

Bear Creek Lake State Park
Name of Property

Cumberland County, VA
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

Category of Property
(Check only **one** box.)

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

<input type="checkbox"/>	private
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

<input type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
3	32	buildings
4	2	sites
15	3	structures
0	0	objects
22	37	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

Virginia State Parks Built by New Deal Programs, Including CCC and WPA

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

RECREATION AND CULTURE/Outdoor recreation

RECREATION AND CULTURE/Outdoor recreation

LANDSCAPE/Park

LANDSCAPE/Park

TRANSPORTATION/Road-related

TRANSPORTATION/Road-related

TRANSPORTATION/Pedestrian-related

TRANSPORTATION/Pedestrian-related

INDUSTRY/PROCESSING/EXTRACTION/

INDUSTRY/PROCESSING/EXTRACTION/

Waterworks

Waterworks

DOMESTIC/Camp

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

OTHER/ Rustic

foundation: CONCRETE

OTHER/ Post-Modern

walls: CONCRETE; WOOD

roof: ASPHALT

other: _____

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Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

Summary Paragraph

Bear Creek Lake State Park is surrounded by the 16,000-acre Cumberland State Forest. The park consists of almost 329 acres of upland forest containing a variety of hardwood trees including oak and poplar, Virginia pine and Loblolly pine. Common wildlife found in the area includes Virginia whitetail deer, wild turkeys, red foxes, and grey squirrels. The central focus of the park is the 40-acre Bear Creek Lake that supports healthy populations of largemouth bass, crappie, bream, and channel catfish. The park offers camping, cabins, a meeting facility, an archery range, picnic shelters, hiking, and access to a 14-mile multi-use trail in the state forest. The Willis River, a small, slow moving tributary of the James, winds through Cumberland State Forest, providing fishing opportunities to anyone with a canoe or small boat. Two canoe launches are located in Cumberland State Forest for access to the Willis River. The park also includes a single cabin lodge/bunkhouse, two residences for park rangers, a park office, maintenance sheds, well houses, and restroom facilities. Additional structures contained within the park include bridges, a dam, and a spillway.

The park was one of four recreational development areas (RDAs) developed by the Virginia Division of Forestry (now the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation) working in conjunction with New Deal organizations, including the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and the Works Progress Administration (WPA) during the Great Depression. While built during the same period as many of the NPS-designed Virginia state parks, Bear Creek was not held to the same strict design standards as found in those parks. Still, the influence of the National Park Service's design and layout can be seen in the landscape and architecture of Bear Creek Lake State Park.

Narrative Description

The topography of the park consists largely of gently sloping hills and some low-lying areas around the lake and beach. In general the layout of the park allows for discrete areas for particular activities. Recreational activities such as swimming, boating, and fishing are concentrated around the lake and beach area. The major elements at Bear Creek Lake as well as Virginia's other RDAs were similar to those of the six CCC state parks established between 1933 and 1936. For Bear Creek Lake, the major park components consist of the vehicular and pedestrian circulation systems, the beach and swimming areas, the picnic areas, the dam, the bridge and spillway, the campgrounds, and the lodge and cabins.

There are two main roads that connect the north and south sides of Bear Creek Lake, Route 666 and Route 629; both roads are paved asphalt. Route 666 runs to the east and west on the north side of the lake. Located on the south side of this road is the park office with a small paved parking lot to the east of the building. A well house and a restroom facility are found to the south of the office, as is a picnic area that includes a picnic shelter and a stone grille built in 1938. Grouped in a semi-circle to the west of the grille is a grouping of wood benches. A curving concrete sidewalk connects all four buildings, leading down to the lake area. To the south of the picnic area, construction is underway on a boat ramp.

To the east of the office, sitting in the middle of the road, is the contact station for the park. Approximately one-tenth of a mile east of the station, located on the north side of the road, is Campground C. The area, which is mostly flat with a variety of trees and bushes, contains picnic tables, a restroom facility, and spaces for tents and trailers. A parking lot is located in the front of the restroom facility. To the east of the campground is a small bunkhouse cabin with a small parking lot in the front of the building. Across the road is a well-house. About a quarter-mile east and located on the south side of the road is the park water tower. The road then begins to curve, heading south towards the lake area. Approximately one-eighth of a mile beyond the tower on the east side of the road is the new Bear Creek Meeting Hall with a large parking area directly in front of the building. To the north of the building is a large open, grassy lot, one of

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the few in the park. Across the street from the Meeting Hall is a concrete pump house. The road continues south, sloping toward the lake, ending in a parking lot. To the south is the boat house, the lakeside picnic shelter and another stone grille. To the west of the picnic area is the beach. To the north of the beach is the concession building. To the north of this building is a c.1938 well house, set back from the road.

