

JAMES RIVER HERITAGE TRAIL

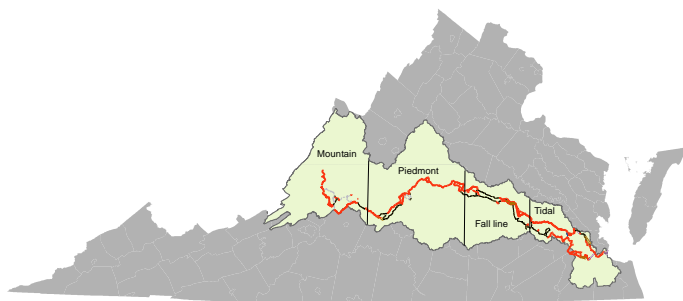


DRAFT CONCEPTUAL PLAN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY | August 2011

*To comment on the draft conceptual plan, visit:
www.dcr.virginia.gov/recreational_planning/trailjrb.shtml*



JAMES RIVER HERITAGE TRAIL

Winding its way through Virginia’s heartland and contained entirely within the state, the geographically diverse James River corridor is a national treasure with the potential to attract visitors from all over the world. The stories waiting to be told about the triumphs and tragedies that unfolded within the river’s watershed are second only to the memories visitors will cherish after exploring the river and its tributaries. Much of the pastoral beauty of the surrounding watershed has been preserved by large landowners, some of whom have ancestral ties to the land going back hundreds of years.

In addition to the nation’s ancestral ties that distinguish this corridor, its geographic position in the heart of Virginia is important. Out-of-state tourists traveling to the James watershed will pass through adjacent communities on their way, supporting other local tourism. Jurisdictions throughout the state will not only experience increased tourism revenue, but also have a model to follow for similar watershed promotional efforts.

- 1 Presquile National Wildlife Refuge
 - 2 James River National Wildlife Refuge
 - 3 Nansemond National Wildlife Refuge
- 1 Upper James River Water Trail
 - 2 Maury River Water Trail
 - 3 Rivanna River Water Trail
 - 4 Dutch Gap Conservation Area
 - 5 Lower James River Water Trail
 - 6 Lawrence Lewis Jr. Park
 - 7 Chickahominy Riverfront Park
 - 8 Jamestown Island
 - 9 Chippokes Plantation State Park
 - 10 Powhatan Creek Blueway
 - 11 Mariners Museum
 - 12 Virginia Living Museum
 - 13 Hoffer Creek Wildlife Preserve
 - 14 Eastern Branch Elizabeth River
 - 15 Nauticus National Maritime Center
 - 16 Elizabeth River Trail Atlantic City Spur
 - 17 Great Bridge Lock Park
- 1 Blue Ridge Parkway
 - 2 Colonial Parkway
 - 3 Skyline Drive
 - 4 Journey Through Hallowed Ground Byway
- 1 Shenandoah National Park
 - 2 Green Spring National Historic Landmark
 - 3 Appomattox Court House National Historical Park
 - 4 Maggie L. Walker National Historic Site
 - 5 Richmond National Battlefield Park
 - 6 Petersburg National Battlefield Park
 - 7 Colonial National Historical Park
- 1 Shenandoah Valley Battlefields National Historic District
 - 2 Journey Through Hallowed Ground National Heritage Area

NATIONAL RESOURCES

WITHIN THE JAMES RIVER WATERSHED

- Watershed Boundary
- James River
- Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail
- Washington Rochambeau Revolutionary Route National Historic Trail
- Appalachian National Scenic Trail
- U.S. Byways and National Heritage Area
- U.S. Wildlife Refuge
- Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network
- National Parks and Landmarks
- National Forest

