



Why Dark Sky Parks Matter

RLEP and RCRFA

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What is a Dark Sky Park?

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International Dark-Sky Association (IDA)

- IDA advocates “protection of the night sky”
 - Encourage enjoyment of the night skies by the public
 - Minimize lighting impacts on human and animal health
 - Preserve dark night sky heritage for future generations
- Created the Dark Sky Places Program in 2001 to recognize
 - Places already having a unique dark night sky heritage
 - Places promoting public awareness of impact of light pollution
 - Places encouraging responsible lighting practices and policies
 - Currently about 60 places designated worldwide: Communities, Parks, Reserves, Sanctuaries and Planned Developments
- The “Park” designation is the only category that a “place” in Rappahannock County would qualify for
 - The Rappahannock Country Park felt to be the best fit
 - Draft application submitted; designation anticipated early 2019

A Place for Community Enjoyment

- Venue open to the public on demand after dusk
- Park exists as an oasis of “light silence” to enjoy
- Offers a suitable environment and facilities for the public to observe the moon, planets, stars, galaxies and other celestial bodies/events
- Location is central to the county residents

A Place for Education: Youth & Public

- School outreach
 - Observation post for future astronomy club
 - Invitation to students to participate in dark skies events
 - Mentor students on related science projects
- Public outreach
 - Planned events with informative presentations
 - Permanent bulletin board raising public awareness

A Place To Develop Ecotourism

- Park is already a haven of natural beauty for visitors
- Opening the park after dusk for selected activities is an extension of the park's intended use
 - Organized events like this one
 - Astronomy clubs/groups wishing to observe the night skies
 - Residents/visitors wishing to enjoy the night skies
 - Students wishing to expand their learning opportunities
- Activities are low-impact, small footprint consistent with philosophy of development in the County
- Ecotourism could benefit businesses offering lodging, meals and country experiences