Heading west back toward the park office, Route 666 ends with its intersection with Route 629. Heading south on Route 629, the road curves to the east and becomes Bear Creek Lake Forest Road, which leads to the cabin area. Grouped together are twelve cabins. The cabins consist of two and three bedrooms and almost all offer a view of the water. The cabins are broken up into small groups of three and four buildings with each group clustered around a small paved parking lot.

Bear Creek Park also has six trails, one of which, the Cumberland Multi-Use, can be used for hiking, bicycling, and horseback riding. The trails vary in length from four-tenths of a mile to sixteen miles in length for a total of approximately thirty-five miles. The trails are located on both sides of the lake.

Heading north on Route 629 toward the park entrance are the two park ranger residences on the south side of the road. The maintenance area, located at the end of a slightly inclining gravel road, is restricted and enclosed by a high chain link fence.

Inventory of Resources:

The following inventory of resources was conducted in 2008 and reflects resources that are contributing and non-contributing to the historic district based on the period of significance and the integrity of the resources.

Picnic Shelter #1, DHR # 024-0034-0001

Contributing (1-Structure)

The 1930s Picnic Shelter is a vernacular interpretation of the Rustic style. It is a small, one-story shelter constructed of heavy, hewn, undressed rounded logs, using mortise and tenon construction, heavy nails and wood pegs. The side-gable roof covered with asphalt shingles has overhanging eaves, a raking cornice, and rounded exposed rafter tails. The roof's interior features exposed beam construction with heavy log king trusses in the gable ends. Small log braces are found at each corner of the structure, and the corner posts are connected by a simple log railing. The interior of the picnic shelter includes wood, built-in benches, a heavy slate floor, and a small grouping of picnic tables.

Lakeside Picnic Shelter, DHR # 024-0034-0002

Contributing (1-Structure)

Almost identical to Shelter #1, this shelter has undergone some alterations, including the poured and molded concrete bases that now support the main shelter supports and the removal of the built-in benches as seen in Shelter #1.

Well House, DHR # 024-0034-0003

Contributing (1-Building)

This ca.1938 one-story, one-bay, frame wellhouse rests on a concrete block foundation and is sheathed with wide vertical boards. The pyramidal roof is covered with asphalt shingles and has exposed, shaped rafter tails. On the east elevation is a central, single-leaf wood paneled door; on the north elevation is a single six-over-six-light wood sash window with a simple wood surround. Both the window and the door appear to be older than the building and may have come from an older house.

Circulation System, DHR # 024-0034-0004

Contributing (7-Structures)

The circulation system at Bear Creek Lake State Park consists of a main roadway that enters the park from the east; this roadway continues to the west, ending at Bear Creek Lake near the concessions area and beach. Another main road circles the lake to the south and then turns west to Bear Creek Lake Forest Road. In addition, a small series of interconnecting roads for the campsite area runs to the west of the main road and contact station. Other elements included within the circulation system include gutters, curbs, and steps. Pedestrian circulation consists of a series of walking trails that run to the east and west, north and south of the park's main area and concrete walkways to the

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concession area and restroom. A multi-use trail that courses from the north and south is used by hikers, bicyclists, and horseback riders.

Picnic Areas, DHR # 024-0034-0005

Contributing (3-Sites)

There are three picnic areas associated with Bear Creek Lake State Park. Two are marked by picnic shelters and are located to the south of the main road, near the lake area. The third picnic area is found to the north of the main road in Campground Area C and consists of a small number of picnic tables, grills and waste receptacles.

Spillway, Lake and Dam, DHR # 024-0034-0006

Contributing (2 Structures, 1 Site)

A tiered spillway constructed of coursed rubble rock and a poured concrete dam are located to the north and west of the 50-acre manmade lake. All were constructed in 1938.

Park Office, DHR # 024-0034-0007

NC (1-Building)

This ca.1975, one-story, L-shaped, three-bay, frame office sits on a raised foundation of concrete block. The building is sheathed with horizontal boards. Double cornerboards articulate the building's walls. The side-gable roof is covered with asphalt shingle and has raking eaves, a boxed cornice and small rectangular louvered vents in the gable ends. A one-story, one-bay, shed roof with elbow brackets marks the single-leaf wood door with two raised panels and a nine-light window is located on the west wall. Windows are vinyl sash six-over-six-light. Attached to the north and west walls of the office are a modern pressure-treated wood deck.

Bathhouse, DHR # 024-0034-0008

NC (1-Building)

This ca.1975 one-story, five-bay, frame and vinyl-sided building rests on a low concrete block foundation. The side-gable roof is covered with asphalt shingle and has overhanging eaves and brackets. A slightly projecting shed roof marks an inset entrance with three single-leaf wood, six-paneled doors. Window openings consist of two-light transom-styled openings.

