



Upper & Middle James Riparian Consortium

Guiding Document

Last Updated: May 2024

This Guiding Document serves to outline the process, vision, goals, structure, and partner roles within the Upper & Middle James Riparian Consortium. The Guiding Document will be updated annually.

For more information, visit www.jamesriverconsortium.org or contact Amber Ellis, Restoration Director with the James River Association and Consortium Convener, at aellis@thejamesriver.org or (804) 215-6137.

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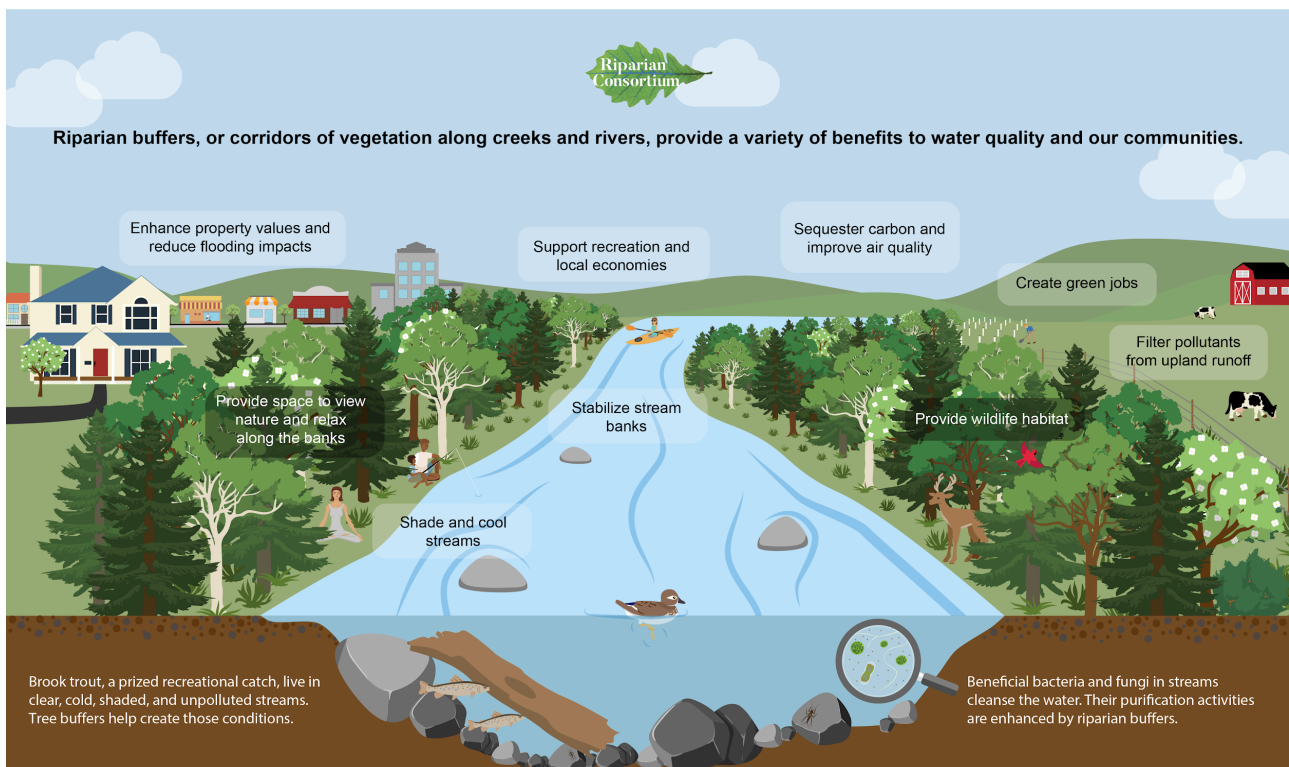
Overview

Vision

The Upper & Middle James Riparian Consortium (Consortium) is a group of partners with the shared vision of **“Growing partnerships to create healthy streamside ecosystems for clean water in the James River today and tomorrow.”** 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.

Mission

To support a network of partners to raise awareness, build workforce capacity, and increase implementation of riparian forested buffers across the Upper and Middle James watersheds through collaboration.



