



# DCR interoffice MEMORANDUM

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**To:** Danette Poole; FILE  
**From:** Lynn Crump  
**Date:** August 12, 2013  
**Subject:** Extension of Banister River Scenic River Designation

Currently, the Banister from the Anderson Bridge at Route 640 in Pittsylvania County to its confluence with the Dan River in Halifax County, a distance of approximately 38.4 miles, is designated as a Virginia Scenic River. After the lower Banister's evaluation in 2012, that river section was designated by the General Assembly, effective July 2013.

As a continuation of Pittsylvania County's 2012 request, DCR studied the remaining section of the Banister River within the county to determine if it qualifies for Scenic River status. The studied section begins at the U.S. Route 29 South Bridge and extends to the Route 640 Anderson Bridge. The evaluation was conducted on May 1 and 2, 2013, by staff from the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), the Virginia Tech Community Design Assistance Center (CDAC) and local interested citizens.

Based on the May evaluation, it was determined that the section of the Banister River from the Route 29 South Bridge to the Route 640 Anderson Bridge, a distance of approximately 24.9 miles, qualifies for Virginia Scenic River designation. If added to the currently designated 38.4 miles, the length of the Banister Scenic River will total 63.3 miles.

Following are the findings that support this designation.

## FINDINGS:

The upper Banister River originates in Virginia's Piedmont and flows through rural Pittsylvania County. Downstream, it merges with the Dan River near the Town of Halifax in Halifax County. The upper section runs largely through forested private lands, some of which are actively harvested for timber using clear-cut and seed-tree methods. Arguably the most scenic part of this section is the approximately 6 miles where the river runs on the northern border of the 2,712 acres White Oak Mountain Wildlife Management Area, which is managed by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries.

Historically, the river was used for fishing and hunting with virtually no development or industrialization along the river corridor. Native American and other historical sites have been identified, of which several are significant. These include Motleys Mill (circa 1789), White Falls Mill (circa 1770), the Rachel Donelson Jackson (born 1767) Birthplace Site, and a Native American Fish Weir near the small town of Markham (circa 1700s).

Approximately 70 percent of the corridor is undisturbed with buffers greater than 100 feet in width. Beyond the buffers, the land is primarily timberland. There is only one impoundment

along this section: the approximately 15 foot tall Motley Mill Dam upstream of Route 57.

Few houses are visible from the river, and there is virtually no commercial development. Only a few roads parallel the river, but these are in short segments. On average, road or power line crossings occur once every 3 miles.

Public river access is limited to infrequent road crossings. These include U.S. Route 29, Dairy View Road, VA Route 57 (Halifax Road), County Road 686 (Markham Road), and Route 640 (Riceville Road).

Since the corridor runs through the Piedmont of Virginia, there are few long or dramatic views or vistas. However, there is a one mile section of whitewater rapids near White Falls Mill with dramatic in-stream rock formations. There are also a number of rock outcroppings along the corridor, particularly in the White Oak Mountain Wildlife Management Area section. This section also has abundant spring native wildflowers and flowering shrubs which bring strong seasonal value.

Fish quality is rated as moderate. However, there are a large number of documented significant natural resources along the corridor, especially in the section up-and-downstream of Markham Road.

Historic sites, seasonal wildflowers, in-stream rock outcroppings and rock cliffs, and remoteness add interest and visual variety to this winding section of river corridor. The overall aesthetic appeal is in the medium to high range.

Based on the evaluation, the overall weighted score for the proposed Banister River extension in Pittsylvania County is 235. This score is adequately above the minimum score for designation; therefore, it is recommended that the studied 24.9 miles of the Banister be submitted for designation.

