Introduction

The Southside Recreational Planning Region is composed of Halifax, Mecklenburg and Brunswick counties, and the towns of Alberta, Boydton, Brodnax, Chase City, Clarksville, Clover, Halifax, LaCrosse, Lawrenceville, Scottsburg, South Boston, South Hill and Virgilina.

The region continues to experience a slight decline in population. The 2010 Census Total Population Maps estimate that the region had a population of 85,538 in 2010. With a projected decrease in population of 1.10 percent from 2010 to 2020, the population will be 84,605 by 2020, comprising 0.95 percent of Virginia’s population.

Regional focus

Through the 2011 Virginia Outdoors Demand Survey, input from public meetings and partnerships with local and regional staff, four priority considerations for the Virginia Outdoors Plan emerged: opportunities for outdoor recreation, economics, health and wellness, and land conservation. The following section summarizes thoughts and strategies for outdoor recreation and land conservation.

Health: Citizens cited the need for regional cooperation to promote wellness and make the connection between outdoor recreation and healthy communities. Strategically locating park facilities close to population centers and developing interconnected walking and biking trails was encouraged. In addition, citizens were interested in schools promoting healthy lifestyles by teaching children swimming and other lifetime recreation skills.

Youth: Programs are needed to actively address “nature deficit disorder” and the problem of childhood obesity. Expanding opportunities for hunting and fishing education, as well as supporting youth clubs that teach outdoor skills was mentioned as important. Providing outdoor and nature education to rural youths was highly recommended. There is a desire for additional public playgrounds, swimming pools, athletic fields and courts, and small neighborhood parks.

Trails: Transportation alternatives including trails for walking, hiking, bicycling and horseback riding are needed. A comprehensive trail system could link small communities and specific destinations.

Water access: Water access ideas included the need for additional public sites for kayak and canoe launches, as well as fishing and swimming access.

Land conservation: The public expressed a need to protect critical open space. While the region is rural with an agrarian economy, it has begun to experience increased development. There are opportunities to enhance the scenic qualities of the region’s river and scenic road corridors, create greenways, develop parks and protect important natural areas, forests and farmland.

Table 13.1 Most-needed outdoor recreation
Southside Recreational Planning Region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>activity</th>
<th>% of households in region</th>
<th>% of households in state</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public access to state waters for fishing, swimming and beach use</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trails for hiking and walking</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural areas</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trails for wildlife watching and nature study</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historic areas</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trails for bicycling</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public pools</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playing fields for outdoor sports (softball, baseball, football and soccer)</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public access to state waters for nonmotorized boating (canoeing or kayaking)</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public access to state waters for motorized boating</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trails for motorized off-road vehicles</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor playing courts for tennis and basketball</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trails for horseback riding</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2011 Virginia Outdoors Demand Survey.
**Land conservation**

Regional and local organizations and agencies should support land-protection efforts on priority lands, as identified by conservation partners in the region. Lands for protection may include those located adjacent to rivers and tributaries, national and state park and forest lands, other parks and natural areas, important scenic viewsheds, core battlefield areas, properties on the state and national historic registers, and state scenic byways. For more information about prioritizing land conservation, see Chapter 5, Conservation Planning.

Since there are no land trusts serving the region, localities and regional agencies will have to provide the policies and support for land conservation in this region (See map 13.1).

### Table 13.2 Conserved lands

**Southside Recreational Planning Region**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>locality</th>
<th>acres</th>
<th>type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brunswick County</td>
<td>1,883.88</td>
<td>Easement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brunswick County</td>
<td>6,389.14</td>
<td>Ownership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halifax County</td>
<td>10,548.58</td>
<td>Easement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halifax County</td>
<td>7,713.70</td>
<td>Ownership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mecklenburg County</td>
<td>4,250.97</td>
<td>Easement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mecklenburg County</td>
<td>4,090.00</td>
<td>Ownership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>34,876.27</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation Protected Lands Inventory, 2013.
CHAPTER 10  Regional Recommendations

Outdoor recreation

In this region, only Halifax County and the town of South Boston have full-time, staffed parks and recreation departments.

