

International Dark Sky Place Annual Report: October 2021 - December 2022



Date

Monday, November 28, 2022

General Information

International Dark Sky Place Name

Rappahannock County Park

International Dark Sky Place Category

International Dark Sky Park

Designation Year

2019

Guidelines Version

2018

Your Name

Bonnie Beers Rappahannock Recreational Facilities Authority member

Email Address

rappdarkskies@gmail.com

Primary Contact

Bonnie Beers RCRFA member, dark skies representative

Primary Contact Email Address

bonbeers@gmail.com

Primary Contact Phone Number

+540 (675) 5330

Secondary Contact Phone Number

+540 (675) 5330

Management Agency (if applicable)

Rappahannock County Recreational Facilities Authority

What is the physical address of the Place?

7 Park Lane
Washington, VA, 22747
United States

Is the site currently under Provisional Status?

No

Are you an IDA Delegate, Affiliate, or Chapter Representative?

No

Night Sky Quality Monitoring

Total average or typical zenith night sky brightness reading reported in the original application:

21.3

Provide the Tier you were certified under, if applicable:

Silver

Total average or typical zenith night sky brightness reading for this reporting period:

21.16

Upload your night sky quality raw data documents for this reporting period:



Upload a map (PDF or image) that shows the locations and names of the places that were used to take SQM measurements:



Describe any changes detected in night sky quality from receiving your certification to the present:

From the data there is a slight increase in brightness (drop in SQM number) that may be statistically significant. The last data points may have been a bit biased by some skyglow but I included it anyway.

Lighting Compliance

Parks, Sanctuaries, and Communities, please fill out the applicable row to describe your lighting compliance rate (%) with your Lighting Management Plan/Policy (whole numbers only):

	Year of Certification	Compliance % in Original Application	Current Compliance %	Anticipated % for Next Reporting Period
Parks	2019	100	100	100

What actions have you taken to meet the requirements of your Lighting Management Plan/Policy during this reporting period? Include a summary of any actions taken with privately owned lighting that helped improve your night sky quality as well:

There are only eight outdoor light fixtures in the Park. Since all lights are fully-shielded and compliant, no further conversions are required to meet the acceptance criteria of our Lightscape Management Plan. The Park Board has also adopted a formal resolution that defines how future decisions will be made about any potential outdoor lighting changes at the Park.

Have you used any fixtures from the IDA Fixture Seal of Approval (FSA) Program?

No

Describe any delays or interruptions, if any, that have impacted your ability to meet your lighting compliance requirements:

The Park is in compliance and requires no further conversions.

Outreach, Education, and Media

Please fill out the following table to summarize all outreach efforts from the past reporting period (whole numbers only).

Total # of Events	# of Unique Efforts Offered	Total # of Attendees for All Events
9	2	170

Note - "unique efforts" offered represent different programs at your site. For example, all star/astronomy related events should be classified as one type of effort, "night hikes" as another type of effort, etc.

For each unique event type your Place hosted, provide all of the following information (up to 100 words per entry; 1000 total word limit): Event name; Date or range of dates of all events under that name; Number of attendees; Brief description of the event and the values that you promoted (i.e. wildlife/ecology, lighting, culture/heritage, IDSP status, ordinance/policy, astrotourism, energy security and conservation, human health, etc.).

We offered 2 types of viewing events: 4 that included presentations prior to viewing which included telescopes available to all attendees and 5 open observation evenings to which attendees were expected to bring their own viewing devices.

1. Rappahannock League for Environmental Protection (RLEP) sponsored presentations in Park pavilion prior to viewing to increase knowledge about sky features and human effects on sky and wildlife.

-4/30 33 attendees

Joyce Harman: "The Effects of Light on Wildlife"

James Granahan: "What's Up (viewing possibilities that night)." The objective was to alert attendees to the effect of lighting on wildlife and on the quality of the sky-viewing, as well as to distribute information about lighting available free, including installation, from RLEP.

-6/11 15 attendees (note: cloudy night)

Joyce Harman talked about using your phone cameras, spotting scopes, and binoculars to capture the moon--followed by opportunities to mount their phones to a telescope to view and take photos of the moon.

James Granahan's presentation, "What's Up," highlighted sky features viewable that evening through each type of device.

-8/27 35 viewers

Milt Romney -"The Color of Stars: How Astronomers Decode Starlight," and Rick

Kohler- talk about the Webb telescope

-9/24 27 viewers

James Granahan: "What's Up?"

2. Free Observation evenings: Park open for viewing from sundown through 11pm during 5 scheduled viewing evenings (4/2, 5/11, 7/30, 9/17, 10-22). Viewers ranged between 4-39 persons)

Did you promote the IDA and its mission during your outreach programs/events? If so, describe:

Yes, IDA sponsorship and resources noted at events via Park sign, website notation on presentations, and verbal reference.

Is there any programming, ongoing or planned, blending the arts and/or culture with dark skies? If so, describe:

Spring 2023. The Park is launching a collaboration with the Rappahannock Association for Art in the Community to present an "Ephemeral Art" exhibit in the Park. Artist submissions may include Dark Sky-related art installations. Information about Dark Skies and RLEP will be available in the Park pavilion.