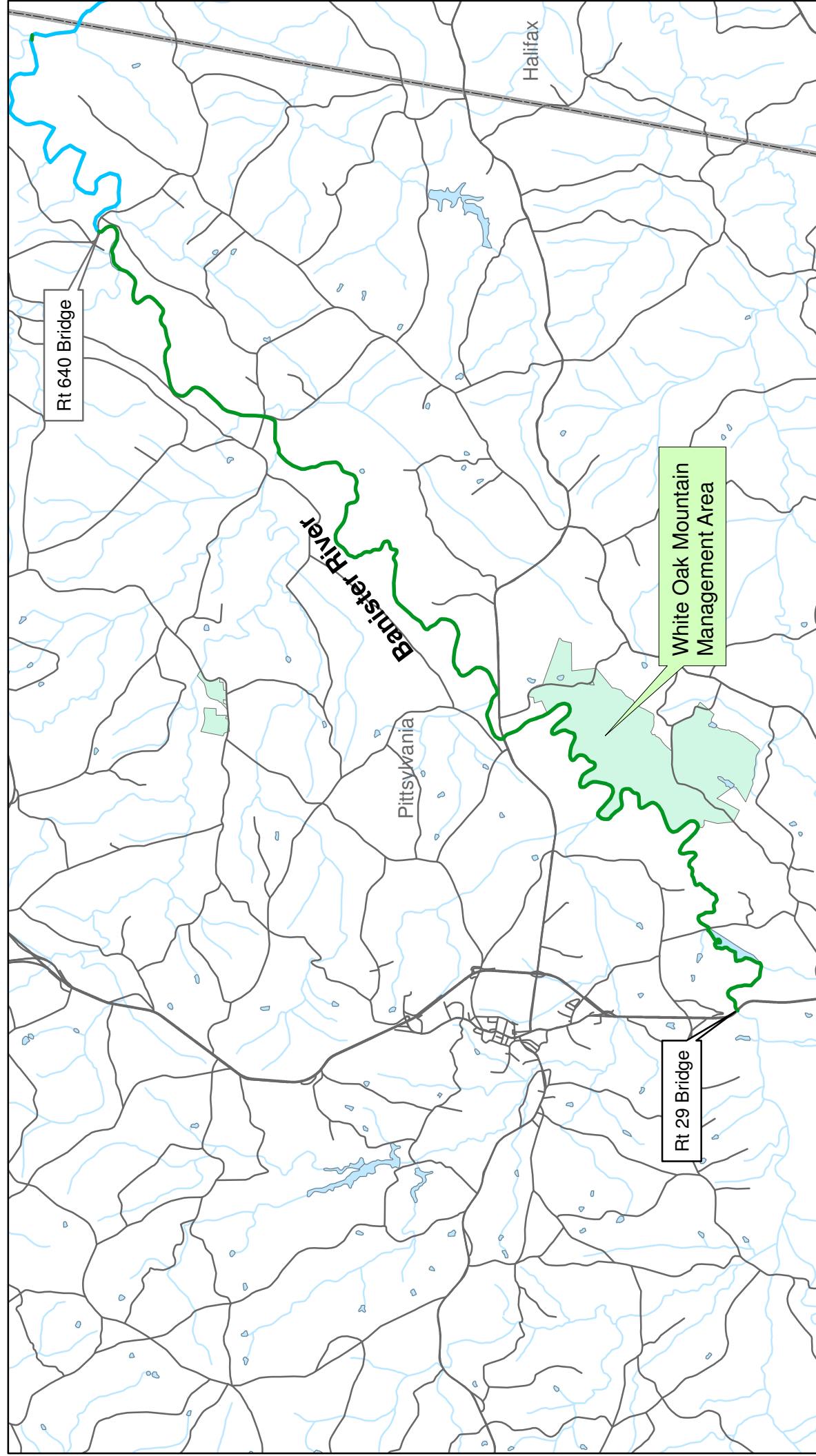
The proposed code change is as follows:

§ 10.1-411.3. Banister State Scenic River.

A. The Banister River from the Route 29 bridge in Pittsylvania County to the confluence with the Dan River in Halifax County, a distance of approximately 63.3 miles, is hereby designated a component of the Virginia Scenic Rivers System.

