

Virginia's Scenic Rivers Program








History

- ✓ **Virginia Scenic Rivers Act passed by General Assembly in 1970**
- ✓ **First designations were the the Staunton & Rivanna Rivers in 1975 for a total of 47.8 miles**
- ✓ **The system has now grown to 24 rivers or segments totaling 519+ miles**
- ✓ **20 rivers or segments have been evaluated and found to qualify for designation**
- ✓ **67 rivers or segments have been identified as worthy of evaluation (these segments are identified in the Virginia Outdoors Plan.**
- ✓ **Program administered by DCR pursuant to Section 10.1 – 401 et.seq. of the Code of Virginia**


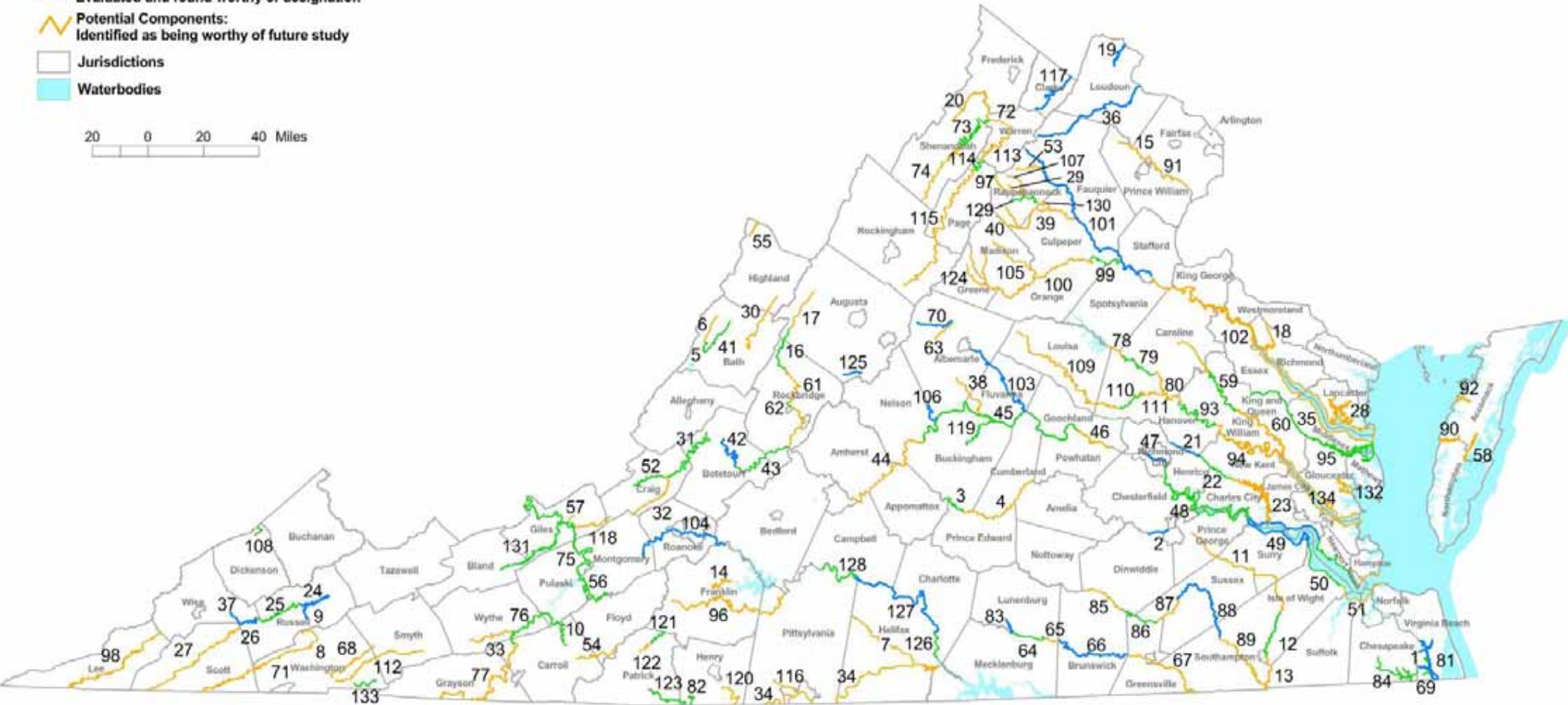


Virginia's Scenic Rivers

-  Scenic Rivers
Legislatively designated components
-  Desirable Components:
Evaluated and found worthy of designation
-  Potential Components:
Identified as being worthy of future study
-  Jurisdictions
-  Waterbodies



