



# Upper & Middle James Riparian Consortium Action Planning Virtual Retreat

## Online Meeting Summary

Thursday, February 18th, 2021

### Executive Summary

The first formal meeting of the Upper and Middle James Riparian Consortium (Consortium) of 2021 was held on February 18th, 2021 as a virtual Action Planning Retreat. The Action Planning Retreat primarily focused on an overview of the Consortium's vision, focus, areas, and goals for 2021 and beyond, followed by a series of presentations by each of the Action Team leads and small group discussions where participants took a deep dive into each of the Consortium's goals and Action Teams: the Knowledge Network, Outreach and Targeting, and Implementation. The content and suggestions generated through this Action Planning Retreat will be used by the Action Teams and Consortium planning team to develop and further refine an Action Plan for the Consortium. This Action Plan is intended to be shared with the Steering Committee for adoption in March of 2021.

The last Consortium meeting summary from November 12th, 2020 can be found at this [link](#). For more information on the Consortium, please see [www.jamesriverconsortium.org](http://www.jamesriverconsortium.org). Presentation slides for this meeting can be found [here](#). Finally, a list of attendees is included at the end of the summary.

### Welcome and Agenda Review

At the beginning of the meeting, Sierra Gladfelter with Dialogue + Design Associates and Amber Ellis with the James River Association welcomed everyone to the meeting and invited participants to share their name and affiliation in the chat and to verbally share a favorite James River activity. After introductions, Christine Gyovai with Dialogue + Design Associates provided an overview of the agenda and shared meeting goals for the Action Planning Retreat, including developing a revised Consortium Action Plan that the Action Team leads will review and further refine for formal adoption in March and engage in collaborative planning for each goal area and actions for 2021 and 2022-2024.

### Overview of Vision, Focus Areas, and Action Plan

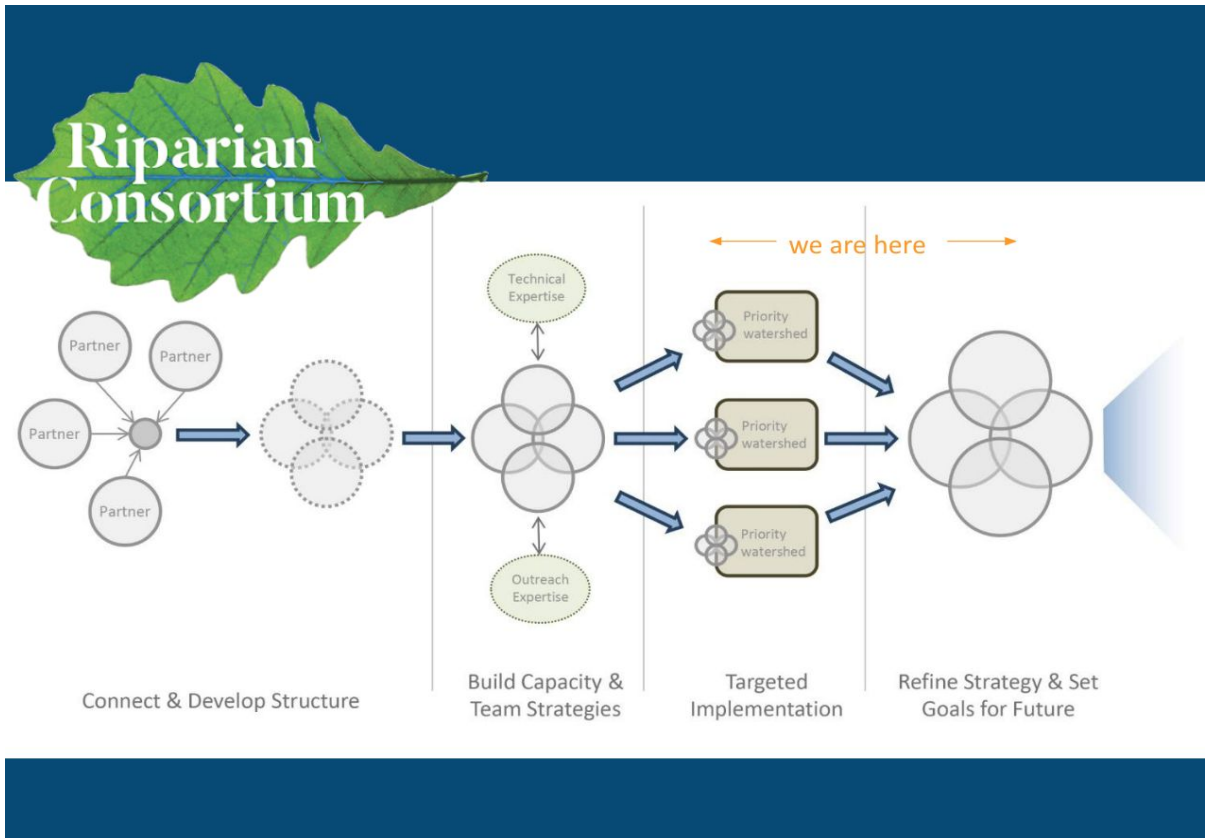
Amber Ellis shared a brief overview presentation on the Consortium's vision statement, geographic area, focus areas, and goals, including how they related to WIP III efforts. During the presentation, participants were invited to share what success for the Consortium looks like to them via chat and to participate in a series of three polls to help the Consortium's planning team, Steering Committee, and Action Teams understand members' priorities and better align the Consortium's activities with the WIP III goals. Feedback from meeting participants to each of the questions are included below. Slides from Amber Ellis' presentation are available at this [link](#).

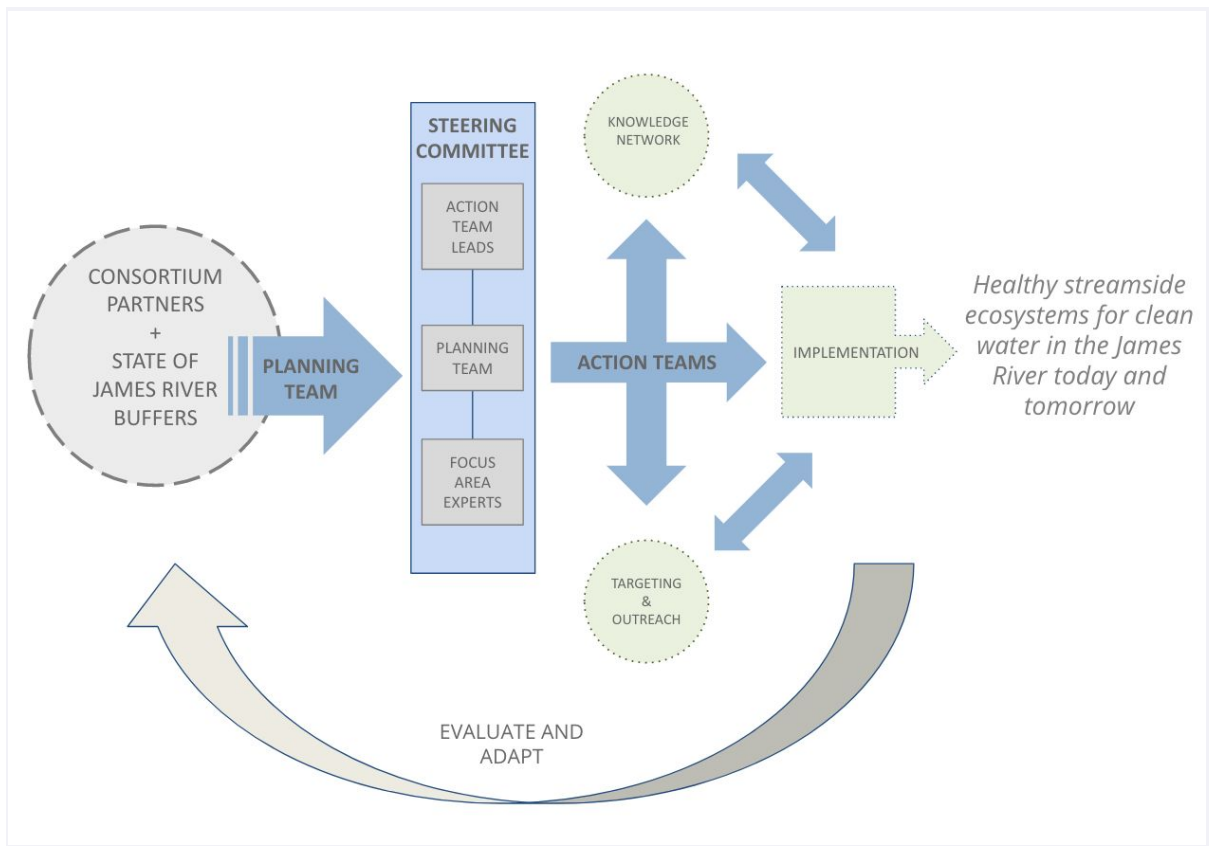
- **In one sentence, what's success [for the Consortium] look like?**
  - Trees on the banks, bugs under the rocks.
  - No cows in streams!

