



MARYLAND PARK SERVICE

2020 ANNUAL REPORT



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Cover Photo: Point Lookout State Park



Rocky Gap State Park



Larry Hogan, Governor | Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio, Secretary



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TTY Users call via the MD Relay

MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT



Throughout our country's history, we have faced challenges which have summoned the spirit of American grit and ingenuity to find solutions and create new opportunities. The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 was one of these historic challenges. This dangerous and unprecedented health crisis disrupted virtually every aspect of society. However, I am proud to report that the Maryland Park Service faced this challenge head-on and quickly adjusted operating procedures to adhere to protocols recommended by the Maryland Department of Health and Centers for Disease Control so we could maintain access to state parks.

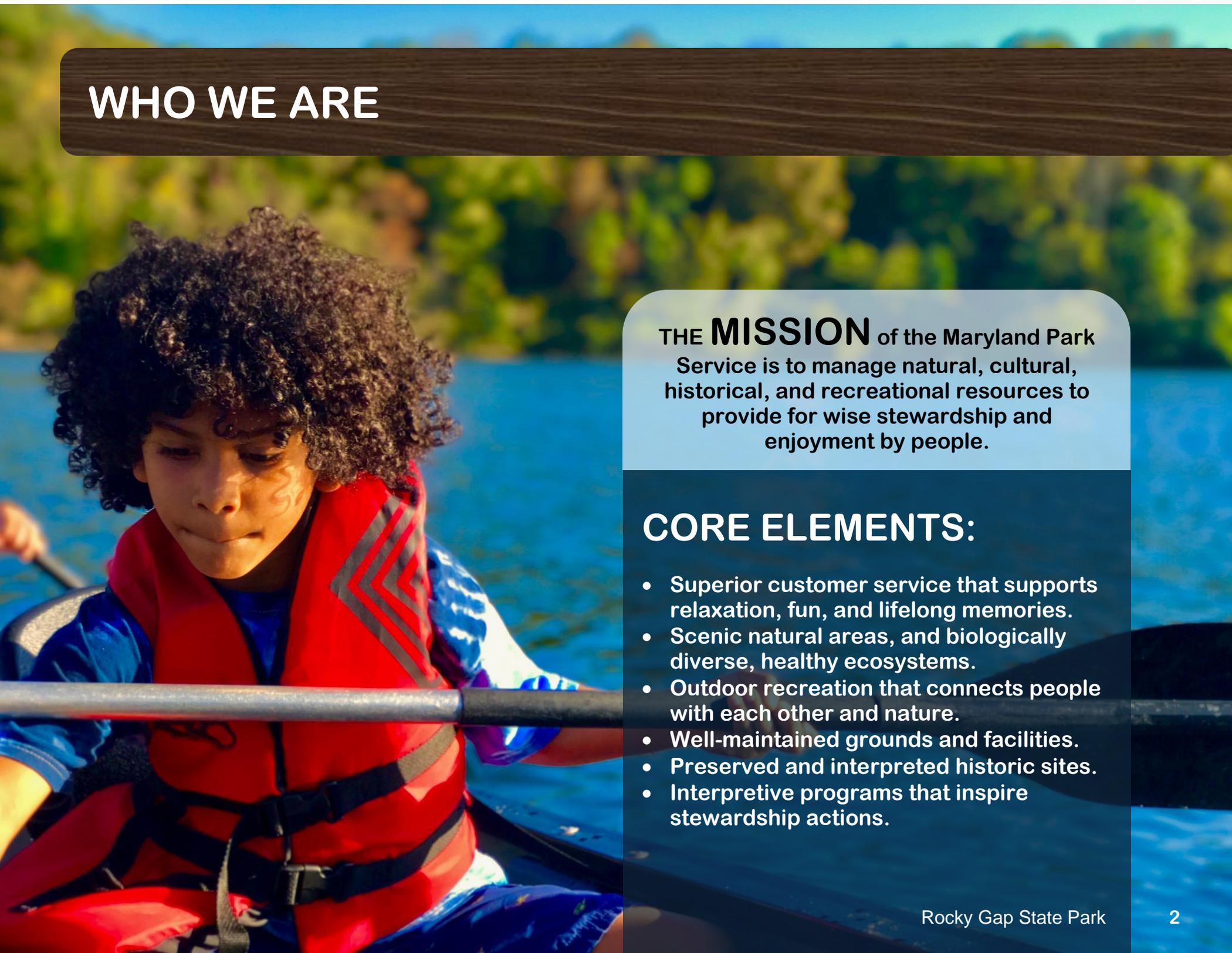
As we met these challenges, Marylanders flocked to state parks in record numbers, looking for a safe haven in nature as an escape from the day-to-day stress and isolation of the pandemic. Consequently, 2020 surpassed all previous attendance records, with 21.5 million people visiting parks across the state -- a 45% increase over 2019, which was, itself, a record-breaking year!

