

# **Staunton Scenic River Report** **Charlotte County and Halifax County**

Prepared By  
Department of Conservation and Recreation  
Division of Planning and Recreation Resources

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## Table of Contents

I.	SUMMARY OF FINDINGS.....	3
II.	REASON FOR THE STUDY.....	3
A.	History of Scenic River Designation for the Staunton River.....	3
B.	Benefits of Designation.....	6
C.	Designation Process.....	7
III.	CORRIDOR STUDY MAP.....	8
IV.	ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS.....	9
A.	River Corridor Vegetation.....	9
B.	Riverbed and/or River Flow Modifications.....	11
C.	Human Development of Visual Corridor.....	11
D.	Historic Features.....	11
E.	Landscape.....	15
F.	Quality of Fishery.....	16
G.	Special Natural Flora and Fauna.....	17
H.	Water Quality.....	18
I.	Parallel Roads.....	19
J.	Crossings.....	19
K.	Special Features Affecting River Aesthetics.....	20
L.	Public Recreational Access.....	20
M.	Land Conservation.....	27
V.	LAND USE AND OWNERSHIP.....	29
VI.	CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	30
VII.	CONSERVATION PLAN.....	30
VIII.	ANTICIPATED COST OF DESIGNATION.....	31
IX.	AGENCY COMMENTS/ RESOLUTIONS.....	31
X.	APPENDIX.....	32
	Appendix A. Acronyms and Abbreviations.....	33
	Appendix B. Species Ranking Definitions of DCR Natural Heritage.....	34
	Appendix C. Letters, Comments, and Other Support.....	37
	Appendix D. Proposed Legislation for the <i>Code of Virginia</i> .....	43

## I. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

In October 2019, the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) completed a Virginia Scenic River evaluation for an extension to the currently designated Staunton River. The study section begins at the end of the current designation Route 360 (James D. Hagood Highway/Kings Highway) and ends at Staunton River State Park. The evaluated 11 miles of the Staunton River form part of the border between Charlotte County and Halifax County.

Based on the evaluation, the 11 additional miles were deemed eligible for inclusion in the Virginia Scenic River System. The designation as a Virginia Scenic River is recommended, and it is further recommended that DCR be the administering agency.

## II. REASON FOR THE STUDY

In June and July of 2019, local officials from the Charlotte County Board of Supervisors (BOS) and Halifax County BOS contacted DCR requesting that a section of the Staunton River be evaluated for inclusion in the Virginia Scenic River System. An evaluation of the section was completed in October 2019, wherein DCR concluded that the river was eligible for designation.

The Scenic Rivers Act instructs DCR to conduct, "[studies of rivers or sections of rivers to be considered for designation](#)," and to, "recommend to the Governor and to the General Assembly rivers or sections thereof to be considered for designation as scenic rivers." This report fulfills this statutory directive.

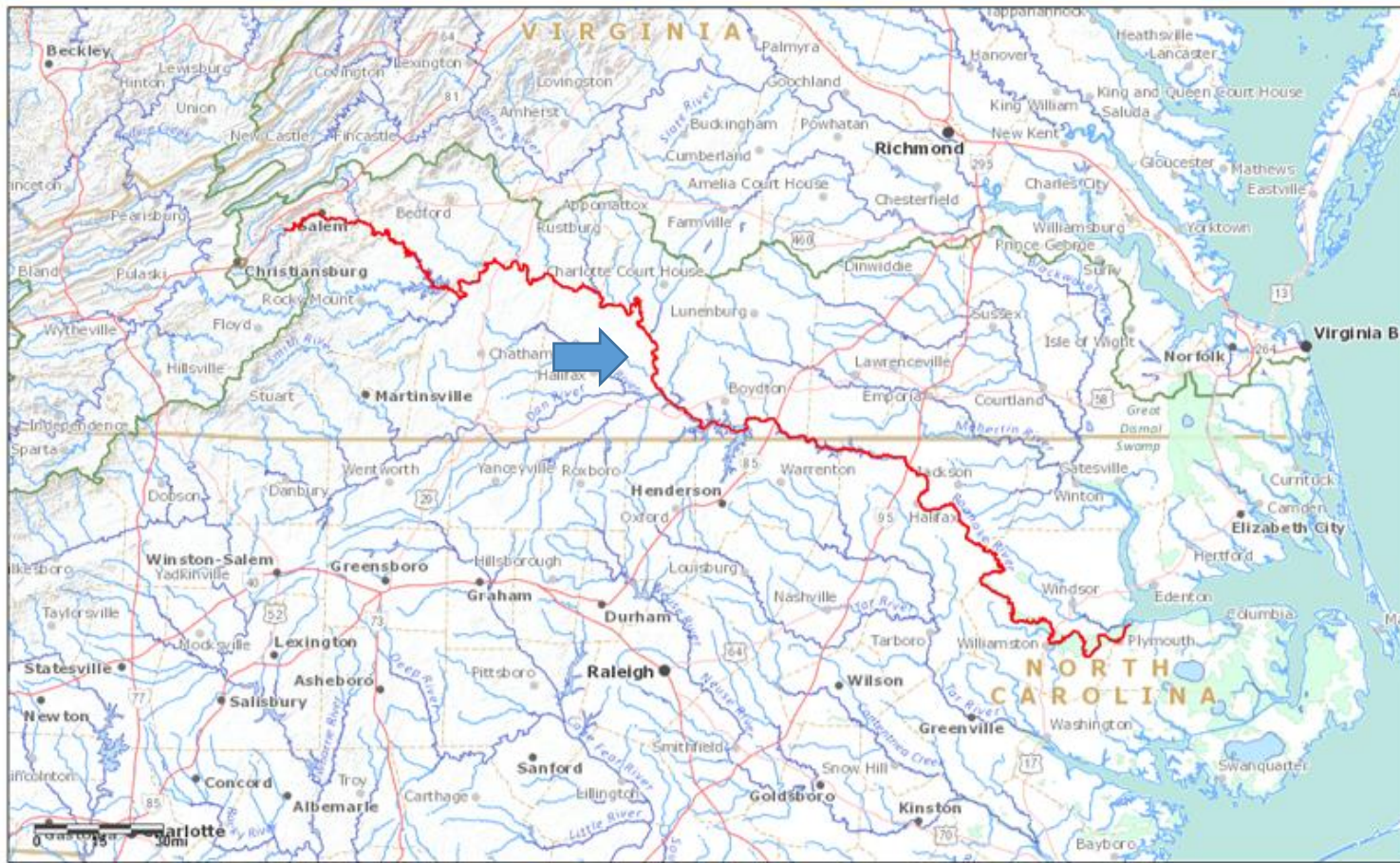
### A. History of Scenic River Designation for the Staunton River

The Staunton River is a segment of the Roanoke River (Map 1). According to the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF), the Staunton River begins at Leesville Dam and ends at Joh H. Kerr Reservoir (<https://www.dgif.virginia.gov/waterbody/staunton-river/>).

The evaluated 11-mile segment is part of the Southern Virginia Wild Blueway (Map 2). According to the Blueway's website (<https://sovawildblueway.com/about-the-blueway/>): "The Blueway's three rivers—the Dan, the Staunton (or Roanoke) and the Banister—combine for more than 100 miles of navigable water. Of that, over 80 miles have been designated as Virginia Scenic River across all three of these rivers."

One section of the Roanoke/Staunton River is part of the Virginia Scenic River System: 51.3 miles, from County Road 761 (Long Island Road) to Route 360 (James D. Hagood Highway/Kings Highway). Other sections of the Roanoke River were recommended for designation in the 1970 Virginia's Scenic Rivers Report.

In July 2019, an upstream segment of the Roanoke River was evaluated: 3.3 miles near the City of Roanoke, from Niagara Dam to Rutrough Point. The 3.3-mile segment qualified for Scenic River designation. The draft report can be found on the DCR Scenic Rivers Study Reports webpage (<https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/recreational-planning/srstudies>).



Visit Streamer at <https://txpub.usgs.gov/DSS/Streamer/>  
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*Map 1. The Roanoke River's connection to the Atlantic Ocean. The red line represents the Roanoke. The blue arrow indicates the location of the evaluated 11-mile segment of the Staunton. The Roanoke River flows across Virginia, then across North Carolina. According to the Trace Summary Report provided by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Streamer, the Roanoke River is about 370 miles long. Source: USGS Streamer, <https://txpub.usgs.gov/DSS/Streamer>*



Map 2. Southern Virginia Wild Blueway. The 11-miles evaluated for this designation are between locations “5” and “6.” Source: Southern Virginia Wild Blueway, <https://sovawildblueway.com/maps/>

## B. Benefits of Designation

The Scenic Rivers Act (the Act), found in Title 10.1, [Chapter 4, §§ 10.1-400 through 10.1-418.1](#) of the *Code of Virginia*, was enacted in 1970 as a means of recognizing the Commonwealth's scenic rivers and their immediate environs. In order to be eligible for Scenic River designation, a river must contain “[superior natural and scenic beauty, fish and wildlife, and historic, recreational, geologic, cultural, and other assets.](#)” Designated rivers need not include the entire river, and may include tributaries. At the request of the locality(s), DCR evaluates a specified river segment, determines whether or not it qualifies for designation, and writes a report documenting these attributes.

Since the passage of the Act, 33 river segments, totaling nearly 860 miles, have received Scenic River designation from the General Assembly. A list of those rivers can be found at: <https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/recreational-planning/document/srlist.pdf>

The Virginia Scenic River designation accomplishes the following:

- Allows riparian landowners to continue using their land as they did before designation, except as provided in §10.1- 408, <https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/title10.1/chapter4/section10.1-408/>
- Requires the Federal Energy Commission (FERC) to consider the impact of proposed hydropower or related projects on a designated Scenic River using the Scenic River report developed in the qualification process
- Requires all state agencies to consider visual, natural, and recreational values of a Scenic River in their planning and permitting process (§10.1-402) <https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/title10.1/chapter4/section10.1-402/>
- Gives riparian landowners, local citizens, and local governments a greater voice in the planning and implementation of federal and state projects that might affect the river (§10.1-406.1), <https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/title10.1/chapter4/section10.1-406.1/>
- Requires authorization by the General Assembly for the construction, operation and/or maintenance of any structure, such as a dam, that would impede the natural flow of a Scenic River (§10.1-407), <https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/title10.1/chapter4/section10.1-407/>

The Virginia Scenic River Program is a state-level program for recognizing the uniqueness and quality of a river. Note that the program is different from the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. The national-level system has a different set of criteria, and requires designation by Congress or the Secretary of the Interior. According to [www.rivers.gov](http://www.rivers.gov), Virginia has approximately 49,350 miles of river, but no congressionally designated Wild and Scenic rivers.