- Diversity.
  - Lots of beautiful bird habitat.
  - Cool, clean water from headwaters to the Bay.
  - No sediment going downstream.
  - Landowners and citizens understand why a buffer is a great thing to have.
  - Native plant buffers large and small all along the James and Clean Water I am not afraid to wade in!
  - Lots and lots of big buffers!
  - Cleaner water.
  - Big, beautiful partnerships between NGOs, state, local, and businesses.
  - Low bacteria levels.
  - Increased accessibility, cleaner water, buffers.
  - Cleaner cooler water.
  - Creating behavioral changes.
  - Great stream habitat.
  - Functioning Riparian Forests.
  - Downstream economies invest in upstream communities, without which the health and wellbeing of their economy is not possible.
  - Forests and upland contour tree plantings where it makes sense.
- **Poll 1:** Which WIP III goals do you feel best represent our Consortium efforts? a) Forest Buffers only, or b) Forest + Grass Buffers.
    - 76% of participants said B: Forest and Grass Buffers; 24% said Forest Buffers only.
    - Comments and questions shared via chat:
      - Grass is kinda important.
      - What does 'Grass Buffer' refer to? Monoculture or to a more diverse herbaceous community?
- **Poll 2:** Select all that you think belong: a) riparian forest buffers, b) agricultural infrastructure, c) streambank stabilization, d) wildlife habitat, e) protection, f) other.
    - #1= Riparian forest buffers (96%), #2 Wildlife habitat (91%), #3=Streambank stabilization (87%), #4=Agricultural infrastructure (83%), #5= Protection (78%), #6=Other (17%).
    - Participants shared the following comments regarding "Other":
      - Change E to Protection + Management as a suggestion for other.
- **Poll 3:** Which focus area do you feel we need to put more focus on going forward: a) double down on riparian forest buffers, b) agricultural infrastructure, c) streambank stabilization, d) wildlife habitat, e) protection, f) other.
    - #1= Streambank stabilization (67%), #2= Double down on riparian forest buffers (58%), #3= Agricultural infrastructure (33%), #4= Wildlife habitat (25%), #5/6=Protection (17%), #5/6=Other (17%).
    - Participants shared the following comments regarding "Other":
      - Other: Landowner/facility owner education as to the benefits of buffers.
      - Contour plantings and multifunctional trees in sensitive areas.
      - Park areas with trails and other infrastructure.
      - Consider silvopasture in livestock operations, we see increasing popularity.
      - Grasses.
      - Maybe need to expand the word "Protection", so it does indicate easements.

- Ensure the quality of a buffer, Invasive vs natives.

Amber also shared these graphics illustrating how information from partners and insights from members, like those shared during today's Action Planning Retreat, feed into the larger Consortium's planning process. The second graphic provides an illustration of how the Consortium is structured.





## Focus Area Breakout Groups

After Amber’s overview presentation and the series of polls, participants were invited to join seven breakout groups for small group discussions around the following questions:

- Which of the 5 Focus Areas did you note needing more focus going forward and why? What would more focus look like?
- If you think a Focus Area is missing or doesn’t belong, what is it and why?

Participants first reflected on these questions individually, then shared their responses with their group members. After an open discussion, small group participants returned to the main room to share top highlights verbally and via chat. For a full list of ideas shared during the breakout small group discussions please see Appendix A of this meeting summary, which are the notes taken by participants during the meeting in a shared document. Top ideas shared with the large group included:

- **Group 1:**
  - We need more education, training, and funding for streambank stabilization and restoration.
  - Training on what stabilizations practices to use and whether or not would be doable/practical/cost effective.
  - Worried about band aid streambank stabilization practices that don't address the issue at hand. Whole watershed approach is ideal but not as practical. Concerns about longevity of streambank practices.
- **Group 2:**
  - Unanimous in our agreement about priority for streambank restoration and are aware of the great costs involved.



## Goal 1 - Knowledge Network

Next, Jenny McGarvey with the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay and Action Team lead for the Knowledge Network Action Team provided a brief overview of this Action Team's goals, current strategies and progress, key partners, and where the team would like input from meeting participants on their activities in the next 12-36 months. The slides shared are available at this [link](#) and more information on the Knowledge Network Team's goals and priorities is available at the PDF worksheet linked [here](#).

After this contextual framing, participants were invited to join three different facilitated breakout groups where each group took on a different strategy to discuss in detail. Group 1 (named "Cabin" to capture the aura of a retreat) focused on Strategy 1: "Build knowledge and capacity about best practices and innovations in riparian restoration for experienced and expert practitioners." This group was facilitated by Amber Ellis with the James River Association. Group 2 ("Beach") discussed Strategy 2: "Train businesses, practitioners, and volunteers in the best and cost-effective practices in riparian restoration, including planning, implementation, and maintenance" and was facilitated by Jenny McGarvey. Finally, Group 3 ("Oasis") tackled Strategy 3: "Increase capacity of businesses to integrate riparian restoration into their business models," and was facilitated by Sheeren Hughes with the Chesapeake Bay Landscape Professionals (CBLP) and Wetlands Watch and Sierra Gladfelter with Dialogue + Design. In each of the small groups, participants first reviewed the [PDF](#) worksheet and specific strategies and actions for the Knowledge Network Action Team assigned to their breakout group and then responded to the following questions individually and then as a small group:

- Are there actions missing under these strategies that we should consider taking on in the coming years?
- Who should lead the proposed actions?
- What are the next steps for implementing these actions (including timeline or milestone for success)?

After discussing these questions as a small group, participants returned to the main room to share top highlights verbally and via chat. For a full list of ideas shared during the breakout small group discussions, please see Appendix A of this meeting summary. Top ideas on strategies and actions for the Knowledge Network Team shared with the large group included:

- **Group 1 (Strategy 1):**
  - Key actions: 1) digital repository for articles/studies, 2) site visits to real projects to learn from and network, 3) virtual roundtables, and 4) tapping into larger Bay efforts and make connections to other collaboratives, identify those opportunities.
- **Group 2 (Strategy 2):**
  - Top ideas shared via chat: "Certification/standardize trainings; needs to be required for certification to be worth paying for."
  - Jenny, who facilitated this group, added that the group talked about how to build a certification program that will be recognized and valued by employers, which will help with employee retention and to bring in some assurance that this certification program has resulted in a more capable workforce.
  - The group also discussed what would go into making the certification program viable and who should be participating in future programs.

- Finally, the group also discussed mentorship and how the Consortium can best support CBLP graduates from the Buffer certification course to ensure that they are confident in their new roles.
- **Group 3 (Strategy 3):**
  - Top ideas shared via chat: “There is a need to connect with the private businesses and understand their motivation for taking on Riparian Buffer Works - a business roundtable would be good. Need to marketing and targeted outreach: passive and active.”
  - Shereen, who facilitated this group, noted that there was actually a lack of knowledge within the group about CBLP’s Buffer certification course highlighting the need to publicize this program more effectively.
  - The group discussed the need to understand potential business partners and what their motivators are through a clear marketing strategy and plan to engage private businesses and bring them to the table.
  - Finally, the group discussed the need to demonstrate the value and benefits of buffers not only to private business owners but also to their employees.

