



Upper & Middle James Riparian Consortium Urban Follow-up Upper + Middle Roundtable Virtual Meeting Summary

Wednesday, September 1, 2021

Executive Summary

The fifth general meeting of the Upper & Middle James Riparian Consortium (Consortium) of 2021 was held on Wednesday, September 1st, 2021 as a virtual meeting. The meeting was originally planned as an outdoor meeting in Scottsville including an in-person site tour and then paddle, but switched to a virtual format due to tropical storm conditions. This meeting was a follow-up to the Upper and Middle James Urban Roundtables held virtually in May 2021. A summary of the Middle James Roundtable can be found [at this link](#), and a summary of the Upper James Roundtable can be found [at this link](#). The purpose of this follow-up meeting was to encourage and support peer learning, share key themes gathered from partners around urban buffers, and collectively identify priority key actions to tackle urban issues through the strengths of the Consortium.

The meeting included small group discussions for next steps and ideas around the themes listed in the [Urban Buffer Report](#), which is a synthesis of the information that was gathered at the two Urban Roundtables. A PDF of general presentation slides for this meeting can be found [here](#). Jessica Huang and Zac Walrod's presentation of the Green Infrastructure Center's riverfront project in Scottsville can be [found here](#). Chris Swanson's presentation of the Center for Watershed Protection's (CWP) Better Site Design can be [found here](#), and additional resources for the CWP Coded Ordinance Worksheet can be found below.

Ways to Engage

- The next Consortium meeting will be held virtually on Wed. Sept. 29th from 11:00 am-12:30 pm. An in-person BMP site tour will follow the meeting from 2:30-4:30 pm. Details can be found on the [RSVP form](#).
- Save-the-date for the Buffer Summit on Wed. Oct. 27th from 10:00 am-2:30 pm. [RSVP here](#); more details to follow.
- To stay up-to-date on events, please visit the website at www.jamesriverconsortium.org and sign up for the Consortium's monthly newsletter.
- Reach out to Amber Ellis at aellis@thejamesriver.org or another member of the Planning Team if you are interested in potentially serving in a greater capacity with the Consortium.

Next Steps

- **The Planning Team** will synthesize ideas that were shared around themes in the Urban Buffer Report and integrate the information into the [Urban Buffer Report](#), and potentially the Consortium [Action Plan](#).
- Ideas shared from meeting participants in the evaluation will be integrated into Consortium planning by the Planning Team.

Welcome and Introductions

At the beginning of the meeting, Amber Ellis with the James River Association (JRA) welcomed participants to the meeting. Next, Christine Gyovai with Dialogue + Design Associates provided a brief overview of Zoom best practices and technology, then provided an agenda review. Christine noted that this is a follow up meeting to the two Urban Roundtables held for the Middle and Upper James watersheds in May. The follow up meeting serves to share information that has been gathered and synthesized from the Roundtables, and to plan future action for the Consortium moving forward. Participants were then invited to share their name, affiliation and their favorite mountain range or body of water. A list of meeting attendees and affiliations is included at the end of this summary.

Overview of the Consortium

Amber gave an overview of the Riparian Consortium, including the vision, focus, mission, values, where the Consortium has been, and where it is headed. See [2 pager](#) for a Consortium overview or visit www.jamesriverconsortium.org for more information and to register for our monthly newsletter.

Scottsville Riverfront Planning Presentation

Matt Lawless with the Town of Scottsville and Jessica Huang and Zac Walrod with the Green Infrastructure Center gave a presentation focusing on riverfront planning in the Town of Scottsville. A PDF of the presentation slides can be [found here](#).

- Matt shared that Scottsville defines itself as a river community, noting that the Town Council and the community orient their work in small town leadership around the James River.
- Matt highlighted the infrastructure, public health, and economic impacts of the riverfront improvement project, which the town was able to undertake with support from the American Rescue Plan.
- Jessica shared that the project team just finished a public survey and an open house, wherein the public shared that mud issues, erosion control, and parking are major concerns at a specific site along the James River, which is currently a railroad maintenance yard.

