



DCR interoffice MEMORANDUM

To: Kelly McClary
From: Lynn Crump
Date: January 12, 2021
Subject: Extension of the Middle James River Scenic River Designation



In July 2020, a segment of the Middle James River in Albemarle, Buckingham, Fluvanna, and Nelson Counties was designated as a Virginia Scenic River. Specifically, the designated segment is from one mile upstream of Warren to the Route 15 Bridge in Buckingham and Fluvanna Counties, a distance of approximately 19 miles.

In 2019, the counties of Albemarle, Buckingham, Fluvanna, and Nelson, along with the town of Scottsville, requested that the section of the James River from the Nelson County line at Allens Creek downstream to the Route 690 Bridge at Columbia be studied for possible Scenic River designation. Since not all of the requested river segment was studied in 2019, the extension study was completed in two sections in 2020.

In September of 2020 over the course of five days, an evaluation was completed by staff from the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and representatives of a local outfitter, the James River Association, and Nelson County along with interested citizens. One section was from Allen's Creek at the Nelson County line downstream to the previous designated section, which began at one mile upstream of Warren, a distance of approximately 34.5 miles. The second section was from the Route 15 New Canton boat launch, the termination point for the section designated in 2020, to the Columbia boat launch, a distance of approximately 10.5 miles.

Based on the evaluations, it was determined that the two new sections **qualify for designation**. Combined the sections add a distance of approximately 45 miles to the existing designation section of the Middle River, a length of 19 miles. Combining the sections qualified for Scenic River designation gives the Middle James River a total of approximately 64 miles.

Following are the findings that support this designation.

FINDINGS:

The James River originates in Virginia's Ridge and Valley Province flowing eastward to the Chesapeake Bay. The section studied, the Middle James, is located within the Piedmont region of Virginia and is generally characterized by flat water with some sections of rapids. The proposed river segment is within the section sometimes called the James River Batteau Festival Trail, which runs from Lynchburg through Goochland. It flows through agricultural, rural and forested landscapes with little development. Most of the corridor is private land with open fields beyond a somewhat intact 100-foot buffer in pasture, a few crops and hay.

The wide river has no dams or other deterrents for river flow, though there are a couple of industrial sites adjacent to the river. These sites cover short shore lengths creating a momentary interruption in the pristine feeling river while adding some visual interest. There are many houses within view of the river, but most are seen for a very short time. Thus creating a feel of remoteness and separation from the hustle and bustle of urban life.

Historically, the river was used for transportation as well as fishing and hunting with little development and little, but concentrated industrialization along the river corridor. There are still remains pieces of the lock system developed in the early 1800s and remnants of various mills. Other notable historic sites and districts that have National Register of Historic Places under the National Park Service (NRHP) and Virginia Landmarks Register (VLR) designation include, but is not limited to: Rassawack (Point of Fork), Glen Arvon, Columbia and Bremono Historic Districts, Rivanna Farm, and the James River – Kanawha Canal System.



This section of the James is wide and shallow, made up of loopy bends with long stretches that allow for long views of the higher elevations when nearby. There are numerous long sections of forest edge that are interrupted by a change in the bank when cliffs or rock outcroppings show highlighting rapids or riffles that add interest. The forest types also change depending on the steepness and aspect of the slope. All this contributes to the interest and variety experienced on this stretch of river.

Fish quality was rated as moderate by the study team and the Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR). Game fish in this section include: smallmouth bass, redbreast sunfish, and Channel catfish with some longnose gar, catfish and smallmouth. There are a large number of documented significant natural resources along the corridor, including several vascular plants, invertebrates and intact natural communities.

Water quality, which is based on the turbidity in the growing season and frequency of trash was given an overall high score. Though there is a lot of

agriculture in the narrow floodplains of this section there is some vegetative buffer to mitigate the worst of the turbidity. Much of the turbidity experienced comes from the tributaries to this section of the river. Trash seen along the river seemed to be concentrated near boat launches and fishing sites. There were some tires in the river, but for the most part they were little visible trash.



Although there is a rail line along the entire section of the river, there are no parallel roads within 1000 feet of the river. The railroad is only on one side and rarely get closer than 1000 feet. There is little train traffic and most of the corridor there is a visual buffer between the tracks and the river. Occasionally an impact from the ballast of the railroad creates a negative visual impact.

The only other sign of development are the bridges and powerline crossings. For the entire 64 river miles there are five bridges and/or trestles and about the same number of large transmission lines. Fortunately the impacts of these crossings are minimal, due to the meandering corridor alignment and the crossings being perpendicular to the river.

The long views and forested slopes create a terrific backdrop for river travelers, especially in the fall when the autumn colors reflect off the relatively flat water. Cliffs and rock outcroppings along with multiple islands, cultural sites, rock formations and primitive mature forest areas create interest and a feeling of remoteness and isolation along the corridor. The aesthetic appeal is in the moderate to high range.

