



## Upper & Middle James Riparian Consortium Outreach & Targeting Meeting Online Meeting Summary

Thursday, April 22nd 2021

### Executive Summary

The second formal meeting of the Upper & Middle James Riparian Consortium (Consortium) of 2021 was held on Thursday, April 22nd, 2021 as a virtual meeting. This meeting was focused on the Consortium's outreach and targeting initiatives with presentations by Lisa Fraley-McNeal of the Center for Watershed Protection on their targeting analysis for landowners in several of the watershed's counties and a facilitated activity around messaging with Paula and Dave Jasinski of GreenFin Studio.

The last Consortium meeting summary from February 18th, 2021 can be found at this [link](#). For more information on the Consortium, please see [www.jamesriverconsortium.org](http://www.jamesriverconsortium.org). A PDF of presentation slides for this meeting can be found [here](#). Finally, a list of attendees is included at the end of the summary.

### Ways to Engage

- The Outreach & Targeting Action Team will be meeting in May to discuss next steps for outreach regarding the targeting analysis conducted by the Center for Watershed Protection for Goochland, Powhatan, and Buckingham Counties. Contact Lisa at [lfm@cwpc.org](mailto:lfm@cwpc.org) if you are interested in participating in the meeting or if you have additional questions or interest!
- If you are interested in helping to field test the messaging being developed by GreenFin and the Consortium, please contact Paula Jasinski at [paula@greenfinstudio.com](mailto:paula@greenfinstudio.com) or Dave Jasinski at [dave@greenfinstudio.com](mailto:dave@greenfinstudio.com).
- If you have suggestions for educational videos that should be added to the existing [matrix](#) or other gaps that you would like to see, contact Paula Jasinski at [paula@greenfinstudio.com](mailto:paula@greenfinstudio.com) or Dave Jasinski at [dave@greenfinstudio.com](mailto:dave@greenfinstudio.com).
- Join us for the Middle James Urban Roundtable on Wednesday, May 12th from 10:30 am-12:30 pm ([register here](#)) or the Upper James Urban Roundtable on Thursday, May 20th from 10:00 am-12:00 pm ([register here](#))!
- To stay up-to-date on events, please visit the website at [www.jamesriverconsortium.org](http://www.jamesriverconsortium.org) and sign up for the Consortium's monthly newsletter there!

### Welcome and Agenda Review

At the beginning of the meeting, Christine Gyovai with Dialogue + Design Associates welcomed everyone to the meeting and invited participants to share their name and affiliation in the chat. The Consortium extended a warm welcome to Sarah Coffey, who recently joined the Chesapeake Bay Foundation to serve as an Upper James Field Technician working on riparian buffers with landowners. Sierra Gladfelter with Dialogue + Design Associates provided a brief overview of the agenda and reminded participants that after the meeting this afternoon, individuals who registered in advance will

be participating in a Best Management Practices (BMP) tour of the Braford Farm in Natural Bridge Station from 2:30-4:30 pm. Anyone who was interested in attending was invited to send Christine a quick email to get more information on the tour and directions.

## **Overview of the Consortium and its Updated Vision, Mission, and Values**

Amber Ellis with the James River Association (JRA) provided a brief overview of the Upper & Middle James Riparian Consortium, including an exciting announcement of the Consortium's newly minted vision, mission and values approved by the Steering Committee (SC) in the morning. These include:

### **VISION**

Growing partnerships to create healthy streamside ecosystems for clean water in the James River today and tomorrow.

### **MISSION**

The Upper and Middle James Riparian Consortium is a network of private, non-profit, and public partners. We share expertise and resources to increase implementation, as well as awareness of riparian buffers and their value to landowners, with a priority focus on riparian forest buffers, across the Upper and Middle James watersheds.

### **VALUES**

- **Collaboration**- We can go further together and seek opportunities to support, collaborate with, and learn from diverse partners both within and outside the James River watershed.
- **Stewardship**- We care for our existing riparian buffers and believe that stewardship is vital to sustained improvements in water quality and successful buffers.
- **Holistic**- We integrate practices such as livestock exclusion fencing, streambank stabilization, grass and forest buffers, and conservation easements that respond to landowner, landscape, and habitat needs.
- **Initiative**- We are proactive and take initiative to create solutions that respond to the needs of Consortium partners and our streamside ecosystems for long-term health of the James River and our communities.

The Consortium comprises four different Action Teams covering different goal areas, including 1) Planning, 2) Knowledge Network, 3) Outreach & Targeting, and 4) Implementation. For more information on the Consortium, visit the website [www.jamesriverconsortium.org](http://www.jamesriverconsortium.org) and view Amber's presentation slides [here](#). If you are interested in potentially serving on the Consortium's Steering Committee or joining an Action Team, please contact Amber at [aellis@thejamesriver.org](mailto:aellis@thejamesriver.org) or another member of the Planning Team.

## **Upcoming Outreach Events**

Next, Amber Ellis reviewed the Consortium's upcoming outreach events. These include a June outreach event at the Catawba Sustainability Center run by Virginia Tech, which will include a webinar and field visit to learn more about their innovative buffer work and research. The Consortium will also be planning a late spring/summer outreach event along the Slate River in Buckingham County, a fall

event along the Maury River in Rockbridge County, and a fourth fall event in Goochland and Powhatan Counties. To stay posted on specific dates and details please sign up for the Consortium's newsletter via [www.jamesriverconsortium.org](http://www.jamesriverconsortium.org). Christine also invited participants to share announcements and upcoming events with the Consortium so that these can be distributed through the monthly newsletter.

