

1 - Introduction

The Shenandoah River flows through the heart of the Northern Shenandoah Valley. The North Fork moves north through Shenandoah County, paralleled by the South Fork in Page County. Both forks come together at Riverton in Warren County to form the Main Stem that continues north through Clarke County. These four river counties demonstrated their concern for this regional resource by making appointments to the Shenandoah River Recreational Use Management Plan Working Committee requested September 1, 1999 by the Lord Fairfax Planning District Commission.

History

Both the popularity and intensity of recreational use of the Shenandoah River in the region has grown since the 1970's when the area first felt growth impacts from the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area population as well as began to experience its own growth. The scenic beauty of the area became an attraction factor and remains strong today. In 1992, Page County was faced with use conflicts relating to the George Washington National Forest lands, boating use on the South Fork and riparian landowners. A Multiple Objective River Corridor Management process (MORC) was undertaken. Informational meetings were held which brought together farmers, fishermen, canoe outfitters and agency representatives which led to cooperative actions that defused that local situation. A plan was recommended to Page County for adoption. No action was taken.

In 1998, with the planned opening of the Raymond R. "Andy" Guest, Jr. State Park in Warren County, the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) encouraged development of a plan for the area of the river it expected to impact and offered meeting facilitation assistance to the Lord Fairfax Planning District Commission. The Commission accepted that offer and sponsored the March 16, 1998 meeting that led to formation of the Ad Hoc Shenandoah River Recreational Use Management Steering Committee (Steering Committee).

This effort was included in the Strategic Plan of the Northern Shenandoah Valley Regional Partnership as a Regional Tourism Destination Program, Appendix A.

Steering Committee work progressed through 1999. Focusing on recreational use, DCR staff facilitated public meetings held in each river county to determine the nature and extent of river issues and conflicts. Attendance ranged from 20 to 60 individuals and there was significant citizen input about the misuse by all segments of river users. Given the concerns of riparian landowners as well as other river use stakeholders, the Planning District Commission requested localities directly appoint members to the Working Committee.

The objective proposed to the Working Committee was to produce a recreational use plan that proposes action on priority issues. The issues presented in alphabetical order below, was originally developed by the Steering Committee:

- Access Sites
- Commercial Use of River
- General Management of the Watershed
- Hunting
- Networking Among Agencies/Gov
- Noise Pollution
- Private Property Rights
- Public Safety/Emergency Response Law Enforcement
- Riparian Destruction
- Roads and Traffic
- The Fishery
- Trash
- User Education and Information
- Wildlife Protection

Appointments were completed as of January 2000. In order to accommodate the different levels of interest in the four counties, the original proposal of five members per county was modified by the Planning District Commission to allow each County to appoint as many members as it wished, however, each county would have a single vote relative to approval of the Working Committee report.

Working Committee Methodology

The Committee first convened February 23, 2000 in Front Royal. Pam Frese, Community Planner presented an overview of the stakeholder concept and a consensus process for the Committee's work. Ms. Jackie Leggett agreed to be Secretary. At the second meeting, March 22, a Co-Chair was selected by each County and the full Committee voted to select a chairman from the overall

group. At the April 26 meeting, the Committee chose to consider the list of initial issues through sub-committees. The final organization follows.

Sub-Committee Name	Topic areas
Accommodations	Roads-Access Points, Camping, Sanitation, Trash and Litter
Public Safety and Law Enforcement	Public Safety, Emergency Response, Law Enforcement, Noise Pollution
Education	Safety Education, User Information, Outdoor Ethics Education
Natural Resources	Wildlife Protection, Riparian Destruction, Quality of fishery/fishing, Hunting, Water Quality and Quantity
River Use	Commercial Use of River, Individual/ private group use of river
Background	Laws, Agency Responsibilities, Liability

The Committee elected to meet monthly through the summer. Meetings focused on the review of Sub-Committee progress reports. In order to develop a method for reaching agreement on the committee report. The Co-Chairs and Committee leaders met with facilitators from the University of Virginia and the Department of Housing and Community Development. This led to the adoption of Ground Rules for Committee work and the Committee's Mission Statement at the August 23, 2000 meeting. The Committee developed a mission statement to use as a guide for completing its work.

MISSION STATEMENT: Recommend an appropriate plan for recreational use on the Shenandoah River which balances competing interests and establishes structure for future-use decisions.

The report which follows brings together the recommendations of the Sub-Committees into an action document for the Counties of Clarke, Page, Shenandoah and Warren to utilize the cooperative local, state and federal resources of the region to benefit its citizens, riparian land owners, and all recreational users of the Shenandoah River. The Committee recommends that this report be forwarded to jurisdictions upstream and downstream of the planning district.