## C. Designation Process

Before an evaluation of a potential scenic river, DCR needs, in hand, a letter from the local governing body, county administrator, city or town manager requesting that a study be conducted.

In order to determine whether a river (or river segment) is eligible for Virginia Scenic River designation, it must be evaluated by the following criteria:

1. River Corridor Vegetation
2. Riverbed and/or River Flow Modifications
3. Human Development of Visual Corridor
4. Historic Features
5. Landscape
6. Quality of Fishery
7. Special Natural Flora and Fauna
8. Water Quality
9. Parallel Roads
10. Crossings
11. Special Features Affecting River Aesthetics
12. Public Recreational Access
13. Land Conservation

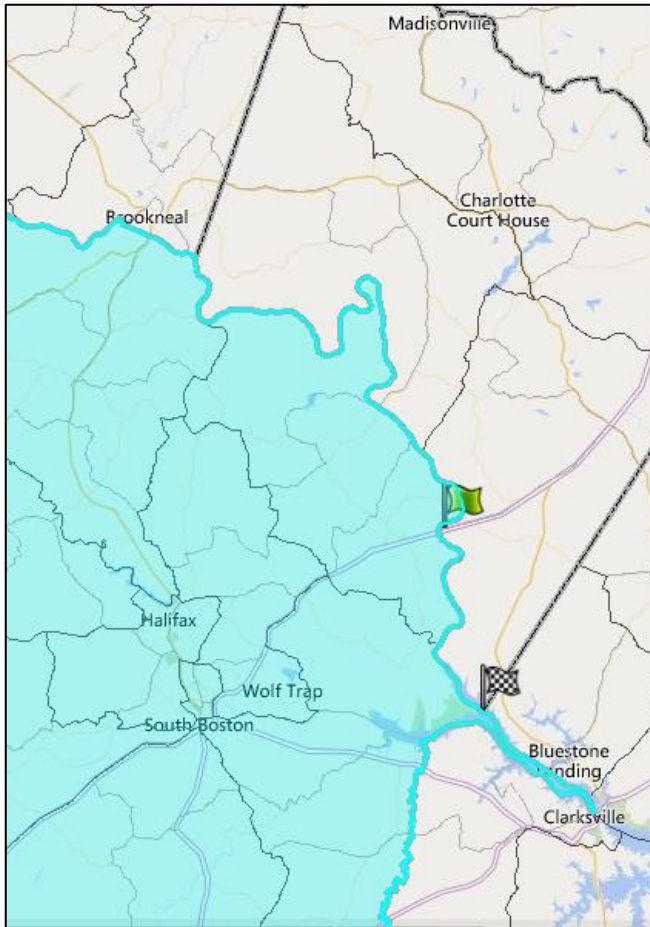
An in-depth discussion is completed in Section IV: ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS (page 9). Each evaluation involves data collection from multiple sources. These include state agencies, local and regional planning commissions, map surveys, and related literature reviews. Each evaluation also involves fieldwork. The fieldwork requires canoeing, boating, or walking the stretch of a river and rating the characteristics of the resource. The fieldwork, combined with the data collected from multiple sources, is used to validate existing land use information and rank the river according to relative superior resources, uniqueness and quality.

Once the study has been completed, and DCR has finalized a report and designation recommendations, resolutions and letters of support are solicited from as many governmental and civic groups, and individuals as possible. These letters and resolutions can become part of the official record if a public hearing on the designation recommendation is held.

The support of local members of the General Assembly is also part of designation process. They introduce the designation legislation and provide support throughout the legislative process. Sample legislation is provided by DCR staff. For proposed legislation, see **Appendix D**.

### III. CORRIDOR STUDY MAP

This report will discuss 11 miles of the Staunton River, from Route 360 (James D. Hagood Highway/Kings Highway) to Staunton River State Park (Map 3, Map 4).



Map 3. County-level view of the evaluated 11 miles of the Roanoke/Staunton River. The river segment forms part of the border between two Virginia counties: Halifax County (left, in blue) and Charlotte County (right). The green flag represents the evaluation's starting point: James D. Hagood Highway (US 360). The checkered flag is the ending point (Staunton River State Park). Source: EnviroAtlas, <https://enviroatlas.epa.gov/enviroatlas/interactivemap/>



Map 4. Street-level view of the evaluated 11 miles of the Staunton River. The grey, dashed line in the middle of the 11-mile river segment represents the border between Halifax County (left) and Charlotte County (Right). Source: EnviroAtlas, <https://enviroatlas.epa.gov/enviroatlas/interactivemap/>



#### IV. ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

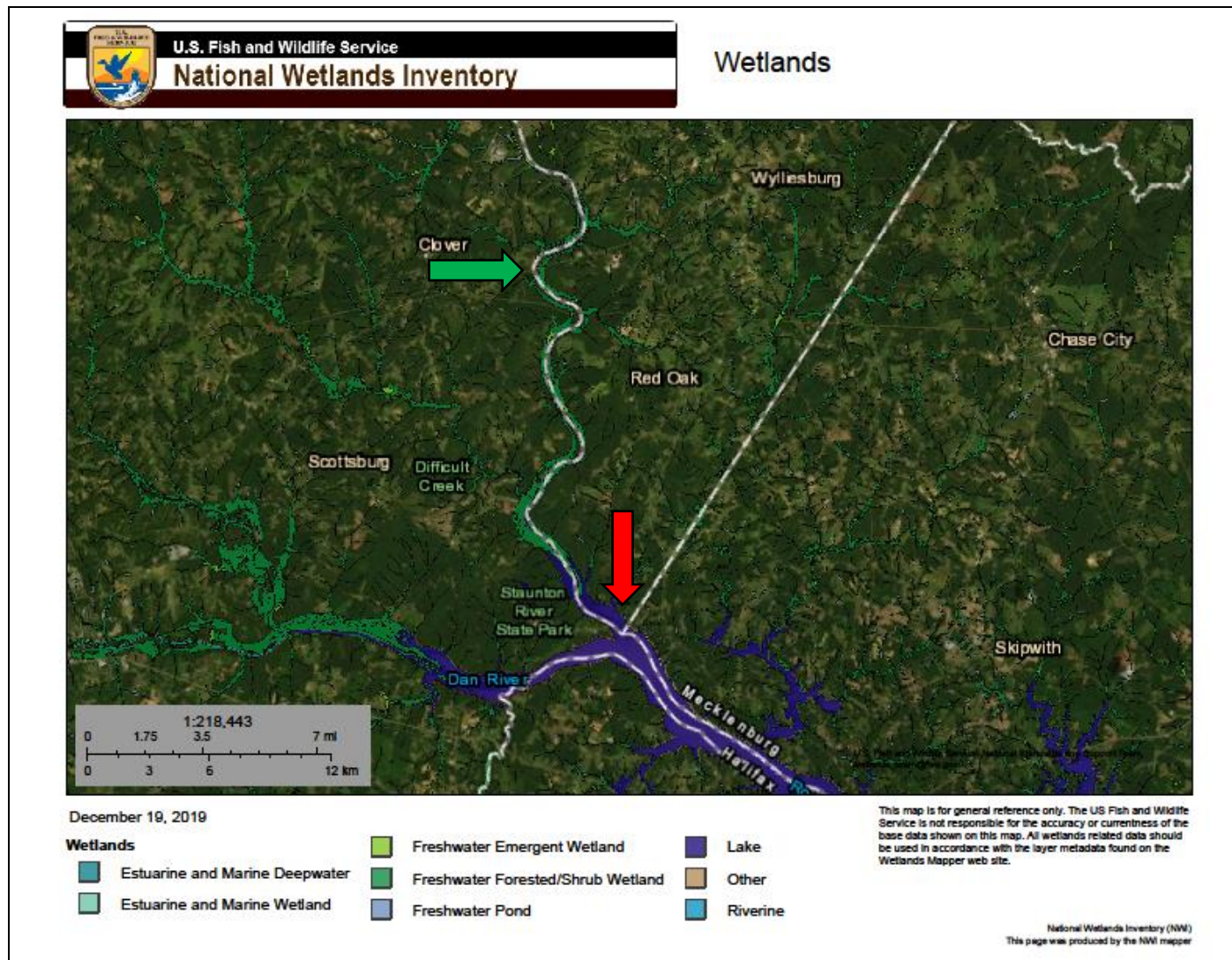
Representatives from Halifax County, the 50<sup>th</sup> Scenic River Anniversary Steering Committee, and DCR's Division of Planning and Recreation Resources performed a field evaluation along the Staunton River on October 25, 2019. The following is a description of the criteria, qualities, and conditions of the resource that make the Staunton a candidate for the Virginia Scenic River System.

##### A. River Corridor Vegetation

The evaluation team gave this criterion a high score because 100 percent of its shores had forested buffers of at least 100 feet (Image 1). Nearly the entire segment was bordered by freshwater forested/shrub wetlands (Map 5).



*Image 1. Lush, forested buffer along the Staunton River.*



Map 5. Wetlands along the Staunton River. The **green arrow** shows where evaluation begins (US 360), and the **red arrow** shows where the evaluation ends (Staunton River State Park). Most of the wetlands surrounding the 11-mile segment are freshwater forested/shrub wetland (**dark green**). The **dashed lines** show the county borders. Near the confluence with the Dan River, the Staunton functions as a lake (**dark blue**). Source: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service National Wetlands Inventory, <https://www.fws.gov/wetlands/data/Mapper.html>

## **B. Riverbed and/or River Flow Modifications**

The evaluation team gave this criterion a low score. The waters were high due to the John H. Kerr Dam and Reservoir (also known as Buggs Island Lake), managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Wilmington District.

## **C. Human Development of Visual Corridor**

The evaluation team gave this criterion a high score for having no urban or rural development. No houses, cabins, barns, industrial buildings or clusters were seen along the river.

## **D. Historic Features**

The evaluation team gave this criterion a moderate score for having historic sites or structures of state significance within 1,000 feet of the river.

