Action Plan
Upper and Middle James Riparian Consortium

January 2022 - June 2025

Last Update: May 23, 2022

This Action Plan serves to outline the action strategies and implementation plan for actualizing priorities within the Consortium. Additional information about the Consortium may be found at the website: www.jamesriverconsortium.org.

VISION

The Upper and Middle James Riparian Consortium (Consortium) is a group of partners with a vision of **"Growing partnerships to create healthy streamside ecosystems for clean water in the James River today and tomorrow."** Several Consortium partners work together in this collaborative effort with a Steering Committee guiding decision making, active action teams working on priority strategies, and an open door to new members and ideas. The Action Plan is a working document and is updated biannually.

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.

GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE
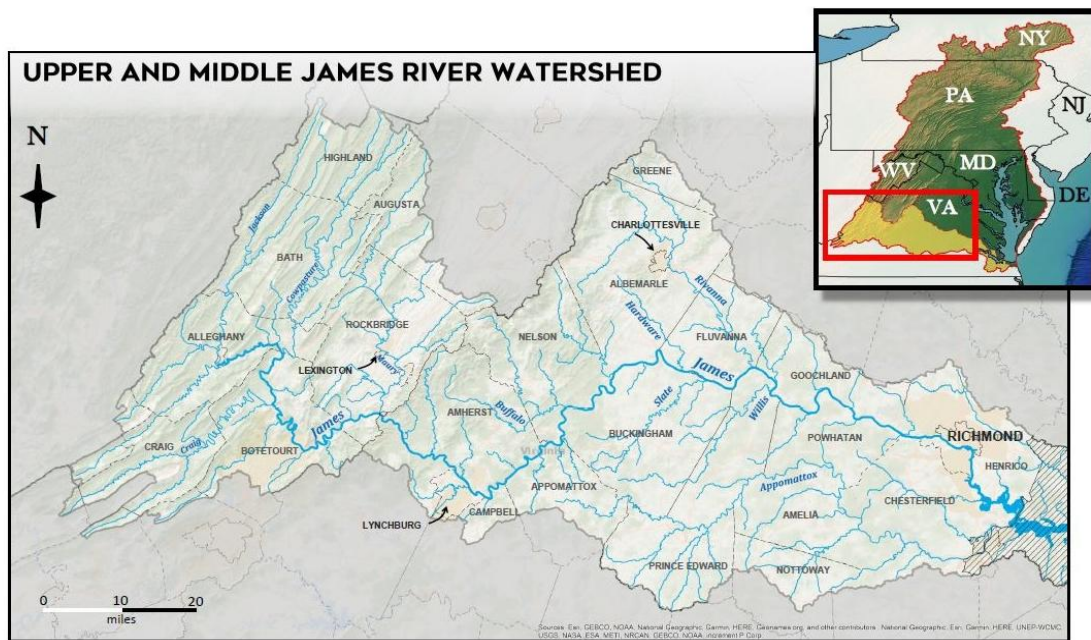
The geographic focus for the Consortium is the Upper and Middle James River Watershed.

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.

GOALS

1. Increase collaboration and strengthen partnerships through developing an effective network of Riparian Consortium members.
2. Build knowledge and capacity about best practices and innovation to ensure the use of the best researched methods for the greatest success of riparian restoration.
3. Build awareness of the importance of riparian areas and deliver outreach based on identified partner priorities, landowner interests, and restoration opportunity areas to increase strategic riparian investments.
4. Coordinate implementation and fill funding gaps to support a holistic approach to riparian restoration projects that leverage partner resources and expertise.

The goals of the Consortium are carried out through four Action Teams: 1) Planning, 2) Knowledge Network, 3) Outreach & Targeting, and 4) Implementation. Each has associated strategies with key actions, timelines, and partners as follows.

ACTION TEAM 1: PLANNING

GOAL: Increase collaboration and strengthen partnerships through developing an effective network of Riparian Consortium members.

LEADS: James River Association, Dialogue + Design Associates (D+D)

ACTIONS	TIMEFRAME	PARTNER(S) RESPONSIBLE	RESOURCES	MEASURE OF SUCCESS
Strategy 1: Facilitate virtual and in-person meetings.				
A. Consortium Meetings to update the larger Membership of Action Team projects, share information, and get feedback.	2019-2024	Planning Team	NFWF-INSR	3 per year in 2022-2024
B. Steering Committee Meetings for Action Teams to give updates, make decisions around upcoming events, budgets, and projects, and guide structure and process.	2019-2024	Planning Team	NFWF-INSR	Meetings held: On average, 10-12 meetings/year
C. Annual James River Buffer Summit to understand emerging challenges and opportunities, brainstorm needs and potential solutions, and celebrate successes of the year.	2019-2024	Planning Team	NFWF-INSR	Summit held: Typically held in October
Strategy 2: Connect and align partners through shared documents and communication methods.				
A. Guiding Document to outline processes, structures, and partner roles within Consortium.	2019-2024	Planning Team	NFWF-INSR	Complete version 1 by December 2020 and then update annually.
B. Action Plan to outline goals, action strategies, and implementation plan for Consortium.	2019-2024	Planning Team	NFWF-INSR	Complete version 1 by June 2021 and then update twice/year

