



DCR interoffice MEMORANDUM

To: Danette Poole, file

From: Lynn Crump

Date: November 16, 2016

Subject: Extension of the James River Scenic River Designation

In July 1985, a segment of the Upper James River in Botetourt County was designated as a Virginia Scenic River. Specifically, the segment is from two miles downstream of Route 43 at Eagle Rock to the Route 630 bridge at Springwood in Botetourt County, a distance of approximately 14 miles.

In 2015, Botetourt County, and in 2016, the Town of Buchanan, requested that the 17 mile section of the James River from Springwood to the Rockbridge/Botetourt County line be studied for possible Scenic River designation. The evaluation was conducted on May 2 and May 10, 2016, by staff from the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and representatives of a local outfitter, the James River Association, the County of Botetourt, and the Town of Buchanan as well as interested citizens.

On August 25 and 26, 2016 another four mile scenic river field evaluation was conducted on the James River section from Alpine to the Snowden Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF) boat access ramp at the request of Rockbridge, Amherst and Bedford Counties.

In August, Botetourt County made another request asking for the James River section from the confluence of the Jackson and Cowpasture Rivers to the existing designated section below Eagle Rock, a total of about 14 miles. The evaluation on this section was completed on October 10, 2016.

Based on all the evaluations, it was determined that the extended section of the James River from the confluence of the Jackson and Cowpasture Rivers, past the already designated section from below Eagle Rock to Springwood DGIF boat access upstream of the Route 630 bridge at Springwood, to the Snowden DGIF boat access ramp, a distance of approximately 49 miles, qualifies for Virginia Scenic River designation. If added to the currently designated 14 miles, the length of this segment of the James Scenic River will total approximately 63 miles.

Following are the findings that support this designation.

FINDINGS:

The Upper James River originates in Virginia's Ridge and Province at the confluence of the Cowpasture and Jackson Rivers and flows eastward to the Chesapeake Bay. The section studied flows through rural and forested landscapes and small towns. It runs through open private lands, which are used primarily as pasture, crops and hay fields. In Buchanan there is a significant amount of the George Washington/ Jefferson National Forest land along the mountain faces. It is hard to choose the most scenic section of this river as the twisting and turning channel provides access to very long mountain views that appear around every bend.

Historically, the river was used for transportation as well as fishing and hunting with little development or industrialization along the river corridor. There are still remains of the lock system developed in the early 1800s and remnants of various mills. Other notable historic sites include Buchanan Downtown District, the Community House, and Varney's Dam, which are all on the Virginia Landmark Register and the National Register of Historic Places.

Approximately 47% of the corridor is undisturbed with buffers greater than 100 feet in width. Beyond the buffers, the land is open fields in the narrow valley and timberland on the mountain slopes. The only impoundment along this river section is the lowest 1.6 miles of backwater from the Snowden dam. Overall this is only about 2% of the entire river segment.

A few houses are visible from the river. Some commercial and industrial development exists near the towns of Buchanan, Glasgow, and Eagle Rock, which have limited visual impact. Roads and a rail line parallel much of the river corridor on both sides. However, the major impacts are where the rail is so close to the river it is either eroding or has ballast in the river. Traffic noise from highway 220 near Eagle Rock impacts the solitude of the river for 3.7% of the entire river segment. Most of the visual impacts from roads and railroad are minimum. Numerous powerlines and bridges cross the river; fortunately their impacts are minimum due to the circuitous alignment of the river's corridor.

Since the corridor runs through the Ridge and Valley of Virginia, there are many long and dramatic views or vistas. There are also cliffs and rock outcroppings that add interest along the corridor. The long views and forested slopes create a terrific backdrop, especially in the fall when the autumn colors reflect off the water.

Fish quality was rated as moderate by the study team. However, there are a large number of documented significant natural resources along the corridor, including several vascular plants, invertebrates and intact natural communities.

Public river access is bountiful, and a local outfitter provides many opportunities to experience a variety of river sections. Access points along the entire section are: Iron Gate/ Lick Run, Glen Wilton, Gala, Craig Creek, Horseshoe Bend, Springwood Road, Buchanan Town Park above the Route 11 crossing, Arcadia Road, Gilmer's Mill Road at Alpine, Glasgow and Snowden. Less than 25% of the entire corridor is permanently protected by public ownership or easements.

