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Our Mission

We believe that **LEARNING AND PLAYING** are **LIFELONG ENDEAVORS** and vital to overall health and wellness.

Our department is dedicated to providing a variety of **QUALITY RECREATIONAL AND LEISURE OPPORTUNITIES** to the **CITIZENS OF AUGUSTA COUNTY**.

If you are looking for a creative outlet, a challenging adventure, a means to stay fit and healthy, or an activity to further your child’s development, you have come to the right place! We maintain several parks and facilities throughout the county that can host a wide range of activities and our trip offerings take you to amazing places both within our state and beyond.

Contact Information

- 540-245-5727
- 540-245-5732
- augustarec.com
- parksrec@co.augusta.va.us
- PO Box 590 Verona, VA 24482
This Annual Report is one of our favorite projects of the year because it gives us an opportunity to reflect on the accomplishments of the past year and communicate the great work being done in the community. There are many citizens and partners including community groups, organizations, and businesses that support this department’s efforts and consistently work with us to improve the quality of life for all of Augusta County. An unmeasurable amount of appreciation should be expressed to them and to the Augusta County Board of Supervisors, the Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission, and our gifted County staff.

2019 was a year of significant accomplishments for Augusta County’s Parks & Recreation Department. The following pages share with you the department’s significant investments in improving our parks and facilities for our citizens and our efforts to provide a wide variety of recreational, educational, and life-long learning activities on a seasonal basis in active and passive environments.

Our mission is to provide quality recreational and leisure opportunities that enhance quality of life for all citizens. Staff work diligently to provide those opportunities in safe, well maintained environments and regardless of what you choose to explore, staff are ready to meet your needs. Being involved and connected to the community and understanding our community’s needs is, has been, and always will be a department priority.

As you take a few minutes to review this report, know that there are many ways for you to be involved with our department. There are so many classes to take, trips to go on, parks to visit, workshops to teach, and events to attend. There are also many volunteer opportunities.; join us at a Parks & Recreation Commission meeting.

We are very fortunate to live, work, and play in such a wonderful place as Augusta County, where all three can so closely intertwine and create boundless opportunities. Seizing these opportunities enhance our quality of life and lead to a greater sense of community. So don’t miss out - seize your opportunity in 2020 and be a part of your greater Augusta community!

Andy Wells, Director
Parks & Recreation Staff

Andy Wells  Director
Lettie Stickley  Administrative Secretary
Joyce Johnson  Recreation Manager
Nick Grow  Programs Coordinator
Courtney Ambrose  Programs Coordinator for Recreation & Special Events
Pam Mowery  Programs Coordinator for Senior Adults
Kelly Rourke  Natural Chimneys Park Coordinator
Ashley Rhodes  Program Technician
Vicki York  Programs Coordinator for Youth Recreation
Lauren Jacobsen  Youth Recreation Assistant

Numerous dedicated part time staff also provide vital support throughout the year in our RecCreate Program, K.I.D.S. Camp Program, trips, and activities.

Parks & Recreation Commission

The Parks and Recreation Commission serves in an advisory capacity to the Board of Supervisors in recommending policies relating to recreation programming, constantly assessing recreation needs to provide year-round supervised recreation for the citizens of Augusta County. The Commission is composed of seven members appointed for four-year terms by the Augusta County Board of Supervisors.

Ernie Landes  Beverley Manor
Ronnie Ritchie  Middle River
Larry Curry  North River
Leon Bartley  Pastures
Sally Williams  Riverheads
Kirk Barley  South River
Samantha Bosserman  Wayne
2019 Accomplishments

4,550 Participants
200,405 Participation Hours
85% Programming Success Rate
(Programs completed vs total programs planned)
Received Virginia Association of Counties (VACO) Achievement Award for The Trails at Mill Place

65% of all operating expenses through direct revenue

Recovered

Virginia Association of Counties (VACO) Achievement Award for The Trails at Mill Place
Natural Chimneys Park & Campground

$10,000
Invested in electrical upgrades

$14,250
in Recreation Matching Grants toward improvements to recreational facilities in the County

New Bus!
Replaced the department's second bus used for trips.

