



Northern Virginia
Regional Park Authority



NVRPA Mission:

The Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority enhances the communities of Northern Virginia and enriches the lives of their citizens through the conservation of regional natural and cultural resources. It provides diverse regional recreational and educational opportunities, and fosters an understanding of the relationships between people and their environment.

Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority

Five Year Strategic Plan 2012-2017

ADOPTED: SEPTEMBER 20, 2012





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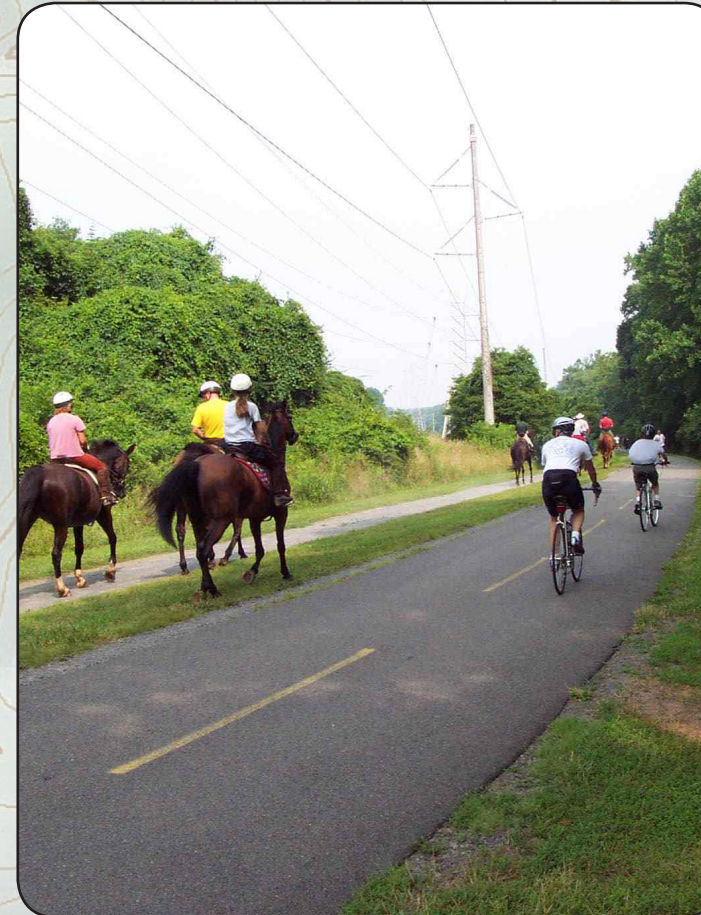


NVRPA - Who we are

The Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority operates in three counties and three cities - Arlington County, Fairfax County, Loudoun County, the City of Alexandria, the City of Falls Church and the City of Fairfax.

Born out of vision for regional land conservation over fifty years ago, the regional park system has grown to include 25 parks and over 11,000 acres. Some of the most defining sites of Northern Virginia are part of this system, from the W&OD Trail stretching 45 miles, to Meadowlark Botanical Gardens, the Carlyle House, Ball's Bluff Battlefield, award winning waterparks and golf courses, campgrounds, event venues, water access and much, much more.

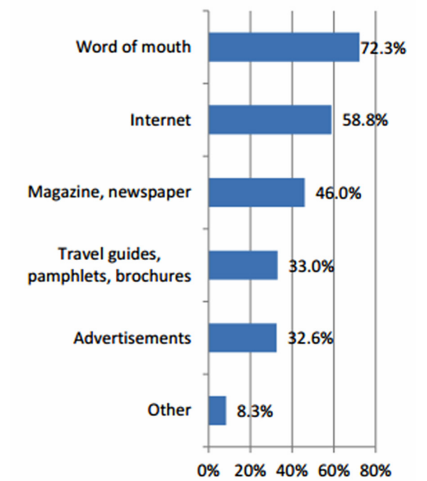
NVRPA is a model of efficiency, generating over 83% of its operating funds through enterprise operations. The agency is operated by some of the best professional park staff in the nation, and supplemented with thousands of volunteers donating over 47,000 hours annually. The organization is governed by a 12 person board appointed by the six member jurisdictions.



