

WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

2019 REGULAR SESSION

Introduced

Senate Bill 88

BY SENATOR BEACH

[Introduced January 9, 2019; Referred
to the Committee on Government Organization; and then
to the Committee on Finance]

1 A BILL to amend the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, by adding thereto a new section,
 2 designated §20-1-15, relating to creating the Office of Outdoor Recreation; authorizing the
 3 hiring of a director of the office and any other personnel necessary; setting forth the duties
 4 of the office; requiring an annual report to the Legislature; requiring collaboration with the
 5 West Virginia Development Office; requiring consultation with the outdoor recreation
 6 community; and authorizing the use of appropriated funds for a grant and loan program to
 7 further outdoor recreation in the state.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

ARTICLE 1. ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION.

§20-1-15. Office of Outdoor Recreation.

1 (a) In addition to the sections contained within the Division of Natural Resources, as
 2 authorized in §20-1-14 of this code, the Office of Outdoor Recreation is hereby established within
 3 the Division of Natural Resources, subject to the provisions of this section. The director shall
 4 select and designate a competent and qualified person to be the chief of the Office of Outdoor
 5 Recreation. The office shall consist of the chief and all personnel employed in the office.

6 (b) The office shall:

7 (1) Coordinate outdoor recreation policy within the sections of the division and between
 8 the division and federal, state, regional and local government entities and nongovernmental
 9 entities;

10 (2) Assist in developing or updating the outdoor recreation management strategies of the
 11 division;

12 (3) Collaborate with the West Virginia Tourism Office and the West Virginia Tourism
 13 Commission to create effective forums for communicating recreation-based initiatives and for
 14 sharing best practices;

15 (4) Serve as a clearinghouse and information center for outdoor recreation stakeholders;

16 (5) Develop data, independently or through contracts with appropriate public or private

17 agencies, on the social, economic and resource impacts of outdoor recreation in this state;

18 (6) Promote the health and social benefits of outdoor recreation in coordination with other
19 related state programs and initiatives; and

20 (7) Report on the office's activities to the Legislature at least once per calendar year,
21 including an analysis of the impacts of outdoor recreation in this state and any recommendations
22 for legislation or policies and initiatives.

23 (c) The office shall collaborate and coordinate with the West Virginia Development Office,
24 representatives of local governments, the outdoor recreation industry and other outdoor
25 recreation stakeholders to promote economic development in this state. In furtherance of
26 promoting economic development, the office may recommend, adopt or assist in the
27 implementation of policies and initiatives that:

28 (1) Encourage development of the outdoor recreation industry in a manner that improves
29 recreational opportunities in this state;

30 (2) Maximize public and private investment in the outdoor recreation industry and in
31 outdoor recreation activities in this state;

32 (3) Enhance quality of life and economic vibrancy in communities across the state;

33 (4) Strike a sensitive balance between development and preservation of the unique natural
34 experience provided by West Virginia's outdoor recreation resources, and between motorized and
35 nonmotorized outdoor recreation activities; and

36 (5) Take a proactive approach to enhancing regional and local outdoor recreation
37 infrastructure.

38 (d) The office shall regularly consult with outdoor recreation representatives to assist the
39 office in carrying out its duties. When consulting with outdoor recreation representatives, the office
40 shall take into consideration geographic and demographic diversity and include feedback from
41 members of the outdoor recreation industry, the environmental community, the natural resources
42 community, other outdoor recreation stakeholders and appropriate state, regional and local

- 43 governmental entities.
- 44 (e) The office may, with funds appropriated by the Legislature for this specific purpose,
- 45 finance programs and projects determined to further outdoor recreation or the outdoor recreation
- 46 industry within this state by making grants or loans using moneys appropriated to the Outdoor
- 47 Recreation Grant or Loan Program.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to create the Office of Outdoor Recreation.

Strike-throughs indicate language that would be stricken from a heading or the present law and underscoring indicates new language that would be added.