



# MARYLAND PARK SERVICE

## 2021 ANNUAL REPORT



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Cover Photo: Washington Monument State Park  
Submitted to the 2021 Photo Contest by David Stant



Photo Submitted to the 2021 Photo  
Contest by Matthew Westbrook



Maryland

Larry Hogan, Governor | Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio, Secretary



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DEPARTMENT OF  
NATURAL RESOURCES



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# MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

In 2021, the Maryland Park Service transitioned largely back to normal after a turbulent 2020 and the impacts of COVID-19. Millions of people who newly discovered their state parks during the pandemic became repeat visitors in 2021, connecting with family and friends in nature.

While park visitation reached a record breaking 21.5 million in 2020, the 2021 numbers were not far behind. Parks welcomed 20.6 million visitors in 2021. In concert with high visitation, park-generated revenues topped \$23.4 million this past year, which was an 8% increase over the previous year, and an all-time record for the Maryland Park Service!

The dramatic increase in visitation over the past two years provided valuable opportunities to reach an entirely new audience with interpretive programs and events related to outdoor recreation. State parks launched a renewed “Leave No Trace” campaign to provide an easily-understood message about how to recreate outdoors and minimize impacts on natural areas. Large banners, in both English and Spanish, were displayed at popular parks throughout the state, supported by a robust social media and email campaign and special appearances by Smokey Bear.

Park improvements and environmental projects were a top priority in 2021. Work was completed in fall 2021 at Bohemia River and Cypress Branch, in preparation for the two new state parks to open in early 2022. Design work for the new Fort Frederick and Sandy Point State Parks’ visitor centers were completed after extensive planning and design considerations. We continued to put an emphasis on the preservation of our historical areas, including two important pieces of African-American history by investing in the Howard House Project at Patuxent River State Park and the Williams Schoolhouse at Fort Frederick State Park. Extensive landscape restoration projects aimed at eliminating invasives and establishing native species occurred at parks including Susquehanna, Calvert Cliffs, and Tuckahoe.

Maryland’s state parks continue to be a touchstone for millions of visitors seeking fun and relaxation, outdoor adventures and connections to nature, history and cultural traditions. The Maryland Park Service looks forward to continuing to expand and strengthen its efforts in 2022 to provide a valuable escape in nature for our millions of visitors.



# WHO WE ARE

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



**TOTAL WORKFORCE: 907 EMPLOYEES**

## 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.



- 610 Seasonal
- 69 Rangers
- 58 Long-Term Contractual
- 47 Maintenance
- 39 Management
- 30 Administrative



# MARYLAND'S 75 STATE PARKS



# PARK LAND ACQUISITIONS

The State acquired over 800 acres of new park land in fiscal year 2021.

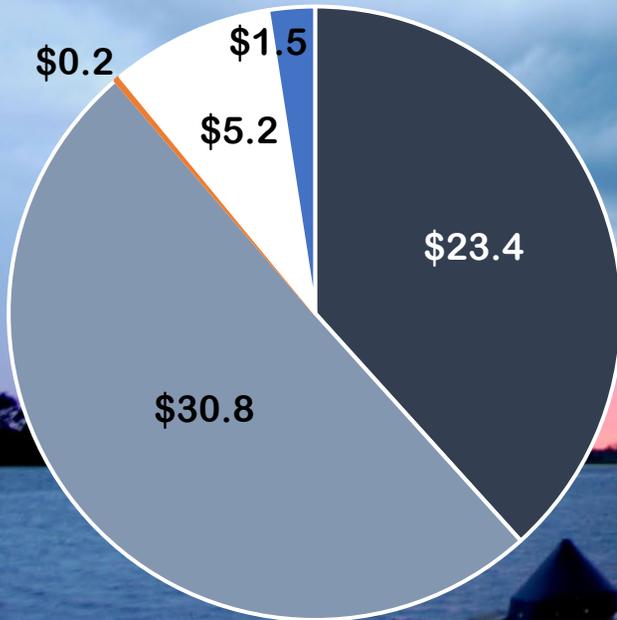
- Patapsco Valley State Park - acquired 25 acres that will conserve a forested buffer along a Patapsco River tributary and expand public recreational opportunities in an area of high park visitation.
- South Mountain Recreational Area - acquired a 71.5-acre parcel to buffer the Appalachian Trail, which features mature hardwood forest and provides habitat for numerous wildlife species. Also, a 22-acre parcel was acquired that will buffer the Appalachian Trail, provide public access for historical interpretive tours, and protect habitat that contributes to the Atlantic Flyway.
- Youghiogheny Natural Environment Area - acquired 185 acres of forested land located just upstream of Swallow Falls State Park that features a mix of hardwoods and hemlocks and provides public access to the Youghiogheny River. In addition, another 155 acres of young forest was acquired that will buffer a half mile of Laurel Run, a tributary to the Youghiogheny River.



