INTRODUCTION

The Lower Appomattox River Corridor stretches along twenty-two miles of central Virginia, beginning at Lake Chesdin and ending in the City of Hopewell, where it converges with the James River. This proposal focuses on all twenty-two miles of this corridor, affecting six jurisdictions -- the Cities of Petersburg, Hopewell, and Colonial Heights, and the counties of Chesterfield, Dinwiddie, and Prince George. Over the last decade the River has been recognized as a valuable resource of the Commonwealth of Virginia. Five miles of the corridor have been designated a ‘Virginia Scenic River’ by the General Assembly, and within this section is located the Upper Appomattox Canal, nominated to the National Register in 1998.

The Crater Planning District Commission in collaboration with The Friends of the Lower Appomattox River (FOLAR), a group of individuals representing the six jurisdictions along the twenty-two mile stretch of River, are leading an initiative to explore the creation of a greenway and blueway corridor along the Lower Appomattox. Funding for this exploration has been generously provided by the Virginia Department of Forestry’s Urban & Community Forestry Grant Program. Preliminary studies have been conducted over the past two decades to assess and inventory existing historical, natural, and recreational features and uses along the corridor. The Crater Planning District Commission and The Friends of the Lower Appomattox River have hired the Community Design Assistance Center (CDAC) to continue this assessment and to design a preliminary greenway and blueway concept plan for the Lower Appomattox River Corridor, as well as a more detailed design conceptual plan for the Upper Appomattox Canal, a 3.6 mile portion of the corridor located in the City of Petersburg. This stretch begins at historic Ferndale Park and ends at Campbell’s Bridge near Virginia State University and downtown Petersburg.

The Appomattox River has long been the heart of historical, cultural, and natural activity in the region. Beginning in the 1800’s the Appomattox served as one of the main transportation routes to central and southwestern Virginia.
Its energy was also harnessed to power the mills that sprang up along its banks. As a result people settled close to the River, and communities developed along the Appomattox. In addition to its role in the history and development of the region, the River also plays an important role in modern Central Virginia. In addition to its beauty, it is also a valuable natural, cultural, and recreational resource for the counties and cities surrounding the river as well as the entire Commonwealth of Virginia.
THE DESIGN PROCESS

The CDAC Team traveled to Petersburg, Virginia in October 2001 for a three day visit with Victor Liu of the Crater Planning District Commission and the Board of The Friends of the Lower Appomattox River, to discuss plans for the creation of a greenway and blueway corridor along the Lower Appomattox River. The visit began with a meeting of the Board, where the team was briefed on past studies that had been done on the area, current projects underway to promote the plan, and the future direction of the initiative. On day two Victor Liu and members of the Board guided the team on a driving tour of the River, beginning at City Point in Hopewell and ending in downtown Petersburg, stopping at key sites along the way. Key scenic, historic, recreational, and natural sites were inventoried along the river. Board members and the team also discussed possible routes through the corridor, and important links. Afterward the group hiked with local historian William Trout along a 3.6 mile section of the Upper Appomattox Canal. An inventory of scenic, historic, cultural, natural, and recreational sites was taken during the hike, as well as some beautiful pictures of the trail as the sun was beginning to set. On day three the design team was joined by key members of the six jurisdictions and PBS producer Tom McCormack who was videotaping a piece on the benefits of a greenway and blueway along the Lower Appomattox River. The group outing consisted of a boat tour on the still waters of the Lower Appomattox River and ended with a picnic on shore.

Upon returning to Blacksburg, the team organized its inventory of the area and began preparing for a community participation meeting that was held in December 2001. The general public as well as FOLAR board members and Victor Liu of the Crater Planning District were present. The meeting generated some imaginative ideas regarding educational and recreational opportunities along the River. Some of these ideas included an early colonial American interpretational trail, an African American trail, a replication of Colonial American herb garden/trail, fishing areas/ access, and improved canoe access to the River.

These ideas were incorporated into preliminary conceptual greenway plans for the Lower Appomattox River Corridor and
the Upper Appomattox Canal trail. A PowerPoint presentation highlighting key natural, cultural, and recreational sites along the river, and potential features of the greenway and blueway was presented to the board in April 2002.

Following the meeting, the board and the Crater Planning District Commission met and reviewed the presentation, offering comments and ideas regarding the future direction of the project. After reviewing the board’s comments and continuing to develop the master plans for both the Lower Appomattox River Corridor and the Upper Appomattox Canal Trail, the team returned to Petersburg in early May to take final measurements and for a series of team charrettes. Members of the team explored the trail by bike during this visit, marking areas that were difficult to pass by bike as well as on foot. It was a beautiful spring day. Fortunately the team has had an opportunity to experience the trail during three seasons. On this May day the sun was shimmering off the water and lush green vegetation lined the banks and the trail.