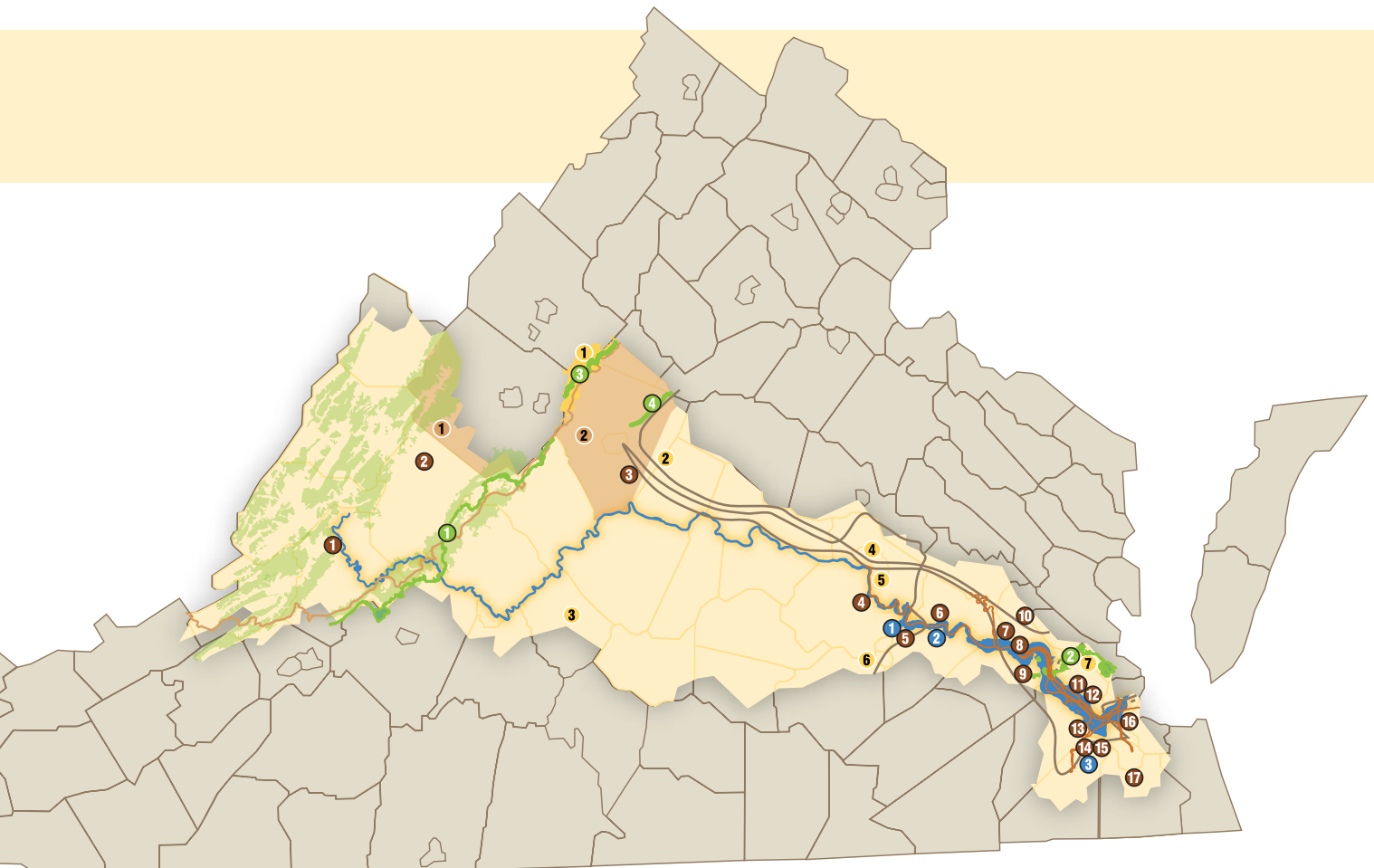


There are many opportunities for partnerships with federal agencies in the Tidal region, particularly through the National Park Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Pontoon boats and power boats can provide educational tours highlighting the river’s significance to the Chesapeake Bay or the nation’s early struggle for survival. Whitewater paddling and tubing are highlights in the Fall-line region, and river rocks encourage sunbathing and wading. Batteaux can navigate the gentle river along the Piedmont region, and river roads still retain their historic character. Many wineries and pick-your-own farms and orchards here provide added value to tourists. The Mountain region has spectacular views and large amounts of public lands, making it ideal for a weekend getaway.

