

# AGENCY OF NATURAL RESOURCES

SECRETARY Julie Moore DEPUTY SECRETARY Maggie Gendron

## Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation

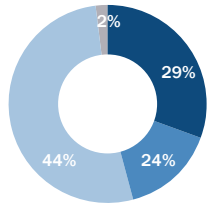
## FY21 MAJOR PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

## FY 2023 BUDGET

COMMISSIONER  
Michael Snyder

### FY 2021 ACTUALS

Total Budget: \$ 26,092,326



- \$9,233,432 General Funds
- \$3,905,563 Federal Funds
- \$12,462,185 Special Funds
- \$491,146 Interdepartmental Fund

### STATE LANDS FOREST MANAGEMENT

Department timber sales support water quality, wildlife habitat, recreation access, and the forest economy.



**410**

Log truckloads offered for sale



**386**

Acres managed via harvesting



**\$459K**

Value of raw material added to forest economy



**\$639**

Net income per acre offered

### PRIVATE FOREST LAND MANAGEMENT

Support private forest landowners with the information and tools to actively manage their forests including administration of the Use Value Appraisal (Current Use) program.



**56%**

Eligible privately-owned forest land enrolled in Current Use



**15,730**

Forest parcels enrolled in Current Use



**68**

Educational programs offered promoting forest stewardship



**2,500**

Forest landowners engaged in education

### URBAN & COMMUNITY FORESTRY

Support cities, town, and villages to enhance their urban trees and community forests.



**11,532**

Hours of local volunteer service



**75**

Communities with forest management plans



**33%**

Vermonters live in communities with forestry programs



**454,157**

Vermonters benefited from assistance to their community

### STATE PARKS

The Vermont State Parks system contains 55 developed State Parks in beautiful and unique locations around the state. Operated and maintained to provide a high-quality visitation experience, State Parks allow for participation in a wide variety of outdoor recreation activities.



**1,034,426**

Total visitors



**\$7.1M**

Revenue from visitation & sale of park services



**\$980,203**

General fund investment



**288**

Local contractors and suppliers paid to provide services and materials

### OUTDOOR RECREATION

Improve and expand access to recreational opportunities on State and private lands while stewarding public recreational infrastructure and environmental quality. Communities benefit from healthier populations & local economic activity.



**4,750**

Miles of trails maintained on public and private lands



**\$1.63M**

State and Federal Recreational Trails Program funding delivered to non-profits and communities



**\$1.68M**

Matching funds provided by non-profits and communities

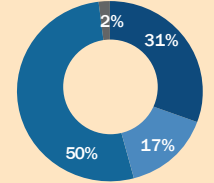


**21**

New outdoor recreation projects planned and mobilized by communities and non-profits