Measurable results:

- Develop smart phone trail application for Bull Run/ Occoquan Trail – December 2012
- Develop new generation of “Discover” publication – May 2013
- Survey NVRPA brand identity – June 2014
- Develop branding plan and dedicate 15% of marketing budget to branding efforts – June 2014
- Connect 500,000 children with nature through our Nature Nuts program – November 2015
- Develop smart phone application for W&OD Trail – December 2015
- Review and expand all SOL-based programs – December 2015
- Develop new website – December 2016

Figure III-9: Source of outdoor recreation information and opportunities [A3]





Messages

NVRPA will become a leader in both how the public learns about the offerings of the Authority and how our educational messages are delivered. The agency will become a model of success in a world of changing information technology.



“
Half a million children in Northern Virginia have a meaningful outdoor/nature experience through a regional park.



Goal 1: Improve branding efforts to increase awareness of NVRPA as an organization

Objectives: *Proactively market the NVRPA brand to increase market visibility*

- Develop a branding campaign to supplement activity marketing
- Develop the next generation in the “Discover” publication
- Re-invent and improve our online capabilities, with a focus towards mobile access
- Create consistent agency information at every park

Goal 2: Increase and enhance excellence in NVRPA’s many educational offerings

Objectives: *Raise the collective profile of NVRPA’s various educational efforts*

- Expand learning opportunities at every NVRPA park
- Review and expand SOL-based programs
- Expand summer camp offerings
- Expand the presence of the Nature Nuts program

Goal 3: Become a national leader in the use of information technology to foster NVRPA’s natural and historic interpretative efforts

Objectives: *Streamline and modernize our interpretive efforts, both natural and historical, using the latest information technology*

- Be an early adopter of interactive websites and mobile technology
- Use QR codes and other information technology to pioneer new ways of providing educational and marketing messages
- Research and develop possible smart phone apps
- Stay on the cutting edge of new technologies and social media that can help market NVRPA facilities and programs



A new trail map built on success

The 2012 – 2017 Strategic Plan is built on the great success of our 2007 – 2012 strategic plan. That plan was the central guiding document for the organization over this five year period and, because of the focused efforts, the goals of the plan were achieved and in many cases surpassed. In 2007, we had a vision that the plan would result in the growth of parkland, and, the result was that we grew by over 450 acres. We envisioned a system where facilities would be well maintained, and due to investments over this time, our parks today are in better shape than they have ever been. We saw that by building on our entrepreneurial spirit, we could become a national leader in conservation and recreation; and this resulted in growth from 80% to 83% self-funded operations during this five year period.

As a result of the previous strategic plan, in 2012 NVRPA is a healthier, more financially diverse, mission focused and growing park agency than we were in 2007. The challenge for the 2012 – 2017 strategic plan will be to build on this success and take NVRPA to the next level, and in the process enhance the entire Northern Virginia region.

Vision for 2017

By 2017, the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority will be seen as the national model of progressive and sustainable park agencies. Its great enterprising spirit will make it increasingly self-supportive and, at the same time, fuel new and exciting parks and programs that enrich the lives of Northern Virginians and drive tourism to the region. Our legacy will be determined by expanding trail systems, improving water quality and wildlife habitats, creating dynamic new parks and features, and enhancing access to the region's rich history.



Goal 3: Leverage external resources to expand service capabilities

Objective: *Cultivate external resources*

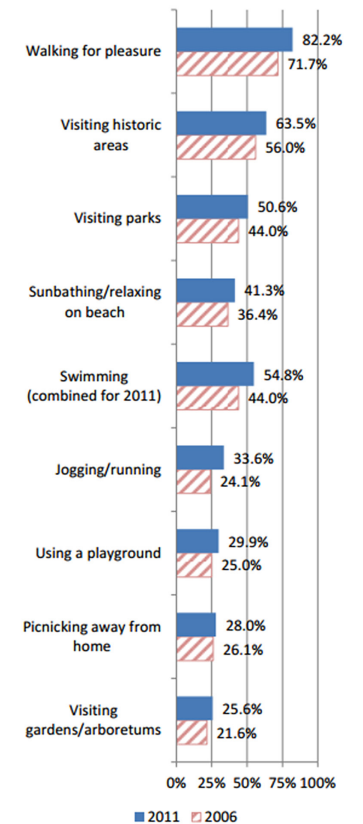
- Enhance volunteer opportunities and training
- Create agency-wide internship program
- Expand community partnership opportunities
- Promote expanded use and recognition of volunteers

