



James River Reach

10 Tips to Put the "River" Back in River City

By Ralph Hambrick and Temple Martin

Richmond is in an enviable position. It is blessed with a large number of historic features and has a wild river tumbling through its center. This mix of human and natural history is what one might expect in a more rural setting. Yet here, in Richmond, they are combined...and easily accessible. They make our city distinct and particularly interesting.

Richmond has done much that is right in the past half century to protect the river and position it for a central place in the community. The James River Park System has been established and has grown over the years, so there is now public access to the river that was not available 40 years ago. There

has been steady growth in the boating and fishing on the river. The floodwall has been constructed and the canal walk has been completed, opening the possibility for significant commercial and tourism development. The public portion of Brown's Island, a place that hosts a variety of special events, is clearly a success story. Belle Isle boasts scores of joggers, cyclists, walkers, rock climbers, and sunbathers on a warm spring day.

Still, from many perspectives the river is a hardly noticeable aspect

of the community. A great deal is yet to be done to bring the river to its potential. A recent trip to the Tourist Information Center, for example, found not a single item that focused on the river.

Richmond often looks to other cities for inspiration in designing its future. No doubt there is a good deal that can be learned from the success of places like San Antonio, Pittsburg, and Baltimore. Yet looking elsewhere may blind us to the potential for the James River in Richmond to surpass the riverfronts and waterfronts in other cities.

We can have

- abundant wildlife AND a vibrant downtown
- whitewater boating AND a marina for powerboats and yachts
- a canal walk with waterside cafés AND secluded riverside trails with not a building in sight
- riverside villages AND public access for all citizens
- important historic sites preserved AND brand new architecture
- a tourist destination AND recreational opportunities for the citizens of Richmond.

No city in the country can offer a combination this diverse, this rich, and this attractive.

With both business and government leaders in Richmond interested in increasing the area's share of tourist dollars as we move toward 2007, the 400th anniversary of permanent English settlement, there would seem to be more that adequate incentive to promote the beauty and potential of the James River.

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Missed an issue of the Reach? Past issues are posted on the JRAC website:

www.jamesriveradvisorycouncil.com

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Here are a few specific steps that could be taken just in downtown Richmond. Some are mentioned in the Downtown Plan now being revised; some are not. Some are big dollar items; some could be accomplished at virtually no cost. Some involve guiding private development; some are public undertakings. Full benefits will require a combination of government, business, and community effort.

1. Extend the canal walk to Great Ship Lock Park and then a river walk to the Henrico County line.
2. Restore the locks at Great Ship Locks Park for use; repair or replace the Norfolk Southern Bridge so that boats may pass.
3. Make Chappel Island a more integral part of the river experience with extended access along the river's edge.
4. Develop and maintain a public whitewater boating facility in the downtown area. The downtown location corresponds to the termination of the primary whitewater boating route for canoes, kayaks and rafts.
5. Develop an overall downtown walking path that maximizes the visual access to the river. This will complement and dramatically expand the existing canal walk.
6. Open up Brown's Island so that it gives as much attention to the river as it does to the canal.
7. Extend the current viewing platform and make Brown's Island Dam ad walkway across the river. This will expand the view of the rapids and form an additional pedestrian bridge.
8. Promote the link between the aforementioned walkway (crossing from Canal Walk on the north bank to the Floodwall Walk on the south) and Mayo's Bridge as one of the most dramatic walking circuits in any city in the county.
9. Identify and dedicate view corridors to the river with appropriate restrictions to maintain these corridors over time. One such view would be the view of the river from Libbie Hill Park, reminiscent of the view of Richmond on Thames in England that resulted in the name Richmond.
10. Encourage the development of restaurants and other public gathering places outside of the park that are compatible with the natural surroundings and allow a view of the river (not just the canal).

The bottom line is that the City of Richmond will have a far brighter future in the river is protected and showcased to its potential. The key is to develop a vision of what the river can become that sparks the imagination and support of the community. To become the preeminent riverfront city in the nation should be our aspiration.

