

ENVISION

THE

James

*A Vision for the
James River Watershed*

June 2013

Photo: Cameron Davidson/Corbis

Chesapeake
Conservancy



About the Envision The James Team:

James River Association (JRA)

Bill Street, Executive Director

The James River Association was founded in 1976 with a mission to be the guardian of the James River, to provide a voice for the river and take action to promote conservation and responsible stewardship of its natural resources. To address water quality issues throughout the watershed, the organization partners with corporations, local governments, farmers, landowners, individuals and state and national agencies. JRA carries out its work through its four core programs: River Advocacy, Education & Outreach, Watershed Restoration and its Riverkeeper program. <http://www.jamesriverassociation.org/>

Chesapeake Conservancy

Joel Dunn, Executive Director

The Chesapeake Conservancy is a non-profit organization, founded in 2008, whose mission is to strengthen the connection between people and the watershed, conserve the landscapes and special places that sustain the Chesapeake's unique natural and cultural resources, and encourage the exploration and celebration of the Chesapeake as a national treasure. The Conservancy advances this mission through partnerships and citizen engagement; educational programs; land conservation, public access and recreational opportunities; advocacy; and signature initiatives such as the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail and Chesapeake Gateways and Watertrails Network. <http://www.chesapeakeconservancy.org/>

National Geographic Maps

Frank Biasi, Director of Digital Development

The National Geographic Society is one of the world's largest nonprofit scientific and educational organizations. Founded in 1888 to "increase and diffuse geographic knowledge," the Society's mission is to inspire people to care about the planet. It reaches more than 400 million people worldwide each month through its official journal, National Geographic, and other magazines; National Geographic Channel; television documentaries; music; radio; films; books; DVDs; maps; exhibitions; live events; school publishing programs; interactive media; and merchandise. <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/>

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Organizations Attending the December 2012 Partner Workshops:

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Albemarle County, Alleghany Highlands Chamber of Commerce, Appomattox County, Boutetourt County, Central Virginia Land Conservancy, Discover Lynchburg, Fluvanna County, Friends of Appomattox County, James River State Park, Lexington and Rockbridge Tourism Development Office, Lynchburg College, Lynchburg Museum System, Lynch's Landing, Natural Bridge Soil and Water Conservation District, Nelson County, Region 2000Lac, Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission, Robert E. Lee Soil and Water Conservation District, Rockbridge County, Rockcliffe Farm Retreat, Scottsville, Town of Glasgow, Trout Unlimited, Twin River Outfitters, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service, Valley Conservation Council, Virginia Canals and Navigation Society, Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, Virginia Tech

Richmond

Capital One, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Chesterfield County, City of Richmond, Henrico County, Goochland County, James River Advisory Council, James River Park System, Kayak Richmond, MeadWestvaco, Nansemond River Preservation Alliance, National Park Service, Richmond Metropolitan Convention and Visitors Bureau, Richmond Regional Planning District Commission, Riverside Outfitters, The Nature Conservancy, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, Virginia Outdoors Foundation

Williamsburg

Chickahominy Tribe, Christopher Newport University Center for Wetland Conservation, City of Newport News, Citizens for a Fort Monroe National Park, College of William and Mary, Colonial Soil and Water Conservation District, Eco Discovery Park, Friends of Powhatan Creek Watershed, Hampton Roads Planning District Commission, Isle of Wight County, James City County, Nansemond River Preservation Alliance, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Park Service – Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail, Surry County, The Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation, USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service, Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, Virginia Living Museum

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A Vision for the James River Watershed

The Envision The James (ETJ) initiative, launched by a team comprised of the Chesapeake Conservancy, the James River Association and National Geographic Maps in 2011, has encouraged individuals, community leaders and organizations to describe their vision for the James River watershed. The team used public meetings and surveys to solicit input from the James River community to develop a shared vision. Participants overwhelmingly envision clean and accessible waterways, restored streamside vegetation and wildlife habitat, local economies benefitting from tourism and recreation, the celebration of culture and heritage and protected landscapes. The Envision The James Team (ETJ Team) is committed to the collaboration, foresight, and leadership required to achieve this vision. The ETJ Team supports goals of protecting, restoring, and passing on the numerous natural, cultural and historic assets of the James River watershed to future generations.

To realize the vision, two core initiatives are proposed in this document that the ETJ Team believes will bring renewed focus and support to long-standing efforts along the river corridor and throughout the watershed. The two core initiatives are:



- **James River Heritage and Recreation Corridor Initiative**
- **James River Wildlife Habitat and Landscape Conservation Initiative**

In order to achieve the goal of each initiative, Envision The James will provide communities and partners with a mechanism for garnering leadership and coordinating assistance to plan and implement regional and river-wide activities in

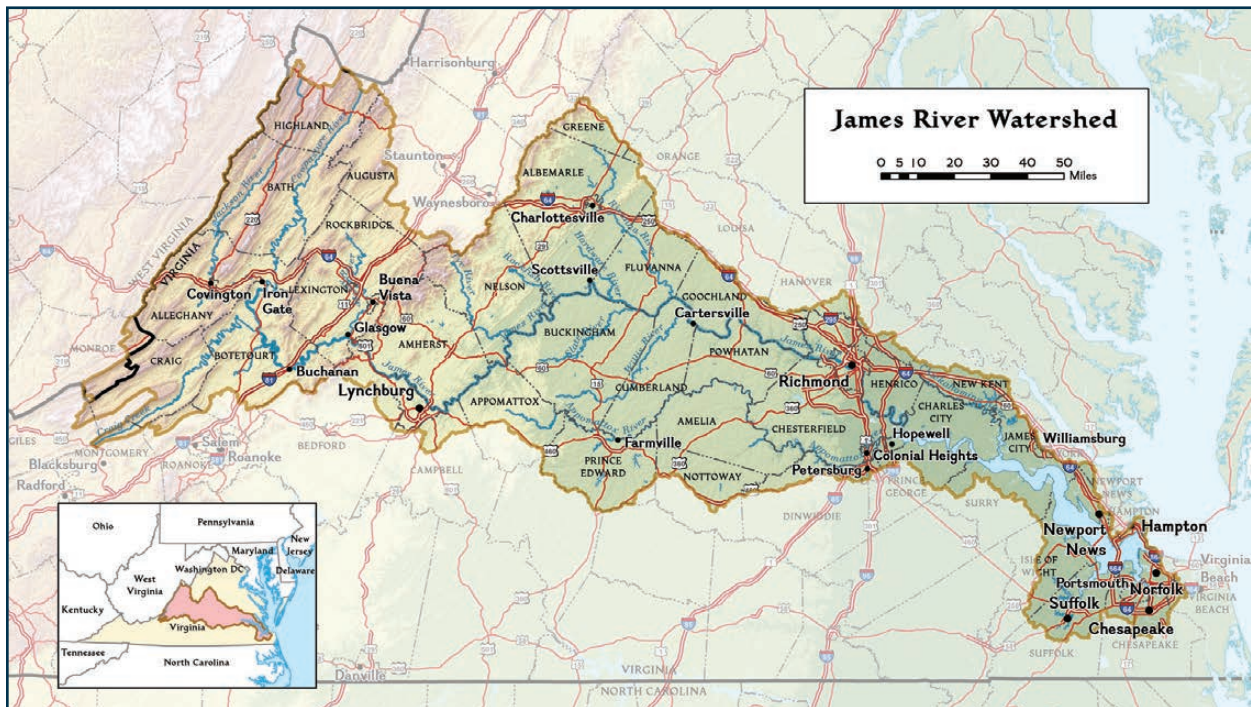


support of these core initiatives. Implementation will involve a two-pronged approach. Envision The James will support new and ongoing projects by helping connect them with the additional resources they need. Envision The James will also bring new tools and approaches to the table.

The path forward will include a new and powerful internet presence to promote heritage tourism and recreation, as well as a community resource toolkit for showcasing important assets and guiding participation in a coordinated marketing approach. New restoration and conservation partnerships will be formed to identify and implement on-the-ground projects that help landowners and communities achieve their stream restoration,

wildlife habitat and land conservation goals. Additionally, new efforts will be directed towards administrative and legislative authorizing mechanisms to boost funding resources and ensure a prioritization of resources occurs to achieve tangible results.