## Targeting for Riparian Forest Buffers

After announcements about upcoming outreach events, Lisa Fraley-McNeal of the Center for Watershed Protection (CWP) gave a brief presentation on the work that CWP and the Consortium's Outreach & Targeting Action Team has been working on to strategically prioritize parcels for outreach to landowners for riparian buffer projects across several of the watershed's counties. The Outreach & Targeting Action Team members provided valuable feedback to CWP about what metrics would be most useful and CWP also solicited input from the full Consortium's membership via a targeting survey distributed in summer 2020. The targeting analysis is done at the parcel scale and has been completed thus far for Goochland, Powhatan, and Buckingham Counties. CWP is currently seeking additional funding to do a similar targeting analysis for Henrico County.



The slide features the title "Upper and Middle James Riparian Consortium Restoration Opportunity Area (ROA) Parcel Prioritization Tool - Goochland" in large, bold, black text. To the left of the title is the "CENTER FOR WATERSHED PROTECTION" logo, and to the right is the "James River Association" logo. In the top right corner, there is a green leaf graphic with the text "Riparian Consortium". Below the title, a paragraph of text describes the tool: "This spreadsheet tool was developed by the Center for Watershed Protection, Inc. in partnership with the James River Association as part of the Riparian Consortium in the Middle and Upper James River Watershed to strategically prioritize areas to recruit landowners for riparian investments. Data is provided on the parcel scale and includes information from the Chesapeake Conservancy Restoration Planner, USDA CropScape, County tax parcel data, DCR Heritage Program, and EPA EJSCREEN. The data included in the spreadsheet is described in the table below and links to the data sources are provided at the bottom of this page. Primary prioritization metrics identified by the Outreach & Targeting Team are provided in green. Supplemental data provided by the County is provided in red-orange, from the Restoration Planner is in blue, and conservation and easement programs is in brown. Columns of the spreadsheet can be filtered based on the parcel characteristics of interest for outreach. The suggested approach is to filter from left to right in the spreadsheet. Parcel address and property owner information from the filtered parcels can be used as part of outreach efforts."

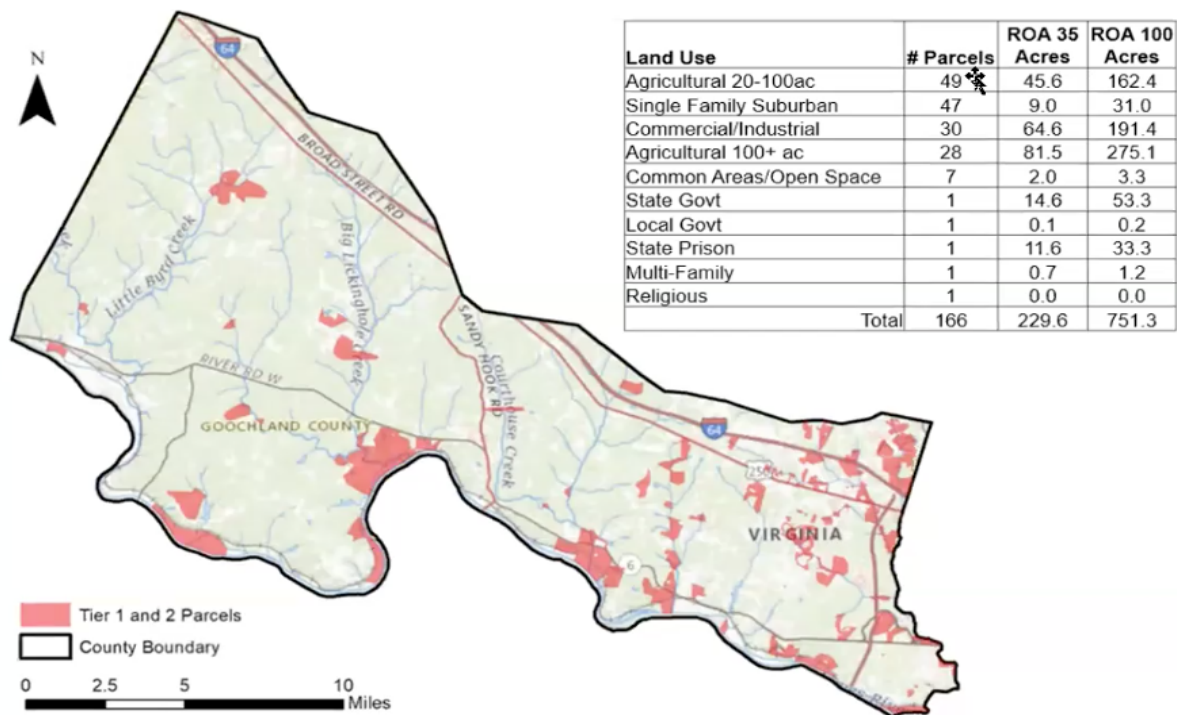
Lisa reviewed the data sources included in the analysis, such as county parcel and tax data, James River Restoration and Opportunity Areas (ROAs) and associated data from the James River Restoration Planner, Chesapeake Conservancy high-resolution land cover data, USDA Cropscape data, as well as data from the Virginia DCR and EPA. For more information on the specific data sources included, please see Lisa's presentation slides [here](#).

After this overview of the targeting analysis approach, Lisa screenshared an example targeting analysis for Goochland County. Currently, the targeting analysis is in a spreadsheet format, and includes several helpful tabs to orient the user and provide more details on the metrics used. Currently, the primary targeting metrics include the tier (1= highest priority, 5=lowest priority), county land use classification, parcel acres, ROA acres, forest acres, cropland acres, pasture acres, conservation and

easement land acreage, VADOF Buffer acres, miles from the Natural Land Network, whether you have an absentee landowner, etc. The next set of metrics are all based on the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Environmental Justice Screening Tool and include information at the census block level about demographics and socioeconomic information. In terms of developing the targeting analysis, all the parcels within that specific census block were assigned the attributes of that entire census tract. The analysis also includes parcel-level information about the owner, their name, address, etc.