Despite the changes required to adjust to the new reality this year, the MPS adhered to our core mission and developed innovative strategies to keep parks open and communicate with visitors. For example, park staff introduced self-check-in methods for campers, conducted seasonal employee interviews virtually, and produced over two dozen "Virtual Ranger Experience" videos to convey interpretive and educational messages, which would normally be held in-person. Additionally, the "Create Your Own State Park" program was launched in spring of 2020 to encourage people from across the state to design their own park-like oasis. And Park Quest, the wildly popular family program with activities across the state, did not lose a step, as participants enthusiastically adapted to a self-serve model using online guides.

In a year defined by uncertainty, the Maryland Park Service rose to the challenge, not only by providing a safe respite for visitors, but also by pushing ahead with conservation and capital projects, as well as expanding and improving our trail system. The year 2020 was a demanding year, but thanks to the courage and dedication of park employees, State Parks served as an important antidote, preserving the health and well-being of millions of visitors.

Nita S. Hain

WHO WE ARE



THE **MISSION** of the Maryland Park Service is to manage natural, cultural, historical, and recreational resources to provide for wise stewardship and enjoyment by people.

CORE ELEMENTS:

- Superior customer service that supports relaxation, fun, and lifelong memories.
- Scenic natural areas, and biologically diverse, healthy ecosystems.
- Outdoor recreation that connects people with each other and nature.
- Well-maintained grounds and facilities.
- Preserved and interpreted historic sites.
- Interpretive programs that inspire stewardship actions.

MARYLAND'S 75 STATE PARKS



Assateague
Belt Woods
Big Run
Bill Burton Fishing Pier
Black Walnut Point
Bohemia River
Bush Declaration
Calvert Cliffs
Casselman River Bridge
Cedarville
Chapel Point
Chapman
Cunningham Falls
Cypress Branch
Dans Mountain
Deep Creek Lake
Deep Creek Lake NRMA
Elk Neck
Fair Hill
Fort Frederick
Fort Tonoloway
Franklin Point
Gambrill
Gathland
Greenbrier
Greenwell
Gunpowder Falls
Harriet Tubman UGRR
Hart-Miller Island
Herrington Manor
Janes Island
Love Point
Martinak
Mattawoman
Merkle
Monocacy
Morgan Run
New Germany
Newtowne Neck
North Point
North Point State Battlefield
Palmer
Patapsco Valley
Patuxent River
Patuxent River NRMA
Pocomoke River
Point Lookout
Rocks
Rocky Gap
Rosaryville
Sandy Point
Sang Run
Sassafras
Seneca Creek
Severn Run
Smallwood
Soldiers Delight
South Mountain
South Mountain State Battlefield
St. Clements Island
St. Mary's River
Susquehanna
Swallow Falls
Torrey C. Brown Rail Trail
Tuckahoe
Washington Monument
Western Maryland Rail Trail
Weverton-Roxbury Rail Trail
Wills Mountain
Wolf Den Run
Woodmont
Wye Oak
Wye Island
Youghiogheny Wild River
Zekiah Swamp

NEW PARK LAND

- **Pocomoke River State Park** - acquired 212 acres with 1,400 linear feet of shoreline on the Pocomoke River in Worcester County that conserves riparian forest, a three-acre pond with waterfowl habitat, and provides opportunities for nature appreciation and future wildlife habitat restoration.
- **Sang Run State Park** - acquired 182 acres that supports diverse wildlife habitat and connects the park to the Youghiogheny River Natural Environment Area in Garrett County.