During the spring of 2013, the ETJ Team will utilize focus groups, one-on-one meetings, and internet-based tools to solicit feedback about the vision and potential participation from a broad array of partners. The ETJ Team is eager to find partners who believe their current efforts will benefit from being affiliated with the vision or who seek to incorporate existing or new efforts into the vision.



Background

In February 2011, the Chesapeake Conservancy, James River Association and National Geographic Maps launched a community-based conservation initiative called Envision The James. The goal of this effort is:

To achieve a shared vision and on-going commitments from communities and partners throughout the James River Basin to value, sustain, and enhance the region's natural and cultural heritage, local economies, wildlife abundance, and outdoor recreation assets for present and future generations.

This multi-year conservation initiative is focused on gathering and sharing ideas about the future of the James River corridor and watershed to produce a regionally and locally-endorsed community action agenda that supports the effort's goal. A variety of communications and planning tools are being used to accomplish this goal, including:

- A community visioning process to shape a consensus-based conservation agenda
- Outreach and engagement through:
 - A river-wide Conservation Council of community and business leaders
 - A network of partners who share common interests in the natural and cultural assets of the James River
 - Community workshops and listening sessions across the watershed
 - EnvisionTheJames.org website that includes dozens of online maps, stories, photos, videos, polls, and surveys
 - Map-based resource assessments and data analysis

The vision presented in this document is a first approximation of the concepts and directions the ETJ Team believes have a base level of

support among potential partners and communities at regional and local levels. The task of producing a widely supported vision and action agenda is occurring through a three-phased process of: 1) engaging the public in the initial visioning work to articulate preferred concepts for future action; 2) enlisting the support of local and regional partners to plan, coordinate and lead activities that will transform the vision into reality; and 3) demonstrating on-the-ground results with a diverse group of partners that are committed to significant short- and long-term implementation projects. The substance of the draft vision is based on the following information sources:

- A community survey of 522 respondents (detailed below)
- A conservation concepts survey and workshop for 93 state, local, and federal government agency representatives and other individuals from non-profit, academic, and business organizations (detailed below)
- An analysis of recent surveys and research related to the ETJ initiative's four principal themes, including:
 - 2011 Capital Region Collaborative Resident Survey by the Southeastern Institute of Research
 - 2011 Virginia Outdoors Demand Survey by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation
 - 2011 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
 - Virginia Environmental Attitudes Survey conducted by Christopher Newport University's Judy Ford Wason Center for Public Policy and sponsored by Virginia Environmental Endowment

- University of Virginia, School of Architecture – County Profiles of Appomattox, Nelson, Albemarle, Buckingham, Fluvanna, and Cumberland Counties compiled by students enrolled in PLAC 5240 – Collaborative Planning for Sustainability, December 2012

- Geo-spatial analyses using existing data sources and studies from a variety of credible sources

This background research has affirmed that Virginians believe outdoor recreation opportunities are important for quality of life and a prosperous local economy; that wildlife-related activities add significant revenue to Virginia's economy; that the James River is seen as *the key natural asset* by communities within the river corridor; and that citizens understand protection of natural resources, like water quality and habitat, is essential if they hope to continue benefiting from the James River.

Community Survey

From June through October 2012, the ETJ Team conducted a survey of 522 respondents to better understand how communities and potential partners see the future conservation and use of James River resources. The survey was administered both at community meetings and through an internet-based survey instrument. Respondents comprised a cross-cut of the population, with nearly equal participation by male and female respondents and a range of age groups. An executive summary of the survey results is posted online at <http://www.envisionthejames.org/your-vision/web>. Some key results from the survey that helped form this draft vision are cited below, categorized by the four principal themes of the initiative.

Recreational Trails and River Access

- The most popular river related activities were hiking/biking, paddling, and wildlife watching

- 83% of respondents agreed that greater public access to the river and more trails in the river corridor would benefit their community
- 80% of respondents agreed that a system of access points and camping options along the James is needed

Heritage and Geo-tourism

- 85% of respondents strongly agreed that the James River is a strong draw to their area
- 83% of respondents agreed that their community would benefit from a regional effort to promote the entire James River for tourism and recreation
- 75% of respondents agreed that the James River in their area should be promoted for tourism

Conservation and Restoration

- Respondents identified streams with poor water quality (88%) and streams with no forested buffers (75%) as the greatest restoration needs along the James
- After water quality, respondents were most concerned about suburban sprawl and development

Wildlife

- After water quality and suburban sprawl, respondents were most concerned about wildlife habitat loss and wildlife population decline
- 90% of respondents agreed that more wildlife habitat conservation is needed in the James River watershed
- Respondents believed that additional wildlife enhancement efforts should occur on both publicly owned lands and private lands in consultation with landowners

Partner Survey and Workshops

In December 2012, the ETJ Team conducted a series of three partner workshops with representatives from government agencies, non-governmental organizations, businesses, and academic institutions. The ETJ Team presented participants with a series of concepts and polled

them – asking which concepts had the most potential for advancing the four ETJ themes. These concepts (see below) were intended to show the group approaches that have been successful across the country and to stimulate thinking about how these and other concepts might be adapted to the James River. Most of the concepts incorporated regional collaboration and multi-partner participation to achieve a greater impact.

Vision Concepts Presented to Partners

Recreational Trails and River Access

Develop and promote a **river-wide system of waterfront public parks with boat launch facilities and camp sites** (no modern hook-ups).

Link existing and planned land **trails , parks, and scenic roadways to form a continuous network** along the River. (e.g. Implement James River Heritage Trail)

Develop access points and interpretive programs along the River that **relate to the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail**.

Increase public access for river users through a network of **willing private landowners**.

Heritage and Geo-tourism

Develop a **river-wide plan for communities and businesses** to support sustainable tourism initiatives focused on stewardship of James River cultural, historical, and natural resources.

Identify **development areas or districts** for specific waterfront heritage and place-based tourism activities unique to each district.

Help **communities develop and implement their own** heritage and place-based tourism initiatives based on **achieving a common standard** that emphasizes sustainable cultural, historical, and natural resource tourism.

Conservation and Restoration

Identify key locations for future **community greenways**, which eventually may be linked to create a regional greenway system.

Develop and implement a coordinated, broad scale **riparian buffer conservation planting initiative** along unprotected, high-value streams and rivers by engaging willing landowners.

Focus land **conservation efforts on large land parcels** along the James River corridor where willing landowners want to establish vegetative buffers for view shed protection, wildlife, water quality, or other purposes.

Work with a **network of local and regional land trusts** to protect representative landscapes of exceptional scenic, wildlife, historic, or cultural value throughout the James River corridor.

Wildlife Habitat

Identify and protect **additional publicly accessible natural habitats** to conserve diversity of wildlife throughout the watershed.

Engage **willing, private landowners** in a watershed-wide fish and wildlife conservation and stewardship program.

Build upon **existing state, federal, and non-profit wildlife refuges, management areas and reserves** to enhance wildlife habitat conservation.

Results from the group polling sessions revealed where strong or limited potential existed for various concepts. Differences between needs in the Upper, Middle and Lower river communities also became apparent. The concepts with the strongest potential, based on number of votes, for each theme are highlighted below.