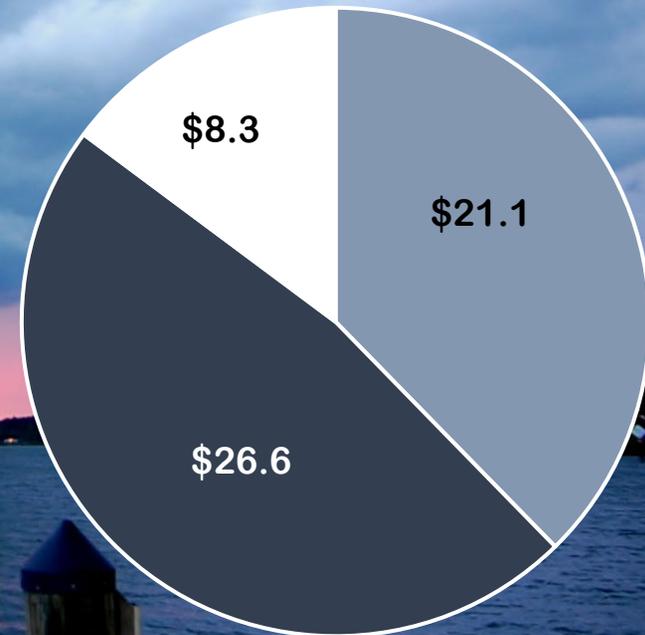
Rosie visiting a new acquisition at Youghiogheny NEA

# FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

## FY 2021 REVENUE \$60.0 MILLION



## FY 2021 EXPENDITURES \$56.0 MILLION



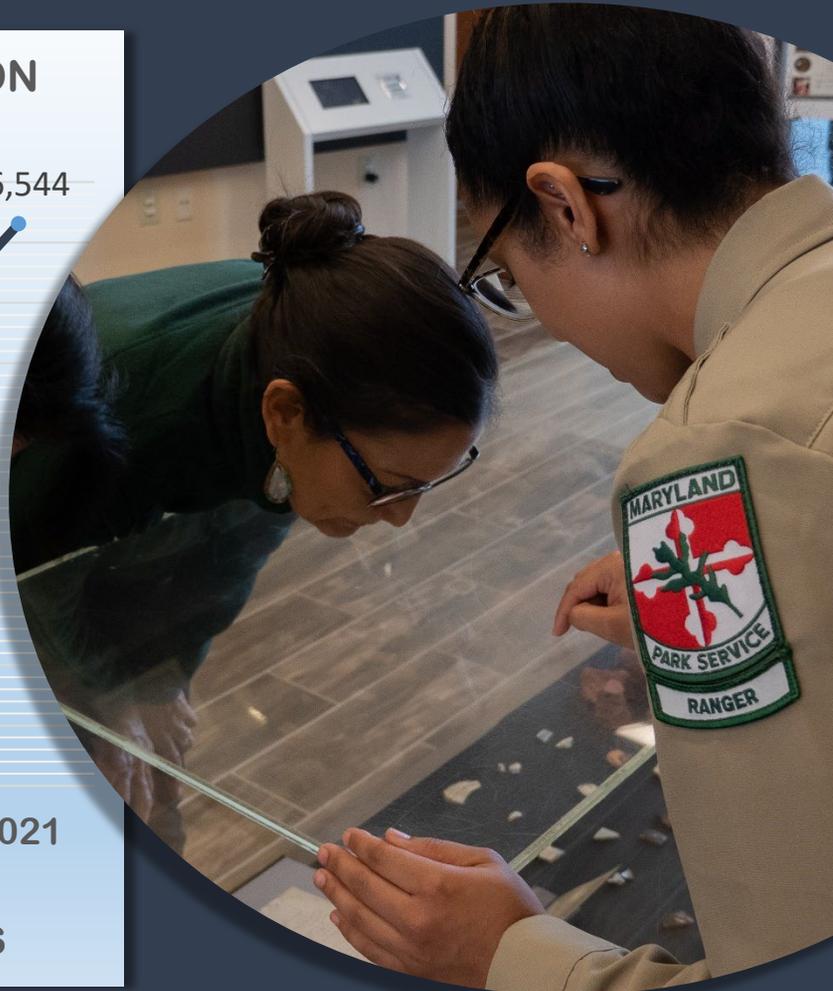
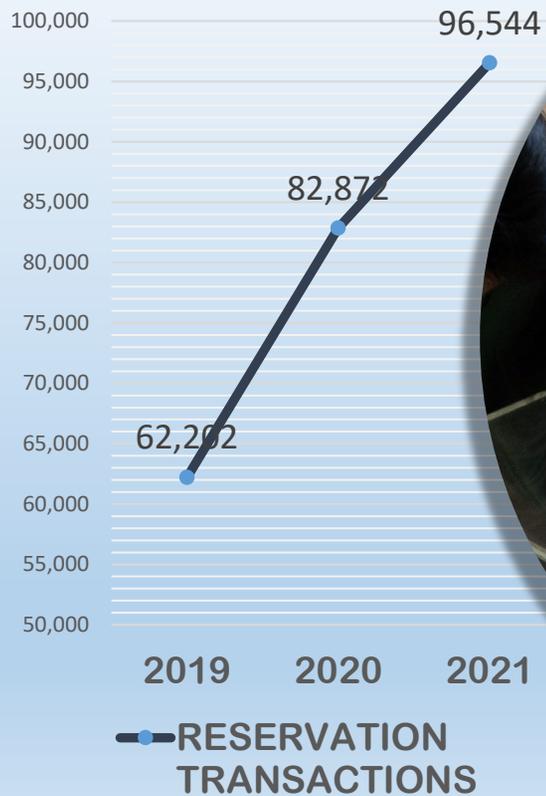
- Park-Generated
- Federal
- Reimbursable

