



Friends of the Rappahannock

2020-2025 STRATEGIC PLAN

Focused on the
Rappahannock River
since 1985



TABLE OF CONTENTS

BACKGROUND	PAGE 3
MISSION	PAGE 3
ADVOCACY	
RESTORATION	
EDUCATION	
OUR SUCCESSES	PAGE 5
VALUES	PAGE 5
ORGANIZATIONAL CHART	PAGE 7
OUR SUPPORT SYSTEM	PAGE 8
BOARD GOVERNANCE	
OUTREACH	
FUNRAISING	
OUR 2020-2025 GOALS	PAGE 9
ORGANIZATIONAL GOALS	
ORGANIZATIONAL PILLAR OBJECTIVES	
ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT OBJECTIVES	
BEYOND 2025: LONG TERM VISION	PAGE 15
APPENDIX: ACRONYM TRANSLATION	PAGE 17

BACKGROUND

Friends of the Rappahannock (FOR) is a 501(c)3 non-profit conservation organization formed in 1985 by citizens concerned with the health of the Rappahannock River. Originally focused on Central Rappahannock River Basin, FOR now works to conserve the entire watershed, across 18 counties, from its headwaters in the Blue Ridge Mountains to its mouth at the Chesapeake Bay.

MISSION

Since 1985, our mission has been to be:

"The VOICE and ACTIVE force for a healthy and scenic Rappahannock River".

This will continue to be our mission through the next decade of work. With the critical support from over 2,000 members and a large network of volunteers FOR accomplishes its mission through--**advocacy, restoration and education.**

ADVOCACY

We engage watershed stakeholders through grassroots action to develop solutions to the river's water quality challenges.

Specifically, we...

- Address local water quality concerns through discourse with members of the community, local and regional stakeholders, local government staff, and elected officials to promote responsible land development, environmental education, and pollution reduction strategies.
- Advocate for watershed-wide policy that protects water quality, increases public access to recreational opportunities and promotes environmental education and stewardship.
- Participate in the Healthy Rivers Initiative that advocates for full funding for water quality programs such as the Stormwater Local Assistance Fund (SLAF), Virginia Agricultural Cost-share Program (VACS), Virginia Conservation Assistance Program (VCAP), and more.

RESTORATION

We mitigate stormwater runoff and restore degraded landscapes that contribute excess nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment to the river.

Specifically, we...

- Plant trees and restore the banks of the streams in the small creeks in the headwater counties of the Rapidan and Rappahannock River basins.
- Restore oyster reefs and create living shorelines downstream.
- Install rain gardens and other landscaping practices that reduce runoff and pollutants to our waterways.
- Remove man-made trash and litter that has been carelessly discarded and has ended up along streams and rivers.

EDUCATION

We invest in young people, giving them the experiences, knowledge and skills to become the next generation of river stewards.

Specifically, we...

- Inspire action and behavior change by providing participants with opportunities to understand their connection to the Rappahannock River.
- Serve PK-12 and collegiate students as well as teachers and teachers-in-training through one-day field trips, weeklong summer camps, Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences and professional development workshops.

The FOR Environmental Education Programs are highly regarded and recognized across the region. FOR provides students with hands-on and Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences (MWEEs) that promote connection and respect for the river, the environment, and personal stewardship of resources. Our programs empower students to gain an appreciation for the unique Rappahannock River and Chesapeake Bay ecosystem. For many students, participating in FOR-guided field trips is their first experience with the river beyond seeing it from a car. FOR currently has support from NOAA and the EPA to help achieve this goal.

OUR SUCCESSES

- Permanently protected 4,377 acres and 65+ stream/river miles of riparian forests in conservation easements.
- Restored 75,000 stream linear feet and 243 riparian buffer acres since 2006.
- Planted over 25,000 trees.
- Removed the Embrey Dam.
- Opened access to 600 miles of nursery/spawning habitat for anadromous fish.
- Installed several protected oyster reefs spanning 10 acres in the tidal Rappahannock River.
- Implemented first Rappahannock River Report Card.
- Mentor over 6,000 students in our environmental educational program annually.
- Remove over 14,000 pounds of trash each year through a robust river cleanup program.
- Engage 1,400 volunteers for projects and events annually.

OUR VALUES

Influential Throughout the Watershed

Advocates for the Rappahannock River throughout the upper, central, and lower portions of the river basin.