Public river access is reasonable, though separated by long stretches that make long days to get from one site to another. Most of the public access sites along this section of the river have a separation distance between 10 and 14 miles. There are few outfitters that can provide shuttle help or guided trips that make access to the river easy. Additionally, the James River Association has developed a series of [water trail maps for Middle James](#), that allow for safe use of the river.

This long section of the James has few properties in land conservation.

Based on the evaluation, the overall score for the proposed Middle James River extension in Nelson, Appomattox, Albemarle, Buckingham, Fluvanna, and Cumberland Counties is well above the minimum score for designation; therefore, **it is recommended that the newly studied 45 miles of the James be added to the existing designated Middle James River be submitted for designation. This additional mileage will bring the Middle James River Section to 64 miles.**

THE PROPOSED CODE OF VIRGINIA CHANGE FOLLOWS:

§ 10.1-413. James State Scenic River.

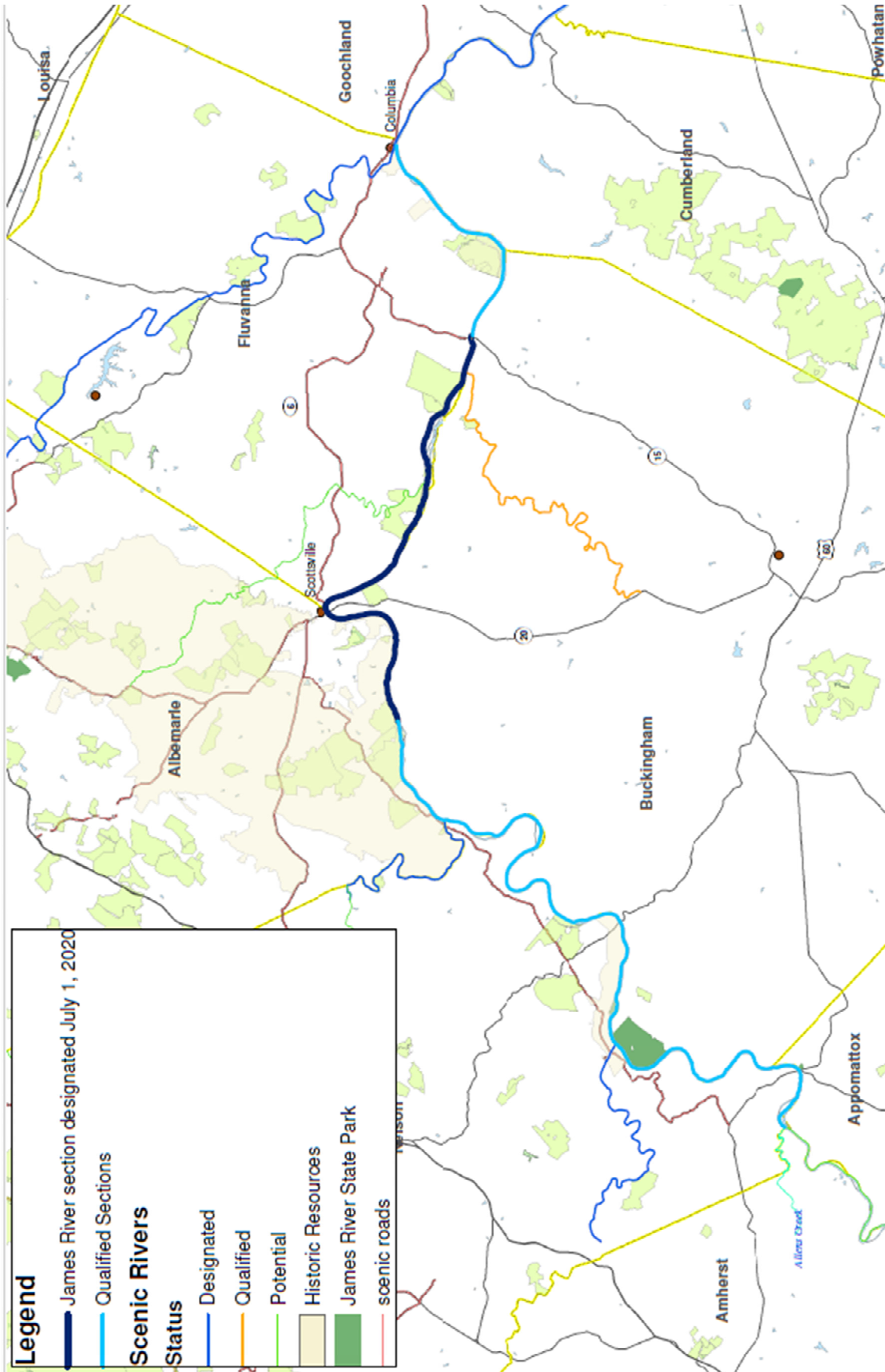
The James River in Botetourt and Rockbridge Counties, including the Towns of Buchanan and Glasgow, from its origination at the confluence of the Jackson and Cowpasture Rivers running approximately 59 miles southeastward to the Rockbridge-Amherst-Bedford County line **and** the James River in Nelson, Appomattox, Albemarle, Buckingham, Fluvanna, and Cumberland Counties from the confluence of Allens Creek running approximately 64 miles to Columbia are hereby designated as the James State Scenic River, components of the Virginia Scenic Rivers System.