Values

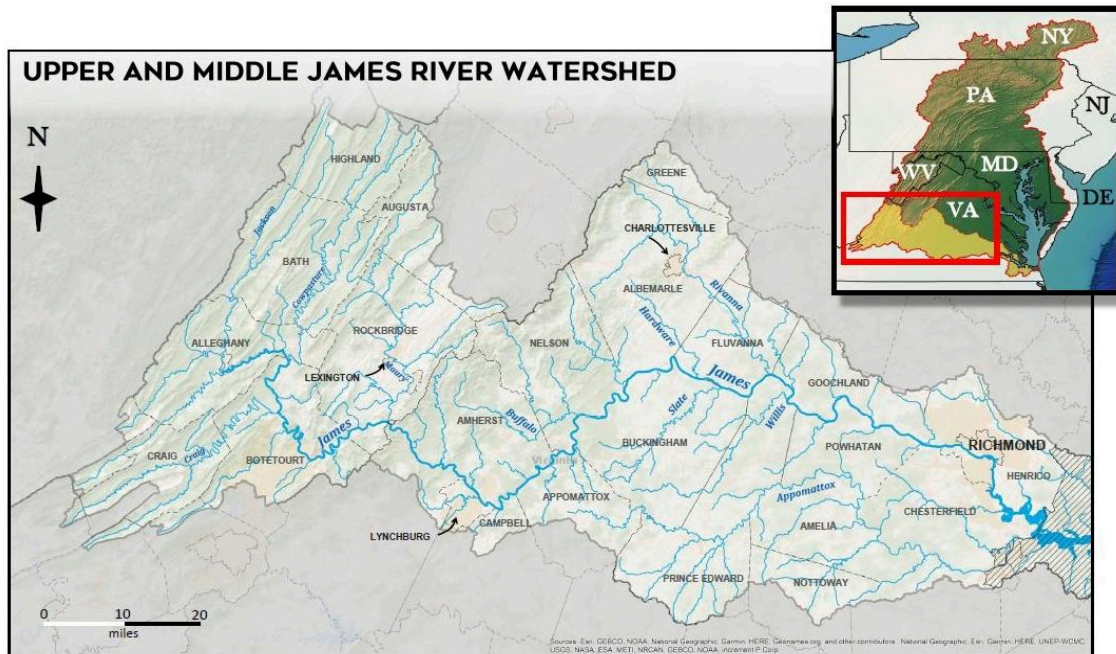
Collaboration -- We can go further together and seek opportunities to support, collaborate with, and learn from diverse partners both within and outside the James River watershed.

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.

Geographic Scope



Consortium 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.

Structure and Communication

Consortium Structure

The Consortium builds on partner strengths and resources to work efficiently towards collective impact. The structure is somewhat informal to allow for flexibility, but includes a Planning Team (PT), Steering Committee (SC), Action Teams, and Consortium members. The James River Association (JRA) serves as the convener and Dialogue + Design Associates (D+D) serves as the facilitator.

As invariably happens, roles, staff and contractors may shift over time in a collaborative. The Consortium will be transparent as it plans for such shifts, and the appropriate team or group will help facilitate the shifts that needs to be involved, such as the Planning Team, Steering Committee, convenor or another entity. The [Resilient Collaborative Model](#) for the Consortium should be used as a guide to help effectively and transparently manage role transitions, as well as the Consortium activity-based budget to consider activities, and the roles outlined in the [Building Resilient Networks working white paper](#).

Planning Team

- Activities: Coordinates the Consortium logistics and communication, filters ideas that surface each year for further prioritization by SC and implemented by Action Teams, and serves as a connector of ideas and people.
- Goal: Increase collaboration and strengthen partnerships through developing an effective network of Riparian Consortium members.
- Schedule: The team meets bi-weekly.
- Partners: JRA, D+D

Steering Committee

- Activities: Includes six to ten representatives from key partner organizations and Action Team leads who guide the direction, strategizing, and decision-making processes of the Consortium. D+D will be available as facilitative resources to the SC in a non-decision making capacity. The Consortium requests that a representative (the designated site representative or alternate) be present during all SC meetings, which will be one-hour conference calls, including some that will be in-person. The SC meets throughout the year, approximately every one or two months.
- Consensus-Based Decision Making Process: All members of the SC will have equal status and voice in SC operations and decisions about the Consortium, which are made by consensus. This means that all members can live with and support a decision. Consensus means that a participant who consents will actively work to support the proposal. A participant who consents will support all of the proposal, and not just the parts they like best. While consensus may entail compromise, a participant who consents to a proposal does not compromise interests or core values of fundamental importance to themselves or their constituents. The SC tests for consensus by using the following method:
 - Raising three fingers will indicate full support (or verbal vote/ chat roll).
 - Raising two fingers will indicate support with some questions and concerns (or verbal vote/ chat roll).