Call for Articles

Is there something about the river that you know? Does your organization have an event that may interest our readers? If so, let us know! Contact Dan Caston at 501-5807 or cas12@co.henrico.va.us and we'll work toward getting it published in an upcoming edition of the REACH!

Temple Martin, a local sculptor, is a member of the Board of the Friends of James River Park.

Ralph Hambrick is a professor is the School of Government & Public Affairs at Virginia Commonwealth University and chair, Falls of the James Scenic River Advisory Committee.

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2004 James River Advisory Council Meeting Schedule

January 27, 8:30 a.m.
 April 28, 8:30 a.m.
 July 28, noon
 October 27, 8:30 a.m.

All locations to be determined.

For more information, contact Kim Conley at 748-1567 or conleyk@chesterfield.gov



Snakehead at Maymont?

By Jason Young, Senior Aquarist
Maymont Nature Center



Don't worry, there are no snakehead fish, *Channa sp.*, on display at the Robin's Nature and Visitor Center at Maymont. However, we do have a species named the bowfin that is frequently misidentified as a snakehead. The bowfin, *Amia calva*, is commonly referred to as grindle by the locals and is native to Virginia. It looks similar to the snakehead but can be distinguished by a short anal fin and black spot at the base of its caudal fin.

Snakehead fish are only one of numerous species that have been introduced into Virginia's waterways. As of yet, they have not been found in the James River. However, species such as blue catfish, flathead catfish, bluegill, and largemouth bass have all been introduced into the James from other watersheds. The problem with introducing a non-native species is that it often adversely impacts the indigenous animals or the system to which it has been introduced. The native species must compete with the introduced species for habitat and food.

At the Maymont Foundation, over fifty species of fish that are found in the James River are on display. The Robins Nature and Visitor Center houses an aquarium that depicts the James River as it flows from the fall line in Richmond to the Chesapeake Bay. The fifteen aquatic exhibits also feature a waterfall, river otters, and over ten species of turtles. It is open to the general public Tuesday through Sunday from 12 to 5 pm. For more information regarding these exhibits and others at Maymont Foundation, please call (804)358-7166.

← PICTURE OPPOSITE

The boys in Boy Scout Troop 501 clean-up on the James River and Four Mile Creek at the Deep bottom Boat Landing, in Henrico County on Saturday, October 9. The cleanup was part of the Stewardship Virginia Campaign. For information visit www.dcr.state.va.us/stewardship

Ralph White Honored with the 2004 Spirit of the Sojourn Award

The Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay organizes the James River Sojourn with the expressed purpose of making new friends, paddling into new towns and learning more about the natural order of things related to water. It is a time to celebrate what we love about the river. There are those who do this everyday and it is the purpose of the Spirit of the Sojourn award to recognize their efforts.

Each year, the James River Sojourn planning team selects an individual who has demonstrated a strong commitment to the restoration and protection of the river and tributaries that the Sojourn travels. Ralph White was selected this year as the ***Spirit of the Sojourn*** award recipient.

Ralph has been the James River Park System naturalist in Richmond, Virginia for 20 years and is a true steward of his community and of the James River. He is passionate in his commitment of fostering a conservation ethic in others and continues to strive to increase awareness of the James River Park System and the James River by encouraging residents to take an active role in preservation. "Parks are like art museums... not everybody has to love sculpture and painting to recognize them as works of art. This is a work of art."

Congratulations Ralph!

Falls of the James Scenic River Advisory Committee Schedule

When: Second Thursday of each month
Noon to 2 p.m.

Where: 5th floor of Richmond City Hall
Planning Commission Office
Conference Room

Visitors are welcome. If you would like to receive notification of meeting agendas, please provide your name and e-mail address to rhambric@vcu.edu.

Conservation Easement Along James is Milestone for Chesterfield, Benchmark for Other Local Governments

By Dave Goode

Chesterfield County is protecting a 263-acre tract of woodland along the James River through a development-limiting contract called a conservation easement. A ceremony on Oct. 5 marked this milestone, as Chesterfield County became the first local government in Virginia to protect public property in such a way.

The property, called the Brown & Williamson Conservation Area, is located in the Enon area of Chesterfield County, upriver of Hopewell and the James' junction with the Appomattox River. The site features nearly a mile of shoreline, as well as a small lake surrounded by a mature hardwood forest.