C.A.R.E Program converted to RecCreate, a more purposefully recreational program.
Augusta County Parks and Recreation provides recreational and leisure opportunities at six parks and two indoor facilities of varying size throughout the County. Each park has been either built or acquired in the past 20 years and amenities within them have developed incrementally as funding has become available. These parks are now anchors within communities around the County, providing convenient access to outdoor recreation. The two facilities managed by the department provide vital programming space where thousands of citizens of both Augusta County and surrounding localities participate in recreational activities annually.
Augusta County Rec Gym

The Augusta County Rec Gym is located in Fishersville in the Woodrow Wilson complex off Route 250. In the 1990s the department began providing programming in the building, originally the Wilson High School gymnasium. While it is still owned and lightly used by the Augusta County School Board, the majority of activities housed in the gym are provided by Parks and Recreation. It features a full size basketball court, metal bleachers, restrooms, and a karate room. The space is also available for rent on Friday nights and weekends between September and April and does see a steady flow of rentals during that time. The building is not air-conditioned and therefore, not used during the summer.

Activity Room

In 2013, the department moved its offices to a more central location within the Government Center. With that move, previous programming space in the building became unavailable. However, a space on the second floor of the Government Center was developed into what is now called the Activity Room. This space is where we host many of our fitness and dance programs. It is also used for some of our instructional, classroom-based programs. This well-lit space features a laminated dance floor, ballet barres, mirror wall, and three large televisions.
Augusta Springs Park

In 2006, Augusta Springs Park was added to the department. Located on Augusta Springs Road just off US Route 42, this park is 25 acres in size and includes a playground, basketball court, picnic shelter, seasonal restroom, multipurpose field, and walking trail almost one mile in length. This is a unique park as it is entirely flat, with most of its area in the Little Calfpasture River floodplain.

Deerfield Park

Deerfield Park was acquired in 2010. This 4.5 acre park is located on Marble Valley Road in Deerfield. It features a picnic shelter, playground, volleyball net, basketball court and Community Center that houses the Deerfield Library Station. A walking trail, approximately 0.32 miles in length runs around the perimeter of the park and several tables are scattered under numerous stately oak trees.
Crimora Park

Crimora Park was acquired in 2000 and is one of two Augusta County parks that provide river access—Crimora being the only one to provide access year-round. Located on New Hope and Crimora Road, just west of the Crimora community, this park is about 18 acres and is split into two levels based on existing topography. It features two picnic shelters, two playgrounds, and a seasonal restroom on the elevated level. A walking trail, almost ½ mile in length, meanders through this level. On the lower level, the park features a large manicured grass area and over 1,000 feet of river frontage that provides ample access to the South River for kayaking, canoeing, and/or fishing. The Crimora Community Center, operated by the local Ruritan Club, and two lighted baseball fields, operated by the Crimora Baseball Association, are at the entrance to the park.
Berry Farm

The department is involved in the management of the Berry Farm property which was acquired by the County in 1964. The property has been managed with a relatively hands-off approach with conservation of watershed and aquifers, wildlife habitat and open space in mind. Over the years, several sections of the property have been parceled off and deeded to the Augusta County Service Authority for the purpose of establishing drinking water sources. Additionally, a portion of land has been leased to Project GROWS, a non-profit farm which strives to educate the local community regarding sustainable food production and access. That lease was renewed in 2019. The Berry Farm property presents numerous opportunities for recreation. The property already has an extensive trail system which is lightly maintained and has recently received enhancement from a local Boy Scout Eagle project. The Berry Farm is a textbook example of property that could be developed for both open space conservation and passive recreation opportunities in the future.
Stuarts Draft Park

Stuarts Draft Park was the first of its kind for the department. The property was purchased in 1998 and was gradually developed in the following years. Located on Edgewood Lane, just off US Route 340, the park features a Junior Olympic size swimming pool, two picnic shelters, amphitheater and playground. There are also two soccer fields, two little league baseball fields, and a lengthy walking trail. The department’s aquatics programming including swim lessons and the summer league Dolphins Swim Team are held primarily at the Stuarts Draft pool. This park also hosts the very popular annual Sweet Dreams Festival.
The Trails at Mill Place