C. Newsletter to give updates on upcoming meetings, project highlights, team updates, and potential funding for riparian restoration.	2019-2024	Planning Team	NFWF-INSR	Sent monthly
D. Key Issues Report to identify specific barriers and challenges to riparian restoration.	2019 and 2022	Planning Team	NFWF-INSR	Riparian Buffers one was completed in 2019. Plans for one on streambank stabilization and restoration planned for 2022
Strategy 3: Develop Resilient Collaborative Model.				
A. Research and outreach around support structures and funding models of similar long-term collaboratives	2019-2024	Planning Team	Feedback from S.C. and models from other collaboratives	Funding model determined and refined collaborative model
B. Develop funding matrix for Consortium strategies (resources needed, potential support, who is best suited to get that support)	2023-2024	Planning Team	Feedback from S.C. and models from other collaboratives	Develop funding matrix and cultivate sustaining funding resources by mid-2023
C. Long-term self-facilitation plan with SC	*2022-2024*	Steering Committee and Planning Team	Decision-making by from S.C.	Plan developed by mid-2023

ACTION TEAM 2: KNOWLEDGE NETWORK

GOAL: Build knowledge and capacity about best practices and innovation to ensure the use of the best researched methods for the greatest success of riparian restoration.

LEADS: Chesapeake Bay Landscape Professional (CBLP) Program , Stroud Water Research Center (Stroud), Center for Watershed Protection (CWP)

ACTIONS	TIMEFRAME	PARTNER(S) RESPONSIBLE	RESOURCES	MEASURE OF SUCCESS
Strategy 1: Build knowledge and capacity about best practices and innovations in riparian restoration for experienced and expert practitioners.				
A. Establish and monitor test plots, conduct research, and document best practices and innovations in riparian restoration implementation and maintenance/management	2022-2024	JRA, Conservation Services, Shannon Farm, TBD	NFWF-INSR Additional resources to be determined	Survival and growth rate of individual trees, reduced maintenance needs & costs over time, a Virginia best practices manual for practitioners

B. Plan and Host 6 Roundtables (2 per year) with practitioners to explore emerging best methods for riparian restoration, understand and address the barriers to adopting new and innovative practices and inform research in riparian restoration. At least one shall engage landscape industry leaders to discuss the opportunities and barriers of a riparian buffer business. At least two will be on streambank stabilization/restoration topics.	2022-2024	CBLP, Stroud, CWP	NFWF-INSR	# of roundtables and stakeholders engaged, findings inform resource and training development
C. Continue to update and refine the digital repository for articles/studies now housed at https://chesapeakeforestbuffers.net/	2022-2024	Stroud, ACB, PA DCNR, Conservation Services, VT	NFWF-INSR	# of clicks/downloads; creation of resource
D. Develop and run an advanced skills and knowledge workshop for experienced Buffer professionals and contractors	2022-2024	CBLP	NFWF-INSR	# of professional to attend
E. Ordinances and Manual Updates for Virginia on urban buffer techniques, planting design templates and model ordinances for river towns, a practitioners buffer implementation and maintenance manual, and/or training materials in Spanish.	2022-2024	TBD	(Support Needed 2022-2024)	Updated resources
F. Provide Field Experiences for Experienced Practitioners	2022-2024	TBD Informed by KN	NFWF-INSR	# Field Experiences Provided
Strategy 2: Train businesses, practitioners, and volunteers in the best and cost-effective practices in riparian restoration, including planning, implementation, and maintenance.				
A. Refine and run 3 regional-specific CBLP-Buffers trainings in both the Middle and Upper James watershed	2022-2024	CBLP, ACB	NFWF-INSR	# of people certified
B. Department of Corrections (DOC) Workforce Development - Continue to refine and run CBLP-Buffers training at the State Farm Correctional Facility, Explore similar partnerships at other DOC facilities	2022-2024	CBLP, VCE, Conservation Services, JRA	NFWF-INSR	# of incarcerated people trained, formalized plan with DOC for expansion to other facilities
C. Establish long-term approaches to hosting and funding regional, specific training events.	2022-2024	CBLP	NFWF-INSR	Multiple funding streams & established network of trainers and host partners
Strategy 3: Increase capacity of businesses to integrate riparian restoration into their business models.				
A. Facilitate and demonstrate the workforce pipeline of riparian restoration trainees into employment at restoration companies.	2022-2024	CBLP, VCE Conservation Services,	NFWF-INSR	List of employers & searchable directory of professionals with CBLP-Buffer credentials