The James River holds a special place in the hearts of Americans because so many trace their ancestry to communities that sprang up along the river as goods and ideas were exchanged and the nation developed. The full potential of the James River Heritage Trail, however, has yet to be realized. The intrinsic qualities of the river — historic, natural, scenic

and recreational — along with the quality and supply of its water are at risk, if measures are not taken to ensure their long-term sustainability. The conceptual plan for the James River Heritage Trail suggests steps that can be taken now to invite nature and heritage-based tourism, sustain working farms, encourage small business development, and increase stewardship to preserve a special place and its people.

The watershed is also a launching point for many heritage tourism experiences. America’s most visited national park, the Blue Ridge Parkway, begins at Rockfish Gap where it connects to Skyline Drive and Shenandoah National Park. Meandering nearby, the Appalachian National Scenic Trail is framed by two national heritage areas: the Journey through Hallowed Ground, which begins at Jefferson’s Monticello and stretches for 180 miles through a treasure trove of history, and the Shenandoah Valley Battlefields National Historic District. Scenic mountain landscapes, geological formations, piedmont vineyards, coastal wetlands and shorelines are connected via the river and thousands of miles of trails that attract both close-to-home explorers and international visitors.



In his book, “*The River Where America Began: A Journey Along the James*,” Bob Deans complains that “the cartography of our national origins has rendered the James River’s contribution in muted tones of low relief, thin and sketchy lines across some faded map of our collective past, as if we as a people slipped briefly and all but unnoticed through its turbid waters.” This plan proposes specific actions for how to work together to refocus national attention on this majestic river. It establishes a vision and brand for the trail, discusses demand and existing conditions, catalogs obstacles to trail development and threats to the trail experience, provides recommendations to address obstacles and establishes a phased approach to trail development.

Proposed Vision Statement: *The James River Heritage Trail is a network of communities that share their traditions, history and lifestyle to foster sustainable recreation and stewardship of treasured landscapes and local waters, trails and byways.*




The plan defines a trail network that would include:

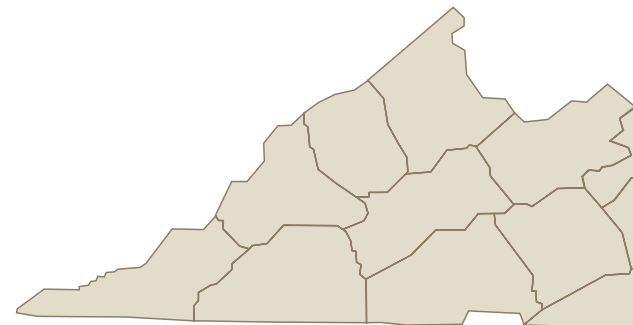
- An on-road bicycle route, including historic river roads, ferries, bridges and underpasses.
- A system of water trail access points and land trail access points.
- Trunkline segments that provide multiuse paths, some with paved paths for bicycles beside a soft surface for runners and equestrians.
- Connecting trails that meet established criteria.
- Local pocket parks that preserve and interpret historic features while providing water access and visitor services.
- Other support facilities such as signs, landscaping, picnic areas, camping, and water and sanitary facilities.