SCOTTSVILLE RIVERFRONT DESIGN

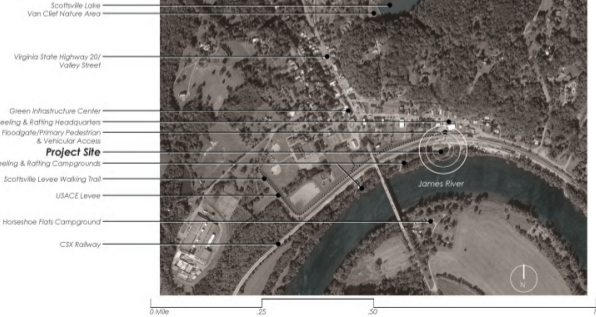
Scottsville, Virginia

Green Infrastructure Design Project

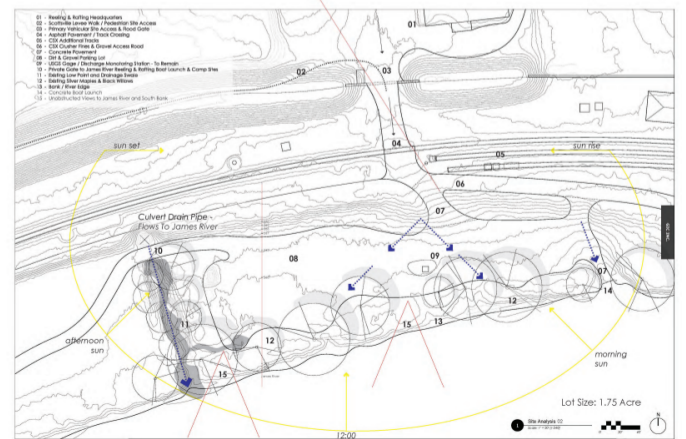
The Green Infrastructure Center is working with the Department of Wildlife Resources, (DWR) and the City of Scottsville to develop a green infrastructure concept plan for the existing DWR boat launch site shown to the right. We have completed our initial site analysis of the property and are asking for community feedback as to what folks would like to see included in the new riverfront design!



Scottsville, Va
Context Map



site analysis drawing 02 - initial findings



- Jessica detailed site problems and constraints, project objectives, and the site's management by the Department of Wildlife Resources.
- Zac shared a site analysis, noting that the James River Reeling and Rafting headquarters, which is adjacent to the site, has been doing maintenance work on site.
- Jessica shared that the site regularly floods, and the design includes boulders and trees to mitigate future flooding. The design also limits driving access towards the bank to help with erosion control. She noted that the project is ongoing, and the team welcomes any shared resources or comments.

Questions and responses from meeting participants and presenters

- Melody asked what expenditure category the Town of Scottsville used for reporting for the State and Local Physical Recovery Funds?
 - Matt responded that they categorized it as local economic recovery. Other eligible categories would have been public health or water infrastructure.
- Michael asked if the design will keep the existing surfacing or if a pervious paver system or gravel will be installed?
 - Zac reported that they are considering surface changes and noted that grading will have to be done at the site.

- David asked what the interface between the river and shoreline is like at this point, as this is a focal point and a point of connection for people. Who are the users expected to be?
 - Zac answered that since there is a boat launch and fishermen help fund the site, the target user group are anglers. The current bank erosion can be addressed by live stake plantings or riprap reinforcement.
- Laurel shared in the chat: “One more thought... keep cars as far away from shore as possible to avoid root compaction of the tree roots.”
- Judy shared in the chat: “You did not mention bio-retention maybe look at adjacent off site opportunities to retain drainage and infiltration ‘rain garden...’”
 - Jessica responded in the chat “That’s a great thought Laurel! We are hoping the rock placement helps protect tree roots from those cars and trucks. Judy, that is a great idea too! Addressing drainage off site would definitely help with on site conditions.”

Jessica noted that sediment control is a major topic, and the team is seeking feedback or ideas on how to address drainage on the site.

Better Site Design Presentation

Amber introduced Chris Swanson from the Center for Watershed Protection for his presentation on Better Site Design. Amber noted that the presentation topic addresses questions that came up during the Urban Roundtables held in May around ordinances and design techniques to use for buffers. The Center for Watershed Protection is a nonprofit organization which works in watershed and stormwater management, and provides services including research technical assistance, training, and a membership program. More information can be found at www.cwp.org. A PDF of the presentation slides can be [found here](#).

- Chris shared the [Coded Ordinance Worksheet](#) (COW) which is part of the larger process of Better Site Design.
- Chris shared examples of Better Site Design, including bioretention areas for parking lots, smaller streets that allow for less impervious cover, tree plantings, and landscape bulbs with plantings inside to address stormwater management.
- Chris listed some common code and ordinance barriers to better site design. In addition, the COW reviews local development regulations based on a set of questions and identifies what barriers might keep localities from incorporating principles into local ordinances.
- Chris shared a forest-friendly Coded Ordinance Workshop, which can be [found at this link](#), and looks primarily at tree conservation.
- Chris shared some caveats to the tool, as well as steps on how to complete the COW, which include:
 - Gather codes, ordinances, and other documents;
 - Identify authorities who administer the rules;
 - Select the appropriate COW questions for your community;

- Review the regulations to find answers to the COW questions; and
- Use the COW spreadsheet to enter answers, points, and notes.
- Chris also shared tips on how to use COW results and code change efforts.

Christine then invited participants to share their ideas on what activities they would allow in a riparian buffer, which is a question that Chris posed to the group. Ideas included:

- Management of invasives (Laurel)
- Trails, harvesting fruit/nuts/mushrooms, removing invasive species (Amber)
- Kids playing! (Christine)
- A community garden (Rebecca)
- We're doing educational water testing with students and scouts in our stream (Jill)
- Community food forests/foraging for fruits/nuts, allowing cuttings of woody decorative species, removing invasives (Sarah)
- Second invasive species removal or management (Deya)
- Kayak/canoe access points (Amber)
- Passive recreation (Judy)
- Resilience suggestion, plan for landward retreat (David)
- Trails, invasive removal, access points, passive recreation (Kelly)
- Planting more trees, education programs (Jessica)

Questions and responses from meeting participants and presenters

- Nicole asked what sort of maintenance guidance Chris would offer for complex landscapes to process stormwater?
 - Chris responded that in residential areas, their team recommends that maintenance is incorporated into homeowners associations and that a maintenance easement is included for natural areas, or for stormwater or structural practices.
- Amber asked in the chat: “How long does the Coded Ordinance Workshop process usually take?”
 - Chris answered that for a simple code review, it can take as little as three months, but for Roundtable-type processes, it takes at least a year to give time for a series of meetings. In those meetings, participants are divided up according to COW sections.
- Kate asked in the chat: “Any thoughts on a herbaceous grasses woody understory plants implementation”?
 - Amber responded in the chat: “That’s a question we constantly grapple with as a Consortium! So much focus has been on trees that herbaceous in buffers hasn’t gotten as much attention.”
 - Chris noted that implementation and layering would be important.