Wood Shed, DHR # 024-0034-0009

NC (1-Structure)

This ca.1975, one-story, one-bay, frame and vertical board building has double cornerboards and rests on pressure-treated wood posts. The shed roof is covered with asphalt shingles. On the east wall is a single-leaf wood entrance door.

Contact Station, DHR # 024-0034-0010

NC (1-Building)

Marking the formal entrance to the park is this one-story, two-bay frame c.1975 contact station, sheathed in T-111 siding and resting on a poured concrete slab foundation. The side gable roof is covered with asphalt shingle with a boxed cornice. On the east and west walls are a slightly off-center single-leaf wood entrance door. To one side of the door is a one-over-one-light sliding glass window. The building is located on a small concrete median with plantings situated in the middle of the road, just east of the main park office.

Well House #2, DHR # 024-0034-0011

Contributing (1-Building)

This ca.1932 one-story concrete block building rests on a raised concrete block foundation. The side-gable roof is covered with asphalt shingles. Located at the southwest corner of the south elevation is a single-leaf slab wood door. Also attached to the south wall is a large metal tank.

Bathhouse-Campground C, DHR # 024-0034-0012

NC (1-Building)

This ca.1975, one-story, four-bay, concrete block building rests on a concrete block foundation. The side-gable roof is covered with asphalt shingles and has overhanging eaves and a boxed cornice. The two entrance doors consist of single-leaf wood with six raised panels, covered by heavy screen doors. Window openings consist of slightly inset one-over-one-light sliding glass with wood surrounds.

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Bunkhouse/Camping Lodge, DHR # 024-0034-0013

NC (1-Building)

This one-story, four-bay, frame camp cabin is sheathed in a log veneer and rests on a molded concrete foundation patterned to look like random rubble stone. The side-gable roof is covered with standing seam metal with a boxed cornice. Attached to the south elevation is a modern wood deck with a simple wood balustrade. A six-panel, single-leaf wood door marks the entrance. Window openings consist of six-over-nine-light vinyl with wood window surrounds topped by small wood hoods. The cabin was built in 2007.

Water Tower, DHR # 024-0034-0014

NC (1-Structure)

This is a metal forty-foot water tower that is no longer in service.

Bear Creek Meeting Facility, DHR # 024-0034-0015

NC (1-Building)

This one-story, three-bay, frame building, built in 2007, is sheathed in a type of beaded board horizontal siding and rests on a foundation with coursed stone veneer. The side-gable roof is covered with asphalt shingle. A chimney sheathed in the same board siding pierces the rear west slope of the roof. A projecting one-story, one-bay, front-gabled, "rustic-styled" porch with a king-post is attached to the front (east) facade, supported by square wood posts attached to coursed rubble stone piers. Double-leaf commercial metal and glass doors mark the central entrance. Window openings consist of tripartite windows with outer windows containing four lights and central windows containing twelve lights.

Well House #3, DHR # 024-0034-0016

Contributing (1-Building)

This ca. 1932, one-story, parged concrete block building rests on a low concrete block foundation. The flat roof has a beveled concrete cornice and a molded concrete frieze; there is evidence of horizontal board siding on the south wall of the building.

Concessions Building, DHR # 024-0034-0017

NC (1-Building)

To the north of the lake and beach area is the c. 2000 concession building, which also includes restroom facilities for men and women. The compound consists of three one-story buildings sheathed in a type of modern beaded horizontal board siding. Each building has a shed roof covered with asphalt shingles. On the south side of the concession building is an overhanging shed roof pent. Entrances consist of single-leaf, modern metal and glass commercial doors; windows are fixed plate glass. On the south side of the building is a large deck area with chairs and tables.

Boat House, DHR # 024-0034-0018

NC (1-Building)

This one-story, three-bay frame building, built c. 1972, is sheathed in T-111 siding with double cornerboards and rests on a raised foundation obscured by latticework panels. The shed roof is covered with asphalt shingles. A single-leaf wood paneled door marks the central entrance and is flanked by one-over-one-light vinyl sash windows. Attached to the rear west of the building is a small shed addition with double-leaf wood doors on the west wall.

Linen Building, DHR # 024-0034-0019

NC (1-Building)

This one-story, one-bay frame laundry building, built in 2007, sits on a poured concrete slab foundation and is sheathed in board-and-batten siding. The side-gabled roof is covered with standing-seam metal. A one-story, one-bay projecting front-gabled porch is attached to the west side of the building. The central entrance consists of double-leaf metal security doors. A similar single-leaf door is located on the northwest corner of the north wall. The building is located approximately three-tenths of a mile south of the cabin area.