## Goal 2 - Outreach and Targeting

After a short break, participants reconvened for a deep dive into the Outreach and Targeting Action Team’s goals, strategies, and plan for 2021 and beyond. Lisa Fraley-McNeal with the Center for Watershed Protection provided a brief overview of the Outreach and Targeting Action Team’s goals and current strategies. During the presentation, participants were invited to respond to two separate polls around which stakeholder groups and audiences should be prioritized in outreach and targeted engagement. Feedback from meeting participants to each of the poll questions are included below.

- **Poll 4- Goal 2. a.** Would a stream restoration targeting analysis be useful?
  - 84% of participants said “yes”, 5% person said “no”, and 11% said “unsure.”
- **Poll 5- Goal 2. b.** Out of these audiences, pick your top 3 that you see a need for more strategic outreach in future years: 1) Rural landowners, 2) Forest landowners, 3) Golf courses/public parks, 4) Wildlife enthusiasts (sportsmen, birders, etc.), 5) Decision makers/officials, 6) Consortium partners, 7) Workforce/Contractors, 8) Youth, 9) Urban landowners/farmers, 10) Other? Results included:
  - #1= Rural landowners (75%)
  - #2= Decision makers/officials (55%)
  - #3/4=Urban landowners (50%)
  - #3/4=Golf course/public parks (50%)
  - #5= Workforce/contractors (25%)
  - #6= Wildlife enthusiasts (sportsmen, birders, etc.)
  - #7= Forest landowners (15%)
  - #8= Youth (10%)
  - #9/10= Consortium Partners (5%)
  - #9/10= Other
    - Institutional land managers (colleges, correctional, local gov’t, etc.)

After Lisa’s presentation, Amber Ellis provided some additional updates on outreach activities, including the exciting news that the Consortium just recently brought Paula and David Jasinski with Green Fin Studio on to support the Consortium’s outreach and communication goals. Green Fin

Studio is a Richmond-based environmental communications firm with a team of communicators, scientists, graphic designers, and programmers that combine science, story, and strategy to create engaging communication strategies and products. They have a 10-year history of working with a variety of groups, including environmental and educational non-profits, academic institutions, state and federal organizations, and private entities. Paula and David Jasinski said a few words, including how thrilled they are to support the Consortium's work in this area. The slides shared by Lisa and Amber are available at this [link](#) and more information on the Outreach and Targeting Team's goals and priorities is available at the PDF worksheet linked [here](#).

With this contextual framing, participants were invited to join three different breakout groups where each group participated in a facilitated messaging exercise around three of the Consortium's priority stakeholder groups for additional outreach. Group 1 ("Cabin") focused on Rural Landowners and was facilitated by Amber Ellis. Group 2 ("Beach") focused on Urban Partners, including parks, golf courses, etc. and was facilitated by David Jasinski and Sierra Gladfelter. Group 3 ("Oasis") focused on Decision makers and Local Government and was facilitated by Paula Jasinski and Lisa Fraley-McNeal. In each of the three small groups, participants responded to and collectively discussed the following questions about their target outreach audience:

- **So What:** Why should this audience care about riparian buffers? How does it impact them?
- **Solutions:** What are you doing to address the vision of healthy streamside ecosystems? How are you helping?
- **Benefits:** What is made better in the short-term or long-term because of your work? How is this audience's life made easier/better because of what you are doing?

Following a 30 minute discussion in small groups, participants returned to the main room to share top highlights verbally and via chat. For a full list of ideas shared during the breakout small group discussions please see Appendix A of this meeting summary. Top ideas on strategies and actions for the Knowledge Network Team shared with the large group included:

- **Group 1 (Rural Landowners):**
  - So What: There's money available to do it; making the land more resilient; it helps people from losing their land; promotes herd health for agricultural landowners; opens up new areas of the property for enjoyment if you have riparian buffers there.
  - Solutions: Potentially model and expand the Farm Float that the Valley Conservation Council did in partnership with the SWCDs upriver to other parts of the watershed.
  - While many rural landowners are farmers it is important to include other kinds of rural land owners. There is a need for targeted messaging to different kinds of rural landowners to make sure that they are aware of the types of funding available to them.
  - There is also a need to do outreach to and creative education for minority Black farmers who may have had issues around land ownership and may not have been able to access NRCS opportunities in the past.
- **Group 2 (Urban Partners):**
  - Started with "What do we mean by urban landowners?" private landowners- large or small lots, schools, parks, golf course, homeowner associations (HOAs)- especially those that could work together along streams; on banks of James in Richmond: Dominion, James City park system, etc.
  - So What: Properly created buffers can frame and enhance water views, can help with green infrastructure and urban development; can provide shaded walking paths for



- recreation, clean water, multi-functional buffers with fruit and nut trees in them, buffers can also prevent cumulative downstream flooding.
- Solutions: Inclusion of urban-focused programs and resources in Streamside Programs Report Tool; Education regarding the multiple values of buffers (including recreation benefits; Designing attractive buffers that maintains views and access; Combining buffers with recreation/park creation opportunities (i.e. walking paths, benches, wildlife viewing opportunities); Cost-share benefits; Technical advice; Labor and materials provided; Improve Public Image, meet organizations sustainability goals.
  - Benefits: Reconnect streams to their floodplains; flood damage mitigation (restore natural floodplains); less maintenance, less mowing and fertilization required; creation of shady places/areas to cool down for people, aquatic systems and riparian species (mitigate urban heat island effect); highlighting the recreational benefits associated with buffers.
  - Problems: Buffers can reduce storm surge and subdue flooding and protect your property for erosion and loss of land as well as protect structures; Entrenched streams/streambank erosion and flood impacts- potential safety/liability issues?; People see buffers as “messy” (may lower their home value) or are “a magnet for pests” (snakes, ticks); Buffers block views of water and access to the water; Stormwater management, drinking water source protection, lack of access to green space/carbon and air pollution benefits of urban tree canopy; Lack of greenspace/outdoor space for recreation; Tendency for urban parcels to be smaller-have to work with greater number of landowners to achieve greater areas of contiguous buffers; If you take a buffer out for development, need to put it back.
    - David noted that it is also important to spend time thinking about problems or perceived problems around buffers to ensure success in outreach and marketing.
- **Group 3 (Decision makers/Local Government):**
    - Started with defining who the decision makers are and who is considered trusted messengers to this audience (i.e. Virginia Cattlemen’s Association, Farm Bureau). The group agreed that getting the ear of these trusted messengers would be an effective way for reaching politicians and high level decision makers with requests.
    - So What: For agricultural lands, it is all about productivity, bottom line economics, etc. If you are a local county official or state official, buffers help you meet some of the EPA and other legislative priorities in a very cost effective way. However, there are maintenance costs associated with buffers that complicate the cost-effectiveness of buffers or that may require more discussion around and explicit framing.
    - Benefits: better water and air quality; climate change benefits including mitigating heat islands and providing a cost-effective way of building coastal resilience while also meeting TMDL and other WIP goals. There’s also economic potential for providing tourism and locally renewable food sources.

### Goal 3 - Implementation

Amber Ellis provided a brief overview of the Implementation Action Team’s goals, current strategies and progress, as well as key areas the team is seeking feedback from participants in the small groups. Amber shared that in 2019, 257 acres of buffers have been installed in the Middle James through the James River Buffer Program, which was funded by the Virginia Environmental Endowment and is a partnership between the Virginia Department of Forestry, the James River

Association, Soil and Water Conservation Districts in the Middle James, and the Virginia Outdoors Foundation. This program will be expanded into the Upper James in 2021 with the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, which will be leading this initiative. The James River Association has also secured funding to continue the James River Buffer Program in the Middle James through 2024. The slides shared, including more details about each of the Implementation Team's strategies, are available at this [link](#). More information on the Implementation Team's goals and priorities is available at the PDF worksheet linked [here](#).