- Property Transfer Tax
- General Fund

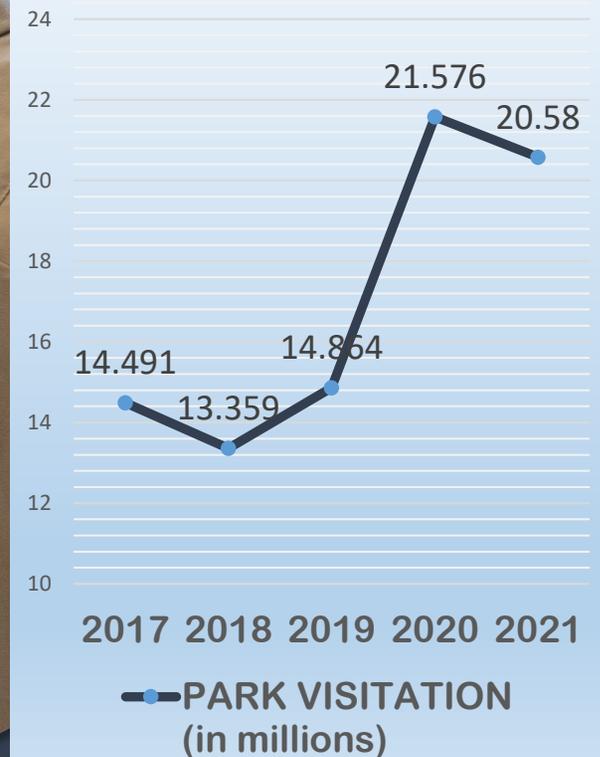
- Salaries
- Operations
- Grants

# CUSTOMER SERVICE AND VISITATION

## PARK RESERVATION GROWTH



## PARK VISITATION GROWTH



- Total Park visitation reached 20.6 million visitors in 2021, which was less than the 21.5 million in 2020, but still well above the previous record year of 2019, with 14.9 visitors. There were 170 full-to-capacity closures in 14 parks.
- Park reservation transactions for camping and other park facilities topped 96,544, a 16% increase over 2020, and a 36% increase over 2019 which, again, was a record-setting year.
- 93% of visitors rated their park experience as excellent or above average.

# NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION



Phragmites removal at Calvert Cliffs State Park



Bohemia River State Park

- Invasive *phragmites* was removed throughout wetlands at Calvert Cliffs State Park to make way for native grasses that support endemic insects and animals.
- Approximately 11 acres of trees were planted at Fort Frederick, Tuckahoe, and Susquehanna State Parks.
- Bohemia River State Park planted 8.5 acres of trees and native meadows and implemented new pollinator habitat management protocols.
- Tuckahoe State Park established 46.9 acres of meadow and hedgerow plantings.
- Susquehanna State Park implemented an eight-acre invasive species (*Sericea lespedeza*) control effort and initiated a significant native meadow planting project.

# CULTURAL AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

- Patuxent River State Park initiated efforts to preserve historic structures on the Howard Farm, an important example of 19th century African American life.
- Patapsco Valley State Park's Elkrige Furnace site was designated as a National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom site. Elkrige Furnace was one of the largest operating iron furnaces in colonial Maryland and used enslaved, indentured, and convict labor. At least five people escaped from this site.
- Fort Frederick State Park coordinated the renovation of the Williams Schoolhouse, an important site of African American history in Maryland. The one-room schoolhouse highlights the contributions of Nathan Williams, who owned and farmed Fort Frederick during the Civil War.



Women's Equality Day reenactment at Sang Run State Park

- MPS organized a Women's Equality Day reenactment in Garrett County, which retraced the steps of women 100 years ago who fought for the passage of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution, giving women the right to vote in 1920. The reenactment concluded at Sang Run State Park and coincided with the opening of the newly-restored historic Sang Run Election House - the oldest of its kind west of the Chesapeake Bay.

# CAPITAL AND CRITICAL MAINTENANCE

- Sandy Point and Greenbrier State Parks completed renovation of day-use bathhouses. The new facilities are more energy-efficient and provide improved amenities for park visitors.
- Road paving at Washington Monument State Park and Pocomoke River State Park's Milburn Landing Area were completely redone, effectively improving access and safety concerns.
- Construction of electric vehicle charging stations for state vehicles began at all southern Maryland Park Service facilities. These charging stations will power electric fleet vehicles.
- Antiquated well and water systems were replaced at the historic Steppingstone Farm Museum at Susquehanna State Park.



New electric vehicle charging station at Merkle State Park.



- Planning and design for the new Sandy Point Nature Center and new exhibits for the Fort Frederick Visitor Center were both completed.

# INTERPRETIVE PROGRAMMING AND EDUCATION

- Approximately 16,200 visitors participated in First Day Hikes at Maryland State Parks from January 1-3, 2021.
- With the COVID-19 pandemic precautions in place, staff of Cunningham Falls put a different spin on the annual Maple Syrup Festival in 2021. Visitors were welcomed into the park to learn the basics of maple syrup production and took home Maryland-made maple syrup for their pancakes.
- Lt. Governor Boyd K. Rutherford announced the first Maryland State Park Week Celebration April 10-16. Events and activities were held at parks around the state to celebrate and recognize the important role that state parks play in the lives of Marylanders.
- A new mobile visitor center was acquired by the Friends of Patapsco Valley State Park, which enables staff to reach visitors throughout the 31-mile-long park and provide interpretive and educational programs to diverse audiences.
- Our successful Park Quest program kicked off its 14th season with a "Spread Your Wings to Explore Maryland's State Parks" bird theme. Thousands of families enjoyed a wide variety of self-guided activities at state parks and learned about their avian residents.



# EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT AND ADMINISTRATION



- The Maryland Park Service's Training Division earned the "Top Training Provider" award from the American Red Cross, in recognition of our trainers who provide high-quality training and service to our workforce.

- MPS instructors provided 629 hours of in-person instruction and taught a total of 781 students at courses throughout the state. Furthermore, all Emergency Medical Response course offerings were successfully transitioned to the American Red Cross training curriculum.
- A new MPS Mentoring Program successfully completed its inaugural effort to support staff leadership development and give participants the tools for career advancement. 83% of mentoring program participants stated they are very likely to recommend the program to others.

# MARKETING AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

- A web page and associated link from our reservation contractor were created to feature rental camping and other outdoor recreation equipment from companies across the country. This was an effort to provide new park visitors with access to inexpensive equipment to try different activities.
- Over 20 resource-based recreation use agreements were established with recreational service businesses (e.g. biking, hiking, and rock climbing guides) at parks throughout the state.
- Parks launched a renewed “Leave No Trace” campaign to educate visitors on the seven minimum-impact practices for anyone visiting the outdoors. Information was disseminated via visits by Smokey Bear, banners, and robust social media and email campaigns.
- The Maryland Park Service boasts over 51,000 Facebook followers, over 36,000 Twitter followers, and 125,000 park newsletter subscribers.