Historic/cultural sites, seasonal wildflowers and vegetation, in-stream rock outcroppings and rock cliffs, and remoteness add interest and visual variety to this winding section of river corridor. The aesthetic appeal is in the high to exceptional range.

Based on the evaluation, the overall weighted score for the proposed James River extension in Botetourt County is well above the minimum score for designation; therefore, it is recommended that the studied 43 miles of the James be added to the existing Upper James River submitted for designation.

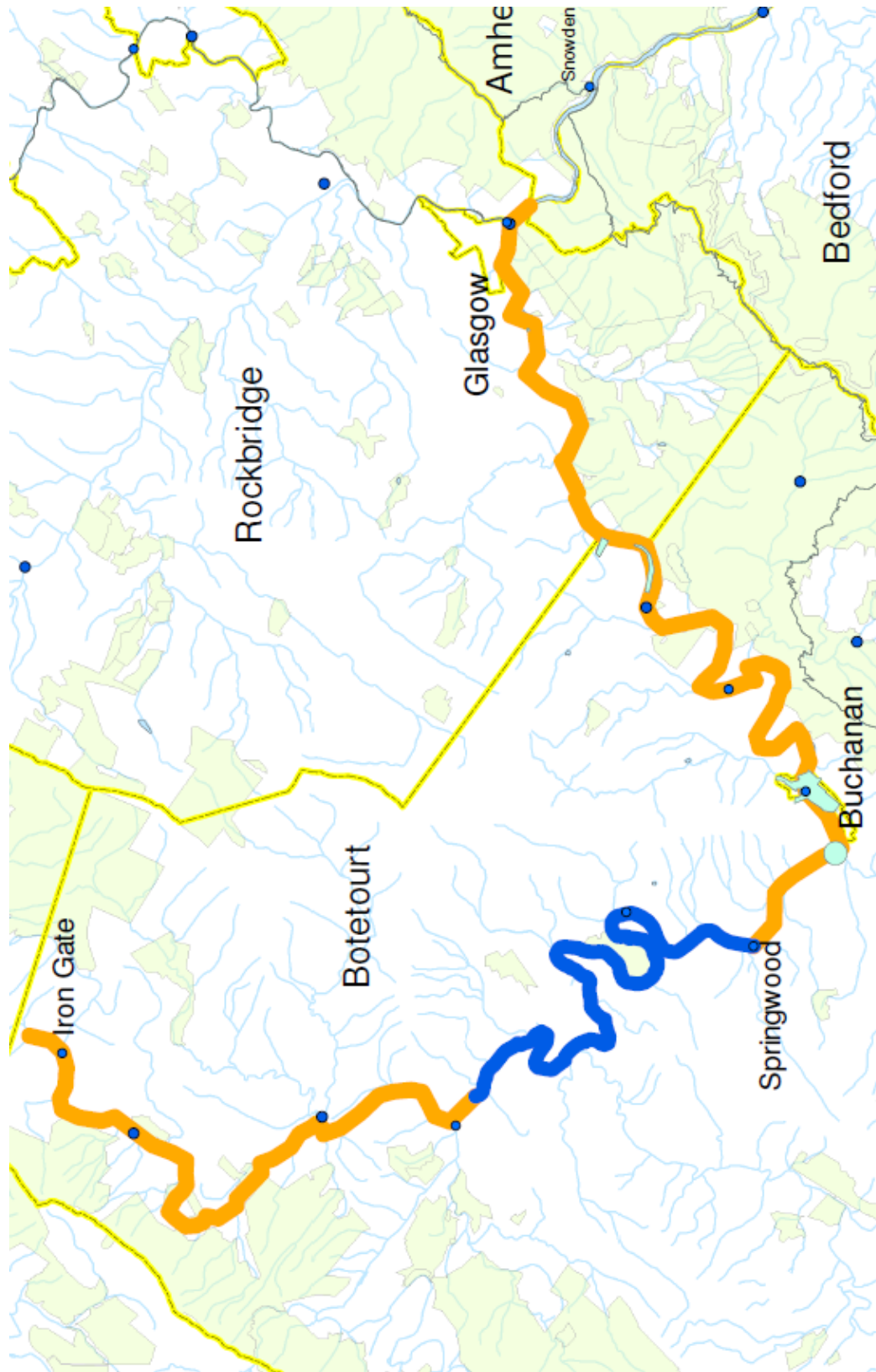
However, Bedford County on November 16, 2016, decided not to vote on support for the designation. The ultimate designation would be from the confluence of the Jackson and Cowpasture Rivers to just below the confluence of the Maury at the Rockbridge/ Bedford/ Amherst County Line.