This is the most recent addition to the department’s slate of parks. Located in the County’s Mill Place Commerce Park, this new facility has been met with enthusiasm from the community and has become a popular recreational amenity. The Trails at Mill Place opened in the fall of 2018. After just over a year of operation, the park is seeing regular visitors every day. This park includes a paved trail approximately two-thirds of a mile long that encircles a 2 acre storm water management pond. A critical wetland area approximately one quarter acre in size is also situated immediately beside the storm water management pond, providing a great opportunity for wildlife viewing. The pond contains several freshwater fish species and is open for catch and release fishing. A picnic shelter with several picnic tables is just a few feet off the parking lot and three benches are placed at intervals along the trail.
Shelter Rentals

Most of our parks offer picnic shelters which are available to rent between April 1 and October 31. They are great for family reunions, birthday parties, office gatherings or get-togethers with friends or teammates. Charcoal grills are provided at most shelters.

Rec Gym Rentals

The Augusta County Rec Gym, located in Fishersville, is also available for rent on Friday nights and weekends between September and April and does see a steady flow of rentals during that time. The space is perfect for birthday parties, reunions, and get-togethers as the entire gym is included in the rental. The department provides a site supervisor who unlocks the building and remains on the premises for the duration of the rental. The building is not air conditioned and therefore, not used during the summer.
The County acquired Natural Chimneys Park and Campground in 2010 and it remains the department’s largest and most popular park. Located in Mt. Solon, this 135 acre park offers many recreational opportunities to county citizens and other visitors from across the state and nation. It features the towering limestone formations for which it is named, trails, picnic shelters, a performance stage, a swimming pool, seasonal access to the North River, and a very popular seasonal campground that is experiencing its fourth generation of campers. Both day visitors and those who choose to stay overnight in the campground find plenty of space and opportunities for recreation, relaxation and fellowship. The facility is managed by Department staff. This park’s annual remote operation, including the available camping program, has been designed to be revenue neutral since it was gifted to the County by the now-dissolved Upper Valley Regional Park Authority.
Campground Performance

1,822 Nationwide Visitors

3,378 Reservations Total

1,049 Reservations Online

11 International Visitors

1,411 Virginia Visitors

2019 Annual Report
Programming

Augusta County Parks and Recreation provides programs and activities that span a wide range of interests and abilities, offering something for everyone. Depending on the subject matter, some programs may be seasonal while others are offered every quarter. Programmers are constantly evaluating interest and adjusting our offerings accordingly so that we always have something new to offer. In the course of a year and taken as a whole, our programs are entirely self-sustaining and are expected to at least break even. Evaluating the financial standing of our programs on the whole provides the flexibility for profit on some programs to compensate for loss on a limited number of individual programs. In effect, this allows us to offer a maximum number of programs to our citizens while still satisfying more broad departmental constraints.

Trips

For more than 30 years, Augusta County Parks and Recreation has offered trips to events and attractions around Augusta County, throughout Virginia, and across the nation. We have a fleet of two 15 passenger buses and a dedicated group of trip drivers and escorts that help facilitate these trips. On occasion, a trip will have more interest than we can fit on a 15 passenger bus. In these cases, and depending on the venue, staff will either take both of the department buses or contract with a local transportation company to secure a larger motor coach.
Classes

We pride ourselves on both the quantity and quality of classes we offer throughout the year. From tried and true classics to innovative new activities, we offer a wide range of classes. Our programming staff works with a number of contracted instructors who are willing to share their talents, skills, and knowledge with the community. We are regularly introducing new classes in an effort to offer unique and fresh experiences for our citizens. Most classes take place in the Government Center building in various spaces and classrooms.
Our department operates two outdoor swimming pools with seasons running between Memorial Day and Labor Day. Both pools host a daily public swim period and swim lessons while Stuarts Draft Pool also hosts the Dolphins Swim Team. Both pools can be rented for parties on Fridays, Saturdays, or Sundays from 6:30pm to 8pm.
C.A.R.E. Converted to RecCreate

In 2019, the C.A.R.E. (Children’s Afterschool Recreation Experience) Program officially ended. This decision was made for various reasons, but mainly to take an opportunity to rework the program into a more purposefully recreational program, focusing on the development of each child. The change was also driven in part by lack of adequate staffing and limited availability of space in schools where the program operated. For the 2019-20 school year, staff debuted RecCreate: Quality Recreation & Creativity for Kids. The new program is intended to offer children the opportunity to experience new activities, increase physical activity, express creativity, develop friendships, build self-esteem, and improve social skills. This is done by intentionally programming activities throughout the program time and reducing enrollment numbers to more manageable levels. The program was reduced to 6 locations from the 8 that were offered in the spring as the department struggled with finding staff to adequately manage all 8 locations. The department also established consistent branding for the program that makes the intent of the program more clear to interested families. More than just an afterschool/childcare environment, RecCreate strives to create a more active and engaging program.