MARYLAND PARK SERVICE WORKFORCE

With record-breaking attendance numbers at state parks due to the COVID-19 pandemic, 2020 was a year filled with extraordinary challenges that were met by dedicated state employees working safely with park visitors as they sought recreation opportunities in Maryland's great outdoors.

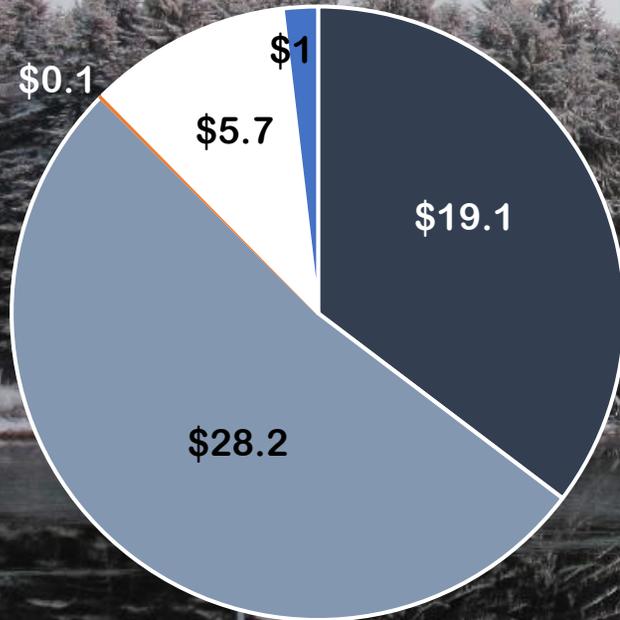


Lt. Col. Chris Bushman, Deputy Superintendent, retired at the end of 2020. He made numerous deep and lasting contributions over his 37-year career with the Maryland Park Service.

40 MANAGEMENT EMPLOYEES, **51** MAINTENANCE EMPLOYEES, **73** RANGERS, **32** ADMINISTRATIVE EMPLOYEES, **51** LONG-TERM CONTRACTUAL EMPLOYEES, **700** SEASONAL EMPLOYEES

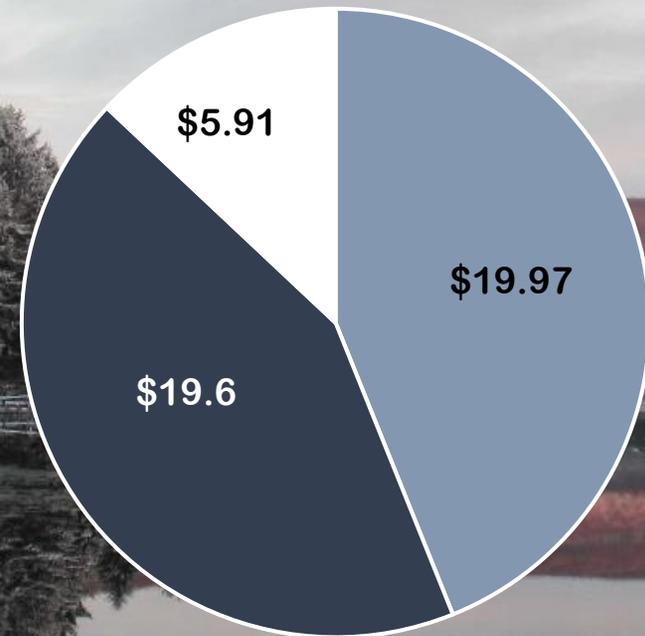
FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