After this background and framing, participants were invited to join three facilitated breakout groups where participants took on several different strategies to discuss in detail. Group 1 ("Cabin"), facilitated by Team co-lead Sammy Vest with Trout Unlimited, focused on Strategies 1 and 2: "Implement the James River Buffer Program to fill gaps in riparian forest buffer programs" and "Implement streambank stabilization and habitat improvement programs." Group 2 ("Beach"), facilitated by Amber Ellis, and Group 3 ("Oasis") facilitated by Sierra Gladfelter both discussed Strategy 3: "Administer flexible funding to support and supplement riparian restoration projects." In each of the three small groups, participants reviewed the Action Team's worksheet and the specific strategies assigned to their breakout group and then responded to the following questions:

- Are there actions missing under these strategies that we should consider taking on in the coming years?
- Who should lead the proposed actions?
- What are the next steps for implementing these actions (including timeline or milestone for success)?

After small group discussions in breakout groups, participants returned to the main room to share top highlights verbally and via chat. For a full list of ideas for the Implementation Team shared during the breakout groups please see Appendix A of this meeting summary. Top ideas shared with the large group verbally and via chat included:

- **Group 1 (Strategies 1 and 2):**
  - The group focused on Strategy 1 due to time constraints.
  - In terms of missing actions, Group 1 was in agreement that the biggest thing is securing long-term funding in these various areas and working with local governments and groups to help create increased volunteer activities.
  - The group also identified the need to include an additional focus on activities in urban areas and with minority groups as this is currently not part of the Consortium's work.
  - Who should lead this?: Group 1 agreed that there are already leaders throughout the watershed that should continue to be engaged and relied upon including the Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Trout Unlimited, the James River Association, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, etc. However, it would be a good idea to bring Virginia Cooperative Extension into the group more actively to help identify projects, etc. as well as any other new groups not currently engaged.
  - Next steps: Continue to identify new organizations and who will take on a leadership role; use this outreach to continue to identify new sites for buffer work particularly using the success in the Middle James to develop an effective program in the Upper James watershed. It would also be ideal to increase marketing and educational outreach efforts around potential project sites in the Upper James through visits to places like the Catawba Sustainability Center.
- **Group 2 (Strategy 3):**

- Group 2 talked a lot about the maintenance fund. Flexibility is key.
- Folks on the call focused on the Upper James noted that there buffers that were installed under CREP that are at risk of being taken out of the system because of the need for replantings or invasive species control. These are the two major areas where support is needed.
- Who should lead this?: The group agreed that it is crucial to have a central person managing the fund and program. However, can we have regional leaders that are pulling together a list and tracking how many acres need to be checked on that year, how many trees need to be replanted, what invasives need to be removed, etc. The group discussed the possibility of Soil and Water Conservation Districts serving as the regional breakdown and potentially playing a connector role.
- Next steps: Identify which areas would we want to implement this process: for example, across the entire watershed or in certain key areas? Then, identifying key local partners to help coordinate the effort and refine the role of the Consortium in serving as a central hub.
- **Group 3 (Strategy 3):**
  - Group 3 was in agreement that there is a need for a flexible fund that includes maintenance and implementation. The group also talked a lot about the need to explore other partners, particularly funding sources, so that the funding is not so NFWF heavy. There is an opportunity to potentially incorporate corporations, businesses, or private funders as well. Luke shared a potential model that may be worth following up on.
  - The group also discussed new policy opportunities with the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) and potential carbon sequestration initiatives on the horizon that could be considered as part of a long-term strategy to fund buffers and bring more diverse partners and funders onboard.
  - Group 3 also discussed the need to have flexible funding and strong oversight over the maintenance of buffers since this is critical to being able to register buffers for things like crediting or carbon sequestration programs. Therefore, setting a maintenance fund in place early on will ensure that buffers can be positioned and built into those programs moving forward.
  - Additional highlights shared via chat included:
    - Find and engage local government and planning districts as funding sources and project partners SWCD state funded, local grants, - need for private funding opportunities to fill the gaps in local and federal funding.
    - The Shenandoah flexible fence program is a model with a privately funded source of free material and labor where a representative meets individual property owner's goals with fencing assistance. The "flexible fence program" was led by Shenandoah Valley SWCD in Harrisonburg (link: <https://svswcd.org/>). Megan Dalton can be contacted for additional information, with contact information at this site: <https://svswcd.org/staff/> Note: technical assistance and free materials may be an approach rather than direct funding.
    - Reach out to other partner organizations to be part of the implementation team, to bring more funding resources.
    - What is the long term funding strategy? Too heavily focused on NFWF.
    - Nutrient crediting to generate funds, carbon sequestration crediting, carbon offsets. RGGI - regional greenhouse gas initiative is a source of flood and resilience funding and social/environmental justice project funding.

- Perhaps a James River Business Roundtable to bring groups together to fund different projects, would require lots of work to get established and not sure who would lead that effort.

## Next Steps and Upcoming Events

Christine Gyovai and Amber Ellis concluded the meeting by thanking participants for their rich input and incredibly valuable feedback on the overall Consortium and each of the Action Team's goals and strategies during the four-hour Action Planning Retreat. The feedback shared today will be incorporated into each of the Action Team's worksheets and plans for 2021 and beyond and will also be integrated into an Action Plan which will be sent out the full Consortium for review in March. This information will also be used to inform the Steering Committee's planning around sustainable funding for the Consortium as well as a NFWF funding proposal that Amber Ellis is currently developing for submission by March 1st. The Consortium planning team will also send out a follow-up survey as another tool to get feedback for the Action Plan from participants today and for members who may not have been able to attend. Meeting participants were also encouraged to see the full list of 2021 Consortium Meeting dates on the website: [www.jamesriverconsortium.org](http://www.jamesriverconsortium.org). The next full Consortium meeting will be on April 22nd, 2021 from 11:00 AM to 12:30 PM. A list of these meetings, including tentatively scheduled outreach events are also included below after the list of meeting participants.

## Meeting Participants

- Meagan Cupka, Blue Ridge Land Conservancy
- Jim Echols, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (VA DCR)
- Amber Ellis, James River Association (JRA)
- Louise Finger, Department of Wildlife Resources
- Lisa Fraley-McNeal, Center for Watershed Protection
- James Fulcher, Central Virginia Land Conservancy
- Genevieve Goss, Valley Conservation Council
- Erin Hillert, JRA
- Dave Hirschman, Hirschman Water & Environment
- Alston Horn, Chesapeake Bay Foundation
- Shereen Hughes, Chesapeake Bay Landscape Professional Program and Wetlands Watch
- Gabriel Irigaray, Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission
- Dave Jasinski, GreenFin Studio
- Paula Jasinski, GreenFin Studio
- Rex Linville, Piedmont Environmental Council
- Luke Longanecker, Thomas Jefferson Soil and Water Conservation District
- Jenny McGarvey, Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay
- John Munsell, Virginia Tech University
- Rodney Nice, Conservation Services, Inc.
- Judy Okay, VDOF
- Eli Podyma, VDOF
- Sarah Pritchett, Twinleaf Native Nursery
- Joey Shelton, JRA
- Carl Thiel-Goin, VA DCR
- Jill Trischman-Marks, McIntire Botanical Garden
- Kate Tuttle, Eastern Tree Arboricultural Consulting

- Kendall Tyree, Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts
- Sammy Vest, Trout Unlimited
- David Wise, Stroud Water Research Center
- Dani Wise-Johnson, Blueline Environmental
- Christine Gyovai, Dialogue + Design
- Sierra Gladfelter, Dialogue + Design

## 2021 Consortium Schedule and Dates

Consortium Meetings

Outreach Events

### APRIL-JUNE

- Thurs. April 22, 11:00 am- 12:30 pm- Consortium Meeting 1: *Proposed Topic: Outreach & Workforce Development*
- May 2020: Outreach Event 1 - Middle James (Slate River in Buckingham - NFWF priority)
- Wed. May 12, 11:30 am-2:30 pm- Urban Middle Roundtable
- Thurs. May 20, 10:30 am-1:30 pm- Urban Upper Roundtable
- June 2021: Outreach Event 2 - Upper James (Maury in Rockbridge - NFWF priority) ]

### JULY-SEPTEMBER

- Wed. Aug. 25, 4:00-5:00 pm- Rumble Happy Hour- ID-ing bottlenecks/optional online call
- September 2021: Outreach Event 3 - Middle James (Powhatan/Goochland - NFWF priority)
- Wed. Sept 1, 10:30 am-2:30 pm-Urban Follow-up Meeting with Upper+Middle Stakeholders
- Wed. Sept. 29, 11:45 am-2:30 pm- Consortium Meeting 2: *Proposed Topic: Source Water Protection and Monitoring & Engagement*

### OCTOBER-DECEMBER

- October 2021: Outreach Event 4 - Upper James?
- Wed. Oct. 27, 10:00 am-2:30 pm- Buffer Summit

## Appendix A. Notes from Small Group Discussions

### Breakout Group 1 - Main Session

Please list participants HERE: Rex Linville, Dani Wise Johnson, Jim Echlos, Luke Longanecker

#### Discussion questions:

- Which of the 5 Focus Areas did you note needing more focus going forward and why? What would more focus look like? Existing Focus Areas include:
  - Riparian Forest Buffers
  - Agricultural Infrastructure
  - Wildlife Habitat
  - Streambank Stabilization
  - Protection
- If you think a Focus Area is missing or doesn't belong, what is it and why?