POTENTIAL CONNECTING TRAILS

WITHIN THE JAMES RIVER WATERSHED

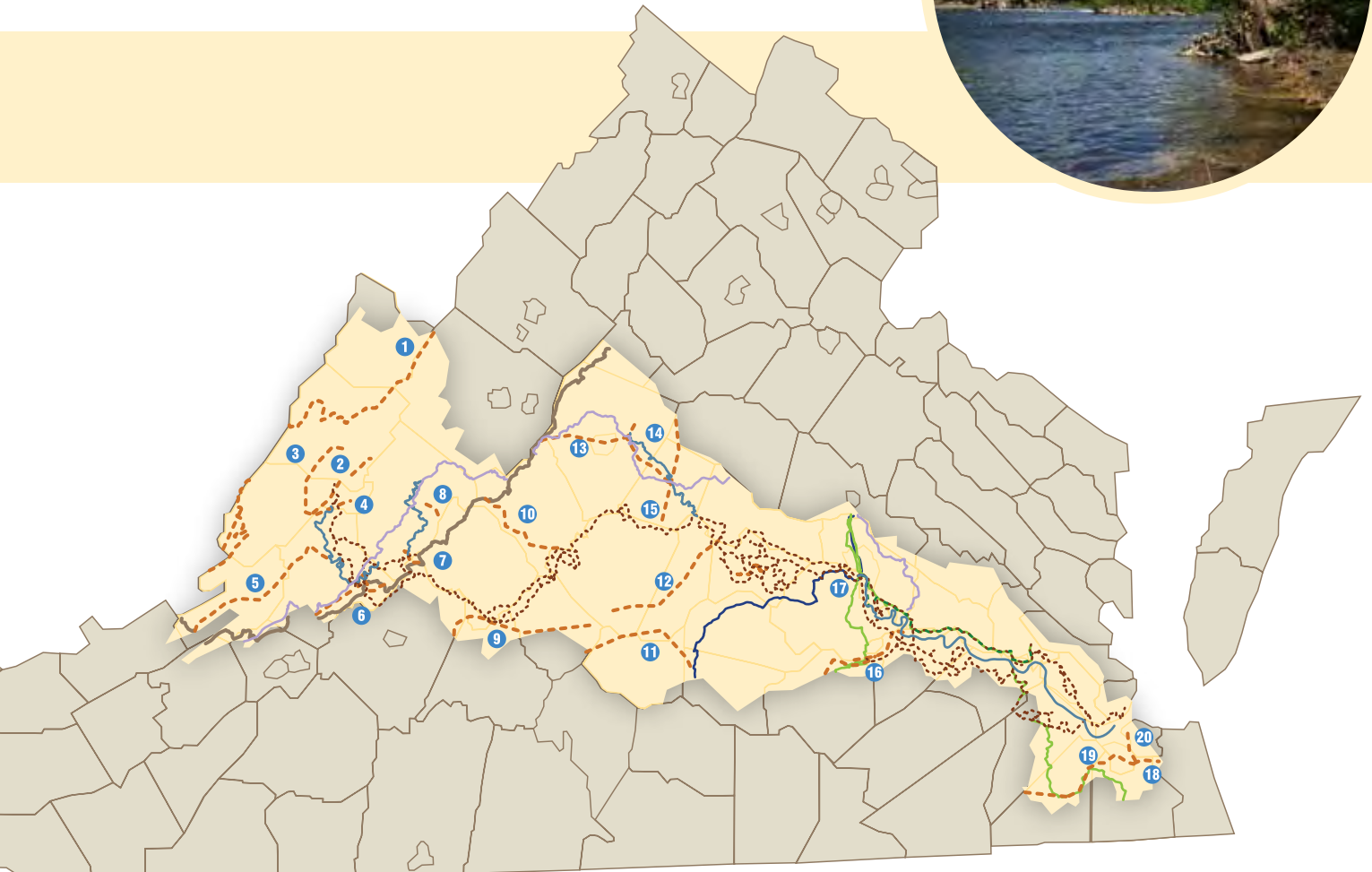
- 1 Shenandoah Mountain, North Mountain and Tuscarora Trails | tinyurl.com/3u3ojqq
- 2 Western Highlands Trails | www.ahchamber.com/visitus.htm
- 3 Jackson River Scenic Trail | tinyurl.com/3pebuoo
- 4 Beards Mountain and Fore Mountain Trails | tinyurl.com/3caqa5r
- 5 Craig Valley Scenic Trail | www.rvarc.org/C&OTrail/c&oweb/page1.html
- 6 Glenwood Horse Trail | tinyurl.com/3z5xr86
- 7 Piney Ridge Trail | tinyurl.com/3z5xr86
- 8 Chessie Trail | www.lexingtonvirginia.com/hiking.htm
- 9 Lynchburg Trail System | www.lyncburgva.gov/Index.aspx?page=506
- 10 Virginia Blue Ridge Railway and Piney Mountain Trails | www.blueridge-railtrail.org/
- 11 High Bridge Trail | www.dcr.virginia.gov/state_parks/hig.shtml
- 12 Willis River and Cumberland-Appomattox Trail | www.dof.virginia.gov/stforest/cumberland.htm
- 13 Three Notched Trail | www.threenotchedtrail.com/maps
- 14 Rivanna River Greenway | rivanna.avenue.org/trails.htm
- 15 Fluvanna Heritage Trail | www.fluvannaheritagetrail.org/
- 16 Appomattox River Greenway | www.folar-va.org/access-points
- 17 James River Park System | www.jamesriverpark.org/
- 18 Virginia Beach Bikeways and Trails | tinyurl.com/3f3wxkq
- 19 Suffolk Seaboard Coastline and Portsmouth Trail | www.suffolkva.us/parks/
- 20 Elizabeth River Trail | www.downtownnorfolk.org/enjoy/attractions?l

