



REGION **16**
George Washington



Kayaking on the Potomac | Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation

Introduction

The George Washington Recreational Planning Region includes Stafford, King George, Spotsylvania and Caroline counties, along with the city of Fredericksburg and towns of Bowling Green and Port Royal. Situated midway between Virginia’s capital and Washington, D.C., the George Washington Recreational Planning Region has rapidly changing land-use patterns, possibly due to being bisected by the heavily traveled Interstate 95.

Regional Focus

Table 16.1 Most-Needed Outdoor Recreation Opportunities

George Washington Recreational Planning Region

activity	% of households in	
	region	state
Natural areas	54	54
Trails	52	43
Historic areas	43	39
Parks	41	49
Water access	33	43
Scenic drives (driving for pleasure)	27	29
Playing fields, sports and golf facilities	22	22

Source: 2017 Virginia Outdoors Demand Survey

Table 16.2 Top 10 Outdoor Recreation Activities By Participation

George Washington Recreational Planning Region

activity	% household
Visiting natural areas	73
Driving for pleasure	69
Walking for pleasure	66
Visiting parks (local, state & national)	57
Sunbathing/relaxing on a beach	56
Visiting historic areas	45
Swimming/outdoor pool	44
Visiting working farms, petting zoos, corn mazes, etc.	42
Swimming/beach/lake river (open water)	41
Viewing the water	38

Source: 2017 Virginia Outdoors Demand Survey. Visit www.dcr.virginia.gov/vop to view regional participation rates for more than 100 activities.



Enjoying friends at Lake Anna State Park | Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation

Regional Featured Projects

To be considered a regional featured project, a project must meet at least one of the following criteria:

- Has statewide or regional significance.
- Addresses top statewide or regional needs identified by the Virginia Outdoors Demand Survey.
- Has involvement and support from multiple jurisdictions in the region.
- Able to be initiated within the next five years.

Featured projects for the George Washington region:

- Develop the East Coast Greenway.
- Implement the Virginia Central Railway Trail.
- Implement the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail.
- Implement the Upper Rappahannock River Water Trail.
- Improve water access throughout the region.

Outdoor Recreation Economic Impact

Table 16.3 Per-Capita Spending on Parks and Recreation

George Washington Recreational Planning Region

locality	dollars
Caroline County	12.46
King George County	31.42
Spotsylvania County	21.13
Stafford County	55.27
City of Fredericksburg	101.62
Statewide	71.09

Source: Virginia Auditor of Public Accounts, "Comparative Report on Local Government Revenues and Expenditures," 2016.

Table 16.4 Virginia State Parks 2017 Attendance and Economic Impact*George Washington Recreational Planning Region*

state park	location	overnight visitors	day-use visitors	total visitors	economic impact
Caledon	King George County	864	90,434	91,298	\$2.0M
Lake Anna	Spotsylvania County	32,980	389,186	422,166	\$9.9M
Widewater	Stafford County	0	0	0	\$2.3M

Source: Virginia Auditor of Public Accounts, "Comparative Report on Local Government Revenues and Expenditures," 2016.

Regional Health

Table 16.5 Health Trends*George Washington Recreational Planning Region*

locality	adult smoking (% of adults)	adult obesity (% of adults with BMI over 30)	physical inactivity (% of adults age 20 or over reporting no leisure time/ physical activity)	access to exercise opportunities (% population with adequate access to locations for physical activity)	air pollution – particulate matter (micrograms per cubic meter)
Caroline County	18	30	21	58	8.8
King George County	14	28	21	61	8.5
Spotsylvania County	15	33	25	75	8.9
Stafford County	14	30	21	81	9
City of Fredericksburg	18	29	22	96	8.7
Statewide	17	27	21	81	8.7

Source: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Outdoor Recreation Interface with Virginia Tourism

The Virginia State Tourism Plan was completed by Virginia Tourism Corp. in March 2016. In 2017, Virginia Tourism compiled “Nature & Outdoors” recommendations in Appendix 13 for each recreation planning region.