#### Add notes about your discussion topic here:

- Riparian buffers are where we get the biggest bang for the buck but we need to focus on a whole range of activities including ag infrastructure.
- Have seen many situations where buffers or livestock exclusion were established but the larger issues with streambank were not addressed and that compromised the whole project.
- We need more education, training, and funding for streambank stabilization & restoration. But stream buffers are more cost effective.
- When you are looking at \$200 - \$400 per foot for stabilization/restoration it is hard to prioritize this over other practices.
- Not all streambank projects are expensive.
- Not all projects are even feasible because the landowner is limited in what they can do to address problems throughout the entire stream corridor.
- Education is important because there are small streambank stabilization practices that landowners could adopt that are helpful and cost effective.
- How do various practices rank on effectiveness vs cost?
- Watershed approach vs band aid fixes on streambank stabilization across the watershed? Longevity issues with restoration?

## Breakout Group 2 - Main Session

Please list participants **HERE**:

### Discussion questions:

- *Which of the 5 Focus Areas did you note needing more focus going forward and why? What would more focus look like? Existing Focus Areas include:*
  - *Riparian Forest Buffers*
  - *Agricultural Infrastructure*
  - *Wildlife Habitat*
  - *Streambank Stabilization*
  - *Protection*
- *If you think a Focus Area is missing or doesn't belong, what is it and why?*

**Add notes about your discussion topic here:**

Unanimous in our agreement about priority for streambank restoration and are aware of the great costs involved. Lots of frustration because of large storm events damaging these efforts before they have an opportunity to take hold. Would like more investment in resource banks, potentially mandating BMPs.

## Breakout Group 3 - Main Session

Please list participants HERE: Judy Okay, Lisa Fraley-McNeal, Rodney, Louis

### Discussion questions:

- Which of the 5 Focus Areas did you note needing more focus going forward and why? What would more focus look like? Existing Focus Areas include:
  - Riparian Forest Buffers
  - Agricultural Infrastructure
  - Wildlife Habitat
  - Streambank Stabilization
  - Protection
- If you think a Focus Area is missing or doesn't belong, what is it and why?

### Add notes about your discussion topic here:

Stream bank stabilization is a good starting point. Usually if you have had cattle in the stream there is a need to stabilize first then plant. Too many times we plant without stabilization and lose the trees. I also feel that invasive removal is a good starting point. Without that again it is a losing battle. Is there anyone from Virginia Outdoors Foundation in the partnership? If not they should be.

Vtreeboy21 - Riparian Forest Buffers - Longer term mind-set. Rather than "Tree Planting" shift conversation more towards "Tree Establishment". That means once a project is funded the planning phase and site preparation phase might be more intentional and take a bit longer before actual planting, then follow-up maintenance after planting. Grant processes and deadlines *must* allow for the long-term approach. Some of the recommendations for getting trees established published by the VA DOF and NRCS back in 2015 after 15 years of CREP experience insisted on replacing the fescue sod with less competitive companion crops. However, in practice contractors would get signed agreements with landowners one-two months (typically) prior to planting. Often that happened in the winter. Having a contract signed in February for a March planting doesn't realistically give enough time to do the site prep and the companion crop conversion prior to planting. The plans and recommendations were good, but funding and decision hold-ups as well as hard deadlines took the feet out of the effectiveness of the plans. Better planning leads to better implementation, leads to less maintenance needs and Establishment/Success. Part of the solution here is to work with grant and funding deadlines and short term requirements so that long term success is closer. I should say this also has the potential to reduce some costs.



## Breakout Group 4 - Main Session

Please list participants HERE: David Wise, Amber Ellis, Sammy Vest, Carl Thiel-Goin

### Discussion questions:

- Which of the 5 Focus Areas did you note needing more focus going forward and why? What would more focus look like? Existing Focus Areas include:
  - Riparian Forest Buffers
  - Agricultural Infrastructure
  - Wildlife Habitat
  - Streambank Stabilization
  - Protection
- If you think a Focus Area is missing or doesn't belong, what is it and why?

### Add notes about your discussion topic here:

More Focus? What would that look like?

- A lot of areas where you can see streambank erosion. If we can do this, then can protect the trees going in.
- I see focusing on RFBs being core and priority. This BMP is one that doesn't self promote the way others do (in the ag sector). Stroud's sense is this is a high return on investment for society. If Consortium becomes an expert in this arena, it can be a niche vs. mission creep with lots of overlap into other organizations' roles.
- Concern that if RFB's don't continue to be at forefront, then could fall behind.
- Streambank component and tying habitat to it, makes it more complete.

Agreed on all 5

- All need to be addressed and where do we put our efforts.
- Streambank and protection - not seeing as much return on investment.
- Concern - which niches to occupy

Missing?

## Breakout Group 5 - Main Session

Please list participants **HERE**: Joey Shelton, Sarah Pritchett, Jenny McGarvey

### Discussion questions:

- Which of the 5 Focus Areas did you note needing more focus going forward and why? What would more focus look like? Existing Focus Areas include:
  - Riparian Forest Buffers
  - Agricultural Infrastructure
  - Wildlife Habitat
  - Streambank Stabilization
  - Protection
- If you think a Focus Area is missing or doesn't belong, what is it and why?

### Add notes about your discussion topic here:

**Riparian Buffers:** We need to double down, there still exist WIP goals that need to be met. This is the best sediment and nutrient reduction to cost ratio going forward.

This looks like more partners involved installing buffers, and including other partners

**Wildlife Habitat:** Includes buffers. If you aren't investing in wildlife habitat, as well, then you risk having an underperforming buffer. More focus on species selection to offer greater wildlife habitat benefits.

**Missing/Other:** Herbaceous species as a component in riparian buffer restoration.

- Woody plants are certainly important for establishing structure, but without intentional planting or seeding of herbaceous species there will likely be a mostly invasive understory that comes in.

**Missing/Other:** Awareness/Education

**Streambank Restoration:** Often times can be used in situations or areas where it may not be necessary, also very expensive.

## Breakout Group 6 - Main Session

Please list participants HERE: Paula Jasinski, David Hirschman, Kate Tuttle, Shereen Hughes

### Discussion questions:

- *Which of the 5 Focus Areas did you note needing more focus going forward and why? What would more focus look like? Existing Focus Areas include:*
  - *Riparian Forest Buffers*
  - *Agricultural Infrastructure*
  - *Wildlife Habitat*
  - *Streambank Stabilization*
  - *Protection & Management*
- *If you think a Focus Area is missing or doesn't belong, what is it and why?*

### Add notes about your discussion topic here:

Shereen --- Double down on RFB, Agricultural Infrastructure and Streambank Stabilization

Dave -- double down on RFB. Continue to test and refine outreach, messaging, implementation option, O&M, etc. -- really become the premier entity with this knowledge and get more acreage.

Note about streambank -- certainly a huge need, but I see it as an offramp to another group of partners. These are hugely expensive and technical with the C.B. expert panel protocols. Should this be the consortium's focus at the expense of other focus areas?