Primary Targeting Data	
Column Name	Description
Tier	Parcel tier (1-5) from the Restoration Planner where 1 is highest priority, 5 is lowest priority. Tiers were based on the natural breaks of the distribution of final weighted scores, which incorporated attributes such as land cover and soil loss in the drainage area, proximity to impaired waters, etc. The parcel prioritization aggregated statistics for the 35' restoration opportunity areas.
County Land Use Classification	Land use classification from the County's tax parcel data.
Parcel Acres	Acres of the parcel calculated using GIS and the parcel boundaries.
ROA 35 Acres	Total acres of restoration opportunity area (ROA) from the Restoration Planner identified within 35' buffer zone of enhanced flow paths located on the parcel.
ROA 100 Acres	Total acres of restoration opportunity area (ROA) from the Restoration Planner identified within 100' buffer zone of enhanced flow paths located on the parcel.
Forest Acres	Acres of all standing trees and tree harvest on the parcel farther than 30' to 80' from non-road impervious surfaces and forming contiguous patches $\geq 1$ -acre in extent obtained from the Chesapeake Conservancy 2013/2014 high resolution land cover dataset.
Cropland Acres	Acres of cropland on the parcel obtained from the Chesapeake Conservancy 2013/2014 high resolution land cover dataset which was based on data from the VA DCR cropland and pasture spatial dataset.
Pasture Acres	Acres of pasture on the parcel obtained from the Chesapeake Conservancy 2013/2014 high resolution land cover dataset which was based on data from the VA DCR cropland and pasture spatial dataset. Note that hay is grouped with pasture because they are difficult to differentiate through image interpretation.

The next tab on the targeting spreadsheet provides an overview of the Tier 1 and Tier 2 parcels. This includes both a map and table with the number of parcels within each land use type. An example for Goochland County is included below.



The last tab includes all of the targeting metric data. The color coding here corresponds to the information included on the first tab. Lisa demonstrated how you might use the data in tab three by filtering the data according to individualized queries.

## Questions and Discussion

Following her demonstration of how the targeting analysis for Goochland County may be used, she opened it up for questions. Specific questions and responses included:

- How did you determine that they are absentee landowners?
  - Lisa shared that CWP first contacted the counties, but none of them had these records. Then, they compared the parcel address with the landowner address. In the cases where these were different, they assumed an absentee landowner situation.
  - Keith Burgess with the Monacan Soil and Water Conservation District noted that based on his knowledge, many of the parcels indicated as having absentee landowners are not; the landowner just lives on the parcel or nearby but uses a different mailing address.
  - Another participant shared via chat that they are not sure that this is the best way to identify absentee landowners.
  - Christine recognized that ground truthing of the data will continue to be key.
- How long does it take to put together a targeting analysis database for a county?
  - Lisa noted that it depends on the county's data and how much it needs to be cleaned up, but generally around two days.
- Could you share a range of what it costs to develop an analysis for a county?
  - Lisa shared that the average cost per county is about \$3,500.
- Do you have the closest water body identified river, stream, lake etc.?
  - Lisa noted that the HUC 12s are in there and if it is within 30 meters of an impaired water body, however, no specific waterbody names are included.
- Are all the counties going to be evaluated?
  - Lisa responded that currently only Goochland, Powhatan, and Buckingham Counties have been evaluated to date.
  - CWP applied for a Small Watershed Grant to conduct an analysis of Henrico County and is exploring other funding to support additional analysis.
  - Amber added that for Rockbridge County, CWP ran into data issues that did not make it possible to assess landowners for each parcel.
- Have you thought about strategies on how to use this data? For example, is there someone with a connection to a given entity who owns lots of land?
  - Lisa noted that the Outreach & Targeting Action Team is currently planning a meeting in May to discuss next steps and strategies for utilizing the targeting analysis in Goochland, Powhatan, and Buckingham Counties.
- How does one access and use this resource?
  - Lisa clarified that currently the targeting analysis for each county is just a separate spreadsheet. It has not yet been made available through the Consortium website.
  - Christine noted that data sensitivity is a perennial and important question.



- Are these public records? Could school children write letters of thanks to those who protect their land? Or possibly write friendly letters alerting them to the possibilities of protection?
  - Lisa noted that most of the information is public, but that property owner information gets a little tricky and is county-specific. Some counties do have all their tax records online, but some do not.
- Is the plan for you all to share "instructions" on how to set up this analysis, so other counties could try developing in-house?
  - Lisa shared that CWP has a workflow document with an overview of the process and data that went into it that could be shared.

Christine also noted that the Consortium's Streamside Report Tool is another valuable resource that participants may find useful. This is available through the Consortium's website at:

<https://jamesstreamsideprograms.com/>.

The following questions were then posed to meeting participants for their feedback:

- Do you envision using this type of analysis for your outreach efforts? In what way?
- How could the Consortium best utilize this analysis to get more buffers on the ground?
- Is there a different format you'd prefer?

Meeting participants responded with the following feedback:

- As you use the easement information, do not discount buffer needs just because there is an easement. Not all organizations require riparian forest buffers on their easement, but if you approach the organization they may be willing to reach out to the landowner to see if they would be interested in doing a riparian buffer planting.
- Consider filtering the list a bit more in order to reach landowners within the Middle James about the Buffer Program and Consortium. Share it with local foresters first to see if there is already a relationship with that landowner. I have been sending letters to landowners, however I would be interested in other ideas.

