



REGION **9**

*Rappahannock-
Rapidan*



Canoeing on the Upper Rappahannock River, Fauquier County | Amanda Demmerle

Introduction

The Rappahannock-Rapidan region includes Culpeper, Fauquier, Rappahannock, Madison and Orange counties, and the towns of Orange, Remington, Warrenton, Culpeper, Madison, Gordonsville and The Plains. This region is adjacent to Northern Virginia, yet maintains a rural character with rolling hills and open farmland, situated in the foothills of the mountains to the west. Portions of the western edge of this region are within the Shenandoah National Park.

Regional Focus

Table 9.1 Most-Needed Outdoor Recreation Opportunities

Rappahannock-Rapidan Recreational Planning Region

activity	% of households in	
	region	state
Natural areas	50	54
Parks	44	49
Trails	43	43
Water access	43	43
Historic areas	40	39
Scenic drives (driving for pleasure)	23	29
Playing fields, sports and golf facilities	21	22

Source: 2017 Virginia Outdoors Demand Survey.

Table 9.2 Top 10 Outdoor Recreation Activities By Participation

Rappahannock-Rapidan Recreational Planning Region

activity	% household
Driving for pleasure	78
Visiting natural areas	72
Walking for pleasure	69
Visiting parks (local, state & national)	55
Swimming/outdoor pool	53
Sunbathing/relaxing on a beach	52
Visiting historic areas	44
Swimming/beach/lake river (open water)	40
Visiting working farms, petting zoos, corn mazes, etc.	40
Freshwater fishing	39

Source: 2017 Virginia Outdoors Demand Survey. Visit www.dcr.virginia.gov/vop to view regional participation rates for more than 100 activities.

Regional Featured Projects

To be considered a regional featured project, a project must meet at least one of the following criteria:

- Has statewide or regional significance.
- Addresses top statewide or regional needs identified by the Virginia Outdoors Demand Survey.
- Has involvement and support from multiple jurisdictions in the region.
- Able to be initiated within the next five years.

Featured projects for the Rappahannock-Rapidan region:

- Implement the Journey Through Hallowed Ground plan.
- Implement the Upper Rappahannock River Water Trail and provide water access along the other regional rivers and tributaries.
- Develop the Woods of Warrenton Trail.

- Improve Rappahannock Landing river access.
- Provide water access at Remington.
- Establish the Mountain Run Corridor as a continuous route from Wine Street Memorial Park to Lake Pelham in the town of Culpeper.
- Develop and improve Laurel Valley Park in Culpeper County.
- Develop trails from the Town of Culpeper to the East View High School and connect to Lenn Park.
- Develop trails to connect neighborhoods to local elementary schools in Culpeper
- Develop the Montpelier Connector Trail.

Outdoor Recreation Economic Impact

Table 9.3 Per-Capita Spending on Parks and Recreation

Rappahannock-Rapidan Recreational Planning Region

locality	dollars
Culpeper County	17.96
Fauquier County	61.67
Madison County	27.25
Orange County	7.62
Rappahannock County	3.38
Town of Culpeper	40.77
Town of Orange	4.58
Town of Warrenton	217.34
Statewide	71.09

Source: Virginia Auditor of Public Accounts, "Comparative Report on Local Government Revenues and Expenditures," 2019.

Table 9.4 Virginia State Parks 2017 Attendance and Economic Impact*Rappahannock-Rapidan Recreational Planning Region*

state park	location	overnight visitors	day-use visitors	total visitors	economic impact
Sky Meadows	Fauquier County	4,482	264,458	268,940	\$5.8M

Source: Virginia State Parks

Regional Health

Table 9.5 Health Trends*Rappahannock-Rapidan Recreational Planning Region*

locality	adult smoking (% of adults)	adult obesity (% of adults with BMI over 30)	physical inactivity (% of adults age 20 or over reporting no leisure time/ physical activity)	access to exercise opportunities (% population with adequate access to locations for physical activity)	air pollution – particulate matter (micrograms per cubic meter)
Culpeper County	16	32	23	76	8.8
Fauquier County	15	26	24	66	9.3
Madison County	18	29	24	44	8.5
Orange County	15	28	26	60	8.8
Rappahannock County	14	27	25	36	8.5
Statewide	17	27	21	81	8.7



Walking the Montpelier Grelen Trail, Orange County | Paula Combs

Outdoor Recreation Interface with Virginia Tourism

The Virginia State Tourism Plan was completed by Virginia Tourism Corp. in March 2013. In 2017, Virginia Tourism compiled “Nature & Outdoors” recommendations in Appendix 13 for each recreation planning region.