- Matt L. stated in chat: “If there are best practices from these case studies which make sense applied to all local codes, we should try to get those elevated to state law. Poorer localities which might not undertake proactive code review can still respond to mandates.”

A list of buffer ordinance language examples, documents, and resources can be [found here](#).

Break Out Groups

Amber noted that the Consortium held the Upper and Middle Urban Roundtables in the spring and met with Planning District Commissions (PDCs) to talk about urban challenges and opportunities with buffers. The [Urban Buffer Key Issues Report](#) is a synthesis of ideas from these meetings, which were narrowed down into three main topics:

1. Theme 1 - Rails, Trails, and Parks: Buffer Corridors that Connect our Communities
2. Theme 2 - Policy and Local Ordinances: Structures to Restore and Protect our Riparian Buffers
3. Theme 3 - HOAs, Golf Courses, and Small Private Parcels: The Non-Traditional Buffer

The breakout groups intended to dive deeper into the themes and to work on identifying key next steps. The Consortium is hoping to integrate the next steps and ideas into the Urban Buffers Report, and then the Consortium Action Plan for next year. Amber gave an overview of each theme, which can be found in the [Urban Buffer Report](#).

Participants were asked to choose which breakout group they would like to join based on the theme and to take notes in a shared [google note-taking doc](#). The specific questions that participants were asked to engage with included:

- *For each opportunity listed, what successful examples have you seen within or outside the James watershed?*
- *For each challenge listed, what do you think the biggest hurdles will need to be overcome?*
- *What are the top actions of the Consortium in the next 1, 2, and 3 years?*

Large Group Report Out and Discussion

After participants met in small groups, meeting participants returned to the large group to share top ideas from their small group conversations. A complete list of ideas from the shared note-taking document is included in Appendix A of the meeting summary. Participants shared the following top ideas from their group in report outs in the large group meeting.

Group 1 - Rails, Trails, and Parks: Buffer Corridors that Connect our Communities

- The Consortium could help develop guidance and share information on creating narrow buffers in urban areas and along railroad corridors, which is both a great need and opportunity.
 - **Next step**- Develop buffer guidelines for narrow areas, including how to address key sensitive, urban natural areas.
 - **Next step** - Develop and share key information about programs and training programs to share with localities around buffers, as well as urban opportunities and challenges.
- There are many examples of successful riparian spaces in urban parks and areas that could serve as models and showcase lessons learned. These could be used in support of changing public perception and the value of buffers in urban spaces.
 - **Next step**- Create tools and materials to foster partnership building with successful examples and key information to share with localities to enable collaboration, information sharing and project coordination.
 - **Next step**- Templates could be created and used as a shared resource between river towns to help facilitate coordination around urban buffer design as well as ordinance creation and adoption.
- Whether private or public buffers, balancing aesthetics with access continues to be an opportunity and challenge. Along with establishing designated access points to protect restoration sites, developing educational signage during construction phases or to explain the ecosystem function of buffers can help understand the reason behind and value of “messy” buffer landscapes.
 - **Next step**- Create informational signage templates to share and create signage where needed for sites.
- There is an urgent need to coordinate rail, river and trail partnerships better which might need state and government-level coordination.
 - **Next step**- Coordinated action is needed among stakeholders, the government, and the railroad. At the state level, it needs to be demonstrated that this effort is as important as railroad partnerships with other industries.

Group 2 - Policy and Local Ordinances: Structures to Restore and Protect our Riparian Buffers

- Expand the education of local leaders and practitioners.
 - **Next step**- Educate elected local officials about the benefits of having riparian ordinances or other natural resource protection policies.
 - **Next step**- Create a punch list example for local governments and maintenance guides for proper tree planting and tree care, which could be a shared tool.
- Help to coordinate an online clearinghouse or database for a singular place for finding ordinance and educational resources. There is a need for a shared database of programs, partners, and resources. Perhaps this could entail plugging into the Program Report Tool or the Coordination Tool.

- **Next step**- Conduct a buffer-specific ordinance and policy review of communities in the Upper and Middle James watershed, and/or provide technical assistance to some of these communities who are ready to update their ordinances, codes, and/ or design standards.
 - Leverage existing policies and ordinances that may not be about buffers directly, but could be applied to buffer work.
 - DEQ does advisory reviews of localities' ordinances (for compliance with CBPA) and has provided some good examples. This would be a good starting point for the Consortium to develop a resource document of model ordinances, and would be so helpful for localities!
- **Next step**- Bolster programs that provide cost assistance to install and maintain buffers. Develop grant programs to allow localities to hire professionals to review or help create their ordinances.
- **Next step**- Start a catalogue of model ordinances and creative strategies.