Brown & Williamson Tobacco Corp. (RJ Reynolds Tobacco Co. merged with Brown & Williamson earlier this year) donated the property to the county in 2001.

The conservation easement, which was filed in Chesterfield County Circuit Court immediately following the ceremony at the site, will maintain the site as a natural area. The easement is being co-held by Friends of Chesterfield's Riverfront and the Virginia Outdoors Foundation.

A master plan for the property calls for future public access at the property. The easement allows for the development of facilities to be used for passive recreational and educational activities, such as hiking along trails, wildlife education programs and fishing at the property's lake.

The easement is one of many ways Chesterfield County is working to meet one of its strategic goals, "To be responsible protectors of the environment."

(Easement continued on page 6)

Riparian Buffers 101

Whether you live along a stream, the reservoir or the river, the types of plants best suited for stream or lakeside corridors are important to water quality. The natural areas in these riparian zones, known as Resource Protection Areas, remove pollutants by filtering storm water runoff. In Richmond, parts of Henrico and Chesterfield County, most of these areas are protected under the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance.

Before embarking on a restoration project it is a good idea to consult with the Department of Conservation and Recreation who can give insight into which species of plants will be most appropriate to your shoreline, stream or river bank. A good design offers a variety of species and may include a mix of trees such as river birch, willow oak, white ash, sycamore, swamp chestnut and shrubs including alder, osier dogwood and buttonbush. Plants commonly used in riparian buffer projects include *dawny shadblow* or *serviceberry*, *yaupon holly*, *oakleaf hydrangea*, *Virginia sweetspire*, *sweetbay magnolia*, *arrowwood viburnum*, *highbush blueberry* and *rhododendron*.

When completing a restoration, it is a good idea to protect the tender saplings from grazing deer with tree tubes while mats decrease the competition from other vegetation allowing the trees and shrubs to mature thus increasing survivability.

Copies of designs and plant lists from various completed projects are available to interested residents by e-mailing riverfronts@earthlink.net.



Promoting "Green Roofs" within Chesapeake Bay Watershed

Green roofs are valuable for managing storm water runoff in addition to reducing heat island effects in urban areas. These benefits are becoming more important as the amount of paved surfaces continues to increase in developing areas. The Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay (Alliance) hopes to accelerate the green roof movement within the greater Richmond area through a promotional contest aimed at commercial and multi-residential facilities.

Thanks to a grant recently received from the Environmental Protection Agency's Chesapeake Bay Program through the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, the Alliance is coordinating a green roof challenge grant contest within the central portion of Virginia's Chesapeake Bay watershed to encourage the construction of green roofs for the improvement of water quality. The Alliance is offering up to \$28,000 towards the construction costs of a green roof(s) that can serve as a demonstration site following its completion. The constructed green roof, sometimes referred to as a living or eco-roof, will then serve as a demonstration of an innovative low impact development storm

water management practice that is practical within urban settings, minimizes impervious cover for new development, and reduces the impacts of existing impervious cover.

For more information about this green roof demonstration pilot project, please contact the Alliance's Richmond office at (804) 775-0951 or feel free to e-mail smeyer@acb-online.org or smoulds@acb-online.org. Also, for more general information about the Alliance and its other programs and activities, please visit www.alliancechesbay.org

Reach Editor:

Dan Caston

**Assistant Editors: Sue Cecil and Louise
Burke**

**Layout and design: Dan Caston
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Living History Encampment at Drewry's Bluff

Richmond National Battlefield Park concluded its series of 2004 Living History events by holding an encampment at Drewry's Bluff on October 9 and 10. Volunteers representing Confederate marines and sailors were on hand throughout the weekend to discuss military life and the role of the fort during the Civil War.

Drewry's Bluff was considered "a perfect Gibraltar" along the James River, protecting the city of Richmond during the Civil War. Through the course of the war it served as an instruction camp for the Confederate Marine Corps, as well as home to midshipmen of the Confederate Naval Academy.