Regional Historic Resources

Although the George Washington region has been the focus of intense development over several decades, the area retains numerous urban and rural historic districts, Civil War battlefields, and National Historic Landmarks. The city of Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania County witnessed some of the most intense fighting of the Civil War and large portions of the Fredericksburg, Spotsylvania Court House and Wilderness battlefields have been protected by either federal government ownership or under conservation easement. The region also contains resources from earlier eras including the town of Port Royal, an intact colonial period shipping center and Old Mansion in the town of Bowling Green. Old Mansion was the first easement donated to the Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission (now the Virginia Board of Historic Resources) in 1969.

Appropriate conservation activities may include installation of highway markers to commemorate historic locations and events, placement of historic properties on the Virginia Landmarks Register or National Register of Historic Places and placement of historic preservation and open space easements. Conservation targets include: 18th, 19th and early 20th century dwellings and commercial buildings/districts; historic schools and churches; Civil War battlefield landscapes and resources; historic transportation routes and crossroads; and significant prehistoric habitation sites. Information about historic buildings, structures and archaeological sites is maintained in the permanent files of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources and is available to local planners.

Table 16.6 Regional Historic Resources

George Washington Recreational Planning Region

resource	location
Chancellorsville and Fredericksburg Civil War Battlefields	Spotsylvania County, City of Fredericksburg
George Washington's Ferry Farm	Stafford County
Belmont	Stafford County
Caroline County Courthouse	Caroline County
Historic Kenmore Plantation	City of Fredericksburg
Ralph Bunche High School	King George County

Source: Virginia Department of Historic Resources

Land Conservation

Table 16.7 Conserved Lands

George Washington Recreational Planning Region

locality	easement acres	ownership acres
Caroline County	11,959.78	65,744.17
City of Fredericksburg	254.80	274.77
King George County	7,974.28	7,368.47
Spotsylvania County	5,094.07	17,656.26
Stafford County	4,053.60	35,878.23
Total	156,258.42	

Natural Area Preserves and Natural Heritage Resources

Because the George Washington region straddles the fall line of the Piedmont and Coastal Plain, it has a variety of habitats ranging from tidal wetlands to dry uplands. Several outstanding examples of globally rare communities occur here, including seepage bogs, calcareous forests and hemlock-hardwood forests. Populations of three federally threatened plant species — sensitive joint-vetch, swamp pink and small whorled pogonia — occur in the district, and two species of globally rare mussels live in its streams. Some of the most important habitat for recovering bald eagle populations can be found here along the Potomac and Rappahannock rivers.

DCR recommends that conservation activities and land protection efforts in the region focus on unprotected Essential Conservation Sites and all unprotected portions of Natural Area Preserve resiliency areas. Secondly, strategic land conservation should expand upon existing managed areas and seek connectivity via protecting and/or managing intact ecological cores and natural vegetation cover between currently protected lands. Finally, attention on remaining unprotected natural heritage resources within the region should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

The appropriate conservation activities and methods of protection will vary with each site but may include placing the site on Virginia's Registry of Natural Areas; developing a voluntary management agreement with the landowner; securing a conservation easement through a local land trust; acquiring the site through a locality or local land trust; dedicating the site as a natural area preserve with the current owner; or acquiring the site as a state-owned natural area preserve.



View of the Potomac River from Widewater State Park | Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation

Conservation targets of special significance in the region include:

- Expansion of the Rappahannock River National Wildlife Refuge
- Buffer lands around Fort A.P. Hill and Quantico
- Wetlands that support rare and threatened plant species
- Improve water quality for streams supporting rare mussels and other aquatic species

Information about the location of conservation sites and the natural heritage resources they contain, as well as management assistance, is available to local planners from DCR’s Natural Heritage Program. For more on the Natural Heritage Program, see Chapter 11 and Appendix 11.

Table 16.8 Natural Area Preserves

George Washington Recreational Planning Region

preserve name	owner	locality
Chotank Creek	Private	King George County
Crow's Nest	DCR and Stafford County	Stafford County

Table 16.9 Natural Heritage Resources

George Washington Recreational Planning Region

Number of occurrences of rare species and significant natural communities	255
Number of different rare species and significant community types (natural heritage elements)	106
Number of globally rare natural heritage elements	30
Number of species listed as federally endangered or threatened	7
Number of species listed as state endangered or threatened	10
Number of terrestrial conservation sites identified by DCR	74
Number of conservation sites with little or no protection	62
Number of partially protected conservation sites	11
Number of well protected conservation sites	1

Information as of Feb. 28, 2018. Source: Virginia Natural Heritage Program