-  Watershed Boundary
-  JRHT Proposed Bicycle Route
-  Appalachian Trail
-  East Coast Greenway
-  U.S. Bike Route 1
-  U.S. Bike Route 76
-  Virginia Capital Trail
-  Potential Connecting Trails (see table)
-  Chesapeake Bay Gateway Water Trails



The following guiding principles underlie the James River Heritage Trail concept and are critical to its success. The trail will:

- Provide multiple avenues to explore and learn about the heritage of the James River, including off-road pathways, water trails, and on-road bicycle accommodations and driving routes.
- Allow for and encourage the full involvement of a wide range of trail constituents, local citizens and stakeholders.
- Build upon existing trail plans, partnerships and traditions.
- Be developed in a manner that ensures respect for private property, and be designed to complement and enhance, rather than detract from, adjacent lands.
- Support local businesses and regional economic revitalization efforts by creating a network of interconnected pathways and bike routes that link communities and showcase attractions throughout the watershed.
- Serve as an outdoor classroom, connecting children to nature, and provide opportunities for active recreation that promotes health and wellness.
- Enhance existing land conservation efforts, promote wildlife corridors and promote access to existing protected lands.



The following goals address issues identified through public input.

Planning and Data Sharing

Goal: Establish a mechanism for inter-jurisdictional coordination that allows for information sharing, joint decision making and the tracking and updating of trail data.

Access to Riverfront

Goal: Develop a continuous trail system with safe access to the James River shoreline for land and water-based recreational activities.

Private Property Rights and Liability

Goal: Establish a trail system in ways that are sensitive to private property owners' liability and trespass concerns through carefully crafted design standards, buffering and adequate monitoring and management of the trail system.

Safety on Shared Roadways

Goal: Establish a safe, efficient, convenient and enjoyable bike route utilizing existing road routes and potential off-road trails.

Quality and Consistency of Experience

Goal: Ensure adequate visitor services including camping, lodging, food, historic attractions and amenities at sufficient intervals throughout the JRHT corridor.

Preserving the Resource

Goal: Promote sustainable land-use practices including conservation design, cluster development and river set-backs that preserve and integrate green corridors for recreation, water quality, habitat and aesthetics.

Engaging Future Stewards

Goal: Engage youth in healthy outdoor recreation that connects them to the stories and heritage resources of the James River watershed.