Measurable results:

- Partner with GMU on practicum/internship program – March 2013
- Implement customer service training – May 2013
- Survey salary and benefits for similar agencies – December 2013
- Develop and implement training/educational guidelines for key positions – December 2014
- Develop performance review and reward system – June 2015
- Promote volunteerism with new information technology – December 2016
- Increase volunteer hours by 20% - July 2017



Figure III-15: Participation in the Top Ten Activities by Year





People

Develop the human resources of the Authority to unlock new levels of creativity and productivity, while supplementing our capabilities with expanded partnerships.



Goal 1: Provide superior staff development opportunities

Objectives: *Provide top quality customer service*

- Provide annual training for front line staff in best practices
- Distinguish ourselves as a leader in customer service in our field
- Develop on-going educational guidelines for key positions

Goal 2: Facilitate a system that both motivates and evaluates an employee's job performance

Objectives: *Create a system by which employees' performance is tied to the goals and objectives of the strategic plan*

- Develop a new performance review system based on best management practices and with staff input
- Implement a reward system based on meeting measurable performance objectives
- Survey similar agencies for current pay scale and benefit packages



Plan development

The 2012 – 2017 strategic plan is the result of a year-long process of assessing NVRPA's place in Northern Virginia and plotting a path for continued growth and improvement. We started this process by reaching out to the leaders of our member jurisdictions and soliciting their thoughts. Then, groups of staff worked on each section of the plan, with a focus on the park needs surveys of what the public is most interested in for their parks. Throughout the process NVRPA Board worked with senior staff, honing the process and direction. Public input and final Board adoption will complete the process that has worked to be as inclusive and open as possible. Just as the Park Authority is here to serve the public, so should the strategic plan for the agency be embraced by the public, and reflect our shared values and goals.



Places

Our lands and facilities define who and what we are as a park system. We will be seen as a leader in the field of parks by enhancing the environment, while growing and maintaining our facilities.

Goal 1: Enhance natural resource conservation in riparian areas

Objectives: *Protect parklands along major waterways for watershed quality and preserve plant and animal habitat*

- Expand riparian buffers by planting trees or creating no-mow zones along waterways to enhance water quality and wildlife habitat
- Use low impact development techniques when creating new park developments
- Develop partnerships with conservation organizations and volunteer programs to provide greater stewardship for the significant resources

Goal 2: Increase cultural and historic resource interpretation and preservation

Objectives: *Ensure heritage resources are protected and preserved*

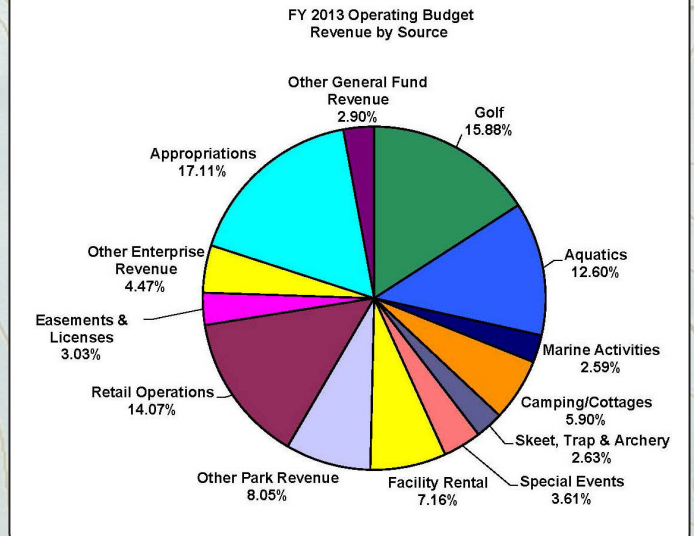
- Acquire lands and facilities with national or regional significance through fee ownership, lease, use agreements or other methods
- Partner with historic organizations on the acquisition and interpretation of historic resources
- Identify archeological, architectural and historic resources at existing park properties



