

**VIRGINIA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION & AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATION
(Agency 229)**

Capital Project Budget Amendment Proposal

Improve Center Woods Complex

	<u>2024-25</u>	<u>2025-26</u>
Additional Funds Requested:		
General Fund	\$14,700,000	\$0
Nongeneral Fund	\$0	\$0

The Center Woods Complex Improvement project (229-18699) received planning authorization within item C-79.10.B of Chapter 1 of the 2023 General Assembly Special Session I. This project is slated to demolish 6,000 GSF of dilapidated facilities at the complex and construct a modern 25,900 GSF facility to assure that researchers are equipped to take on the emerging natural resources management and conservation challenges that industry and communities in the Commonwealth will face in the 21st century. Planning activities are currently underway and preliminary designs are scheduled to be completed by September 2024. This request is for construction authorization and funding for this project to continue to progress in the most efficient and optimal manner.

The Department of Fish and Wildlife Conservation at Virginia Tech is home to nationally and internationally recognized undergraduate and graduate programs, including the only undergraduate program in fisheries management in the Commonwealth of Virginia. With five embedded federal scientists, close ties to the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources, and strong research funding programs, the department stands as a model of stakeholder integration under the land-grant university mission.

Over the last five years, the Department of Fish and Wildlife Conservation faculty were awarded \$38.6 million in new research funding consistently contending for the highest position of funding per FTE among all departments at Virginia Tech. This includes strong federal funding with 82 percent of the research dollars awarded to the department awarded by eight federal agencies.

The applied research conducted by the faculty and students of the department directly benefits conservation of game and non-game species in the Commonwealth and ultimately benefits the outdoor recreation and tourism industry in Virginia. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S. Census Bureau estimated that people engaged in wildlife-associated recreation spend \$3.5 billion annually in Virginia, presenting a tangible value in investment for the programs researched at Center Woods.

The research facilities for the department are located in an area called Center Woods. These structures have surpassed their functional life expectancy and are now too small, outdated, and dilapidated to support the research activities of the department.

To ensure the continued success and support of the department's critical research which directly contributes to a significant portion of the economy for the Commonwealth, this capital project request is for a General Fund appropriation to design and construct approximately 25,900 gross square feet of new office, research laboratory, field support, and field storage spaces at Center Woods in Blacksburg, Virginia. As part of the project, 12 existing structures comprising 6,000 gross square feet will be demolished.

This request is for authorization and full construction funding to complete the Improve Center Woods Complex capital project and to reimburse the university for temporarily funding the planning work with nongeneral fund resources. The total project budget request is \$14.7 million and the funding plan calls for General Fund support.