

VaULT 2026 Conference Field Trips Descriptions

All field trips are Monday, April 27, 2026 except for Riverview Farm Park which will be on Wednesday, April 29 afternoon. Please select **ONLY ONE** Monday field trip when you register. You are able to select one Monday field trip and the Wednesday field trip.

PLEASE note field trips start times and length of trip before signing up for one.

We strive to provide accessible field trip options to conference attendees. If you are interested in joining a trip but need accommodations, please reach out to the trip coordinator via their email in the trip descriptions at least three weeks before the conference and we will try to make adjustments.

A. Newport News Park Tour, Walk, Talk, & Drive

Date: Monday, April 27, 2026

Time: 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Participant spots available: 20

Join Newport News Waterworks to tour one of the largest municipal parks east of the Mississippi River. At almost 8,000 acres, Newport News Park offers a plethora of examples of successful conservation work. This field trip will highlight the history of the park, reforestation efforts, watershed management, historical preservation efforts, and natural area preservation.



Photo credit: Virginia Tourism Corporation

Distance from the Newport News Marriott: 15 minutes /10 miles

Parking: There is sufficient parking on site.

Meeting time: 9am Newport News Park: 13560 Jefferson Ave, Newport News, VA 23603

Duration: 3 hours

Accessibility: Accessible, primarily a driving tour with minimal walking

You will need to bring:

- Comfortable shoes
- Sufficient water
- Rain and sun protection
- Snacks/lunch

Leader: Andrew Rich and Eddie Harrah, Newport News

Contact for questions: Terry Costello, Terry.Costello@jamescitycountyva.gov

B. Grandview Nature Preserve, Hike & Bird

Date: Monday, April 27, 2026

Time: 9:30 AM - 12:30 PM

Participant spots available: 20

Join us for a 4-mile round-trip birding hike through Grandview Nature Preserve, one of Hampton's coastal gems. This scenic walk follows the beach out to Factory Point, offering opportunities to observe a variety of shorebirds, wading birds, and other coastal wildlife along the Chesapeake Bay. Participants will learn about the area's unique coastal habitats, the importance of the Back River estuary, and ongoing local efforts to enhance coastal resilience.



Photo credit: Mary Bennett

Distance from the Newport News Marriott: 26 minute drive / 15 miles

Parking: There is plenty of parking along State Park Dr.

Meeting time: 9:30am, Grandview Nature Preserve Trail Access: State Park Dr, Hampton, VA 23664 (37.078676509125856, -76.27766520177924)

Duration: 3 hours

Accessibility: Hiking tour - terrain is flat, but expect extended time walking on uneven terrain.

You will need to bring:

- Dress for the weather, footwear suitable for sandy terrain
- Binoculars
- Sufficient water
- Rain and sun protection
- Snacks

Leader: Stephen Living and Meagan Thomas with the Department of Wildlife Resources

Contact for questions: Mary Bennett, Mary.Bennett@dof.virginia.gov

C. Conservation on the Elizabeth River, Walk, Talk, Bike

Date: Monday, April 27, 2026

Time: 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM

Participant spots available: 25

Visit the Pru and Louis Ryan Resilience Lab, a global model for coastal resilience, designed to teach the world's coastal residents and businesses how to respond as sea levels rise. This coastal property is protected under a rolling conservation easement which will eventually result in this pillar of resilience to be demolished to allow the waters and marshes of the Elizabeth River to take over. Then, take a short ride on the Elizabeth River Trail to learn about the trail's history and future connections, enhancements, and placemaking activities.



Photo credit: Elizabeth River Project

Distance from the Newport News Marriott: 25 miles, 31 minutes (subjective due to tunnel traffic)

Parking: Available at 4610 Colley Avenue, Norfolk, VA 23508 or street parking along Colley Ave.

Meeting time: 10:00 AM at Elizabeth River Project's Ryan Resilience Lab, 4610 Colley Avenue, Norfolk, VA 23508.

Duration: 4 hours, Ryan Resilience: 10-12pm, ERT Bike 1-2pm.

Accessibility: Accessible - walking on flat, paved terrain. Biking on flat, paved terrain.