2 – Shenandoah River Use Committee

The primary recommendation of the Working Committee is that the region needs a formal group tasked with carrying forward the recommendations of this Committee. Given the acknowledgment within the Northern Shenandoah Valley about the economic value of tourism and recreational use of the Shenandoah River and its prominence in the Northern Shenandoah Valley Regional Partnership Strategic Plan, this is an important investment of resources.

Proposed name: Shenandoah River Use Committee (SRUC)

Purpose: The Shenandoah River Use Committee will further research and develop the recommendations from the Working Committee as presented in this report. The River Use Committee can advise the respective Boards of Supervisors on options for cooperative implementation of consensus recommendations from the Working Committee, such as an uniform Noise Ordinance demonstrating to river users the seamless standards for behavior on the river. In addition, the Shenandoah River Use Committee could serve as a clearinghouse for other governmental and non-government organizations (NGO), relative to implementation of proposed programs affecting recreational use of the Shenandoah River.

The Shenandoah River Use Committee will also work with private interests and local, state, federal government entities to discover where future issues lie (such as jurisdiction and implementation issues, etc.). The Committee will work with these agencies to facilitate decisions in order to implement actions on these new items. Memorandums of agreement/understanding among and between agencies, organizations and local government are anticipated as the primary means by which recommendations would be implemented.

Membership: Each river county Board of Supervisors will appoint up to 4 members representing local stakeholder groups in order to provide representation of the many “diverse interests” of river users and landowners. Related agencies, such as the Department of Conservation and Recreation, Department of Game and Inland Fisheries and National Forest Service would have the option of appointing ex-officio, non-voting members.

Term: Appointments would be for two years, with initial terms staggered as one year and two year. Terms of office will be for one year.

Meetings: All River Use Committee meetings would be open to the public.

Staffing: The Lord Fairfax Planning District Commission is a logical starting point for the provision of staff support as well as serving as the initial fiscal agent.

Funding: Support from the Northern Shenandoah Valley Regional Partnership should continue at \$20,000 annually. Localities would need to agree and support the LFPDC with a per capita investment. In addition, Five cents per capita on a year 2000 population for the River Counties of 106,796 would raise \$5,340. From this base, the River Use Committee would seek grant and foundation support to implement recommendations.

Future: Working with river county boards of supervisors, town governments, as well as with other government agencies, and, NGOs the River Use Committee may recommend the next logical steps for structuring river management (e.g., participation with a Shenandoah River Basin Commission; development of a separate implementation committee; creation of a 501(c)(3); or no action.)

Committee Limits:

Excluded from the Shenandoah River Use Committee functions:
taking legislative actions or lobbying outside the framework provided by local governments in its local and regional legislative programs;
serving as an advocate (individual members could be advocates for a specific cause, but they must not intimate that they represent the River Use Committee).

Sunset clause: The initial River Use Committee should have a sunset provision for the fifth year, whereby extension of the Committee for a further term requires action by local governments.

The recommendations by topic area are set out in sections.

- 3. Education
- 4. Accommodations
- 5. Public Safety and Law Enforcement
- 6. River Use
- 7. Natural Resources

Issues Listing by Section: 3 - Education

- 1: Water Safety
- 2: River Ethics and Etiquette
- 3: Private Landowners' Rights
- 4: River Users Rights and Responsibilities

4 - Accommodations

- 5: Substandard roads leading to river access locations.
- 6: River Access Sites
- 7: Campers Often Negatively Impact on their Surroundings
- 8: Need for Adequate Sanitation and Trash Facilities
- 9: Riparian Areas Are Being Damaged By Recreational Use.
- 10: There is a clear need to control litter and trash along the Shenandoah River.

Section 5 - Public Safety and Law Enforcement

- 11: Law Enforcement
- 12: River Use Assistance Volunteers
- 13: Concern about noise pollution on and along the Shenandoah River.

Section 6 - River Use

- 14: Ever increasing use of the Shenandoah River is causing confusion, controversy and conflicts among stakeholder groups.
- 15: Information for float tube users
- 16 Litter and trash left by river users.
- 17: Labeling Watercraft
- 18: There is a need to articulate private landowners' rights.
- 19: Avoiding Overuse of the River.
- 20: Where multiple uses occur in close proximity (i.e. wading fishermen and boaters) then user conflict may occur.

Section 7 - Natural Resources

- 21: Water Quality as it affects utilization of the Shenandoah River for recreational purposes.
- 22: Communications and Collaboration Among Environmental Agencies
- 23: There is a need to protect plants and wildlife (flora and fauna) from recreational impacts on the Shenandoah River.
- 24: There are concerns about the quality of the Shenandoah River fishery.
- 25: Funding Conservation Efforts