Diverse and Distributed Leadership

Identifies and cultivates new leaders and spreads leadership roles among staff, the board, and volunteers.

Constructive Engagement

Engages watershed stakeholders through the tools of relationship-building, dialogue, education, and consensus-based action.

Proactive Programs

Engages on issues in a proactive context wherever possible and through thoughtful deliberation, providing pragmatic solutions.

Sound Science

Crafts innovative solutions based on the best available scientific data.

Outcome Oriented

Evaluates and adjusts programs based on their ultimate, proven benefit to the Rappahannock River.

Professional Integrity

Takes credible actions and is accountable for these actions to members, donors, and the citizens of the Rappahannock River watershed. Continuously striving to be transparent, follow-through on commitments, and base decisions on the best available science.

Technical Credibility

Employs science professionals who can contribute constructively to developing local and statewide solutions to key technical issues affecting the Rappahannock River.

Fiscal Responsibility

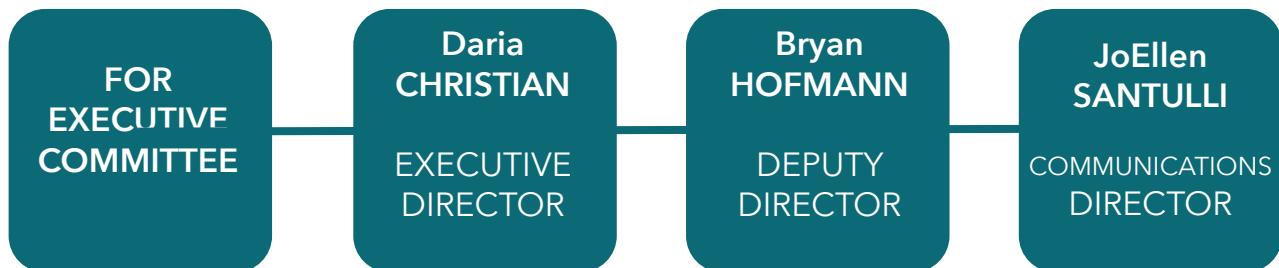
Manages financial resources given by members and donors to maximize on-the-ground river protection actions.

Equal Representation

Strives to be culturally competent, inclusive, and committed to using resources and influence to provide for equal protection and access for everyone who shares and enjoys the Rappahannock River.

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

FOR LEADERSHIP



FOR PILLARS



FOR ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT



OUR SUPPORT SYSTEM

BOARD GOVERNANCE

We maintain an executive committee that provides oversight of the programs and financial stability of the organization.

Specifically, we...

- Participate in monthly executive committee meetings to review financial documents and programmatic materials
- Review and offer guidance on advocacy issues
- Participate in committees and special events
- Participate in fundraising activities

OUTREACH

We foster awareness on threats to water quality, habitat and wildlife and offer solutions to individuals and communities on what they can do to reduce risks to our environment.

Specifically, we...

- Attend community events, neighborhood association meetings, church groups, and civic associations.
- Communicate our messaging through monthly program email/newsletters to our members.
- Maintain an active and updated website and social media presence where thousands of community members can check in on our advocacy, restoration and education programs and donate to support our mission.

FUNDRAISING

We maintain a diverse stream of funding to support our program pillars and basic operations.

Specifically, we...

- Host fundraising events
- Apply for grant support
- Maintain a membership program
- Solicit funds from individual and corporate donors

OUR 2020-2025 GOALS

BUILDING ON 35 YEARS OF SUCCESSES

FOR developed a multi-faceted, holistic approach to identify organizational and specific program pillar goals. FOR remains deeply committed to the issues affecting the Rappahannock River and its watershed and we will continue to tackle them, in partnership with other community organizations, through advocacy, habitat protection and restoration, community engagement and education. As data has indicated, we are seeing results from our decades of effort. Through our programs we inspire and call to action river-lovers to recreate, advocate, and participate in local efforts to address the water quality and land protection needs in the community.

Our work is not done – and in many ways it is threatened more now than ever. We must remain vigilant and laser focused to ensure the natural, scenic, cultural, historical, recreational, and public values of the Rappahannock River are understood, protected, enhanced, and celebrated by the local communities who reap the many benefits of a healthy Rappahannock River ecosystem.

This Strategic Plan addresses organizational issues to guide FOR staff leadership and the board both in planning, accountability, and program sustainability. In addition, we included program pillar-specific goals, strategies, and actions to guide department leadership and their staff in the execution of programs over the next 5 years.