- A “one finger” position by one or more participants indicates that consensus has not been reached and more discussion is potentially needed (or verbal vote/ chat roll).
- Schedule: The SC meets six to nine times a year. Meetings are typically one-hour long and are held virtually, with some in person as needed.
- Partners: James River Association (JRA), Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay (ACB), Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Chesapeake Bay Landscape Professionals (CBLP), Green Fin Studio, Monacan SWCD, Mountain Castles Soil & Water Conservation District, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Peter Francisco SWCD, Stroud Water Research Center, Thomas Jefferson SWCD, Trout Unlimited, Virginia Department of Forestry (DOF), Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources, Virginia Tech, and Dialogue + Design Associates as facilitator.

Budget Approval

- For shared budgets that support the Consortium, the SC adopted this process on March 9, 2020:
 - Action Team leads or other SC members can bring up budget items during monthly calls or during in-person meetings, and the SC will approve budget requests or bring up concerns about the proposed use of the unallocated funds at SC meetings.
 - If budget decisions are needed in a quicker manner, budget items would be sent to the SC via email with a timeframe for review and decision-making, with additional calls being held if needed.
 - The SC determined that receiving the budget in print during meetings and at the end of each meeting summary would be helpful, which JRA will provide.

Action Teams

- Activities: Each Action Team is an implementation arm of the Consortium to accomplish the Consortium goals. Each Action Team has a chair and sometimes a co-chair. Action Teams are open to anyone that is interested. It is where ideas from the broader Consortium membership are moved into action. As the Consortium continues to calibrate its structure, Action Teams may be adjusted. Action Team strategies are included in the [Consortium Action Plan](#) outlining the goals and actions for the effort.
- Action Team Lead roles and tasks:
 - *Action Team Meetings*: Coordinates Action Team calls or meetings. Each Team develops a meeting schedule and format that best meets the goal of their Team and of its members. Leads will set up a meeting schedule early in the year. For Action Team meetings or call:
 - Send an invite to the Action Team Contact List and to Jordan Bennett to add to the [Events page](#) of the website.
 - Develop an agenda in advance, have someone take notes during the call, save in the Action Team folder, and distribute the notes to all members of the Action Team contact list.
 - *Worksheet*: Update Action Planning worksheet with active actions items the Team is working toward with timeframe, coordinators, etc. for implementation. Complete larger updates in January and July. Keep the Action Team contact list up to date.
 - *Other*:
 - Give updates at each SC meeting and brief updates at Consortium meetings.
 - Identifies action items, coordinators and a timeframe for implementation for their goal with Action Team members.

- Brings ideas from larger Consortium meetings to the Action Team to consider for moving forward or incorporating into Team strategies as funding and interest allows.
 - Keep the team moving forward – checks in on progress and implementation – and keeps the “team spirit” moving forward.
- **Partners:** Any Consortium Member may serve on an Action Team, however each Team has a Team Lead, as well as Team Champions that are responsible for Team strategies.

Action Team Goals and Team Leads

1. **Planning Team:** Increase collaboration and strengthen partnerships through developing an effective network of Riparian Consortium members. *(Team Leads: JRA and D+D)*
2. **Outreach & Targeting:** 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. *(Team Lead: JRA. Team Champions: Green Fin, Webbones)*
3. **Knowledge Network:** 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. *(Team Lead: Chesapeake Landscape Professional Program (CBLP). Team Champions: Stroud, Virginia Tech, VCE)*
4. **Implementation:** Coordinate implementation and fill funding gaps to support a holistic approach to riparian restoration projects that leverage partner resources and expertise. *(Team Leads: JRA, Trout Unlimited. Team Champions: DOF, CBF, NRCS, RCA, SWCDs)*