### FY 2023

Budget: \$32,081,101

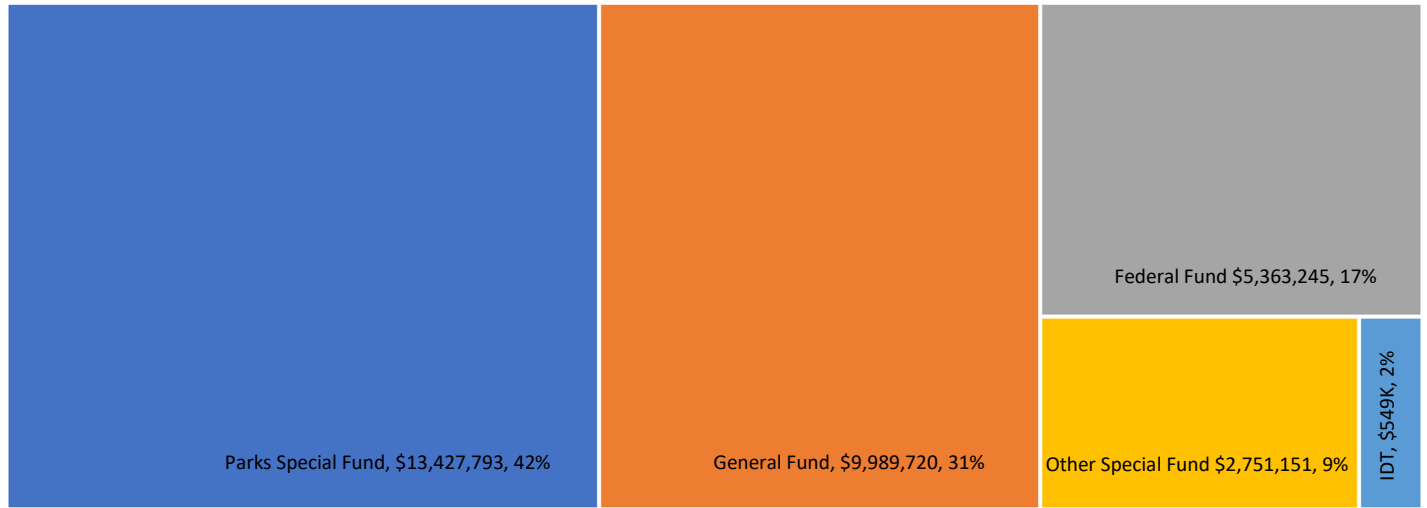


- \$9,989,720 General Funds
- \$5,363,244 Federal Funds
- \$16,178,944 Special Funds
- \$549,193 Interdepartmental funds

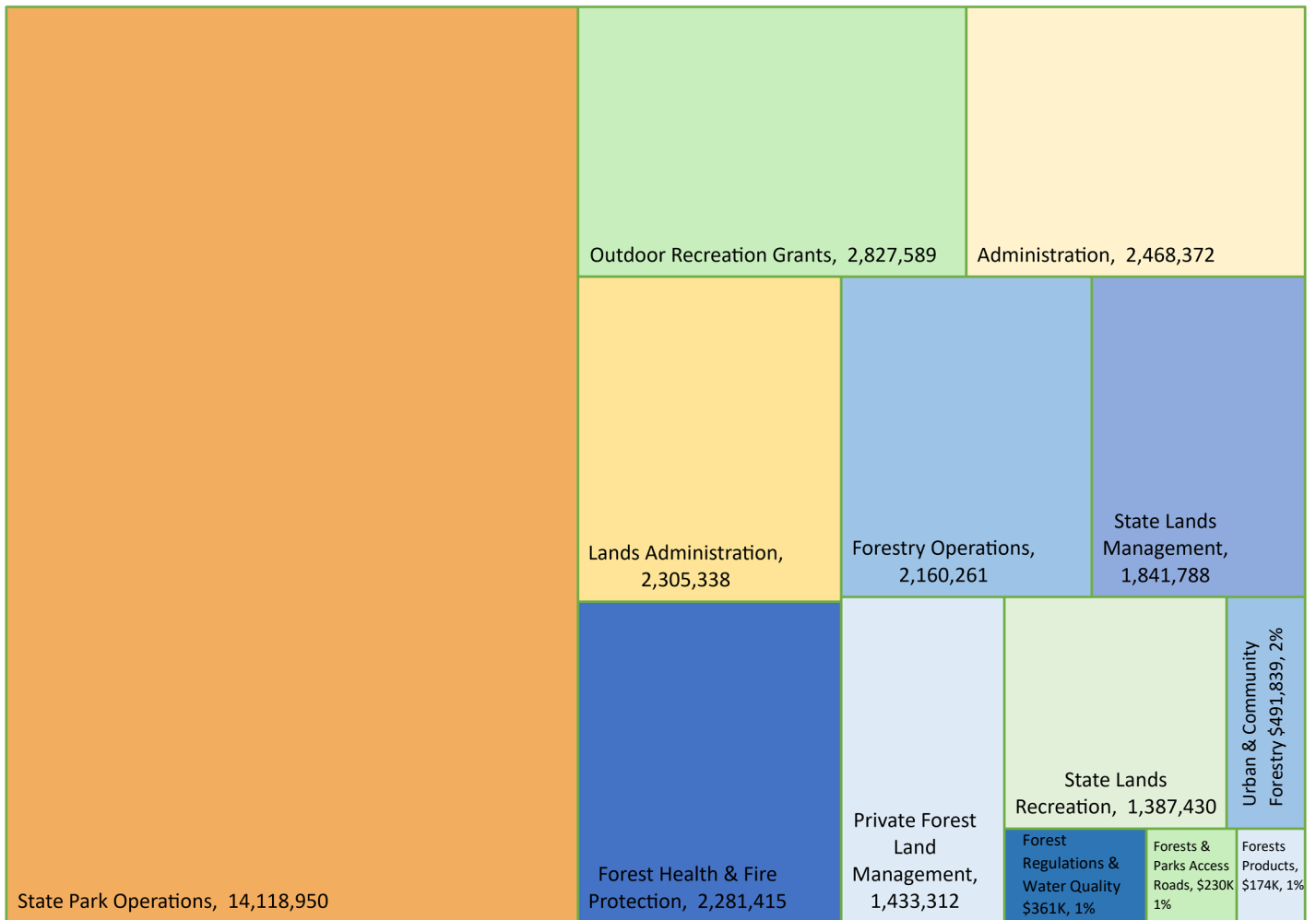
125 Classified Positions  
400 Seasonal Positions

# Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation

## FY23 Governor's Recommended \$32M Budget by Fund



## FY23 Governor's Recommended Budget by Program



## **Budget Summary**

The Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation in many ways supports the future of our way of life in Vermont. And in many ways, both the ongoing COVID pandemic and the looming climate crisis have only increased the importance of delivering on FPR's mission. Our forests, parks, and outdoor recreation play a vital role in what makes Vermont special. Healthy forests provide habitat for abundant wildlife; the basis for our world-renowned recreation opportunities; clean air and water; carbon storage and sequestration that helps mitigate climate change, and forest products we use and enjoy every day while bolstering local economies. Our State Parks system is one of a kind - offering high-quality outdoor experiences in 56 managed parks and welcoming over 1 million registered visitors each year. Together, our forests and parks recreational assets are a powerful engine of health, community, and economic development.

## **Description of Divisions, Appropriations, and Programs**

**Forestry** - Forestry programs affect a broad and expanding constituency concerned with the sustainable use, management, protection, and health of Vermont's forest landscape, representing 75% of the state and conferring enormous climate and economic resilience benefits. These forests provide the economic resource base for Vermont's diverse forest economy through sustainable forest management (\$1.4 billion annually and over 10,000 jobs), as well as providing the foundation of the state's recreation and tourism economies. Vermont's actively managed forests also provide critical biological diversity, natural communities, and wildlife habitat as well as critical functions such as water supply and quality, flood resilience, air pollution prevention, and uptake and storage of carbon dioxide.

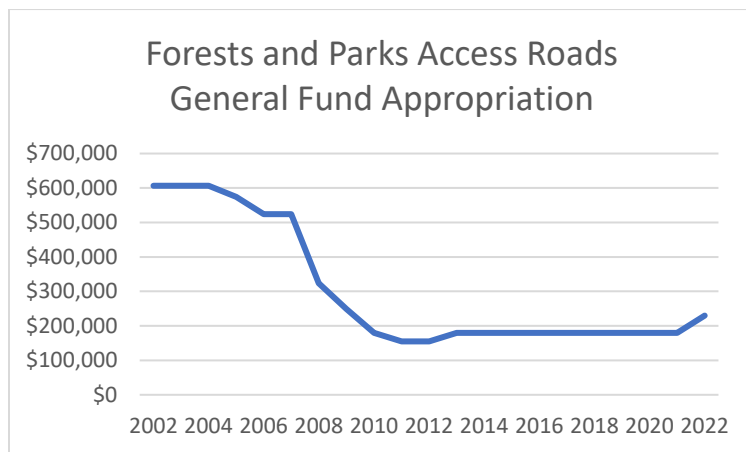
The Forestry Division has responsibility for administration and oversight of over 15,000 parcels covering more than 2 million acres of private land enrolled in the Use Value Appraisal (current use) program for forestland; stewardship and public access and recreation activities on over 360,000 acres of state-owned land (state forests, state parks, and wildlife management areas); assisting municipalities in the management of urban and community treescapes and municipal forests; forest health monitoring and technical assistance; preparing and responding to wildland fires, and assisting forest economy enterprises including the wood energy sector.

**State Parks** - The State Parks Division is a highly complex business enterprise responsible for planning, staffing, operation, construction, maintenance, and marketing of the State Parks system and the conservation and interpretation of the natural and cultural values within it. The State Park system includes 55 developed Parks. Visitation continues to be very strong even in light of the current pandemic. Parks provide a safe and healthy recreation opportunity and serve as a valuable refuge for relaxation and connecting to Vermont's natural world. During the 2021 season parks received near record paid in-season attendance with over 1,034,000 visits to the systems woodlands, trails, vistas, waterfronts, campsites, picnic pavilions, event halls, and nature interpretive programs. Paid, operating-season admissions are only a subset of total, year-round visitation and use. Collectively state parks incorporate a small city of infrastructure and facilities dispersed throughout all geographic regions of the state. During the busier periods the park system is hosting 50,000 to 60,000 visitors in a given week. Beyond their direct wellness and economic benefits, Vermont State Parks also drive some \$90 million in related visitor spending.