Group 3 - HOA's, Golf Courses, and Small Private Parcels: The Non-Traditional Buffer

- The scenic river designation was a success, but having educational programming in place is necessary to bring about awareness that protection of forested buffers is needed for the designation to stay in place.
 - **Next step**- Get a program in place with an educational component to inform people about what Scenic River designation means to ensure it stays in place by protecting buffers along it.
- The native plant campaign was successful, and doing the same for riparian plants with visual resources was discussed.
 - **Next step**- Figure out what plants or type of information to include in the Riparian Plant Guide.
- HOAs are restricted sometimes by whoever is leading the way in an HOA. Some community members might not feel empowered to speak up or realize that their neighbors feel the same way.
 - **Next step**- Outreach to HOAs regarding buffer education, especially those with environmentally-minded members, about potential projects.

Christine pointed out that the [Urban Buffer Key Issues Report](#) will be updated with the ideas shared during the meeting and group discussions. The ideas that were shared will directly serve to inform the work of the Consortium.

Next Steps and Upcoming Events

Meeting participants were invited to share feedback on the meeting content and structure by completing this [evaluation](#). There are future opportunities to engage with the Consortium this fall and

next year; upcoming events are listed below and can be found at <https://jamesriverconsortium.org/events/>.

Amber encouraged participants to join the next Consortium meeting on September 29th, which will be virtual and followed by an in-person site tour of the Department of Corrections State Farm buffer project. The topic of the meeting will be around source water protection and water quality management in buffers and engagement. The annual Buffer Summit will be held on October 27th, and the agenda will be shared soon.

The Chesapeake Bay Landscape Professionals will be hosting another round of buffer certificate trainings this fall. More information can be found at <https://certified.cblpro.org/product/cblp-buffers-certificate-course/>.

Upcoming meetings include:

- Wed. Sept. 29, 11:00 am-12:30 pm- Meeting (virtual), [RSVP here!](#)
 - BMP tour to follow from 2:30 - 4:30 pm - RSVP for details
- Wed. Oct. 27, 10:00 am-2:30 pm- Buffer Summit (virtual), [RSVP here!](#)
- Oct. 2021 - CBLP Buffer Trainings: Link to [CBLP - Buffers Certificate Course](#), Link to [CBLP - Urban Buffer Design Charrette](#)
- For more information on the Consortium visit: www.jamesriverconsortium.org

Meeting Participants

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Christian Anderson, Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay | 9. Michael Gee, City of Richmond Parks and Rec Department |
| 2. Kim Biasioli, Albemarle County | 10. Genevieve Goss, Upper James Resource Conservation & Development Council |
| 3. Amber Ellis, James River Association | 11. Chris Gyurisin, Thomas Jefferson SWCD |
| 4. Jenn Clarke, Richmond Three Waters Utilities | 12. Nicole Hersch, New River Valley Regional Commission |
| 5. Sarah Coffey, Chesapeake Bay Foundation | 13. Dave Hirschman, Hirschman Water & Environment, LLC |
| 6. Nissa Dean, Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay | 14. Kelly Hitchcock, Central Virginia Planning District Commission |
| 7. Jeremy Falkenau, Virginia Department of Forestry | 15. Alston Horn, Chesapeake Bay Foundation |
| 8. Melody Foster, Commonwealth Regional Council | 16. Jessica Huang, Green Infrastructure Center |

17. Gabriel Irigaray, Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission
18. Paula Jasinski, Green Fin Studio
19. Casey Johnson, James River Association
20. Lara Johnson, Department of Forestry
21. Rebecca Joyce, Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission (CSPDC)
22. Matt Lawless, Town of Scottsville
23. Nancy Lilly, Lynchburg Water Resources
24. Judy Okay, Department of Forestry
25. Deya Ramsden, Department of Forestry
26. Joey Shelton, James River Association
27. Kelly Snoddy, Peter Francisco SWCD
28. Chris Swanson, Center for Watershed Protection
29. Jill Trischman-Marks, Botanical Garden of the Piedmont
30. Kate Tuttle, Eastern Tree Arboricultural Consulting
31. Thomas Unsworth, Town of Scottsville
32. Sammy Vest, Trout Unlimited
33. Zac Walrod, Green Infrastructure Center
34. Laurel Williamson, Albemarle County
35. David Wise, Stroud Center
36. Michelle Wolfgang, EPA
37. Emily Carlson, Dialogue + Design
38. Sierra Gladfelter, Dialogue + Design
39. Christine Gyovai, Dialogue + Design
40. Lea Taylor, Dialogue + Design

Appendix A. Notes from Small Group Discussions

Breakout Group 1: Rails, Trails, and Parks: Buffer Corridors that Connect our Communities

Participants: *Christine Gyovai (facilitator), Lea Taylor (note-taker), Dan Gritsko, Kelly Hitchcock, Rebecca Joyce, Matt Lawless, Rex Linville, Joey Shelton, Jill Trischman-Marks, Zac Walrod*

Discussion questions:

- For each opportunity listed, what successful examples have you seen within or outside the James watershed?
- For each challenge listed, what do you think the biggest hurdles will need to be overcome?
- What are the top actions of the Consortium in the next 1, 2, and 3 years?

For each opportunity listed, what successful examples have you seen within or outside the James watershed?