The Virginia Canals & Navigations Society has historical information related to the evaluated section of the Staunton River. The following is a sample of the historical information provided in the Society's Roanoke/Staunton River Atlas.

### **(1) Scenic Steel Truss Bridge**

Allows a rare view of the river. Underneath are examples of 4 different styles of concrete bridge piers (Map 6).

### **(2) Falkner's Mill, Mosely's Mill, Mosley's Old Mill**

The mill, on the L bank, is gone but the substantial crib dam still spans the river, with a channel broken through it near the left side. A number of exposed timbers, notched, about 10" square. Two narrow channels cleared on the R end, probably by swimmers or boaters (Map 6).

### **(3) Blank's Old Ferry**

A fish house was here, probably holding gear for catching shad (Map 7).

### **(4) Abbyville**

The historic 1818 town of Abbyville, located on the river at the county line, is now under sand and water (Map 8).

### **(5) Staunton River State Park**

Built by the Civilian Conservation Corps in 1933-1935 (Map 8).

The Staunton River flows into the John H. Kerr Dam and Reservoir. According to USACE, construction of the dam began in 1947, and was named the "Bugg's Island Project" after the owners of a nearby island and the descendants of Samuel Bugg. Later, the 82<sup>nd</sup> Congress would pass a law renaming the project "John H. Kerr Dam and Reservoir" after a North Carolina Congressman (<https://www.saw.usace.army.mil/Locations/District-Lakes-and-Dams/John-H-Kerr-1/History/>).





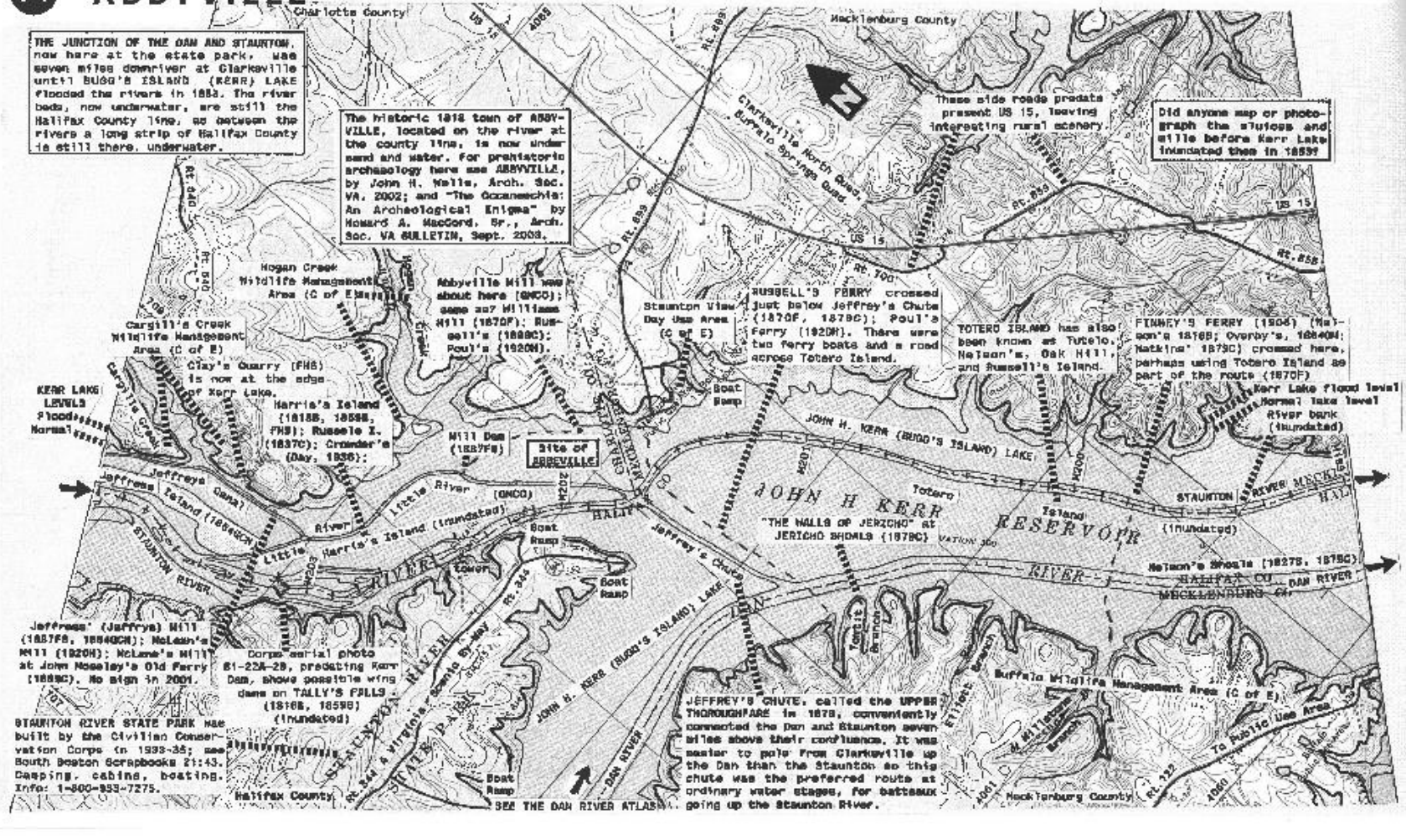
**74 ABBYVILLE**

THE JUNCTION OF THE DAM AND STAUNTON, now here at the estate park, was seven miles downriver at Clarksville until BUDD'S ISLAND (KERR) LAKE flooded the rivers in 1883. The river beds, now underwater, are still the Halifax County line, as between the rivers a long strip of Halifax County is still there, underwater.

The historic 1818 town of ABBYVILLE, located on the river at the county line, is now underwater and water, for prehistoric archeology here see ABBYVILLE, by John H. Wells, Arch. Soc. VA, 2002; and "The Occaneechie: An Archaeological Enigma" by Howard A. MacCord, Sr., Arch. Soc. VA BULLETIN, Sept. 2003.

These side roads predate present US 15, leaving interesting rural scenery.

Did anyone map or photograph the stupess and stille before Kerr Lake inundated them in 1883?



Map 8. Historical information about the Staunton River, nearby the site of the 1818 town of Abbyville. Source: Virginia Canals & Navigations Society, Roanoke/Staunton River Atlas

## E. Landscape

The evaluation team gave this criterion a moderate score for having a low diversity of corridor features. There were few changes in scenery apart from slow, flat water and forested shores. However, there was a high range of views, including backgrounds of several miles (Image 2).

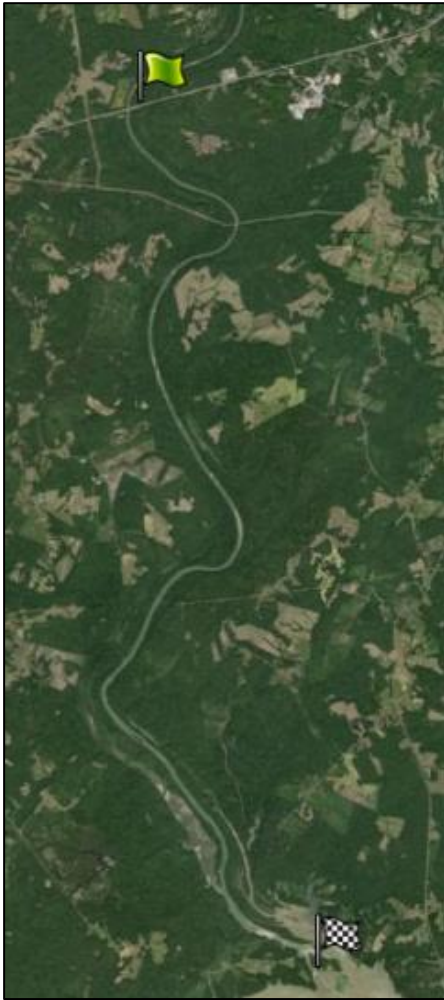
The 11-mile section of the Staunton River is in Virginia's Piedmont province. According to DCR (<https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural-heritage/va-physiographic-provinces>):

“Virginia’s Piedmont Plateau province is a gently rolling upland bounded on the east by the Fall line and the west by the Blue Ridge Mountains. The western boundary of the Piedmont is characterized by distinct peaks and ridges, comprising the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains. To the east, the Piedmont continues to slope more gently toward the Fall Line. The Fall Line marks the zone of transition from the hard, resistant bedrock underlying the Piedmont to the softer sediments underlying the Coastal Plain. Streams are able to cut more easily through the sands, gravels, and clays of the Coastal Plain, and rivers widen as the topography flattens. In the northern part of the state this boundary is sharply delineated by falls and rapids. From foothills to rapids, these varying site conditions support a mosaic of plant communities.”

The Staunton River’s topography is characteristic of the Piedmont with its forests and gently rolling hills (Map 9, Map 10).



*Image 2. Long-range view along the Staunton River.*



Map 9. The evaluated 11 miles of the Staunton River. Note the green vegetation along the river. Source: EnviroAtlas, <https://enviroatlas.epa.gov/enviroatlas/interactive-map/>



Map 10. The elevation of the evaluated 11 miles of the Staunton River. Note the rolling lands along the river. Source: EnviroAtlas, <https://enviroatlas.epa.gov/enviroatlas/interactive-map/>

## F. Quality of Fishery

The evaluation team gave this criterion a high score for prime fishing opportunities. According to the Southern Virginia Wild Blueway website, the Staunton River is “known as one of the best spots for inland striper fishing on the East Coast.”

DGIF provides the following information about fishing in the section between US 360 and Staunton River State Park (<https://www.dgif.virginia.gov/waterbody/staunton-river/>):

“Seasonal fishing for migrating walleye, suckers, striped bass, and white bass occurs here. Catfish, gar, largemouth bass, and crappie also offer angling action. Waterfowl, wading birds, and raptors (osprey and bald eagles) are abundant amongst the many islands at the confluence with the lake.”



In addition to the fish listed above, the river section also has the following: smallmouth bass, spotted bass, redbreast sunfish, bluegill, rock bass, flathead catfish, channel catfish, and striped bass.

## **G. Special Natural Flora and Fauna**

The evaluation team gave this criterion a moderate score for having a couple species with state-level or national-level conservation status.