B. Nothing in this section shall preclude the Commonwealth or a local governing body from constructing, reconstructing, or performing necessary maintenance on any road or bridge.

*At its September 11, 2013, meeting, the DCR Board made motions of support for Scenic River Designation for the Cranesnest River, Tye River and Banister River extension.*



**Legend**


 Banister River: scenic river designation proposal

**Status of Scenic Rivers**

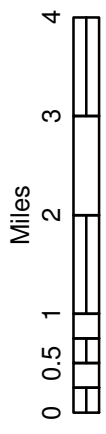
 Designated

 Qualified

 Worthy

 Roads

 County Boundary



**PITTSYLVANIA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
SCENIC RIVER DESIGNATION – BANISTER RIVER**

**RESOLUTION  
2013-08-07**

**VIRGINIA:** At a meeting of the Pittsylvania County Board of Supervisors on Monday, August 5, 2013 in the General District Courtroom of the Edwin R. Shields Courthouse Addition, the following resolution was presented and adopted:

**WHEREAS,** the Virginia Scenic Rivers Program was enacted by the Virginia General Assembly in 1970 for the purpose of identification, protection, and preservation of certain rivers, or sections of rivers, which possess high quality natural beauty; and

**WHEREAS,** the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation has been charged with administering the Scenic Rivers Program and developing an objective evaluation process to judge the suitability of river segments; and

**WHEREAS,** several Pittsylvania County residents joined staff from the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation to visit the Banister River and evaluate its eligibility for Scenic River designation; and

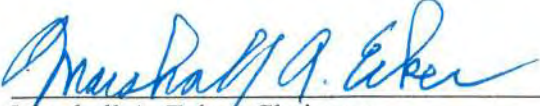
**WHEREAS,** the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation completed its evaluation and determined that the portion of the Banister River under review in Pittsylvania County was found to qualify as a Virginia Scenic River; then

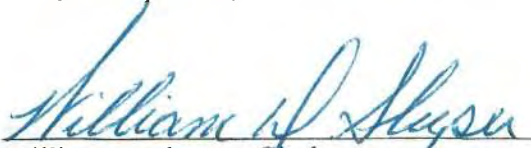
**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED,** that the Pittsylvania County Board of Supervisors does hereby support the designation of the Banister River, from the Route 29 bridge in Pittsylvania County to the point where the Banister River leaves the County at the Pittsylvania/Halifax County line, as a Virginia Scenic River; and

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** that Pittsylvania County will contact our General Assembly representatives to request that they serve as patrons for the legislation that will codify the Scenic River designation.

Given under my hand this 5th day of August, 2013.



  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Marshall A. Ecker, Chairman  
Pittsylvania County Board of Supervisors

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
William D. Sleeper, Clerk  
Pittsylvania County Board of Supervisors

Douglas W. Domenech  
Secretary of Natural Resources



David A. Johnson  
Director

**COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA**  
**DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND RECREATION**

600 East Main Street, 24<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Richmond, Virginia 23219  
(804) 786-6124

July 16, 2013

Mr. William D. Sleeper  
Pittsylvania County Administrator  
Post Office Box 426  
Chatham, Virginia 24531

Re: Scenic River Study of a Banister River Segment within Pittsylvania County

Dear Mr. Sleeper:

At your request on behalf of the Pittsylvania County Board of Supervisors, Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) staff conducted a study of a Banister River segment in Pittsylvania County. You requested that the study begin at Bearskin Creek and Strawberry Creek; however, DCR staff began the evaluation where the river was accessible. The specific segment found to meet the program criteria is from the Route 29 bridge to the Route 640 bridge, which is the beginning of the current Scenic River designation enacted by the General Assembly in March of 2013.