Table 13.3 Per-capita spending on parks and recreation
Southside Recreational Planning Region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>locality</th>
<th>dollars</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brunswick County</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halifax County</td>
<td>10.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mecklenburg County</td>
<td>1.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town of South Boston</td>
<td>35.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town of South Hill</td>
<td>80.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statewide</td>
<td>62.81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Economic impact

Nature and outdoor recreation are strengths for the region. Buggs Island Lake is the largest lake in Virginia with 50,000 acres of water and 800 miles of shoreline, and home to some of the best largemouth bass fishing in the country. State parks and a multitude of trails are located in the region. Visitors have many opportunities to hike, bike, ride horseback, observe wildlife, hunt, fish, kayak and canoe.

Health and wellness

According to the County Health Rankings and Roadmaps program, regional access to recreation is particularly low at an average of 11 percent.

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.
- Is able to be initiated within the next five years.

Featured projects for the Southside region

- The proposed Beaches to Bluegrass Trail should be developed to connect existing trails from the Cumberland Gap to the Chesapeake Bay across the southern portion of the state. The Beaches to Bluegrass Trail may include the Tobacco Heritage Trail, Dan River Trail, Staunton River Water Trail and Town Connections Trails.

- The East Coast Greenway is an off-road trail system, spanning nearly 3,000 miles from Canada to Key West. Virginia’s route incorporates existing trails, temporary on-road routes and proposed corridors. Improvements and connections for the trail include signage and connections to existing trails, parks, neighborhoods and historic sites.

- Develop overnight camping areas and canoe ramps spaced along the river where bridges cross the stream along the Meherrin River Blueway Canoe Trail. This blueway will eventually extend from the headwaters of the North Fork of the Meherrin to the confluence of the Chowan River.

Table 13.4 Virginia State Parks 2013 attendance and economic impact
Southside Recreational Planning Region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>state park</th>
<th>location</th>
<th>overnight visitors</th>
<th>day-use visitors</th>
<th>total visitors</th>
<th>economic impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Occoneechee</td>
<td>Mecklenburg County</td>
<td>29,521</td>
<td>160,151</td>
<td>189,672</td>
<td>$4,776,491</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staunton River</td>
<td>Halifax County</td>
<td>19,465</td>
<td>109,738</td>
<td>129,203</td>
<td>$3,215,683</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staunton River Battlefield</td>
<td>Halifax, Charlotte counties</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>30,635</td>
<td>30,635</td>
<td>$490,160</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Virginia State Parks.
Regional Recommendations

Southside

- Increase regional water access to Lake Anna, Great Creek Reservoir and Kerr Reservoir, and the Staunton, Dan, Meherrin, Banister and Nottoway rivers and their tributaries, including the implementation of the Roanoke River Basin Association recommendations.

- Develop a state park on the Meherrin River in Brunswick County.

Local parks and recreation projects

- Local governments should partner to plan and implement the Tobacco Heritage Trail connecting many of the communities in southern Virginia.

- Great Creek Reservoir in Brunswick County is a 212-acre impoundment with 8 miles of shoreline. Brunswick County should work with other regional and local partners to connect this park to the Tobacco Heritage Trail and to downtown Lawrenceville.

- The town of South Boston is developing Cotton Mill Park.

- The town of Alberta is connecting the Virginian Railroad corridor with the Tobacco Heritage Trail.
A stretch of the Meherrin River makes for a peaceful paddle. Photo by DCR.

- The town of LaCrosse is developing a town park system. The town should look for connectors to the Tobacco Heritage Trail from the existing trail located behind the town office.

- Brunswick and Mecklenburg counties should look for opportunities to acquire park land on Lake Gaston to help meet the need for public access and enhanced water recreation.

**Water access**

- The Army Corps of Engineers has developed the John H. Kerr Reservoir on the Roanoke River in Halifax and Mecklenburg counties. Dominion Virginia Power has developed Lake Gaston farther downstream in Mecklenburg and Brunswick counties and into North Carolina. The lakes provide more than 73,000 acres of inland waters for recreation. While Kerr Reservoir offers public access, Lake Gaston public access is limited and expanded water access should be a priority.