Later in May, the team returned to Petersburg to present its final conceptual plans and recommendations to the FOLAR Board. The team showed the group a powerpoint presentation prepared as a marketing tool for FOLAR Board member to use while visiting various interest groups. Also presented to the board were a series of more technical drawing illustrating concepts for the larger greenway and blueway corridor and the more detailed Upper Appomattox Canal Trail.
INVENTORY & ANALYSIS

The Inventory and Analysis section of this document is divided into four categories, Access Points, Natural and Existing Features, Recreational, and Historic and Cultural Features. An inventory and analysis has been done for both the overall twenty-two mile Lower Appomattox River Corridor and for the 3.6 mile Upper Appomattox Canal Trail, which is a section of the greater corridor. The Lower Appomattox River Corridor study is more general and attempts to highlight key features throughout the six jurisdictions. The Upper Appomattox Canal Trail, on the other hand, is more intensive and attempts to identify most of the features within this length of the Appomattox that lend to the character and potential of the greenway and blueway.
Access Points
Lower Appomattox Corridor (22 miles)

Increasing public waterfront access, one of the primary objectives of the Lower Appomattox Greenway Plan, is an important step toward improved stewardship of the River and surrounding area. It has been determined that there currently exists a limited number of opportunities for residents and visitors to physically access the River. The map on page 8 (compiled by the Crater Planning District Commission) includes existing public access locations as well as proposed locations for additional pedestrian and boat access.

Currently, there are thirteen points along the twenty-two mile corridor where the River and its vegetated edge are easily accessible to the public. All of these points are accessible by pedestrians, while six of these points are boat access points. Presently, there are three access points in the City of Hopewell, two of which are accessible by boat; in the County of Prince George there is presently one boat and pedestrian access point; in Petersburg there are two access points, one of which includes a canoe pick up ramp; in the County of Dinwiddie there are three access points, two of these are accessible by boat; Chesterfield has two access points, both accessible by boat; and Colonial Heights has two points, both accessible by boat.

In addition to a number of site visits, the team consulted many of the FOLAR board members who are active users of both the still water portions of the River, more widely used for motor boats, and the upper portion of the canal, which is navigable only by canoe and kayak.

Many of the Board members have been active in development of existing trails surrounding the River, have hiked these areas often, and are familiar with current usage, needs, and future needs. An additional reference consulted was the Appomattox River Corridor Study compiled by the Crater Planning District with assistance from the Crater Coastal Resource Management Task Force in 1993, which identified and located existing and proposed public access points to the River.
Location of existing access points was taken into consideration in placement of the greenway corridor, in the proposal for additional access points that are a need for current users of the River, and to meet projected needs following implementation of the greenway and blueway corridor plan. Other considerations involved in the placement of proposed access points included sensitivity to the existing use of particular areas, to existing natural elements, and to possible linkages—such as proximity to other attractions and parking.

Also, an important component of public access is the location and number of major roads that facilitate access to the River and surrounding areas. There are a number of major roads that cross over the Lower Appomattox River, connecting the jurisdictions on opposite sides of the River and providing access to the Riverfront. These roads include Interstates 95 and 295, Route 1/301, Highway 10, and Temple Avenue, a main artery between Prince George and Colonial Heights. Major roads that run parallel to the River are Interstate 85, Route 36, and US 460.
The Upper Appomattox Canal Trail has two main access points, Ferndale Park (Near #5 on page 11 map) at its western end and Campbell’s Bridge (near #8 on page 11 map) at the eastern end. Ferndale Park currently offers ample parking, picnic areas, bathroom facilities, water fountains, and signage about the natural and historic features of the trail. In addition, it provides approximately 2 ½ miles of river and canal access. Campbell’s Bridge is less developed, presently offering an area for parking, and a canoe and kayak pick up site. Improved boat pick up facilities are recommended for this area. In addition, more developed parking, bathroom and water facilities, and an information and security hub is also proposed for this site.

Physical access to the River by foot is available along the majority of the existing riverside and jeep trails. Visitors may visually or physically connect with the River at various points along the existing trail. The general public may access the trail at either Ferndale Park or Campbell's Bridge. Access for emergency vehicles exists at South West Street and through the Indian Town Creek area.

An objective of the greenway and blueway plan is to provide access between other existing and proposed trails in the region. Under development is the Ettrick Trail on the Chesterfield side of the Canal. Earlier stages of the plan recommend visual links between each of the trails with the latter phases providing physical connections between trails in the region.
page 9, access points map
Natural & Existing Features
Lower Appomattox River Corridor (22 Mile)

The character of the river and its edge changes dramatically as it progresses from Lake Chesdin at the western end of the corridor to City Point at the eastern end. The area just east of Lake Chesdin consists of slow moving water for approximately one mile with a thick band of vegetation on each side of the river. The northern side of the river is more developed than the south side, however, this developed area is screened by low density vegetation. For the next four and a half miles the river is braided over rock and gravel, and is the whitewater portion of the Lower Appomattox. The river weaves among rocks and small islands until it reaches Campbell’s Bridge where it once again becomes a more open, slower moving water. After the abutment dam, the river enters the tidal waters. It is a single unbroken channel for the most part until east of Temple Avenue where it becomes braided again weaving amidst medium and larger sized islands. It is not possible to see across the river at this point because views are obstructed by islands heavily vegetated with trees. After the Interstate 295 bridge, the river becomes unbroken again and wide open. A system of blueway corridors and signage will help to guide and educate users of the Lower Appomattox River blueway about the natural features and history of the river.