Cabins 1-12, DHR # 024-0034-0020/0031 and 024-0034-0051

NC (12-Buildings)

These cabins, all built in 2007, are grouped together and located on the southern side of Bear Creek lake, north of Bear Creek Lake Forest Road. All have views of the water, except for Cabin #1. The one-story, two-bay, frame cabins rest on raised concrete block foundations and are sheathed in board-and-batten siding. The front-gable roofs are covered with standing seam metal and have overhanging eaves and boxed cornices. An interior chimney sheathed in board-and-batten siding pierces each roof slope. Attached to one side of each cabin is a slightly projecting front-gabled porch area with square wood posts. A wood deck is attached to the front elevation of the cabins; a single-leaf wood paneled door marks the off-center entrances. Window openings consist of paired six-over-six wood sash.

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Lodge, DHR # 024-0034-0032

NC (1-Building)

This one-and-a-half-story, five bay, frame cabin dwelling, built in 2007, is sheathed in board-and-batten siding and rests on a coursed rubble foundation. The side-gable roof is covered with standing seam metal; on the north and south roof slopes are two front-gabled dormers, each with a single light. A one-story, one-bay projecting front-gable roof porch with a stylized king-post is supported by square wood posts. The central entrance consists of double-leaf wood paneled doors with a transom. Window openings are single and paired six-over-six-light wood sash. Attached to the rear of the cabin are a similar porch and a large wood deck area with simple wood balustrade.

Office, DHR # 024-0034-0033

NC (1-Building)

This ca.1932, one-story, two-bay, frame building is sheathed in vinyl siding and rests on high concrete block piers. The pyramidal roof is covered with asphalt shingles, has overhanging eaves and a boxed cornice. The cut-away porch is supported by a single square wood post connected to a simple wood balustrade; the off-center entrance consists of a single-leaf wood paneled door. Window openings consist of a one-over-one-light vinyl sash. The building does not have enough physical integrity to be considered contributing.

Park Ranger's House, DHR # 024-0034-0034

NC (1-Building)

This one-story, four-bay, frame, single-family ranch dwelling is covered with wide vertical board siding and rests on a concrete block foundation. The side-gabled roof is covered with asphalt shingles. Triangular louvered vents are found in each gable end. A single-leaf wood slab door covered by a modern metal storm door marks the off-center entrance. Window openings consist of single and paired vinyl one-over-one-light sash.

Park Superintendent's House, DHR # 024-0034-0035

NC (1-Building)

This ca.1977, one-story, five-bay frame ranch house is sheathed with vertical board siding and rests on a stretcher bond brick foundation. The side-gabled roof is covered with asphalt shingles and has overhanging eaves; on the west wall is an exterior end, shouldered brick chimney with a metal vent. An engaged cutaway front porch is supported by wood square posts connected to a simple wood balustrade. The off-center entrance consists of a single-leaf wood paneled door. Window openings consist of six-over-six-light wood sash.

Drainage Culvert, DHR # 024-0034-0036

Contributing (1-Structure)

One historic resources in the park is this slate drainage culvert.

Fireplace/Grill, DHR# 024-0034-0037-0038

Contributing (2-Structures)

Located at each of the two south picnic grounds is a c.1938-1939 coursed rubble stone fireplace/grill.

Archery Range, DHR #024-0034-0039

NC (1-Site)

The archery range is a grassed area set aside for archery near the north edge of the park, south of Route 629. There is a short, wooden sign distinguishing it as an archery range.

Boat Ramp, DHR #024-0034-0040

NC (1-Site)

This ca. 1940 boat ramp is a short length of concrete angled down from an asphalt parking lot into the Bear Creek Lake. Next to it is a tall wooden sign that posts the fishing and boating regulations. The ramp was paved in the 1970s.

Drain Tower, DHR #024-0034-0041

Contributing (1-Structure)

This ca. 1937, drain tower is a concrete rectangular tower rising from the middle of the lake. At the top is a flat platform that is accessed by footings on the side and has pipe facing on all of its edges.

Pump Station, DHR #024-0034-0042

NC (1-Building)

This ca. 2007, one-story pump station has a flat roof and is laid in common course brick bond with concrete posts at each corner. In the center of the primary façade is a double metal door with light above and piping to the side. There are concrete platforms extending from the pump station on three of the sides.

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Water Lab, DHR #024-0034-0043

NC (1-Building)

This ca. 1979, one-story, small, wood covered building has a single entry door and a pyramidal roof.

Maintenance Complex Shed #1, #024-0034-0045

NC (1-Building)

This ca. 1977 shed is a one-story, one-bay, wood building with a single wooden door. It has an angled roof.