All related, is Does data really show if Agricultural infrastructure is effective - need communication

Group 6 - need to add emphasis on protection of existing buffers and managing what we have installed

## Breakout Group 7 - Main Session

Please list participants **HERE**:

**Discussion questions:**

- *Which of the 5 Focus Areas did you note needing more focus going forward and why? What would more focus look like? Existing Focus Areas include:*
  - *Riparian Forest Buffers*
  - *Agricultural Infrastructure*
  - *Wildlife Habitat*
  - *Streambank Stabilization*
  - *Protection*
- *If you think a Focus Area is missing or doesn't belong, what is it and why?*

**Add notes about your discussion topic here:**

Focus Areas needing more focus:

-Ag Infrastructure (stream fencing) and Streambank Stabilization (reconnect the pasture/field back to the stream and bringing it back to the floodplains) go hand in hand

-Focus areas really determined by a custom approach for each landowner: addressing focus areas in relation to landowner needs and what problems they are trying to address/what problems are solved by the buffers; explaining benefits in a way that they understand and perceive them

-looking at which buffer is best for property (grass vs forest)

-landowner education/awareness - creating community ambassadors to spread the word, testimonials and case studies

## Breakout Group 1 - Goal 1 Knowledge Network

**Please list participants HERE:** Amber (facilitator), James (central virginia land conservancy), joey shelton, david wise, meagan cupka, rex linville, sammy vest

Learned who to connect folks to and basic understanding of how they're installed. Need to know how to not sound like an idiot with landowners. Better understanding of all the pieces that make up a project. VT study of natural regeneration in different regions (harder upstream). Natural regen is easier down in coastal areas. Wants to be able to give more value to landowners post signing on for conservation easement. Conservation Easement world - wants to be able to effective land management. All the different orgs across the landscape and ways to leverage those resources.

**Strategy 1:** Build knowledge and capacity about best practices and innovations in riparian restoration for experienced and expert practitioners.

**Actions** (see [worksheet](#) for more details):

- A. Select test plot locations for riparian restoration methods
- B. Assist in planning and execute the Annual Buffer Summit
- C. Install riparian buffers on test plots at selected properties in Middle and Upper James and track progress
- D. Host Roundtables on Riparian Buffer Methods for the Middle and Upper James Watershed: through test plots and compiling partner experience in the region, the identification of the most cost-effective and successful methods for site preparation, planting methods, species selection, and establishment needs for the region.

### Discussion questions:

- *Are there actions missing under these strategies that we should consider taking on in the coming years?*
  - *Is there central repository for the studies/research articles? Doesn't think so. This could be a key thing.*
  - *Roundtables valuable there to create the connections between the people. This helps to know who to contact on these questions.*
  - *Hands on is really helpful. Site visits in the field. Seeing it on the ground. This encourages side conversations too.*
  - *Opportunities for folks to get out during installation*
  - *Opportunity for research plots - collaboration on sites that have issues. If you have an easement and they want to do something, this group can connect to programs to help*
  - *Having different means for this strategy: 1) digital repository for articles/studies, 2) site visits to real projects to learn from and network, 3) virtual roundtables, and 4) tapping into larger Bay efforts and make connections to other collaboratives, identify those opportunities.*
- *Who should lead the proposed actions?*
- *What are the next steps for implementing these actions (including timeline or milestone for success)?*
  - **FOR #4:** Have 1-2 times a year to interact with the Riparian Buffer Advisory Committee in PA to cross pollinate. Figure out when and how.
  - **FOR #1:** Beat bushes to find information sources.

- FOR #2: Identifying which projects would be good to visit. What do we want to know more about? And do you know sites that fit the bill? Then that leads us to sites that could support that learning. Potential survey

## Breakout Group 2 - Goal 1 Knowledge Network

Please list participants **HERE**: Jenny (facilitator)

**Strategy 2:** Train businesses, practitioners, and volunteers in the best and cost-effective practices in riparian restoration, including planning, implementation, and maintenance.

**Actions** (see [worksheet](#) for more details):

- A. Develop regional-specific trainings in both the Middle and Upper James watershed
- B. State Farm Workforce Development
- C. Train and employ interns and volunteers in buffer verification and stewardship (e.g., riparian stewards)
- D. Identify sustainable and long-term approaches to hosting and funding regional-specific trainings

### Discussion questions:

- *Are there actions missing under these strategies that we should consider taking on in the coming years?*
- *Who should lead the proposed actions?*
- *What are the next steps for implementing these actions (including timeline or milestone for success)?*

### Add notes about your discussion topic here:

- *Are there actions missing under these strategies that we should consider taking on in the coming years?*
  - Mentoring and training: A regular source of information and support for newly trained individuals.
  - Need to verify that certification has value in the marketplace.
    - Could be a part of, versus the thing.
  - Continue with the state farm workforce development approach, by thinking outside-of-the-box for audiences who are seeking workforce development.
- *What are the next steps for implementing these actions (including timeline or milestone for success)?*
  - Need an umbrella grant just for the training just for the implementation and verification.
    - Community colleges or continuing education to support this work.
    - Certification is given and required (e.g., licensing) would open doors to get people to stay in buffer restoration, versus the current issue of knowledge and employee retention. More value to the employer.
      - Could we charge for the certification so that it is self-funding?
      - The material presented needs to be the same; a set curriculum
    - Make it a requirement to be a certified professional to do a riparian buffer plan.
      - Almost a notary type of certification;
      - Gain experience and be able to apply what you have learned;
      - Should we use a model like with ISA? Require a test to receive certification, and CEUs per year in order to maintain that certification.
    - Public procurement for contracts can require certification.

- Propagate Ventures: One stop shop for agricultural landowners
  - Make sure there is a marketplace in order to be a certification is viable.
  - Get a handle on the potential employers to understand what kind of training would be of value to them. (e.g., Shenandoah Habitats, Conservation Services, other landscaping companies).
- *Who should lead the proposed actions?*
  - Student or colleges should be a great source for internship and volunteers.
    - Work with the schools to incorporate training into the curriculum.
    - Community college should be a host for a certificate or training program.
    - Workforce development of community colleges in VA.
    - CBLP-A as a model in VA.
      - Be aware that management isn't always in the local community college but at a higher entity.
  - Local government summer green job training programs to serve as sites or hosts with a pipeline to students.
  - Americorp and offering a certification program?
  - Master Naturalists program as a source of volunteers.
  - Virginia Farm Bureau: Delmarva Chicken Association has a landscape architect on board; a source of trust to the agricultural industry.



## Breakout Group 3 - Goal 1 Knowledge Network

**Please list participants HERE:** Shereen (facilitator, report out), Sierra (note taker); Lisa Fraley-McNeal, Dave Jasinki, Luke Longanecker, Jim Echols, Carl Thiel-Goin,

**Strategy 3:** Increase capacity of businesses to integrate riparian restoration into their business models.

**Actions** (see [worksheet](#) for more details):

- A. Facilitate and demonstrate the workforce pipeline of riparian restoration trainees into employment at restoration companies.
- B. Exploration of the business model that makes riparian restoration work.

### Discussion questions:

- *Are there actions missing under these strategies that we should consider taking on in the coming years?*
- *Who should lead the proposed actions?*
- *What are the next steps for implementing these actions (including timeline or milestone for success)?*

**Add notes about your discussion topic here:**

Perhaps there should be a series of learning modules that could be used by businesses to help them incorporate restoration into their business models.

State Farm in Augusta County- inmates learning to plant trees. As we learn more about this experiment, potentially expand this program to other similar locations around the state (Jim)

**Consider a certification program for the riparian restoration trainees. (Lisa)**

- Lisa's org has a green jobs program- once participants get certification there are employers that understand the set of skill sets that graduates come out with.
- Shereen- is there a list of employers that we should be talking to? Conservation Services has said that they are interested in employing previously incarcerated people coming out of CBLP program; there are still some gaps in knowledge that the CBLP program exists.

**There is a need for outreach and education around the existence of the CBLP Buffer Certificate program and who can participate/benefit from this. (Shereen)**

- Is this something CBLP or the Consortium should take on?