20 0 20 40 Miles

The Scenic River System:

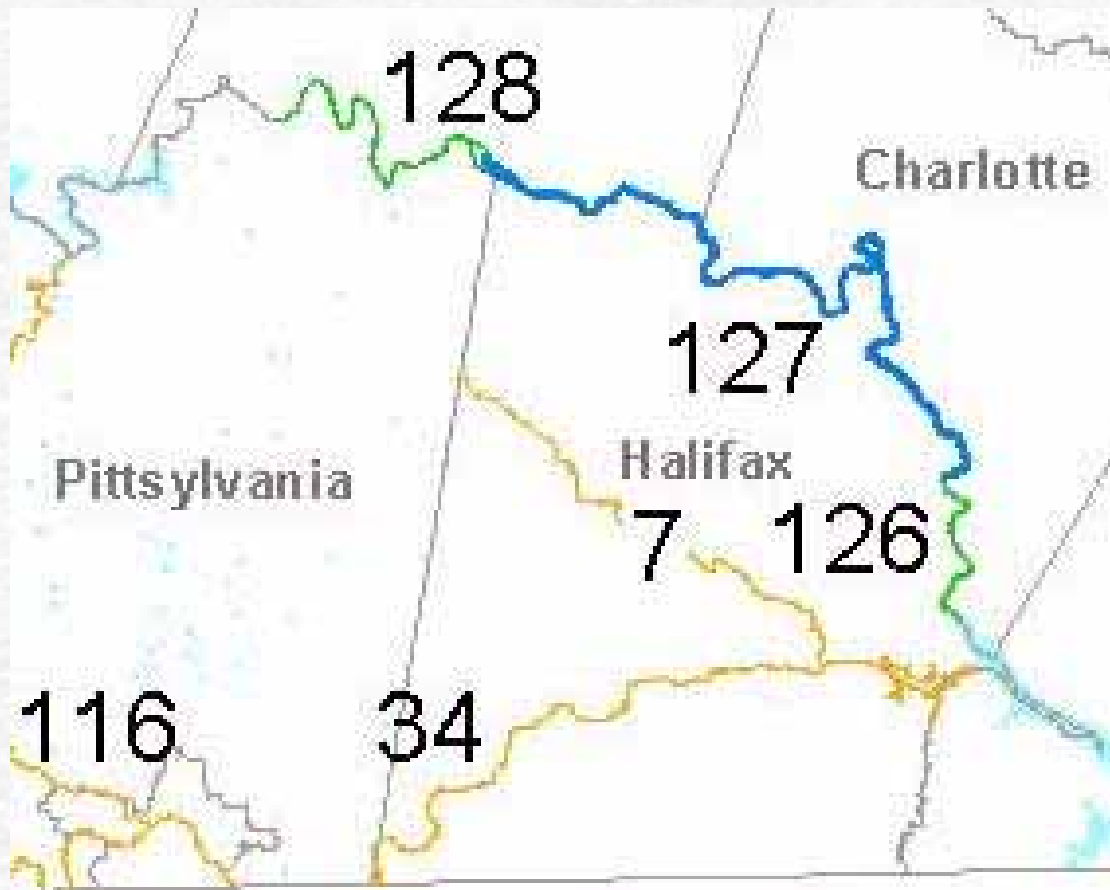
Is diverse:

- Mountain [9]
- Piedmont [10]
- Coastal [5]






System currently consists of 24 river segments & more than 519 river miles

EXAMPLE



126-128 – Staunton River - part designated
7 – Banister River
34 – Dan River
116 – Sandy River

-  Scenic Rivers
Legislatively designated components
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Virginia Scenic Rivers Program

Purpose

- Identify and protect *significant* river resources (the Virginia Code calls for designated rivers to possess “superior natural and scenic beauty, fish and wildlife, and historic, recreational, geologic, cultural, and other assets”)

Virginia Scenic Rivers Program

River Resource Protection

- Relies on riparian property owner: Scenic River Act does not authorize any additional restrictions on riparian land uses.
- Is voluntary, with the cooperation and support of local & state government



Benefits of Designation:

Encourages:

- protection and preservation
- closer review of projects by state & local agencies
- Federal Energy Regulation Commission (FERC) reviews of hydro or related project proposals

Requires

- General Assembly authorization for dams

Enhances opportunities for funding

Benefits of Designation:

Provides:

- opportunities to **consider scenic & other resources** in planning & design
- eligibility for **land use tax** considerations, **if** locally adopted
- framework for local support.