- Successful Examples
 - Rails to Trails - Highbridge Trail; Biggest Hurdle: Funding and human capacity (either paid staff or volunteers).
 - Jill: The New River Trail (rails-to-trails project) provides recreational opportunities and river access, and connects communities. There are buffers along the river for the length of the trail.
 - Joey: The James River Park System in Richmond incorporates a rail system with park and have ample buffers along the river.
 - Matt: Successful trails and parks I've used near waterfront rail yards include the Roanoke Greenway, the NYC High Line, and the Philly Schuylkill trails and stairs.
 - Rex: Riverview Park in Charlottesville. Also, Rivanna Conservation Alliance is looking into enhancing this corridor with a stream bank restoration project.
 - Riverview Park in Charlottesville is a corridor that has seen an explosion in use as a result of the Rivanna River Company opening, which gave a meaningful way to access the river. Commercial access to the river has changed the perception of the river. The Rivanna Conservation Alliance is planning a mitigation project along a section of the river; the restoration project may alarm river users as construction work will take place, although the project will be environmentally beneficial. Conflict between uses and mitigation efforts may need to take place.
 - Dan: sees people use the corridor when he visits every week. JRA helped Scottsville make the natural area park more accessible, connecting the river to natural areas in town. The park has the possibility to be a corridor from a lake in Scottsville to the river. As a town, there is great love for the river and wanting to pass that passion on to future generations.

- Greenway through Idaho Springs, Colorado - part of the Peaks-to-Plains Trail.
- Christine: Large-scale efforts are necessary, but smaller entities like river outfitters are often needed to sustain connection to the river.

For each challenge listed, what do you think the biggest hurdles will need to be overcome?

- Biggest Hurdle: Funding and human capacity (either paid staff or volunteers).
- Jill: Challenges - The New River Trail is a long trail (57 miles) and invasive plant management is needed and volunteers are required.
- Joey: Hurdles can include rail companies wanting to plant buffers near railroads, which would lead to more maintenance. For parks it can be funding or viewsheds being compromised.
- Matt: In our region, CSX seems to see some outreach benefits to this work, but there isn't real regulatory push, legal liability, and methods to address technical challenges. We need to coordinate rail-river-trail partnerships better, especially on the Richmond to Lynchburg line. It might need state-government-level coordination and contracting.
 - A challenge is that CSX railroad owns the riverfront area for 100 river miles, requiring partnership with CSX for any public access or buffer improvement. There isn't enough of a regulatory push to make solid progress happen. Scottsville can't do it alone. Coordinated action is needed among stakeholders, the government, and the railroad. At the state level, it needs to be shown that this effort is just as important as some of their bigger deals with major industries.
- Matt: The border issue is that the river should be acting as a unifying force but instead serves as a legal boundary. Has anyone had experience working through this?
 - Kelly: The Amherst/Lynchburg area is working on a Middle James River Plan. Presenting the James River as a unifying body, expanding that unifier, rather than looking at the river as a boundary separator has been helpful. On a map, it represents a locality boundary or a separation of issues.
- Rex Linville: Challenges include how to "add" public access to existing corridors where it may not already exist.
- Joey: When working with the Park system about installing erosion buffers, a challenge was that buffers are not visually-appealing to all community members. Aesthetics and access pose a barrier on public lands. Trails that are used in urban areas heavily can experience erosion and can foster the introduction of invasive species.
 - Rex: Aesthetics and access are the same impediments for private landowners.

What are the top actions of the Consortium in the next 1, 2, and 3 years?

- Continue bringing communities together and share BMPs and successful community buffer projects.
 - Develop program coordination with pre-hazard mitigation and stormwater programming.

- **Next step** - Develop and share key information about programs and training programs to share with localities around buffers, as well as urban opportunities and challenges.
- **Next step**- Create tools and materials to foster partnership building with successful examples and key information to share with localities to enable collaboration, information sharing and project coordination.
- **Next step**- Templates could be created and used as a shared resource between river towns to help facilitate coordination around urban buffer design as well as ordinance creation and adoption.
- Kelly: An opportunity is to provide guidance for narrow buffer improvements. In Amherst County and Lynchburg, railroad tracks can't be moved. The narrow buffer area limits buffer efforts, but erosion needs to be addressed. Expand the messaging of buffers as it relates to resilience and hazard mitigation. The role of the Consortium in having a conversation with localities about resiliency planning, buffers as a hazard mitigation strategy, and the reduced impacts of floods. Addressing invasive species and sharing the knowledge of the network.
 - Scott: Expand opportunities to the other side of the river where there is no railroad and work can be done.
 - **Next step**- Develop buffer guidelines for narrow areas, including how to address key sensitive, urban natural areas.
- Zac: Good informational signage to bring public awareness of the environmental benefits of buffers seems very important.
 - Kelly: In the Middle James, a vision to put in a trail, and there needs to be an access point. There you can provide education on why and how to preserve buffers as sensitive resources.
 - **Next step**- Create informational signage templates to share and create signage where needed for sites.
- Kelly: Extend professional training for local landscape workforce in maintaining buffers.
- Work on legislation that might help localities get access from Railroads?
 - **Next step**- Coordinated action is needed among stakeholders, the government, and the railroad. At the state level, it needs to be demonstrated that this effort is as important as railroad partnerships with other industries.