### Next Steps

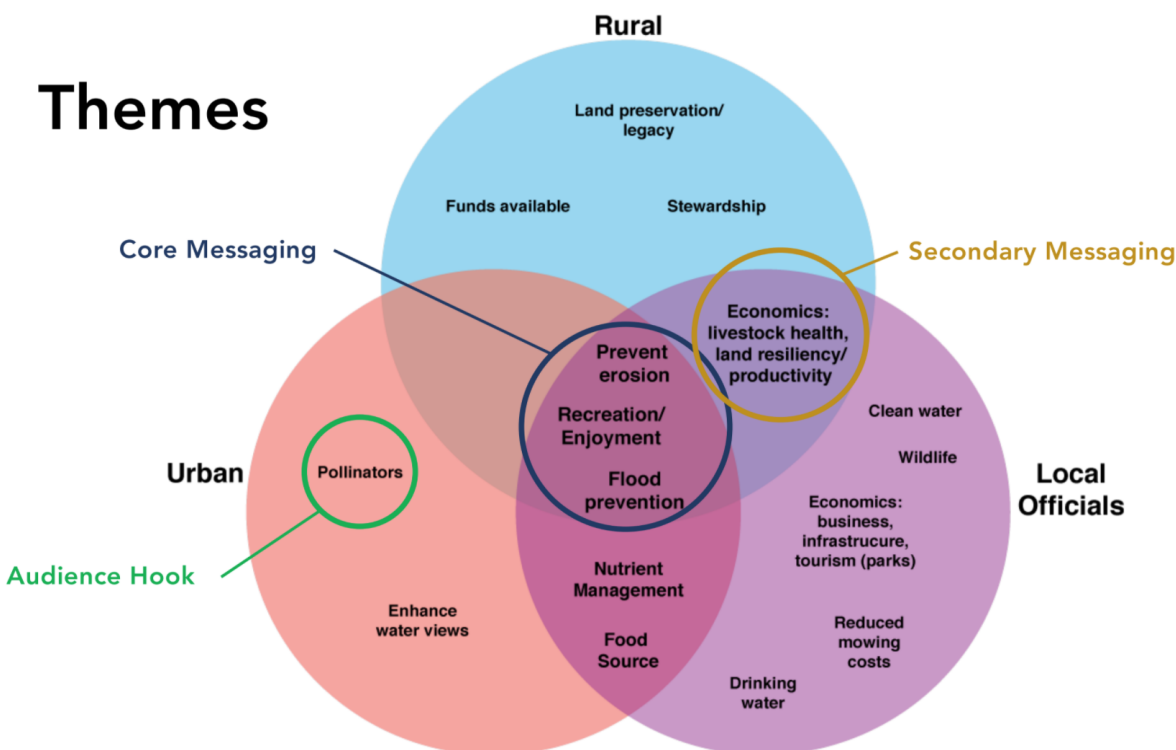
- The Outreach & Targeting Action Team will be meeting in early May to discuss next steps for outreach re: the targeting analysis for Goochland, Powhatan, and Buckingham Counties.
- Please contact Lisa at [lfm@cwpc.org](mailto:lfm@cwpc.org) if you are interested in participating in the May meeting or if you have additional questions or interest in the targeting analysis!
- The Outreach & Targeting Action Team will consider the input shared by meeting participants, make any necessary adjustments to the targeting analysis, and identify how best to make this resource available online considering privacy limitations.

### Outreach and Communication Strategy Updates

Next, Dave and Paula Jasinski with GreenFin Studio shared an update on the outreach assessment and communication products they have been developing for the Consortium. First, Dave reviewed the input gathered from Consortium members at the February 18th Action Planning Retreat during a messaging exercise where participants identified priority audiences for engagement with the Consortium (rural landowners, urban stakeholders, and local government officials), challenges in effectively communicating with these groups about buffers, and ideas for how to better structure

messaging and highlight riparian buffer benefits in a targeted way. More details from this meeting, including the specific questions participants engaged with and how the exercise was structured, are available in the meeting summary [here](#) and the slides at this [link](#).

