The Capital Region has been amping up the cinematic voltage in 2012. With a stellar slate of ongoing production activity, Virginia, West Virginia and Washington, D.C. are the beating heart behind all the action. *P3 Update* recently got up close and personal with all three states to find out why film and television projects keep coming back.

VIRGINIA

With a heritage that spans over four centuries, Virginia is a haven of historic towns, idyllic rural communities and futuristic 21st-century cityscapes. Also blessed with ocean and mountain vistas, especially at Chesapeake Bay, the Blue Ridge Mountains and Shenandoah Valley, the

state is an absolute dream for filmmaking. With over 5,000 photos on its online location library, the **Virginia Film Office** showcases a hefty variety of film settings.

The natural beauty of Virginia's Smith Mountain Lake so inspired Director Sara Elizabeth Timmins that it nurtured the idea for her TV movie *Lake Effects*. "Of course, there are lakes all over the country, and several other states were encouraging us to shoot elsewhere, but none could touch the natural beauty of this lake, the mountains, the vibrant fall colors, the genuine community as well as the unbelievably supportive Film Office," says Timmins. "The rich history and vibrant locations that existed without any additional art design greatly enhanced the script, the production value and, in several cases, led us to write real locations and true color into the script.

"My company, Life Out Loud Films, believes people need to think broader in their location searches," Timmins continues.

"Weight is often put on the incentives and the aesthetic offerings of the location, but I strongly feel that the support and excitement of the actual people within the location, including the film office, become a large factor in your ability to effectively make the best film possible. You are

living and working in a location often for extended periods, and having an enthusiastic community that is supportive, proud and takes ownership of your film makes everyone's job easier, and I believe [that] ultimately shows on the screen. The role the local community, people and film office plays in the quality of the final film is vastly underestimated. I have found that kind of support in Virginia."

Virginia's motion-picture incentive package is currently comprised of two separate performance-based incentive funds: The Governor's Motion Picture Opportunity Fund provides grants while the Virginia Motion Picture Tax Credit Fund entails a refundable tax credit. Qualification for either fund is based on several factors, including length of filming in the Commonwealth, jobs created, trainees hired, and the use and/or purchase of Virginia resources, goods or services. Information is available at Film.Virginia.org, and the Film Office staff will help to determine which fund is best suited to an individual project.

Additional state incentives include an exemption from the state's 5-percent sales-and-use tax in the purchase of production-related supplies or equipment. This exemption is realized at the time of purchase and can be obtained by simply submitting a form to the merchant. Virginia hotel or motel stays will be exempt from the state's lodging tax on the entire stay after 90 consecutive days, and an exemption from hotel taxes is available for stays of 30 days or more in some localities. (Many counties and cities in Virginia charge an additional lodging tax, often referred to as a transient occupancy tax, and the laws governing these taxes vary greatly by locality.) Additionally, most state-owned locations are provided free of charge, providing privacy in a controlled production environment.

Recent productions shot in Virginia include Steven Spielberg's highly anticipated film *Lincoln* (starring Daniel Day Lewis, Tommy Lee Jones and Sally Field), Jon Abraham's short *In Captivity* (a 48 Hour Film Project competition winner in 2011), and an adaptation of David Baldacci's

book
Wish You Well
. Suffolk's New Dominion Pictures has shot episodes for "A Haunting" while the Richmond-based Dreams Factory and In Ear Audio are currently working on a cooperative documentary project with China's CCTV. And Hampton-based m2 Pictures, well known for its Discovery Channel and National Geographic documentaries, has been shooting "Cold Case."

WEST VIRGINIA

West Virginia has always been blessed with a wealth of spectacular location options that all searchable through the **West Virginia Film Office's** online locations library of over 19,000 images. Kevin Townsend, executive producer and creative director at Science + Fiction, had no idea that West Virginia offered the types of locations and top quality of crew that it did. "I'm kicking myself for not having shot here sooner," he admits. The state's wide array of locations include a retired gothic-style state penitentiary in Moundsville (recently used as a Mexican prison in the dramatic sport film
Warrior

) and the famous “River On Demand,” West Virginia’s signature locale that enables the Gauley River’s flow to be modulated to suit production needs each November.

The West Virginia Film Industry Investment Act provides up to 31-percent tax credits for in-state spends (27-percent base plus 4 percent for 10 or more resident crew or talent hires). Set at $10 million annually, the fund has no caps and requires a minimum spend of only $25,000. Eligible projects include feature films, TV movies and series, commercials, music videos, commercial still photography and postproduction. Purchases and rentals of tangible personal property and services directly used in production are also exempt from state sales tax (at 6 percent), excluding food, beverages and motor fuel. Additionally, lodging stays at the same facility in excess of 30 consecutive days are exempt from state tax (6 percent) and local taxes (this varies by region). Filming on most state-owned properties is fee free and, depending upon the scope of the production, the Film Office is able to assist with negotiations for soft incentives (like discounts on office space and vehicle rentals) given their established statewide network on many services throughout the region.

Aaron Hanlon, production marketing manager at MTD Consumer Products, only has positive comments about West Virginia. “The hospitality, knowledge and willingness of the crew and community exceeded our expectations,” says Hanlon. “Our experience will undoubtedly keep West Virginia at the top of our list for future productions.” With Hollywood films like *Unstoppable* (starring Denzel Washington), *Super 8* and *The X-Files: I Want to Believe* in its rear view, West Virginia continues its busy filmmaking tradition in 2012 by hosting many more features and TV productions, such as *Out of the Furnace*, *Doughboy*, *Random Acts of Christmas*, MTV’s “16 and Pregnant” and History Channel’s “American Pickers.”

WASHINGTON, D.C.

Aided by its iconic sites, such as the Lincoln Memorial, Pentagon and the White House, Washington D.C. has long been a visual prize for compelling political dramas like *State of Play* or smart political comedies like HBO's "Veep." The state offers film and TV productions a long list of useful locales, and the
D.C. Office of Motion Picture and Television Development
(
MPTD
) Website features a Locations Gallery where location scouts can find a variety of ideal shooting venues ranging from apt action settings to the majestic Jefferson Memorial.
Recently shot and upcoming D.C. productions include the much anticipated action flick
The Bourne Legacy
(starring Jeremy Renner),
Argo
(directed by and starring Ben Affleck),
Heatseekers
, "Life After Top Chef," "Restaurant: Impossible," "America's Most Wanted," "The Marriage

Counselor," "Covert Affairs," "House of Cards" and "Who Do You Think You Are?"

Enacted in 2006, the Film D.C. Economic Incentive Grant Fund encourages the hiring of local production crew and talent while utilizing the multitude of the state's cinematic offerings. "Curren tly, the Film D.C. Incentive Program is unfunded," reports Crystal Palmer, director of the MPTD. "In October 2012, the D.C. Office of Motion Picture and TV Development will be commissioning a study to determine what type of incentives the District needs to offer to the industry to increase the level of production activity in the city." Plans are also underway to create a comprehensive workforce training program for District residents working alongside local community colleges/universities; nonprofit organizations; and industry businesses to build specific skills conducive to long-term, sustainable careers.

Virginia, West Virginia and Washington, D.C. are all working hard to keep features interested in the highly prized Capital Region while ensuring that solid systems are set in place to encourage and promote local production talent in both domestic and international arenas.