The field evaluation was performed on May 1 and 2, 2013. DCR staff, along with support from the Virginia Tech Community Design Assistance Center (CDAC), local citizens, and the Halifax Town Manager, paddled the study corridor. Staff is very appreciative of the support received from the local representatives who guided the trip. Background research for the study started during the spring of 2013 and continued through June. Based on the completed work, the 24.9-mile segment of the Banister River from the Route 29 bridge to the Route 640 bridge has been found to qualify for designation, and, if the County wishes to proceed with the process, the length of the current Banister Scenic River will be extended from to 38.4 miles to 63.33 miles.

Should the Board of Supervisors wish to continue with the designation process, please notify Lynn Crump of my staff. The Board will need to pass a resolution of support for extending the designation of the Banister. Extending a Scenic River designation is comparatively uncomplicated as it does not require a full report.

Another part of the designation process is for the County to contact your local General Assembly representatives to request that they serve as patrons for the legislation that will codify the designation. The attached draft legislation should prove helpful in this regard.

Mr. William D. Sleeper  
July 16, 2013  
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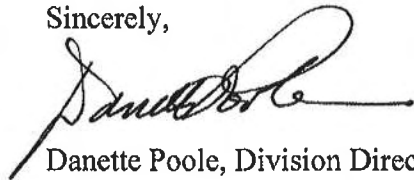
The proposed river section will be presented to the Board of Conservation and Recreation at their September 11, 2013, meeting for the membership to consider endorsing the extension of the Banister Scenic River as described in this letter and the attachment.

We look forward to hearing from you regarding your interest in pursuing the formal designation. In addition, please send this office a copy of the Board resolution of support. We anticipate that the necessary requirements can be completed in a relatively short time so that designation legislation can be presented in the 2014 General Assembly.

If you would like Department of Conservation and Recreation staff to participate in any general or public informational meetings, let us know, as we are happy to assist. We appreciate your interest in the Scenic Rivers Program, and we want to help wherever possible to facilitate extending the designation of the Banister.

For additional information, please direct your questions to Lynn M. Crump, Environmental Programs Planner, (804) 786.5054, or [Lynn.Crump@dcr.virginia.gov](mailto:Lynn.Crump@dcr.virginia.gov).

Sincerely,



Danette Poole, Division Director  
Planning and Recreation Resources

Attachment

- C: Greg Sides, Assistant Pittsylvania County Administrator
- Mark W. Moore, Pittsylvania County Director of Parks and Recreation
- Carl Espy IV, Halifax Town Manager
- Lynn M. Crump, DCR, Environmental Programs Planner

Banister River Code – extended

§ 10.1-411.3. Banister State Scenic River.

A. The **Banister River** from the Route 640-29 bridge in Pittsylvania County to the confluence with the Dan River in Halifax County, a distance of approximately 38.463.3 miles, is hereby designated a component of the Virginia Scenic Rivers System.

B. Nothing in this section shall preclude the Commonwealth or a local governing body from constructing, reconstructing, or performing necessary maintenance on any road or bridge.



**PITTSYLVANIA COUNTY**  
VIRGINIA

**William D. Sleeper**  
County Administrator  
P.O. Box 426  
Chatham, Virginia 24531  
dan.sleeper@pittgov.org



Phone (434) 432-7710  
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Gretna/Hurt (434) 656-6211  
Bachelors Hall/Whitmell (434) 797-9550

May 3, 2012

David A. Johnson, Director  
Department of Conservation and Recreation  
203 Governor Street  
Richmond, Virginia 23219-2010

Re: Proposed Scenic River Study of the Staunton River and Banister River/Pittsylvania County

Dear Mr. Johnson:

At the request of the Pittsylvania County Board of Supervisors on Monday, May 7, 2012, I am requesting that the Department of Conservation and Recreation develop the required evaluation for the river segments of the Staunton River from the Leesville Dam to the Halifax County line in Pittsylvania County as a Scenic River Review Study which would join in with the request of Halifax County for a Scenic River, as well as the Banister River from its headwaters at Bearskin Creek and Strawberry Creek, to the Halifax County line which would coordinate with Halifax County for their Scenic River designation of the Banister River.

