

# SUPPORT HB2059

Topic: Land & Wildlife Conservation

Bill Patron: Del. Paul Krizek

## OVERVIEW:

Virginia's Great Outdoors Act would provide \$230 million in annual dedicated funding to make public lands easily accessible for all Virginians and ensure our most important and iconic landscapes are protected for future generations. This bill would

- **Protect** places vulnerable to development, like working farms and forests, historic sites, and unique natural areas.
- **Improve** public access to the outdoors by fixing and expanding existing state park infrastructure and providing competitive grants to help establish new greenspaces.
- **Invest** in a thriving outdoor recreation sector by developing new parks, trails, natural area preserves, wildlife management areas, and state forests.

The funding would be split across multiple conservation programs and state agencies that work to protect natural resources and develop public lands and trails. The bill allocates a portion of existing recordation tax revenues.

## REASONS TO SUPPORT:

- **Invest in conservation and access.** Virginia lacks a dedicated source of funding to support Virginia's outdoor spaces. The result is that underfunded and inconsistently funded programs are not able to keep up with the demand for trails, parks, public lands, and the staff and infrastructure needed so that people can use them.
- **Protect nature and history.** Virginia has a wealth of natural beauty, diverse landscapes, and interesting history that make it an ideal place to get outdoors, but we need to protect these resources so they are available for future generations.
- **Grow local economies.** Investing in outdoor infrastructure attracts employers and active workforces, ensuring those communities thrive economically and socially. Outdoor recreation is also a growing industry that contributed over \$13.4 billion dollars and over 122 thousand jobs to the Commonwealth in 2023. Virginia's state tourism plan identifies outdoor recreation as a priority investment across all regions.
- **Support physical and mental health.** Access to the outdoors benefits our physical and mental health and provides communities with places to gather and play. Demand for outdoor spaces surged during the COVID-19 pandemic and has remained high.



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This position was taken by Virginia Conservation Network (VCN)'s Legislative Committee and Board of Directors and is supported by Virginia's conservation community. For a complete list of VCN positions, visit [www.vcnva.org/bill-tracker](http://www.vcnva.org/bill-tracker). VCN is committed to building a powerful, diverse, and highly-coordinated conservation movement focused on protecting our Commonwealth's natural resources today and for tomorrow.