The John H. Kerr Reservoir's forests are managed by USACE. The forestland has upland hardwoods (oaks and hickories), pines (loblolly, short-leave, and Virginia), and bottomland hardwoods (willow, willow oak, ash, birch, sycamore, and sweetgum per [https://www.saw.usace.army.mil/Portals/59/docs/recreation/johnhkerlake/WMA%20Book\(Final\).pdf](https://www.saw.usace.army.mil/Portals/59/docs/recreation/johnhkerlake/WMA%20Book(Final).pdf)).

Staunton River State Park is a 2,400-acre preserve located along the evaluated section of the Staunton. According to DGIF's webpage about the park, the following species have been sited (<https://www.dgif.virginia.gov/waterbody/staunton-river/>):

“Explore the water’s edge for Canada geese, wood duck, great egrets and great blue herons year-round. In the winter, check the deep waters for loons and mergansers and the numerous ring-billed gulls for rarer species of gull. Once away from the water and into the woods, look amongst the pines for brown-headed nuthatches and wheezy pine warblers. The hardwoods hold red-eyed and white-eyed vireos in summer and, of course, downy and red-bellied woodpeckers are found drumming away almost anywhere. Watch along the roadsides in more open areas for small flocks of chipping sparrows and eastern bluebirds. Other creatures to be on the lookout for include eastern painted turtles sunning themselves in quiet coves and swarms of red-spotted purple, hackberry emperor and question mark butterflies sipping mineral-rich sand at every mud puddle.”

Staunton River State Park also has a designated DGIF Birding and Wildlife Trail: the Dan River Loop. Year-to-year bird observations at the park can be found at [ebird.org](https://ebird.org/barchart?byr=1900&eyr=2019&bmo=1&emo=12&r=L159407) (<https://ebird.org/barchart?byr=1900&eyr=2019&bmo=1&emo=12&r=L159407>).

### **Species with Conservation Status**

This section of the Staunton River has several animal and plant species with state-level or national-level conservation status. The following list was provided by the DCR Natural Heritage Program.

For species ranking definitions (G1, G2, S1, S2, etc.), please see Appendix B.

(1) Stalkless yellow cress/ *Rorippa sessiliflora* G5/S2  
Stalkless yellow-cress is native to the southern and midwestern United States. It is easy to distinguish as its flowers lack petals. As the name suggests, the flowers are borne on very short (< 2mm) pedicels (flower stalks). Habitat I anthropogenic (man-made or disturbed habitats), riverine (in rivers or streams), shores of rivers or lakes. Information source: NatureServe Explorer. (Image Go Botany – Native Plant Trust)



(2) Yadkin hedge-nettle/ *Stachys matthewsii* G1G2/SOC/S1  
Yadkin Hedge-nettle is a perennial, recently discovered and named in Virginia and North Carolina. Its habitat is forested floodplains, wet meadows and river slopes. *Stachys matthewsii* is distributed in the Piedmont region that includes southeastern and south-central Virginia and north-central North Carolina. The flowers are on erect, spar stems of 80 – 100 centimeters tall. Information source: *Flora of Virginia*, Weakley, Ludwig, Townsend. (Image Go Botany – Native Plant Trust)



## H. Water Quality

The evaluation team gave this criterion a moderate score for having rarely visible pollution, and waters that are turbid or muddy during less than one-third of the six warm season months (May through October) (Image 3).



Image 3. Turbid waters of the Staunton River.

## **I. Parallel Roads**

The evaluation team gave this criterion a high score for having no parallel roads.

## **J. Crossings**

The evaluation team gave this criterion a moderate score for having an average of 0.1 to 0.3 crossings per mile. Crossings are roads and power/communication lines that pass over a river. Although crossings reduce the sense of remoteness along a river, they can provide visual and physical access to the water. The team counted three crossings during the evaluation. The bridge for US 360 was not included in the count, because the bridge represented the starting point of the evaluation (Image 4).



*Image 4. The bridge over the Staunton River for Route 360 (James D. Hagood Highway/Kings Highway).*

## **K. Special Features Affecting River Aesthetics**

The evaluation team gave this criterion a medium-high score for having aesthetic appeal.

The 11 miles offered mid- range views. Along the way, in-stream rock formations, cultural sites, islands, rock outcrops, special geological features, and remoteness provided navigational interest (Image 5, Image 6).



*Image 5. Special geological features along the Staunton River.*



*Image 6. Close-up of special geological features along the Staunton River.*

## **L. Public Recreational Access**

The evaluation team gave this criterion a high score for having a public boat/canoe/kayak launch site or a public use trail along the corridor.

The evaluated 11 miles is part of the Southern Virginia Wild Blueway (Map 2, page 5). According to the Blueway's website (<https://sovawildblueway.com/about-the-blueway/>), "since much of the land is public, you can pull over your canoe or kayak and enjoy a break or leisurely picnic lunch along much of the Blueway."

Recreationists can find a boat launch site at US 360 (Map 11). DGIF offers the following pointers for canoes and motor boats traveling between the boat ramps at US 360 and Staunton River State Park (<https://www.dgif.virginia.gov/waterbody/staunton-river/>):

"This section of the Staunton River should be planned as an overnight trip for canoeists. Landowner permission must be obtained prior to camping on private land along with river. Launch from DGIF ramp off US 360E. Take out at Staunton River State Park ramp at the end of HW 344 off US 360. The river is accessible to both canoes and motorboats. Thirteen navigable miles of river are available. Slow, flat water characterizes this stretch. Up to 4.5 miles of still water must be crossed where the river meets the lake to reach the state park ramp...Sandbars and sand shoals are potential navigation hazards to motorboat operators. Boaters may become disoriented by the multiple channels at the river delta."

The US 360 ramp is managed by DGIF, but is located in property managed by USACE called the John H. Kerr Dam and Reservoir (Map 12). The ramp is in the property's Clover Wildlife Management Area (Map 13). Further downstream, river-goers can find Hogan Creek Wildlife Management Area (Map 14). Hunting is allowed in the two management areas, and the public should contact USACE for questions and further information.

The evaluation team landed their boats in Staunton River State Park (Image 7, Image 8). The park offers overnight lodging, an equestrian campground, pools, picnic shelters, playgrounds, and tennis and volleyball courts. The park also has over 17 miles of multi-use trails, including a designated DGIF Birding and Wildlife Trail (the Dan River Loop) (Map 15).

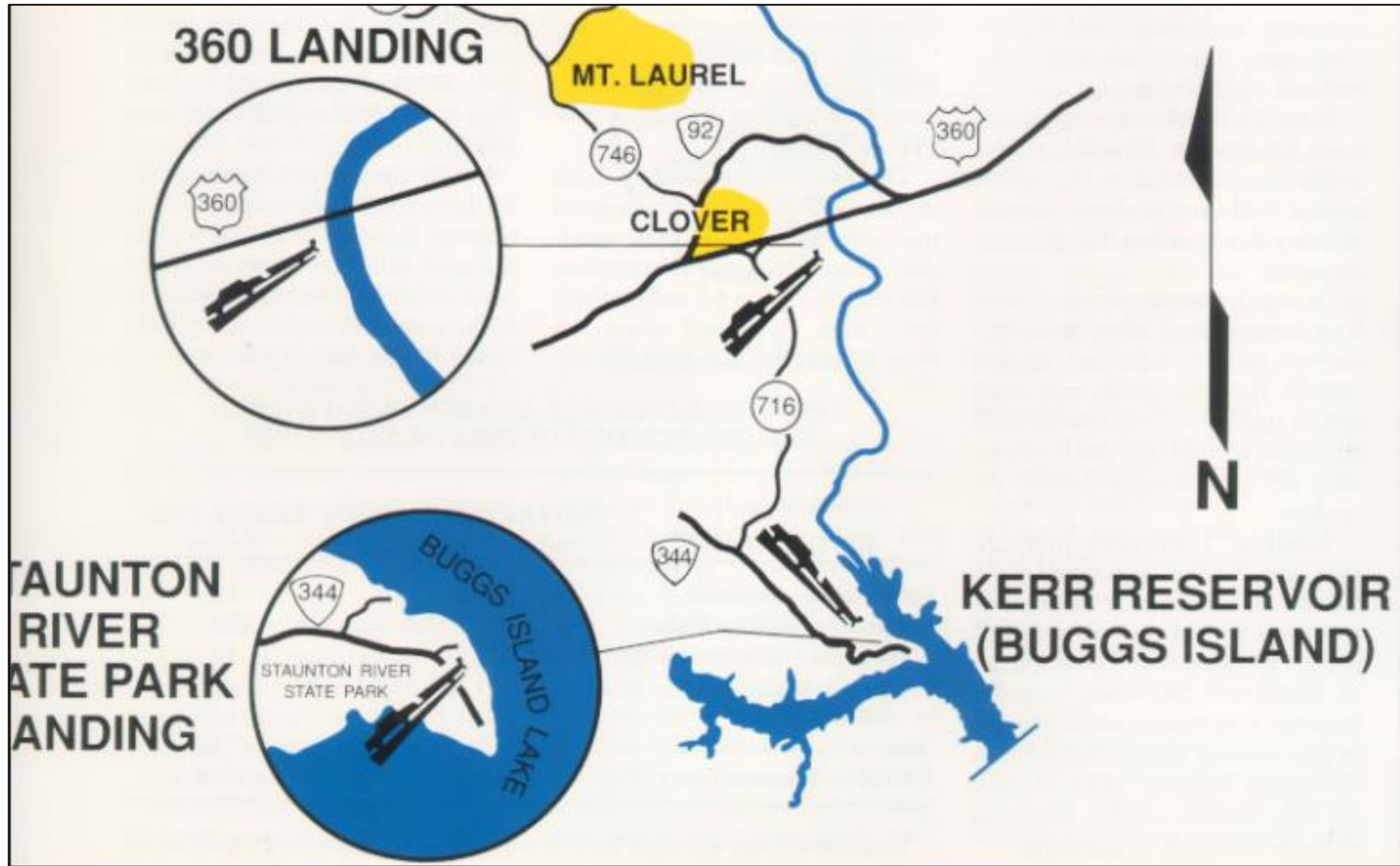
Staunton River State Park has the distinction of being the Commonwealth's first state park to be an International Dark Sky Park, and the 25<sup>th</sup> certified International Dark Sky Park in the world.



