

**SUMMARY OF THE
HAMPTON ROADS REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE
JULY 3, 2025 at 10:00 A.M.
CHESAPEAKE, VA**

1. Summary of the June 5, 2025, Meeting of the Hampton Roads Regional Environmental Committee (REC)

The summary and attendance of the June 2025 meeting were included in the agenda. There were no edits.

2. Southern Rivers Roundtable

Kit Friedman, Crater Planning District Commission, provided an overview of the recent convening of the Southern Rivers Roundtable. The Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and the Albermarle-Pamlico National Estuary Partnership (APNEP) support the Roundtable in an effort to bring more awareness to the Southern Rivers since much attention is focused on waterways in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Localities within this watershed are under-resourced and under-staffed so the Roundtable was formed in an effort to pool resources and technical assistance to address environmental concerns in the Southern Rivers.

There are four main committees that the Roundtable is broken up into, Water Quality, Flood Resilience, Outdoor Recreation, and Land Conservation. The group is meeting quarterly and are close to finalizing their first Strategic Plan. Within each topic there are several goals to work towards, with the main theme being lack of capacity to achieve most of the goals.

Several projects are already underway including a feasibility study for fish passage at the oldest dam in Virginia. The Nottaway Blueway Master Plan was developed to explore outdoor recreation opportunities and develop some design plans for potential future boat launches and access points.

There was a suggestion for the Roundtable to consider Sentinel Landscape funding as a portion of the watershed overlaps with the Tidewater Sentinel Landscape in Virginia. There may also be opportunities to leverage funding if there are projects that would benefit DoD facilities. HRPDC staff have been attending and collaborating with the Roundtable so there is crossover between the localities in each PDC.

3. The State of the James: 50 Years of Watershed Progress

Justin Doyle, James River Association (JRA), described the latest findings from the State of the James Report. The report card is published every two years with the most recent published in 2023 and can be viewed at [JRA's website](#). There are 18 indicators that are tracked to assess progress towards achieving restoration goals. Overall, the river has been resilient over time with slight increases in the scores. There are other metrics tracked that evaluate the benefits of a healthy river include benefits for drinking water, riverside park visitation, seafood production, hunting and fishing licenses, and public river access. These metrics provide a clear understanding of the societal and economic benefits of river restoration.

Stormwater controls are also considerably lower than they should be according to the report. New development is outpacing our stormwater best management practices implementation.

JRA continues to track this challenge and recommend green infrastructure as a solution to address urban stormwater concerns.

American shad abundance continues to trend downwards and there are multiple factors causing its decline including water quality and habitat, dams, water intakes, predation, and bycatch. Three non-native blue catfish that were introduced as sportfish have been a major contributor to the decline of American shad and other migratory fish. Commercial harvesting is one incentive to keep the blue catfish population in check. There was a suggestion that policy changes can also be made through the General Assembly to improve the shad population.

There was also mention of the JRA living shoreline collaborative, and there are opportunities to obtain funding to implement living shorelines.

There was a question about where the metrics for tidal water quality and stream health come from. JRA tracks dissolved oxygen, turbidity, and other factors that are listed in the report card for water quality. Stream health is tracked through data collected by VA DEQ on benthic invertebrates. There was another question about tracking combined sewer overflows (CSOs) and that is being addressed through Richmond's city-wide plan. Projects are being implemented to address volume-overflow events and larger-scale projects will be funded to address them in the future. There was also some discussion on opportunities to experience the James via camping and there is a [tool](#) to find more information.

4. James River Land Improvements

Hampton Roads Sanitation District (HRSD), in partnership with Newport News, designed and constructed a new multi-use trails project in Riverview Farm Park as part of the James River Treatment Plant development for SWIFT. Lauren Zuravnsky, HRSD, and Richard Watt, VHB, provided an overview of the project. The project recently received a Governor's Environmental Excellence Gold Medal Award.

HRSD provided an overview of SWIFT and the construction of the James River Treatment Plant. The trails were developed with Newport News to blend resource protection with infrastructure needs. Riverview Farm Park had a trail system, but this partnership has allowed them to expand the trails and boardwalks and preserve as much existing vegetation as possible. The project will be finalized in 2026.

Community involvement was very robust and input was provided by the neighboring community and used in the planning and development of the trails system.

5. Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement

Dr. KC Filippino, HRPDC, briefed the Committee on the [proposed revisions](#) to the 2014 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement. It has been widely accepted that many of the metrics proposed in the 2014 Agreement won't be achieved by the 2025 deadline that was set, a Beyond 2025 initiative was launched in 2022. This initiative has led to two tasks that the partnership needed to undertake: 1) revise the Bay agreement and 2) revisit the governance and structure of the partnership. The Vision, Preamble, Principles, Goals, and Outcomes have all been revised and are available for public feedback, and the governance and structure will be revised over the course of the next year.

The biggest changes have been to the goals and outcomes, there were 10 goals and the draft proposes 4. And there were 31 outcomes and the draft proposes 21. Much of the changes are due to consolidation of the existing outcomes and a recognition that there is much more overlap in the goals and outcomes. Members of the Committee were encouraged to review the draft and reach out if they would like HRPDC staff to submit comments.

6. Climate Action Plan Update

HRPDC has developed [draft measures and actions](#) for the region's first Climate Action Plan. A survey is available to review the draft actions and prioritize them within each sector. Committee members are encouraged to review the draft actions and [take the survey](#).

7. Other Business

No other business was discussed.