The floodplain along the river is for the most part vegetated with a typical climax forest. This forested edge is also home to many species of wildlife. The river is also abundant with a variety of fish including small and large mouth bass, pickerel, and mackerel, to name a few. Educational programs incorporated into the greenway and blueway plan will help to protect biodiversity while teaching residents and visitors about the variety of habitats and wildlife along the river.

Some of the riverfront in the Hopewell area is developed. This development is visible from the river. The Chesterfield side, opposite Hopewell, is not developed due to marshy banks extending along the shoreline. A number of marshy areas exist throughout the region. Due to their sensitivity, these locations are undeveloped. Future trails will either need to follow the perimeter of the marshes or special measures will need to be taken to ensure the protection of these habitats.
Some trails exist throughout the region, however many of these are smaller, not built to accommodate hiking and biking traffic, and not continuous. A system of trails along the greenway will provide an opportunity for residents and visitors to experience the diverse natural features of the Lower Appomattox.
The Upper Appomattox River Canal corridor currently sits within roughly 750 feet of the edge of the 100 year flood-plain on both sides of the river. This section of the trail has been designated a part of the ‘Scenic River Corridor.’ It offers some breathtaking views of the river and surrounding vegetation. It is also relatively unpolluted and used for a variety of recreational activities.

This portion of the canal is also the site of the fall line of the river. The fall line is where a river in Virginia transitions from the piedmont geologic region onto the Atlantic Coastal Plain. Characteristic of a fall line, numerous rocks, most igneous and metamorphic, can be found along this portion of the trail and canal channel. A large outcropping of rock exists near Campbell’s Bridge and perhaps contributed to the siting of the bridge many years ago.

The land surrounding the fall line is undeveloped and fairly rough terrain. Both the north and south banks of the river are heavily vegetated and are home to furred animals including: grey squirrel, flying squirrel, rabbit, muskrat, opossum, groundhog, raccoon, beaver, and deer. There is also an abundance of fish in the river such as smallmouth bass, largemouth bass, chain pickle crappie, pumpkinseed, redbreast and red sunfish, channel catfish, carp, and redhorse sucker. Anadromous fish species such as herring, alewife and hickory shad terminate their spring migration in the swift waters of the fall line.

A variety of flowering plants can be found along the river. Overstory species are of a typical climax forest and include in part, beech, birch, elm, maple, tulip, hickory, oak, sycamore, and pine. Understory trees include pawpaw, sweetbay magnolia, serviceberry, and dogwood, among others. Vines such as clematis and yellow jasmine, and wildflowers like lilies, and blue star can also be found along the trail. Patches of ferns, mosses and horse tails are also a common site. Educational programs and signage will help to protect this biodiversity while also teaching residents and visitors about the various plants and wildlife along the Canal Trail.
Downstream from Matoaca mill and races, located just west of Ferndale Park, the channel is single and unbroken for one mile before being broken again. It passes Randolph Farm on the north shore and then remains braided all the way to the Rte 36/ Campbell’s Bridge. The river once braided weaves among small islands and rock for the remainder of the 3.6 mile stretch. A system of channels, stopping points for canoers and kayakers, and signage is recommended for this portion of the blueway. These elements will help to guide visitors throughout the canal, will provide an opportunity for users to experience various habitats, and will teach about the natural features of the channel.

A fairly developed system of foot and jeep trails exists along the Upper Appomattox Canal Trail. These trails, for the most part, may accommodate foot and bike traffic. The trail system will require clearing where overgrown, bridges to connect portions broken by creeks and the canal, and spur and alternate trails to provide a greater variety of hiking and biking options for visitors.
Place “Lower Appomattox River Corridor”
“Natural & Existing” Map here.
Leave off the term “Lower” since it’s the whole stretch of river
Recreational
Lower Appomattox Corridor (22 Mile)

The Lower Appomattox River Corridor provides an invaluable recreational resource for residents, visitors, and the Commonwealth of Virginia. The majority of the river's edge is not developed, providing a wide section of vegetated land on both banks of the Appomattox that stretches for most of the 22-mile corridor. In addition, the character of the river itself is unique and dynamic, changing from still water near Lake Chesdin, to braided canals over rock and gravel near the City of Petersburg and Chesterfield County, once again opening into still waters after the abutment dam east of Petersburg, and remaining braided through a number of islands until it becomes open waters with a marshy edge near the city of Hopewell, where it joins the James River at City Point.