1. **Recreational Trails and River Access:** *Link existing and planned land trails, parks, and scenic roadways to form a continuous network along the river (survey response “1b”).*
2. **Heritage and Geo-tourism:** *Identify development areas or districts for specific waterfront heritage and place-based tourism activities unique to each district (survey response “2b”).*
3. **Conservation and Restoration:** *Identify key locations for future community greenways, which may eventually be linked to create a regional greenway system (survey response “3a”).*
4. **Wildlife:** *Build upon existing state, federal and non-profit wildlife refuges, management areas, and reserves to enhance wildlife habitat conservation (survey response “4c”).*

Guiding Principles for Envision The James

After the group poll, participants broke into theme-based discussion groups to further explore needs and opportunities within and across the themes. The breakout groups were designed to facilitate a wide-ranging discussion of what approaches might contribute to a successful conservation vision. Participants were also asked to think about other potential concepts, outside of those presented by the ETJ Team. The groups identified significant details, experiences and process-oriented observations that helped to clarify what refinements and steps might be needed to launch successful local and regional initiatives. Some overall principles that are necessary to guide the vision emerged as follows:

- **Broad Community Support.** A broad, community base of support is essential to make ETJ goals a reality. Where possible, conservation initiatives should make use of existing plans, programs, and resources. New partners, from both the public and private sectors, should be encouraged to join and support the initiative. Endorsements of the vision at the community level and by other key decision-making bodies should be sought.
- **Leadership and Organizational Strength.** The ETJ Team is fully committed to leading, organizing and implementing key vision-related components. At the same time, the ETJ Team cannot do it alone. It is vitally important to have a broad-based coalition of groups to provide ongoing refinements and implementation of chosen vision initiatives. The ETJ Team together with coalition leaders can form bridges across multiple agencies and organizations, as well as help plan and orchestrate sustained efforts on a common set of priorities to maximize results.
- **Focused Initiatives with Economic Benefits.** The vision concepts with the greatest potential for conservation and economic benefits at the community and regional levels will be strategically combined and integrated to achieve greater focus and a higher likelihood of success.
- **Demonstrating and Communicating Ongoing Results.** There is a strong need to demonstrate tangible results in the near future and to continually communicate the significance and connections between individual projects and achieving long term ETJ goals.

Vision Elements

Building on existing public and partner support for the development of a watershed-wide vision was a key starting point for the ETJ initiative. The ETJ Team felt strongly about using a “bottom-up” approach to determine what themes, key concepts,

and directions would best align with public sentiments. Although the process is admittedly far from perfect, it is distinguished from many typical planning efforts by having no pre-conceived pathways or “alternatives” to reaching outcomes described in the vision statement. Before the four thematic areas were chosen, the community-based survey, described above, was conducted to confirm the level of interest and support in various dimensions of the themes. Survey questions ranged from testing opinions about what is most important to advance community goals; to determining what government, non-profit or private entities should exert leadership on various issues. Other public surveys and research efforts relevant to envisioning the future of the James River watershed were also assessed to help confirm whether particular aspects of a theme were, in fact, things that people cared about or would benefit their community.

Following this initial outreach effort, the themes were expanded to include several potential “vision concepts” that have been used in other parts of the region and the nation to achieve conservation and resource management objectives. These concepts were not meant to be fixed alternatives that partners and the public were to choose or eliminate from consideration. Rather, the concepts served a valuable purpose in helping partners to adapt, blend, or combine them and other ideas into something that could work for the James River. This base of information and the guiding principles for ETJ helped to *provisionally* determine that the four thematic elements used in the initial planning phases of the vision process are now best reflected in the consolidation of two core initiatives:

- James River Heritage and Recreation Corridor Initiative
- James River Wildlife and Landscape Conservation Initiative

These initiatives will gain strength by sharing information, resources, and approaches where appropriate and by being flexible enough to move forward with local conditions and projects where they stand. The ETJ Team envisions these initiatives



developing in unique ways with the support and influence of partners in five geographic regions along the James. The five regions are naturally-defined as the Lower James, Richmond Region, Middle James, Lynchburg Region, and Upper James. The two core initiatives and the geographic delineations are only in the formative stages of development and will be refined in consultation with potential key partners to determine the level of support and interest generated around them. After consensus about the essential elements of the vision initiatives is reached, work must continue to develop a governance structure that will provide the necessary leadership and coordination to maintain progress. Fortunately, the draft initiatives build upon a variety of existing and future community, non-profit, and government planning activities and capital infrastructure investments. Therefore, they already reflect a strong measure of public support. A sampling of these activities is included in the *Ongoing Efforts and Existing Plans* section (Appendix A), found at the end this document.

The Case for a James River Heritage and Recreation Corridor Initiative

Based on the information and feedback gathered by the ETJ Team, it has become increasingly evident that *accessing, enjoying and sustaining an abundance of cultural and recreation assets through a cohesive network of heritage sites and land and water trails is one of the best and most viable ways to reap the economic and quality of life benefits that the James River corridor has to offer.*

The watershed has a wide range of heritage and recreation features, some of which are outlined in the table below.

An orchestrated effort linking these regional assets with local community infrastructure along the river corridor can magnify the scope, scale, and diversity of authentic heritage and place-based travel experiences available to residents and visitors. When managed in a sustainable manner, the potential for increased use of these river corridor assets can support existing tourism-related employment, create new jobs, and direct more revenue to maintain and enhance these features.

Heritage and Recreation Corridor Features by Geographic Area

Feature Type	Feature Statistics			Source Comments
	Upper James	Middle James	Lower James	
Historic Plantations	0	5	28	National Park Service
Sites on National Register of Historic Places	140	380	373	National Register of Historic Places
National Park Service Designated Chesapeake Bay Gateway Sites	1	1	18	National Park Service
River Access Sites: a mix of public & private marinas & parks. Includes Appomattox, Chickahominy, Jackson, Maury & Rivanna R.	26	31	110	James River Association maps; Chesapeake Bay Program Access Study
Land Trails (miles): approximately 6,400 miles of existing land trails and those under development in the watershed.	1,800	2,200	2,400	East Coast Greenway (Lower James); Virginia birding and wildlife trails; Scenic Byways
Navigable Waterways (miles)	229	465	173	Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries
Water Trails (miles): Blueways, VA Water Trails and the John Smith National Historic Trail				John Smith Trail: 535mi. Blueway/Water Trails: 218mi
Virginia Scenic River (miles)	9.75	73.8	35.2	Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation

* Upper James: West of Lynchburg, Middle: Between Richmond and Lynchburg, Lower: East of Richmond to Chesapeake Bay

Planning Needs for the James River Heritage and Recreation Corridor Initiative

How this proposed initiative can be effectively executed to engage all of the necessary players is a key question. The partners currently involved with these efforts have already helped identify some critical planning needs, observations, and recommendations that point the way forward. These include:

- Establishing a broad, overarching theme that is flexible enough for communities to tell their own story, yet still showcase regional recreation and heritage resources
- Developing a river-wide plan that provides a template and motivation for local participation
 - This plan will support leveraging and respecting existing local and regional master plans, where applicable, as well as encourage seeking designation for tourism districts, where appropriate, to leverage funding
- Developing a cohesive source of information for users including:
 - Online resource mapping describing the recreational and heritage resources
 - Standard orientation and user etiquette education signage at river access points
- Engaging businesses and focusing on creating business opportunities
- Engaging Virginia Tourism Corporation and major corporate players, such as railroad companies, that can help shape the initiative
- Gathering opinions and feedback from residents and other stakeholders within the watershed through online surveys and “geo-polls” (<http://www.envisionthejames.org/your-vision>).
- Respecting regional differences in the elements of primary interest to communities in the Upper, Middle, and Lower James. Some differences we