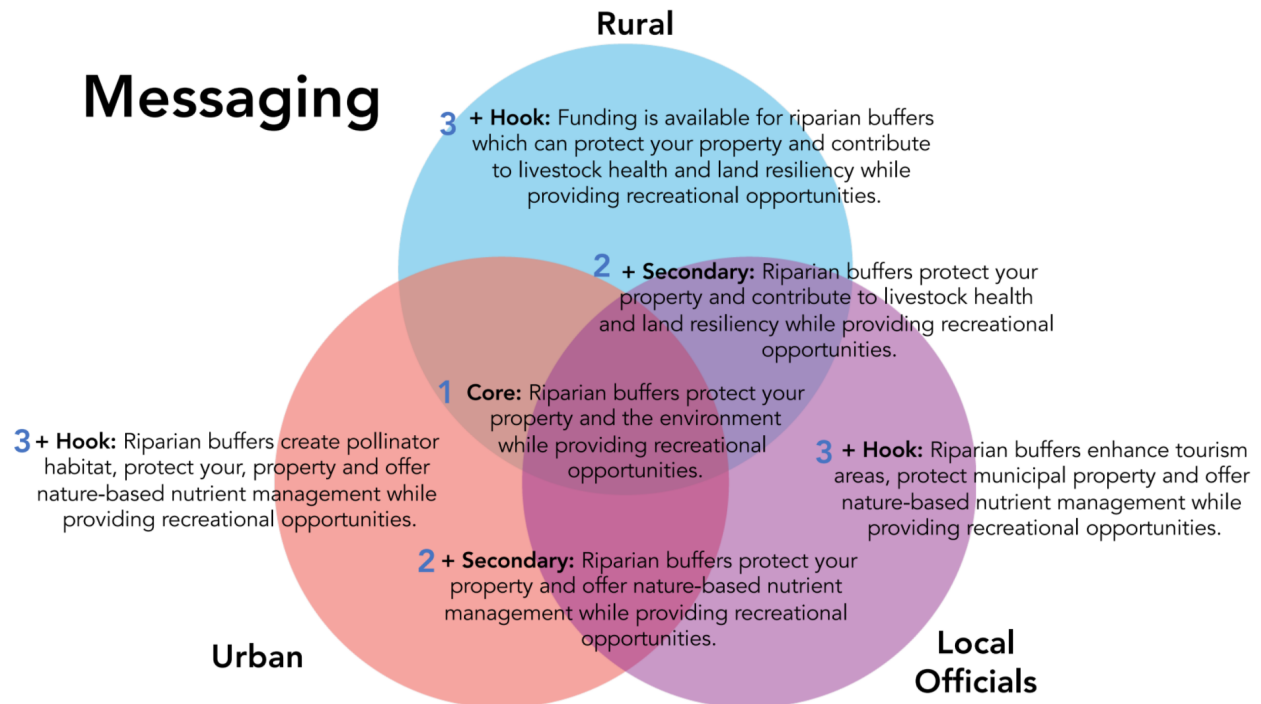
In analyzing the results of the three small breakout sessions from the February 18th meeting, GreenFin created a number of helpful graphics and venn diagrams to layer shared areas of interest and identify primary and secondary messaging opportunities as well as “audience hooks.” Dave explained that the area in the center where all three audiences overlap are the issues around which you want to structure primary messaging. Areas where two stakeholder groups share areas of overlap would include issues and motivators around which secondary messages can be structured. The venn diagrams are included below and more details are available in GreenFin’s slides [here](#). During his presentation, Dave noted that these results about Consortium audiences and messaging are limited to the perspectives of those who attended and participated in the February 18th meeting and are by no means comprehensive.



After reviewing the three stakeholder group’s motivators and areas of interest, Dave presented a second venn diagram that begins to translate some of the key issues from the first venn diagram into specific messaging tailored for these audiences. Based on this analysis, a primary message that intersects with all three stakeholder groups would be “Riparian buffers protect your property and the environment while providing recreational opportunities.” Secondary messages that align with two of the three audiences are included in the venn diagram and are also available in the slides [here](#).

Based on this exercise, GreenFin has also been developing more comprehensive and narrative messaging for the Consortium, such as “Riparian landowners are looking for cost effective solutions to

manage erosion and flooding issues. The James Consortium offers low to no cost nature-based solutions in the form of riparian buffers.” Dave also emphasized that GreenFin Studio and the Consortium is also open to continuing to refine this or do a similar exercise with different stakeholder audiences and input from other Consortium partners.



After this overview of the February 18th messaging exercise results, Dave and Paula with GreenFin Studio open up a poll to solicit meeting participants’ perspectives on the messaging presented. The poll questions included the following and participants were invited to add more details via chat:

- In your experiences, will these messages work with the corresponding audiences?
- Are they similar or different from what you are using now?
- Do you need new materials to help you talk about buffers from these benefits?

In response to question one, 73% of participants agreed that the messages will work with the corresponding audiences based on their experiences; 27% indicated “maybe,” and zero said “no.” For question two, 95% of participants responded that the messages shared by GreenFin Studio are similar to what they are using now in their work; 5% said “different.” Finally, in response to question three, 45% of respondents indicated a need for additional materials to talk about buffers and their benefits, 50% indicated “maybe,” and 5% said “no.”

Additional feedback shared by participants via chat included:

- In the mountains of western Virginia, riparian discussions often include wildlife corridors.



- The USDA has great information on trees and pollinators which helps getting the interest of the landowners. People do not think of trees as ultimate pollinators.
- Materials should educate all parties especially local government about the importance for everyone working together cooperatively, not using the big stick to force compliance.
- Love the venn diagram and the messaging breakdown. I may be jumping ahead, but I think some of our additional challenges lie in the outreach part (what are the best ways to get these messages across based on the audience) and that would determine what kinds of materials we need.
- I am thinking that the messages might benefit from more testing with the audiences who may not have been well represented in the breakout groups.
  - Another participant agreed that this was a good point.
- Many times landowners do not know their stream water quality particularly on the smaller streams.

Specific questions for GreenFin Studio about the messaging exercise and outputs included:

- Curious whether the concept of stream health/healthy ecosystem entered into things?
  - Paula responded that was implied in some of the small group discussions but may not have been explicitly called out during the audience messaging exercise in February. Paula noted, however, that stream health is in the Consortium's vision statement.
  - Dave added that stream health has been a message that has resonated broadly with Stroud Research Center's work over the years, particularly in their work with rural, agricultural landowners and recreational fishermen, etc.
  - Dave was a little surprised that stream health/water quality did not appear in the messaging exercise and thinks that this would still be a valuable hook for rural landowners. Stewardship and recreational opportunities also can serve as proxies.
- And are you feeling very cautious about asking about carbon sequestration?
  - Paula noted that through the Consortium and this exercise on messaging, they have not discussed carbon sequestration and its potential benefits to stakeholders. This, however, would be worth exploring and there are a number of models from other states.
  - Christine noted that Elise will be discussing Boxerwood's carbon offset program at the upcoming Urban Roundtables in May (more details and registration link below).