Maintenance Complex Shed #2, #024-0034-0046

NC (1-Building)

This ca. 1977 shed is one story with a gable roof creating a second story height. There is vertical paneling creating walls on three sides. The primary façade is open. The walls on either side of the front do not extend to the edge of the front roof eave but sit back a couple feet. The roof is supported on the interior by posts and struts holding up beams.

Maintenance Complex Carport, #024-0034-0047

NC (1-Building)

This ca. 1977 carport is two bays, open on all sides. It has a metal roof in the shape of a flattened Gothic arch. The roof is supported by metal posts along the two sides.

Maintenance Complex Garage, #024-0034-0048

NC (1-Building)

This ca. 1977 garage is three bays and covered in vertical metal panels. Two of the bays have garage doors and the third has a horizontal sliding window. It has a shallow gable roof.

Maintenance Complex Shed #3, #024-0034-0049

NC (1-Building)

This ca. 1977 shed is one story with a pyramidal roof covered in asphalt shingles. The walls are vertical wood panels with small posts between them, painted in shades of beige and brown. There is a single door on one side and a one-over-one sash window on another.

Playground, DHR #024-0034-0050

NC (1-Structure)

This play area is located to the north east of the concession building and beach area and features metal playground equipment.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1938-1940

Significant Dates

1939

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

N/A

Period of Significance (justification)

The period of significance encompasses the original construction of Bear Creek Lake as a recreational development area during the New Deal.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

N/A

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

Bear Creek Lake was built in 1938 as a project of the Virginia Department of Agriculture through the State Forestry Division and was one of four recreational development areas (RDAs) developed in Virginia with the aid of New Deal organizations. Unlike state parks, which were created based on master plans prepared in conjunction with the National Park Service (NPS), RDAs such as Bear Creek Lake were designed and built without formal plans. During the 1930s, both national and state parks employed the style known as Rustic architecture. This style stressed simplicity in design, use of native building materials, and avoidance of overly perfect construction lines to evoke a look not unlike something built by a pioneer craftsman. The end result at informally planned RDAs is a more vernacular expression of the Rustic architecture designs and workmanship than what used in national and state parks during the New Deal. Even though Bear Creek Lake has very few structures from the efforts of the Forestry Service and the CCC, what still remains from this period are excellent examples of Rustic-inspired design and craftsmanship. The park is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its association with CCC and WPA park development projects in Virginia and Criterion C for its park plan. The park retains a statewide level of significance and a period of significance of 1938-1940. It is being listed under the Virginia State Parks Built by New Deal Programs, including CCC and WPA.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

The Formation of Recreational Demonstration Areas, the CCC, and the WPA

By 1933, as the United States grappled with the economic and human toll of the Great Depression, President Franklin D. Roosevelt entertained a number of ideas to offer relief and hope to the American people. The most daunting task facing the president was to create meaningful jobs for the large numbers of unemployed Americans. Of particular concern was the lack of employment opportunities for young men.

On April 17, 1933, Roosevelt implemented the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). Unlike the National Relief Agency (NRA), the CCC did more than offer aid. The CCC provided jobs through a variety of projects that included the rehabilitation and development of national and state parks and other recreation facilities. The impact of these efforts was profound as countless young men helped shape the physical and cultural landscape of the nation's parks.

On May 6, 1935, Roosevelt signed Executive Order No. 734 forming the Works Projects Administration (WPA). In 1939, the organization was renamed the Works Progress Administration. The WPA had two functions: to organize small projects with tangible results across the nation, creating work for the unemployed, and to coordinate the Works Program. Unlike the CCC, which employed only men between the ages of 18 and 25, the WPA employed mostly middle aged men and some women. The WPA workers were typically recruited from nearby locations for specific projects.

The efforts of the Roosevelt administration to deal with parks fell under the auspices of another agency, the Public Works Administration (PWA). In July 1933, a National Planning Board, later called the National Resources Board, was charged with planning "recreational requirements" and "recreational procedures," particularly with regard to national parks. The board also wanted to be as inclusive as possible and, by 1934 and 1935, enlisted the help of states to form their own planning boards to begin creating recreation projects that would, among other things, utilize the CCC and the WPA.¹

Recreational Demonstration Areas (RDAs) were established during President Roosevelt's tenure in addition to the new state parks. These facilities were the brainchild of Roosevelt's Land Planning Committee and the National Park Service. Both agencies agreed that one of the most pressing needs in many urban areas were large natural areas to provide recreational outlets for people, particularly those of lower and middle incomes. This need would be filled with the creation of the RDAs, a concept that was enthusiastically supported by the Land Planning Committee. Unlike the state parks, the emphasis of the RDAs was on large group recreational activities, rather than family outings or day trips. Lodges and cabins that could accommodate groups of campers for extended periods were constructed and used by civic or welfare