- The Roanoke River Basin Association recommends installation of the following to improve public water access in the region:
  - Accessible launch at Buggs Island/John H. Kerr Tailrace Park.
  - Support facilities near U.S. 1 Steel Bridge.
  - Public launch site and parking upstream from Whittle’s Mill on the Meherrin River.

- The Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries and local governments should work with public and private partners to provide additional public access for boating, swimming, picnicking and lake use on the Virginia portions of the lake.

- DCR, DGIF and local governments should work with public and private partners to provide additional public access on Kerr Reservoir, especially for bank fishing and lakeside trails for scenic viewing and wildlife watching.

- The Staunton River Water Trail is a multiuse trail connecting Staunton River Battlefield with Staunton River State Park. Parking and water access need to be developed at the Dryburg Road crossing of Difficult Creek.

**Trails and greenways**

*Multistate trails or routes*

- U.S. Bike Route 1
- East Coast Greenway

*Statewide and trunkline trails*

The following statewide and trunkline trails are included as featured projects: Beaches to Bluegrass Trail, Tobacco Heritage Trail and the East Coast Greenway.
Regional trails

- A conceptual plan that connects existing trails between Wilderness Road State Park and beachfront parks should be completed.

- The Tobacco Heritage Trail forms the major elements of the Beaches to Bluegrass Trail using abandoned railroad corridors and a series of connector trails to link communities. State, regional and local agencies and organizations should continue partnerships for trail planning and implementation. The following are projects related to this trail:
  
  - A connector trail should be developed between Occoneechee State Park and the Tobacco Heritage Trail/Beaches to Bluegrass Trail near Jeffress.
  
  - The Tobacco Heritage Trail should be extended south into Clarksville from Jeffress using the old business Route 58 bridge over the reservoir.
  
  - Remaining sections of the abandoned Norfolk, Franklin and Danville rail corridor in Halifax County should be acquired.
  
  - The trail should be extended into North Carolina and connected to Danville from the south.
  
  - A connector trail should be developed at Lawrenceville near the old Virginian Rail Road corridor in the vicinity of Dolphin or Smokey Ordinary.
  
  - The Dan River Trail should connect South Boston with Staunton River State Park. As part of the Beaches to Bluegrass Trail, this trail would follow the river and lie mostly on Army Corps of Engineers’ property.
  
  - The former Richmond-Danville Railroad line is being developed as a rail-to-trail conversion from Ringgold to South Boston. This rail line parallels the Dan River and would provide a terrestrial component to the proposed Dan River Canoe Trail. The Richmond to Danville Railroad line between South Boston and Clover is lightly used and should be considered for a rail-with-trail project linking the Tobacco Heritage Trail to the Wilson-Kautz Raid Trail and the Staunton River Water Trail.
  
  - The abandoned Seaboard Coastline railroad corridor is a multimodal transportation project that includes bicycle and pedestrian facilities and high-speed rail. Just south of Petersburg to Raleigh, this corridor could serve as the alignment for the East Coast Greenway connecting the Tobacco Heritage Trail.
  
  - The towns of Halifax and South Boston should continue to develop a trail on utility easements along Terry’s and Toot’s Creeks.
  
  - A trail corridor should be identified to link Lawrenceville with Fort Christanna in Brunswick County. Portions of this trail could provide access to the Meherrin River, a state scenic river.

Bike routes

U.S. bicycle routes

- Improve safety for bicyclists along U.S. Bicycle Route 1 and replace missing signs along the route.

- Bicycle and pedestrian accommodations should be included as part of the Southeast High Speed Railway. This corridor would make an appropriate alignment for the East Coast Greenway linking the Tobacco Heritage Trail and the Trans-Virginia Southern Trail.

- VDOT and local governments should implement the regional transportation plan options for bicycle and pedestrian access.

Thematic driving tours

There has been tremendous interest in thematic driving tours. These include heritage-based tours, agricultural or product-based tours, and nature-based tours such as the Virginia Birding and Wildlife Trail and Fish Virginia First. The Virginia Tourism Corp. maintains a list of Virginia’s scenic drives.

- Virginia’s Retreat offers travelers meaningful history attractions and abundant outdoor recreation. Related Civil Water thematic driving trails include Lee’s Retreat and Wilson-Kautz Raid Civil War driving tours, as well as the Civil Rights in Education Heritage Trail.