What have you noticed about your visitors' experiences? For example, is attendance/visitation of dark-sky programs consistent, growing, or dropping off? Have visitors provided any feedback on their experiences at your site? Please describe:

Attendance for presentations was fairly consistent, 25-35 viewers, with the exception of one evening with poor viewing prospects (15 viewers). Attendees ranged in age from youth to seniors. For the most part attendees stayed on after the program to view at telescopes available to all.

Attendance for open observations increased steadily through the season (4--> 39). At each Open Observation evening, there were several attendees who arrived in hopes of sharing others' devices.

Provide up to five photos of events you hosted this year:



Provide social media handles or website links used to promote dark skies (these will be added to your Place's IDA page):

Park Website: www.rappahannockcountypark@weebly.com

Has your Place participated in any IDA-led initiatives such as International Dark Sky Week, the Under One Sky conference, or other relevant promotions during this reporting period?

Yes

If you answered yes to the previous question, please describe:

Please see entry for 4/30 Presentation Event above.

Upload files of any media coverage (articles, interviews, etc.) about your site or dark-sky efforts you are involved with. This may also be a document with a list of links to the respective coverage.



DS media.docx

To update our records, please provide a photo of your erected sign with your respective International Dark Sky Place label:



Briefly describe how educational materials are being dispersed/provided at your Place:

RLEP Dark Skies lighting information is available at all Presentation events. IDA and other related websites are part of the "What's Up?" presentations.

Briefly describe any efforts undertaken to reach new audiences. If this was not part of your efforts last year, describe what you plan to do to engage new visitors in the 2023 reporting period:

Plans for 2023:

- include Dark Skies information and activities at scheduled Park events
- explore use of local organizational contacts to publish Dark Skies calendar and highlight events
- install a mounted pocket brochure holder in pavilion to hold educational / informational brochures
- display Dark Sky event photos and calendar in Park pavilion

Partnerships

Have you worked with any external partners to promote the dark-sky movement within and outside of your Place's boundaries? If so, identify these partners and explain the result of this collaboration:

Rappahannock League for Environmental Protection (RLEP): Presentation Events. RLEP has identified speakers for Presentation Events and managed on-site equipment and programming.

Rappahannock County Sheriff Department: scheduled Sheriff Dept. security at Park during all viewing events.

Have you collaborated with an IDA Delegate or IDA Chapter on dark-sky issues since the last reporting period? If so, please describe:

We discussed our situation--a small park of 7.3 acres with residential neighbors on 2 borders--with Ashley Wilson to design a calendar that satisfied IDA as well as accommodated our neighbors concerns about nighttime activity in the Park .

Briefly describe future plans (in 2023 and beyond) to engage with existing and new partners and how you will expand the dark-sky movement:

We plan to present a proposal to the Park board, Rappahannock County Recreational Facilities Authority (RCRFA), to review our current calendar structure and approve a Dark Skies program for 2023. Pending RCRFA approval, we will proceed to develop community connections to advance the Dark Skies programming in the Park.

To further assure neighbors that nighttime viewing is secure, we plan to propose setting up red-light designations in approved viewing areas and continue with local sheriff department security oversight.

Success in Light Pollution Control, Leadership, and Future Threats

Have the "threats" identified in your application for certification:

Increased

If the "threats" identified in your application for certification have increased or decreased, please provide a brief explanation of how they have changed (i.e., increased/decreased visibility of light domes, new sources of glare/problematic lighting, new industry/development, etc.):

Our circumstance to date is fairly constant. Community environmental organizations are actively engaged, however, with the developers of a large multi-use site in Culpeper County, Clevenger's Corner, which could affect light quality in the Park in the future. Efforts are to gain an agreement to install Dark Sky compliant lighting in commercial and residential areas of this development.

Provide a brief description of how you will continue to manage "threats" over the next year:

See above.

Change in Ownership, Place Size, or Access

Have there been any changes to the size, access and/or boundaries of your Place (this could be property acquisition, sale, road development/closure, easement access, etc.)? If so, please describe:

No change.

What is the total size of your Place (in square kilometers only)?

.030

Additional Information

What do you consider the greatest single benefit of the IDA certification to your location?

The primary benefit of IDA certification allows public access to a Dark Sky site to people in a wide-ranging area which includes skies bleached by urban lighting quality and density. We have visitors from all over Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Maryland. Experienced astronomers have commented that the sky quality at our park is better than larger sights, like Sky Meadows, where they notice more ambient light.

Did you have any dealings with IDA over the last 12 months regarding any certification issues? How were they handled by IDA?

We adjusted our viewing calendar as described above.

Thank you for completing your 2022 Annual Report! Please provide us with any additional information that you would like us to know about your Place and/or your efforts to combat light pollution:

We appreciate IDA's support for continued certification of Rappahannock County Park, unique in its size and circumstance. It offers a resource to our community and beyond.