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organizations that provided recreation for disadvantaged children. The NPS envisioned the creation of large natural areas ranging in size from 2,000 to 10,000 acres in which low-maintenance camping and picnic facilities would be built.²

Acquiring the land for new parks and RDAs initiated a controversial experiment in the relocation of people and the reclamation of land. Carried out under the auspices of the Land Planning Committee (and later the Rural Resettlement Administration), the program reclaimed thousands of acres of land exhausted from ruinous farm practices, particularly in the American South, and that had become a tax burden to the state. Some of these lands were earmarked for RDAs and to be absorbed into the state and national park systems. Estimates suggest that approximately 100 million acres, on which as many as 650,000 families lived a marginal existence, could be reclaimed for public use. Approximately \$25 million from the PWA was appropriated for land acquisition.³

In Virginia, government assistance and rural rehabilitation programs under the Resettlement Administration moved hundreds of families off the land. But not everyone found the government's actions laudable. The human cost could be devastating as the programs forced small farmers and their families to seek other kinds of work, which in many cases they were ill-suited or ill-equipped to do. Legal battles lasting for years were frequent, as the state struggled to move reluctant landowners off property now desired by the government. Eventually the state won the authority to condemn occupied land and evict the families living there.⁴

Between 1933 and 1948, four RDAs in Virginia—Bear Creek Lake, Holliday Lake, Goodwin Lake, and Prince Edward Lake—were developed by the Forest Service and built by the CCC and WPA. Although these sites were not developed within the design framework of the NPS, they share some design features and approaches to planning, including long entry drives, organizing water features, and structures built out of natural materials to blend with the landscape.

The design of the four Virginia RDAs was in large part influenced by the conservation guidelines, aesthetics, and planning processes developed by the NPS for use in the national parks and later in Virginia state parks. The NPS park design process, known as the Master Plan process, was developed over the course of several years as a way to accommodate the NPS's dual obligations of conservation of natural resources and provision of those resources for human enjoyment. CCC and WPA personnel and park administrators in Virginia drew on the existing Master Plan process, as well as NPS personnel, to develop master plans for the first six CCC Virginia state parks. These master plans were then modified and implemented to some degree when the Virginia State Park Service began drawing up plans to create four recreational sites, one of which was Bear Creek Lake State Park.

The Virginia RDAs have a number of elements and approaches first developed or planned for the national and state parks. Like the parks, the RDAs were to be no more than a day's drive from a major population center. A body of water (in the case of the RDAs, a manmade body of water) provided a central organizing feature as well as the site of several types of recreation. Like the state parks, the RDAs were also discrete in their organization, separating the various uses of the area such as day use, service areas, ranger buildings, active recreation areas, and campsites.

In addition, the landscape and architectural aesthetics of the NPS guided the creation of the RDAs in Virginia. These ideas shaped relations between the natural and man-made landscape. Local materials and building traditions, such as rough-hewn log picnic shelters or concrete block buildings, were used. Paths, stairs, trails, and bridges were unobtrusively built into the landscape with local stones. Dams, retaining walls, and spillways suggested natural forms without imitating them. Single entrance points into the parks were along carefully planned curving roads with intermittent views of open landscape. The conformity of the aesthetic and planning principles in the Virginia parks to those of national parks was underscored by the inclusion of buildings from the Virginia parks in the three-volume 1938 edition of Albert H. Good's *Parks and Recreation Structures*.⁵

The CCC in Virginia undertook a massive construction effort in building not only six state parks but, with the WPA, also laid the ground work for the four RDAs. Unlike the six state parks that relied heavily on CCC labor, the four RDAs had more limited CCC/WPA input. In some cases, the efforts of the CCC/WPA primarily focused on initial construction of the RDA road systems or in clearing or reforesting the land.

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Park Design Concepts and Recreational Area Design

Despite the less grand nature of the RDAs, they were still influenced to a great degree by the master plan designs drawn up by the NPS. Although simpler in execution and perhaps even cruder in architectural expression, the RDAs still captured the essence of what the national parks and Virginia state parks were trying to accomplish.

The first impression of the park and its associated buildings and natural areas were important in the planning process. As such, it was important that the road system work successfully in the overall design of the RDAs. The RDAs, like the state parks, had roadways and circulation systems that emphasized and preserved the natural beauty of the area. In addition, the circulation system organized the park and connected the various areas of the RDAs to the main entrance. In general, the visual impact of the roadways on the surrounding environment was to be minimal and was to blend in with the natural features of the park. The roads were also to have a minimal impact on existing landforms. The RDA road systems were organized into major and minor roadways. The major roadways were comprised of the park's entrance road and roads leading to major recreational features in the park. The minor roads were spurs off the major road, did not connect to other roadways, and terminated at dead ends. These minor roads were also not designed to accommodate heavy traffic. Examples of major roadways are the roads leading to natural areas, to the beach and lake area, and the entrance road. Minor roadways are those leading to camping areas, cabin areas, park residences, and maintenance and shop areas.

