



REGION **18**
Middle Peninsula

Introduction

The Middle Peninsula Recreational Planning Region includes the counties of Essex, Gloucester, King and Queen, King William, Mathews and Middlesex and the towns of Tappahannock, West Point and Urbanna. Located in the east-central Tidewater region, the district is largely rural, with thousands of acres of ecologically valuable tidal and nontidal wetlands, forests, pastures, rivers and streams. The topography ranges from flat, level areas to gently rolling hills as much as 200 feet above sea level. The Middle Peninsula economy, tourism and recreational opportunities are dependent on the region’s abundant natural resources. The region offers opportunities for commercial and recreational harvesting of finfish and shellfish. The construction and maintenance of pleasure and workboats, and the use of waterways for transport and recreation, are vital facets of the community.

Regional Focus

Table 18.1 Most-Needed Outdoor Recreation Opportunities

Middle Peninsula Recreational Planning Region

activity	% of households in	
	region	state
Parks	48	49
Natural areas	47	54
Water access	47	43
Trails	40	43
Historic areas	33	39
Playing fields, sports and golf facilities	27	22
Scenic drives (driving for pleasure)	25	29

Source: 2017 Virginia Outdoors Demand Survey.



Crabs | Virginia Tourism Corp.

Table 18.2 Top 10 Outdoor Recreation Activities By Participation

Middle Peninsula Recreational Planning Region

activity	% household
Driving for pleasure	65
Walking for pleasure	64
Visiting natural areas	62
Viewing the water	48
Visiting parks (local, state & national)	45
Sunbathing/relaxing on a beach	44
Saltwater fishing	42
Swimming/beach/lake river (open water)	42
Swimming/outdoor pool	40
Visiting historic areas	38

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

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 Middle Peninsula region:

- Develop the conceptual plan for the Route 17 Multiuse Path that would run through Gloucester County, Middlesex County, Essex County, ultimately ending in Fredericksburg.
- Connect blueways in Gloucester and Mathews counties with the York River and Mobjack Bay.
- Develop Middle Peninsula State Park.
- Develop water access at road endings.



Werowocomoco | John Henley/Virginia Tourism Corp.

- Develop Rotary Poor House Park in Essex County.
- Develop the June Parker Marina in Essex County.
- Improve Woodville County Park in Gloucester County.
- Construct a trail connector from the Gloucester County Courthouse to Beaverdam Park.
- Develop Werowocomoco.
- Develop the Urbanna Water Trail to connect the Pirates Cove Blueway with the Museum in the Streets walking trail and the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail.

Outdoor Recreation Economic Impact

Table 18.3 Per-Capita Spending on Parks and Recreation

Middle Peninsula Recreational Planning Region

locality	dollars
Essex County	53.68
Gloucester County	28.76
King and Queen County	21.87
King William County	15.86
Mathews County	21.03
Middlesex County	11.19
Town of West Point	12.10
Statewide	71.09

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

Table 18.4 Virginia State Parks 2017 Attendance and Economic Impact

Middle Peninsula Recreational Planning Region

state park	location	overnight visitors	day-use visitors	total visitors	economic impact
Middle Peninsula	Gloucester County*	-	-	-	-

* Middle Peninsula and Hampton Roads regions share Gloucester County.

Source: Virginia State Parks

Regional Health

Table 18.5 Health Trends

Middle Peninsula 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)
Essex County	18	33	27	15	8.3
Gloucester County	16	35	23	57	8.3
King and Queen County	18	30	26	28	8.3
King William County	16	26	28	48	8.7
Mathews County	14	28	22	66	8
Middlesex County	15	26	23	37	8.2
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 2013. In 2017, Virginia Tourism compiled “Nature & Outdoors” recommendations in Appendix 13 for each recreation planning region.

Regional Historic Resources

The Middle Peninsula region is another area that relies heavily on the Chesapeake Bay and the rivers that feed into it. Prior to the arrival of European settlers, Native American populations called this area their home. Modern-day archaeologists have defined numerous prehistoric settlements and hunting encampments that depended on the region’s waterways for their survival. Recently, the National Park Service was able to acquire over 260 acres of land that comprise the archaeological remains of Werowocomoco, a Late Woodland/Contact Native American village that served as a leadership and spiritual center for the Powhatan tribe at the time of English settlement in the early 17th century. With respect to resources that were established after English settlement, places such as Rosewell, the King and Queen Courthouse tavern and the Urbanna Historic District remain places on the gently rolling landscape for visitors to enjoy.

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: 17th, 18th, 19th and early 20th century dwellings and commercial buildings/districts; historic schools and churches; 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 18.6 Regional Historic Resources

Middle Peninsula Recreational Planning Region

resource	location
Rosewell	Gloucester County
Werowocomoco	Gloucester County
Walter Reed Birthplace	Gloucester County
New Point Comfort Lighthouse	Mathews County
Urbanna Historic District	Middlesex County/ Town of Urbanna
King and Queen Courthouse Tavern	King and Queen County

Source: Virginia Department of Historic Resources.

Land Conservation

Table 18.7 Conserved Lands

Middle Peninsula Recreational Planning Region

locality	easement acres	ownership acres
Essex County	25,523.12	1,079.33
Gloucester County	2,600.92	2,314.06
King and Queen County	23,177.28	12,263.82
King William County	17,115.75	3,741.04
Mathews County	1,104.37	308.27
Middlesex County	3,182.83	210.16
Total	92,620.94	

Source: Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation Protected Lands Inventory

Natural Area Preserves and Natural Heritage Resources

With abundant shoreline along the lower Potomac and Rappahannock rivers and the Chesapeake Bay, the Northern Neck region has very important habitat for a number of coastal species and plant communities. Beaches in the district have populations of the globally rare sea-beach knotweed, federally threatened northeastern beach tiger beetle and least tern nesting colonies. Single populations of Kentucky lady’s slipper, sensitive joint-vetch and Parker’s pipewort are part of the region’s globally rare flora.

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. Secondarily, 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.

Conservation targets of special significance in the region include:

- Protection of lands around Hughlett Point and Dameron Marsh natural area preserves
- Sandy beach habitats and associated wetlands and uplands that support the threatened northeastern beach tiger beetle

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 18.8 Natural Area Preserves

Middle Peninsula Recreational Planning Region

preserve name	owner	locality
Bethel Beach	DCR	Mathews County
New Point Comfort	The Nature Conservancy	Mathews County

Table 18.9 Natural Heritage Resources

Middle Peninsula Recreational Planning Region

Number of occurrences of rare species and significant natural communities	141
Number of different rare species and significant community types (natural heritage elements)	76
Number of globally rare natural heritage elements	16
Number of species listed as federally endangered or threatened	3
Number of species listed as state endangered or threatened	8
Number of terrestrial conservation sites identified by DCR	41
Number of conservation sites with little or no protection	38
Number of partially protected conservation sites	3
Number of well protected conservation sites	0

Information as of Feb. 218. 20118. Source: Virginia Natural Heritage Program