*Image 7. Boat landing at Staunton River State Park. Photo courtesy of Tricia Pearsall.*



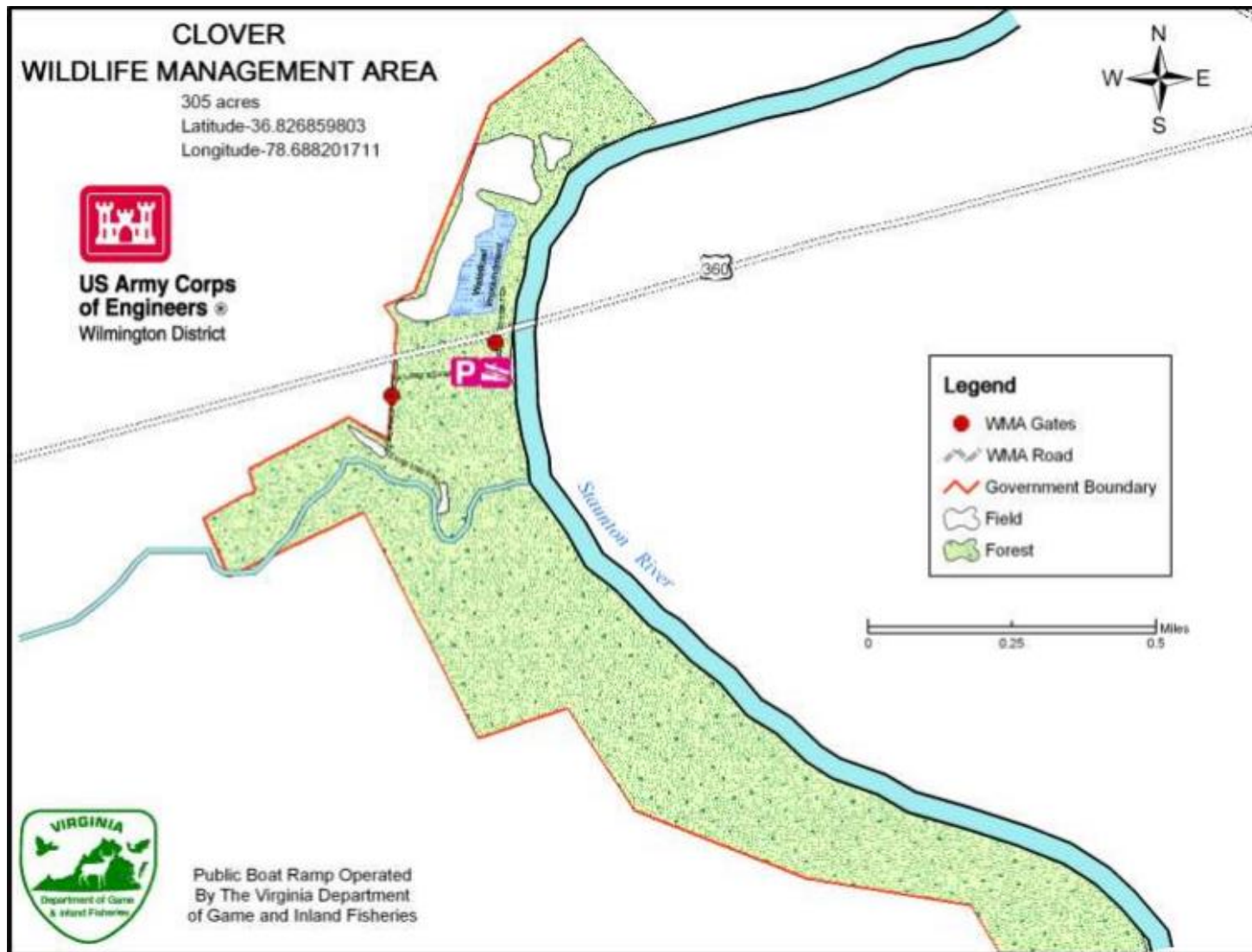
*Image 8. Shelter in Staunton River State Park, nearby the park's boat landing.*



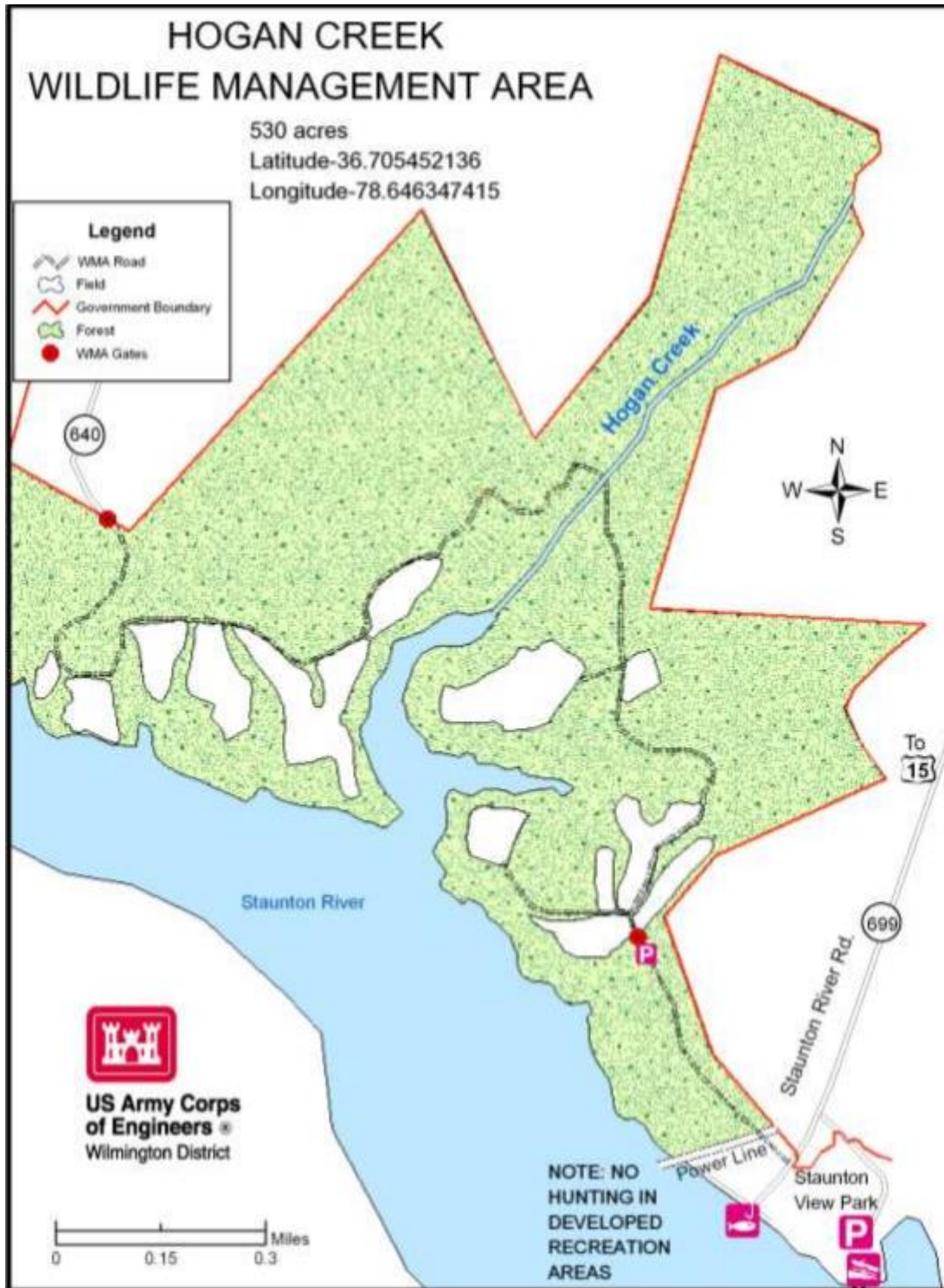
Map 11. Boat launch access at two points along the Staunton River: US 360 and Staunton River State Park. Source: DGIF Staunton River, <https://www.dgif.virginia.gov/waterbody/staunton-river/>

