

Support Authorization of Loudoun State Park Property in the Biennium Budget

Importance:

- Loudoun County has purchased a 281-acre parcel of land for donation to the Commonwealth for addition to the adjacent 600 acres that has already been acquired by the Commonwealth for a state park.
- The parcel purchased by the County contains infrastructure needed to support the 600 acres already owned by the Commonwealth.
- Authorization must be included in the state budget in order for the state to be able to accept the property donation. Mere acceptance of the property would not commit the state to any initial capital expenditures or any initial operational costs.
- Creating this state park will preserve significant natural and historic resources, support the rural economy, provide important trail connectivity and provide economic benefit to the County and the region.
- This region is currently the most underserved area by the state park system and would be able to draw residents and visitors from the populous Northern Virginia region and beyond.

Background:

- In 2014, former Gov. Bob McDonnell announced an agreement with the Leggett Foundation to acquire 600 acres of undeveloped land and stream property to create a new state park in northwest Loudoun. The 600 acre parcel was then transferred to the Commonwealth of Virginia in June 2016 and is part of a future land collective that will eventually contain 1,500 acres.
- On October 18, 2018, the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors voted to purchase a 281-acre parcel adjoining the original 600-acre parcel for donation to the Commonwealth for the envisioned state park.
- The parcel contains much of the needed infrastructure for a state park- environmental education center, restored historic buildings, roads, trails, water well and septic system, electricity, etc.
- State budget precludes the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) from initiating or accepting by gift any new lands for use as a State Park or Nature Area Preserve without a specific appropriation for such purpose by the General Assembly. The budget allows the Department “to acquire land as expressly set out in Item C-27 of this act, as well as in-holdings or lands contiguous to an existing State Park or Natural Area Preserve as expressly set out in Items C-25 and C-26 of this act and as provided for in Section 4-2.01 a.1. of this act provided further that acquisitions authorized in Items C-25 and C-26 will not cause the department to incur additional operating expenses.” So the parcel needs be specifically identified in that provision in order for the donation to be authorized.
- The proposed budget includes language that allows the DCR to accept the park.

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