The changing character of the river and the vegetated edge through most of the corridor offer a number of recreational options for experienced outdoors persons, for novices, and for families. Experienced canoers and kayakers currently use the canals west of the abutment dam, small and medium sized boats cruise the more open waters east of the dam, and larger crafts and sailboats navigate the open waters near the City of Hopewell. Signage guiding users through the more challenging channels west of the abutment dam is recommended. Improved boat access will facilitate access to the river for all crafts.

In addition, there are a number of existing sites that provide nature trails and areas for picnicking. Some of these sites are more developed such as White Bank and Fort Clifton Parks located in Colonial Heights. Although some trails do exist throughout the region, they are not continuous, and many are smaller and cannot accommodate both hiking and biking traffic. There are also a number of existing parks adjacent to the River such as City Point Park in Hopewell that allow residents and visitors an opportunity to appreciate the breathtaking views of the Appomattox. A system of continuous trails linked between various parks and jurisdictions will provide the region a comprehensive system of outdoor activities.
Sport fishing is a popular past time and is excellent in areas below the abutment dam. Sites for bank and net fishing exist throughout the corridor, though these are limited in number and do not meet the growing demands of fishing enthusiasts. The addition of bank and net fishing sites will help to address these needs while also protecting habitat along the banks of the River. While on visits to the corridor, the CDAC team also observed many people fishing on the river in small boats. Improved boat access will facilitate small and medium craft fishing on the river.
The Upper Appomattox Canal Trail is used for a wide range of recreational activities. These activities include canoeing, kayaking, hiking, birdwatching and fishing. There are a number of existing trails that wind their way through the 3.6 mile stretch. These trails include the towpaths adjacent to the Old Canal, a riverside trail, and jeep trails. The trails along the Canal Trail are fairly-well developed. However, many sections are overgrown and would require clearing, are broken by creeks or debris and would require bridges, or need to be more clearly marked. In some cases trails would need to be widened to accommodate both hiking and biking.

Appomattox Riverside Park, marking the beginning of the Canal Trail, provides a site for canoers and kayakers to put their boats into the water. The blueway along the Canal Trail offers a challenging course with a number of class II and class III rapids along the latter portion of the Trail, as well as a class IV rapid near Target Rock, not far from Campbell’s Bridge at the end of the Trail. Signage along this portion of the corridor would assist in guiding users through the canal. In addition, signs should also warn visitors of the dangers of the river.

Residents and visitors also take advantage of a number of quiet fishing locations along the trail. Some of these favorite spots are the towpath near Appomattox Riverside Park, the area near Battersea Arches, the rock outcroppings near Ettrick Riverside Park, and the canoe take-out site at Campbell’s Bridge, in addition to other quiet alcoves and beaches along the fall line. The addition of bank fishing walls at key spots along the Canal Trail may provide added locations for fishing enthusiasts.

This portion of the corridor has been designated a ‘Virginia Scenic River’ by the General Assembly and offers countless opportunities for visitors and regular users to appreciate the breathtaking views along the corridor -- both from the trails and by boat. Seating and rest areas at key viewing areas will provide visitors an opportunity to rest and take in the sites of the River. In addition, ‘Scenic View’ signage may be placed along the blueway noting scenic vistas visible from the water.
Place map of Recreational uses here
Historical & Cultural
Lower Appomattox River Corridor (22 Mile)

The region surrounding the Lower Appomattox River Corridor is rich in history. Historical sites and artifacts can be found along the river and throughout each of the counties and cities, providing a glimpse into the history of the river and the development of the region. The opportunities to incorporate this history into the development of the greenway and blueway concept are numerous.

The western portion of the corridor, near the fall line, is dotted with the remnants of mills, mill races, and mill dams. These remains are what are left of the many mills that once stood along the banks of the Appomattox, and used the power of the river to fuel their operations. In addition portions of the Old Canal, constructed to navigate bateaux boats around the rapids of the river, are in good condition in Dinwiddie County. The towpaths adjacent to the canal also remain. Other built works that assisted in navigating the tough terrain surrounding the fall line were the toll locks and Indian Town Creek Aqueduct, both located in the City of Petersburg. Portions of these remain as well.

Plantations, such as Weston Manor and Appomattox Manor at City Point, both located in Hopewell were built not far from the river's edge. These stately homes have been restored and may be seen from the river. Kennon House, also called the Brick House, is located in Colonial Heights not far from Fort Clifton Park. These plantations, and others throughout the area, may be links in the greenway and blueway network, providing visitors an opportunity to learn about the history of the families that lived there, the river, and the region.

Other historical sites along the corridor are the CSX swing bridge in Hopewell that is still in operation, Blandford Cemetery once in Prince George, but later annexed by the City of Petersburg, where approximately 30,000 Confederate soldiers are buried, and St. John's Church located in Hopewell.
Cultural sites such as Fort Lee, located in Prince George County, Virginia State University, located in Chesterfield County, the sand and gravel operations also located in Prince George County, the numerous parks that border the river in each of the jurisdictions, and the many neighborhoods and schools near to the River should be incorporated into the greenway and blueway system.