Breakout Group 2 - Policy and Local Ordinances: Structures to Restore and Protect our Riparian Buffers

Participants: *Emily Carlson (facilitator), Chris Swann (note-taker), Christian Anderson, Kim Biasioli, Andrea Bowles, Nissa Dean, Michael Gee, Chris Gyurisin, Nicole Hersch, David Hirschman, Alston Horn, Jessica Huang, Gabriel Irigaray, Casey Johnson, Laura Johnson, Nancy Lilly, Judy Okay, Kelly Snoddy, Laurel Williamson, and Dave Wise.*

Discussion questions:

- For each opportunity listed, what successful examples have you seen within or outside the James watershed?
- For each challenge listed, what do you think the biggest hurdles will need to be overcome?
- What are the top actions of the Consortium in the next 1, 2, and 3 years?

For each opportunity listed, what successful examples have you seen within or outside the James watershed?

- Create strong ties with ongoing workforce programs. Frankly, newly planted buffers need lots of maintenance but existing urban buffers are also quite a mess with invasives, dumping, erosion -- we need to also take care of our existing riparian forests instead of just creating new ones. (Dave)
 - Do you know of great guiding maintenance documents? What invasives do you attack first and what time of year? Anything to demystify the how!
- Start a catalogue of model ordinances and creative strategies.
 - The Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act Resource Protection Areas might be a good policy example to copy. (Gabriel)
 - Resource Protection Areas (RPA ordinances) are a voluntary program for localities if they are not in a title area to create ordinances that would need to be promoted. Judy worked with state Delegates to see if they could expand the mandatory program to more localities, but no progress has been made yet. For real protection everywhere, it may be worth reintroducing this to the legislature.
 - Some localities are changing ordinances for derelict lots to reduce taxes if owners convert landscape to a native or pollinator “meadows” (this can get tricky when defining what those landscapes need to look like and how they should be properly converted.)
 - VDOF has a Virginia tree ordinance database that is a searchable database with standards for urban trees. It has some urban buffer language in it and could potentially be expanded. It is maintained by Virginia Tech. (Lara) <http://vtod.frec.vt.edu>
 - There is a beaver habitat ordinance which can be creatively used for buffers: <https://www.bae.ncsu.edu/workshops-conferences/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2018/08/McGill-Beaver-and-stream-restoration-Dont-Believe-Everything-you-Think.pdf> (Nissa)

- JRA created a document about ten years ago that has sample language for a number of Better Site Design Principles. A link is contained in a handout that also includes links to three model ordinances for riparian buffers. (Chris S.)
<https://owl.cwp.org/mdocs-posts/examples-of-code-and-ordinance-language-for-better-site-design-james-river-association-richmond-va/>
- Two opportunities are to build in resiliency (communities are much more responsive to flooding than to water quality; link with new VA grant program for resiliency) and to coordinate buffer work with stormwater ordinances, such as VSMP (Virginia Stormwater Management Program). Allows buffers to be included in compliance measures such as performance bonds and inspections. In a way, this would be a more feasible approach than trying to expand RPA west of I-95, which has already been tried (and failed) several times. (Dave)
- Another opportunity for groups of localities is to look at pay-for-performance programs in conjunction with watershed groups and/or businesses. Another way to get the work done in a non-regulatory strategy. Particularly applicable to MS4s. (Dave)
- Education and outreach are crucial components of local policy development.
 - Partnering with Plant Virginia Native Campaigns--it would be great if local governments were promoting the use of native plants by showcasing them in public landscapes.
 - Creating a punch list example for local governments and maintenance guides for proper tree planting and tree care could be a shared tool.
 - Public education of the importance of buffers--in our area many “wild” landscapes are viewed as unkempt, unattractive and undesirable. People like to mow and like the mowed aesthetic! Are there any documents that discuss messy ecosystems, orderly frames or the like?
 - One solution that I have seen work really well is defining the “boundaries” of these “wild” areas for the public. This can be signage or some kind of visual fencing like small stakes with a rope and a small mowed zone in front of this.
 - In urban environments, Nancy has seen examples of buffers serving as educational and beautification projects (for example removing pavement in a dendritic pattern and planting in that area) so the buffer, while small, serves multiple purposes.
- Streambank stabilization efforts should consider floodplain restoration and upstream impact programs.
 - Some good projects funded by grants (e.g., NFWF) have done floodplain restoration, often in conjunction with stream restoration. In many cases, the floodplain plantings are much more successful and impactful than the in-channel stream work! (Dave)
 - Upstream Impacts on Streambanks - voluntary implementation programs on private and public land such as the Virginia Conservation Assistance Program. Including similar locality programs such as the Albemarle County Conservation Assistance Program & Charlottesville Conservation Assistance Program. Programs are administered by local Soil and Water Conservation District's. (Chris S.)

For each challenge listed, what do you think the biggest hurdles will need to be overcome?