ACTIONS	TIMEFRAME	PARTNER(S) RESPONSIBLE	RESOURCES	MEASURE OF SUCCESS
B. Conduct a contractor workshop on successful riparian buffer business models, business capacity building, and business best practices for private landscape contractors.	*2022-2024*	CBLP	NFWF- INSR	# of contractors attending and available for buffer contract work

ACTION TEAM 3: TARGETING & OUTREACH

GOAL: Build awareness of the importance of riparian areas and deliver outreach based on identified partner priorities, landowner interests, and restoration opportunity areas to increase strategic riparian investments

LEADS: GreenFin Studio and JRA

ACTIONS	TIMEFRAME	PARTNER(S) RESPONSIBLE	RESOURCES	MEASURE OF SUCCESS
Strategy 1: Develop and implement system to strategically prioritize landowner recruitment.				
A. Expand analysis to select counties within Middle and Upper James	*2022-2024*	Support Needed	*(Support Needed 2022-2024)*	
B. Understand partner needs for targeting areas for streambank stabilization and restoration and implement solution to assist	*2022-2024*	Support Needed	*(Support Needed 2022-2024)*	
Strategy 2: Hold Consortium Outreach Events to raise awareness of riparian buffers and connect citizens to assistance.				
A. Hold 6 Outreach Events (2 per year) to raise awareness of riparian buffers and increase adoption of practice	2022-2024	Each event will have different leads	NFWF-INSR	2 events/year
Strategy 3: Host online hub for landowners and practitioners to explore programs, learn, and connect.				
A. Ongoing maintenance for Consortium website to serve as hub for information, ~2 larger updates per year	2022 - 2024	JRA, Webbones	NFWF-INSR	ongoing updates
B. Ongoing updates to the Streamside Support tool and Practitioner tool on the Consortium website	2022 - 2024	Chesapeake Conservancy	NFWF-INSR	1 tool created (https://jamesriverconsortium.org/programs/) and then updated quarterly
C. Integrate Riparian Native Plant Guide into Consortium website	2022 -2023	JRA, Webbones	NFWF-INSR + Possible Support Needed	Riparian Plants integrated into Website

Strategy 4: Cohesive outreach strategy for riparian outreach across Consortium partners.				
A. Create outreach materials as needed for Consortium Partners	2022-2024	GreenFin	NFWF-INSR	Materials developed
B. Annual Report	2022-2024	GreenFin	NFWF-INSR	Report released in October
C. Create Riparian Native Plant Guide (print + online)	2022 -2023	GreenFin, DEQ, JRA	NFWF-INSR + Possible Additional Support Needed	Native Riparian Plant Guide Release late 2023
Strategy 5: Support coordination across Consortium Outreach and Targeting partners.				
A. Hold quarterly team meetings	2022-2024	JRA	NFWF-INSR	4 meetings /year
B. Keep track of team members, update calendar with events, and upkeep team worksheet.	2022-2024	JRA	NFWF-INSR	
C. Engage new partners, especially those focused on outreach, targeting, and marketing for partner organizations	2022-2024	All partners	NFWF-INSR	At least 5 new partners engaged

ACTION TEAM 4: IMPLEMENTATION

GOAL: Coordinate implementation and fill funding gaps to support a holistic approach to riparian restoration projects that leverage partner resources and expertise.

