

2026 PARK RANGER INSTITUTE AGENDA

Session II

Sunday March 22

1pm – 6:30pm: **REGISTRATION & Room Check in: Biden Center**

Class locations will be included on the agenda in your registration packet.

SUPPER ON YOUR OWN

7:pm: - Until: Welcome/Opening Remarks, John Byrd - Executive Director, Board Introductions, Recognition of New Agencies, - Biden Center

Monday March 23

7:30am – 8:30am: Breakfast

8:45am – 11:45am: “Utilizing Ambassador Animals in Programming” Michael Romano, Lakes Supervisor/Environmental Education Specialist, Greensboro, NC - Pinelands Lounge

8:45am – 11:45am: “Outdoor Safety-Plants and Animals to be Aware of for Staying Safe in the Outdoors” Dick Thomas, High Point Parks & Recreation Dept, NC - Bay Room

8:45am – 11:45am: “Crisis and Deaths in the Parks” Chief John Smiddy, Lorain Co. Metro Park Rangers, OH, - Dunes Room

12pm – 1pm: Lunch

1:15pm – 5:45pm: “Introduction to Full Range Leadership” Major Steve Savidge, Delaware Natural Resources Police - Bay Room

1:15pm – 5:45pm: “Snakes, How Too’s & How Not Too’s” Michael Romano - Dunes Room

1:15pm – 5:45pm: “Indian River Lifesaving Station Tour” Tyler Dreiblatt, Interpretive Programs Manager - Meet in front of Biden Center

6pm – 7pm: Supper

7:15pm – 9:15pm: “Developing Campfire Stories” Michael Romano, - start in Dunes Room

7:15pm – 9:15pm: Astronomy” Ranger Jill Lee, MNCPPC - meet in Biden Center Lounge

7:15pm – 9:15pm: “Capacity Issues-Are We Loving Our Parks Too Much” Major Steve Savidge - Bay Room

Tuesday March 24

7:30am – 8:30am: Breakfast

8:45am-11:45am: “Dealing with Veterans in Crisis” Staff from U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs - Bay Room

8:45am-11:45am: “Waterfowl Identification” Wildlife Officer Darin Dick from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service _ Dunes Room

8:45am – 11:45am: “Round Table Discussion – Current Issues” Jonathan Furman, Park Ranger Supervisor, Pittsburgh, PA - Pinelands Lounge

12am – 1pm: Lunch

1: 15pm – 5:45pm: Cultural Resources Field Trip” A trip to a local historical site. Led by Chief of Cultural Resources Taylor Renolds and his staff. - Meet in front of the Biden Center.

1:15pm - 5:45pm: “Clam Raking-wade in the coastal waters of Cape Henlopen in search of clams” water temps will be 45-50 so bring waders or a wet suit. A State of Delaware Fishing License is required. It can be purchased at dnrec.deleware.gov/fish-wildlife/, John Smiddy, meet in Biden Center Lobby

1:15pm – 5:45pm: “The Importance of Being Involved in The Planning Process” John Byrd - Bay Room

1:15pm-5:45pm: "Dealing with Large Mammals" Michael Romano - Dunes Room

6pm – 7pm: Supper

7:15pm - 9:15pm: "How to Start an Archery Program in Your Park" Dusty Cantley,
Alamance County Pks. & Rec., NC and Clint Richardson - Bay Room

7:15pm – 9:15pm: "Things That go Bump in The Night" Michael Romano - Meet in Biden
Center Lobby

7:15pm – 9:15pm: "Search and Seizure in Tents & Campers" Capt. Kurt Blattner,
Delaware Natural Resources Police - Dunes Room

Wednesday April 25

7:30am – 8:30am: Breakfast

8:45am – 5:45pm: All firearms competitions will be held during this time frame only.
(sign-up sheet will be at registration) Sgt. Robert Young (Retired), Criminal Justice
Instructor, Alamance Community College, NC* - Meet in Biden Lobby

8:45am - 11:45am: "Birding I.D. Visual & Auditory" Ranger Jill Lee - Dunes Room

8:45am-11:45am: "Vehicle Left in the Park – A First Responders Role" John Byrd - Bay
Room

12pm – 1pm: Lunch

1:15pm – 5:45pm: "Autism and IDD Training for First Responders" Lt. Chuck Sawenko
(Retired) from the Delaware Network for Excellence in Autism. - Bay Room

1:15pm – 5:45pm: "Dealing with Invasive Species" Chris Bennet, Environmental
Program Manager and his Invasive Species Team. (May include a Service Project) -
Dunes Room

6pm – 7pm – Supper

7:15 – 9:15pm: "Customer Service" John Byrd - Bay Room

6:30pm – Until: Evening Trip to Prime Hook National Wildlife Refuge to watch the sunset and observe wildlife as the sun sets. This is a good time of the year to observe the elaborate American Woodcock courtship display flight. The tour will be led by State Park Volunteer and local expert Julie McCall. - Meet in front of the Biden Center.

Thursday March 26

7:30am – 8:30am: Breakfast

8:45am – 11:45am: “Fort Miles Trip”: Tour will be led by Interpretive Programs Manager Kaitlyn Dykes - Meet in front of Biden Center

8:45am-11:45am: “The benefits of Using Drones in Your Parks” Chief John Smiddy - Bay Room

8:45am- 11:45am: “Birding Hike” Ranger Jill Lee - Meet in Biden Lounge

12pm-1pm: Lunch

1:15pm -5:45pm: “Cape Henlopen Birding Trip” Richard Julian, Nature Center Manager & accomplished birder.- Meet in front of Biden Center

1:15pm-5:45pm: “Developing Programs Around Big Foot & Other Cryptids” Michael Romano - Dunes Room

1:15pm-5:45pm: “Sworn Vs. Non-Sworn Issues” See explanation at end of Agenda - start in Bay Room

6pm-7pm-Supper

7:15pm – Until: **AWARDS CEREMONY** – Administration Building

Speaker: Matt Ritter, Director Delaware State Parks

Presentation of Awards: John R. Byrd Sr. – MC

Door Prizes & Group Photo

Friday March 27

BREAKFAST ON YOUR OWN

Check out of rooms by 10am

2026 Session II Adjourned

Additional Information:

- **These classes are for sworn personnel only**
- All trips and several of the classes will have signup sheets at registration. Some trips require carpooling; please bring an agency van if possible.
- All firearms participants should bring at least 150 to 200 rounds of ammunition.
- Top Gun Award competitors must use your duty weapon. **(NO TRICKED-OUT GUNS)**
- All shooters shoot at the discretion of the Range Master only.
- **THE PHILADELPHIA AIRPORT IS A LITTLE OVER 2 HOURS AWAY AND THE SALISBURY MARYLAND AIRPORT IS AN HOUR AND A HALF AWAY. NO AIRPORT PICK UP WILL BE AVAILABLE THIS SESSION.**
- Sworn vs. Non-Sworn Issues; First 2 hours Sworn & Non-Sworn will be separated and for the last 2 hours we will all come together and discuss our findings. Major Steve Savidge & John Byrd will mediate the sworn discussion and Clint Richardson & Jonathan Furman will mediate the non-sworn discussion.