



REGION **17**
Northern Neck

Introduction

The Northern Neck Recreational Planning Region includes Lancaster, Northumberland, Richmond and Westmoreland, and the towns of Colonial Beach, Irvington, Kilmarnock, Montross, Warsaw and White Stone. The Northern Neck includes farms, forests, tidal wetlands, rivers, streams and marshes. Tourism, outdoor recreation, history and rich natural resources beckon visitors and residents alike eager to escape the stresses of urban life. The Potomac and Rappahannock rivers and the Chesapeake Bay form three of the boundaries for the Northern Neck Recreational Planning Region. There are more than 1,000 miles of shoreline, which comprise 38 percent of the total Tidewater shoreline in Virginia. Wetlands cover 37,890 acres of the region. More than 50 percent of the region’s land area is forested.

Regional Focus

Table 17.1 Most-Needed Outdoor Recreation Opportunities

Northern Neck Recreational Planning Region

activity	% of households in	
	region	state
Parks	48	49
Natural areas	47	54
Water access	47	43
Trails	40	43
Historic areas	33	39
Playing fields, sports and golf facilities	27	22
Scenic drives (driving for pleasure)	25	29

Source: 2017 Virginia Outdoors Demand Survey.

Table 17.2 Top 10 Outdoor Recreation Activities By Participation

Northern Neck Recreational Planning Region

activity	% household
Driving for pleasure	65
Walking for pleasure	64
Visiting natural areas	62
Viewing the water	48
Visiting parks (local, state & national)	45
Sunbathing/relaxing on a beach	44
Saltwater fishing	42
Swimming/beach/lake river (open water)	42
Swimming/outdoor pool	40
Visiting historic areas	38

Source: 2017 Virginia Outdoors Demand Survey. Visit www.dcr.virginia.gov/vop to view regional participation rates for more than 100 activities.

Regional Featured Projects

To be considered a regional featured project, a project must meet at least one of the following criteria:

- Has statewide or regional significance.
- Addresses top statewide or regional needs identified by the Virginia Outdoors Demand Survey.
- Has involvement and support from multiple jurisdictions in the region.
- Able to be initiated within the next five years.

Featured projects for the Northern Neck region:

- Provide new public access, shoreline improvements and marina upgrades at Windmill Point Marina in Lancaster County.
- Construct water trail facilities at the Bush Mill Natural Area Preserve in Northumberland County.
- Provide gravel and low maintenance improvements at Hampton Hall Creek in Northumberland County.



Paddleboarding at Westmoreland State Park | Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation

- Identify and obtain funds for a Monroe Creek boat launch in Westmoreland County.
- Implement a living shoreline at the Farnham Creek Pier and improve accessibility at this site and between Cat Point Creek.
- Support bayside public access as part of the Ditchley Land Conservation.
- Implement the Kilmarnock Town Center to include an amphitheater, playground, picnicking, green space, walking trail, dog park and splash pad.

Outdoor Recreation Economic Impact

Table 17.3 Per-Capita Spending on Parks and Recreation

Northern Neck Recreational Planning Region

locality	dollars
Lancaster County	6.64
Northumberland County	4.09
Richmond County	6.85
Westmoreland County	0.08
Town of Colonial Beach	4.97
Statewide	71.06

Source: Virginia Auditor of Public Accounts, "Comparative Report on Local Government Revenues and Expenditures," 2016.

Table 17.4 Virginia State Parks 2017 Attendance and Economic Impact

Northern Neck Recreational Planning Region

state park	location	overnight visitors	day-use visitors	total visitors	economic impact
Belle Isle	Lancaster County	19,346	23,074	42,420	\$2.0M
Westmoreland	Westmoreland County	77,443	185,736	263,179	\$7.4M

Source: Virginia State Parks



Pier Fishing | Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation

Regional Health

Table 17.5 Health Trends

Northern Neck Recreational Planning Region

locality	adult smoking (% of adults)	adult obesity (% of adults with BMI over 30)	physical inactivity (% of adults age 20 or over reporting no leisure time/ physical activity)	access to exercise opportunities (% population with adequate access to locations for physical activity)	air pollution – particulate matter (micrograms per cubic meter)
Lancaster County	14	30	25	50	8
Northumberland County	14	26	26	36	8
Richmond County	18	30	23	20	8.1
Westmoreland County	17	31	30	7	8.3
Statewide	17	27	21	81	8.7

Source: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation



Canoes | Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation

Outdoor Recreation Interface with Virginia Tourism

The Virginia State Tourism Plan was completed by Virginia Tourism Corp. in March 2013. In 2017, Virginia Tourism compiled “Nature & Outdoors” recommendations in Appendix 13 for each recreation planning region.

Regional Historic Resources

Owing to its more than 1,000 miles of shoreline along the Rappahannock and Potomac rivers as well as the Chesapeake Bay, the Northern Neck region has been a focal point of human settlement for thousands of years. For generations prior to the arrival of European settlers, Native American populations called this area their home. Modern-day archaeologists have defined numerous prehistoric settlements and hunting encampments that depended on the region’s waterways for their survival. After the arrival of English settlers, precursors to the towns of Irvington, Kilmarnock and Colonial Beach became focal points of trade as well as centers for commercial fishing and oyster operations. The area retains the agrarian setting that was established in the early 17th century and the high-style homes of wealthy planters such as Stratford Hall, Mount Airy and Sabine Hall.

Appropriate conservation activities may include installation of highway markers to commemorate historic locations and events, placement of historic properties on the Virginia Landmarks Register

or National Register of Historic Places and placement of historic preservation and open space easements. Conservation targets include: 17th, 18th, 19th and early 20th century dwellings and commercial buildings/districts; historic schools and churches; historic transportation routes and crossroads; and significant prehistoric habitation sites. Information about historic buildings, structures and archaeological sites is maintained in the permanent files of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources and is available to local planners.

Table 17.6 Regional Historic Resources

Northern Neck Recreational Planning Region

resource	location
Historic Christ Church	Lancaster County
Stratford Hall	Westmoreland County
Menokin	Richmond County
Hughlett’s Tavern	Northumberland County
Irvington/Carter’s Creek Historic District	Town of Irvington

Source: Virginia Department of Historic Resources

Land Conservation

Table 17.7 Conserved Lands

Northern Neck Recreational Planning Region

locality	easement acres	ownership acres
Lancaster County	3,336.41	1,346.13
Northumberland County	6,384.01	718.90
Richmond County	7,218.27	5,905.29
Westmoreland County	7,000.68	37,888.29
Total		69,797.98

Source: Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation Protected Lands Inventory

Natural Area Preserves and Natural Heritage Resources

With abundant shoreline along the lower Potomac and Rappahannock rivers and the Chesapeake Bay, the Northern Neck region has very important habitat for a number of coastal species and plant communities. Beaches in the district have populations of the globally rare sea-beach knotweed, federally threatened northeastern beach tiger beetle and least tern nesting colonies. Single populations of Kentucky lady’s slipper, sensitive joint-vetch and Parker’s pipewort are part of the region’s globally rare flora.

DCR recommends that conservation activities and land protection efforts in the region focus on unprotected Essential Conservation Sites and all unprotected portions of Natural Area Preserve resiliency areas. Secondly, strategic land conservation should expand upon existing managed areas and seek connectivity via protecting and/or managing intact ecological cores and natural vegetation cover between currently protected lands. Finally, attention on remaining unprotected natural heritage resources within the region should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

The appropriate conservation activities and methods of protection will vary with each site but may include placing the site on Virginia’s Registry of Natural Areas; developing a voluntary management agreement with the landowner; securing a conservation easement through a local land trust; acquiring the site through a locality or local land trust; dedicating the site as a natural area preserve with the current owner; or acquiring the site as a state-owned natural area preserve.

Conservation targets of special significance in the region include:

- Protection of lands around Hughlett Point and Dameron Marsh natural area preserves
- Sandy beach habitats and associated wetlands and uplands that support the threatened northeastern beach tiger beetle

Information about the location of conservation sites and the natural heritage resources they contain, as well as management assistance, is available to local planners from DCR’s Natural Heritage Program. For more on the Natural Heritage Program, see Chapter 11 and Appendix 11.

Table 17.8 Natural Area Preserves

Northern Neck Recreational Planning Region

preserve name	owner	locality
Bush Mill Stream	DCR	Northumberland County
Dameron Marsh	DCR	Northumberland County
Hickory Hollow	Northern Neck Audubon Society	Lancaster County
Hughlett Point	DCR	Northumberland County

Table 17.9 Natural Heritage Resources

Northern Neck Recreational Planning Region

Number of occurrences of rare species and significant natural communities	64
Number of different rare species and significant community types (natural heritage elements)	42
Number of globally rare natural heritage elements	15
Number of species listed as federally endangered or threatened	4
Number of species listed as state endangered or threatened	4
Number of terrestrial conservation sites identified by DCR	18
Number of conservation sites with little or no protection	10
Number of partially protected conservation sites	6
Number of well protected conservation sites	2

Information as of Feb. 217. 2017. Source: Virginia Natural Heritage Program