

# Upper And Middle James Riparian Consortium



Scope: Regional/Watershed

Location: Virginia

## CONTACT INFORMATION:

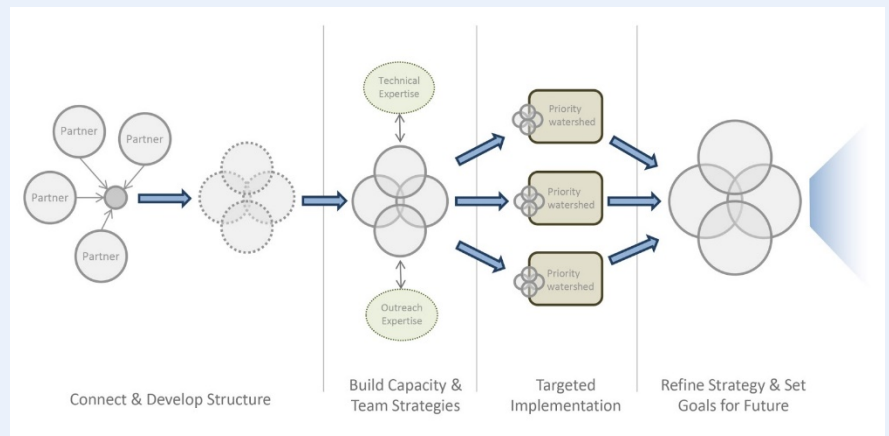
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## SCOPE:

- The Upper and Middle James Riparian Consortium (the Consortium) is a network of partners working together to achieve their goals in riparian buffer implementation and protection in order to improve water quality in the James River watershed.
- The geographic focus for the Consortium includes the freshwater areas of the James, including the Middle and Upper James watersheds.
- Their vision is “Growing partnerships to create healthy streamside ecosystems for clean water in the James River today and tomorrow.”
- The Consortium aims for a holistic approach to riparian restoration and aligns partners around five areas of focus: Riparian Forest Buffers, Agricultural Infrastructure, Streambank Stabilization, Wildlife Habitat, and Buffer Protection.

## COLLABORATIVE FORMATION:

- The impetus for the Consortium began in 2015, through a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) grant awarded to the James River Association (JRA) that targeted livestock exclusion projects and riparian buffers on high sediment yield agricultural lands within the Monacan, Thomas Jefferson, Robert E Lee, and Natural Bridge Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD). That project resulted in 35,000 linear feet of cattle exclusion, 3,000 trees in riparian buffers, strengthened trust between partners, and ultimately the creation of the James River Buffer Program and the Consortium.



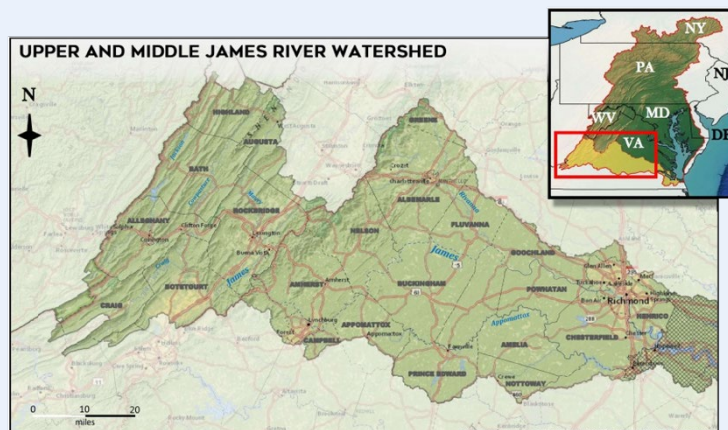
- JRA received funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) to support the development of the Consortium between January 2019-December 2021. The Consortium is going through a three year process of formalizing a structure, testing out strategies, and refining as the partnership moves forward towards action. (*see right*)
- JRA and Virginia Department of Forestry received funding from the Virginia Environmental Endowment to launch the James River Buffer Program in 2019. This program serves to fill gaps in state and federal programs and is eligible to any landowner in the Middle James. The program covers 100% of the cost for site preparation, installation, and three years of establishment support. JRA and DOF's combined goal is 742 acres of restored forest buffer by December 2021.