The variety and number of historic and cultural sites along the river would make a fascinating hiking and biking trail. The greenway corridor should be carefully placed to provide a link between key sites. In addition, the corridor should be sensitively placed in order to provide visitors an opportunity to learn about the history and culture of the area while also preserving the integrity of these artifacts. Increased public interest and awareness of the many historical and cultural sites along the Appomattox may also fuel present and future preservation efforts.

The team collected an inventory of the historical and cultural artifacts along the corridor from a number of sources. These included input from local historians, community members and FOLAR Board members, review of a number of studies produced over the last two decades which locate and describe many of the sites along the corridor, and through site visits to each of the jurisdictions.
The areas surrounding the Upper Appomattox Canal Trail, on both its southern and northern banks, are rich in historical and cultural artifacts. This portion of the river, close to the fall line, was once the location of the many mills that fueled the commerce of the area. Remnants of these mills exist along the Canal Trail. Traces of mill races, headwalls, and other artifacts used to direct the river may also be found along this stretch of the Appomattox. The Battersea Arches in Petersburg, the mill races near Campbell’s Bridge, and the Battersea headwall are some artifacts in fairly good condition within approximately a mile and a half length of corridor and within the City of Petersburg.

In addition, this portion of the river was particularly difficult to navigate due to the number of rocks along the fall line, the rough terrain, and various grade changes along the Canal. Navigation of the canal required ingenuity, engineering, and labor. The towpaths used along the old canal in Dinwiddie County remain in good condition. These paths were used by boaters to push their bateaux boats filled with cargo along the canal. The canal crossed the Rhehoic Creek Valley by way of the Indian Town Creek Aqueduct, built by slave labor. The aqueduct’s walls that held the channel of the canal are gone, however, its massive stone buttresses still stand today.

Not far from the aqueduct are the remains of two toll locks, the only two in the region, that once raised and lowered boats along the canal. Currently the trails surrounding the locks and aqueduct are not well defined and are overgrown. These paths would need to be cleared and defined to facilitate access to these sites. The towpaths provide an existing trail that is fairly wide and well defined. Signage along the towpaths may educate visitors about construction of the canal and the journey of the bateaux boatsmen. Signage is also recommended for the Indian Town Creek Aqueduct, the toll locks, and Battersea Arches. In addition, paths directing visitors around these sites will help to stimulate the imagination as well as aid in preserving these artifacts. The overall greenway trail will provide a link between these various artifacts, both physically and visually for most sites.
Many other historical artifacts exist throughout the Canal Trail. Some of these may be a stone wall, or the remains of fish and mill dams. Since these blend in with the rocks and other scenery of the Canal Trail, they may at first go unnoticed. It is recommended that the design not identify most of these more subtle artifacts. Part of the intrigue and magic of the trail comes from stumbling upon these sites, or from noticing them across the river, and wondering who built them, when, and why.

Downtown Petersburg, a short walk to the east from Campbell's Bridge, is the site of numerous historical buildings, such as Peter's Point (from which Petersburg was named), the Trapezium house, the Farmer's Market, the Farmers' Bank, the Siege Museum, and more.

Blending the past with the present is Virginia State University, which rests on a bluff on the northern bank of the River near the eastern end of the Trail. The University overlooks Campbell's Bridge and is on the Chesterfield side of the Canal. At the foot of the University is the Ettrick Riverside Trail and Vastale's Trail. Also, located not far from the University to its west is Randolph Farm. The location of Campbell's Bridge between the University, the Canal Trail, and downtown Petersburg is an excellent opportunity to provide a site for communities to come together and celebrate the history of the River and the culture of the area.
Place “key historical and cultural sites” map here
The team has developed two master plans for the project. The first, for the Lower Appomattox River Corridor, is conceptual and intended to illustrate general placement of the corridor along the twenty-two mile length of the River. The map indicates placement of the greenway as well as key sites within the region, with the goal of communicating the greenway and blueway’s potential to provide a comprehensive network of natural, recreational, historical, and cultural features along the Lower Appomattox River.

The second master plan, developed for the Upper Appomattox Canal Trail, is much more detailed. Two concepts have been developed for this portion of the trail. First, the design, in keeping with the larger blueway and greenway plan, seeks to link natural, recreational, historic, and cultural features throughout the Upper Appomattox Canal Trail and surrounding areas. Second, the design seeks to highlight the history that marks this portion of the corridor, as well as the present and future of the Canal Trail. This portion of the greenway and blueway concludes at Campbell’s Bridge where past, present, and future are melded together and celebrated. A careful balance has been kept between additions made to the trail, enhancements made to existing features, and information provided to visitors. Part of the magic of the Canal Trail comes from the artifacts and features that may at first go unnoticed, only to be stumbled upon while walking along a path, leaving visitors to imagine its role in the history and course of the River.
Lower Appomattox River Corridor (22Mile)

A conceptual plan for the placement of a greenway corridor along the Lower Appomattox River is illustrated on the following page. The greenway is intended to provide a link between the various natural, historical, and cultural features of the region. It will also create physical and visual connections between the six jurisdictions along the River. The first phase of the greenway is proposed along the southern bank of the River with future phases providing links to trails along the northern banks.