The Tobacco Heritage Trail is great for long runs. Photo by Kelly J. Mihalcoe LLC, courtesy of Virginia Tourism Corp.
Historic and landscape resources

Localities are encouraged to work with local residents to identify and preserve the many historic features found throughout the region. Native American sites, Civil War trenches and battlefields, historic river fords, the canals, and mill sites all mark significant moments in the Commonwealth’s history and are worthy of recognition and preservation.

Recommendations:

• Regional and local agencies should build relationships with local historic attractions, historical societies, museums and other tourism organizations in the region to include the Virginia Association of Museums, Virginia Civil War Trails, Preservation Virginia, the Virginia Main Street Program and others to enhance local heritage tourism, educational and recreational offerings.

• Local government and local and regional organizations should work with the state to meet the critical need for countywide surveys of historic and architectural resources in Mecklenburg and Brunswick counties.

Scenic resources

The following scenic resources were identified through Virginia Outdoors Plan public meetings or in collaboration with Scenic Virginia, a private, nonprofit organization that is building a registry of Virginia places of significant scenic beauty.

• Buggs Island Lake

Scenic highways and Virginia byways

The Virginia Department of Transportation provides information about the Virginia Byways Program, along with a scenic roads map.

The following road segments are potential Virginia byways and should be evaluated to determine if they qualify for designation:

• The Route 715 loop from Route 46 over Iron Bridge and back to Route 46 in Brunswick County makes a scenic tour and crosses the Meherrin River, a state scenic river.

• Route 360 (Mountain Road) and Route 659 (River Road) in Halifax County are components of a scenic loop that includes Routes 729, 360, 659 and 729 in Pittsylvania County.

• Route 615 and Route 707 from Route 903 westward to Route 58.

Federal programs

Army Corps of Engineers

• Long-distance trails have been proposed at the John H. Kerr Reservoir. These include an area along the north bank of the Dan River from South Boston to Staunton River State Park and another area along the banks of the Staunton River from Staunton River Battlefield State Park to Staunton River State Park.

• Bank fishing and water access around the reservoir should be considered.

• Small parking areas along the shoreline for fishing should be developed.

• Bridge restoration along sections of the Tobacco Heritage Trail traversing the Kerr Reservoir property should be considered.

• Fort Pickett in Nottoway, Dinwiddie and Brunswick counties should be evaluated for opportunities to increase public recreational use within the base mission.

State facilities and programs

State parks

The region has a need for additional state parkland and water access along the Meherrin River in Brunswick County.
CHAPTER 10 Regional Recommendations

Region 13 • Southside

State natural area preserves and natural heritage resources

Southside lies squarely in Virginia’s southern Piedmont, an area with a long history of agriculture and timber production, activities not always conducive to sustaining the best examples of native biological diversity. However, the district supports some of the rarest species and natural communities in the world. Biological highlights of the district are: a population of oak barrens Barbara’s buttons (a plant species so new to science it hasn’t been formally named), plant communities associated with greenstone-influenced hardpan soils, one of the world’s largest populations of the federally endangered Michaux’s sumac and granite flatrock communities.

DCR recommends that all unprotected conservation sites, and all unprotected portions of partially protected sites, be targeted for future land conservation efforts. The appropriate method 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 include:

- Protection of additional buffer lands around Fort Pickett.
- Protection of additional lands around Difficult Creek Natural Area Preserve.
- Protection of Piedmont hardpan forest and Piedmont savannah communities.
- Protection of granite flatrock communities.