## STRUCTURE/FUNDING:

- The Consortium builds on partner strengths and resources in order to work efficiently towards collective impact. As the sole organization focused on the James River watershed, JRA serves as the convener. The structure includes a Planning Team (PT), Steering Committee (SC), Action Teams focusing on implementing the four Consortium goals, and Consortium Membership, but retains a flexible and somewhat informal nature to continue to welcome new partners.
  - **Planning Team**
    - Activities: Coordinates the Consortium logistics and communication.
    - Schedule: They meet bi-weekly.
    - Partner Organizations: James River Association (JRA), Dialogue + Design Associates (D+D; Consortium facilitator)
  - **Steering Committee**
    - Activities: Includes representatives from major partner organizations and Action Teams that guides the direction, strategizing, and decision-making of the Consortium. The SC follows a consensus decision-making process and budget approval.
    - Schedule: The SC meets monthly by phone and in person (when possible) before Consortium meetings.
    - Partner Organizations: JRA, Virginia Department of Forestry, Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, Monacan SWCD, Peter Francisco SWCD, Natural Bridge SWCD, Virginia Cooperative Extension, Thomas Jefferson SWCD, Trout Unlimited, Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, Stroud Water Research Center, Center for Watershed Protection, and D+D (facilitator).
  - **Action Teams**
    - Activities: Each Action Team is an implementation arm of the Consortium to accomplish the Consortium goals. Each Action Team chair and co-chair have important roles to coordinate group calls; identify action items and a timeframe for implementation of their goals with Action Team members; update Action Planning worksheets, or other similar document, with active action items that the Team is working toward; and report back to the SC and larger Consortium membership.
    - Schedule: Each Action Team aims to meet in-between each Consortium meetings.
    - Partner Organizations: Any Consortium Member may serve on an Action Team, however Teams are led by specific organizations.
  - **Consortium Membership**
    - Activities: The Consortium is open to anyone who wants to be a participating member. Individual members interact in a variety of ways from serving on Action Teams, attending Consortium meetings and the annual Buffer Summit, receiving monthly newsletters, as well as partnering with other members on riparian projects and grant proposals.
    - Partner Organizations: The Consortium membership represents a larger network of partners working in the Upper and Middle James Watershed to partake and share in training and collaboration around the five focus areas of riparian restoration including riparian forest buffers, agricultural infrastructure, wildlife habitat, streambank stabilization, and protection. These include representatives from local Roundtables, Planning District Commissions, local government, SWCDs, private sector, state agencies, non-profits, and many others.
- The Consortium is currently funded by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the Virginia Environmental Endowment.

## MAJOR PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS:

- Center for Watershed Protection
- Chesapeake Bay Foundation
- Chesapeake Conservancy
- Conservation Partners LLC
- James River Association
- Middle James Roundtable
- Monacan SWCD
- Natural Bridge SWCD
- Peter Francisco SWCD
- Stroud Water Research Center
- Thomas Jefferson SWCD
- Trout Unlimited
- Valley Conservation Council
- Virginia Cooperative Extension
- Virginia Department of Forestry
- Virginia Dept. of Wildlife Resources
- Virginia Outdoors Foundation



- Dialogue + Design Associates (facilitator)
- And More!

## WATER CONCERNS:

More than one-third of all Virginians rely on the James River and its tributaries for drinking water, commerce, and recreation. JRA releases a State of the James Report every 2 years that grades our progress across a variety of indicators. According to the 2019 State of the James report, only 11% of the James River Total Maximum Daily Load goal to restore 70,000 acres of riparian buffers by 2025 as indicated in the Phase III Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) had been achieved by 2018. In order to reach this goal, it is fundamental for organizations to collaborate, share resources, and catalyze the implementation of projects.