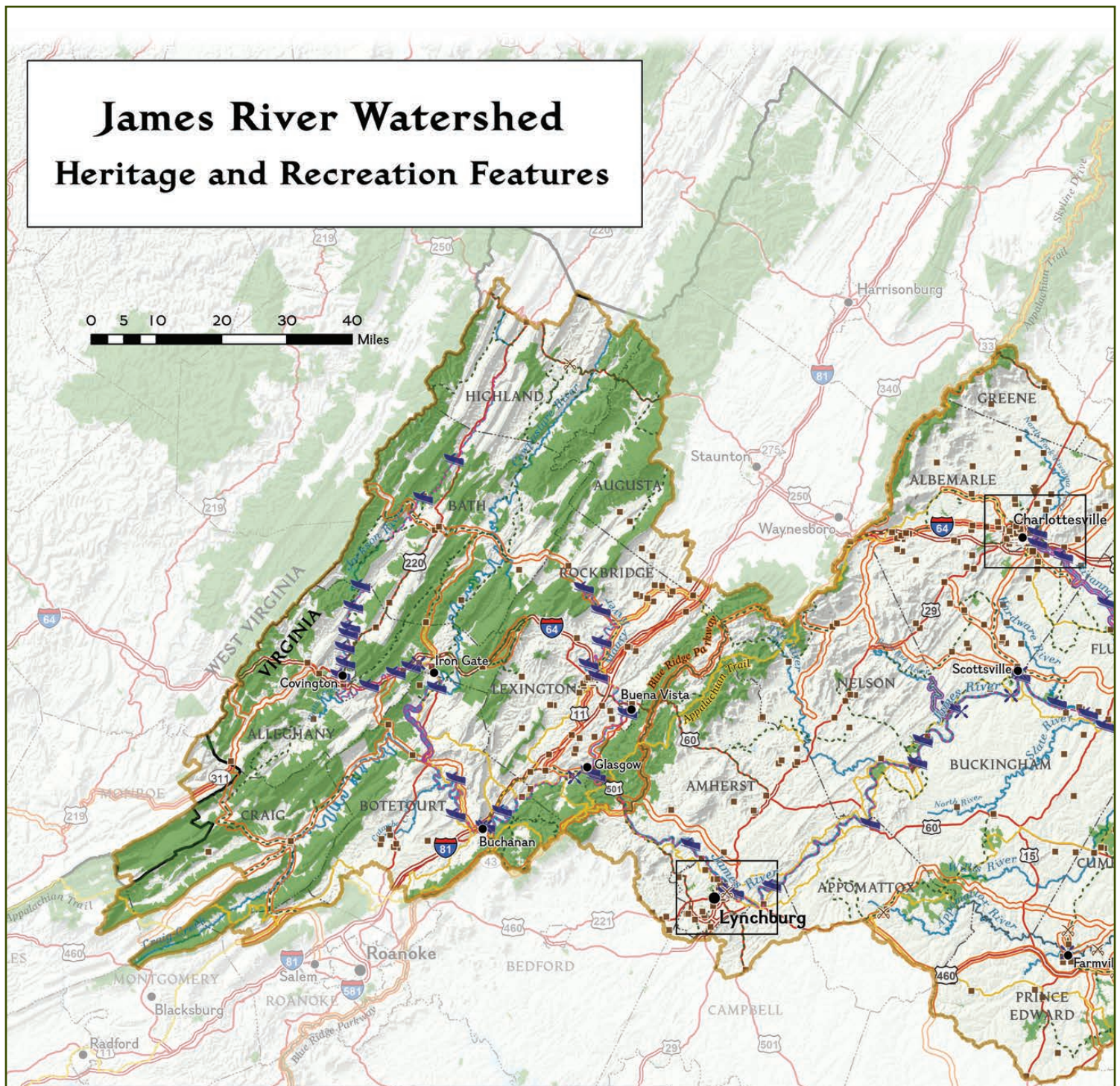
heard *may or may not represent broader sentiments in the community*. For example:

- In the Lower James,
 - primary interests include promoting existing Civil War trails, building out the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail, offering tour boats and guided trips and getting greater public access to large rural areas that offer unique experiences
 - interest in utilizing Fort Monroe and the Capt. John Smith NHT focal areas as a regional anchors
- In the Middle James,
 - primary interests are in urban areas (e.g., Richmond and Lynchburg), in connecting land trails and parks, and in using a riverfront development district concept to bring locals and visitors to the river
- In the Upper James,
 - primary interests include building out water trails on the James and tributaries, working with private landowners for recreational opportunities, and sharing the unique history of river navigation



Photo: Ira Block/National Geographic

James River Watershed Heritage and Recreation Features



Trails, Scenic Routes, & Recreation Areas

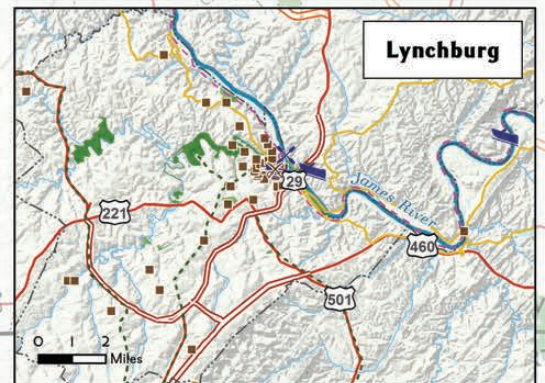
- - - - Water trail
- Bicycle & multi-use trail
- - - - Birding & wildlife trail loop
- Scenic byway
- Virginia Scenic River
- Public park or recreation area