Goal 3: Implement best business practices at NVRPA

Objectives: *Improve operational efficiencies*

- Lead in energy conservation
- Reduce long-term liability of retirement plan
- Implement efficient and cost saving purchasing methods



Measurable results:

- Update per capita figures for jurisdictional support – September 2012
- Update Business Policy Manual - December 2013
- Create new revenue source through stream/wetlands mitigation partnerships – March 2014
- Implement alternative financing for new facilities – March 2014
- Implement recommendations of energy audits – Nov 2014
- Expand centralized purchasing – December 2015
- Develop full business plans for all major parks – March 2015
- Increase e-commerce (product sales and facility rentals) by 25% - December 2015
- Grow average gross revenue by 3.5% above inflation – July 2017
- Develop new revenue producing facilities:
 - Meadowlark Light Show – December 2012
 - Great Waves new feature – June 2014
 - Upton Hill adventure course – May 2015
 - New large group shelter at Occoquan – May 2016
 - Catering venue at Occoquan – May 2017
- Assist the Northern Virginia Regional Park Foundation in achieving its goal of generating over \$100,000 per year in annual support – July 2017
- Commit 30% of annual net revenue to the retirement plan, with a goal of reducing the unfunded startup debt by 25% - July 2017



Finance

The long-term strength and growth of the organization rests on our ability to sustain and grow the financial resources needed to achieve our mission.



Goal 1: Develop new funding initiatives to ensure the future economic sustainability of NVRPA

Objectives: *Create and implement new revenue options*

- Secure and utilize financing for the purpose of funding innovative facilities that help unlock revenue potential
- Cultivate partnership and programming opportunities to produce new revenue streams
- Expand NVRPA's use of e-commerce to sell products and services
- Create revenue opportunities during off-peak time periods
- Explore the addition of new member jurisdictions, and evaluate current per capita funding to assure equity throughout the region
- Support and foster the growth of the Northern Virginia Regional Park Foundation
- Expand use of land for wetland and stream mitigation banking and other eco-services

Goal 2: Optimize current facilities and services to ensure improved future financial performance

Objectives: *Improve net financial performance of all facilities*

- Use creative programming for revenue generation
- Implement best business practices in all operations
- Improve the net performance of each facility
- Develop a sustainable business plan for each facility