- Enforcement action on ordinances (who will enforce? Staff time needed). (Chris)
- Education for Local Officials, Staff, & Developers. While education materials and resources can be created, who can/will serve as primary contacts to carry out those education opportunities? (Chris)
- Public support for adopting ordinances that provide protection on rural land uses like agriculture. (Kim)
- Identifying the steps to take from site inspection, the erosion issue identification, to funding sources to fix the problems...for county staff to assist landowners in the steps.
- Original RPA ordinance and manuals are quite dated, as indicated. Updated ordinances should build off of complimentary ordinances such as those for resilience and flood prevention. (Dave)
- Creating ordinances that take into consideration geographic constraints. Upper James localities are in the Valley and Ridge Province with a large proportion of steep slopes/undevelopable land, so it is difficult to add another developmental limitation. (Gabriel)
- Reporting issues: The Green Infrastructure Center is working with VDOF to start addressing the lack of coordinated outreach reporting in the state. This process is going to start with Jessica Huang and Karen Firehock reaching out to networks like this to help identify buffer planters, interviewing current agencies on reporting processes and developing a survey to gather information from those involved in stream buffer work. The project goal is to start developing a “decision support tool” to report outreach for all those involved and issue a consensus report on the recommended process to follow.
- Another classic challenge is funding and lack of geographically equitable access (i.e. VCAP not available in Lynchburg) following up with funding would be distributing that funding well. (Nancy)
 - Funding for rural communities for code review and modification. (Chris)
- Access to the river may create competing interests, so will need to address property rights versus public good provided by buffers. (Chris)

What are the top actions of the Consortium in the next 1, 2, and 3 years?

- Build on the education of local leaders and practitioners.
 - **Next Step**- Educate elected local officials about the benefits of having riparian ordinances or other natural resource protection policies. (Gabriel)
 - **Next Step**-Creating a punch list example for local governments and maintenance guides for proper tree planting and tree care could be a shared tool.
- Help to coordinate an online clearinghouse for a singular place for finding ordinance and education resources. There is a need for a database of programs, partners, and resources that are shared. Perhaps this could entail plugging into the program report tool or the coordination tool.

- **Next Step-** Conduct a buffer-specific ordinance and policy review of communities in the Upper and Middle James watershed, and/OR provide technical assistance to some of these communities who are ready to change some of their ordinances/codes/design standards. (Laurel).
 - Leverage existing policies and ordinances that may not be about buffers directly, but could be applied to buffer work.
 - DEQ does advisory reviews of localities' ordinances (for compliance with CBPA) and has provided us with some good examples - this would be a great starting point for the Consortium to develop a resource document of model ordinances. And would be so helpful for localities! (Kim)
- **Next Step-** Bolster programs that provide cost assistance to install/maintain buffers. Grants to allow localities to hire professionals to review/help create their ordinances. (Chris)
- **Next Step-** Start a catalogue of model ordinances and creative strategies.

Breakout Group 3 - HOA's, Golf Courses, and Small Private Parcels: The Non-Traditional Buffer

Participants: *Amber Ellis (facilitator), Sierra Gladfelter (note-taker), Sarah Coffey, Jeremy Falkenau, Paula Jasinski, Deya Ramsden, Sandra Stuart, Kate Tuttle, Thomas Unsworth, Samuel Vest*

Discussion questions:

- For each opportunity listed, what successful examples have you seen within or outside the James watershed?
- For each challenge listed, what do you think the biggest hurdles will need to be overcome?
- What are the top actions of the Consortium in the next 1, 2, and 3 years?

Why are you here/why did you pick this group?

- **Sandra-** In Rockbridge County, Sandra has been involved with a plan through a federal grant for a TMDL project on a major creek in town. As part of this work, a HOA and golf course were invited to join the process. The golf course is at the beginning of their master plan and the HOA is hesitant to be engaged. Sandra hopes to do outreach informed by today's conversation.
- **Deya-** Deya works with the James River Buffer Program (JRBP) at the VDOF. They have a portion of funding to work in urban/residential areas and are trying to get input to make their efforts through the program work better.
- **Sarah-** In Sarah's outreach work at Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF), she has a lot of applicants in the Upper James with small parcels. Sarah has been working with Sandra to help get the golf course mentioned above buffered. It may take several years, but they're trying!

- **Paula-** Paula with Green Fin Studio has been working on educational modules and outreach for the Consortium. Through conversations, HOAs/small parcel landowners have been flagged as tough nuts to crack re: messaging/outreach. She is interested in best practices.
- **Jeremey-** Jeremey works with VDOF in the Capital Work Area. He works with Deya on the JRBP and has a lot of work going on in Richmond, Ashland, and Williamsburg. He would like to know how to effectively implement projects through JRBP, especially as they are seeing the need for more work with HOAs as there are more smaller parcels/forest fragmentation.
- **Kate-** Kate has dedicated half her life to these issues as a consulting arborist. This work has led her to issues like ordinances, smaller off grid projects, tree/plantings, using bio pesticides, etc. She is a small town, municipal HOA arborist primarily. It can be lonely work in HOA land! Kate wants to learn how to better reach HOAs and be a resource for them.
- **Thomas-** Thomas is the Scottsville Town Clerk, and noted that the town does not own any riverfront land. Scottsville has riverfront access but CSX owns the land and has leases with other private landowners upriver. Some private landowners have been very engaged and have decided to use land for low impact, riparian friendly uses. He is interested in ideas for what the town can do to work well with private landowners.
- **Sammy-** Sammy has worked with the ag sector forever, and is interested in demonstrating the positive impact of buffers on HOAs, etc. He asked, "How can we design buffers to look pretty and get buy-in from local governments?"

For each opportunity listed, what successful examples have you seen within or outside the James watershed? (Informed Designs and Programs, Neighborhood Approach, Social Marketing & Resources, Partner with Local Groups)

Note: Ideas below were added by participants directly.

