



Upper & Middle James Riparian Consortium

Streambank Stabilization Key Issues Report - Possible Roles for the Consortium

August 2022

1. **Advocate for expanded capacity for technical assistance.** In the James River watershed and beyond, additional staff with relevant training and experience are needed to identify feasible project sites and implement restoration or stabilization efforts. The need is greater than a few people can address. Possible Consortium next steps:
 - a. Document the need for and advocate to natural resource agencies (DCR, SWCD, DWR, etc.) for expanded technical assistance.
 - b. Seek funding to train existing non-profit organization staff in these matters and hire a person with assessment, design, and implementation expertise to cover the Middle and Upper James.

2. **Create engaging learning opportunities.** There is a major gap in capacity and knowledge of what is available for stream work, both among practitioners and the public. There needs to be better understanding about the cost-effectiveness and assessment tools that could be used when assessing a site. Possible Consortium next steps:
 - a. Creation of education programs in partnership with local governments and partners to communicate with the public that streams should look messy, and to leave beaver and woody debris in streams.
 - b. Have uniform and consistent resources and/or central database on stream erosion interventions for practitioners to share with landowners.
 - c. Organize a multi-day, in-person training session for site assessments to educate practitioners on what they're looking at, including visits to failed projects to understand lessons learned.
 - d. Success stories that demonstrate effective bioengineering approaches, such as woody debris and planting shrubs. Landowners want to see something that worked before they buy into it.

3. **Help secure funding for projects, and prevention through watershed work.** The risk and reward factors of dedicating large amounts of money to one project need to be considered. Funding programs need to be set up to fund the right practice at the right amount, and provide the needed resources for design and implementation. Possible Consortium next steps:
 - a. Seek funding that could be made available on a competitive basis for the private sector to design and implement stream projects.
 - b. Keep up the watershed-scale work and reduce the need for streambank stabilization projects. (i.e. land conservation, stormwater management, buffer ordinances, etc.)

4. **Address roadblocks and important issues.** A coordinated watershed scale approach is needed in order to truly address the causes of degraded stream morphology. Projects are in danger of focusing on the symptoms and piecemeal restoration. Possible Consortium next steps:
 - a. Help address bureaucracy roadblocks in state funding, programs, and permitting processes that can be a hindrance to flexible solutions.
 - b. Address issues related to DEIJ (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice) through developing an approach for site evaluation and prioritization across the whole watershed that includes DEIJ factors, in addition to factors used to assess stream sites, as comparison criteria.
 - c. Look to existing efforts within the James watershed to support or learn from such as the RVAgreen 2050, an equity and climate action plan developed by Richmond's Office of Sustainability that is focused on flooding and stream health.