You will need to bring:

- Helmets provided
- Bikes provided
- Comfortable shoes
- Sufficient water
- Rain and sun protection
- Snacks

Leaders: Pam Northam (Elizabeth River Project), Helen Kuhns (Coastal Virginia Conservancy) & Kindra Greene (Elizabeth River Trail)

Contact for questions: Helen Kuhns (HelenKuhns@covaconserve.org) and Kindra Green (ekindra.greene@elizabethrivertrail.org)

D. Exploring Catlett Island's Restoration and Monitoring Work for Habitat Resilience, Kayak

Date: Monday, April 27, 2026

Time: 11:00 AM - 2:00/4 PM

Participant spots available: 20

Paddle through the Catlett Islands on a kayak tour which explores the diverse wildlife, ecosystems, and restoration of the area with the Virginia Institute of Marine Science and the Chesapeake Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve in Virginia. Participants will get to enjoy a 2 hour paddle through slow-moving tidal waters and will have the opportunity to explore Machicomoco State Park on their own after the paddle. Kayaks (single or tandem), life vests, and paddles will be provided.



Photo credit: Dave Yeager

Distance from the Newport News Marriott: 27 minute drive / 14 miles. If you are coming from the west you may want to go to on the field trip before you go to the hotel

Parking: Boat Launch has space for 15 vehicles, carpooling is encouraged.. There is a \$5 fee that will be paid by VaULT.

Meeting time: 10:30am, Machicomoco State Park Cartop Boat Launch (37.303128, -76.550266)

Duration: 3-5 hours. 2 hours for paddling, 2 hours to explore the State Park on your own.

Accessibility: Need to be able to get in and out of a kayak and paddle. Machicomoco State Park has an accessible boat launch.

You will need to bring:

- Comfortable closed-toed shoes (old sneakers or muck boots that can get wet and/or dirty, must be able to be secured to the foot with laces, cords, etc.)
- Quick-dry clothing
- Sufficient water
- Rain and sun protection
- Snacks/lunch

Leader: Erin Reilly and Scott Lerberg, VIMS and Lucas Manweiler CZM

Contact for questions: Lucas Manweiler (Lucas.Manweiler@deq.virginia.gov)

E. Grafton Ponds, Walk & Talk

Date: Monday, April 27, 2026

Time: 12:00 - 3:00 pm

Participant spots available: 15

Come explore and experience the natural beauty and history of the Grafton Ponds property! Owned by Newport News Waterworks, the property includes 5 tracts comprised of a total of 550 acres of conserved land protected by a perpetual historic preservation and open-space easement held by the Virginia Board of Historic Resources. While the easement ensures the protection of a critical portion of the City of Newport News water supply, the property also contains numerous well-preserved Civil War defensive earthworks and other archaeological sites. In addition to its historic value, the property includes several specimens of a coastal plain natural pond complex which provides habitat for numerous plant and animal species. The tour will involve a hike across portions of the property to highlight these conservation values and the City's on-going management of the property. The tour will be led by Newport News Waterworks and Virginia Department of Historic Resources staff members.



Photo credit: Virginia Department of Historic Resources

Distance from the Newport News Marriott 17 minute drive / 11 miles

Parking: There is plenty of parking available.

Meeting time: 12:00 PM, 600 Oriana Road, Yorktown, VA; GPS Coordinates: 37.148645, -76.477939

Duration: 3 hours

Accessibility: Walking tour - not strenuous but will involve extended time standing and walking.

You will need to bring:

- Comfortable shoes
- Sufficient water
- Snacks

Leader, Andrew Rich (Newport News Waterworks) and Brad McDonald (VA Department of Historic Resources)

Contact for questions: Wendy Musumeci, wendy.musumeci@dhr.virginia.gov

F. Tour of Machicomoco State Park, Walk & Talk

Date: Monday, April 27, 2026

Time: 1:00 PM - 4:00 PM

Participant spots available: 20

Comprised of 645 acres, Machicomoco State Park contains a high diversity of habitats ideal for wildlife viewing including tidal marshes and wetlands, farmed fields, shrubby grasslands, longleaf pine stands, and mixed forest which make this one of the premier wildlife viewing locations along the Commonwealth's Middle Peninsula. When established in 2019, Machicomoco was the first state park celebrating and honoring the history and legacy of the Native Tribes of Virginia. Join staff from Virginia State Parks and The Conservation Fund to learn how the park came to be, take a guided tour of the extensive interpretive facilities and historic Timberneck House (c.1793), with time for a self-guided walk of the miles of trails throughout the park. The tour will involve a guided hike across portions of the property with additional time to explore exhibits or trails in the park.