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 staff. For a discussion of the Natural Heritage Program, see Chapter 9.
### CHAPTER 10 Regional Recommendations

#### Region 13 • Southside

**Table 13.5 Natural area preserves**  
*Southside Recreational Planning Region*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>preserve name</th>
<th>owner</th>
<th>locality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Difficult Creek</td>
<td>DCR</td>
<td>Halifax County</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Virginia Natural Heritage Program.*

**Table 13.6 Natural heritage resources**  
*Southside Recreational Planning Region*

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of occurrences of rare species and significant natural communities</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of different rare species and significant community types (natural heritage elements)</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of globally rare natural heritage elements</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of species listed as federally endangered or threatened</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of species listed as state endangered or threatened</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of conservation sites identified by DCR</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of conservation sites with some protection</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of conservation sites with more than 65% of area with some protection</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of adequately protected conservation sites</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Data as of July 1, 2012.  
Source: Virginia Natural Heritage Program.*

### State fish hatcheries and wildlife management areas

- DGIF proposed land acquisitions for the Dick Cross (formerly Elm Hill) Wildlife Management Area in Mecklenburg County. This wildlife management area contains lands that can meet many regional demands for dispersed recreation.

- DGIF should continue to look for additional recreational boating and fishing access on the Staunton River, as well as shoreline access for bank fishing on Kerr Reservoir.

### Other state lands

The following state-owned lands contain significant undeveloped open space that may have some potential for local recreational use. Each site should be assessed and, where appropriate, a cooperative agreement should be developed to make these resources available for local use as parks and open space.

- Medium Security Institute #1 in Brunswick County has 700 acres of undeveloped land that should be evaluated for its potential for meeting local recreational demand.

- Southside Community College in Brunswick County has 62 acres of land that should be evaluated for its recreational potential.

### Private sector

- Entrepreneurial opportunities may exist for outfitter services and outdoor skills development including horseback riding, fee-based camping, hunting, fishing, boating access and trails for all-terrain vehicles. The protection of historic sites, scenic viewsheds and working landscapes is of value to the tourism industry.

- Private campgrounds, resident summer camps for children, golf courses, tennis courts, swimming pools, marinas, agritourism and overnight accommodations may help meet needs identified in the 2011 Virginia Outdoors Demand Survey.

- Lake Gaston was constructed by Dominion Virginia Power as a hydroelectric project. In 2005, the project was relicensed by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, and Dominion agreed to contribute funds to acquire and develop a public park on the Virginia shore of the reservoir. Local and state governments should partner with Dominion to identify the best site to acquire and develop a public park on Lake Gaston.

- Marinas, and especially dry-storage-boat facilities, may be needed on Kerr Reservoir and Lake Gaston.
Website directory

Southside Recreational Planning Region
http://www.southsidepdc.org/

2010 Census Total Population Maps
http://www.census.gov/geo/maps-data/maps/datamapper.html

County Health Rankings and Roadmaps Program
http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app#/virginia/2013/rankings/outcomes/overall/by-rank

Beaches to Bluegrass Trail
http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/recreational_planning/tr-sbiibi2e.shtml

East Coast Greenway
http://www.greenway.org/index.shtml

Roanoke River Basin Association
http://prod.rrba.org/

John H. Kerr Trailrace
http://www.recreationparks.net/VA/mecklenburg/tailrace-park-john-h-kerr-dam

Dan River Basin Association
http://www.danriver.org/

Dan River Water Trail

Nottoway River

Lake Gaston

Kerr Reservoir
http://www.recreation.gov/unifSearchResults.do?topTabIndex=Search

U.S. Bicycle Routes
http://www.virginiadot.org/programs/united_states_bicycle_route_1_and_76_in_virginia.asp

Virginia Birding and Wildlife Trail
http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/vbwt/

Fish Virginia First
http://www.fishvirginiafirst.com/

Scenic Drives and Driving Tours Through Virginia
http://www.virginia.org/ScenicDrives/

Virginia’s Retreat
http://www.varetreat.com/

Civil Rights in Education Heritage Trail

Scenic Virginia
http://www.scenicvirginia.org/

Virginia Byways Program
http://www.virginiadot.org/programs/prog-byways.asp

State Scenic Rivers
http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/recreational_planning/srmain.shtml

John H. Kerr Reservoir
http://corpslakes.usace.army.mil/visitors/projects.cfm?id=k708350

State Park Master Plans
http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/recreational_planning/masterplans.shtml

Occoneechee State Park
http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/state_parks/occ.shtml

Staunton River State Park
http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/state_parks/sta.shtml

Staunton River Battlefield State Park
http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/state_parks/stb.shtml

Virginia’s Registry of Natural Areas
http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural_heritage/registry.shtml