FY 2020 REVENUE \$54.2 MILLION



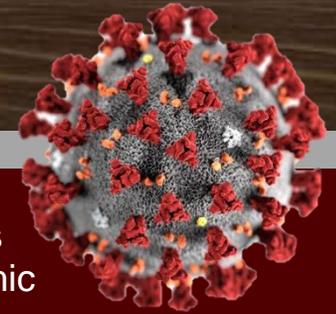
- Park-Generated
- Federal
- Reimbursable
- Property Transfer Tax
- General Fund

FY 2020 EXPENDITURES \$45.5 MILLION



- Salaries
- Operations
- Grants

COVID-19 PANDEMIC RESPONSE



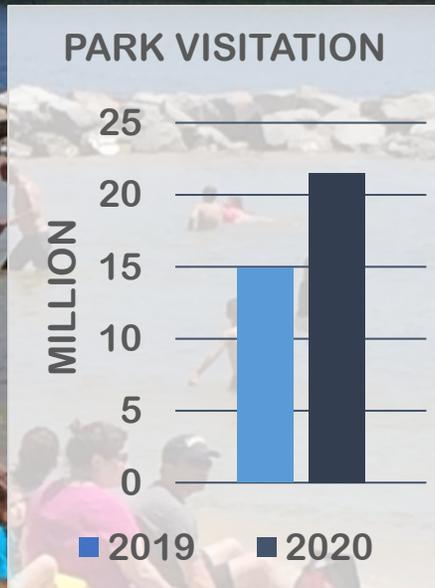
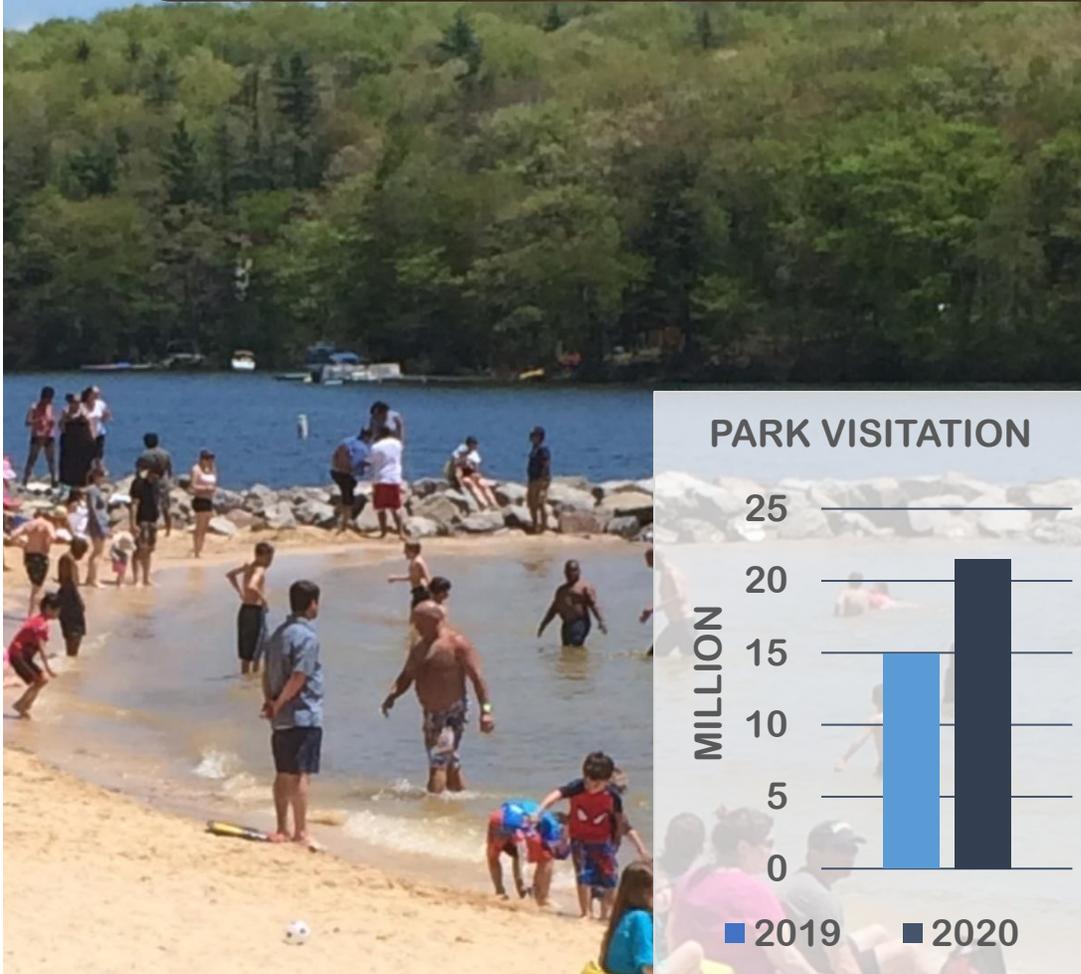
The Maryland Park Service Answers the Call During the COVID-19 Pandemic