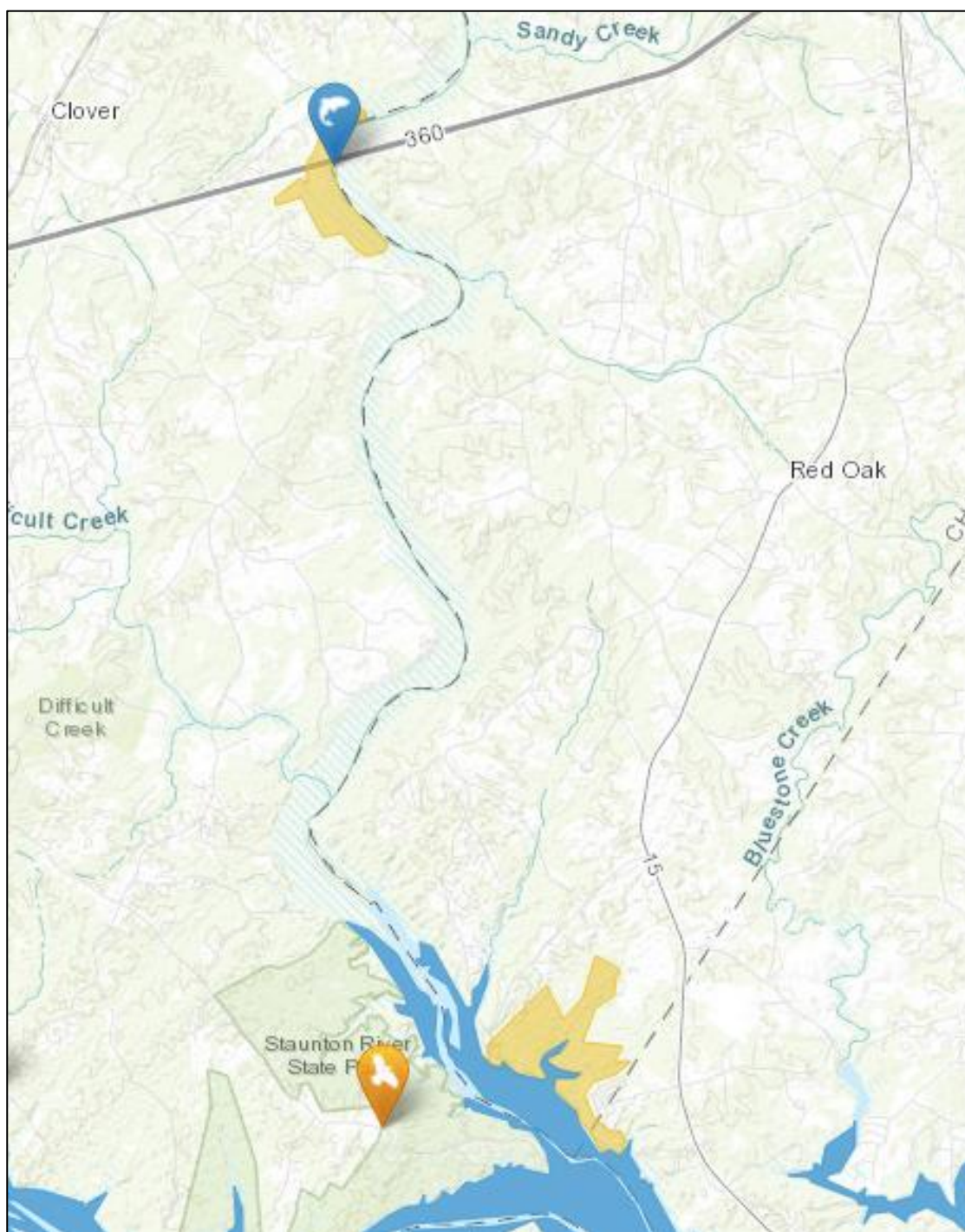






Map 13. Clover Wildlife Management Area. The P/Boat icon next to Route 360 indicates parking and a public boat ramp. The management area is managed by USACE, but the boat ramp is managed by DGIF. Source: USACE Guide to Wildlife Management Areas, John H. Kerr Reservoir, [https://www.saw.usace.army.mil/Portals/59/docs/recreation/johnhkerlake/WMA%20Book\(Final\).pdf](https://www.saw.usace.army.mil/Portals/59/docs/recreation/johnhkerlake/WMA%20Book(Final).pdf)



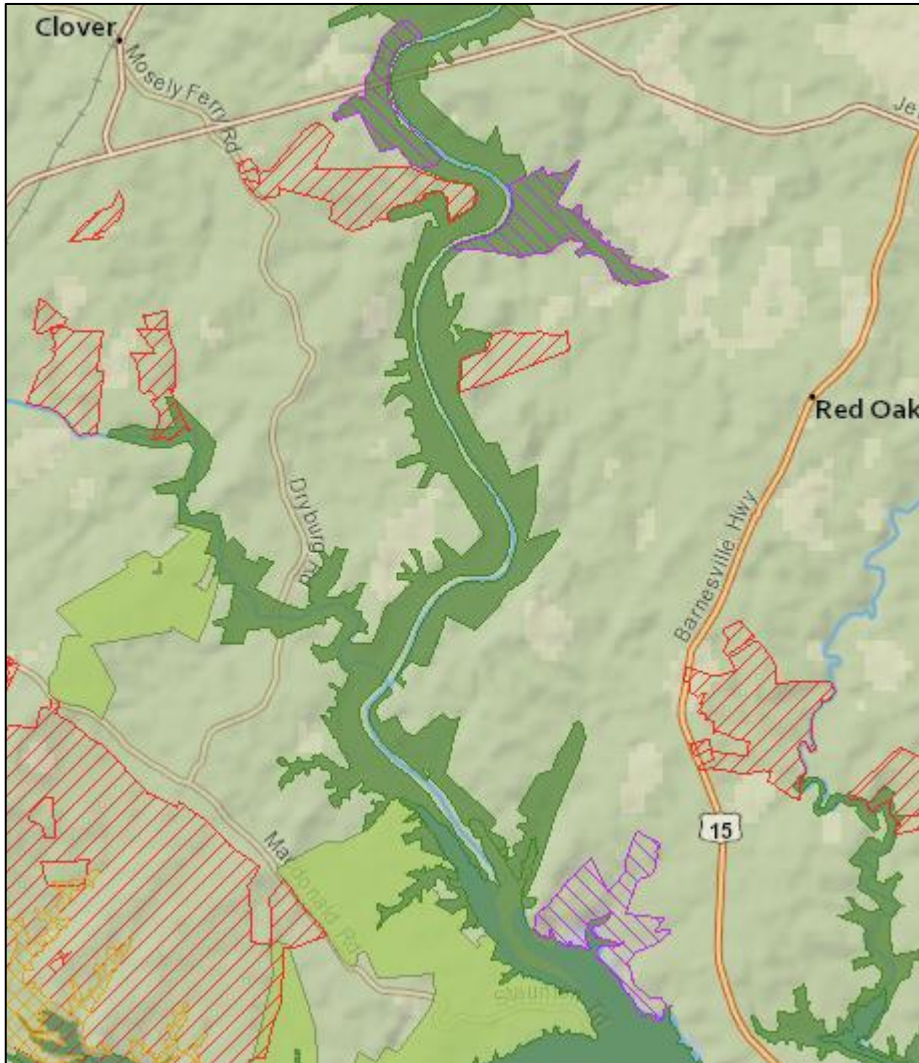


Map 15. Birding, fishing, and hunting opportunities at the Staunton River. The **blue, fish icon** indicates that the waterway is a warm water stream. The **orange, bird icon** indicates birding trails (i.e., the Dan River Loop). The **solid blue areas** are public fishing lakes. The **orange areas** are public hunting grounds: Clover and Hogan Creek Wildlife Management Areas, managed by USACE. Source: Find Wildlife VA, <https://vafwis.dgif.virginia.gov/>

## M. Land Conservation

The evaluation team gave this criterion a high score for having over 25 percent of the corridor protected through easement or other permanent measure.

DCR's Natural Heritage Program provides information about managed lands and conservation easements. According to its inventory, the 11 miles of the Staunton River has the following protection from development (Map 16): the John H. Kerr Dam and Reservoir, managed by USACE; several conservation easements, at least one of which is managed by the Virginia Outdoors Foundation; and Staunton River State Park, managed by DCR's State Park System.



Map 16. Land conservation along the evaluated section of the Staunton River. In **dark green** are federal lands (John H. Kerr Dam and Reservoir), and in **light green** are state lands (Difficult Creek Natural Area Preserve and Staunton River State Park). The areas in **red stripes** are conservation easements. The areas in **purple stripes** is the federally managed Hogan Creek WMA at Kerr Reservoir. Source: Virginia's Managed Conservation Lands Map, <http://vanhde.org/content/map>

## V. LAND USE AND OWNERSHIP

Lands along the study corridor are mostly federally or state managed (Map 16, page 28), and the land cover around the river is largely forested (Map 17).



Map 17. Land use along the evaluated section of the Staunton River. Most of the section is surrounded by Forest & Woodland (**green**). Other land uses are Developed & Other Human Use (**pink**, e.g. the roads), Recently Disturbed or Modified (**maroon**), and Agricultural & Developed Vegetation (white). Source: GAP/LANDFIRE National Terrestrial Ecosystems 2011, <https://maps.usgs.gov/terrestrial-ecosystems-2011>

## VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) concludes that the Staunton River from Route 360 (James D. Hagood Highway/Kings Highway) to Staunton River State Park, a distance of approximately 11 miles, is hereby eligible to be a component of the Virginia Scenic River System. Scenic River designation is warranted because of the aesthetic and recreational qualities of the river section, its environs, and the protected lands.

Flowing through forested land, this river segment has a number of interesting aesthetic features including in-stream rock formations, cultural sites, islands, rock outcrops, and special geological features.

The Staunton River is home to loons, mergansers, warblers, great blue herons, and other species. The river offers prime fishing opportunities for walleye, suckers, striped bass, white bass, catfish, and other sport fish.

The studied segment of the Staunton is the historic site of mills, ferries, and the 1818 town of Abbyville. The 11 miles is also a part of the Southern Virginia Wild Blueway. The blueway is water trail, made up of three rivers (the Dan, the Staunton, and the Banister) and two lakes (Kerr Lake and Lake Gaston). The water trail provides access for canoeing, kayaking, fishing, and other recreational activities. At present, over 80 miles of the blueway is part of the Virginia Scenic River System.

Considering the aspects of this segment of the Staunton River as described in this report, DCR recommends that:

1. The section that starts from Route 360, and ends at Staunton River State Park, a distance of approximately 11 miles, receive Virginia Scenic River designation, and
2. The Department of Conservation and Recreation be appointed the Administering Agency.

Proposed legislation for Scenic River designation is provided in **Appendix D**.

## VII. CONSERVATION PLAN

The following recommended conservation plan would involve local and state governments, individual and riparian landowners, and local stewardship initiatives.

### A. Virginia Scenic River Designation

Designation of the 11-mile section of the Staunton would give riparian landowners, local citizens, and local governments a greater voice in the planning and implementation of federal and state projects that might affect the river. For other benefits of Scenic River designation, see **Section B: Benefits of Designation** (page 6).

The local government may create a local scenic river advisory committee to advise the local government on the protection or management of the scenic river segment within its jurisdiction. For more information about this process, see *Code of Virginia* [§ 10.1-401.4](#).

**B. Land Use Plans**

Charlotte County and Halifax County can continue in their land use plans, to support recognition, appreciation, and concern for the river, which recognizes the role it plays in the county’s quality of life. Such plans can help protect the river and its environs from insensitive development and insure that the development that does occur uses low impact strategies whenever possible.

The federal government manages a considerable amount of land surrounding the 11-mile portion of the Staunton River. Land use plans developed by USACE continue to allow public recreation, and to promote and conserve fish and wildlife resources and habitat. At the state level, the master plan for Staunton River State Park can continue to promote recreation, land and water conservation, and “dark sky” astronomy events.

**C. Local and Riparian Landowners**

Stewardship by local and riparian landowners has been good over the years. If not for this stewardship, the attributes necessary for inclusion in the Virginia Scenic River System might have been lost. Through continuation of these efforts, the natural and scenic character of the river can be protected.

**D. Local Stewardship Initiatives**

Several local initiatives support the conservation and recognition of the Staunton/Roanoke River. Local groups that have supported the Staunton River’s conservation and recognition include the Upper Reach Roanoke River Basin Association, the American Canoe Association, and the Friends of Staunton State Park.