Paula added that in regards to testing the messaging with other stakeholders, GreenFin Studio recently received some reports on studies that researchers and other groups in the Chesapeake Bay have been conducting on messaging around shoreline management. The biggest takeaway from these findings is that the biggest indicator of a landowner being willing to do something is whether or not his or her neighbor has done something. Paula added that if members of the Consortium are willing and interested in helping to field test messaging, GreenFin and the Consortium would greatly value that.

Next, Dave shared a brief update on GreenFin Studio's work to curate a resource library of educational videos that can be shared through the Consortium's website and its network. GreenFin is currently in the compiling process and so far has 15 videos identified covering five different topic areas. Eight of the fifteen cover riparian forest buffers specifically, with others engaging issues of agricultural infrastructure, streambank stabilization, wildlife habitat, and buffer protection. Gaps in the existing

database include videos covering the range of buffer options to landowners, wildlife benefits beyond brook trout, buffer progression and maintenance, and the process for installing and maintaining a riparian buffer in general. To view the matrix of videos that GreenFin has developed for the Consortium see: <http://bit.ly/jamesMatrix>. Dave noted that the Consortium is also in conversations with a video producer to potentially create additional videos that can be shared and through the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay there are 31 video clips that are also being processed into full length videos. Dave invited meeting participants to review the matrix of existing videos and share any other videos that they are aware of or flag gaps regarding needs.

## Small Group Discussions

Next, Dave provided a brief overview of the small group discussion that participants will be asked to discuss in two small groups. After this, participants split into two groups and joined facilitated sessions with Paula and Dave Jasinski to discuss the following questions:

- Is the question “who are we not engaging with” or is it “is our messaging effective with the audiences we ARE engaging with”?
- Strategic messaging: What are you hearing from landowners regarding barriers to adoption of riparian buffers?

Detailed notes were captured in a notetaking doc and are included in Appendix A.

## Report Out to Large Group

Meeting participants rejoined the large group for an overview of the top ideas discussed. Top takeaways for each group are listed below in bullets.

### Group 1

#### *Audiences to engage*

- Absentee landowners was one particular group identified that the Consortium could engage more actively with. Participants acknowledged that this group is sometimes difficult to reach and may require particular messaging (i.e. tax breaks since they are not living on the property).
- Transitional families were also identified as another stakeholder group that may require outreach as families are passing on property or new members are inheriting tracts of land. As properties transition within families it is important to talk to them early on about options like conservation easements.
- Public land owners and public works staff were also flagged as particularly relevant stakeholders in urban contexts to get educational resources to. This could be public officials, the individuals who actually do the moving, and in some cases the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT).
- Farm Bureaus were identified as particularly active groups in rural areas who often have active, well-networked members. Many of these members are agricultural producers themselves. The 2025 cost share deadline for funding was noted as an important motivator to include in messaging.
- Homeowner Associations (HOAs) and neighborhoods groups, particularly in places where farmland is transitioning to residential, would be valuable to do more outreach to.

## **Resources**

- The group ran out of time to discuss specific resources that are being used right now regarding messaging. Judy mentioned a [Department of Forestry resource “Get the Most out of Your Land”](#) that went through a number of printings; Paula will be getting a sample of that.
- Amber also mentioned the [Consortium’s Streamside Program Report Tool](#) and the need to understand who is using it and how in order to determine how its usability or outreach can be improved.
- Participants identified the need for a full [overview video of the riparian buffer process from beginning to end and what to expect along the way](#) as most useful for resource development.

## **Group 2**

### **Audiences to engage**

- It is important to [acknowledge the diversity of rural landowners and their different interests and needs](#). There is often the assumption that when people hear “rural landowners” they assume agricultural landowners and this is not always the case.
- An example of a non-agricultural rural landowner might be [“new-to-rural-life folks”](#) who may be living on a previous farm that was subdivided. They may have drainage issues and be interested in installing riparian buffers on their properties.
- [In urban areas, there may also be individuals living adjacent to buffers but who want a yard; there may be a conflict with riparian buffers impeding the size of their yard.](#)
- [Individuals responsible for maintaining urban buffer areas may not understand riparian buffer functionality and unknowingly mow or remove riparian plants.](#)
- Regarding messaging to farmers, most of the outreach has focused on stream exclusion; [there is an opportunity to do outreach around opportunities for plantings within excluded areas.](#)

### **Resources**

- None specifically identified in the small group report out. See Appendix A for additional details.

## **Next Steps and Upcoming Events**

Christine thanked participants for their contributions to a rich conversation around outreach, targeting, and messaging during the meeting today. After the meeting today, participants who pre-registered will be visiting the Braford Farm in Natural Bridge Station, Virginia for a 2:30-4:30 pm tour of the property and overview of the Best Management Practices (BMP) implemented there.

The Consortium’s next online meetings will focus specifically on urban issues in the Upper & Middle James Watershed. Please register in advance for the Middle James Urban Roundtable on Wednesday, May 12th from 10:30 am-12:30 pm ([register here](#)) and Upper James Urban Roundtable on Thursday, May 20th from 10:00 am-12:00 pm ([register here](#)) if you are interested! Additional meeting dates for the remainder of 2021 are listed below. To stay up-to-date on events, please visit the website at [www.jamesriverconsortium.org](http://www.jamesriverconsortium.org) and sign up for the Consortium’s monthly newsletter there!

Finally, meeting participants were invited to complete an [evaluation](#) to share feedback on the meeting structure, content, and focus.