A developed system of trails along the greenway will create a comprehensive system of outdoor activities and provide an opportunity for users to spend the day hiking, walking, or biking along the River. The trail will guide users through a variety of environments, directing visitors down to the River's edge, then away from the River for a short period only to meander once again to the water's edge. In addition, spur trails, or secondary trails, will be developed to provide a quiet atmosphere for more passive recreational activities such as birdwatching.

The region is fortunate to have a number of existing parks along the banks of the River in each of the jurisdictions, with a number of proposed parks in the works. The greenway corridor provides a link between many of these parks, creating a linear park system along the corridor. The greenway will enhance the amenities of these sites, as well in time provide amenities such as boat launching sites, picnic areas, overlooks, and bank fishing in areas that are currently or projected to be deficient in such facilities. For purposes of this project, short of placement of the overall greenway corridor and trail, the placement of specific amenities is not a part of the project objective. However, some suggestions have been made regarding boat launch sites and bank fishing locations at additional access points, and it is anticipated that more detailed locations for many amenities will become evident as the greenway corridor is developed.
Upper Appomattox Canal Trail (3.6 Mile)

The Proposed Greenway and Blueway Corridor is intended to be a dynamic environment offering a wide range of opportunities for exploration and experience. With this in mind, the team has developed a range of concepts described below that will stimulate the imagination, curiosity, and understanding of visitors to the Upper Appomattox Canal Trail.

The Upper Appomattox Canal Trail begins at Appomattox Riverside Park, located approximately one and a half miles east of Lake Chesdin. This portion of the Lower Appomattox River Corridor is 3.6 miles in length and runs through the City of Petersburg and the Counties of Dinwiddie and Chesterfield. Appomattox Riverside Park is a main access point to the River and includes important amenities such as bathrooms, water, parking, pond-side picnic areas, and a canoe put in site. The pond is an excellent location for kayakers to practice Eskimo rolls before venturing out into the rapids created by the fast moving waters and outcroppings of rock that line the canal.

Appomattox Riverside Park extends along the ‘old canal.’ The old canal, still filled with water, is a part of the original route used by bateaux boats to navigate the River. The original towpaths remain adjacent to this portion of the canal. Visitors can reach the towpaths by crossing the canal over the existing small wooden bridge at Ferndale Park. From this point one walks for a short distance through hardwood forest. At the trail junction, which is marked by a wooden sign, the trail merges with the towpaths and follows the peaceful River flowing under modern life and automobiles on the Route 601 Bridge.

There are two existing trails beyond the bridge, the towpath that follows the ‘old canal’ and a spur trail that winds its way down to the River. The towpath is a flat graded trail, made some time ago to facilitate the transfer of goods up and down the River, while the riverside trail follows the existing terrain. The towpath offers a glimpse into the workings of the old canal system through proximity to some of the concrete canal walls and a series of proposed interpretive
signs detailing the lives of the navigators, boatmen and builders. The old canal portion of the trail ends dramatically, at the point where the canal walls collapsed years ago from the force of the River. Here visitors will be guided across a bridge proposed to reconnect the towpath with the riverside trail and begin the visitor’s journey down to the River’s edge.

A short, connecting trail is proposed through the old forest, between the end of the old canal and the river. At this junction visitors may choose to follow the River eastward or complete a 10,000’ loop along the River that will return back to Appomattox Riverside Park.

The winding riverside trail offers a change from the linear conditions of the canal towpath. The trail gradually twisting, turning, rising and falling is a moderately challenging trail for walkers and bikers. The cool air adjacent to the water and the sounds of the River flowing over the rocks along its bed provide a beautiful and relaxing atmosphere and a welcomed relief from a brisk hike. The trail guides visitors through a lush floodplain forest, into open fields of ferns, and again into the shade of the forest.

Small bridges are proposed throughout the 3.6-mile stretch, providing visitors a safe and continuous course along the riverside trail. These bridges offer an opportunity for one to pause and appreciate the moving water, wetlands and wildlife beneath. Proposed spur trails, secondary trails branching off the main path, will continue into the floodplain forest and provide a variety of interpretive walking history tours. One such trail interprets the life of a colonial Petersburg resident, while another identifies a variety of medicinal, edible, and symbolic plants used by Native Americans of the Central Virginia region.

Another proposed spur trail passes the site of a Native American fish dam that remains intact to this day. Signage with images of Native Americans capturing fish along these dams illustrates how such dams were used to catch fish. Shortly after this point the trail crosses over the site of the “Mystery Mill” and one of the many scenic overlooks along the River. A small observing area is proposed at this site for visitors to rest and reflect upon the identity of the unknown mill and the beauty of the river.
The path proceeds for some distance quietly winding along the river and forest. Visitors are directed along the trail and pass through a large opening near a power plant. This point offers an interesting contrast between the modern world and the past. The electric hum of the power plant will be heard over the sound of the river, but it will be screened from view by vegetation. Across the River, the remains of the old Ettrick mill dam are visible.