- **Amber-** Judy Okay mentioned a successful partnership with an HOA in Chesterfield. JRA has had grants to do 'Walkable Watersheds' that really dove into working with one community over several years. I love the Native plant Guides that have been created and would love to see one for Riparian Plants!!
- **Deya-** The successful projects we have completed in urban and residential settings have depended on either partnership with an organization or an engaged landowner. The partnerships allowed for some element of publicity about our program or an opportunity for education about buffers (signs or talking about the buffer to the public). Orgs and an engaged landowner have also helped with maintenance.
- **Jeremey-** We rely on partnerships to spread our messages. We do speak with individual landowners, but partnerships are key to the success of many of our programs and partnerships.
- **Thomas-** The project to get a Scenic River designation for the portion of the James River around Scottsville was a successful example of using local partnerships (Scottsville, Albemarle Co, Buckingham Co, Nelson Co all participated) to increase visibility and education around riparian buffer survey and enhancement work.
- For wetland restoration projects elsewhere, have seen presentations from community/trusted messenger groups work at the community level. Those can be partnered with case study

videos, social media and other outreach so “target” landowners hear directly from others they recognize or see themselves as similar to.

For each challenge listed, what do you think the biggest hurdles will need to be overcome? (Small parcels, Lack of programs, Golf courses, Aesthetic concerns, Lack of educational resources)

Note: Ideas below were added by participants directly.

- **Amber-** Very difficult to keep up with reporting to DEQ for projects, especially for small local groups. Figuring out who to take this on for urban projects is a hurdle and important. The 35' minimum is really hard to get in urban areas, so getting funders and programs to support smaller buffers like 10' or sometimes even less is a hurdle. Golf Courses--when I've spoken to them there is a big hurdle of balancing the golf game with trees.
- **Jeremey-** It is difficult to find contractors who are interested in actually planting in these small areas. If someone is able to make a planting happen rates could be higher if the project is stand,alone. Bundled projects could help incentivise or entice contractors, or even bring costs down.
- **Sarah-** 1) Small parcels aren't considered as “high priority” in the James Restoration Planner (most of the time), and often working on these kinds of projects isn't the most efficient use of time when there are so still many large parcels in need of buffers; 2) golf courses--not enough space to do a 35-ft buffer even if they are receptive to it; we need to be able to make exceptions for narrow width buffers (this also relates to lack of programs); 3) aesthetic concerns--it is so difficult to change the mindset of HOAs, but I know from personal experience that there are a lot of people who live in HOAs that do care about their impact on the land and water but feel forced to live in HOAs and to comply with these rules (e.g., my own parents finding it difficult to find homes that aren't in HOAs both in Virginia and other states we've lived in).
- **Sammy-** Lack of funding and partners willing to invest land on nonfarm property and residential (somebody else yard). Parcels are small and it is difficult getting contractors to do work at a reasonable cost.
- **Deya-** 1) Conflict about our landowner agreement with the local government (they will not sign the agreement). 2) We've had possible projects fall through due to the level of invasive species on the site and time needed to treat and manage these.

Top Ideas/Key Next Steps

- **Amber-** For outreach to small parcel landowners/HOAs, having a native plant campaign and guides would be helpful. Webinars have been very successful and she would love to see a Riparian Plant Guide developed.
 - **Next step-** Figure out what plants/type of info to include in the Riparian Plant Guide.
- **Thomas-** Local designation of this stretch of James as Scenic River was incredibly productive as a process as it allowed to get several Board of Supervisors from local counties together to go

through the survey process and make sure they had a section that is scenic (based on percentage of complete riparian buffer). This process could be leveraged/replicated.

- **Next step**- Get a program in place with an educational component to inform people about what Scenic River designation means to ensure it stays in place by protecting buffers along it.
- **Sarah**- For HOAs, many people feel forced to be members of HOAs and some care about the environment and would like to see their HOA investing in these activities. If you have enough people in HOAs who want to live ecologically minded to speak up, there may be the possibility for action. Having more opportunities to share would be good.
 - **Next step**- Outreach to HOAs re: buffer education, especially those with environmentally minded members about potential projects.
- **Kate**- Kate worked for Brandermill in Chesterfield Co. on an urban forest project where resident participation was one of the greatest challenges. You get passion/emotion from people who pay 300-400 dollars a month to be a member of their HOA. It is a challenge. BUT, education is power. This is one thing that she has seen over 15 years. You educate people about trees, then everyone wants to plant trees because your outreach has worked.
 - **Next step**- Educate people who live in HOAs about urban forest buffers.
- **Sandra**- The Lower Maury has also been designated in Rockbridge County. Rockbridge Trail Collaboration has been a part of this process. [**Note**: small group got cut off while Sandra was speaking].

What are the top actions of the Consortium in the next 1, 2, and 3 years?

Note: See above for next steps embedded within top ideas.

- Outreach to HOAs re: buffer education, especially those with environmentally minded members about potential projects.
- Educate people who live in HOAs about urban forest buffers.
- Figure out what plants/type of info to include in the Riparian Plant Guide that can be used in outreach to small parcel landowners/HOAs
- Get a program in place with an educational component to inform people about what Scenic River designation means to ensure it stays in place by protecting buffers along it.