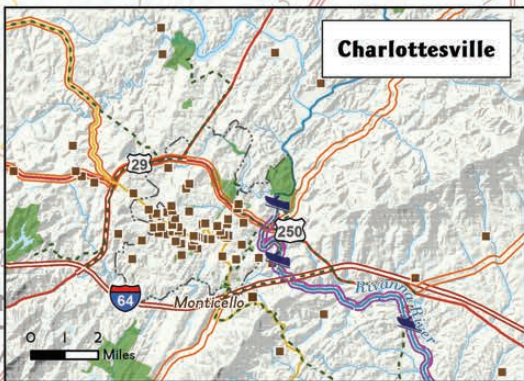
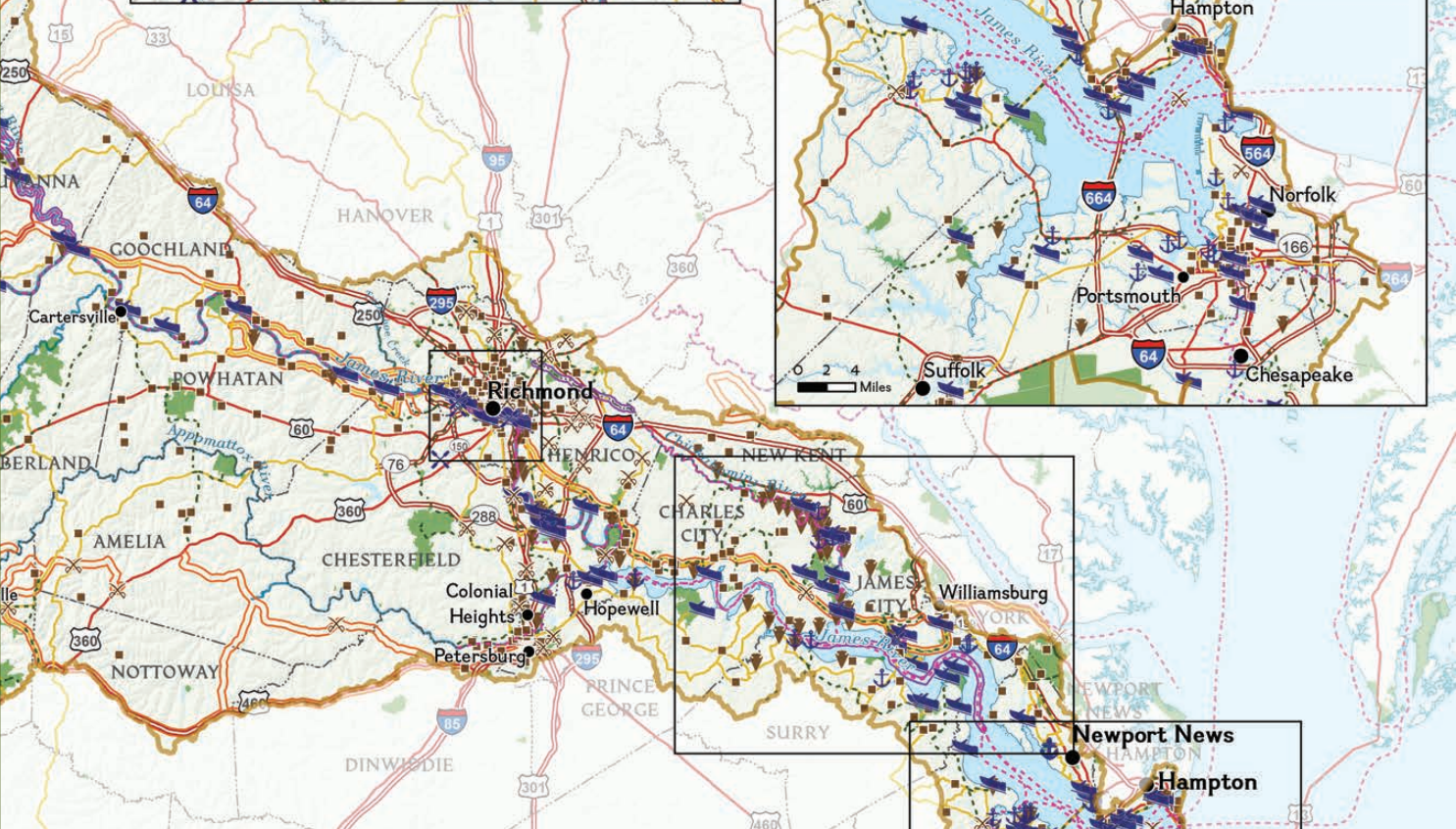
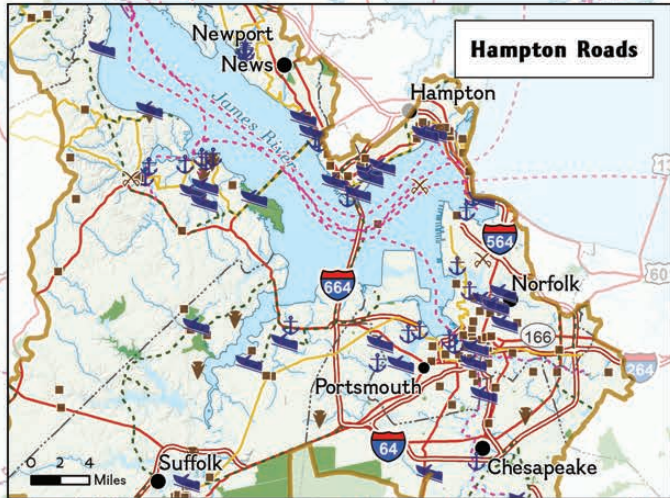
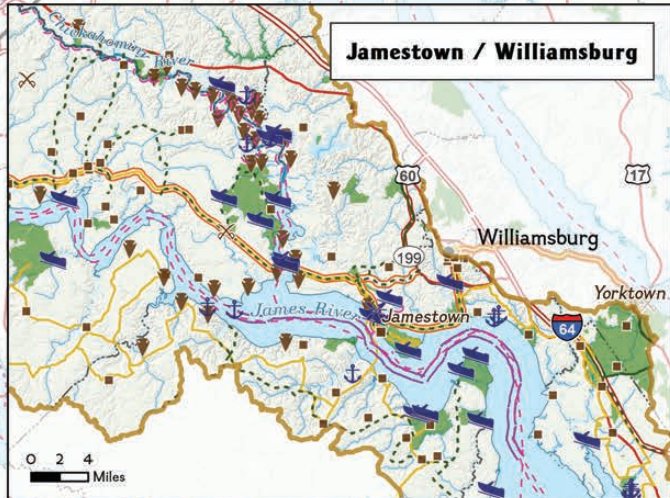
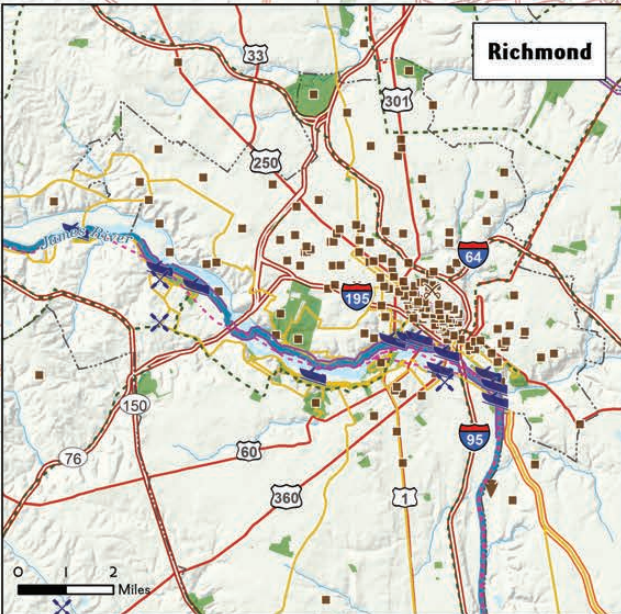
River Access

- ⚓ Public boat access
- ⚓ Private marina
- ✕ River outfitter

Historic Sites

- ✕ Historic battlefield
- ▼ Historic Indian village
- Nationally registered historic place





SOURCES:
 WATER TRAILS: National Park Service (NPS), Virginia Department of Conservation & Recreation (VA DCR) - BICYCLE & MULTI-USE TRAILS: East Coast Greenway Alliance, VA DCR, James River Association (JRA), Appalachian Trail Conference - BIRDING & WILDLIFE TRAILS: Virginia Department of Game & Inland Fisheries - SCENIC BYWAYS: National Scenic Byways Program, US Census Bureau - SCENIC RIVERS: VA DCR, United States Geological Survey (USGS) - PUBLIC PARK OR RECREATION AREAS: VA DCR - PUBLIC BOAT ACCESS: NPS, JRA - PRIVATE MARINA: NPS, JRA - RIVER OUTFITTERS: JRA, National Geographic Maps (NG Maps) - HISTORIC BATTLEFIELDS: NPS, NG Maps - HISTORIC INDIAN VILLAGES: NPS - NATIONALLY REGISTERED HISTORIC PLACES: NPS - BASE MAP: USGS, ESRI, NG Maps.



Infrastructure and Marketing Needs Examples for the Heritage and Recreation Corridor Initiative

Infrastructure and marketing needs have been identified, based on partner feedback and research into similar initiatives. Some specific infrastructure and marketing needs include:

- Creating an informational and promotional online platform that geographically illustrates opportunities for tourism and recreation along the river corridor, including links to existing resources
- Adopting new technologies that leverage mobile device technologies to drive users to new places and to share interpretive messages
- Developing a toolkit for localities to help them improve existing resource attractions, provide uniform signage with safety and orientation messages, and share unique local heritage information
- Launching a substantial marketing campaign that incentivizes local partner participation in online platform and toolkit use
- Providing opportunities within the internet-based platform and on-site signage for businesses to market themselves, helping to incubate local business development
- Building out land and river trails with overnight accommodation options, including both primitive camping and lodging, where appropriate, on both public and private lands
- Supporting new and existing programs and sites that connect people to the river, including environmental education centers, recreational guides, eco-tours, nature centers, and river-themed public events.
- Showcasing and celebrating examples of local efforts to promote heritage tourism and river recreation.

The Case for a James River Wildlife and Landscape Conservation Initiative

Based on the information and feedback gathered by the ETJ Team, it has become increasingly evident that a combination of critical needs that address water quality and wildlife habitat enhancement, as well as protection of important cultural, historical, and natural landscapes, can best be achieved through a

James River wildlife habitat restoration and landscape conservation initiative.

The watershed has a wide range of wildlife and landscape conservation features, some of which are outlined in the table below.

James River Wildlife and Landscape Conservation by Geographic Area				
Feature Type	Feature Statistics			Source Comments
	Upper James	Middle James	Lower James	
Virginia Natural Landscape Assessment (acres): Includes lands ranked as having outstanding & very high ecologic integrity	1,218,292	495,266	80,340	DCR, 2007
Important Bird Areas (acres)	520,047 (56% currently protected)	909,990 (17% currently protected)	23,413 (20% currently protected)	National Audubon Society 2009
Wildlife Refuge (acres): Includes National Wildlife Refuges, Designated Wilderness Areas, Habitat/Species Management Areas, and Virginia Wildlife Management Areas	316,451	41,382	26,962	Chesapeake Bay Program, 2012
Fishing Lakes	11	41	18	DGIF, 2008
Virginia Birding and Wildlife Trail Sites: Includes designated wildlife watching sites	51	65	51	DGIF
Public Lands (acres)	1.3 million	500,000	178,000	Chesapeake Bay Program, 2012
Percent of Streams Lacking Vegetation Buffer	≥ 24%	≥ 23%	≥ 34%	500 ft buffers consist of forest, wetlands & other vegetated areas (NLCD, 2006)
Percent of Subwatersheds with Poor or Very Poor Biotic Integrity Ranking	6%	38%	49%	Benthic Index of Biotic Integrity (Benthic IBI) values, summer 2010
Number of Barriers to Fish Passage	48	221	58	Martin and Apse, 2011

* Upper James: West of Lynchburg, Middle: Between Richmond and Lynchburg, Lower: East of Richmond to Chesapeake Bay

Citizens and partners throughout the river corridor have made it clear that improved water conditions are fundamental to achieving human quality of life goals and sustaining the region's wildlife. By focusing habitat restoration projects and landscape conservation along riparian corridors, water quality goals can be met in tandem with other goals. In addition, wildlife habitat in the context of this initiative also refers to aquatic habitat that can be restored by riparian buffers, water quality improvement, fish passage restoration and in-stream habitat projects.