Funding Committee

- The Funding Committee was formed in November 2023 with the goal to develop a funding framework that diversifies funding, maintains the integrity of the Upper & Middle James Riparian Consortium and the James River Buffer Program, and ensures long-term success of riparian forest buffer projects installed under partner programs.
- Meetings: The Funding Committee meets approximately every two months throughout the year. The Committee was formed as a temporary effort, but may extend beyond December 2024.
- Members: JRA, VEE, CBF, RCA, DOF, TJSWCD, TU

Consortium Members

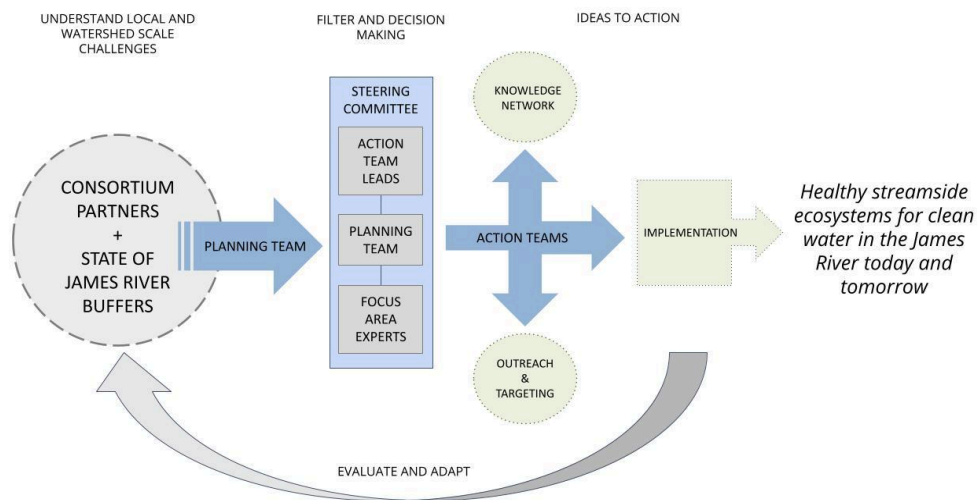
- **Activities:** Members interact in a variety of ways from serving on Action Teams, attending Consortium meetings and the annual Buffer Summit, as well as partnering with other members on riparian projects and grant proposals.
- **Partners:** Consist of a larger network of partners working in the Upper and Middle James watershed to partake and share in training and collaboration around riparian forest buffers. For a list of current partners, visit this [link](#).

Feedback Loop and Evaluation

Information gathered through discussion and surveys at Consortium meetings, Buffer Summits, and one-on-ones are synthesized and filtered by the Planning Team. Repeating themes and ideas are brought back to the SC and Action Teams to prioritize and either integrate into Action Team strategies, inform future meeting topics, or used to adjust the Consortium to be more effective. The SC incorporates informal

check-ins on effectiveness of the Consortium throughout the year in addition to the following methods for processing ideas and evaluation:

- **Evaluations:** After Consortium meetings and Summits, attendees are sent an evaluation to provide feedback. These are reviewed by the PT and used to inform future efforts.
- **Summaries:** D+D writes summaries from all Consortium meetings and Summits and shares these with the full Consortium membership and sends out via the newsletter. Specific items that relate to an Action Team are sent to the Team Lead for integration as needed.
- **Surveys:** As information gathering is needed by Action Teams or for the Consortium as a whole, online or written surveys are used and then synthesized by the appropriate party.
- **Mid and End of Year Review:** During the fall, the PT does a mid-year review through one-on-one conversations, document review, surveys, or other methods to ensure the Consortium is on track for progress toward the vision, goals and to check-in on process considerations. In December, the PT holds a longer planning session to review the work plan and stakeholder input to plan for the upcoming year. In January the PT conducts individual outreach to Team Leads to touch base on interest in continuing their role, updating the Action Plan, and addressing any areas they need support.
- **Evaluation and Action Plan Updates:** Every three years (2024, 2027, etc.), the Consortium conducts a review of the Consortium Action Plan, impact, and mission. This will coincide with the process of updating the Consortium Action Plan, Activity Based Budget, and Guiding Doc. The review includes outreach to Consortium members, partners, and the Steering Committee. Outreach may include surveys, interviews, and focus groups. The Planning Team leads this effort in close coordination with Action Teams.