An integral part of the park layout and use was the creation of a trail system, which allowed visitors to view the natural beauty of the park. The main purpose of the park, in addition to providing locations for sleeping, was to provide recreation. The variety of recreation provided depended on the park. As parks were to be planned preferably near a body of water, the park could provide water recreation such as swimming, fishing, and boating. These recreational activities required bath houses and the construction of piers and boat ramps. These buildings and structures were erected based upon the number of visitors expected at the park. The trails were developed based on available land and accessibility for hikers.

The picnic grounds at the RDAs were all located in shaded locations near the water in order to take advantage of the spectacular views and cool breezes. Structures included picnic shelters, fireplaces, toilets, and some maintenance buildings, though only Prince Edward State Park had the typical CCC design for maintenance areas that included a shop, a garage, and sundry storage buildings.

Perhaps the most important distinction that separated the RDAs from the state parks was that the recreational areas were initially never intended for overnight use. As a result, certain types of buildings, such as ranger's quarters, offices, and concessions areas, were never part of the original design plans. Also many of the construction details, such as stone culverts, retaining walls and steps, are sparse or even absent from the recreational areas. In essence, even though the RDAs borrowed many of the basic design elements found in the state parks, the four RDAs tended to be more modest undertakings.

The Creation of Bear Creek Lake State Park

The construction of Bear Creek Lake Park was overseen by the Virginia Department of Agriculture. Approximately one hundred men, including carpenters, farmers, and unskilled laborers who needed work, built the manmade lake, two pavilions, a concession stand and six fireplaces in 1938. CCC Company # 2354 arrived in Farmville on May 7, 1933, and then traveled the twenty miles to the northeast to Cumberland Forest, where they worked on Private Forest Project # 69. CCC Company #1390, an African American company that constructed Prince Edward Lake Park, may have also worked at Bear Creek Lake.⁶ CCC involvement at Bear Creek Lake Park may have consisted of clearing and restoring the park lands. Bear Creek Lake Park was given to the Division of State Parks in 1940, and it was operated as a day-use recreational area. In 1962, the division added campgrounds and the area's name was changed to Bear Creek Lake State Park. During the 1970s, the park

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undertook an ambitious construction program, resulting in the construction of new facilities, such as administrative headquarters, restrooms, maintenance buildings, and residences for park rangers. In 1998, four new wells and a new administrative office were constructed. In 2006, the park constructed twelve cabins, a lodge, and the Bear Creek Lake Conference Center.

Endnotes

¹ Ney C.Landrum, *The State Park Movement in America: A Critical Review* (Columbia: Univ. of Missouri Press, 2004), 143.

² Landrum, 144-145; Land and Community Associates, "Survey of State-Owned Properties: Division of Parks and Recreation" (July 1988), 42-43.

³ Landrum, 144; Jennifer Catherine Reut et al., "Virginia State Parks Built by the Civilian Conservation Corps, 1929-1936," Multiple Property Documentation Form (2012), 9-10.

⁴ Reut et al., 11.

⁵ Land and Community Associates, 42-45.

⁶ Local anecdotal evidence as conveyed by Tom Kneipp, Park Ranger at Bear Creek Lake State Park.

Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)

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9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Association of Southeastern State Park Directors. *Histories of Southeastern State Parks*. Printed for the Southeastern State Park Directors, 1977.

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http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/state_parks/hol.shtml.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
 previously listed in the National Register
 previously determined eligible by the National Register
 designated a National Historic Landmark
 recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
 recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
 recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

State Historic Preservation Office
 Other State agency
 Federal agency
 Local government
 University
 Other

Name of repository: Virginia Dept. of Historic Resources, Richmond, VA

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): VDHR no. 024-0034

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 328.7 (includes 40-acre lake)
 (Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

Datum 27

1	<u>17</u> Zone	<u>740590</u> Easting	<u>4157425</u> Northing	3	<u>17</u> Zone	<u>741040</u> Easting	<u>4157690</u> Northing
2	<u>17</u> Zone	<u>740740</u> Easting	<u>4157670</u> Northing	4	<u>17</u> Zone	<u>741555</u> Easting	<u>4157170</u> Northing
5	<u>17</u> Zone	<u>741698</u> Easting	<u>4156235</u> Northing	7	<u>17</u> Zone	<u>740390</u> Easting	<u>4156760</u> Northing
6	<u>17</u> Zone	<u>741435</u> Easting	<u>4156065</u> Northing	8	<u> </u> Zone	<u> </u> Easting	<u> </u> Northing