RecCreate

The RecCreate program is by far the most popular program or activity that our department offers. With 6 locations throughout the county, it also has the widest reach. The program operates within elementary schools, utilizing the cafeterias and gyms. The schedule for the program is also determined by the school calendar. The RecCreate program is designed to be a place where children can interact with each other and our staff in a comfortable environment and includes activities like games, crafts, and outdoor recreation. This is also a program where we rely heavily on part time staff who are dedicated to our mission of providing quality opportunities, particularly to elementary-age children.
K.I.D.S. Camp

KIDS Camp is a summer camp we offer in June and July at several elementary schools throughout the county. Our goal in this program is to provide a safe and fun environment for children during the summer months while also exposing them to various fun and educational experiences. In 2019, our staff put together a phenomenal schedule of field trips and activities so that each day was an adventure. Again, this program relies heavily on our dedicated part time staff who help us provide these opportunities.

- 4 Sites
- 181 Enrolled
- 32 Staff
25 Field Trips (per site)
Activities Guide

The department prints a quarterly activities guide that is distributed to all Augusta County residents and is unquestionably the widest reaching communication for the department. This guide includes all Parks & Recreation activities and programs for a three month period as well as announcements and information for various County departments, non-profits, and state agencies.

Rec Report

The Rec Report is the department’s email newsletter that is sent out monthly. Each issue provides information for programs which have registration deadlines in the next 30 days. Occasionally, large or new programs will also be featured. The newsletter was started in 2016 and has gradually improved and increased readership since then. In March 2019, the RecReport mailing list increased drastically. This increase was a result of adding the email addresses of more than 1,500 households who had recently participated in ACPR programs. While the increase in mailing did increase the cost for the newsletter service, it also greatly increased the monthly reach of the RecReport.
The department manages three Facebook pages—Augusta County Parks and Recreation, Natural Chimneys Park & Campground, and Stuarts Draft Pool. Each of these pages are updated regularly and receive moderate engagement from followers. This social media presence has proved to be an important aspect of the department’s communications as more and more citizens look for information through these channels. These pages provide followers with updates on program registration deadlines, capital improvements, and department announcements.

Website

A significant amount of department information is available on our website. Anything from Parks and Recreation Commission meeting minutes to staff contact information can be found within our array of pages. Additionally, our website acts as the portal to our online registration software. This system has seen tremendous growth in usage since its introduction and is used for a large portion of activity registrations.
16th Annual Sweet Dreams Festival

Augusta County Parks and Recreation cooperatively sponsored, administered, and hosted the 16th Annual Sweet Dreams Festival which attracted over 4,000 attendees. This 501(c)(3) non-profit event is an award-winning national and state festival. Sweet Dreams is a family friendly event and is free to all who attend! Families can enjoy the wide range of activities in the Children’s Area that include a craft tent, rock climbing wall, laser tag, inflatables, entertainment and so much more.

Red Wing Roots Music Festival

The department hosted the seventh annual Red Wing Roots Music Festival at Natural Chimneys Park in cooperation with Black Bear Productions (www.redwingroots.com). This festival is a one-of-a-kind event for the region that attracts visitors from across the country to experience a weekend of music, adventure, and family fun. The event sold 4,385 tickets—most of which sold out in seconds after becoming available online. The event had its greatest attendance yet and sold out admission tickets for all three days of the event.
15th Annual Senior Health Fair

The Augusta County Senior Health Fair is an annual event geared towards seniors and their caregivers. The halls of the Augusta County Government Center in Verona are packed with public agencies, private business, and healthcare professionals. The 15th Annual Senior Health Fair for our county’s senior adult population hosted 48 total vendors and more than 175 attendees.