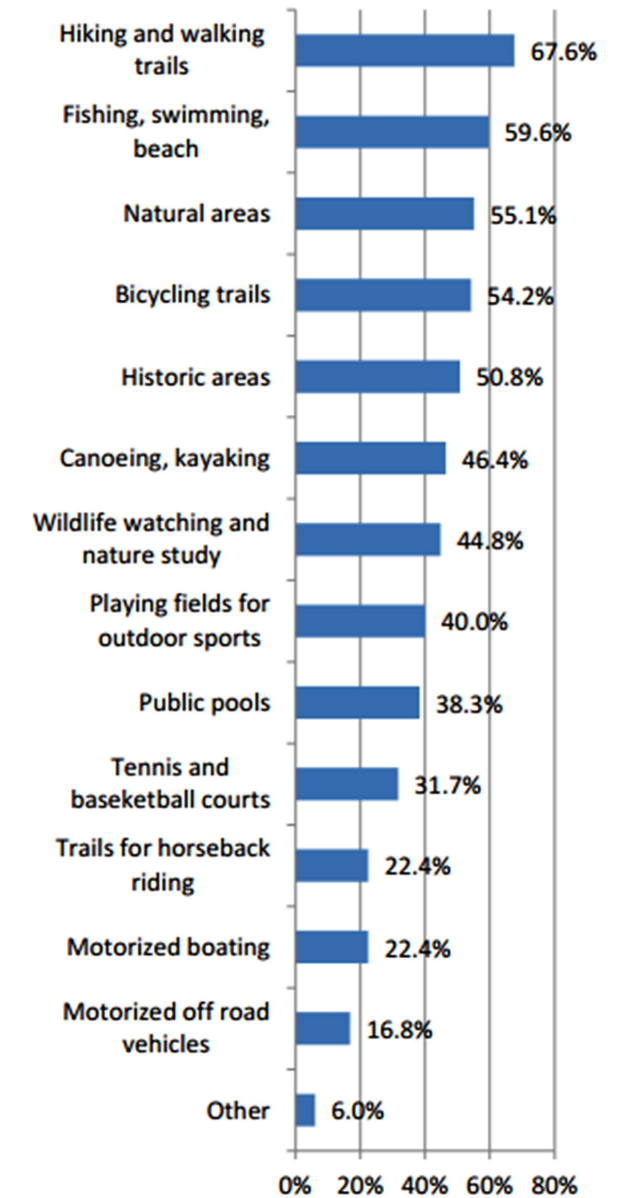


Goal 3: Actively assess opportunities for new facilities and acquire additional properties

Objectives: *Expand public parkland to meet the open space and recreation needs of Northern Virginia's growing population*

- Acquire properties to meet NVRPA mission and land selection criteria with a focus on partnerships
- Seek out opportunities to add new member jurisdictions where there are chances to preserve more land for the region
- Partner with public and private entities to add new park services
- Actively work to add new park features to Upton Hill, Cameron Run, Meadowlark and Occoquan Regional Parks, and be open to new opportunities at other parks

Figure III-13: Most needed outdoor recreation opportunities [A10]



Source: 2011 Virginia Outdoors Demand Survey

Goal 4: Redevelop existing lands and facilities to expand recreational opportunities

Objectives: *Expand and enhance the trail network to provide better accessibility, sustainability and connectivity*

- Perform system-wide trail inventory with GPS mapping, including ADA accessibility
- Create new connections with other regional trails, park lands and facilities
- Take a leadership role in regional trail planning
- Innovate new ways to promote non-motorized commuting
- Continually invest and renovate existing facilities to serve the public

Objectives: *Attract new user groups at all parks*

- Adapt existing facilities for new programming opportunities
- Expand the range of activities and programs available to park users



Table III-I: Percentage of Households Participating in Activities [2011 -- All Varieties]

Activities	Percent
Walking for pleasure	82.2%
Visiting historic sites	63.5%
Visiting parks (local, state, natl.)	50.6%
Visiting natural area/preserve/refuge	50.3%
Swimming/pool	43.1%
Sunbathing/relaxing on a beach	41.3%
Swimming/beach	38.3%
Jogging/running	33.6%
Using a playground	29.9%
Picnicking away from home	28.0%
Visiting gardens/arboretums	25.6%
Hiking/backpacking	24.8%
Fresh water fishing	24.4%
Camping	24.1%
Visiting natural preserves	19.4%
Golf	16.4%
Canoeing/kayaking/rowing	15.7%



This LEED-certified visitor center was added to the Temple Hall Farm facility in 2012.

Measurable results:

- Expand partnership with Civil War Trust and Civil War Trails to acquire and interpret new historic properties – December 2012
- Develop a community grant program to leverage the assistance of environmental groups to plant trees and enhance riparian buffers – November 2013
- Open Meadowlark/W&OD Connector Trail – June 2013
- Survey trail system for ADA accessibility issues – June 2013
- Open Rust Sanctuary – December 2013
- Create pilot program for extended hours on the W&OD Trail to promote commuting
- System-wide GIS trail inventory – May 2014
- Review potential for expanded activities as part of park specific business plans – March 2015
- Implement public/private partnership on catering venue at Occoquan Regional Park – May 2017
- Review at least 12 new land acquisition opportunities – June 2017
- Adapt older facilities to new uses – June 2017