ORGANIZATIONAL GOALS

Organizational reach and participation

FOR aims to use available resources to make sure we are reaching the right people with the right tools in the right places for the highest impact for the river. Some programs will expand into new areas and some programs will grow with more participants. Other programs will be scaled appropriately to attain this goal.

Diversity, inclusion, justice and equity

FOR will work to ensure that our programs and communications engage diverse communities in age, race, ethnicity, gender, region and socioeconomic status to effectively address the needs of the river. FOR will actively seek ways to be representative of the entire community we serve.

Sustainability

FOR's vision is to have the appropriate staff, funding and programs to accomplish our mission. FOR will work to create funding streams that are reliable and consistent, create and maintain the right programs to fulfill our mission and to retain high quality employees to run those programs.

The following objectives will illustrate how each of these goals will be addressed through FOR's program pillars and supporting organizational programs.

ORGANIZATIONAL PILLAR OBJECTIVES

ADVOCACY

Organizational reach and participation

- Provide plan review, comments, and recommendations to local governments on development projects, erosion and sediment control, stormwater management, WIPIII, MS4, and other related issues to protect the Rappahannock River. 2020-2025.
- Maintain an active and engaged presence by FOR staff, board, and members at the Virginia General Assembly, state agencies, and statewide advocacy efforts focused on water quality funding, WIPIII, fish and wildlife habitat, and environmental education. This includes monthly Virginia Conservation Network (VCN) water work-group calls, VCN Lobby Day, Healthy Rivers Initiative partnership with James River Association (JRA) and Potomac Conservancy, Quarterly Rappahannock River Basin Commission and associated Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meetings, and other issue specific campaigns as needed. 2020-2025.
- Continue to protect the Rappahannock River and Chesapeake Bay through active participation in federal appropriations processes and defense of the Clean Water Act through targeted advocacy, campaigns, and litigation. This includes the Choose Clean Water Coalition (CCWC) Bay Day on the Hill, CCWC Annual Meeting, meetings with congressional representatives of VA-1, VA-5, and VA-7, meeting with federal agency staff, and other issue specific campaigns as needed. 2020-2025.
- Expand the Rappahannock River Report Card to all regions of the watershed by 2023 and update biannually following the release of the 305(b) integrated water quality report released by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). Work to expand report card metrics to include indicators for the 10 goals outlined in the Chesapeake Bay Agreement.

Organizational reach and participation (continued)

- Work with the Ecopark to continue to create a Rappahannock Symposium to expand the reach, capacity, and effectiveness of the Rappahannock River Roundtable partnership by 2022.

Diversity, inclusion, justice and equity

- Research and expand local media contacts to ensure FOR press releases and announcements are distributed throughout the geographic region we serve.
- Research and include representatives (staff and elected) from every City, County, Town, PDC, SWCD and other relevant local bodies in the Rappahannock River watershed in all correspondence and offerings of the Rappahannock River Roundtable by 2020.
- Offer technical assistance on development plan review, grant writing, comprehensive plan updates, and other planning services to rural and underserved communities 2020-2025.

Sustainability

- Develop and maintain contractual service partnerships with six MS4 permittees for community outreach, education, and participation support by 2022
- Identify a dedicated funder to support the long term river report card program
- Locate and fund a full time River Steward position in the headwater region in conjunction with opening a headwaters office in Fauquier/Culpeper County by 2021

RESTORATION

Organizational reach and participation

- Provide plan review, comments, and recommendations to local governments on development projects, erosion and sediment control, stormwater management, WIPIII, MS4, and other related issues to protect the Rappahannock River. 2020-2025.
- Work with headwater partners to complete at least one restoration project annually in each of the six counties by 2022 and two annual projects by 2025.
- Work with communities and partners to facilitate two river cleanups in 16/18 counties of the Rappahannock River watershed by 2025.
- Work with MS4s, Planning District Commissions, and Soil and Water Conservation Districts to support programs and projects in the urban/ suburban and agricultural sectors through FOR programs: headwater stream initiative (HSI), urban forestry, coastal forestry, oyster restoration, living shorelines, fish habitat, and stormwater management programs.

