

**Subject: Nature Centers**

**FY 2023 Proposed Budget  
Budget Work Session Follow-up**

**4/19/2022**

The following information is provided in response to a request made by Ms. Cristol, Ms. Garvey, Mr. Dorsey, and Mr. de Ferranti at the work session on 04/07/2022, regarding the following question:

*Are the current nature center hours meeting demand? If not, what should the hours be and what resources are needed to make this possible?*

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The current nature center hours ensure that at least one nature center is open in Arlington County every day of the week, except Monday. Prior to the pandemic, all three centers were open six days a week; currently most days of the week only one or two nature centers are open. The hours of operation of each nature center are summarized in the tables below.

Hours Pre-Pandemic (March 2020 and Prior):

	<b>Long Branch</b>	<b>Gulf Branch</b>	<b>Potomac Overlook</b>
Sunday	1pm-5pm	1pm-5pm	1pm-5pm
Monday			
Tuesday	10am – 5pm	10am – 5pm	10am – 5pm
Wednesday	10am – 5pm	10am – 5pm	10am – 5pm
Thursday	10am – 5pm	10am – 5pm	10am – 5pm
Friday	10am – 5pm	10am – 5pm	10am – 5pm
Saturday	10am – 5pm	10am – 5pm	10am – 5pm
<b>Hours Open to Public:</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>39</b>

Current Hours (March 2022):

	<b>Long Branch</b>	<b>Gulf Branch</b>	<b>Potomac Overlook</b>
Sunday			1pm-5pm
Monday			
Tuesday	10am – 5pm		10am – 5pm
Wednesday	10am – 5pm		10am – 5pm
Thursday		10am – 5pm	10am – 5pm
Friday		10am – 5pm	10am – 5pm
Saturday	10am – 5pm	10am – 5pm	10am – 5pm
<b>Hours Open to Public:</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>39</b>

While answering the question regarding demand is challenging, information regarding usage prior to the pandemic helps highlight what were historically the most popular days of the week for individuals to visit the nature center. Sundays averaged 40 people visiting one of the two nature centers operated by Arlington County (80 visitors total), which was relatively similar to weekday usage. Saturdays were traditionally the most popular day.

**Subject: DPR Nature Centers**

The Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) will continue to evaluate nature center usage over the next several months and use that information to inform a potential FY 2024 budget change request to allow DPR to adjust nature center operations. The potential budget change request will consider both the overall operating hours to provide, which may be different than the pre-pandemic hours or current hours, as well as the best staffing model between permanent and temporary staffing options.

It would cost approximately \$25,000 in additional temporary staff dollars to open the nature centers to pre-pandemic hours of 1pm – 5pm on Sundays, with the potential for some additional hours being made available on the other weekdays (Tuesday – Friday).