



2022 FACT SHEET

CLINCH RIVER VALLEY INITIATIVE

Revised March 2022



GOAL 1: Create a Clinch River State Park

www.clinchriverva.com

The goal of the Clinch River State Park Action Group is to work with Virginia DCR to create a state park sited within Tazewell, Russell, Wise, and/or Scott Counties for public recreation, education, and community development along the Clinch River while protecting its sensitive and internationally significant biological diversity.



Given the enormous potential for the region to become an attractive eco-tourism destination, the Clinch River State Park Action Group is seeking to build and support a tourism infrastructure by establishing a new state park along the Clinch River.

Thanks to CRVI's lobbying efforts more than \$5 million has been dedicated for land acquisition and initial park creation. In the coming years, full establishment of the new state park will require a master planning process with communities and additional funding for visitor centers, campgrounds, and other park features. The state park will include anchor properties in Artrip near Cleveland and St. Paul managed by DCR State Parks complemented by multiple public river access points upstream and downstream of the anchors managed by DCR and other partners.

Completed Actions & Recent Successes

- **Summer 2021:** The park's Master Planning process officially gets underway. Clinch River State Park is officially dedicated by DCR and Governor Ralph Northam as Virginia's 41st State Park.
- **Fall 2020:** Two additional properties adjacent to Sugar Hill purchased, bringing the total acreage of this anchor to 460 acres. Chief Ranger moved onto the staff residence at Sugar Hill.
- **Spring 2020:** Supplies and equipment were purchased for park start-up operations. A Chief Ranger of Operations was hired.
- **Winter 2019:** VA DCR acquired a one acre canoe launch area from the Nature Conservancy at Artrip near Cleveland, VA in Russell County.
- **Fall 2019:** The first Park Manager was hired to oversee start-up of the State Park. VA DCR held a soft opening of the Sugar Hill property in St. Paul, VA .
- **Summer 2019:** VA DCR purchased 270 acres along the Clinch River near St. Paul, VA known as "Sugar Hill". This property will serve as the second "anchor" unit of Clinch River State Park.
- **Fall 2018:** VA DCR purchased 285 acres along the Clinch near Cleveland, VA in Russell County as the first "anchor" unit of Clinch River State Park.



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TOP 2022 Priorities – Complete additional land purchases around access points, launch State Park Master Planning Process and officially dedicate the park.



GOAL 2: Develop Access Points

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The goal of the Access Points Action Group is to improve and enhance public access to the Clinch River, to increase the positive tourism/economic impact to communities along the river while enhancing the quality of life for the citizens of those communities.



Given the enormous potential for the Clinch River Valley region to become an attractive eco-tourism destination, the Access Points Action Group is seeking to develop and enhance public access to the river for various outdoor users. Though there are already several public access points along the river, there are lengthy float times between those points which may not be accommodating to families, seniors, beginners, and other leisurely outdoor recreation enthusiasts.

The Action Group is currently working in several geographic areas around the river to develop (in partnership with willing landowners) several new access points on the Clinch River for boating, fishing, and swimming. Development of needed businesses such as outfitters and shuttle services, restaurants, gift shops, attractions, etc. within the area's towns are anticipated as a result of this approach.

Ongoing and Future Plans

- Seek funding to develop and enhance new access point sites on the Clinch.
- Work in partnership with the Department of Conservation and Recreation to eventually make some of the new access points part of the Clinch River State Park System.
- Continue to install signage at access points on the Clinch River. The signs inform users about the unique ecosystem and culture of the Clinch while incorporating CRVI branding.

Completed Actions & Recent Successes

- **Fall and Winter 2020-2021:** The Action Group is working to obtain new access points in Russell, Wise, and Scott Counties, and
- Actively Transferring Carbo and Old Castlewood access points to DCR.
- **Spring 2020:** Boat Launch completed at McDonald's in downtown Richlands.
- **Fall 2019:** Boat Launch completed in Carbo and on River Street in Richlands, site owned by town.
- **Spring 2017:** Boat Launch completed in Artrip, transferred to DCR State Parks in 2018.



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TOP 2022 Priorities: Acquire lands and complete development of two new access points downstream of St. Paul, VA.



GOAL 3: Improve Water Quality

www.clinchriverva.com

The goal of the Water Quality Action Group is to create a new Water Quality Task Force to more fully integrate water quality into all of CRVI's work.



The Clinch River is one of the most biologically diverse river systems in North America. It is home to one of the highest concentrations of rare species in our nation, and the Nature Conservancy has named it “the number one hotspot in the U.S. for imperiled aquatic species.” The Clinch River also supports many human communities whose history and future are intimately connected to the vitality and integrity of its water.

Preserving and restoring clean water is fundamental for the success of other CRVI goals. Clean water supports the continued existence of the Clinch's globally rare freshwater mussels and fish and it sustains a wider array of freshwater species that make the river such an exceptional recreational fishing resource. Future economic development (including recreation) must be done in a way that minimally impacts this valuable resource.