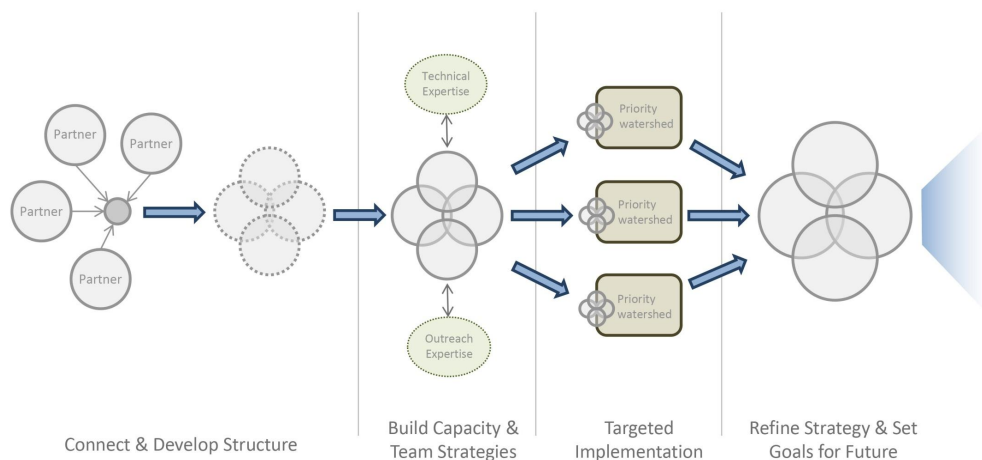*LEADS:* James River Association, Trout Unlimited

ACTIONS	TIMEFRAME	PARTNER(S) RESPONSIBLE	RESOURCES	MEASURE OF SUCCESS
Strategy 1: Implement the James River Buffer Program to fill gaps in riparian forest buffer programs				
A. Install riparian buffer projects in Middle James through hardwood with shelter method	2019-2025	JRA	VEE-JRWQIP	242 acres (2019-2022) + 235 acres (2022-2025)
B. Install riparian buffer projects in Middle James through natural regeneration techniques	2019-2022	DOF	VEE-JRWQIP	700 acres (2019-2022)
C. Install riparian forest buffers in Upper James	2021-2023	CBF	VEE-JRWQIP	200 acres
D. Develop strategy for sustained funding for JRBP beyond 2024	2023-2024	JRA, DOF, CBF, RCA		Strategy developed

Additional Idea: Pillot urban specific program that addresses small parcels, narrow buffers, and aesthetic preferences			*Support Needed*	

Strategy 2: Implement streambank stabilization and habitat improvement programs

A. Implement Upper James River Home Initiative	2022-2026	TU	VEE-JRWQIP, RCPP, NFWF-INSR	
B. Integrate findings from 'Streambank Stabilization Key Issues Report' to identify opportunities and barriers for this work in other areas of Upper and/or Middle James	2022-2024	Implementation Team	NFWF-INSR	

Strategy 3: Administer flexible funding to support implementation of priority riparian restoration projects

A. Develop and implement conservation plan at State Farm Dept of Corrections Facility to count towards State Lands WIP	2020-2025	DOF, DOC, Monacan SWCD, JRA, TNC, VCE, DEQ	NFWF-INSR, VARTF, State Lands Fund, VEE-JRWQIP	100 acres forest buffer; 100,000 lf exclusion fencing, 15 acres wetland
B. 2022 Riparian Mini-Grant Program to fill gaps for partner riparian forest buffer projects. Priority is low cost streambank stabilization practice in combination with JRBP program.	2022-2024	Action Team	NFWF-INSR	Project completed
Additional Idea: Administer 2023 Riparian Mini-Grant Program to fill gaps for partner riparian forest buffer projects.	*2023-2025*		*Funding needed*	

Strategy 4: Protect riparian buffer investment through a James River Stewardship Program

A. Launch Round 1 of Pilot JR Stewardship Program in NRCS-Lexington Service Area to assess 3-13 year old CREP buffers to inform maintenance activities	2022-2023	JRA, DOF, NRCS, FSA	NFWF-INSR	2 interns, 200 acres assessed, 100 acres receive maintenance
B. Evaluate Round 1 and identify geography and partners for Round 2	2023	Action Team		Evaluation Completed
C. Administer Round 2 of JR Stewardship Program in 2 NRCS Service Areas	2023-2024	JRA, DOF, NRCS, FSA	NFWF-INSR	4 interns, 400 acres assessed, 200 acres receive maintenance
D. Evaluate Round 2 and identify geography and partners for Round 3 if decide to continue	2024	Action Team	NFWF-INSR	Strategy Developed
E. Develop strategy to continue funding for seasonal positions through partnerships and funding for maintenance	2023-2025	Action Team		Strategy Developed
Additional Idea: Administer Round 3 of JR Stewardship Program if funding secured	*2024-2025*		*Support Needed*	

Strategy 5: Support coordination between implementation partners

A. Hold Quarterly meetings (Jan/Feb, March/April, July/August, November)	2022-2024	JRA/TU	NFWF-INSR	Meetings Held: 4 meetings/year
B. Keep Implementation Team 'Funding List' current and provide program information to Targeting & Outreach Team for Streamside Program Report Tool	2022-2024	Action Team	NFWF-INSR	Funding List and Streamside Program Report updated
C. Support progress towards riparian forest buffer goal for the James River Basin within the Phase III Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP III)	2022-2024	DOF		28,094 acres of riparian forest buffer (urban/ag)

## CONSORTIUM CREATION & SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

2019-2021: JRA received funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) to support the development of the Consortium between January 2019-December 2021. The Consortium will go through a three year process of formalizing a structure, testing out strategies, and refining as the partnership moves forward. To view the Annual Report visit this link.