Fall Spooktacular

The department held its Fall Spooktacular on Saturday, October 26 at Natural Chimneys Park. The approximate attendance was 1,380 which does not account for people already camping at the park with every one of the 165 sites rented. This year’s event was adjusted to be larger and to offer even more activities for campers and the community. Additions this year included bounce houses, a costume parade, and game stations. As is usually the case, the campground was completely full for the weekend celebrations.
Recreation Matching Grant Program

The Recreation Matching Grant Program offers assistance to organizations with a 501(c)(3) designation to aid in constructing, replacing or repairing recreation facilities or land for use by the general public. The Program sets guidelines for funds to be received from the County and matched by the organization, understanding that recreation is important for our county residents and visitors. Applications and approval of funds are reviewed by the Parks and Recreation Department, Parks and Recreation Commission and Augusta County Board of Supervisors.

$14,250 in Grants

Stuarts Draft Diamond Club

$14,250
Board-Funded Recreation Projects

Each magisterial district in the County has a revolving infrastructure account and a recreation matching grant account which are funded annually in varying amounts. Any disbursements from these accounts must be approved by a majority vote from the Board of Supervisors. These accounts allow Board members the flexibility to address unique problems and needs in their magisterial districts and have also been used to study problems, leverage other funding sources and expedite projects. Often, these funds are used to support projects related to recreational opportunities in the County outside of the Recreation Matching Grant process.

Stuarts Draft
Diamond Club
Backstop Fence
$1,365

Clymore
Elementary ADA
Playground
$23,000

Greenville
Ballfield
$917

Stuarts Draft
Ruritan Club
Waterline Repair
$3,000

Natural Chimneys
Visitor Center Roof
$35,000

Stuarts Draft Park
Shade Study
$4,000

$67,282
in Recreation Support
County-owned Recreation Facilities

Augusta County owns several properties and facilities that directly support recreational opportunities in the County but are not managed or operated by Parks and Recreation. These properties have either been acquired or gifted to the County in the past and have been leased out to various community groups with the understanding that the properties are to be used for recreation. This has proved to be an effective way for the County to provide recreational opportunities which does not require active management.

- **2** Community Centers
- **10** Ballfields
- **5** Leased Properties
- **34** Acres
Verona Elementary School Ballfields
Leased to Verona Community Association
3 ballfields
10.8 Acres

New Hope Community Center and Fields
Leased to New Hope Ruritan Club
2 ballfields
Community Center
6.7 Acres

Crimora Community Center & Fields
Leased to Crimora Ruritan Club
2 ballfields
Community Center
6.6 Acres

Fishersville Ballfields
Leased to Fishersville Baseball/Softball League
2 ballfields
5.3 Acres

Stuarts Draft Diamond Club Ballfield
Leased to Stuarts Draft Diamond Club
1 ballfield
4.7 Acres
In order to properly replace park infrastructure as it ages, the County has a depreciation schedule specific to Parks and Recreation. This fund is set up to plan for and cover the replacement cost for anything from benches to entire buildings. Allocations are made to the depreciation schedule at the end of the fiscal year based on various budgetary factors.
Expenses-FY19

Financial Overview

Total Expenses: $1,101,904.11
Augusta County Parks and Recreation strives to fulfill our mission of providing quality recreation and leisure opportunities through both programming and facilities. This would not be possible without continually evaluating and improving our parks and facilities. The following pages cover the 2019 calendar year and provide a detailed overview of capital improvements completed at County parks and facilities managed by Parks and Recreation. Many of these projects have been facilitated in collaboration with the Facilities Management Department both in funding and administration. Vehicle purchases for the department are included as these play a vital role in equipping staff to provide programming services. Planned future capital improvement projects are also provided at the end of this section.
Natural Chimneys Park Electrical Improvements
Under the direction of the Facilities Management Department (Rusty Sprouse, Director) $10,000 worth of electrical upgrades at the Stage, Shelter 3, and in the festival grounds at Natural Chimneys Park were completed. The County only contributed $1,500 in cash towards these improvements along with some labor, stone and equipment for trenching. Black Bear Productions paid the remainder of the costs as most of these improvements had immediate benefit to their operations for the annual Red Wing Roots Music Festival. Dominion Energy also upgraded the electric service at the stage to 320 amps at no cost to the County.