ATTACHEMENTS:

MAP OF SECTION

RESOLUTIONS OF SUPPORT

DRAFT





BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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Director of Finance and
Human Resources

**RESOLUTION R2020-50
NELSON COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
SCENIC RIVER DESIGNATION – JAMES RIVER**

WHEREAS, the Virginia Scenic Rivers Program was enacted by the Virginia General Assembly in 1970 for the purpose of identification, protection, and preservation of certain rivers, or sections of rivers, which possess high quality natural beauty; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation has been charged with administering the Scenic Rivers Program and developing an objective evaluation process to judge the suitability of river segments; and

WHEREAS, the County of Nelson will coordinate an effort to evaluate a segment of the James River in Nelson County to determine its eligibility as a Scenic River designation along with the James River Association, the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission, and the Counties of Albemarle, Buckingham, Fluvanna and the Town of Scottsville.

WHEREAS, the maximal river segment would be a total of 30 miles. Allens Creek to Howardsville. This includes Allens Creek to Norwood: 12 miles, Norwood to Wingina: 5 miles, Wingina to Howardsville: 13 miles. To include the access point Buffalo Station. All sites have ecological, geological and historical significance. Our state and regional partnership will determine the best qualifying river segment.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Nelson County Board of Supervisors does hereby support the evaluation of the James River within Nelson County by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation to determine its eligibility as a Scenic River Designation, much like the Tye River, with a distance of approximately 12.7 miles to the confluence of the James as well as the Rockfish River, a distance of 9.7 miles to the confluence of the James.

Approved: December 8, 2020

Attest  Clerk
Nelson County Board of Supervisors



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Marine Resources Commission
180 Paswick Road
Bldg 98
Port Monroe, VA 23651-1064

Matthew J. Briddler
Secretary of Natural Resources

Steven G. Brownson
Commissioner

December 23, 2020

Department of Conservation and Recreation
Attn: Lynn Crump
600 East Main Street, 24th Floor
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Re: Proposed Scenic River Designation of Segments of the
South, North Fork of the Shenandoah, Middle James
extension and extension of the Rappahannock River

Dear Ms. Crump,

In accordance with your memorandum dated December 8, 2020, we have reviewed the documentation concerning the proposed Scenic River designation of segments of the South River in Waynesboro, North Fork of the Shenandoah in Shenandoah County, Middle James extension from Allens Creek to Warren and New Canton to Columbia, and extension of the Rappahannock River in the City of Fredericksburg, the counties of Spotsylvania, Essex, Westmoreland, King George, Stafford, Richmond, and Caroline, and the towns of Port Royal and Tappahannock.

The Virginia Marine Resources Commission (VMRC) is responsible for managing the commercial and recreational tidal fisheries and for issuing permits for encroachments in, on, or over State-owned submerged lands throughout the Commonwealth. The VMRC has no position on the proposed Scenic River designations provided such designations do not adversely affect our management of the commercial and recreational fisheries and the submerged lands on which those resources depend.

If you have any questions please contact me at 757-247-2251 or by email at randy.owen@mrc.virginia.gov. Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Randy Owen
Deputy Chief, Habitat Management Division

RDO/tlb
HM

An Agency of the Natural Resources Secretariat

www.mrc.virginia.gov

Telephone (757) 247-2200 (757) 247-2292 V/TDD Information and Emergency Hotline 1-800-541-4646 V/TDD



**APPOMATTOX COUNTY
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

P.O. Box 863, Appomattox, VA 24522 Phone: (434) 352-2637
www.AppomattoxCountyVA.gov

RESOLUTION

APPOMATTOX COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

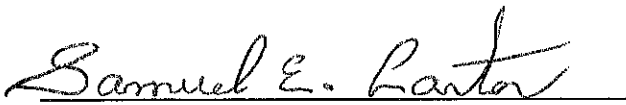
SCENIC RIVER DESIGNATION – JAMES RIVER

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WHEREAS, the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation has been charged with administering the Scenic Rivers Program and developing an objective evaluation process to judge the suitability of river segments; and

WHEREAS, the section of river in Appomattox County is from the confluence of Allen's Creek to the Appomattox/Buckingham County Line, a distance of 3.6 miles.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Appomattox County Board of Supervisors does hereby support the evaluation of the James River within Appomattox County by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation to determine its eligibility as a Scenic River Designation.



Samuel E. Carter, Chairman
Appomattox County Board of Supervisors

ATTEST:



Clerk to the Board