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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 131

Offered January 28, 2016

Commending Virginia State Parks.

Patrons—Hanger, Deeds and Dunnavant; Delegate: Rasoul

WHEREAS, for 80 years, the Virginia State Parks system has operated for the benefit of all Virginians, preserving and protecting significant natural and cultural resources and providing outstanding opportunities for outdoor recreation; and

WHEREAS, the original six state parks were constructed between 1934 and 1936 and celebrated their official opening on June 15, 1936, thus making Virginia the only state to open an entire state park system in a single day; and

WHEREAS, the state park system, built during the Great Depression by the Civilian Conservation Corps and the National Park Service in partnership with the Commonwealth, has grown to include 36 operating state parks and four new sites in stages of planning and development, all managed by the Department of Conservation and Recreation; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia State Parks system has been recognized nationally, receiving the National Gold Medal Award for excellence in parks and recreation management from the National Recreation and Park Association; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Conservation and Recreation's Division of Planning and Recreational Resources develops and updates master plans for all of the Commonwealth's state parks and has been recognized nationally by the National Park Service and the Society of Outdoor Recreation Professionals for excellence in outdoor recreation planning over the last 50 years; and

WHEREAS, a fundamental component of Virginia's outdoor recreation and tourism offerings, the Virginia State Parks system hosts nearly nine million visitors annually, with an economic impact of more than \$208 million each year from state park visitor spending; and

WHEREAS, volunteers contribute more than 160,000 hours of service annually to Virginia State Parks, representing the equivalent of 77 full-time employees valued at nearly \$4 million; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia State Parks system is a premier provider of camping, overnight cabins, swimming pools and beaches, boating and paddling, fishing, hiking, biking, horseback riding, and many other outdoor activities; and

WHEREAS, Virginia State Parks provide therapy for the mind, body, and spirit of Virginians and visitors from around the country and the world and are an important part of a healthy lifestyle; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia State Parks system offers numerous opportunities for young people to become engaged in environmental conservation and labor assistance through the Youth Conservation Corps, AmeriCorps Interpretive Trail Project, and the Virginia Service and Conservation Corps; and

WHEREAS, Virginia State Parks promote a strong sense of stewardship of the Commonwealth's abundant and wondrous natural and cultural resources; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, that the General Assembly hereby commend Virginia State Parks, on the occasion of its 80th anniversary in 2016, for the invaluable service that state parks have provided the citizens of the Commonwealth; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare copies of this resolution for presentation to the director of Virginia State Parks, the director of the Department of Conservation and Recreation, the director of the Division of Planning and Recreation Resources, and each Virginia State Park as an expression of the General Assembly's admiration for the parks' unique contributions to the Commonwealth.

INTRODUCED

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