**Is there an ability to expand riparian implementation by engaging landscape architecture firms, land management companies, etc. Perhaps through an interface they would be willing to list land owners willing to be a venue for hiring practitioners?**

- Some of the estates that own a lot of riparian areas may not have livestock, etc. and not be eligible for ag BMP programming.

- Shereen- CBLP- goal is to bring in more certified landscape professionals certified through their programs and develop the buffer certificate program.

**Riparian restoration certificate for businesses to demonstrate work they have done to improve water quality. (Luke)**

**Marketing a holistic approach to buffer benefits and buffer programs- For example, what benefits from an HR perspective, how can the business use the buffer program to increase employee well-being, health, etc. (i.e. walking trail near office building)**

- There is a major need for outreach, education, and marketing!
- Could this be more centrally located on the Riparian Consortium's website
- Dave- GreenFin Studio brought on to help with marketing and outreach- do website audit, first, to ensure that people coming to the website are finding the materials they need to find.

**Incentives or credits for businesses that implement or donate funds to riparian restoration? (Luke)**

- Reputation, feel-good stories, etc.

**Utilize private funding to fill the gaps of state or federal funding. Example, flexible fence program in Shenandoah Valley funded by a local business. (luke)**

**Active vs Passive Outreach**

- Leverage the Consortium website to do outreach/disseminate information to potential businesses/employers and/or participants to be trained in programs?
- Website- is a bit more passive
- Setting up a survey to send to businesses to see what skillsets they look for; this would allow for more matching of desired skillsets (by employers) with participants' skillsets built through the programs.
- Potential for more direct outreach to businesses; trusted messengers/ambassadors to the businesses (i.e. who SWCDs are interacting with frequently/whose services they use for buffers)
- There is a need to convince more businesses in the landscape industry to take on this work; what will it take to incentivize/convince them to take on this work.
- On the other side, there is a need to identify, find, hire new employees to do the buffer work. (seasonal work is an issue)
- Dave- has there been a business analysis of the actual potential for buffer-based work in the basin?
- Shereen- another idea previously discussed had been a **Business Round Table** (note that CBLP has been able to do effective work in PA); there is an issue in the nonprofit world of private sector people to do work cheaply- doesn't always match up.

**Next steps:** More detailed market research is needed/a potential Business Round table

## Breakout Group 1- Goal 2 Outreach & Targeting

Please list participants **HERE**: Amber (facilitator), Sandra Stuart (NB SWCD), Hunter Moore, Dani Wise Johnson, Dave Hirschman, James Fulcher, Sammy Vest, Louise Finger, Genevieve Wall

What you wish they knew!: stabilizing streambanks are important. Want to learn more. Wildlife/pollinators/birds in riparian areas can be enhanced, messy is good - people thinking the manicured look is good. Short term maintenance is key to success of buffers. Messy is beautiful. Agree with all of them! Amazing to see how quickly they help.

### [Messaging Exercise Overview](#)

**Strategy 4:** Support coordination between implementation partners (see [worksheet](#) for more details)

**Audience:** Group 1 - Rural Landowners

#### **Discussion questions:**

- *So What: Why should this audience care about riparian buffers? How does it impact them?*
- *Solutions: What are you doing to address the vision of healthy streamside ecosystems? How are you helping?*
- *Benefits: What is made better in the short-term or long-term because of your work? How is this audience's life made easier/better because of what you are doing?*

**Add notes about your discussion topic here:**

#### **So what:**

- Because there's money available to do it.
- Legacy you leave for your children
- Making the land more resilient and productive
- Can help them from losing their land
- Landowners doing it on their own - they knew it was right
- Neighbor downstream will appreciate it
- Those with livestock - herd health is economic benefit
- Land stewardship - responsibility for common good
- Understanding the wide range of benefits
- New use of riparian area for enjoyment

**Solutions:** getting message to the farmer, newspaper articles, civic groups,

- Last year did a farm float. Everybody took something with them. Potential to expand that idea up and down the river.
- Soil health coalition group - can't separate this from this work. Legislature has passed carbon sequestration task force
- Most people think about farmers - but there are others that have it for enjoyment. VCAP helps

these folks. Folks seem overwhelmed - having different messaging for farmers vs the rural landowner. We have support for them.

- Funding - if we can offer opportunities for cost-share that gets us there
- Minority black farmer challenges - ownership of land issues. Orphan land without clear owners and not been able to access NRCS programs.

### **Benefits**

## Breakout Group 2- Goal 2 Outreach & Targeting

Please list participants **HERE: Beach Group**, David (facilitator), Sierra (facilitator/note taker), Shereen (notetaker); Gabriel Irigaray, Meagan Cupka, Judy, Emily Mills, Alston Horn

### [Messaging Exercise Overview](#)

**Strategy 4:** Support coordination between implementation partners (see [worksheet](#) for more details)

**Audience:** Group 2 - Urban Landowners, Golf courses and parks

### Discussion questions:

- **So What:** *Why should this audience care about riparian buffers? How does it impact them?*
- **Problems** that these groups are facing/that buffers could help alleviate
- **Solutions:** *What are you doing to address the vision of healthy streamside ecosystems? How are you helping? What resources are available to your audience?*
- **Benefits:** *What is made better in the short-term or long-term because of your work? How is this audience's life made easier/better because of what you are doing?*

Add notes about your discussion topic here:

### What do we mean by urban landowners?

- private landowners- large or small lots
- Schools
- Parks
- Golf courses
- Homeowner associations (HOAs)- especially those that could work together along streams
- On banks of James in Richmond: Dominion, James City park system, etc

### So What:

Buffers can invite and support pollinators  
Buffers can frame and enhance water views  
Green infrastructure in urban development  
Buffers can provide shaded walking paths for recreation.  
Buffers can clean water (water quality credits)  
Multi-functional buffers (planting fruit/nut trees)  
Buffers can prevent cumulative downstream flooding

### Problems:

Buffers can reduce storm surge and subdue flooding and protect your property for erosion and loss of land as well as protect structures.

Entrenched streams/streambank erosion and flood impacts- potential safety/liability issues?

People see buffers as “messy” (may lower their home value) or are “a magnet for pests” (snakes, ticks)  
Buffers block views of water and access to the water  
Stormwater management, drinking water source protection, lack of access to green space/carbon and air pollution benefits of urban tree canopy  
Lack of greenspace/outdoor space for recreation  
Tendency for urban parcels to be smaller-have to work with greater number of landowners to achieve greater areas of contiguous buffers  
If you take a buffer out for development, need to put it back

### **Solutions:**

Inclusion of urban-focused programs and resources in Streamside Programs Report Tool  
Education regarding the multiple values of buffers (including recreation benefits  
Designing attractive buffers that maintains views and access  
Combining buffers with recreation/park creation opportunities (i.e. walking paths, benches, wildlife viewing opportunities)  
Cost-share benefits  
Technical advice  
Labor and materials provided  
Improve Public Image, meet organizations sustainability goals

### **Benefits**

Reconnect streams to their floodplains  
Flood damage mitigation (restore natural floodplains)  
Less maintenance, less mowing and fertilization required  
Creation of shady places/areas to cool down for people, aquatic systems and riparian species (mitigate urban heat island effect)  
Highlighting the recreational benefits associated with buffers

### **Additional notes that were accidentally added under Group 1:**

- 1, Urban landowners should care because of air quality, urban habitat, climate change ambient and aquatic water warming.
2. My involvement has been from targeting, outreach and implementation. I have helped with website content, workshop presentations, and field demonstrations in urban landscapes.
3. More interest in urban buffers, more understanding of why forest buffers are imperative as we move into the future for human health, water quality and urban habitat.  
Maybe take a look at urban development requirements related to stream condition and forest buffer. This would have to work through counties, decision makers and permitting agencies.

## Breakout Group 3- Goal 2 Outreach & Targeting

Please list participants **HERE**: Paula (facilitator), Lisa (note taker)

### [Messaging Exercise Overview](#)

**Strategy 4:** Support coordination between implementation partners (see [worksheet](#) for more details)

**Audience:** Group 3 - Decision Makers/Local Government

**Defining the group:** State level makes economic decisions to make dollars go farther and see ROI. DEQ, DCR, DOF,

Land Managers- not tied into conservation community (Golf courses, local P&R departments)

Virginia Cattleman's Association, Farm Bureau, etc. that have a wider net to landowners.