**Lands Administration and Recreation** - The Lands Administration and Recreation Division is responsible for the administration and land records of state-owned lands managed by the three departments within the Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) and management of recreation across all FPR program areas. ANR holds approximately 360,000 acres of lands held in fee-simple ownership and an additional 140,000 acres of conservation and recreation easements on private lands held by the Agency. In this capacity, the Division maintains ANR property records and maps; administers leases, licenses and special use permits for a great variety of uses and activities on ANR lands; carries out ANR land acquisitions and other property transactions; administers the ANR Payment in Lieu of Taxes to towns (PILOT) program; coordinates long-range management planning for ANR lands; conducts land surveys and prepares maps of ANR lands; and coordinates the development of ANR lands administration policies.

Recreation services are not only a prominent program of the department, but also a growing and diversifying aspect in terms of volume and public demand. The increasing demand for recreational access to the state-owned lands managed by the department coupled with a renewed appreciation for the multiple values of outdoor recreation activity to individuals and communities has led to the department's current concentrated effort to focus on expanding and improving access to recreational opportunities on department lands and in conjunction with private landowners and statewide recreation partner organizations. It is also of paramount importance to maintain stewardship and care of public recreational infrastructure assets commensurate with expanding and diversifying use so as to sustain a high-quality environment and user experience, and the economic and wellness benefits they drive.

**Forests and Parks Access Roads** - This program uses state funds to repair and maintain the extensive network of several hundred miles of access roads to over 360,000 acres of ANR lands. This network consists of approximately 600 miles of roads and is essential to the maintenance of state park and forest land, forest management, and providing access for the recreating public, some local commuters, and for emergency response.



**Administration** - The Administration Division is responsible for leadership, management and oversight of all Department divisions, programs, financial management, personnel management, policy development and legal services.

### Key Budget Items

- State Park visitation continues to be strong with 1,034,426 paid visitors during the 2021 operating season. This is the highest level in the past 33 years and continues a now decade-long 40% increase. High visitation also brings increased operating costs primarily for maintenance equipment and materials, infrastructure improvements, and seasonal staff who provide high-quality front-line service for park visitors' enjoyment and safety. While ski lease revenue projections were down in the FY22 budget due to the uncertainties of the pandemic in FY23 revenues are anticipated to return to normal, with \$3.5M budgeted. Parks operations are supported by \$1.54M of price increases. Parks special fund balance of \$733K is used on a one-time basis to preserve current services across the Department.
- Recognizing the critically important role forests play in mitigating atmospheric carbon dioxide and conferring landscape and economic resilience, the Department is receiving \$97K of general funds from the Agency of Natural Resources Central Office to support the climate forester position, in FY22 a limited-service grant-funded position with grant funding that will end in July. Vermont's 4.5 million acres of forests are a net carbon sink, meaning that they take in more CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere each year than they emit and offsetting almost half of Vermont's annual emissions. Many of the strategies outlined in Vermont's Climate Action Plan rely on forests' mitigation capacity. FPR's climate forester leads the SOV in understanding forest carbon, management strategies to enhance carbon sequestration and storage and climate resilience, and opportunities to maximize the potential of forests in the face of climate change.

- Investment in outdoor recreation is prioritized with \$5M of one-time general fund for the FY23 Vermont Outdoor Recreation Economic Collaborative (VOREC) Community Grant Program in addition to \$100K of base general fund. This program was established in 2018 in Act 194. Grants are used for a variety of purposes with the result being communities that can show measurable success supporting and growing their local economies through leveraging outdoor recreation. Interest in the program and funding requests have far exceeded expectations. For the \$5,100,000 available in FY22, the Department received 103 letters of interest requesting a total of \$21.5 million in project work. Communities across Vermont see outdoor recreation as an important economic driver as evidenced by the number of applications received and funding requested and the Department expects to significantly increase the impact for communities as a result of the increased investment in this program.
- The retirement rate increase results in \$328K of cost pressure for the Department. This increase is covered by the parks special fund for parks staff and by the general fund for forestry, lands administration and recreation, and administration staff.