Drewry's Bluff is one of 12 Civil War sites protected by Richmond National Battlefield Park around the city of Richmond, Virginia. The site is located south of Richmond, off of Jefferson Davis Highway (Route 1) at Bellwood Road in Chesterfield County. All programs are free. For further information, visit the National Park Service headquarters at Chimborazo Park or call 226-1981.

Reflections...



Whitney Goddard –First Place
Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay
2004 James River Sojourns Art Contest

Governor Warner Goes To The River

When you are asked to take the Governor of Virginia, the Lieutenant Governor, and their families on a white water rafting trip down the mighty James as it flows through Richmond, you have a challenge on your hands. The challenge was accepted by Buzz Kraft, owner of the Richmond Raft Company when he was approached by the office of the Governor and the Virginia Tourism Corporation to conduct such a trip.

It sounded quite simple, at first, to this veteran of the river. The plan was to take Governor Mark Warner, Lt. Governor Tim Kaine, their families and an unknown number of media people rafting...not a problem! Then came the addition of the Governor's security force, the State Police Dive Team, the City of Richmond's River Rescue Team, land-based media people, a river that could be at any level on the appointed day, and the need to adhere to a very strict time schedule. Plans also had to be made for shuttling the land-based (non-rafting) media people ahead of the rafts so they would be in position at each significant photo/interview opportunity.

August 27th turned out to be a beautiful day and the River was at an ideal level. The State Police Dive Team and the City of Richmond's River Rescue Team were strategically placed in case of need (Richmond Raft Company has never had a serious injury of fatality in its 16 years of operation). At the Raft Headquarters, the rafting media, security people and the special guests were given a river safety



briefing by their rafting guides, fitted with the appropriate gear, and then put aboard buses for the trip to the landing at James River Park.

The trip consisted of four rafts, two for Governor Warner and Lt. Governor Kaine and their families and two for the media that were rafting along for photo opportunities. Everyone paddled down river through mild rapids and some flat water to get the feel of the raft before shooting Hollywood Rapids, the first class VI rapid of the trip. There the fun began. The Media Rafts went ahead to allow photographers to get in place before other the rafts ran the big drop. As the Governor's raft came through, his daughter, to her embarrassment, fell out - a great photo opportunity. Sarah Ramsey, the guide in the raft, quickly swept her back into the raft and, after several high fives by the crew, the trip continued down river to the take out on Belle Island.

Once on shore, with the Richmond skyline in the background, the Governor and Lt. Governor talked about how important such a unique thing as being able take a raft ride through the middle of our city is to promoting tourism both in the City and the Commonwealth and, consequently, to benefiting our economy.

Rocketts Landing Project Moves Ahead

The 30 acres of industrial land along the James just east of the city line are about to undergo a radical change. On October 14th, the Henrico County Planning Commission unanimously approved the proposed Village of Rocketts Landing a mixed use luxury waterfront development to be built along route five. Ultimately, the Village is to have 972 residential units including condominiums, town houses and apartments and 182,000 feet of office and retail space. The plan also calls for a 176-slip marina as well as some small parks and walkways. The next step is to take the proposal before the Henrico Board of Supervisors for consideration and if they approve, the developers hope to start building the first segment of the Village in 2005.

(Easement continued from page 4)

The Brown & Williamson Conservation Area is located downriver from another Chesterfield County preserve, the Dutch Gap Conservation Area, an 810-acre tract beside the historic 1611 Citie of Henricus, the second permanent English settlement in the New World.

Member Focus-Ralph Hambrick

"River Rat" has become a proud name for James River Conservationists. A leading member of the clan is Ralph Hambrick, Chairman of the Falls of the James Scenic River Advisory Committee. Created under the Scenic River Act in 1972, this committee monitors any changes in the James as it flows through Richmond in order to preserve the river and its banks and islands in their natural state. Dr. Hambrick is also a professor, teaching public policy and Administration in the L. Douglas Wilder School of Government & Public Affairs at Virginia Commonwealth University.



Dr. Hambrick is a native Virginian, but spent his teen years in Sarasota Florida. He is a graduate of Dartmouth College and received his PhD from Syracuse University. Between college and graduate school, he spent two years in Nepal with the Peace Corps, teaching Math and English. Before moving to Richmond in 1978, he taught at Texas A&M for 6 years and at the University of South Carolina for one year.

Initially, it was his grandfather got him interested in river life by taking him canoeing on the New River, but it was a Texas A&M that he was really hooked. Influenced by the book "Deliverance", he took a group of students canoeing down the Rio Grande. After receiving a Certificate of Achievement from the American Canoe Association, he bought his own canoe which he still owns. A versatile waterman, he has also served as a guide for the Richmond Rafting Association.

In the mid nineties, he got involved in teaching environmental policy which led directly to involvement with the James River. Today, his volunteer work includes teaching groups canoeing skills, leading canoeing trips on various Virginia rivers and being an active participant on a number of River organizations such as The Virginia Outdoor Coalition, Friends of James River Park, The Coastal Canoeists and The Virginia Scenic River Board.

He says his most notable achievement is having spotted the first (and maybe the only) manatee ever seen in the James River in Richmond.

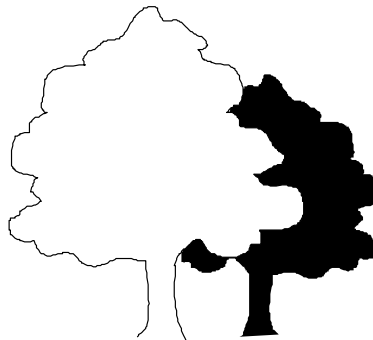
Richmond Tree Inventory Update

The City of Richmond has an estimated 200,000 trees on its property but no record of their species, size, age or condition. That situation is changing with the start this summer of the City's first comprehensive inventory of its street trees, starting with Monument Avenue and the Fan District.

Using handheld computers loaded with Geographic Information System (GIS) street maps, information is being entered about each tree. To date, 1301 trees have been assessed and recorded, nearly half of them sugar maples.

"The inventory will help us determine which species to plant," said City Arborist Peter Girardi. "We'll find out which ones we are overplanting, which

ones are raising the sidewalks with their roots and which ones aren't thriving in an urban environment.



"And we'll find out which ones are doing just fine."

The city hopes to eventually inventory not only street trees but those on other properties and in its parks, using some staff and many volunteers. The Fan inventory is supported with a grant from the Historic Monument Avenue and Fan District Foundation and the technology with two Urban and Community Forestry grants from the state.

JAMES RIVER REGIONAL CLEANUP IS ONLY GETTING BETTER!

The James River Regional Cleanup, coordinated by JRAC, has grown steadily from year to year. This year saw an increase in the number of sites cleaned covering over 50 miles of river in 7 different jurisdictions. Together, we pulled out 324 bags of trash and 269 bags of recyclable materials. Eighty-one tires were removed from the river—an increase of 50% from last year. We also saw a shift in participants. In particular, this year saw a 150% increase in the number of boats assisting in the cleanup.

With all of the success of the Cleanup, one would think future initiatives would simply mirror current methods. Not so. Changes are in the future for the cleanup.

In early October, cleanup site coordinators met to discuss the future of the Cleanup. During the meeting, the team brainstormed ideas for improvements to existing sites, expansion to new areas, and challenges that will need to be addressed.

Improvements to Existing Sites:

Proposed changes to existing sites include the integration of Varina Day, a community celebration in eastern Henrico County, with the Osborne Landing cleanup site, lending more of a “river festival” feel to the day. This would benefit both organizations. Another option is for site coordinators to identify hot spots that change from year to year. Ironically, the success of past cleanups has sparked this need!

Expansion to New Areas:

One idea for expansion would rename the initiative the “James River Watershed Cleanup” which broadens the scope and paves the way to include streams and tributaries. The obvious challenge with this concept is access to the tributaries on private property. The solution? Integration of the Adopt-A-Stream program run by Virginia’s Department of Conservation and Recreation. Another idea is to expand the cleanup to a longer period of time with the traditional cleanup becoming a “banner day” to kick off or end the initiative. This would partly be facilitated through better use of the JRAC website and listing cleanups taking place during the designated time period.

Other expansion discussion revolved around the need to invite non-English speaking communities. This will be the biggest challenge yet due to differences in cultural views on how the river should be treated. The solution will most likely include various outreach and educational programs and literature. Additionally, it will require a shift in how JRAC functions. An example is that all forms of registration require written or spoken English.

Challenges:

Challenges to consider include money and distribution of resources such as supplies and manpower. To this end, the meeting wrapped up by generating an exhaustive list of organizations that may be invited to partner with JRAC as we expand the scope of the Cleanup. This will be critical to success. By partnering with other organizations, it will be possible to spread the responsibilities for each individual site out as well as leverage the collective clout to aid in generating sponsorships. We all know that this project is not possible without volunteers and partnerships—it’s a founding principle of JRAC!

Conclusion:

For five years, the Regional Cleanup has been one of the flagships of the James River Advisory Council. The future looks very bright for this truly regional initiative. As we enter this next phase, we must keep in mind the goal—a cleaner river not only for the future but for the present as well!





Parade of Lights: Cruising the Galaxy

Join us on Saturday, December 11 as JRAC sponsors the 12th Annual James River Parade of Lights, a bright and beautiful holiday evening on the river. The boat parade was cancelled last year due to Hurricane Isabel. We are excited that there will be approximately 20 boaters that will be "Cruising the Galaxy" down the James River. Viewers will have 4 popular spots to enjoy a spirited boat parade from the Intermediate Terminal in Richmond to the Varina -Enon Bridge in Henrico.

The boats will gather below Libby Hill Park where, at dusk, viewers will begin the countdown for start of the Grand Illumination! Entertainment and refreshments will be available at designated sites. Arrive early for parking and festivities and don't forget to carry a flashlight and bring binoculars!

City of Richmond

Libby Hill Park – Festivities begin at 4:30 p.m.
Countdown begins at 6:00 p.m.

Dock Street – no formal activities.

Henrico County

Osborne Boat Landing – Festivities begin at 5:30 p.m.
Parade viewing expected between 7:00-7:30 p.m.

Chesterfield County

Dutch Gap Boat Landing – Festivities begin at 5:30 p.m.
Parade viewing expected between 7:15-7:45 p.m.

The Bluff at Henricus Historical Park – Festivities begin at 5:30 p.m.
Parade expected between 7:30-8:00 p.m.

For more information, visit www.jamesriveradvisorycouncil.com or call 804-717-6681.

www.jamesriveradvisorycouncil.com
Phone:804/748-1567
Chesterfield, VA 23832
P.O. Box 40



The Fall/Early Winter James River Fishing Report

The fall and early winter fishing outlook on the tidal James River, from the City of Richmond to Hopewell, offers some of the best fishing of the year. The blue catfish action is great right now and will get even better as the water temps drop into the 50's and 40's. It is at this point that the blue cats, which can weight upward of 70 lbs., begin to feed heavily on gizzard shad. Look for these big fish in just about any water depth, from 50' or more to as little as 3'. A state citation is available from the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries for any blue catfish release of 34" or more in length. Remember to practice CPR with your blue catfish...catch, photograph, and release.

Migratory striped bass have begun to move into this stretch of the river. The season for striped bass runs from October 4, 2004 through December 31, 2004. These fish are delicious table fare and can be prepared any number of ways... from baked or broiled to fried or grilled...the choice is yours. The regulations for keeping striped bass in this stretch of the river are a limit of two fish per person per day and must be between 18" to 28" in length. One of the allowed two fish can be longer than 28" in length.

Look for striped bass on river flats just off the main channel. The best spots will have good tidal current moving across the flat. River flats can be 3' to 15' deep. I like to use cut gizzard shad fished on the bottom of a flat, but lures like Rattle Traps and curly tailed grubs also work great.

Other fishing opportunities in the tidal James River include crappie, flathead catfish, largemouth bass, gar and carp... but the best fishing opportunities over the next couple of months will be for the blue catfish and striped bass. If you have any questions on fishing the James River, feel free to contact me. Thanks, take care, and Happy Fishing!



Mike Ostrander, *James River Fishing School*, 804-938-2350 or mike@jamesriverfishing.com