Approximately a mile from the end of the 3.6 mile stretch lie a pair of large stone arches, the remains of the Battersea mill race. Here the visitor emerges from a wooded path into an open glade in full view of the arches. Signage will reveal that these arches were remains of the Battersea mill, one of the great mills along the Appomattox River. A secondary path will wind around the arches to the water’s edge so that visitors may imagine the course the River once took through the arches to Battersea Mill.

A thousand feet beyond the Ettrick mill dam visitors may experience a magnificent example of ancient engineering. A boardwalk is proposed here to accommodate foot and emergency vehicular traffic along the river. The boardwalk runs atop an existing sewer line, flanked on its right by rail lines above and on its left by the swift moving water of the River below, and ending in a bridge crossing over the South Canal. Branching from the boardwalk is a secondary walk and spur trail that leads through a rail tunnel, and across a feeder stream to the relics of the Old Indian Town Creek Aqueduct, a massive stone aqueduct built by slave labor to carry the canal across the valley.

A wooden walkway framing the stone buttresses will manage circulation and preserve the integrity of the remains while allowing visitors to more closely inspect the aqueduct. Not far from the aqueduct are the remains of two toll locks, gravity fed mechanisms that were constructed to raise and lower boats to the aqueduct. These locks are the only remaining locks in the area. Interpretive signage will educate visitors about the concept of locks and their important role in navigation of the Lower Appomattox River. Eventually, this spur trail may also be linked to nearby neighborhoods, the Petersburg Training School and the Central State Hospital by a power line easement adjacent to the stream corridor.
The main trail continues on becoming a graded gravel path through the forest. The path is long and straight, however, proposed nodes on each side of the path offer additional opportunities for mystery and discovery. Shortly after the boardwalk, somewhat hidden and off the beaten path, is a large circular green pool surrounded by giant stones and overgrown vegetation, the remains of an abandoned quarry. Seating will be nestled in the grove to allow a spot for reflection and rest.

The trail parallels the river for some distance, offering glimpses of the River, small beaches below, and the banks on the opposite side of the canal. Visitors are guided along the trail where they will step through the woods into a small clearing adjacent to the River. Here they can see the smooth granite walls of the old Battersea dam, still in good condition, stretching across the canal. These walls directed water through the Battersea mill races to its north. This point offers extensive and beautiful views of the River. Seating will be available for visitors to rest and imagine life on the River hundreds of years earlier.

East of the Battersea dam, a working railway bridge stretches across the canal linking the south and north sides of the River. A proposed pedestrian and biking bridge is proposed between the buttresses of the rail bridge connecting the Upper Appomattox Canal Trail to the existing Ettrick Riverside Trail located on the Chesterfield County side of the River. The buttresses of the bridge stand approximately twenty feet above the water level and fifty feet below the rail lines that they support. The bridge will provide visitors an exciting opportunity to stand above the canal as water quickly flows beneath and will offer unobstructed views of the canal both upstream and downstream. Such connections will be important in eventually linking the Upper Appomattox Canal Trail to a regional trail system.

Along the trail, overgrown secondary trails branch off the main trail, some leading to small beaches, river rocks, and the canal banks, while others weave away from the River and through the forest. These spur trails offer a unique opportunity for art along the greenway and blueway. Nestled within the woods, visitors may stumble upon industrial art works and sculpture that trigger the imagination and curiosity. Many pieces of interesting old iron machinery exist through-
out Petersburg. This machinery, put into an artistic context by local artists, would provide unique points of interest along this long stretch of trail. This project may be funded by the Arts and Greenway effort, a new initiative promoting the integration of art and nature.

The trail along the final portion of the 3.6-mile stretch is elevated above the rapids of the River on its left and the ‘dry canal’ to its right. During a few months of the year the ‘dry canal’ is also full of rushing water, accommodating the higher water levels brought on by the spring rains. This walk offers a different stimulus for the visitor, with the sound of water on each side and views of the River through thin rows of vegetation. Regulated by park authorities, during the remaining months of the year the dry canal may offer a safe passage for visitors under the Fleet Street Bridge. Grading, stairs, and a walkway are proposed that will guide visitors under the fifty-foot wide bridge to the proposed Campbell’s Bridge Park on the opposite side. Campbell’s Bridge marks the end of the 3.6 mile Upper Appomattox Canal Trail and an important access point to the River and trail.