Regional Historic Resources

In spite of its proximity to the congestion of Northern Virginia, the Rappahannock-Rapidan Region largely retains a rural and agricultural character. This area was of central importance to both armies during the Civil War, and abounds with battlefields, encampments, troop transportation routes, and national and local soldiers’ cemeteries. James Madison’s Montpelier, a National Historic Landmark, is located here, as are properties associated with the 18th century Governor Alexander Spotswood and 19th century Governor James Barbour. The area is rich in archaeological and historic sites representing enslaved persons as well as

thousands of years of indigenous occupation predating European settlement of the region. The Rappahannock-Rapidan region is part of the Journey Through Hallowed Ground National Heritage Area, a historic and scenic region that runs from Gettysburg to Monticello and encompasses battlefields and other historic sites of great significance to American history.

Appropriate conservation activities may include installation of highway markers to commemorate historic locations and events, placement of historic properties on the Virginia Landmarks Register or National Register of Historic Places and placement of historic preservation and open space easements. Conservation targets include: 19th century farmsteads, 19th and early 20th century dwellings and commercial buildings/districts; Civil War battlefields; sites and properties associated with enslaved persons/communities and significant prehistoric habitation sites. Information about historic buildings, structures and archaeological sites is maintained in the permanent files of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources and is available to local planners.



Mountain Run Lake, Culpeper County | Culpeper Tourism

Table 9.6 Regional Historic Resources

Rappahannock-Rapidan Recreational Planning Region

resource	location
Salubria	Culpeper County
Gilmore Cabin/ Freedman's Farm	Orange County
Montpelier	Orange County
Brandy Station, Rappahannock Station, Kelly's Ford, Cedar Mountain, Buckland Mills, Wilderness, and Mine Run Battlefields	Region-wide
Old Fauquier County Jail	Town of Warrenton

Source: Virginia Department of Historic Resources

Land Conservation

Table 9.7 Conserved Lands

Rappahannock-Rapidan Recreational Planning Region

locality	easement acres	ownership acres
Culpeper County	18,229.24	1,908.64
Fauquier County	93,597.82	21,701.40
Madison County	15,501.89	41,319.91
Orange County	32,398.88	2,096.36
Rappahannock County	32,462.61	31,223.72
Total	290,440.47	

Source: Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation Protected Lands Inventory

Natural Area Preserves and Natural Heritage Resources

The Rappahannock-Rapidan region supports a number of rare species and significant communities. Many are concentrated in the higher elevations of the Northern Watery Mountains, Bull Run Mountains and the Blue Ridge, but some are scattered across the lower areas of the Piedmont. Pockets of diabase soils that have been relatively undisturbed harbor interesting plant communities and many of the area’s streams and rivers harbor dwindling populations of native mussels.

DCR recommends that conservation activities and land protection efforts in the region focus on unprotected Essential Conservation Sites and all unprotected portions of Natural Area Preserve resiliency areas. Secondly, strategic land conservation should expand upon existing managed areas and seek connectivity via protecting and/or managing intact ecological cores and natural vegetation cover between currently protected lands. Finally, attention on remaining unprotected natural heritage resources within the region should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

The appropriate conservation activities and methods of protection will vary with each site but may include placing the site on Virginia’s Registry of Natural Areas; developing a voluntary management agreement with the landowner; securing a conservation easement through a local land trust; acquiring the site through a locality or local land trust; dedicating the site as a natural area preserve with the current owner; or acquiring the site as a state-owned natural area preserve.

Conservation targets of special significance in the region include:

- Diabase woodlands
- Basic oak-hickory forests
- Low elevation basic outcrop barrens.
- Improvement water quality in streams and rivers that support rare mussels and other aquatic invertebrate species.
- Strengthen protection and management of conservation sites on federal lands.

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Information about the location of conservation sites and the natural heritage resources they contain, as well as management assistance, is available to local planners from DCR’s Natural Heritage Program. For more on the Natural Heritage Program, see Chapter 11 and Appendix 11.

Table 9.8 Natural Area Preserves

Rappahannock-Rapidan Recreational Planning Region

preserve name	owner	locality
Bull Run Mountains	Virginia Outdoors Foundation	Fauquier County (part)

Table 9.9 Natural Heritage Resources

Rappahannock-Rapidan Recreational Planning Region

Number of occurrences of rare species and significant natural communities	377
Number of different rare species and significant community types (natural heritage elements)	162
Number of globally rare natural heritage elements	38
Number of species listed as federally endangered or threatened	6
Number of species listed as state endangered or threatened	7
Number of terrestrial conservation sites identified by DCR	44
Number of conservation sites with little or no protection	18
Number of partially protected conservation sites	16
Number of well protected conservation sites	10

Information as of Feb. 28, 2018. Source: Virginia Natural Heritage Program