

# **SUCCESS!**

## **State Budget Includes Funding for Two More Staff at the Park**



Governor Northam has signed a Virginia state budget that includes funding for two additional staff positions at the park. The funding will enable the park to alleviate longstanding problems caused by the inability to hire sufficient staff.

The Friends of Mason Neck State Park have worked to increase the number of staff at the park for more than ten months. In January, the Friends organized a petition drive seeking more funding that garnered hundreds of signatures. Friends' President Hillary Clawson testified in support of increased park funding before the House of Delegates last February, and a delegation of Friends Board members met with Melissa Baker, the Director of Virginia State Parks, in March. Delegate Kathy Tran and Senator Scott Surovell introduced legislation providing for the funding increase, and the legislation was supported by other Northern Virginia legislators.

What initially seemed like a successful effort was potentially derailed when COVID-19 substantially reduced state revenue projections, and all budget increases were put on hold pending re-evaluation of the state's finances. However, the pandemic also increased the need for more staff at the park, as large numbers of people began visiting the park for respite. More

than six times the usual number of people visited the park in March, and park attendance has remained several times higher than usual for the last several months.

**A huge THANK YOU to Delegate Tran, Senator Surovell, all of the other legislators who supported increased funding for the park, and Governor Northam and his staff -- as well as everyone who signed our funding petition.**