Communication Tools

Developing a team hub and coordination tools were key to improving effective communication and outreach. The following have been developed (and continually updated) by the Consortium.

Team Hub: All files are saved on a shared Google Drive that is hosted by JRA. The SC and Action Teams can access files through a Team Hub that utilizes GoogleSites and accessed via www.jamesriverconsortium.org or through Google Drive.

Coordination Tool: The Chesapeake Conservancy created the Coordination Tool for the Consortium to facilitate coordination and collaboration among implementation partners across the James River watershed per Consortium members' request and guidance. JRA now manages this Tool. The layers within the Tool provide spatial information and landscape context to support collaborative decision-making for members of the Consortium. [Click here](#) to access the tool. This will be updated annually with assessment for effectiveness and need for larger updates every three years.

Streamside Program Report Tool: The Chesapeake Conservancy developed a web-based mapping application, "Streamside Program Report" tool to be used in the Middle and Upper James for landowner outreach per Consortium members' request and guidance. This Tool is being revised in early 2024 and will be upkept by Webbones. Landowners or practitioners can enter a few questions about the property and the report provides a narrowed down list of potential riparian programs and local contact information. [Click here](#) to access the tool. This will be updated annually with assessment for effectiveness and need for larger updates every three years.

Newsletter: The Consortium publishes a newsletter that is sent out to Consortium members that give updates on upcoming meetings, project highlights, team updates, and potential funding for riparian restoration, with content welcome from Consortium members. The graphic standards for the newsletters may be found on the next page.

Consortium Events

For a **Master Schedule** of events visit this [link](#). These are updated via a Google Calendar.

Steering Committee Meetings: The purpose of these monthly meetings is to allow Action Teams to give updates, vote on budget requests, make decisions around upcoming events or projects, and guide structure and process.

Consortium Meetings: The purpose of these meetings is to update the larger Membership of Action Team projects, share information, get feedback, and learn. There are two to three meetings per year.

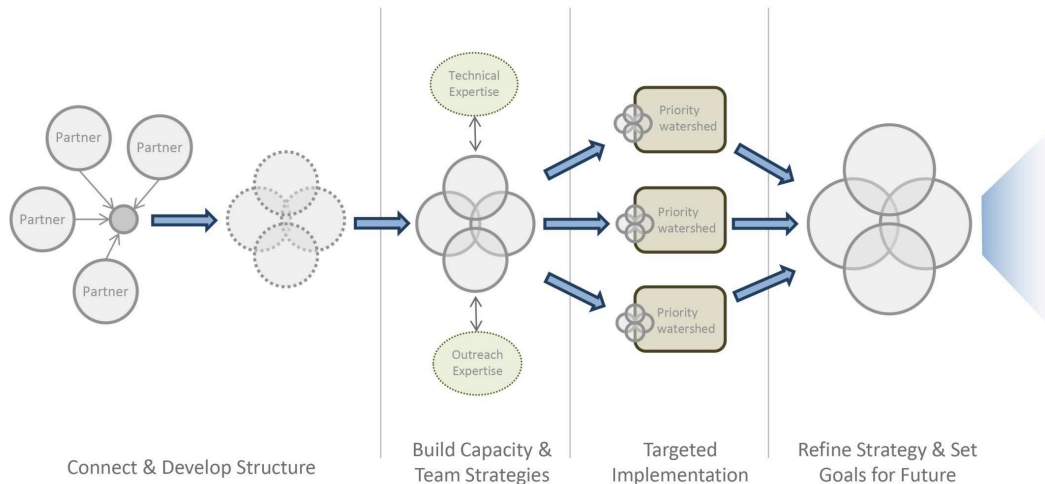
Field Visits: Often in conjunction with the Consortium meetings, field visits and site tours allow for practitioners and partners to learn from on-the-ground examples and discuss techniques and insights.

Buffer Summit: The purpose of the Annual Summit is to update the larger Consortium membership on the status of riparian buffers in the Middle and Upper James watershed, brainstorm around needs and potential solutions across the region to riparian buffer restoration, and celebrate successes of the year. This event is typically held in October.