THE PROPOSED CODE OF VIRGINIA CHANGE FOLLOWS:

§ 10.1-413. James River State Scenic River.

A. That portion of the James River in Botetourt and Rockbridge Counties County, and the Towns of Buchanan and Glasgow, from its origination at the confluence of the Jackson and Cowpasture Rivers running approximately 59 miles southeastward to the Rockbridge/Bedford/Amherst County line is hereby designated a component of the Virginia Scenic Rivers System.

B. No dam or other structure that impedes the natural flow of the James River in Botetourt County shall be constructed, operated or maintained within the section of the James River designated as a scenic river by this statute unless specifically authorized by an act of the General Assembly.





Botetourt County, Virginia
Board of Supervisors

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Fincastle, Virginia 24090
Phone (540) 928-2006
Fax (540) 473-8225

Board of Supervisors

L. W. Leffel, Jr.
Chairman

Todd L. Dodson
Vice Chairman

Billy W. Martin, Sr.

Donald M. Scothorn

John B. Williamson, III

The regular meeting of the Botetourt County Board of Supervisors was held on Tuesday, October 25, 2016, in Rooms 226-228 of the Greenfield Education and Training Center in Daleville, Virginia, beginning at 12:45 P. M.

PRESENT: Members: Mr. L. W. Leffel, Jr., Chairman
Mr. Todd L. Dodson, Vice-Chairman
Mr. John B. Williamson, III
Dr. Donald M. Scothorn
Mr. Billy W. Martin, Sr.

ABSENT: Members: None

There being no discussion, on motion by Mr. Leffel, seconded by Mr. Dodson, and carried by the following recorded vote, the Board adopted the following resolution in support of the extension of the Scenic River designation for the James River from Iron Gate to Eagle Rock and requesting that the Virginia General Assembly amend Section 10.1-413A of the Code of Virginia to include the entire length of the James River from Iron Gate to the Botetourt/Rockbridge County line as a Scenic River.

AYES: Mr. Williamson, Mr. Dodson, Mr. Martin, Mr. Leffel, Dr. Scothorn
NAYS: None
ABSENT: None ABSTAINING: None

Resolution Number 16-10-07

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, the James River in Botetourt County from Eagle Rock to Springwood received Scenic River Designation in 1985; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Buchanan and Botetourt County asked the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation to evaluate the 14-mile length of the James River in Botetourt County from Springwood to the Botetourt/Rockbridge County line for consideration of extending the existing designation of this section as a Scenic River as enabled by the Code of Virginia; and

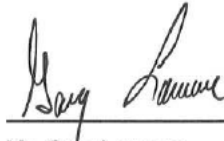
WHEREAS, Botetourt County subsequently asked the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation to evaluate the 16-mile length of the James River in Botetourt County from Iron Gate to Eagle Rock for Scenic River Designation as enabled by the Code of Virginia; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Conservation and Recreation conducted the evaluation and determined both sections of the James River meet the criteria for Scenic River designation; and

WHEREAS, the 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 Botetourt County Board of Supervisors supports the formal designation of the extension of the Scenic River designation for the James River from Springwood to the Botetourt/Rockbridge County line, and from Iron Gate to Eagle Rock, and hereby requests the Virginia General Assembly to amend VAC 10.1-413 A, *James River State Scenic River* to this effect.

A Copy TESTE:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gary Larowe", written over a horizontal line.