Allows project review & monitoring by Virginia Scenic River Board.

Benefits of Designation:

- ✔ **Supports Land Conservation** through
 - Virginia Land Conservation Foundation
 - Conservation Land Tax Credit
 - Virginia Outdoors Foundation



Designation DOES NOT:

- ✦ **Authorize condemnation** of land for access (eminent domain is specifically prohibited).
- ✦ **Impose land use** controls
- ✦ **Affect existing riparian land uses** (grazing, irrigation, hunting, fishing, timbering)
- ✦ **Allow public use** of private property
- ✦ **Impose federal** controls, rules, or regulations
- ✦ **Affect tributary streams** that flow into a designated segment
- ✦ **Promote increase in recreational use**

Evaluation Occurs When Requested By:

- the General Assembly**
- the State Scenic River Advisory Board**
- a locality letter**

Minimum Criteria for evaluation

- Minimum of 5 miles long, or part of another system**
- Available for evaluation; in recognized published guide books**
- Identifiable starting and stopping points**

Public Recreational Use/Access

Formal Access

- Public docks
- Public boat launches
- Public lands
- Public trails

Informal Access

- Public road crossings that are not developed, but used
- Private properties that allow the public to use for hiking, river access & fishing

Designation Process

1. Evaluate river
 - A. Following a Request
 - B. Map and literature surveys
 - C. Field evaluation



D. Thirteen evaluation criteria, which determine eligibility

- ✓ Stream Corridor Vegetation**
- ✓ Streambed and/or stream flow modifications**
- ✓ Human Development of Visual Corridor**
- ✓ Historic Features**
- ✓ Landscape**
- ✓ Quality of Fishery**
- ✓ Rare, Threatened, or Endangered Species**
- ✓ Water Quality**
- ✓ Parallel Roads**
- ✓ Crossings**
- ✓ Special Features Affecting Aesthetics**
- ✓ Recreational Access**
- ✓ Land Conservation**

Designation Process

(For Qualifying Segments)

2. Report preparation & presentation of the draft report to the Virginia Scenic River Board for advisory review
3. As requested, provide copies of the report to citizen/governing bodies with sample “boiler plate” legislation
4. Legislation introduced by local representative to the General Assembly (GA)
5. Passage of legislation by the GA & Governor’s signature

Extension of Scenic River Designation

- **Request** from interested parties for study of mileage extension
- **Field study** to be done with full leaf cover; using same evaluation criteria as full designation



Extension Process

- **Letter** to the local jurisdiction & other interested parties indicating qualification of the extension
- The locality will then go through their **legislative representatives** to ask for *an amendment* to the existing legislation
- **Same advantages & management** as full designation

Once Designated



- **Post designation management and protection**
- **Periodic survey of the river corridor**



Virginia Scenic River Board

- **A 15-member board** appointed by the Governor
- **Role to:**
 - **Make recommendations** on designations
 - **Comment** on proposed plans & corridor use
 - **Assist in preserving** the river values & natural resources
 - **Advise & assist localities** on river corridors
 - **Advise DCR on appointees** to local committees


Scenic Rivers – the future

- **New** designations or extensions of the existing system
- **Additional** project reviews
- **Development of educational initiatives** to inform the public about the program and Virginia's Scenic River system.



40th Anniversary Goals

- Designate 4 + river sections
- Focus on qualified rivers
- Host commemoration event
- Connect w/ local partners
- Get media attention
- Have a writing & photo contest



KEEP AN EYE OUT for the 40th anniversary celebratory events starting in 2010. Plans include river floats and a photo contest.

Virginia's Scenic Rivers Program


Program Successes: 24 river sections totaling 529 miles, in 12 of Virginia's 14 major watersheds, in approximately 35 counties and cities.

This program identifies, recognizes and provides a level of protection to rivers or streams that have outstanding scenic beauty, historic importance, recreation significance and natural characteristics that make them stand out amongst Virginia's many rivers.

As a result of recognition received through Scenic River status, localities and adjacent landowners have supported their designated rivers by:

- Developing local river-based management plans and ordinances
- Community involvement, including organized river clean-ups
- Maintaining forest buffers that exceed state recommendations
- Facilitating easements to conserve river lands
- Protecting recreational interests during dam recertification
- Working for the removal of several dams

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Scenic River Contacts

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Scenic River Advisory Board

- Richard Gibbons – Chairman

<http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/prr/srmain.htm>