## 2021 Consortium Schedule and Dates

- Wed. May 12, 10:30 am-12:30 pm- Urban Middle Roundtable
- Thurs. May 20, 10:00 am-12:00 pm- Urban Upper Roundtable
- Wed. Aug. 25, 4:00-5:00 pm- Rumble Happy Hour- ID-ing bottlenecks/optional online call
- 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: *Topic: Source Water Protection and Monitoring & Engagement*
- Wed. Oct. 27, 10:00 am-2:30 pm- Buffer Summit

## **Meeting Participants**

1. Michelle Audie, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)- Region 3
2. Nicole Basenback, University of Maryland Extension
3. Telicia Berry, Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS)
4. Keith Burgess, Monacan Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD)
5. David Byrd, US Fish and Wildlife Service
6. Sarah Coffey, Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF)
7. Dylan Cooper, Trout Unlimited
8. Meagan Cupka, Blue Ridge Land Conservancy
9. Amber Ellis, James River Association (JRA)
10. Louise Finger, Department of Wildlife Resources
11. Lisa Fraley-McNeal, Center for Watershed Protection
12. Repp Glaettli, Albemarle County
13. Genevieve Goss, Valley Conservation Council
14. Erin Hillert, JRA
15. Kelly Hitchcock, Central Virginia PDC
16. Shereen Hughes, Wetlands Watch and CBLP
17. Gabriel Irigaray, Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission
18. Dave Jasinski, GreenFin Studio
19. Paula Jasinski, GreenFin Studio
20. Lara Johnson, Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOF)
21. Rebecca Joyce, Central Shenandoah PDC
22. Marilyn Knight, US Fish and Wildlife Service
23. Matt Kowalski, CBF
24. Dominique Lavorata, Thomas Jefferson PDC
25. Rex Linville, Piedmont Environmental Council
26. Luke Longanecker, Thomas Jefferson SWCD
27. Martha Morris, Virginia Outdoor Foundation
28. Judy Okay, VDOF
29. Jennifer Palmore, VA DEQ
30. Eli Podyma, VDOF
31. Deya Ramsden, VDOF
32. Kristen Saacke Blunk, HeadWaters LLC
33. Elise Sheffield, Boxerwood Nature Center
34. Joey Shelton, JRA
35. Kelly Snoddy, Peter Francisco SWCD
36. Karen Stanley, Boxerwood Nature Center
37. Sammy Vest, Trout Unlimited
38. Barbara Walsh, JRA
39. Laurel Williamson, Albemarle County
40. David Wise, Stroud Water Research Center
41. Michelle Wolfgang, EPA
42. Christine Gyovai, Dialogue + Design
43. Sierra Gladfelter, Dialogue + Design

## Appendix A. Notes from Small Group Discussions

### Breakout Group 1

**Participants:** Paula Jasinski (facilitator), Sierra Gladfelter (notetaker), Amber Ellis, Judy Okay, Barbara Walsh, David Wise, Deya Ramsden, Dylan Cooper, Elise Sheffield, Erin Hillert, Gabriel Irigaray, Jennifer Palmore, Joey Shelton, Karen Stanley, Keith Burgess, Kelly Hitchcock, Kelly Snoddy

#### Discussion Questions:

- Is the question “who are we not engaging with” or is it “is our messaging effective with the audiences we ARE engaging with”?
- Strategic messaging: What are you hearing from landowners regarding barriers to adoption of riparian buffers?

#### Notes:

##### Who are we not engaging with?

- Absentee landowners as subdivision of both rural/urban landowners (hard to reach)
  - Collectively owned (i.e. LLC), can get to the address but may not be an interest if they aren't living on the property or renting it out
  - Difficult to capture them/get their interest (often different states/counties)
  - #1 challenge in Rockbridge County (a lot of land is rented, owners are out of state often); often renters are interested in BMPs
  - Depend upon neighbors to encourage people to participate in cost-share programs- requires assessing whether its worth time to contact absentee landowners, but peer pressure can get the absentee landowners to participate
  - Work with local Conservation Districts (SWCDs) and orgs to facilitate/access absentee landowners in partnerships
  - Messaging: peer pressure- here's what your neighbors have done? Producing new economic benefits, tax breaks they could get (balance sheet is valuable to them), urgency- re: funding available now but potentially not in the future; are there any local financial incentives i.e. at county level for BMPs, “it's good for everybody”
    - Target landowner vs. farming?
    - With older farmers- remind them about the 2025 deadline for funding
      - Keith encourages people to put in for the cost share program now, since this makes the land more valuable in terms of being able to rent it out
      - Return on investment
      - Landowners could potentially lose tax base if don't make these investments
- Transitional families, esp. with rural/ag land when land is passed/inherited from one generation to another
  - Ideal to engage before land is transitioning as an estate plan to get conservation conversation going
- Public Works Departments, Municipality
  - They are often mowing land, etc.
- VDOT



- They maintain all roadsides along streams
- Public spaces and Parks particularly in urban areas
- Farm Bureaus
  - This is where local landowners are gathering and have trust in material shared
  - Mostly agricultural producers
  - Benefits: cost-share programs?
  - Wouldn't need a separate message for Farm Bureaus (than ag producers generally)
  - Great place to go to for hearing barriers/learn about flash grazing and BMPs
  - Listening here is as important as messaging
- HOAs
  - Farms that have now turned into neighborhoods

-Best messengers are those who have already participated in a buffer program/planting

-2025 deadline for funding- many not aware of this

### What are you using for messaging now?

- Judy- sent out a publication "Get the Most out of Your Land" (DOF?)- info on cost share programs, tax breaks, and diversity of benefits of buffers; did 3 printings of it; done with prioritization for all counties- few thousand went out
  - Judy to send Paula a sample
  - In feedback, some thought it was effective, others not so much depending on area
- Amber- Streamside Program Report Tool- there was discussion about printing and taking out to field/in meetings with landowners; unsure how or if it is being used and how it could be made more effective to meet communication needs

### Videos

- Is this a good tool to invest in/share; how would you use them?
  - Amber- stewardship; highlight actual successful buffer projects; trying to work on videos on proper maintenance after installation so that they can be sustained/continue to be a success; more of these resources would be helpful
  - Judy- Site prep videos would be helpful; often not enough site prep happens in general
  - Amber- added helpful to be able to see the progression/development of different phases; this is what you could expect
  - Amber-Keith previously shared an idea for a video with the progression of benefits that you might see on your property over the years
  - Paula- are there technical resources to help with maintenance?
    - Amber- if get NFWF- there will be a maintenance fund to assist with this.