Outreach Events: Each year there are at least two events that are focused on raising awareness to the public about riparian ecosystems. Locations are determined by the Outreach Team with input from Consortium members and led by any stakeholder.

Origins

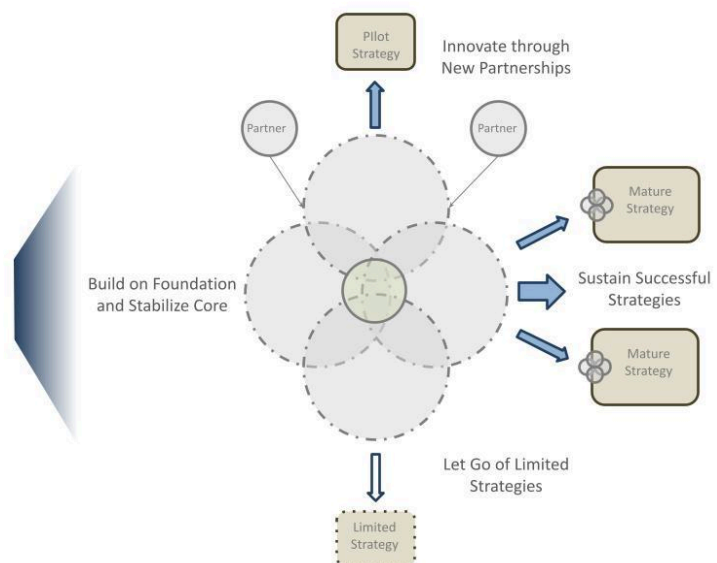
The James River Association (JRA) received funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) to support the development of the Consortium between January 2019–December 2021. The Consortium went through a three year process of formalizing a structure, testing out strategies, and refining approach as the partnership moves forward. View the Consortium Annual Reports ([2019-2021](#), [FY2022](#)) for success highlights and the [resources](#) page of the website for previous meeting summaries. JRA received additional funding from NFWF to build on the successes of the Consortium thus far and build a resilient collaborative model to sustain the Consortium.



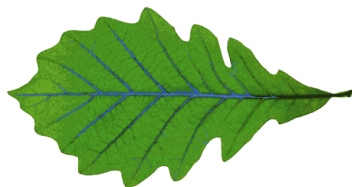
A Resilient Collaborative Model for the Consortium

For the Consortium to be resilient over time, it needs to build on our foundation and stabilize core functions, remain open to innovation through testing out strategies through new partnerships, and to let go of limited strategies and focus on sustaining successful ones. These all depend on a clear evaluation process and a supportive funding model.

In 2023, the The Upper & Middle James Riparian Consortium (Consortium) Steering Committee (SC) developed a Resilient Collaborative Model including three elements: **1) Collaboration, 2) Action, and 3) Funding**, to enable the Consortium to work towards its mission and vision in a self-sustaining partnership model. The Consortium's Resilient Collaborative Model is summarized in a separate document.



Riparian Consortium Graphic Standards



Upper & Middle James Riparian Consortium



Butler Stencil Med 24pt

Butler Stencil Light 16pt - one point spacing

Streambank stabilization practices are implemented to address excessive erosion rates. Streambank stabilization can involve a variety of activities depending on the circumstances at a given site. These activities range from simply planting the bank to grading/matting/planting to installing deflection structures at the toe of the bank to armoring with large rock and/or tree roots. In some instances, the extent of streambank erosion and channel instability may require a more comprehensive restoration approach. (Cabin Regular 12pt)

Cabin Medium 24pt

Cabin Regular 16pt - one point spacing

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RGB 127, 190, 31

CMYK 50, 0, 100, 0
LAB 74, -41, 61

RGB 254, 166, 33

CMYK 0, 35, 85, 0
LAB 79, 17, 70

RGB 75, 195, 242
HSV 197, 69, 95
CMYK 69, 19, 0, 5
LAB 74, -19, -33

RGB 77, 97, 115
HSV 208, 33, 45
CMYK 33, 16, 0, 55
LAB 40, -3, -13

RGB 16, 26, 38
HSV 213, 58, 15
CMYK 58, 32, 0, 85
LAB 9, 0, -10