**VIII. ANTICIPATED COST OF DESIGNATION**

The only anticipated direct costs as a result of the designation would be those incurred by DCR as a result of its duties as administrator of the river. These costs are estimated to be within \$1,000 per year.

**IX. AGENCY COMMENTS/ RESOLUTIONS**

A draft report was circulated in 2019 among DCR Divisions, other state agencies, Charlotte County, and Halifax County. See comments and resolutions of support in **Appendix C**.

**X. APPENDIX**

A. Acronyms and Abbreviations ..... 33

B. Species Ranking Definitions of DCR Natural Heritage ..... 34

C. Letters, Comments, and Other Support ..... 37

    1. Letters Requesting Designation ..... 37

    2. DCR Designation Support Letters ..... 39

    3. Agency Comments ..... 39

    4. Resolutions of Support..... 40

D. Proposed Legislation ..... 43



## **Appendix A. Acronyms and Abbreviations**

<b>The Act</b>	Scenic Rivers Act, Title 10.1, Chapter 4 of the <i>Code of Virginia</i>
<b>BOS</b>	Board of Supervisors
<b>DCR</b>	Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation
<b>DGIF</b>	Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries
<b>USACE</b>	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
<b>USGS</b>	U.S. Geological Survey
<b>VA</b>	Commonwealth of Virginia

## Appendix B. Species Ranking Definitions of DCR Natural Heritage

SCIENTIFIC NAME	COMMON NAME	GLOBAL RANK	STATE RANK	FEDERAL STATUS	STATE STATUS
Villosa perpurpurea	Purple Bean	G1	S1	LE	LE

### Definitions of Abbreviations used on Natural Heritage Resource Lists

The following ranks are used by DCR to set protection priorities for natural heritage resources. Natural Heritage Resources, or "NHR's," are rare plant and animal species, rare and exemplary natural communities, and significant geologic features. The criterion for ranking NHR's is the number of populations or occurrences, i.e. the number of known distinct localities; the number of individuals in existence at each locality or, if a highly mobile organism (e.g., sea turtles, many birds, and butterflies), the total number of individuals; the quality of the occurrences, the number of protected occurrences; and threats.

- S1** Critically imperiled in the state because of extreme rarity or because of some factor(s) making it especially vulnerable to extirpation from the state. Typically 5 or fewer populations or occurrences; or very few remaining individuals (<1000).
- S2** Imperiled in the state because of rarity or because of some factor(s) making it very vulnerable to extirpation from the state. Typically 6 to 20 populations or occurrences or few remaining individuals (1,000 to 3,000).
- S3** Vulnerable in the state either because rare and uncommon, or found only in a restricted range (even if abundant at some locations), or because of other factors making it vulnerable to extirpation. Typically 21 to 100 populations or occurrences (1,000 to 3,000).
- S4** Apparently secure; Uncommon but not rare, and usually widespread in the state. Possible cause of long-term concern. Usually >100 populations or occurrences and more than 10,000 individuals.
- S5** Secure; Common, widespread and abundant in the state. Essentially ineradicable under present conditions. Typically with considerably more than 100 populations or occurrences and more than 10,000 individuals.
- S#B** Breeding status of an animal within the state
- S#N** Non-breeding status of animal within the state. Usually applied to winter resident species.
- S#?** Inexact or uncertain numeric rank.
- SH** Possibly extirpated (Historical). Historically known from the state, but not verified for an extended period, usually > 15 years; this rank is used primarily when inventory has been attempted recently.
- S#S#** Range rank; A numeric range rank, (e.g. S2S3) is used to indicate the range of uncertainty about the exact status of the element. Ranges cannot skip more than one rank.
- SU** Unrankable; Currently unrankable due to lack of information or due to substantially conflicting information about status or trends.
- SNR** Unranked; state rank not yet assessed.
- SX** Presumed extirpated from the state. Not located despite intensive searches of historical sites and other appropriate habitat, and virtually no likelihood that it will be rediscovered.
- SNA** A conservation status rank is not applicable because the element is not a suitable target for conservation activities

**Global Ranks** are similar, but refer to a species' rarity throughout its total range. Global ranks are denoted with a "G" followed by a character. Note GX means the element is presumed extinct throughout its range, not relocated despite intensive searches of historical sites/appropriate habitat, and virtually no likelihood that it will be rediscovered. A "Q" in a rank indicates that a taxonomic question concerning that species exists. Ranks for subspecies are denoted with a "T". The global and state ranks combined (e.g. G2/S1) give an instant grasp of a species' known rarity.

These ranks should not be interpreted as legal designations.

- G1** Extremely rare and critically imperiled with 5 or fewer occurrences or very few remaining individuals; or because of some factor(s) making it especially vulnerable to extinction.
- G2** Very rare and imperiled with 6 to 20 occurrences or few remaining individuals; or because of some factor(s) making it vulnerable to extinction.
- G3** Either very rare and local throughout its range or found locally (even abundantly at some of its locations) in a restricted range; or vulnerable to extinction because of other factors. Usually fewer than 100 occurrences are documented.
- G4** Common and apparently secure globally, although it may be rare in parts of its range, especially at the periphery.
- G5** Very common and demonstrably secure globally, although it may be rare in parts of its range, especially at the periphery.
- GH** Formerly part of the world's fauna with some expectation that it may be rediscovered; generally applies to species that have not been verified for an extended period (usually >15 years) and for which some inventory has been attempted recently.
- GX** Believed to be extinct throughout its range with virtually no likelihood of rediscovery.
- GU** Possibly rare, but status uncertain and more data needed.
- G?** Unranked, or, if following a numerical ranking, rank uncertain (e.g., G3?).
- G\_G\_** The rank is uncertain, but considered to be within the indicated range (e.g., G2G4) of ranks (also, T\_T\_).
- G\_Q** Taxon has a questionable taxonomic assignment (e.g., G3Q) and may prove to be invalid upon further study.
- G\_T\_** Signifies the rank of a subspecies (e.g., G5T1 would apply to a subspecies if the species is demonstrably secure globally (G5) but the subspecies warrants a rank of T1, critically imperiled.)

## **FEDERAL STATUS**

The Division of Natural Heritage uses the standard abbreviations for Federal endangerment developed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Division of Endangered Species and Habitat Conservation.

- LE** Listed Endangered
- LT** Listed Threatened
- PE** Proposed Endangered
- PT** Proposed Threatened
- C** Candidate (formerly C1 - Candidate category 1)
- E(S/A)** Treat as endangered because of similarity of appearance
- T(S/A)** Treat as threatened because of similarity of appearance
- SOC** Species of Concern species that merit special concern (not a regulatory category)

## **STATE LEGAL STATUS**

The Division of Natural Heritage uses similar abbreviations for State endangerment:

<b>LE</b>	Listed Endangered
<b>PE</b>	Proposed Endangered
<b>SC</b>	Special Concern - animals that merit special concern according to VDGIF (not a regulatory category)
<b>LT</b>	Listed Threatened
<b>PT</b>	Proposed Threatened
<b>C</b>	Candidate

For information on the laws pertaining to threatened or endangered species, please contact:

- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for all **FEDERALLY** listed species;
- Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Plant Protection Bureau for **STATE** listed plants and insects; and
- Department of Game and Inland Fisheries for all other **STATE** listed animals

## **CONSERVATION SITES RANKING**

Rank is a rating of the significance of the conservation site based on presence and number of natural heritage resources; on a scale of 1-5, 1 being most significant. Sites are also coded to reflect the presence/absence of federally/state listed species:

### Conservation Site Ranks

<b>B1</b>	Outstanding significance
<b>B2</b>	Very High significance
<b>B3</b>	High significance
<b>B4</b>	Moderate significance
<b>B5</b>	Of general Biodiversity significance

### Legal Status of Sites

<b>FL</b>	Federally listed species present
<b>SL</b>	State listed species present
<b>NL</b>	No listed species present

## Appendix C. Letters, Comments, and Other Support

### 1. Letters Requesting Designation

#### Halifax County – June 28, 2019



SCOTT R. SIMPSON, P. E.  
County Administrator  
[srs@co.halifax.va.us](mailto:srs@co.halifax.va.us)

## HALIFAX COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

1030 Mary Bethune Street, Suite LL1  
P. O. Box 699  
Halifax, VA 24558-0699  
(434) 476-3300  
Fax: (434) 476-3384  
[www.halifaxcountyva.gov](http://www.halifaxcountyva.gov)

DENNIS G. WITT  
CHAIRMAN  
H. W. H. PANNELL  
VICE CHAIRMAN

SUPERVISORS  
STANLEY BRANDON  
W. BRYANT CLAIBORNE  
J. T. DAVIS  
JEFFREY D. FRANCISCO  
GARLAND B. RICKETTS  
JOSEPH A. ROGERS

June 28, 2019

Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation  
203 Governor Street, Suite 326  
Richmond, VA 23219  
Attention: Lynn M. Crump, Environmental Program Planner

Dear Lynn:

At the June 25, 2019 Halifax County Board of Supervisors meeting the Board voted unanimously to officially request the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation to evaluate a section of the Staunton River to be designated a scenic river under the Virginia Scenic Rivers Act of 1970.

This section of river from the US360 Bridge near Clover to Staunton River State Park is approximately 11 miles in length and will complete the last stretch for the Staunton to be designated a scenic river in Halifax and Charlotte Counties.

Please advise if you require additional information or if I might be of further assistance in this matter.

Sincerely,

Scott R. Simpson, P.E.  
County Administrator

**Charlotte County – July 16, 2019**



**County of Charlotte  
Board of Supervisors**

Post Office Box 608  
250 LeGrande Avenue, Suite A  
Charlotte Court House, VA 23923-0608

Phone 434-542-5117  
Fax 434-542-5248

Daniel N. Witt  
County Administrator  
www.charlotteva.com

July 16, 2019

Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation  
203 Governor Street, Suite 326  
Richmond, VA 23219

Attention: Lynn M. Crump, Environmental Program Planner

Dear Lynn,

At the July 10, 2019 Charlotte County Board of Supervisors meeting the Board voted to officially request the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation evaluate a section of the Staunton River for designation as a scenic river under the Virginia Scenic Rivers Act of 1970.