Churchville StoryWalk Installed
Through a partnership with the Augusta County Library, another StoryWalk was installed around the Churchville Library and Churchville Elementary School property. A StoryWalk®, created by Anne Ferguson of Montpelier, VT, encourages both literacy and outdoor recreation. The installation was funded entirely through a community sponsor.
Crimora Park Sign Replaced
The original park sign at Crimora Park was replaced due to normal wear and tear. The sign had been up since the park was completed in the early 2000s and had since faded and chipped significantly. A similarly sized sign replaced the original one and a second smaller one was added on the upper portion of the park so that visitors recognize the transition from the leased ball fields to the County park. These are both an updated design that is being gradually implemented at each park.

$820 Total Cost

Park Welcome & Rules Signs Installed
In cooperation with the Facilities Management department, new park rules signs were installed throughout our parks and in multiple locations at some of our bigger and busier parks. This was done at significant savings by our County sign shop. Prior to these signs being installed, there was no way for park visitors to be aware of the park rules other than calling our office or going online. These signs will improve visitors' experiences and help the department by making our rules and regulations clear.

$804 Total Cost
Replaced Activity Bus
A new activity bus, a 2019 Ford E450 Starcraft Super-Duty minibus with a wheelchair lift, replaced the department’s 2009 Ford minibus. This 2009 Ford bus was the second bus the department conducted trip programming with and had accrued high mileage and increasing maintenance needs.

Replaced Administrative Vehicle
Replaced the department’s 2003 Ford Explorer with a highly practical and functional 2019 Ram 1500 Promaster van that better enables staff to load and haul program supplies throughout the County.
Planned Capital Improvements

Shade at Stuarts Draft Park
The department is currently in the process of exploring options to provide shade over the seating area for the John C. Swett Amphitheater at Stuarts Draft Park. The seating is currently in full sun on the average summer day which makes it challenging to utilize. The County has contracted with Lineage Architects to conduct a study on what solutions would best solve this problem. Once completed, the study will guide staff in issuing procurement for a shade structure.

Stuarts Draft Park Pool Renovations
The Stuarts Draft Pool, built almost twenty years ago, has begun to show signs of wear that normally come with age. In particular, the liner has begun to deteriorate and needs to be replaced. This project is planned to be completed during the 2020-21 off season and will likely include additional projects on and around the pool deck to improve the efficiency of the space and visitors’ experience.

Stuarts Draft StoryWalk®
For the past two years, Augusta County Parks and Recreation and the Augusta County Library have cooperatively installed two StoryWalks® throughout the County. A StoryWalk®, created by Anne Furguson of Montpelier, VT, encourages both literacy and outdoor recreation. The Stuarts Draft Park installation has already been funded entirely through a community sponsor and will be installed and opened in spring 2020.
Natural Chimneys Visitor Center Renovations
Under the direction of the Facilities Management department, renovations of the Visitor Center at Natural Chimneys Park and Campground will be completed by the opening of the 2020 camping season. Those renovations include a complete replacement of the roof (including the underlying structure), asbestos abatement, opening up the interior space, replacing some electric service elements, and installing security cameras. These renovations will greatly improve the space, making it more welcoming to park visitors and campers and a better working space for staff.

River Access Projects
Augusta County has received $200,000 in funding through the DuPont Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration settlement which was awarded specifically for improving river access at both Crimora Park and Dooms Crossing. Parks and Recreation, working in collaboration with Community Development staff, is working on assembling plans, scheduling a community meeting, and carrying out the project.

Berry Farm Timber Management
Parks and Recreation staff will be working closely with other County staff to adopt a timber management plan for the Berry Farm in order to continue appropriate stewardship of that property. In particular, two stands of white pine were planted many years ago and are beginning to deteriorate and create an ideal environment for an invasive grass species that is relatively new to the landscape. Harvesting those two stands will improve the ecological position of the property and begin the process of sustainably managing timbering and reforestation efforts for long-term income generation.
Connect with us!

540-245-5727
540-245-5732
augustarec.com
parksrec@co.augusta.va.us
PO Box 590 Verona, VA 24482