Financial Planning for Sustainability

Goal: Develop a stable and diversified funding portfolio to plan, construct, operate and maintain the James River Heritage Trail network.

Important Subwatersheds

1	Johns Creek	23	Slate River
2	Craig Creek	24	North Fork Rivanna River
3	Potts Creek	25	Hardware River
4	Dunlap Creek	26	Buffalo Creek
5	Ogle Creek	27	Bush River
6	Barbours Creek	28	Rivanna River
7	Catawba Creek	29	Willis River
8	Back Creek	30	Appomattox River
9	Jackson River	31	Deep Creek
10	South Buffalo Creek	32	Flat Creek
11	Bullpasture River	33	West Creek
12	Cowpasture River	34	Namozine Creek
13	Calfpasture River	35	Swift Creek
14	Little Calfpasture River	36	Chickahominy Creek
15	Pedlar River	37	Blackwater Swamp
16	Ivy Creek	38	Diascund Creek
17	South River	39	Warwick River
18	Tye River	40	Pagan River
19	Buffalo River	41	Nansemond River
20	Rockfish River	42	Elizabeth River
21	Moormans River	43	Portsmouth Ditch
22	David Creek	44	Intracoastal Waterway

MUNICIPALITIES

WITHIN THE JAMES RIVER WATERSHED

-  **Watershed Boundary**
-  **Cities**
-  **Watershed Towns**
-  **State Scenic Rivers**
-  **James River**
-  **Watershed Creeks and Rivers**



Leadership and Organizational Structure

Goal: Establish an effective and sustainable approach to JRHT management that clearly defines organizational mission and structure, partnership roles, leadership responsibility and guidelines for decision making.

Communication and Branding

Goal: Establish clear channels of communication between partners, define promotional tools that attract a national and international audience, and plan interpretive tools for educational outreach.

Successful Multi-jurisdictional Trails

Many examples of successful multi-jurisdictional trails exist, both within and outside of the United States. For example, the San Francisco Bay Trail Project is a 500-mile shoreline trail around the bay with 300 miles on the ground in just two decades. In 2008, American Trails honored Florida with the first-ever “Best Trails State Award,” recognizing Florida’s success in facilitating an outstanding statewide system of trails. Illinois has the Grand Illinois Trail, and North Carolina has the 900-plus-mile Mountains to the Sea Trail. Tennessee has the 300-mile Cumberland Trail State Park. The Northern Forest Canoe Trail meanders 750 miles through four states and Canada. See *Northern Forest Canoe Trail: Trails and Economic Development Report* at www.northernforestcanoetrail.org.



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Photo by Lynda Richardson

Conclusion

“Though the James is wholly contained within the state of Virginia, it is not a local river; for it belongs to the nation; not to the native-born only, but also to those who have come from many lands to become citizens of the United States. So much of significance to our country has happened in the James River watershed that this river cannot belong to one state alone, but must belong to all.”

— BLAIR NILES, *THE JAMES*, PUBLISHED IN 1939

Creating a sustainable Virginia, one that encourages and supports environmental and economic prosperity, is everyone’s responsibility — citizens, businesses, universities and government agencies. Everyone wants to live in an area with healthy water, adequate water supply and safe river access, but this quality of life requires work, resources and individual commitment. Investing in the next generation should be an immediate priority. Teaching children to value nature’s gifts at an early age is critical so that, as they grow, they will continue to care for these assets through lifestyle choices.

The success of this trail depends on strong leadership, adaptability, resource development, the capacity of local partners and the development of creative and long-lasting solutions to current challenges. There is much to gain through coordinated and focused energies. What follows from these investments depends on community ownership, trust and cooperation among partners.

The James River Heritage Trail serves as a model for recreational development, heritage tourism, revitalized towns and watershed stewardship that can be applied statewide. The conceptual plan offers a vision of what can be achieved when all these elements come together.