## Breakout Group 2

**Participants:** Dave Jasinski (facilitator), Christine Gyovai, Lisa Fraley-McNeal, Rex Linville, Repp Glaettli, Sarah Coffey, Laurel Williamson, Martha Morris, Sammy Vest, Shereen Hughes, Matt Kowalski, Marilyn Knight, Louise Finger, Dylan Cooper, Nicole Basenack

### Discussion Questions:

- Is the question “who are we not engaging with” or is it “is our messaging effective with the audiences we ARE engaging with”?
- Strategic messaging: What are you hearing from landowners regarding barriers to adoption of riparian buffers?

### Notes:

- There is a lot of work happening around buffers, landowners have a lot of options and may feel “hit over the head” with information. Urban dwellers may have no clue about programs. Landowners likely have more knowledge.
- Board of Supervisor and water utilities are aware of it and know how it benefits clean drinking water.
- Do “ecologically-minded landowners” know about the programs?
- Example of a horse operator that also races horses - they are not a traditional farmer. Didn’t have relationships with SWCD to fence horses out of streams. This is an example of folks out there we are missing.
- Rural landowners - still confusion between farmers/ agriculture and everyone else. Ex. Batesville - solar farm and camp across the road. Third property owner not in agricultural land use; they have somewhat forested buffers and the Mechums is highly incised at this location. Example of a person that would want to be reached through programs, but they are not familiar with the District or getting a grant. They have low-level stream restoration, but there are opportunities for live stakes and log-jam. Three streams that come together on this property. Ag community has been hit over the head with information about programs, but other land-owners haven’t been engaged yet.
- Large land-owners may be aware of programs, but smaller-to-mid size parcel parcels, or non-ag and non- forested lots, may not be aware of programs and resources yet.
- Live staking, log jams in the creek are easy-to-implement solutions most people don’t know about. Identify where the low-hanging fruit opportunities for restoration.
- Identify non-technical ways of helping to raise awareness.
- Big non-tapped audiences similar to Albemarle County are with new subdivisions and smaller lots close to streams. Where the stream buffer may have been protected during development-bit of a free-for-all after development where buffers may be cut down. Or if a buffer wasn’t mapped, it could have been cut down and there are opportunities to reestablish buffers.
- New-to-rural-life folks - have a broad interest in rural but don’t have experience or technical know-how. Looking for hands on technical assistance - which require a site visit.
  - Are they coming to Albemarle Co. for assistance?
    - Yes, they are coming to the county.
  - Knowledgeable about buffers?
    - Sometimes it starts as a drainage complaint. County government is seen as the entity to respond in some way.

- Ag landowners “hit over the head” with buffers – how?
  - Ex. of family farm in Fauquier Co. Farmers have heard of CREP. The Conservation District has done outreach with the ag community, but non-ag has had less outreach.
  - This is not an overstatement; larger properties are hearing about programs.
  - Neighbor adoption is important and especially true with conservation easements and word of mouth outreach.
- Most messaging with buffers has been about stream exclusion. Not as much about forested buffers – this is an opportunity to slide in.
- From an ag perspective, ag lands that get sub-divided into smaller lots don’t qualify for ag programs any longer, and they don’t have accessibility for as a farm.
- In the urban sector, with DOF, urban buffers often don’t qualify for other programs including urban buffers that haven’t met the specifications of CREP. These definitions often exclude a huge audience. People that live in subdivisions or smaller rural landowners are harding to engage. There is a need for site visits, follow up, etc.
  - Biggest connection has been an environmental steward that lives in the community. Master naturalist, tree steward, etc. Word of mouth has been the strongest connection with potential land-owners for outreach.
  - Minimum size requirements for buffer width?
    - Ten foot wide buffer establishment projects have been funded but the wider the better. However, many sites need to have an assessment first as the width needs to be variable according to the site needs, especially in highly urbanized areas.
- We need big results and that is hard to have from one property at a time. Suburban areas may offer greater opportunities working together. In the resource protection area in the Lower James, builders build right up against the buffer. There is a conflict between a usable yard space and a buffer in this situation. CBLP program was started partially for suburban areas and urban lots owners that may hire professionals to do landscaping. Targeted focus areas might be property owners that engaged professionals to do the work that are trusted advisors. Going to the HOA and targeting a whole community for outreach could be a good approach to have more buffer installation in suburban and urban areas. Target real estate agents so they can provide info to new property owners as well. There are many other groups to target within urban and suburban areas.
- With early adopters, what are other barriers to adoption?
  - Limiting views, water access, aesthetics, not creating a weedy mess. People being worried about pests are all barriers.
  - "My cows do just fine in the creek" is a perception challenge.
  - People are intimidated with potential maintenance of trees/forest. Everyone owns a lawn mower, but trees are an unknown quantity for many people.
  - Seeing weedy buffers on other properties can create a negative perception.
  - Aesthetics are important, plus invasives.
  - Limited riparian education in schools could be a barrier.