Adequate open space, natural resources, wildlife habitat and working and cultural landscapes are inextricably linked to clean water needs for people and wildlife. Studies by the US Fish & Wildlife Service have shown how important these needs are to Virginians. Forty-two percent of Virginia's population participates in wildlife recreation activities, and about \$3.6 billion in expenditures for wildlife-related recreation occurred in Virginia in 2011.

Partners throughout the watershed believe that a combination of locally-tailored, multi-purpose wildlife habitat corridors or riparian buffers, focused on private lands, will benefit present and future generations in the James River watershed. Across the country, a variety of successful programs exist that could be adapted for the James to help meet private landowner conservation goals and public recreation needs while also meeting



Photo: James River Association

cultural, natural, scenic and wildlife habitat landscape conservation goals. In more urbanized landscapes, greenways have been established by communities to meet many of these needs and goals. They can be designed to include or exclude public access features, depending upon community values and landowner preferences. Riparian buffers, referred to in the context of this initiative, can be implemented in partnership with willing private landowners based on their self-defined goals, such as wildlife and fisheries enhancement, or through programs adopted by localities that protect scenic resources and water quality.

Planning Needs for the James Wildlife and Landscape Conservation Initiative

Partners have helped identify specific planning needs, including:

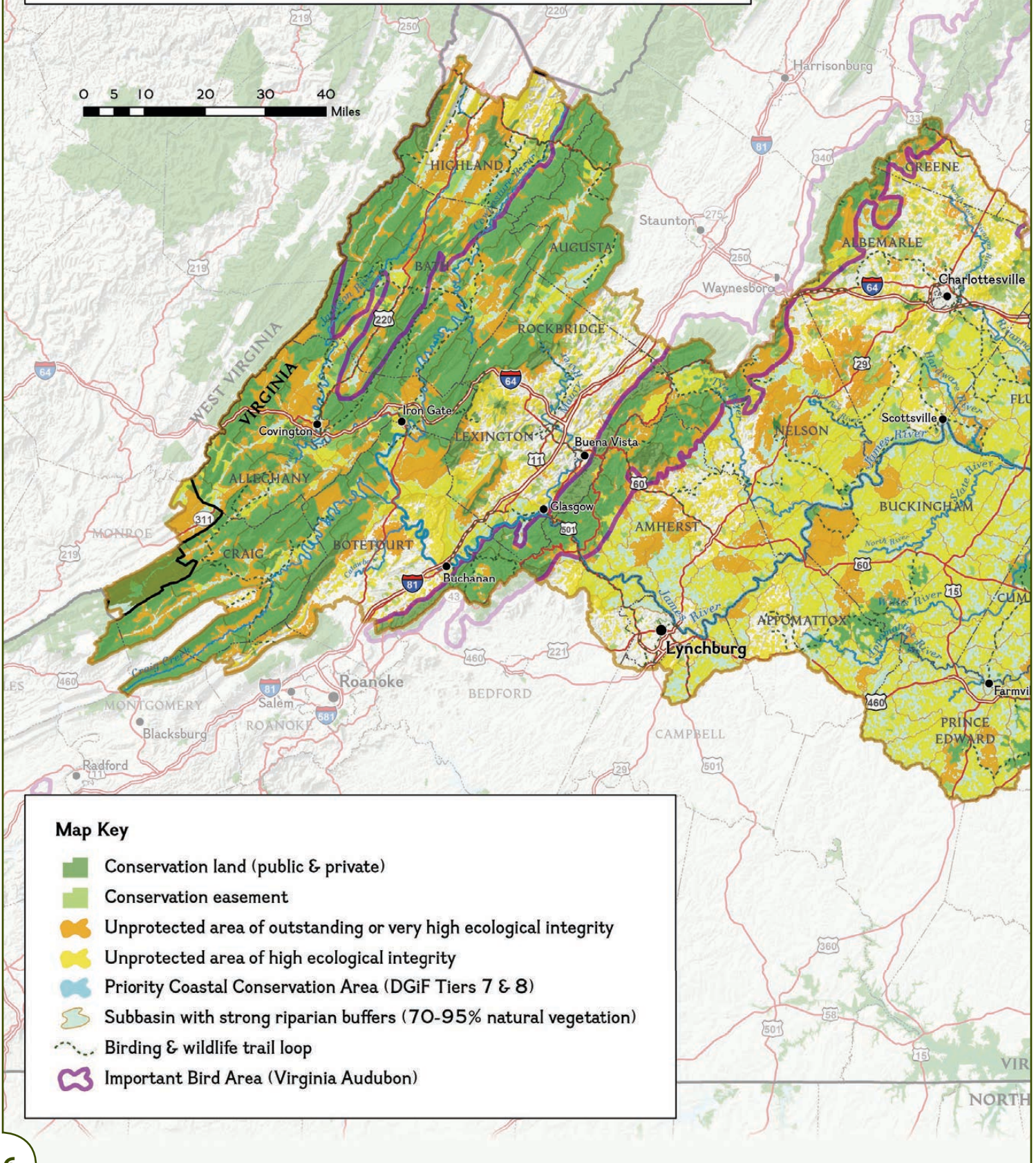
- Developing a framework for a network of multi-entity partners that come together to coordinate and share information; to identify conservation targets, gaps, and connections; and to pool resources throughout the watershed
- Conducting up-to-date assessments to determine where streamside buffers are most needed to restore water quality, fisheries, and other aquatic resources
- Determining where conservation priorities are for varying conservation needs, such as wildlife species protection, natural communities, intact ecosystems, cultural and historic landscapes
- Gathering opinions and feedback from residents and other stakeholders within the watershed through online surveys and “geo-polls” (<http://www.envisionthejames.org/your-vision>).
- Respecting regional differences in the elements of primary interest to communities in the Upper, Middle and Lower James. Some differences we heard *may or may not represent broader sentiments in the community*. For example:

- In the Lower James,
 - interest in conserving and maintaining large landowner holdings to preserve the “land base” and in landowner outreach to support uses that help sustain these areas
 - interest in focusing on fish and aquatic habitat, and connections between water quality and the food chain throughout the watershed
- In the Middle James,
 - interest in multi-purpose greenways or buffers for conservation, wildlife habitat, water quality, and recreation—public access components are dependent upon needs/opportunities
 - interest in promoting riparian buffers for large and small landowners to achieve greater water quality benefits
 - interest in building on existing resources and plans (i.e. Wildlife Action Plan) and on science that has already been done
- In the Upper James,
 - interest in a riparian buffer initiative with water quality being an important focus, as well as other landowner identified goals
 - interest in building community trust through private landowner outreach, building customized approaches for different landowners and cultivating “landowner spokespeople” to spread the word
 - Interest in having a full toolbox of conservation options available for landowners to meet a range of needs and interests



