

Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority (NOVA Parks)

Program Description

The Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority (NOVA Parks) was founded in 1959 under the Virginia Park Authorities Act. Currently there are six jurisdictional members: the counties of Arlington, Fairfax, and Loudoun and the cities of Alexandria, Fairfax, and Falls Church. NOVA Parks 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. Regional parks supplement local facilities and are distinguished from county and local parks in that they are designed to appeal to and serve the broad-based population of the entire Northern Virginia region, or may be of a size or scope that a single jurisdiction could not undertake alone. The Washington and Old Dominion (W&OD) Railroad Regional Park, which extends from Alexandria through Arlington, Falls Church, Fairfax, and Loudoun, is just one example of many NOVA Parks facilities that have region wide characteristics.

NOVA Parks now owns, leases, and holds easements on 12,918 acres of land, of which 8,591 acres are in Fairfax County. The Regional Park system serves a population of 2 million people. Parklands within the system include: Aldie Mill, Battle of Upperville/Goose Creek Bridge, Carlyle House, Mount Defiance, Mount Zion, and Tinner Hill Historic Parks, Meadowlark Botanical Gardens, the W&OD Trail (Washington and Old Dominion Railroad Regional Park), Algonkian, Ball's Bluff Battlefield, Beaverdam Reservoir, Blue Ridge, Brambleton, Bull Run, Bull Run Marina, Cameron Run, Fountainhead, Gateway, Gilbert's Corner, Hemlock Overlook, Occoquan, Pohick Bay, Potomac Overlook, Red Rock, Sandy Run, Seneca, Springdale, Temple Hall Farm, Upton Hill, and Piscataway Regional Parks, the Upper Potomac properties, the Rust Sanctuary, and Webb Sanctuary.

In its conservation role, NOVA Parks is involved in implementing portions of the Environmental Quality Corridors concept, which defines an open space land system designated for long term protection in the County. In this role, NOVA Parks places emphasis on acquisition of the shoreline properties along the Potomac, Bull Run and Occoquan Rivers, while the Fairfax County Park Authority (FCPA) concentrates on acquiring land along the County's interior stream valleys.

Program Initiatives

From FY 2018 through FY 2022, NOVA Parks received \$25,788,524 in support from its regional membership jurisdictions, plus an additional \$26,367,465 in grants, donations, bonds, and other capital revenue, representing an actual capital program level of \$52,155,989. Accomplishments during these years include, as examples: construction of a conservatory at Meadowlark Botanical Gardens; acquisition of the last privately owned land inside Pohick Bay Regional Park; opening of the dual pedestrian and cyclist trails on the W&OD in Falls Church; renovation of the Nature Center at Potomac Overlook Regional Park; planning for the new Beaverdam Reservoir Park and the Cameron Run Winter Village; construction of the Jean R. Packard Center and replacement of the seawall at Occoquan Regional Park; improvements to rowing facilities at Sandy Run; acquisition of a shoreline inholding at Pohick Bay Regional Park; acquisition of 150 acres for Springdale Regional Park, the Goose Creek Bridge, and additional land at Gilbert's Corner; improvements to the Bull Run Festival of Lights; linkage of Gateway Park and local trails with the W&OD Trail; park entrance renovations at Meadowlark Botanical Gardens; upgrades to the campgrounds at Bull Run Regional Park; various trail improvements on the Washington & Old Dominion Railroad Regional Park; and ongoing renovations and upgrades to existing roads, parking, and restroom facilities.

Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority (NOVA Parks)

A portion of the capital improvement program includes the repair and renovation of existing and aging facilities, such as roof replacements, road repairs, replacement of mechanical systems, and similar work to preserve and repair existing facilities. Additional elements of the CIP include land acquisition, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) improvements, energy improvements, expansion of existing facilities, and new features to meet the needs of the region.

Funds from Fairfax County to support NOVA Parks' capital improvement program have historically been supported by General Obligation Bonds. NOVA Parks' Capital Fund revenues consist primarily of capital appropriations received from the six-member jurisdictions. Fairfax County's contribution for FY 2024 is proposed at \$3.0 million. Funds for FY 2025 and beyond have not been formally allocated to specific projects and the following schedule lists only projects planned for FY 2024.

Current Project Descriptions

1. **ADA Improvements (Region-wide):** \$400,000 for accessibility improvements throughout the park system.
2. **Algonkian Regional Park and Woodlands Event Center (Loudoun County):** \$480,000 for improvements to the events facility and golf cart shed including installation of solar panels with backup generator.
3. **Algonkian Regional Park (Loudoun County):** \$500,000 for improvements and renovations to Volcano Island Waterpark and cottages.
4. **Bull Run to Occoquan Trail (Fairfax County):** \$100,000 to be used as a match for an existing grant to redesign and construct 1.5 miles of trail along the Occoquan Reservoir.
5. **Beaverdam Reservoir Park (Loudoun County):** \$400,000 for the development of a marina facility, trails, picnic shelters, and boat storage.
6. **Gateway Wetlands Park (City of Fairfax):** \$900,000 for the expansion of the existing facilities to provide boardwalk trail and interpretive exhibits.
7. **Golf Course Improvements (Region-wide):** \$550,000 for capital improvements at all NOVA Parks golf courses.
8. **Headquarters (Fairfax County):** \$60,000 for automated systems and building renovations.
9. **Land Acquisition (Region-wide):** \$400,000 for land and easement purchases, to be supplemented by grant funds.
10. **Meadowlark Botanical Gardens – Walk of Lights (Fairfax County):** \$600,000 for design, engineering, and permitting of a new structure to house and assemble light displays used during the Winter Walk of Lights event.
11. **Meadowlark Botanical Gardens (Fairfax County):** \$165,000 to expand and improve gardens including the installation of the irrigation pump and controls.
12. **Miscellaneous Improvements (Region-wide):** \$1,873,000 for energy projects, tree plantings, facility improvements, road and parking improvements, interpretive and signage improvements, and other capital maintenance not specifically assigned to a particular public use facility or park location.

Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority (NOVA Parks)

13. **Occoquan Regional Park (Fairfax County):** \$50,000 for the preliminary design and possible grant match for a mountain bike trail.
14. **Park Development Support and Planning (Region-wide):** \$900,000 for project management, development, planning, and strategic initiatives.
15. **Pohick Bay Regional Park – Campground Waterline (Fairfax County):** \$200,000 for a waterline and pump station to provide irrigation.
16. **Pohick Bay Regional Park – Parking and Renovation (Fairfax County):** \$200,000 for the design and engineering to improve roadways and parking areas throughout the park system and to incorporate recently acquired land into the park.
17. **Temple Hall Farm Regional Park (Loudoun County):** \$15,000 for seasonal event facility improvements.
18. **Vehicles and Equipment (Region-wide):** \$1,325,000 for capital equipment at all parks, central maintenance, and headquarters.
19. **Waterpark Maintenance (Region-wide):** \$300,000 for renovations and repairs at all NOVA Parks waterparks.
20. **Winkler Botanical Preserve (Alexandria):** \$200,000 for the improvement and maintenance of existing donated facilities as well as design and engineering for parking expansion.
21. **W&OD Railroad Regional Park (Fairfax, Arlington, Loudoun Counties and Cities of Fairfax and Falls Church):** \$800,000 for various trail enhancements including widening, repairs including the redesigning and constructing the trail's crossing of Shreve Road.

Project Cost Summaries

Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority (NOVA Parks)

(\$000's)

Project Number	Project Title	Source of Funds	Budgeted or Expended Through FY 2023						Total FY 2024 - FY 2028	Total FY 2029 - FY 2033	Total
				FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028			
1	ADA Improvements (Region-wide)	B	C	\$400						\$400	\$400
2	Algonkian Regional Park and Woodlands Event Center (Loudoun County)	B	C	\$480						\$480	\$480
3	Algonkian Regional Park (Loudoun County)	B	C	\$500						\$500	\$500
4	Bull Run to Occoquan Trail (Fairfax County)	B	C	\$100						\$100	\$100
5	Beaverdam Reservoir Park (Loudoun County)	B	C	\$400						\$400	\$400
6	Gateway Wetlands Park (City of Fairfax)	B	C	\$900						\$900	\$900
7	Golf Course Improvements (Region-wide)	B	C	\$550						\$550	\$550
8	Headquarters (Fairfax County)	B	C	\$60						\$60	\$60
9	Land Acquisition (Region-wide)	B	C	\$400						\$400	\$400
10	Meadowlark Botanical Gardens - Walk of Lights (Fairfax County)	B	C	\$600						\$600	\$600
11	Meadowlark Botanical Gardens (Fairfax County)	B	C	\$165						\$165	\$165
12	Miscellaneous Improvements (Region-wide)	B	C	\$1,873						\$1,873	\$1,873
13	Occoquan Regional Park (Fairfax County)	B	C	\$50						\$50	\$50
14	Park Development Support and Planning (Region-wide)	B	C	\$900						\$900	\$900
15	Pohick Bay Regional Park - Campground Waterline (Fairfax County)	B	C	\$200						\$200	\$200

Project Cost Summaries

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(\$000's)

Project Number	Project Title	Source of Funds	Budgeted or Expended Through FY 2023						Total FY 2024 - FY 2028	Total FY 2029 - FY 2033	Total
				FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028			
16	Pohick Bay Regional Park - Parking and Renovation (Fairfax County)	B	C	\$200						\$200	\$200
17	Temple Hall Farm Regional Park (Loudoun County)	B	C	\$15						\$15	\$15
18	Vehicles and Equipment (Region-wide)	B	C	\$1,325						\$1,325	\$1,325
19	Waterpark Maintenance (Region-wide)	B	C	\$300						\$300	\$300
20	Winkler Botanical Preserve (Alexandria)	B	C	\$200						\$200	\$200
21	W&OD Railroad Regional Park	B	C	\$800						\$800	\$800
Total Project Cost				\$10,418	\$6,562	\$6,787	\$7,971	\$8,769		\$40,507	\$40,507
Total Fairfax County				\$3,000	\$3,515	\$3,622	\$3,731	\$3,843		\$17,711	\$17,711

Notes: Numbers in bold italics represent funded amounts. A "C" in the 'Budgeted or Expended' column denotes a continuing project.

Key: Source of Funds	
B	Bonds
G	General Fund
S	State
F	Federal
X	Other
U	Undetermined