The Board of Supervisors of Pittsylvania County is requesting the Department of Conservation and Recreation to review these segments through Pittsylvania County through Halifax County.

Your attention in this matter is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

William D. Sleeper  
County Administrator

WDS/kp

Cc: Honorable Members, Pittsylvania County Board of Supervisors  
J. Vaden Hunt, Esquire, County Attorney  
Otis S. Hawker, Assistant County Administrator  
Greg Sides, Assistant County Administrator



## Reed, Beth (DCR)

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**From:** Rhur, Robbie (DCR)  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 08, 2014 3:24 PM  
**To:** Poole, Danette (DCR)  
**Subject:** FW: Scenic River Reviews

This from the DEQ

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**From:** Kennedy, John (DEQ)  
**Sent:** Thursday, November 14, 2013 12:30 PM  
**To:** Rhur, Robbie (DCR)  
**Subject:** RE: Scenic River Reviews

Robbie – staff in our Water Quality Standards section reviewed your list of proposed Scenic Rivers designations, and their comments are:

- Offer support for the designations.
- Scenic river designations do not require different water quality standards or criteria.

Hope this is helpful,

John Kennedy

DEQ-Office of Ecology & Infrastructure

phone: 804-698-4312

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**From:** Rhur, Robbie (DCR)  
**Sent:** Monday, November 04, 2013 10:02 AM  
**To:** Kennedy, John (DEQ); Cason, Gladys (DGIF); Hubbard, Quatro (DHR); Revell, Paul F. (DOF); Jordan, Elizabeth (VDOT); Woodward, Jay (MRC)  
**Subject:** FW: Scenic River Reviews

All:

As stated in the *Code of Virginia* §10.1- 404, the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) is responsible for notifying other affected state agencies of Scenic River designation proposals. During the past several months, as requested by the localities, DCR conducted evaluations of the three river segments listed below. We ask for any comments you may have on the proposed designations to [Robbie.rhur@dcr.virginia.gov](mailto:Robbie.rhur@dcr.virginia.gov) by December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2013.

- The Cranesnest River within Dickenson County from Route 637 crossing to the Flannagan Reservoir Cranesnest Launch Ramp, a distance of approximately 10.7 miles.
- The Tye River within Nelson County from Route 738 (Tye Depot Road) to the confluence with the James River, a distance of approximately 12.7 miles.
- The Banister River extended in Pittsylvania County from the Route 29 bridge to the Route 640 bridge, where the current Banister designation ends, a distance of approximately 25 miles. In 2013, the Banister in Pittsylvania and Halifax Counties and the Town of Halifax was designated as a Scenic River. The additional section will bring the total Banister designation to approximately 63.3 miles.

The Tye River in Nelson County was recommended for study as possible Scenic Rivers in the 2007 Virginia Outdoors Plan. Each has been evaluated and meets the adopted criteria for designation. The three river segment maps are enclosed for your review.

At the present time, we understand that all involved localities will be supporting designation and will be approaching their local members of the General Assembly to prepare legislation for the 2014 session. We ask for your

support for the designation of the specified reaches of the Banister, Dan, and Meherrin Rivers. If we do not hear from you by the requested date, we will assume your concurrence.

If you would like additional information on the Scenic Rivers Program, please contact our staff representative, Lynn Crump, at (804) 786.5054 or [lynn.crump@dcr.virginia.gov](mailto:lynn.crump@dcr.virginia.gov). Additional information about the program is also available on the DCR/Scenic Rivers website at [http://dcr.virginia.gov/recreational\\_planning/srmain.shtml](http://dcr.virginia.gov/recreational_planning/srmain.shtml).

Thank you.

Attachments: River Maps

cc: David Dowling, Policy and Planning Director  
Michelle Vucci, Assistant Director of Policy and Planning  
Lynn Crump, Environmental Programs Planner  
Robbie Rhur, Environmental Program Planner

Lynn Crump, LA, ASLA  
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[http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/recreational\\_planning/srmain.shtml](http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/recreational_planning/srmain.shtml)