Connect & Develop Structure   Build Capacity & Team Strategies   Targeted Implementation   Refine Strategy & Set Goals for Future

2022-2024: Continued support was secured for facilitation and activities. Consistency in support is key to sustained momentum, thus reinforcing the need to develop a resilient model that is not dependent on grant funding. Over the 3-year period, D+D will lead the Consortium through a resilient collaborative model building process that includes: building on and deepening funding analysis and planning initiated in 2021 with SC; research and outreach around support structures and funding models of similar long-term collaboratives; develop a funding matrix for a resilient collaborative model and long-term self-facilitation plan with SC; and develop evaluation tool. This approach may include bringing on a coordinator position for the Consortium.

STEERING COMMITTEE

- Amber Ellis, Casey Johnson, and Joey Shelton, James River Association
- Charlie Simmons, Natural Resources Conservation Services
- Deya Ramsden, Department of Forestry
- Jenny McGarvey and Christian Anderson, Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay
- John Munsell, Virginia Tech
- Keith Burgess, Monacan Soil and Water Conservation District
- Kelly Snoddy, Peter Francisco Soil and Water Conservation District
- Lee Cummings, Natural Bridge Soil and Water Conservation District
- Luke Longanecker, Thomas Jefferson Soil and Water Conservation District
- Louise Finger, Department of Wildlife Resources
- Matt Ehrhart and David Wise, Stroud Water Research Center
- Sammy Vest, Trout Unlimited
- Sarah Coffey, Chesapeake Bay Foundation
- Paula and Dave Jasinski, GreenFin Studio
- Shereen Hughes and Beth Ginter, Chesapeake Bay Landscape Professionals
- *Christine Gyovai, Emily Carlson, and Lea Taylor, Dialogue + Design Associates, facilitators*
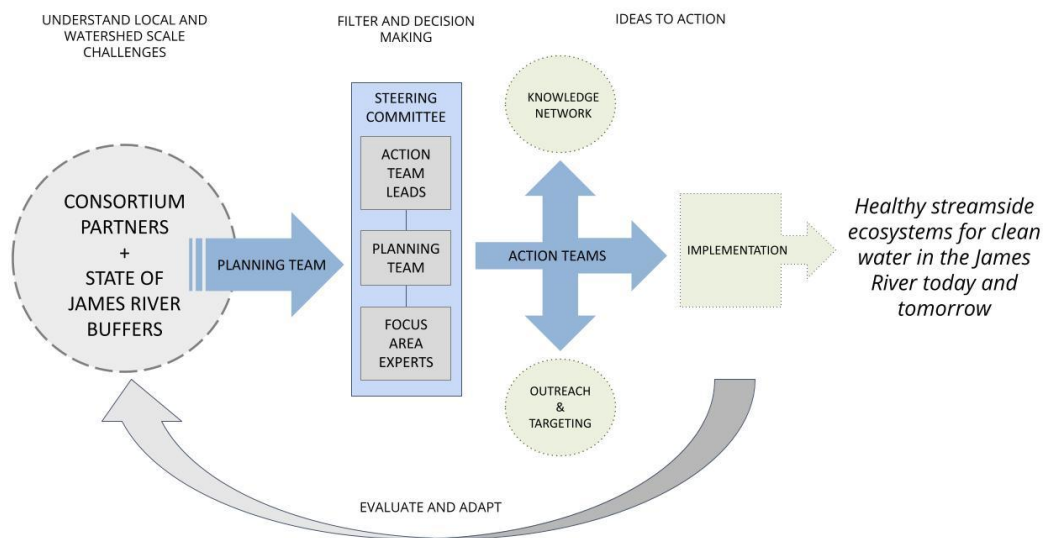
The diagram above illustrates how the Consortium is organized to respond to emerging issues in riparian restoration and move ideas into action. The Consortium provides both a space to listen to the current needs of partners and to assess the overall state of riparian buffers across the Upper and Middle James watershed. At the end of every year, the Planning Team filters ideas that surfaced in meetings and evaluations and then reports out key themes and proposed actions to the Steering Committee for prioritization. These are then integrated into the Action Plan. For more information about the Consortium's structure and organizational tools please see the Riparian Consortium Guiding Document.