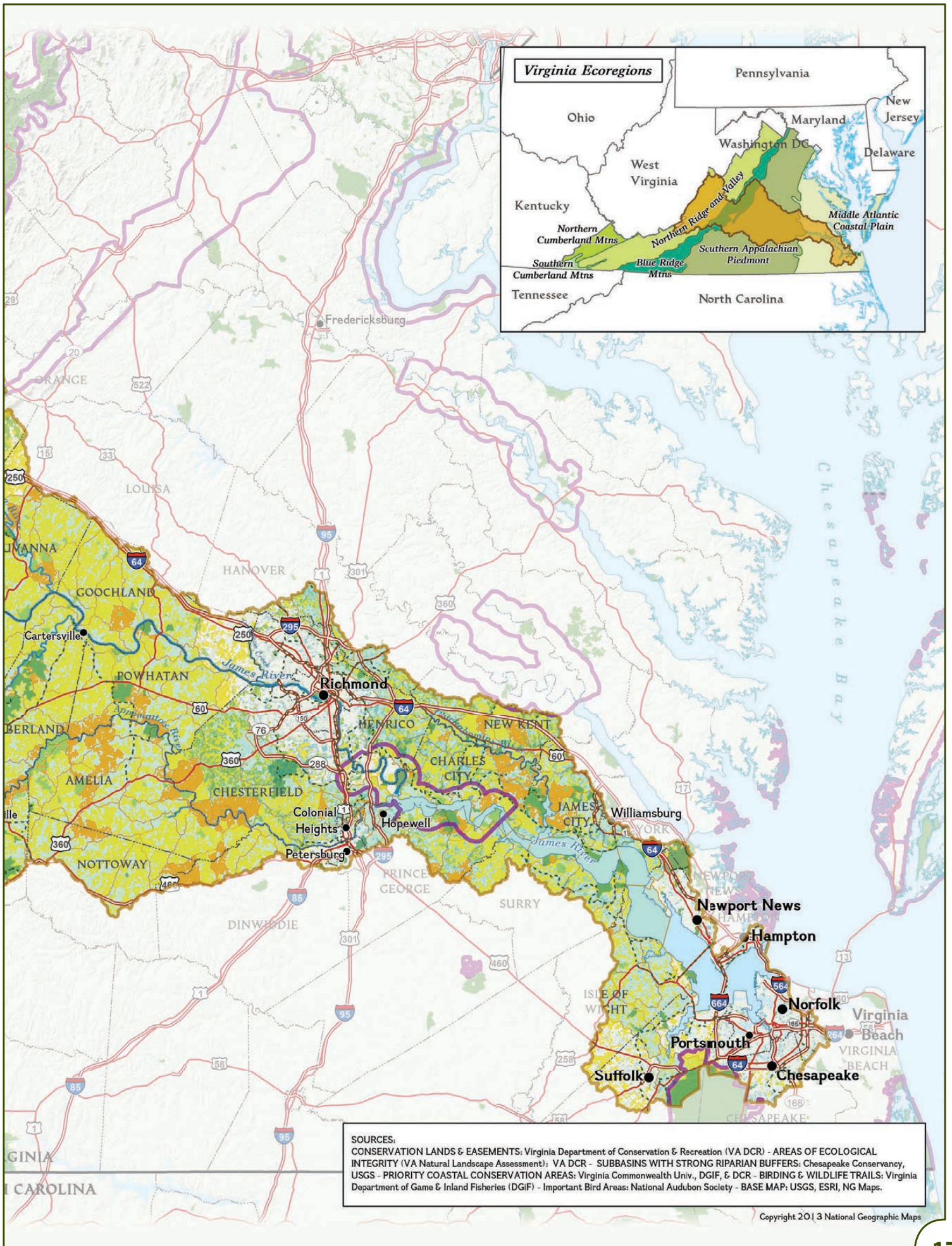
James River Watershed Wildlife & Landscape Conservation Features

0 5 10 20 30 40 Miles



Map Key

- Conservation land (public & private)
- Conservation easement
- Unprotected area of outstanding or very high ecological integrity
- Unprotected area of high ecological integrity
- Priority Coastal Conservation Area (DGIF Tiers 7 & 8)
- Subbasin with strong riparian buffers (70-95% natural vegetation)
- Birding & wildlife trail loop
- Important Bird Area (Virginia Audubon)



Infrastructure and Marketing Needs for Wildlife and Landscape Conservation Initiative

Although a good deal of work has already been done to address wildlife and landscape conservation issues, additional infrastructure and marketing needs exist, including:

- Addressing the limited capital for wildlife habitat conservation by seeking diverse sources of support, including new mechanisms for funding, business opportunities, and possible legislative efforts to create a permanent funding source
- Prioritizing conservation efforts in targeted areas of the James River watershed with agencies and organizations
- More clearly articulating the need for wildlife habitat conservation and specific actions that may be taken to the public
- Creating reliable, direct, technical and financial support services for landowners interested in riparian buffer and wildlife habitat restoration
- Establishing internet-based information, resources and tools for landowners to help accomplish individual and shared land conservation goals for landscapes with high cultural, natural, wildlife or other values
- Protecting key natural, scenic and cultural areas along the river based on existing plans as first priority
- Publishing online maps representing potential conservation landscapes, greenways, and riparian corridors as an education tool



Photo: Thea Ganoe

Moving Forward

The ETJ Team is extremely pleased with the level of feedback and participation from partners, thus far, and with the key ideas and action items that have surfaced. This feedback has led to the consolidation of the four initial themes into two core initiatives, reflecting the most pressing needs identified by the James River community through data, surveys, and community and partner meetings. These initiatives build upon a variety of existing and future community, non-profit, and government planning activities and capital infrastructure investments. Therefore, they already reflect a strong measure of public support. As the ETJ Team continues to move forward, further feedback and partner participation will be encouraged.

For more information, stories, maps, and multimedia, please visit EnvisionTheJames.org and join the community to receive updates and opportunities to participate in the Envision The James initiative.



Photo: Richard Nowitz/National Geographic

Appendix A: Ongoing Efforts and Existing Plans

The James River has been an essential natural resource for American Indians and Virginians for thousands of years. Today, communities throughout the river corridor are finding new value in the waterway. Plans and initiatives for localities throughout the watershed will be considered as an essential part of a vision for the river's future. A consistent message the ETJ Team heard in meetings and workshops was to include existing plans and initiatives. In many cases, projects and plans being applied in one part of the watershed offer lessons and inspiration to other areas.

The following is a brief summary of plans and projects that are helping derive benefit from the James, while sustaining and restoring its natural resources. For the purposes of this draft vision, the ETJ Team recognizes that some plans or partners might be missed and expects that this will be rectified as feedback from partner organizations and localities is collected.

Local, Regional, State and Federal Water Trail and Tourism Initiatives

Water trails throughout the James River watershed are in various stages of development and address different goals and scales. Water trail initiatives share the commonality of welcoming users to public waterways and informing them with orientation information through websites, paper maps, or signs. Many water trails also strive to inform users about topics such as history, ecology, and outdoor recreation ethics. Most water trails have a goal of promoting tourism and visitation, as well.

James River Heritage Trail

This concept for a braided network of water trails, bike routes and pedestrian trails running the length of the James is the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation's vision of a recreational and tourism resource that protects and promotes the natural, historical and agricultural heritage of the James River watershed. The James River Heritage Trail is an inclusive framework that embraces multiple forms of recreation and visitation.

Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail – James River Segment Plan

The James River segment of the first water-based National Historic Trail has been the subject of an outreach and planning process that has identified focus areas and key actions that will bring to life a recreational and interpretive resource telling the story of colonial exploration, Virginia Indian life, and the Chesapeake Bay watershed's ecological history. On the Lower James River, this plan and the Trail offer the most clearly established framework for welcoming and informing locals and tourists alike.

Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Watertrails Network

The Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network connects people with the Chesapeake Bay and its rivers through more than 160 exceptional parks, wildlife refuges, museums, sailing ships, historic communities, trails and more. Administrated by the National Park Service Chesapeake Bay Office, this network includes over twenty sites and trail in the James River watershed.

Upper James Water Trail

Botetourt County worked closely with a small outfitter business to create a recreational and tourism resource – the Upper James Water Trail, including an online presence, orientation signage at access points, establishment and improvement of new access points, and plans for a more cohesive system of overnight camping options for multi-day users. The Trail has also spawned a great annual clean-up effort to remove litter from the river. The effort has been made possible by support from the local, state, and federal level and is a good example how multiple designations can overlap successfully. In this instance, the water trail is a part of the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network, is partially designated as a Virginia Scenic River and has support from VDGIF, DCR and the Virginia Tourism Corporation.