Campbell’s Bridge offers a fitting end to the Upper Appomattox Canal Trail. It is one of the most scenic portions of the canal offering views of the rapids to the west and calmer, more open waters to the east. On the south side of the bridge are the remains of mill races and canal walls, while abandoned brick warehouses sit close to the water’s edge on the northern bank. These buildings may one day be transformed into mixed-use facilities housing, perhaps a museum, artists’ galleries, and studios. On a bluff above the northern bank rests Virginia State University. An expansive open area dotted by tall oaks lies to the right of the bridge on the south side of the River. Here visitors may rest on benches overlooking the River or picnic with their families. The site, already a popular fishing spot, offers an opportunity for improved bank fishing amenities. In addition, Campbell’s Bridge is currently a canoe and kayak pick up location. The masterplan for the park also proposes an improved facility for boat pick up. It is anticipated that once the blueway is developed between Campbell’s bridge and the abutment dam that the site may also be a prime location for boat launching.
The Park will include an interactive play area, housing a model system of locks, mill races, and canals that children and adults can operate. Water features including waterfalls and rapids will educate visitors about the River and its course from the mountains to the tidewater region. Three different mechanisms operable by visitors will illustrate how water is gravity fed through the locks making it possible for boats to navigate around the rocky terrain of the River.

The site will also provide a transition between the urban environment of downtown Petersburg and the natural environment along the Canal Trail. It will also feature important practical amenities such as parking, bathrooms, and water fountains, and a police substation for safety and information. Due to its location between the University, downtown, and more natural environment of the trail and River, an outdoor amphitheater is proposed to provide a gathering space for visitors and members of the community. This amphitheater will provide a venue for the blending of today’s culture with that of the past. The amphitheater will overlook the River and University above, offering a magnificent view of both as visitors enjoy an outdoor performance. It will also help to screen and buffer the railroad lines that mark the edge of the Park.

Old concrete railway buttresses transverse the site and the River. These towering buttresses shaped like giant key holes may one day provide the foundation for a pedestrian suspension bridge between the Campbell’s Bridge Park and the restored warehouses on the north side of the bank, a physical metaphor for their journey through the historical and natural wonders that await them along the Upper Appomattox Canal Trail.
Overall plan

Canal under-pass area

View of park with interpretive signage

The Park at Campbell's Bridge
PHASING RECOMMENDATIONS

The following phases are recommended for the development of a Greenway and Blueway Corridor along the Lower Appomattox River:

I. Greenway Stages
   A. Upper Appomattox Canal Trail
   B. Trails from Lake Chesdin linking to the Canal Trail
   C. Link to Upper Appomattox Canal Trail and Lake Chesdin Trails to Ettrick Riverwalk Trail
   D. City Point Park Trails
   E. Prince George Nature Center
   F. Prince George Regional Park
   G. Linking of Trails between Nature Center and Prince George Regional Park with City Point Park Trails
   H. Redevelopment of Petersburg Harbor and east through Petersburg
   I. Trail system through remainder of Prince George County
   J. Link Chesterfield Trails with White Bank Park and Fort Clifton Park Trails

II. Blueway Stages
   A. Improved Boat Access between Lake Chesdin dam and Appomattox Riverside Park on north and south sides of the River
   B. Signage providing advanced, intermediate, beginner canoe/kayak routes
   C. Clear channels where possible to facilitate navigation (less carry out locations)
   D. Public docking areas near commercial districts
   E. Signage about history/ecology
   F. Improved boat access east of the abutment dam between Prince George and Colonial Heights
CONCLUSION

The Lower Appomattox River Corridor is blessed with diverse natural environments, numerous historic and cultural artifacts, and a prime location, running throughout six jurisdictions. The opportunity for a dynamic Greenway and Blueway Corridor along the Lower Appomattox is phenomenal. In addition, much of the land surrounding the River is highly vegetated and not yet developed. The Greenway and Blueway would provide an opportunity to create a recreational, historical, and cultural link along the length of the River and between the various jurisdictions.

The Greenway and Blueway, through improved access to the River, would also increase stewardship of this valuable resource and improve the quality of life for communities surrounding the Appomattox. Improved access would also provide an alternative for tourism and draw visitors to the area. An increase in the number of visitors will also benefit other commercial and supporting businesses within the region. Added economic benefits include increased property values.

Another primary objective is to preserve the River and its habitats and wildlife. Conservation of the land surrounding the River will help to ensure protection of these habitats. Education is an important component of the Greenway and Blueway Plan. By learning about biodiversity, water quality, and protection of these natural resources, the community may be more involved in conservation efforts.

The Upper Appomattox Canal Trail, a section of the Lower Appomattox River Corridor, illustrates the potential for a greenway and blueway along the River. There is a wealth of natural, historic, and cultural artifacts along the trail, as there is through much of the region. In addition, there are numerous opportunities along the Trail for a wide range of recreational activities for all skill levels. The greenway and blueway along the Canal Trail will provide a connection physically, but it also attempts to conceptually provide a link between the past, present, and future of the area. Connections such as this may be made on a number of scales, such as for a 3.6-mile section of the trail, or perhaps within a jurisdiction, or throughout the region.
WORKS CONSULTED

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