The Consortium is focused on restoring and protecting these riparian areas through the five focus areas to address the full suite of threats to our riparian ecosystems from ensuring we exclude cattle from our streams, restore tree canopy, increase wildlife habitat both within our streams and along its banks, stabilize eroding banks, and work with partners to protect these riparian areas when possible through conservation easements.

## STRATEGIES:

- Each Action Team is an implementation arm of the Consortium to accomplish the Consortium goals.
  - **Targeting and Outreach Team**
    - Goal: Build awareness of the importance of riparian areas and deliver outreach based on identified partner priorities, landowner interests, and restoration opportunity areas to increase strategic riparian investments. (Team Leads: Center for Watershed Protection)
    - Year 2-3 Strategy Focus:
      - Targeting: 1) Develop a system to strategically prioritize landowner recruitment in two NFWF Priority Subwatersheds: Powhatan and Goochland, and another in Rockbridge County, and 2) Establish criteria for implementation in priority sub-watersheds, 3) Develop Micro-Targeting Strategy for Riparian Buffer Adoption.
      - Outreach: 1) Develop and launch Landowner Tool, 2) Hold 2 Field Days, and 3) Develop marketing and outreach materials for Consortium
- **Research Team:**
  - Goal: Ensure practitioners are using the best method for the best site for riparian restoration. (Team Leads: JRA, Stroud Water Research Center)
  - Year 2-3 Strategy Focus: 1) literature review on best practices, 2) Select and install test plot locations for riparian restoration methods, and 3) Create document: Riparian Buffer Methods for the Middle and Upper James Watershed
- **Knowledge Network Team:**
  - Goal: Build knowledge and capacity about best practices, innovation, and by growing partnerships. (Team Lead: Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay)
  - Year 2-3 Strategy Focus: 1) Use input from local Consortium meetings to inform regional-specific trainings in both the Middle and Upper James watershed, 2) deliver riparian buffer trainings that respond to rural/agricultural landscape and urban landscape
- **Implementation:**
  - Goal: Coordinate implementation and outreach based on targeting, funding availability, and potential for impact. (Team Leads: JRA, Trout Unlimited)
  - Year 2-3 Strategy Focus: 1) Create Coordination Tool for partner coordination, 2) Fill gaps in state and federal programs through the James River Buffer Program and Upper James Home River Initiative, and explore other gap needs, 3) Select projects for collaborative implementation in priority sub-watersheds

## RESULTS:

- At the onset of the initiative, a dozen stakeholders were interviewed by the Consortium facilitators, which informed a [Key Issues Report](#) that has informed the structure and goals of the Consortium.
- Developing a team hub and coordination tools were key to improving effective communication and outreach. The following have been developed by the Consortium:
  - Website: Developed a website for the Consortium at [www.jamesriverconsortium.org](http://www.jamesriverconsortium.org)
  - Coordination Tool: The Chesapeake Conservancy created the Coordination Tool for the Upper and Middle James Riparian Consortium to facilitate coordination and collaboration among implementation partners across the James River watershed. The layers within the Practitioner Tool provide spatial information and landscape context to support collaborative decision-making for members of the Consortium. Click [here](#) to access the tool.
  - Landowner Tool: The Chesapeake Conservancy developed a web-based mapping application, “Streamside Program Report” tool to be used in the Middle and Upper James for landowner outreach. They will also develop a program card

web page summarizing funding programs including short descriptions and relevant contact information. Click [here](#) to access the tool.

- Newsletter: D+D publishes a newsletter that is sent out to Consortium Members that give updates on upcoming meetings, project highlights, team updates, and potential funding for riparian restoration.
- VDOF and JRA have installed at total of 228 acres of riparian forest buffer through the James River Buffer Program since its launch in 2019, with several additional projects slated for implementation through the Consortium as well.



**Information current as of November 2020. Please check with the Collaborative contacts (or website if available) for the most up to date information. To find other source water collaboratives across the U.S. or to add yours to the list, visit the Source Water Collaborative's [How To Collaborate Toolkit](#)**