This section of the river, from the US360 bridge near Clover to the Staunton River State Park is approximately 11 miles in length. Having this section designated as a scenic river will complete the last stretch for the Staunton in Charlotte and Halifax Counties.

Please advise if you require additional information or if I might be of further assistance in this request by the Board of Supervisors.

Sincerely,

Daniel N. Witt, MPA  
County Administrator

---

Gary D. Walker, County Seat (A)	Garland H. Hamlett, Jr. -Chairman Drakes Branch (C)	Kay Pierantoni Wylliesburg/Red Oak (B)	Robert L. Shook, Jr. Keysville (D)	Nancy R. Carwile-Vice Chairman Cullen/Red House (E)	Donna Fore Aspen/Phenix (F)	Royal Freeman Bacon/Saxe (G)
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## 2. DCR Designation Support

At the October 2019 Board of Conservation and Recreation meeting, the Board voted unanimously to support the designation of the Maury River in Rockbridge County as a Virginia Scenic River.

## 3. Agency Comments

### Department of Game & Inland Fisheries Staunton River Study

- A total of six sites were sampled in September 2011 (Altavista, Brookneal, Log Island, Clover, 360 Bridge and the Davis farm).
- Total electrofishing time was 6.03 hours.
- All species were netted on each run. Otoliths from age-0 smallmouth bass were removed and checked for OTC marks to evaluate the 2011 stocking.
- A total of 86 smallmouth bass were collected conferring a catch rate (CPE) of 14.3; age-0 smallmouth bass was 4.5.
- A total of 27 age-0 smallmouth bass were collected and two otoliths were unreadable. Of the 25 otoliths checked for OTC, only two were stocked fish (8% stocked fish contribution).
- In 2011, smallmouth bass were stocked at three sites (Altavista, Long Island and the Davis farm). Stocked contribution at those three sites was 12.5%.
- Smallmouth bass ranged in length from 58 – 473 mm. The PSD was 33 and the RSD-P was 16.
- Redbreast sunfish CPE was 32.3. Redbreast sunfish ranged in length from 63 – 173 mm with an average length of 117 mm. Redbreast sunfish were most abundant at Long Island and the Davis farm and least abundant at Clover and 360 Bridge. Generally, redbreast are more abundant upstream of Brookneal.
- Bluegill abundance was 21.2 fish/hour. Bluegill were significantly more abundant at 360 Bridge than all other sites. Bluegill lengths ranged from 58 – 183 mm (mean=125 mm).
- Redear sunfish CPE was 6.1 and they were significantly more abundant at 360 Bridge than all other sites.
- Largemouth bass (1.0 fish/hour) and rock bass (0.5 fish/hour) were rarely collected.
- Channel catfish CPE was 23.9 and they were more abundant at Brookneal and the Davis farm than other sites. Channel catfish ranged in length from 176 – 658 mm with an average length of 377 mm.
- A total of seven American shad were collected at Clover and 360 Bridge.
- A total of 36 species were collected.

## 4. Resolutions of Support

### Charlotte County (1/2) – December 12, 2019



### County of Charlotte Board of Supervisors

Phone 434-542-5117  
Fax 434-542-5248

Post Office Box 608  
250 LeGrande Avenue, Suite A  
Charlotte Court House, VA 23923-0608

Daniel N. Witt  
County Administrator  
www.charlottecountyva.gov

December 12, 2019

Ms. Kelly McClary, DCR Acting Director  
Division of Planning and Recreation Resources  
Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation  
600 East Main Street, 24th Floor  
Richmond, VA 23219

RE: Extending the Scenic River Designation on the Staunton River

Dear Ms. McClary:

At their December 11, 2019 meeting, the Charlotte County Board of Supervisors adopted the attached resolution in support of the extension of the Scenic River designation for the Staunton River from the US360 Bridge near Clover to the Staunton River State Park, approximately 11 miles in length. I hereby request that you forward this resolution to the Board of Conservation and Recreation for consideration at their January 2020 meeting.

Letters will also be sent to the County's General Assembly representatives requesting their support in the submittal of legislation in the 2020 General Assembly session to amend Section 10.1-413 A of the Code of Virginia to designate the section of the Staunton River from the US360 Bridge near Clover to the Staunton River State Park in Charlotte County as a 'Scenic River'.

On behalf of the citizens of and visitors to Charlotte County, I appreciate the efforts by you and the Department of Conservation and Recreation staff to assist in obtaining this designation.

Sincerely,

Daniel N. Witt  
Charlotte County Administrator

Attachment

Cc w/att.: Ms. Lynn Crump, DCR, Environmental Programs Planner

Cc w/ att.: Delegate James Edmunds

---

Gary D. Walker, County Seat (A)	Garland H. Manslett, Jr. -Chairman Drake Branch (C)	Kyle Pierantoni Wylliesburg/Red Oak (B)	Robert L. Slouk, Jr. Vice Chairman Keyville (D)	Crystal Shepherd Calken/Red House (E)	Donna Fere Aspen/Phenix (F)	Royal Freeman Raccoon/Saxe (G)
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**County of Charlotte  
Board of Supervisors**

Phone 434-542-5117  
Fax 434-542-5248

Post Office Box 608  
250 LeGrande Avenue, Suite A  
Charlotte Court House, VA 23923-0608

Daniel N. Witt  
County Administrator  
www.charlottecountyva.gov

**A RESOLUTION  
REQUESTING FORMAL SCENIC RIVER DESIGNATION**

WHEREAS, the Virginia Scenic Rivers Program was enacted by the Virginia General Assembly in 1970 for the purpose of identification, protection, and preservation of certain rivers, or sections of rivers, which possess high quality natural beauty; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation has been charged with administering the Scenic Rivers Program and developing an objective evaluation process to judge the suitability of river segments; and

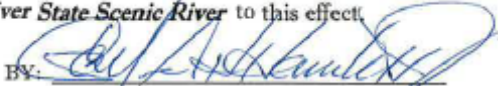
WHEREAS, much of the Staunton River in Charlotte County has already received Scenic River Designation; and

WHEREAS, in July 2019 the Charlotte County Board of Supervisors asked the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation to evaluate the 11-mile length of the Staunton River in Charlotte County from the US360 Bridge near Clover to Staunton River State Park in order to consider extending the Scenic River designation to include this section of river, as enabled by the Code of Virginia; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Conservation and Recreation conducted the evaluation and determined this section of the Staunton River meets the criteria for Scenic River designation; and

WHEREAS, the Charlotte County Board of Supervisors would like to pursue formal designation through this process, which requires a resolution of support from the Board of Supervisors and a request to the Virginia General Assembly to amend the Code of Virginia to include this extension;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Charlotte County Board of Supervisors supports the formal designation of the extension of the Scenic River designation for the Staunton River from the US360 Bridge near Clover to the Staunton River State Park, and hereby requests the Virginia General Assembly to amend VAC 10.1-413 A, *Staunton River State Scenic River* to this effect.

BY:   
Garland H. Hamlett, Jr., Chairman  
Charlotte County Board of Supervisors

ATTEST:   
Daniel N. Witt, Clerk

Gary D. Walker, County Seat (A)    Garland H. Hamlett, Jr., -Chairman, Drakes Branch (C)    Kay Pierantoni, Wylliesburg/Red Oak (B)    Robert L. Shook, Jr., Vice Chairman, Keysville (D)    Crystal Shepherd, Cullen/Red House (E)    Donna Fore, Aspen/Phenix (F)    Royal Freeman, Bacon/Saxe (G)



SCOTT R. SIMPSON, P.E., MPA  
County Administrator  
[ssr@cohalifaxva.gov](mailto:ssr@cohalifaxva.gov)

# HALIFAX COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

1030 Mary Bethune Street, Suite LL1  
P. O. Box 699  
Halifax, VA 24558-0699  
(434) 476-3300  
Fax: (434) 476-3384  
[www.halifaxcountyva.gov](http://www.halifaxcountyva.gov)

IL W. H. PANNELL - ED02  
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RONNIE DUFFEY - ED04  
DEAN THURMON MORTON - R005  
STANLEY BRANDON - ED06  
W. BRYANT CLAIRBORNE - ED08

## 2020-2 RESOLUTION

### HALIFAX COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS REQUESTING FORMAL SCENIC RIVER DESIGNATION

The Board of Supervisors of Halifax County, Virginia (the "Board"), at its regular meeting on the 6<sup>th</sup> day of January, 2020 adopts the following resolution:

**WHEREAS**, the Virginia Scenic Rivers Program was enacted by the Virginia General Assembly in 1970 for the purpose of identification, protection, and preservation of certain rivers, or sections of rivers, which possess high quality natural beauty; and

**WHEREAS**, the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation has been charged with administering the Scenic Rivers Program and developing an objective evaluation process to judge the suitability of river segments; and

**WHEREAS**, much of the Staunton River in Halifax County has already received Scenic River Designation; and

**WHEREAS**, in June 2019 the Halifax County Board of Supervisors asked the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation to evaluate the 11-mile length of the Staunton River from the US360 Bridge near Clover to Staunton River State Park in order to consider extending the Scenic River designation to include this section of river, as enabled by the Code of Virginia; and

**WHEREAS**, the Department of Conservation and Recreation conducted the evaluation and determined this section of the Staunton River meets the criteria for Scenic River designation; and

**WHEREAS**, the Halifax County Board of Supervisors would like to pursue formal designation through this process, which requires a resolution of support from the Board of Supervisors and a request to the Virginia General Assembly to amend the Code of Virginia to include this extension;

**Appendix D. for the *Code of Virginia***

**03/12/20 Governor: Approved by Governor-Chapter 320 (effective 7/1/20)**

**VIRGINIA ACTS OF ASSEMBLY -- CHAPTER**

*An Act to amend and reenact § [10.1-418](#) of the Code of Virginia, relating to Staunton State Scenic River.*

[H 1601]

Approved

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That § [10.1-418](#) of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:

§ [10.1-418](#). Staunton State Scenic River.

The river, stream, or waterway known as the Staunton or the Roanoke, from ~~State Route 360 to~~ State Route 761 at the Long Island Bridge to the Staunton River State Park boat landing, a distance of approximately ~~51.3~~ 62.8 river miles, is hereby designated as the Staunton State Scenic River, a component of the Virginia Scenic Rivers System.