- Played a critical role in supporting the health and well-being of Maryland's communities during a period of intense anxiety and disruption.
- Developed a detailed response plan that served as the primary set of park operating procedures to ensure the safety of visitors and employees.
- Led the rapid reopening of nearly all facilities after Memorial Day, with most facilities operating at full capacity by the Independence Day holiday.
- Instituted a "self-serve" approach to limit visitor-staff contact by enhancing park and trail wayfinding signage and adapting popular interpretive programs, like Park Quest, into online self-guided activities.
- Developed cleaning and disinfection protocols for cabins and bathhouses to minimize the risk of infection.
- Modified contact stations, including the installation of barriers and the use of personal protective equipment for staff, to ensure the health and safety of visitors and staff.
- Modified interpretive programs to virtual outreach through the production of over two dozen popular interpretive videos featuring park rangers and MCC members.

"When everyone locked their doors, we opened our gates."

- Ranger Rachel Temby

PARK VISITATION



- Total park visitation jumped a record-shattering 45% in 2020 to 21.5 million from the all-time high of 14.9 million in 2019. This surge of visitors necessitated 292 full-to-capacity park closures, nearly triple the previous year, across 14 parks.
- New park reservation transactions increased by 35% from June-September 2019 (46,205 bookings) when compared to June-September 2020 (71,331 bookings).

CUSTOMER SERVICE

What do our visitors say?

- 91% want to visit a State Park again.
- 94% report that State Parks are a good value.
- 95% feel safe visiting a State Park.
- 95% said visiting a State Park is an important way to escape from stress and demands of daily life.
- 95% said visiting a State Park is one of the best ways to connect with nature.

“This trip was such a benefit to my family's mental health, and at just the right time. Thank you so much for staying open and allowing us some respite in your beautifully kept park. It was such a blessing!”

“Deep Creek Lake State Park - It was affordable. The campsite was nice and clean. The lake was right there and we could even walk up to look at the stars.”

NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION

- An eroding field at Tuckahoe State Park was fully restored into nine acres of meadow, 5 acres of forest, and 4 acres of wetland habitat. Project funding and support were provided by the DNR Chesapeake and Coastal Service.
- Targeted treatments and mitigation were implemented at Fair Hill NRMA to reduce the spread of the invasive Spotted Lanternfly.
- An expanded area of native meadow wildflowers was added to recently established quail habitat at Sassafras NRMA.
- Fifty reef balls were placed in Rocky Gap State Park's Lake Habeeb and 30 reef balls were placed in Deep Creek Lake to provide expanded habitats for colonizing marine life. Projects were funded by the Maryland State Lakes Protection and Restoration Fund.
- Ten separate projects were completed at Deep Creek Lake NRMA utilizing funds from the State Lakes Protection and Restoration Fund, including hydrilla control and over one mile of protection from shoreline erosion.

NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION



Stream Restoration at Rosaryville State Park

- Over two miles of streams draining to Charles Branch in Rosaryville State Park were stabilized and restored to reduce sediments and nutrients from entering the Patuxent River watershed. The project was completed in partnership with the Maryland State Highway Administration.
- Over 1,500 hemlock trees at New Germany State Park were treated to protect against Hemlock Woolly Adelgid. In addition, 200 Ailanthus trees at Fair Hill NRMA were treated to protect against the invasive Spotted Lanternfly, and 184 ash trees at seven state parks were treated to reduce the destructing impact of the Emerald Ash Borer.
- Rocky Gap State Park worked in conjunction with the Wildlife & Heritage Service and the Friends of Rocky Gap State Park to create a new sunflower meadow, which serves as a wildlife food plot and scenic area for visitors.
- A large stormwater retrofit was completed at Fair Hill Natural Resources Management Area that significantly reduced impervious surface area, installed new stormwater treatment practices, and restored a natural drainage area to improve the water quality of Big Elk Creek. This project earned a “Best of the Bay” Stormwater Award and was supported by DNR’s Chesapeake and Coastal Service.

CULTURAL AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION



Point Lookout State Park

- The historic Point Lookout Lighthouse at Point Lookout State Park was fully renovated, including improvements for ADA access and the future installation of interpretive exhibits about the history of the site. Additional work included landscaping, stormwater management, and restoration of an historic coal shed and buoy shed.
- Exterior renovations of the barracks at Fort Frederick State Park were completed. The work included a new shake roof and roof comb. A new door for the fort is planned in 2021.
- A large barn at Bohemia River State Park was restored. Additional structural work is planned in 2021.

INTERPRETIVE PROGRAMMING AND EDUCATION

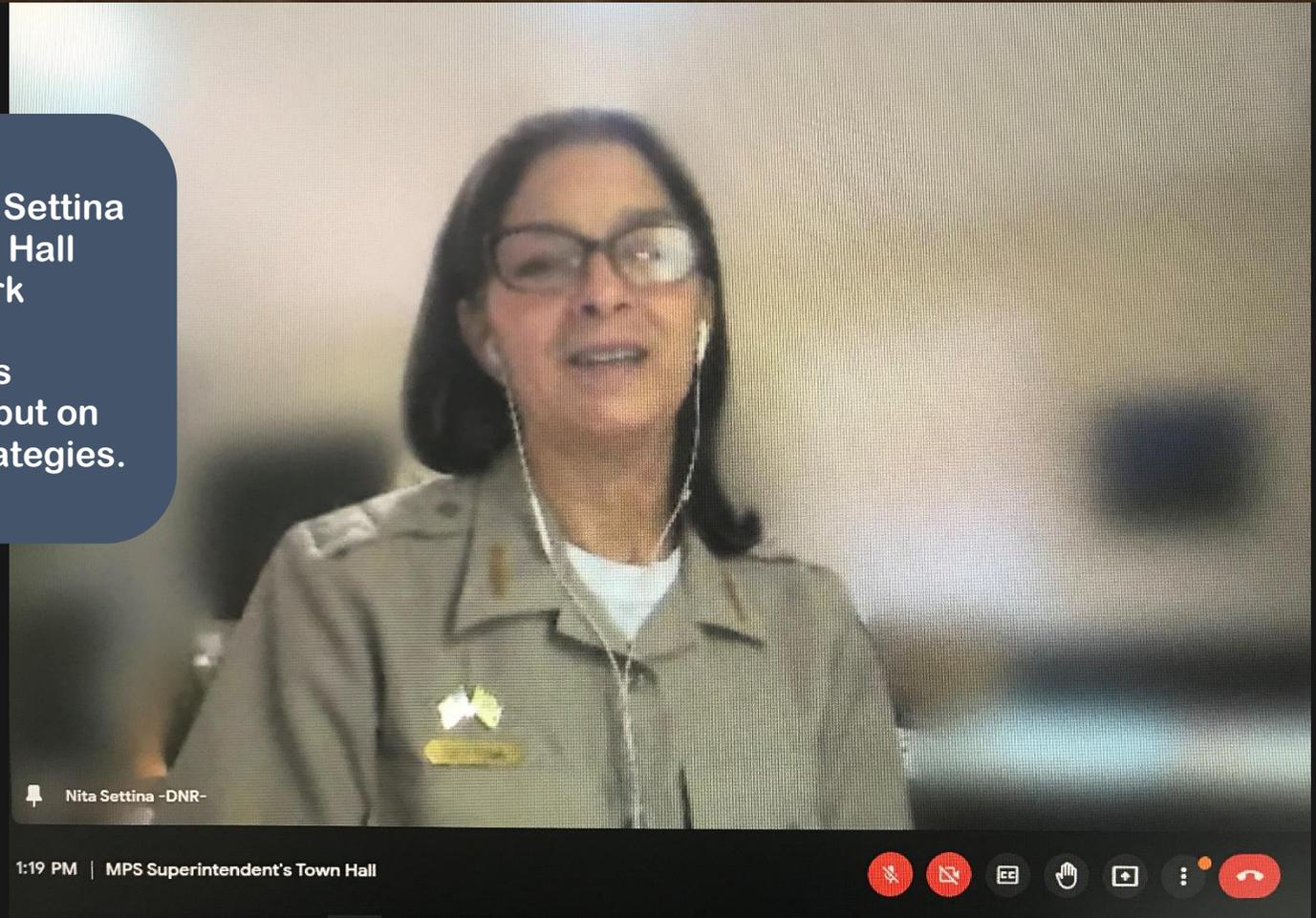
- The “Create Your Own State Park Challenge” was launched to provide individuals staying at home during the pandemic with opportunities and ideas to create a park-like oasis within their own yard. Submissions and pictures poured in from across the state.
- The overwhelmingly popular Park Quest Program returned in 2020 with a new self-guided theme. The program provided intriguing activities that encouraged visitors to enjoy the outdoors through recreational activities at parks throughout the state.
- A “Virtual Ranger Video” program was created to connect with Marylanders who were stuck at home for most of the year. Park staff developed over two-dozen, short educational videos with content that was closed-captioned, tagged with graphics, and distributed over YouTube and social media channels.
 - The Maryland Park Service welcomed approximately 5,000 registered visitors for the annual First Day Hikes on New Year's Day. Hikers enjoyed 43 hikes at 30 parks, totaling over 10,000 miles walked on the trails. Participation increased 23% over 2019, which was also a record-breaking year.