Maury River Water Trail

Rockbridge County has plans to develop a Maury River Water Trail as a designated Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network site and may join Botetourt County in adding to the length of the Upper James Water Trail.

Alleghany Highlands Blueway Initiative

This marketing and tourism project by the Alleghany Highlands Chamber of Commerce and Tourism aims to work in concert with public access improvements to promote and sustain the regions lakes, streams and rivers. This is an example of a project just getting underway that hopes to harness waterways to benefit local economies in a sustainable way.

Rivanna River Water Trail

Another example of a water trail initiative on a tributary of the James. The Rivanna Water Trail is a work in progress by the Rivanna Conservation Society with similar goals to other water trail projects.

Chickahominy Water Trail

Three counties and the Chickahominy Tribe collaborated and worked with the James River Association and VA DCR on a signage and map project for the 22 miles of the tidal Chickahominy River. More access and expansion upriver are areas for improvement for this effort.

Suffolk Water Trails Initiative

The Nansemond River Preservation Alliance is spearheading the effort to increase public access opportunities in the tidewaters of Suffolk. The organization has maps and targeted points where new public access would be beneficial.

Virginia Civil War Trails

Five regional Civil War Trails programs give visitors the chance to explore hundreds of Virginia's trails on back roads. Interpretive signs provide some history while driving and walking through some of the most picturesque landscapes anywhere. Each regional Trail is outlined in free full-color maps available at state welcome centers and local/regional visitor centers.

State Parks

Three State Parks – Douthat, James River, and Chippokes – offer diverse recreational opportunities in the watershed. Managed by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, these award-winning parks offer hiking, paddling, camping, and other activities.

National Forests

The Forest Service maintains recreational trails and river access in many areas of the Upper James watershed, including a contiguous portion of the Jefferson National Forest that borders the James River that is preserved as a wilderness area.

Open Space, Habitat Protection, and Wildlife Conservation Initiatives

Protecting wildlife habitat and open space is a core part of a healthy future for the James. Many existing plans and methods for doing this exist at the local, regional, state and federal levels. Below are several examples of other initiatives that provide frameworks or ideas for this type of conservation.

Virginia Outdoors Plan

The Virginia Outdoors Plan is the state's official document regarding land conservation, outdoor recreation and open space planning. It helps all levels of the public and private sectors meet needs pertaining to those issues. The plan provides guidance for the protection of lands through actions of the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation (VLCF), and the plan is required in order for Virginia to take part in the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) program.

Virginia Wildlife Action Plan

Created by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries in 2005, the Virginia Wildlife Action Plan summarizes the key threats to terrestrial and aquatic wildlife in Virginia, and finds that habitat destruction and water pollution are the main concerns. The plan calls for greater cooperation between conservation partners.

Buffalo Creek Wildlife Corridor Project

The Rockbridge Area Conservation Council has teamed up with the Virginia Outdoors Foundation to protect wildlife habitat in a critical corridor of forested lands connecting the Alleghany and Blue Ridge Mountains and offering a safe passage under Interstate-81. This targeted land conservation project offers an example of how important habitat areas can be identified and prioritized.

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Programs

Agricultural properties along the James River are often enrolled or eligible for numerous programs through NRCS for technical and financial assistance for improving water quality, establishing riparian buffer, and restoring wildlife habitat.

Local Land Conservancy Properties and Projects

Local and regional land conservancies hold easements and develop relationships with riparian landowners and will be important to a vision for the future of the James River.

National Wildlife Refuge System

The National Wildlife Refuge System is the world's largest, most diverse collection of lands and waters dedicated to wildlife conservation. There are two refuges on the James River, Presquile and James River NWRs, that could serve as anchor points for an expanded presence on the river.

Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries

The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries maintains 39 management areas, totaling over 203,000 acres, for the benefit of all citizens for a variety of outdoor recreational opportunities. Many management areas are open for some type of hunting. These lands are purchased and maintained with hunting, fishing, and trapping license fees and with Wildlife Restoration Funds. The public is encouraged to utilize the land and enjoy the bountiful natural resources found on each area.

Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation State Natural Area Preserves

The Virginia Natural Area Preserves System was established in the late 1980's to protect some of the most significant natural areas in the Commonwealth. A site becomes a component of the preserve system once it is dedicated as a natural area preserve by the Director of the Department of Conservation & Recreation. Natural area dedication works in much the same way as a conservation easement by placing legally binding restrictions on future activities on a property. The Natural Area Preserve System includes examples of some of the rarest natural communities and rare species habitats in Virginia. This system now includes 61 dedicated natural areas, totaling 51,948 acres.

Local Comprehensive Plans

Included here are only a few examples of ways in which the James River is woven into many local plans. Taken together, the visions that localities have for the James provide a foundation for an overarching vision for the James.

Goochland County 2028 Comprehensive Plan

County Comprehensive Plans in many cases have excellent strategies for protecting and using the James. In this example, plans include a "James River Bank Overlay District" that would encourage the protection or establishment of riparian buffers for water quality and maintain scenic views from the river. Additionally, the county plans to develop park facilities and public access at key points along the James River.

Chesterfield County Comprehensive Plan

Chesterfield's plan includes provisions for "promoting the preservation and enhancement of scenic, historic, natural and open space qualities of the James and Appomattox Rivers," as well as supporting proposals for waterfront access.

James City County Comprehensive Plan

James City County's plan includes numerous provisions for protecting environmentally sensitive areas through conservation easements and zoning and for improving water quality.

City Riverfronts

Cities founded on the James have often turned their backs on a polluted and abandoned resource. But as the river's health improves and interest in recreation, wildlife and history increase, cities and towns

recognize that the river corridor can be an engine for economic success while increasing the quality of life available to residents. River corridors are often havens for wildlife in the urban setting, as well.

Downtown Lynchburg Revitalization

A city turning back towards the river on which it was founded, Lynchburg has invested in trails and public space along the riverfront. The Lynch's Landing Foundation, through the Virginia Main Street Program, has helped increase use and value in the riverfront downtown. The RiverWalk trail features 3.5 miles of paved path for walking, jogging and biking that invites citizens to get exercise and commune with nature. These efforts coincide with Lynchburg's large investment in reducing its storm water runoff and addressing combined sewer overflows.

Richmond Riverfront Plan

Recognizing the central importance of the James River to the character and experience of Richmond, the city commissioned a Riverfront Plan to create a "bold strategy to revitalize 2 miles of riverfront." Focusing on redefining the city-river relationship, planners reached out to public and private stakeholders and citizens groups to ultimately create a plan that will create more pedestrian connections, open space, and access to the river. With the goal helping the river become a "dynamic year-round attraction" and community resource, the plan imagines a future where surrounding neighborhoods and private businesses are given a boost with careful public investment.

Specific Plans for New Parks and Public Access

In several cases along the James, plans exist for new parks and public access that are noted as part of a vision for the future of the James.

Powhatan State Park

DCR hopes to open this riverfront park that will provide camping, an access point, and trails in an area previously inaccessible to the public. This will represent a significant gain for recreation resources on the main stem James.

Brown and Williamson Conservation Area

In this case, Chesterfield County owns a riverfront parcel on the tidal James River that is the subject of a master plan involving low-impact development for hiking, water access and wildlife watching.

River-Based Events

Key events track the growth of interest in recognizing and celebrating the James River as a source of community pride, heritage, and identity. These are excellent forums to bring citizens together to celebrate the James and to educate the public on needs, plans, and projects.

James River Batteau Festival

Created by the Virginia Canals and Navigation Society, this annual event has been running for almost three decades, drawing attention to the rich history of navigation on the James River. The launch of the festival in Lynchburg is a large event for the city. Covering the James from Lynchburg to Richmond, the festival has grown to involve over 20 replica wooden vessels modeled after the craft that brought inland Virginia's agricultural goods to market in Richmond. This event is a great example of a celebration and promotion of the James River's heritage.

Dominion Riverrock

This Richmond-based event has become one of the largest outdoor festivals in the country. Featuring the James River as the backdrop and stage for many events, Riverrock brings everyone to the river.



Photo: Holt Messerly

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