



REGION **12**
West Piedmont

Staurolite crystals for which Fairy Stone State Park is named | Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation



Misty morning on the water | Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation

Introduction

The West Piedmont Recreational Planning Region includes Franklin, Henry, Patrick and Pittsylvania counties, the cities of Danville and Martinsville, and the town of Rocky Mount.

The predominantly rural landscape has ruggedly beautiful mountains that provide a variety of recreational opportunities ranging from scenic views along the Blue Ridge Parkway to the trout streams of the streams of the Dan and other river and stream corridors. With the exit of manufacturing jobs from the region, communities are turning toward nature-based recreation and tourism as economic drivers.

Regional Focus

Table 12.1 Most-Needed Outdoor Recreation Opportunities

West Piedmont Recreational Planning Region

activity	% of households in	
	region	state
Natural areas	46	54
Parks	46	49
Water access	45	43
Historic areas	43	39
Scenic drives (driving for pleasure)	34	29
Trails	31	43
Playing fields, sports and golf facilities	21	22

Source: 2017 Virginia Outdoors Demand Survey

Table 12.2 Top 10 Outdoor Recreation Activities By Participation

West Piedmont Recreational Planning Region

activity	% household
Driving for pleasure	70
Visiting natural areas	60
Walking for pleasure	58
Visiting parks (local, state & national)	41
Swimming/outdoor pool	39
Freshwater fishing	38
Swimming/beach/lake river (open water)	35
Sunbathing/relaxing on a beach	33
Viewing the water	31
Outdoor festivals (music festivals, outdoor-themed festivals, extreme sports festivals, etc.)	31

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 West Piedmont region:

- Expand and connect the Dick & Willie Trail to other trails and destinations.
- Develop and connect the Lauren Mountain Preserve Trail to Smith River Trail.
- Connect towns and trails of the Smith River Trail and the Beaches to Bluegrass Trail system as part of the Small Towns Collaborative Initiative.

- Extend the Danville River Walk.
- Develop trails and access points throughout the Dan River Basin.
- Develop parking, trails and other nature-based activities at Bald Knob Natural Area Preserve in Rocky Mount.
- Develop Patrick County trails including the Dan River Park Trail, Dehart Park Trail and Primland’s hiking and biking trails.
- Implement Franklin County trail projects.

Outdoor Recreation Economic Impact

Table 12.3 Per-Capita Spending on Parks and Recreation

West Piedmont Recreational Planning Region

locality	dollars
Franklin County	18.23
Henry County	23.21
Patrick County	13.61
Pittsylvania County	10.84
Town of Rocky Mount	15.46
City of Danville	133.36
City of Martinsville	142.72
Statewide	71.09

Source: Virginia Auditor of Public Accounts, “Comparative Report on Local Government Revenues and Expenditures,” 2016.



Summer fun | Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation

Table 12.4 Virginia State Parks 2017 Attendance and Economic Impact*West Piedmont Recreational Planning Region*

state park	location	overnight visitors	day-use visitors	total visitors	economic impact
Fairy Stone	Patrick, Henry counties	33,530	140,531	174,061	\$4.5M
Smith Mountain Lake	Bedford, Franklin* counties	41,861	471,099	512,960	\$11.1M

* West Piedmont and Roanoke Valley-Alleghany regions share Franklin County.
Source: Virginia State Parks

Regional Health

Table 12.5 Health Trends*West Piedmont 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)
Franklin County	17	28	22	34	9.1
Henry County	20	32	38	56	9.1
Patrick County	19	31	28	38	8.6
Pittsylvania County	17	32	30	33	9.3
City of Danville	21	34	29	69	9.1
City of Martinsville	20	34	27	98	8.9
Statewide	17	27	21	81	8.7

Source: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation



On the move | Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation

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

Historically, the West Piedmont region is perhaps best known for its association with expansion of tobacco cultivation into the western and southern portions of the state during the 19th century. Urban centers such as Martinsville and Danville served as processing centers for tobacco as well as points of trade and transportation where the crops could be moved via canal or rail to the larger markets in the east. This area retains a rural character and a drive along any of the area’s back roads will reveal numerous historic tobacco barns and fields that evoke the agricultural heritage of the West Piedmont. Many historic farmsteads and communities include both manor houses and the homes of enslaved persons and tenants, and extensive evidence for indigenous occupation prior to European settlement can be found.

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; historic schools and churches; historic transportation routes and crossroads, 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.

Table 12.6 Regional Historic Resources

West Piedmont Recreational Planning Region

resource	location
Henry County Courthouse	Henry County
Booker T. Washington National Monument	Franklin County
Fairy Stone State Park Historic District	Henry County
Burnett’s Diner	Pittsylvania County
Danville Southern Railway Depot	City of Danville

Source: Virginia Department of Historic Resources

Land Conservation

Table 12.7 Conserved Lands

West Piedmont Recreational Planning Region

locality	easement acres	ownership acres
City of Danville	73.35	0.00
City of Martinsville	0.93	26.27
Franklin County	9,560.69	9,875.42
Henry County	2,816.93	5,560.97
Patrick County	2,934.28	18,063.60
Pittsylvania County	7,248.77	2,711.00
Total	58,872.21	

Source: Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation Protected Lands Inventory

Natural Area Preserves and Natural Heritage Resources

The West Piedmont region has relatively few rare species populations and significant natural communities. However, scattered across the district are some globally significant sites for biological diversity. Among these are the world’s largest population of the narrow endemic, Piedmont fameflower, healthy populations of the federally endangered Roanoke logperch and the eastern-most populations of the state endangered bog turtle.

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. Secondarily, 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:

- Biologically significant, low-elevation outcrop communities in Franklin County
- Habitat for the federally endangered small-anthered bittercress in Patrick County
- Riparian areas in watersheds that support the federally endangered Roanoke logperch and other rare aquatic species

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 12.8 Natural Area Preserves

West Piedmont Recreational Planning Region

preserve name	owner	locality
Grassy Hill	DCR	Franklin County
Bald Knob	DCR	Franklin County

Table 12.9 Natural Heritage Resources

West Piedmont Recreational Planning Region

Number of occurrences of rare species and significant natural communities	169
Number of different rare species and significant community types (natural heritage elements)	81
Number of globally rare natural heritage elements	25
Number of species listed as federally endangered or threatened	6
Number of species listed as state endangered or threatened	11
Number of terrestrial conservation sites identified by DCR	66
Number of conservation sites with little or no protection	53
Number of partially protected conservation sites	11
Number of well protected conservation sites	2

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