Ongoing and Future Plans

- Closely monitor water quality monitoring working closely with the Upper Tennessee River Roundtable, to establish programs to monitor and report on water quality on the Clinch River.
- Organize and promote clean up efforts to remove debris from the Clinch in conjunction with Stream Sweepers and Keep Southwest Virginia Beautiful.
- Coordinate work with CRVI's Action Groups to identify and promote specific water quality initiatives on an annual basis.
- Celebrate and publicize efforts by CRVI and others to improve water quality throughout the Clinch River Watershed.

Completed Actions & Recent Successes

- **Fall 2019:** \$10,000 grant from VA Dept. of Forestry (Partnership: Environmental Education and Water Quality)
- **Fall 2018:** \$10,000 grant received from VA Dept. of Forestry, \$5,000 and \$2,000 grants received from Tennessee Valley Authority.
- **Fall 2017:** CRVI received the Tennessee River Basin Network's Aquatic Biodiversity Award.



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2022 Top Priorities: Establish the water quality task force and to support the work of partner organization Stream Sweepers in their mission to safely remove trash and tires from the Clinch River.



GOAL 4: Increase Environmental Education

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The goal of the Environmental Education Action Group is to increase environmental awareness among all community members with a strategic focus on teachers, youth, and those recreating on the Clinch River.



Teaching people about the environment encourages them to appreciate nature and its complex and vital functions. This is especially important in the Clinch River watershed, which is renowned for its globally significant biodiversity. People who learn about their relationship to the environment are more likely to conserve natural resources and energy.

This Action Group aims to educate both children and adults who live in the Clinch River watershed. They are working to empower local citizens with knowledge about environmental issues so that they will support sustainable businesses, act to restore the local environment and improve public health.

Ongoing and Future Plans

- Continue to organize an annual educational symposium for educators and the public in the Clinch River Valley counties and an annual Youth Summit.
- Continue installation of educational signage at access points along the Clinch River.
- Gather stories about the history of the Clinch River to incorporate in educational materials. This will include oral histories to be collected at annual symposiums and other CRVI events.
- Develop an education program to teach students about water sources and quality.
- Develop an The Clinch River Ecological Education Center (CREEC) to serve as a hub and referral center for the many environmental and cultural learning opportunities in the region.

Completed Actions & Recent Successes

- **2021-** Completed second edition of the Teach the Clinch curriculum guide.
- **2019-2020:** Renovations of overnight housing space at the Clinch River Ecological Education Center (CREEC), a component of the UVA-Wise Oxbow Center.
- **Spring 2019:** Helped host the annual Clinch River Youth Summit in March 2019 and hosted the 7th Annual Clinch River Environmental Education Symposium in May 2019.
- **Spring 2017:** Teach the Clinch, a curriculum guide for educators in the local communities, was published and available in print or digitally at www.teachtheclinch.com.



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2022 Top Priorities: Develop CREEC to serve as a hub and referral center for environmental and cultural learning opportunities in the region. Next steps will be to complete building renovations, develop curriculum, secure equipment and develop marketing platform for the center.



GOAL 5: Foster Downtown Revitalization

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The goal of the Downtown Revitalization, Entrepreneurship, and Marketing Action Group is to foster a regional approach to community development and to build entrepreneur capacity centered on building and attracting a tourism infrastructure in support of outdoor recreation.



Using a regional approach, this Action Group seeks to connect localities and promote opportunities for regional revitalization. Through community development, support for entrepreneurs and regional marketing strategies, downtowns of localities in the region will become vibrant destinations with strong identities.

Given the enormous potential for the region to become an attractive tourism destination, this Action Group also seeks to build and support a tourism infrastructure with a focus on outdoor recreation, historic and cultural tourism activities. This will occur by working with other Action Groups to identify needed tourism resources and amenities, encouraging entrepreneurs in the tourism sector, and branding the region as a destination with vast and diverse tourism opportunities.

Ongoing and Future Plans

- Build capacity in localities to qualify for the DHCD Main Street Program. This includes building participation of business and property owners.
- Implement regional marketing strategy for the Clinch River including promoting the Tastes of the Clinch restaurant and eatery trail.
- Help coordinate and promote a Clinch specific regional opportunity challenge highlighting specific needs of HOC communities with leveraged funding for prizes.
- Assist all towns in the watershed to receive the Hometowns of the Clinch designation.

Completed Actions & Recent Successes

- **2021:** First annual Hometowns of the Clinch Symposium
- **2020:** Town of Tazewell received Mainstreet and Hometowns of the Clinch designation.
- **2019:** Dante received \$269,000 AML Pilot Program grant from DMME and \$215,000 Brownfield grant.
- **Summer 2019:** Tazewell received their Hometown of the Clinch Designation.
- **Summer 2019:** Dungannon and St. Paul both received Main Street Grant awards. Cleveland, Dante, Dungannon, Richlands, & St. Paul are designated Hometowns of the Clinch.



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2022 Top Priorities: To continue building leadership capacity, Hometowns of the Clinch will launch an annual summit targeting the capacity needs of the communities along the river and leverage the RALLY SWVA program. In order to strengthen the economic impact of the Clinch on communities, CRVI will update the HOC visitor guide and create a business directory, showcasing restaurants, outfitters, and recreation businesses.