2020 First Day Hike at Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad State Park

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

- Superintendent Nita Settina held 20 Virtual Town Hall meetings with all park employees to share pandemic operations updates and seek input on park operational strategies.



- The Training Division adapted numerous training courses and continued to provide essential health, safety, and operational training to park staff.
- A new one-year employee mentoring program was launched to help staff strengthen their leadership abilities, develop new skills, build stronger professional networks, and improve their career development opportunities.

MARYLAND CONSERVATION CORPS



The Maryland Conservation Corps (MCC) provides young adults with opportunities for personal and professional development and to receive hands-on training in a variety of environmental and natural resource-based careers through a supportive, team-based framework.

Trail Building at Palmer State Park

- MCC completed the Palmer State Park trail system, a three-year project that resulted in 4.5 miles of new trails.
- MCC improved a total of 3,795 acres of public lands, and maintained, repaired, and expanded 365 miles of trails within Maryland Parks.
- MCC planted 1,282 trees and shrubs, as well as native grasses along the Chesapeake Bay in critical areas.
- MCC inoculated 1,068 Eastern Hemlock trees to prevent depredation from the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid and treated 208 ash trees to protect them from the Emerald Ash Borer.

VETERANS CONSERVATION CORPS

The Veterans Conservation Corps (VCC) provides full time contractual jobs to veterans in state parks. Members are trained in public land management skills, such as emergency response, trail construction, hazardous tree removal, environmental education and invasive species removal.

- Planted over 300 cedar trees and 50 native plants on public lands in southern Maryland.
- Improved approximately 20 miles of trail and constructed six equestrian-rated trail bridges.
- Completed various park projects including the construction of eight informational bulletin boards, eradication of invasive species from park properties, removal of 20 hazardous trees, and restoration of three park properties.
- Routed, painted, and installed 12 campsites and directional signs and removed and replaced 20 campsites fire rings and fire pits.