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary for Bear Creek Lake State Park at 328.70 acres is shown on the attached survey map of January 11, 1991, from Talbot & Associates, Ltd., and is recorded in the Cumberland County Clerk's Office as Plat Cabinet A, Slide 114, with the following detailed description:

Beginning at a point, said point being 0.5 ± mile in a southwesterly direction from the intersection of Route 622 and Route 629; thence from said point of beginning S 32° 28' 31" E, 2,389.47 feet to concrete monument; thence S 08° 01' 29" W, 3,100.00 feet to a concrete monument; then S 79° 24' 18" W, 1,291.87 feet to a concrete monument; then N 46° 06' 00" W, 932.85 feet to a concrete monument; then N 38° 06' 55" W, 2,729.16 feet to a concrete monument on the eastern right-of-way line of Route 629; thence turning and running along said right-of-way with a curve to the right having a radius of 405.58 feet, an arc length of 428.23 feet and a chord bearing of N 21° 17' 07" E and distance of 408.62 feet to a point; thence 51° 32' 00" E, 408.38 feet to a point; thence along a curve to the left having a radius of 639.41 feet, an arc length of 171.20 feet and a chord bearing of N 43° 51' 46" E and distance of 170.69 feet to a point; thence N 36° 11' 32" E, 334.88 feet to a concrete monument; thence leaving aforesaid eastern right-of-way line of Route 629, N 21° 40' 48" E, 1,173.56 feet to a steel pin; thence continuing N 21° 40' 48" E, 50 feet ± to the centerline of Bear Creek, thence N 52° 47' 12" E, 22 feet ± to a blazed 30" oak tree; thence continuing N 52° 47' 12" E, 919.70 feet to a blazed 30" hickory tree; thence S 31° 33' 03" E, 458.17 feet to a blazed 36" white oak tree; thence continuing, across Route 629, S 31° 33' 03" E, 61.16 feet to a concrete monument; thence turning and running along the eastern right-of-way line of Route 629 N 65° 27' 07" E, 570.01 feet to a concrete monument, the point of the beginning.

The above described parcel located in Madison District, Cumberland County, Virginia, contains 328.70 acres.

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Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary for the Bear Creek Lake State Park is all that which is owned and operated as the Bear Creek Lake State Park by the Department of Conservation and Recreation within the Cumberland State Forest in Cumberland County, Virginia, at the time the nomination was prepared. The north, south, east, and west boundaries of Bear Creek Lake State Park encompass all of the architecturally and historically significant features and events associated with the Bear Creek Lake State Park during its period of significance.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Meg Greene Malvasi/ DHR Staff
organization William and Mary Center for Archaeological Research/ August 2008/September 2012
Virginia Department of Historic Resources date _____
street & number 13803 Sterlings Bridge Road/ 2801 Kensington 804-763-3595/ 804-482-6439
Avenue telephone _____
city or town Midlothian/ Richmond VA 23112/
_____ state _____ zip code 23221
e-mail _____

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

All photographs taken by Meg Greene Malvasi April 16, 2008
Digital Images stored at the Virginia department of Historic Resources

View: Picnic Shelter #1, South view
Photo: 1 of 15

View: Picnic Shelter #1, Roof detail
Photo: 2 of 15

View: Picnic Shelter #1, Framing detail
Photo: 3 of 15

View: Picnic Area near Shelter #1, East view
Photo: 4 of 15

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View: Pump House, East elevation
Photo: 5 of 15

View: Drainage area, South view
Photo: 6 of 15

View: Detail, Drainage
Photo: 7 of 15

View: Spillway, East view
Photo: 8 of 15

View: Dam, South view
Photo: 9 of 15

View: Bear Creek Lake & Dam, North view
Photo: 10 of 15

View: Cabin #1, North elevation
Photo: 11 of 15

View: Bear Creek Lake, South view
Photo: 12 of 15

View: Bear Creek Lake, Beach Area, Northwest view
Photo: 13 of 15

View: Bear Creek Lake, Picnic Area C, West view
Photo: 14 of 15

View: Lakeside Shelter, South view
Photo: 15 of 15

Property Owner:

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation
street & number 203 Governor Street telephone 800-933-7275
city or town Richmond state VA zip code 23219

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.



4160
4159
32'30"
4158

2.1 MI. TO U.S. 60

BEAR CREEK
STATE PARK
UTM ZONE 17
DATUM 27

	E	N
A	740 590	4157 425
B	740 740	4157 670
C	741 040	4157 690
D	741 555	4157 170
E	741 698	4156 235
F	741 435	4156 065
G	740 390	4156 760

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