Diversity, inclusion, justice and equity

- Expand the offering of Student Stream Team program partnerships and project opportunities to six new schools by 2023.
- Research opportunities for increased cost-share assistance for low income land-owners interested in agricultural and stormwater best management practices and incorporate strategies into programs by 2022.
- Research opportunities to build workforce develop into Headwater Stream Initiative, Urban Forest, Coastal Forestry, Living Shoreline, and Oyster Restoration programs. 2020-2022
- Work with local communities, planning district commissions, and other partners to prioritize Urban Forestry tree programs in low income neighborhoods. 2020-2023

Sustainability

- Develop and maintain contractual service partnerships with six MS4 permittees for restoration project support by 2022
- Develop donor supported campaigns for tree planting and oyster restoration by 2021
- Locate and fund a full time River Steward position in the headwater region in conjunction with opening a headwaters office in Fauquier/Culpeper County by 2021
- Increase revenue from FOR led restoration projects to \$50,000 per year by 2023.

EDUCATION

Organizational reach and participation

- Work with two school districts to submit a NOAA B-WET or other grant application to bring Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences to their schools. One application in 2020 and one application by 2022.
- Work to expand participation in the Fredericksburg region field trip program by adding 1,000 students as field trip participants by 2025.
- Research opportunities to purchase, facilitate a partnership, or other ways to acquire a floating barge for a floating classroom.
- Expand summer camps to headwaters or tidal

Diversity, inclusion, justice and equity

- Grow Head Start and Virginia Preschool Initiative program by adding Caroline County and Fauquier County by 2025.
- Reinvigorate youth at risk program by actively seeking at least 100 participants through community partners for summer programs, Breaks for the Bay, Wildlife Festival and camp scholarships.

Diversity, inclusion, justice and equity (continued)

- Grow Head Start and Virginia Preschool Initiative program by adding Caroline County and Fauquier County by 2025.
- Expand our college internship program to include students from each of the three community colleges throughout the watershed by 2023.

Sustainability

- Work with at least 2 school districts or counties to add a line item to their budgets for MWEE support by 2025.
- Advocate at the state level for funding dedicated to environmental education, specifically MWEE support funding.
- Find dedicated, annual sponsor of \$2,500 for youth at risk programs by 2025.
- Continue funding stream of \$5,000/year to bring education programs to Head Start and Virginia Preschool Initiative.
- Locate and fund a full time education staff person in the headwater region in conjunction with opening a headwaters office in Fauquier County by 2021.

ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT OBJECTIVES

BOARD GOVERNANCE

Organizational reach and participation

- 100% board participation in growing FOR's network through "Breakfast by the River" (or similar event hosting) by 2020.
- 100% board participation as an officer, on a committee or special project by 2020

Diversity, inclusion, justice and equity

- Establish and promote board liaison program to include regionally diverse representation that meets semi-annually by 2022
- Actively recruit members of diverse ethnicity, race, age and socioeconomic status to participate as members or liaisons.

Sustainability

- Create position description of a board member and liaison by 2020
- Create board orientation process for incoming members and liaisons by 2020

OUTREACH

Organizational reach and participation

- Establish relationships with all media contacts in watershed for effective news coverage on priority issues
- Create watershed region-specific marketing plans that include community partners and ranks marketing strategies in order of effectiveness by 2021.
- Conduct assessment every two years.
- Establish at least 1 community partner in each substantial watershed county for increased community recognition by 2023.
- Establish annual “citizen action” campaign for each watershed region (headwaters, middle, tidal) to increase community engagement (examples: install rain barrels) by 2022. Once established, participation should grow by 5% each year.

Diversity, inclusion, justice and equity

- Revise all website and print materials to support diversity and inclusion in 2020.
- Test all marketing materials to ensure the images and language used is inclusive and helps to engage a broader audience in FOR’s mission.
- Participate in 2 community events in each watershed region that serve low-income and Spanish speaking community by 2022.
- Create digital content on website and social media platforms that celebrates environmental justice history along the Rappahannock River four times a year

Sustainability

- Recruit and train 2-3 volunteers in each watershed region to effectively represent FOR at community events several times a year without staff support by 2025.
- Create an annual assessment of outreach plan with metrics that can be tracked each year.
- Secure \$2,000 annual commitment from donors to support JEDI focused event participation by 2023.

FUNDRAISING

Organizational reach and participation

- Re-establish legacy giving programs for donor giving through retirement plans and wills by 2021.
- Attain 1% membership in all watershed counties by 2025
- Host 12 home parties, including Breakfasts by the River, which are introductory parties, a year in the Fredericksburg area by 2021. Host 2 home parties each year in the Upper Rappahannock, Rapidan, and Tidal region by 2022.