Veterans Conservation Corps member, Calvin Ogburn, hard at work

TRAIL IMPROVEMENTS

The Maryland Park Service has a trail network that extends 1,134 miles!

- At Patapsco Valley State Park, a bypass trail was created around the rail tunnel by the former Union Dam at Hollofield, removing the need for visitors to cross the active rail line. Also, a trail connection was established between the Pickall Area and Alberton Trailhead, eliminating the need to walk along busy roads. Patapsco Valley State Park now maintains over 200 miles of multi-use trails.
- A new trail segment by the Greenbrier State Park campground and park entrance now allows visitors to circumnavigate the park and reach all facilities by trail.
- Off-Highway Vehicle recreation opportunities were expanded at Wolf Den Run State Park by opening 27 miles of additional trails at the North Hill and Potomac Areas of the park.

PARK IMPROVEMENTS



New automated gate at St. Mary's River State Park

- Environmental site design practices were employed during the renovation of the parking lot and comfort station at St. Mary's River State Park, providing automated gate access, removal of impervious surfaces, stormwater management, and native landscaping at the boat ramp.
- Two new bridges were installed at Wolf Den Run State Park that created fish passages on Wolf Den Run and Short Run, two cold-water trout streams on the site. The projects were completed in partnership with Trout Unlimited.

- Environmental site design practices were employed during the renovation and redesign of the entrance road and day use parking lot at Rocky Gap State Park, as well as planting of native landscaping, and stormwater and drainage improvements. The project also included the installation of two electric vehicle charging stations for use by visitors.
- A new modern comfort station, picnic facility improvements, native landscaping, and stormwater management infrastructure were installed at the William Houck Area of Cunningham Falls State Park.



New bridge at Wolf Den Run State Park

PARK IMPROVEMENTS



New Playground at
Sandy Point State Park

- Equestrian infrastructure improvements continued at Fair Hill NRMA, including a new water system, water tower, and major renovation of the turf track, timber track, and three-day event facilities (dressage arenas, cross country course, and show jumping arenas) in preparation for a Maryland 5 Star Event in October 2021, one of only two 5 Star events in the United States.

- A new beach plaza and Chesapeake Bay-inspired playground was developed at Sandy Point State Park, which welcomes approximately 1.5 million visitors annually.



Water Tower at Fair Hill State Park

OUR FRIENDS AND PARTNERS



Tawes Garden Tree Planting

Our Friends groups are invaluable sources of support. These independent nonprofit organizations are dedicated to assisting state parks, helping with special events and programs, and park maintenance.

Governors Park Advisory Commission
Friends of Assateague State Park
Friends of Maryland State Forests and Parks
Friends of Janes Island State Park
Friends of Martinak State Park
Friends of New Germany State Park
Western Garrett County State Park Volunteers
Friends of Cunningham Falls State Park
The Volunteer Team (Rocky Gap State Park)
Dans Mountain Park Association
Friends of Fort Frederick State Park
Save Fair Hill
North Point State Park Volunteers
Soldiers Delight Conservation
Friends of Calvert Cliffs State Park
Friends of Point Lookout State Park
Point Lookout Lighthouse Preservation Society
Friends of Seneca Creek State Park
Benjamin Harrison Society
Gunpowder United Mountain Bike Operators
Percy Lee Dairy Farm Foundation
Graham Equestrian Center
Friends of Helen Avalynne Tawes Garden
Piscataway Conoy Tribe
Friends of the Patapsco Valley State Park
National Steeplechase Foundation
Turkey Point Light Station
Catoctin Forest Alliance
Maryland OHV Alliance
West Rhode Riverkeeper
Rosaryville Conservancy
Chesapeake Natives
Chesapeake Conservancy

MORE INFORMATION

INFORMATION:

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dnr.maryland.gov

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1-888-432-2267

parkreservations.maryland.gov

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New Germany State Park
by Luke Mongrain