Mr. Gary Larowe
Botetourt County Administrator



At a regular meeting of the Town Council of the Town of Buchanan held at the Buchanan Town Hall on the 8th day of August 2016 beginning at 7:00 p.m.:

MEMBERS:	VOTE:
Larry R. Hall, Mayor	YES
Sarah Boblett, Vice-Mayor	ABSENT
Diane DiPalma	ABSENT
Della Hylton	YES
Jane Kneisley	YES
Ardelia Smith	YES
Edward Tolley	ABSENT

On motion of Councilmember Della Hylton, which carried by a vote of 4-0, the following was adopted:

**A Resolution
In Support of Extending the Scenic River Designation of the James River
in the Town of Buchanan and Botetourt County and
Request an Amendment to Legislation by the
Virginia General Assembly for Designation**

Whereas, the Town of Buchanan and Botetourt County asked the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) to evaluate the 14-mile length of the James River in Botetourt County from Springwood to the Botetourt / Rockbridge County line to extend the existing designation of this section as a "Scenic River" as enabled by the Code of Virginia; and

Whereas, the Town Council was presented information on the designation process by DCR staff prior to the staff site visit in May 2016; and

Whereas, the Department of Conservation and Recreation conducted the evaluation and determined the extended length of river meets the criteria for extending the James River Scenic River designation; and

Whereas, the Town of Buchanan would like to pursue formal designation through the designation process, which requires a resolution of support from Town Council and a request to the Virginia General Assembly to amend the Code of Virginia to include this extension; and

AT A REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF
ROCKBRIDGE COUNTY, VIRGINIA, HELD AT THE ROCKBRIDGE COUNTY
ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES ON MONDAY, OCTOBER 24, 2016

**Resolution to Request a Portion of the
James River be Designated as a Scenic River**

WHEREAS, the Virginia Scenic Rivers Program was enacted by the Virginia General Assembly in 1970 for the purpose of identification 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, staff from the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation visited the James River and evaluate its eligibility for Scenic River designation; and,

WHEREAS, the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation completed its evaluation and determined that the portion of the James River under review in Rockbridge County was found to qualify as a Virginia Scenic River; and,

WHEREAS, the Virginia Board of Conservation and Recreation supports the endorsement for designation as a Scenic River of a portion of the James River.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rockbridge County Board of Supervisors does hereby support the designation of the portion of the James River which flows through Rockbridge County as Virginia Scenic River; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Rockbridge County Board of Supervisors hereby requests that our General Assembly representatives serve as patrons for the legislation that will codify the Scenic River designation.

Adopted that 24th day of October, 2016.


Recorded Vote:

AYES: Lewis, Ford, Campbell, Higgins

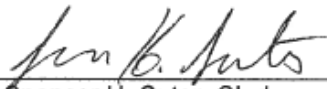
NAYES: None

ABSENT: Hinty

ROCKBRIDGE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

By: 

John M. Higgins, Chairman

Attest: 

Spencer H. Suter, Clerk

AT A REGULAR MEETING OF THE GLASGOW TOWN COUNCIL,
GLASGOW, VIRGINIA, HELD AT GLASGOW TOWN HALL ON
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2016

**Resolution to Request a Portion of the James River
be Designated as a Scenic River**

WHEREAS, the Virginia Scenic Rivers Program was enacted by the Virginia General Assembly in 1970 for the purpose of identification 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, staff from the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation visited the James River and evaluated its eligibility for Scenic River designation; and,

WHEREAS, the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation completed its evaluation and determined that the portion of the James River under review in Rockbridge County was found to qualify as a Virginia Scenic River; and,

WHEREAS, the Virginia Board of Conservation and Recreation supports the endorsement for designation as a Scenic River of a portion of the James River.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Glasgow Town Council does hereby support the designation of the portion of the James River which flows through Rockbridge County as Virginia Scenic River; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Glasgow Town Council hereby requests that our General Assembly representatives serve as patrons for the legislation that will codify the Scenic River designation.

Adopted that 8th day of November, 2016.

Recorded Vote:

AYES: 6

NAYES: 0

ABSENT: 0

GLASGOW TOWN COUNCIL

By: 
Ruby O. Clark, Mayor

Attest: 
William B. Rolfe, Clerk