Photo credit: Virginia State Parks

Distance from the Newport News Marriott: 33 minute drive / 21 miles. If you are coming from the west you may want to go to on the field trip before you go to the hotel

Parking: Carpooling is encouraged, but there is plenty of parking. The parking fee will be paid by VaULT.

Meeting time: 3601 Timberneck Farm Road, Hayes, VA 23072

Duration: 3 hours

Accessibility: Terrain is flat, but expect extended time walking on uneven terrain

You will need to bring:

- Comfortable shoes
- Sufficient water
- Snacks

Leader: Heather Richards, The Conservation Fund, Joel Neville, Machicomoco State Park, and Adam Newland, Machicomoco State Park.

Contact for questions: Taylor Evans, tevens@conservationfund.org

G. Ragged Island Wildlife Management Area, Walk & Talk

Date: Monday, April 27, 2026

Time: 1:30-3:30

Participant spots available: 15

Learn about Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources partnership with Ducks Unlimited, Christopher Newport University and NOAA to restore 6,300 feet of shoreline on the Ragged Island WMA adjacent to the James River Bridge in Isle of Wight County. Participants will have the opportunity to view the restored shoreline and learn about how this partnership helped protect the threatened 1,537 acre marsh at the WMA, including involvement from local universities and school programs.



Photo credit: Meghan Marchetti, Virginia DWR

Distance from the Newport News Marriott: 20 minutes / 11 miles

Parking: There is space for ~ 15 vehicles. Carpool encouraged.

Meeting time: 1:30pm, Ragged Island WMA Parking Area: 12527 Carrollton Blvd, Carrollton, VA 23314

Duration: 2 hours

Accessibility: Walking tour - not strenuous but will involve extended time standing and walking.

You will need to bring:

- Dress for the weather, footwear suitable for sandy terrain
- Binoculars
- Sufficient water
- Rain and sun protection
- Snacks

Leader: David Norris, Department of Wildlife Resources

Contact for questions: David Norris (david.norris@dwr.virginia.gov)

WEDNESDAY

H. Wednesday: Riverview Farm Park Living Shoreline and SWIFT Facility Tour, Walk & Talk

Date: Wednesday, April 29, 2026

Time: 2 PM - 4 PM

Participant spots available: 50

This tour highlights how Hampton Roads Sanitation District (HRSD), in partnership with the City of Newport News, developed a mile of new trails and boardwalks around Riverview Farm Park as part of the Sustainable Water Initiative for Tomorrow (SWIFT) program. This sustainable and resilient approach emphasized the partnership between HRSD and the City, while providing a model for regional stormwater management. HRSD, in partnership with the City, provided new public access to river views and connections to adjacent parks—an amenity to City of Newport News citizens, residents throughout Hampton Roads. Participants will see how shoreline protection, stormwater improvements, and new public amenities were integrated into a single comprehensive project that strengthens the park and surrounding community.



Photo credit: Hampton Roads Sanitation District

Distance from the Newport News Marriott 7 minute drive / 3 miles

Parking: There is plenty of parking available.

Meeting time: 2:00 PM at Riverview Farm Park: 105 City Farm Rd, Newport News, VA 23602

Duration: 2 hours

Accessibility: Walking on flat, paved terrain. The total length of the tour is 2.6 miles if participants walk back along the trail..

You will need to bring:

- Comfortable shoes
- Sufficient water
- Rain and sun protection
- Snacks

Leader: Lauren Zuravnsky and Brantley Bissette, Hampton Roads Sanitation District and Richard Wiatt VHB

Contact for questions: Mary Bennett, Mary.Bennett@dof.virginia.gov

TBD

H. Fort Monroe

Date: Monday, April 27, 2026

Time:

Participant spots available:

Photo:

Photo credit:

Distance from the Newport News Marriott:

Parking:

Meeting time:

Duration:

Accessibility:

You will need to bring:

- Sufficient water
- Snacks

Leader:

Contact for questions: