

Rivanna River Basin Commission
Executive Committee Meeting Agenda
June 13th, 2025, from 11:00 AM to 12:00 P.M.
Location: Microsoft Teams (Virtual Meeting)

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Meeting ID: 242 304 907 646 **Passcode:** gj7bq7wn

(for Remote Participation in Compliance with All-Virtual Meeting Policy, Guest Speakers,
and Members of Public)

Item	Time	Description
1	11:00 – 11:05	Call to Order, Attendance
2	11:05 – 11:07	Approval of Agenda*
3	11:07 – 11:10	Comments from the Public: limit of 3 minutes per speaker Public are welcome to provide comment on Rivanna River Basin related topics.
4	11:10 – 11:35	RRBC Annual Conference Planning & Engagement
5	11:35 – 11:45	Hardware River Scenic Designation
6	11:45 – 12:00	Roundtable <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Local Updates- Items for next meeting
7	12:00	Adjourn

*Items that require action

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2025 Rivanna River Basin Annual Conference

The Rivanna River Basin Conference presents topics that promote the management and continued care of the Rivanna watershed. The goal of the RRBC is to inform the public, local leaders, and other interested organizations to learn about recent changes and future programs for the basin. It is a priority of the RRBC to host an event that promotes improved communication between the public, local governments in the basin, and environmental organizations.

Topic: Resilience, Innovation, and Responsible Growth as it relates to:

- Water Supply Planning
- Data Centers
- Drought Resilience

Date: Wednesday, September 24th, 2025

Venue: The Center at Belvedere, Auditorium A

Registration Fee: \$10 - \$15 (Hosted on EventBrite)

Proposed Schedule

9:00-9:30am	Rental begins, event setup
9:30-10:00am	Event begins; breakfast is available
10:00-10:15am	Welcome
10:15-10:50am	Keynote speaker (35 minutes)
10:50-11:30am	Speaker 1 (40 minutes)
11:30-11:50am	Networking and tabling break
11:50-12:30pm	Speaker 2 (40 minutes)
12:30-1:20pm	Lunch and networking break
1:20-2:00pm	Speaker 3 (40 minutes)
2:00-2:40pm	Speaker 4 (40 minutes)
2:40-3:00pm	Closing remarks; clean up
3:30pm	Rental ends

Scenic Rivers Background

The Virginia Scenic Rivers Program was established in 1970 to honor exceptional examples of the state's extensive network of over 49,000 miles of rivers and streams. This initiative has continued to grow, safeguarding Virginia's waterways for several key reasons:

- Rivers and streams are vital sources of drinking water, recreational opportunities, wildlife habitats, commercial resources, and scenic beauty.
- Traditional river access points are disappearing as agricultural lands are converted to residential areas, with new property owners often restricting public access.
- Scenic river designation fosters greater public appreciation for the importance of rivers among Virginians.

Managed collaboratively by the state, citizens, and local governments, the program aims to enhance the conservation of scenic rivers and their surrounding areas. Rivers and streams awarded this designation are celebrated for their scenic, recreational, historical, and natural characteristics by community groups, localities, the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), and the Virginia General Assembly.

In order to gain designation, local residents and state representatives evaluate rivers according to program criteria to determine whether or not river segments are worthy. This is done only after each locality adjacent to the river segment requests the study. Once the river is found worthy, the locality must then have its local legislators present a bill to the General Assembly, which then passes a resolution adopting the river into the system of scenic rivers.

The Virginia Scenic Rivers Program protects scenic rivers and streams and provides an opportunity to consider scenic and other resources in planning and design. The program promotes the protection of rivers with scenic, recreational, historic, and natural attributes. Additionally, if adopted locally, properties along designated scenic rivers may qualify for special tax assessments to lower their tax burden.

Benefits of Scenic River Designation

Scenic River Designation Process

- Provides opportunities to consider scenic and other resources in planning and design.
- Focuses Federal Energy Regulation Commission reviews of hydro or related project proposals.
- Encourages closer review of projects and proposals by state agencies and localities.
- Requires General Assembly authorization for dam construction.
- Provides for continued existing appropriate riparian land uses.
- Provides framework for appointment of a local Scenic River Advisory Committee.
- Provides eligibility for land use tax considerations, if locally adopted.

The following steps are taken in the designation of a candidate river segment.

1. A local governing board asks DCR to study a river segment.
2. DCR conducts a preliminary study to see if the segment meets minimum criteria. If so, DCR further studies the segment for eligibility with local support.
3. If deemed eligible, the locality accepts DCR's report and passes a resolution endorsing designation of the qualifying river segment.
4. The local board has a state legislator sponsor a bill to designate the river segment scenic.

Virginia Scenic Rivers Program

Evaluation Criteria

Stream Corridor Vegetation	Wide buffers with tree canopies are significantly weighted criteria.
Streambed or Stream Flow Modifications	Because the intent of the program is to keep designated rivers in a native or natural state, significant channelization or impoundments of any kind negatively impact the scenic quality of the river.
Human Development of Visual Corridor	Development impacts on the river are scored in two parts. (1) The development related to the concentration of buildings in predominately urban areas as they are observed from the river. (2) This is for predominantly rural areas, where single residences or groupings are seen as separate individual units or clusters. <i>Higher scores are a result of having no urban development and no visible buildings.</i>
Historic Features	Rivers were the primary transportation corridors in early America. <i>Historic features in the river viewshed improve score</i> , especially if they are on the National Register of Historic Places.
Landscape	When the term “scenic” is used, it is most frequently applied to the natural environment or landscape. Here, two specific attributes – (1) <i>diversity</i> and (2)

	views – are identified and considered for scoring along the proposed river section.
Quality of Fishery	Fish and wildlife assets along a scenic river are important because of their intrinsic and recreational value. The quality of fish in a river corridor is based on the abundance of recreational varieties, the number of varieties, the uniqueness of the varieties, and opportunities along the river for legal fishing.
Additional Natural Features	This section refers to the wildlife and plants along the corridor. Data from the Natural Heritage Data Explorer is used to identify species of statewide or greater significance that are present along the corridor. Additional points may be granted for the presence of plant or animal species within 1,000 feet of the river.
Water Quality	Water quality is based on <i>the visible turbidity or siltation</i> during the growing season and the <i>amount of liter</i> in and adjacent to the river corridor.
Parallel Roads	The scenic river designation process considers the perceived remoteness of the river corridor. Since many of Virginia's rivers were major transportation routes, roads often followed the rivers. <i>How visible the roads are is key to a high rating the parallel roads.</i>
Crossings	This refers to roads, railroads, major telephone lines, transmission lines, and any other manmade structure that crosses over the river. Pipelines and other crossings that go under the riverbed <i>are</i>

	<i>not</i> seen from the river are not counting in the scoring.
Special Features Affecting Aesthetics	The purpose of this category is to list all the stream and corridor features that singly or in combination make the river resource visually attractive.
Overall Aesthetic Appeal	<i>An overall aesthetic appeal rating considers all of the special features</i> and then a score is applied. A river or segment with an exceptional ranking would have many features, a high level of diversity, and extreme or dramatic contrasts.
Public Recreational Access	During the evaluation, reviewers will record specific types of <i>water-based recreation</i> that occur on the river segment, such as boating, fishing, swimming, tubing, and body surfing.
Significant Permanent Protection	Special consideration is given to river segments where at least 25% of adjacent land is in significant permanent protection.

WHAT SCENIC RIVER DESIGNATION DOES

- Designation encourages protection and preservation of the river.
- Designation declares the protection of a river's scenic values to be a beneficial purpose of water resource policy.
- Designation allows for a local administering committee that can be appointed by the Director of Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR).
- Designation requires the Board of Conservation and Recreation (BCR), whose members are appointed by the Governor, to advise the Director of DCR on the federal, state, or local plans that impact the designated river segment and to give local citizens a voice in river-related issues.
- After designation, the General Assembly must approve construction of any dam that would result in an impediment to the natural flow of the river.
- For properties along designated rivers, a special tax assessment may be given to reduce the tax liability, as valued by the State and Land Evaluation Advisory Council, if adopted by the locality.
- The Federal Energy Regulator Commission (FERC) recognizes Virginia's designated Scenic River System. This acknowledgement of the program ensures that the qualities of the designated river are considered during licensing or relicensing of federal projects on or crossing designated rivers.
- Designation allows for lands along designated corridors to receive grant funds.

WHAT SCENIC RIVER DESIGNATION DOES NOT DO

- Designation *does not* give the state control over land use.
- Designation carries with it *no* land use controls.
- Designation *does not* give the public any right to use privately owned land.
- Virginia *does not* commercially promote its scenic rivers.

Overall, Scenic River designation constitutes official recognition of the natural, scenic, historic, and recreational values of some of Virginia's most valuable riverine resources and provides them with a measure of protection not afforded other rivers. Additionally, it gives riparian landowners and other local citizens a stronger voice in any government action or decisions that have the potential to impact "their" river.