On-farm experts, e.g., Milk inspectors and vets are trusted messengers, esp. When tapping into things like biosecurity. Virginia Farming segment on riparian forest buffers.

### Discussion questions:

- *So What: Why should this audience care about riparian buffers? How does it impact them?*  
Productivity and bottom line economics of farms. Cost effectiveness of meeting regulatory requirements. For local park managers, lower maintenance/grounds costs if they can stop mowing up to edge of stream. Keep cost of maintenance of buffers in mind too though- which can be offset by cost-share program. In urban settings, some options like VCAP, some local programs like CCAP in Charlottesville.
- *Solutions: What are you doing to address the vision of healthy streamside ecosystems? How are you helping?*  
Climate change benefits (e.g., heat islands and coastal resiliency), cost effective ways to meet TMDL and NPDES requirements.
- *Benefits: What is made better in the short-term or long-term because of your work? How is this audience's life made easier/better because of what you are doing?*

Ag infrastructure. Climate change benefits (e.g., heat islands and coastal resiliency), cost effective ways to meet TMDL and NPDES requirements.

### Add notes about your discussion topic here:

### Why should this audience care about buffers?

- Meeting TMDL and NPDES goals
- Regulated community - buffers are cost-effective. For listed streams with impairments, putting nature to work for things municipalities are required to address
- Clean water, wildlife, benefits to local economy (businesses and infrastructure being created), drinking water, streambank stabilization, flooding.
- Economic gain - renewable local food sources
- Golf courses and impacts. Land managers are pushed to clean up streambanks. Keeping buffers is a cheaper option.

- Parks and Recreation - Improving parks and buffers/water quality. Tourism dollars returned on buffer investment.

**Are there groups that come to mind outside of local govt for the audience?**

- State agencies (DEQ, DCR) have responsibility for the WIP. Marketing opportunity for buffers is cost-effectiveness at the societal level.
- Civic groups - little leagues, etc that mow fields and prep for ballgames
- Landowners - those that manage large estates, golf courses, etc.
- Heads of Parks & Recreation departments
- Rural landowners - larger groups like the VA cattlemen's association. Members will listen to them when they won't listen to the conservation community. Milk inspectors and vets that go onto farms.

**Benefits:**

- Cutting costs for mowing. Challenge to have a clean look along streams.
- Maintenance costs for buffer establishment may not be a cost savings in the short-term. Cost-share program may be needed.
- Cost-share programs are available in urban settings to help with maintenance costs.

**Solutions:**

- Climate change may be an area for decision makers. Heat islands, etc.
- Deliver message through case studies where numbers could come from. Where they have been put into place and tie into messaging.



## Breakout Group 1- Goal 3 Implementation

**Please list participants HERE:** Sammy (facilitator), Alston Horn, Dave Jasinski, Emily Mills, Gabriel Irigaray, Judy

**Group 1-Strategy 1 + 2:** Implement the James River Buffer Program to fill gaps in riparian forest buffer programs + Implement streambank stabilization and habitat improvement programs

(see [worksheet](#) for more details)

### Discussion questions:

- *Are there actions missing under these strategies that we should consider taking on in the coming years?*
- *Who should lead the proposed actions?*
- *What are the next steps for implementing these actions (including timeline or milestone for success)?*

### Add notes about your discussion topic here:

Need for long term sources and localities that are not being funded, local organizational involvement.

Increase volunteer work through local organizations.

Focus in urban areas and work with local governments and include minorities.

Leader in each area depend where they are SWCDs, NRCS, CBF, TU, JRA, Extension

Continue to identify organizations and leadership roles, locate new projects for buffers through partners.

Expand on successes in Middle James, Marketing/ outreach for additional projects. Education.

## Breakout Group 2- Goal 3 Implementation

Please list participants **HERE**: Amber Ellis, Paula Jaskinski, Charlie Simmons, Sandra Stuart, Carl Thiel-Goin, James Flucher, Louise Finger

**Strategy 3:** Administer flexible funding to support and supplement riparian restoration projects

(see [worksheet](#) for more details)

### Discussion questions:

- *Are there actions missing under these strategies that we should consider taking on in the coming years?*
- *Who should lead the proposed actions?*
- *What are the next steps for implementing these actions (including timeline or milestone for success)?*

### Add notes about your discussion topic here:

- Limited forest or is grass option? Not losing warm season grass
- Flexibility is key - have had 2 or 3 instances where CREP are going out of the model. Criteria they have to meet to stay in. Invasive species control and tree survival rate are the big issues. Could we address this spring. Anyone other than a government agency to offer support! Not a ton of hurdles to tackle it. SWCD, FSA, NRCS could play a role. TU and CBF potential to help here and manpower to help. Volunteers to help this. Feel okay with support we have for TA
- NRCS and SWCDs work well together. Like the Consortium idea that we've gathered these folks. Funding is the thing that holds it up. If we could be a repository of what grants are available for what activities for riparian needs.
- Didn't see a need for people on the ground to do site checks on the ground, but pool of money for planting and invasive control.
- Given there are projects from all over, central entity may need to serve that. The Consortium itself could serve that role. Partners could tap into it.
- Maintaining buffers planted years ago - hadn't been successful. Would benefit from a replant.
- How to make it easy - it would be a lot on one person. The smaller the area, the easier to get out. Do we break it up regionally with leads in each area. Possibly SWCD boards could help this. Groups to meet monthly on area basis. Request the money to the group.
- Identifying key areas and partners to lead the effort. This will help determine the areas we can do it in.
- Anytime you can create relationship with the ag community. Flood events that create problems in exclusion fencing.

## Breakout Group 3 - Goal 3 Implementation

Please list participants **HERE**: Sierra (facilitator), Shereen Hughes (notetaker), Dani Wise Johnson, Lisa Fraley-McNeal, Joseph Shelton, Luke Longanecker

**Strategy 3:** Administer flexible funding to support and supplement riparian restoration projects

(see [worksheet](#) for more details)

### Discussion questions:

- *Are there actions missing under these strategies that we should consider taking on in the coming years?*
- *Who should lead the proposed actions?*
- *What are the next steps for implementing these actions (including timeline or milestone for success)?*

### Add notes about your discussion topic here:

Actions Missing?

-partners, funding sources, funding strategies to make these funds and effort sustainable

Shereen - Find and engage local government and planning districts as funding sources and project partners

Luke - SWCD state funded, local grants, - need for private funding opportunities to fill the gaps in local and federal funding.

- The Shenandoah flexible fence program is a model with a privately funded source of free material and labor where a representative meets individual property owner's goals with fencing assistance. The "flexible fence program" was led by Shenandoah Valley SWCD in Harrisonburg (link: <https://svswcd.org/>). Megan Dalton can be contacted for additional information, with contact information at this site: <https://svswcd.org/staff/>
- Note - technical assistance and free materials may be an approach rather than direct funding.

Joey - reach out to other partner organizations to be part of the implementation team, to bring more funding resources.

Lisa - what is the long term funding strategy? Too heavily focused on NFWF

Dani - Nutrient crediting to generate funds, carbon sequestration crediting, carbon offsets

How can the maintenance fund versus the implementation funding? Hard to quantify the cost of maintenance

Invasive control - money for that on the front end, example Johnson grass needs to be managed for 3 years

Absolutely, the maintenance often doesn't get done - definitely a gap there.

The benefit of the nutrient and carbon sequestration as a funding source is that it requires ongoing monitoring and maintenance.

Is there any research about carbon sequestration going on? Yes, groups have worked on this.

Case studies - is a great way to get these projects and multi-stakeholder type projects on the ground - need a point person for those projects.

Should there be one outreach individual - Dani ideally, long-term there should be a person in charge of constantly looking for new opportunities. Typically some partners may have key people as the point person.

Some groups better than others at prospecting for new opportunities

RGGI (Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative) FUNDS for flood mitigation and resilience - tied to social and economic justice

Perhaps a James River Business Roundtable to bring groups together to fund different projects, would require lots of work to get established and not sure who would lead that effort.