Organizational reach and participation (continued)

- Host 2 donor appreciation events each year starting in 2020.

Diversity, inclusion, justice and equity

- Organize two home parties a year that target under-represented populations

Sustainability

- Increase appeal and major donor giving by 15% each year
- Research opportunities for streamlining current CRM software or migrating to new software.
- Create annual assessment of donor demographics, donor retention, and donor appreciation process.
- Create major donor pipeline by 2021.
- Assess major donor strategy annually starting in 2022.

BEYOND 2025

OUR LONG TERM VISION

Whereas this strategic plan addresses the next five years, ultimately FOR strives for a long term vision to be accomplished in the next 5-10 years. FOR recognizes that funding and other constraints place many goals in this vision beyond the time frame of the five year plan. However, knowing these long term goals is essential to meeting the mission of FOR and planning for the future.

FOR's boots-on-the-ground approach provides tailored support to the unique needs of the 18 counties along the watershed with additional branch offices and infrastructure. FOR's headquarters is fully resourced and includes a total of five branch offices located in Fredericksburg, Tappahannock, Kilmarnock/Urbanna, upper Rappahannock and the Rapidan. Each of these offices is appropriately staffed to support the FOR pillars in that region. Each location is fully outfitted with vehicles, tools and equipment to implement the programs appropriate for that region.

River access sites are consistently placed and maintained providing an active water trail from the headwaters to the Chesapeake Bay. Communities in our watershed experience the benefits of improved and safe access to the river and recreational opportunities in their own backyard. These communities feel a special connection to their local watershed and have active liaisons partnering with FOR to protect it.

**Friends of the Rappahannock
Strategic Plan 2020-2025**

County representatives, landowners, membership, and community members who live in the 18 counties along the watershed value and respect the Rappahannock River. They are well informed about FOR's work and about ways they can protect, restore, and enhance the river. Donors receive a clear message on FOR successes and needs, motivating new members and donors and retaining current giving.

FOR program leadership and the Board has a healthy inventory of data in order to track what is going well and which areas need attention. Each year, FOR leadership and board identify where things stand with current goals, set new goals or strategies as necessary, and take action to achieve goals while measuring outcomes. FOR leadership and the board feel confident that they are achieving continued growth and are operating as a data-centric organization.

A wide range of people, reflective of our increasingly diverse community, is engaged with the river and active with FOR as board members, staff, river liaisons and volunteers. FOR is positively influencing decisions made affecting the Rappahannock River across 18 counties by providing timely and proactive information and a strong, diverse, and well-informed network of activist volunteers.

FOR continues to utilize age-appropriate, customized programs to educate, inspire change, and activate young people to be long-term advocates for the river. FOR partners with community educators, business leaders, and philanthropists who share a common vision for building new activist and community leaders sensitive to the needs of healthy rivers and ecosystems.

The community understands the power of restoration efforts to:

- Improve water quality,
- Prevent loss of land and infrastructure,
- Reduce flooding and flood damage,
- Cultivate healthier ecosystems for fishing, hunting, and wildlife; and,
- Increase economic development.

County leaders are proactive to ensure they are compliant with all legislative and policy measure designed to improve and sustain high water quality levels.

FOR will remain a steadfast partner and innovative leader in the advocacy, education, and restoration of the Rappahannock River from the headwaters to the Chesapeake Bay.

Friends of the Rappahannock
Strategic Plan 2020-2025

APPENDIX

ACRONYM TRANSLATION

- **B-WET** - Bay Watershed Education and Training
- **CCWC** - Choose Clean Water Coalition
- **CRM** - Customer Relationship Management
- **DEQ** - Department of Environmental Quality
- **EPA** - Environmental Protection Agency
- **HSI** - Headwater Stream Initiative
- **JEDI** - Justice, equity, diversity and inclusion
- **JRA** - James River Association
- **MS4** - Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System
- **MWEE** - Meaningful Watershed Educational Experience
- **NOAA** - National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
- **PDC** - Planning District Commission
- **SLAF** - Stormwater Local Assistance Fund
- **SWCD** - Soil and Water Conservation District
- **TAC** - Technical Advisory Committee
- **VACS** - Virginia Agricultural Cost Share
- **VCAP** - Virginia Conservation Assistance Program
- **VCN** - Virginia Conservation Network
- **WIP** - Watershed Implementation Plan