Smokey Bear visiting Sandy Point State Park



Food Truck at Pocomoke River State Park

- A Food Truck Partnership Program was launched to encourage food vendors throughout the state to provide services at select state parks. This partnership program seeks to support economic opportunities for small businesses while providing a valuable amenity for park visitors.

# MARYLAND CONSERVATION CORPS

- MCC crews partnered with the Veterans Conservation Corps crew on the Trail Improvement Project at Cedarville, which involved constructing and installing 90 signs and 3 bulletin boards, and improving 10 miles of trails.
- MCC crews and the Veterans Conservation Corps crew coordinated on a major project at Wye Island Natural Resources Management Area, where they restored a trail by constructing a 400-foot wooden boardwalk over a wet area, building two trail puncheons, and building a trail reroute.
- MCC crews treated 7,782 hemlock trees to reduce the impact of forest pests. Crews also planted 7,050 trees and shrubs, bay grasses, and other native plants throughout the state.
- MCC Crews provided a wide array of environmental education programs to over 20,300 students and park visitors.



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.

# CONSERVATION JOBS CORPS



The Maryland Conservation Jobs Corps (CJC) provides underserved youth and young adults with the opportunity to conserve Maryland State Parks and public lands, while learning practical job skills that will prepare them for the future.



- CJC Crews removed trash from 28,254 feet of roadside and shoreline, improved 2,225 feet of trail, planted 513 native trees, improved seven pollinator gardens, and assembled and installed eight buoy markers at oyster beds.
- CJC Crews built and completed 26 other park improvement projects including three bulletin boards, 10 picnic tables, five cooler boxes, four bat boxes, five split rail fences, two trail staircases, and a platform bridge.
- CJC crews installed over fifty exclusion fences around newly planted hemlock saplings to protect them from wildlife and help ensure future growth.

# VETERANS CONSERVATION CORPS

The Veterans Conservation Corps (VCC) provides full time jobs to veterans in state parks. VCC participants complete conservation projects in areas such as park operations, wetland restoration, and trail maintenance and construction. Corps members are trained in various public land management skills, such as hazardous tree removal, trail construction, emergency response, chainsaw safety, environmental education, and invasive species control.



Bridge construction at Cedarville State Forest.

A four-member VCC crew worked out of the Merkle Natural Resources Management Area.

- The VCC identified and implemented significant upgrades to the 20-mile trail system at Cedarville State Forest. They used the MPS wayfinding program, which seeks to help visitors successfully navigate parks, to develop corrective signage for nearly 90 areas, including the construction of two large information bulletin boards at trailheads. Additional improvements included repairs to dozens of low-lying wet areas, three major trail relocations, and a new bridge over a beaver-affected waterway.
- The VCC took down over 30 hazardous trees and planted over 30 native trees on park land. Additionally, crews built and maintained several critical park infrastructure improvements including seven bridges, 10 bulletin boards, and a new roof.

# TRAIL IMPROVEMENTS

- An additional 20 trail miles were opened to the public through improvements, extensions, and additions for a total of 1,153 miles of trails in state parks.
- State parks collaborated with partner organizations at Patapsco Valley State Park (Friends of PVSP) and Seneca Creek State Park (Mid-Atlantic Off Road Enthusiasts) to make major improvements to navigation aids along popular park trail systems. Both parks now feature new bulletin boards with up-to-date maps and labeled composite posts at intersections throughout. Friends of PVSP also installed bike repair stations at select trailheads.
- Gambrill State Park and the City of Frederick hosted USA Cycling's Marathon MTB National Championship on their shared trail system, awarding stars-stripes jerseys in 23 categories.
  - St Mary's River State Park partnered with St Mary's Mountain Bikers on a major trail improvement project, which included over a mile of new natural surface singletrack trail and surfacing of the trail across the dam spillway.

# OUR FRIENDS AND PARTNERS

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



Ed Johnson and Jane Nitsch  
Patapsco Valley State Park "Senior Ranger" Volunteers

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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## RESERVATIONS:

1-888-432-2267

[parkreservations.maryland.gov](http://parkreservations.maryland.gov)

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DNR 04-102022-331 10/2022

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