SENTINEL LANDSCAPES

"Where Mission Meets Recreation"

Exploring Robinson–Baker's Creek and the Readiness and Recreation Initiative

April 2026

Mary Bennett | Kristal McKelvey | Vanessa Ehrenpreis
DOF | DCR | NPS

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TIDEWATER SENTINEL LANDSCAPE

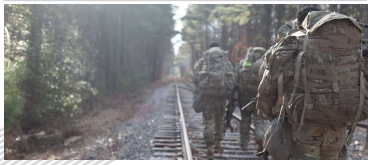
DCR Virginia Department of Conservation & Recreation

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

LAND & WATER CONSERVATION FUND

Mary Bennett

- Tidewater Sentinel Landscape Coordinator
- Virginia Department of Forestry



Kristal McKelvey

- Chief Recreation Grants Manager
- DCR-PRR

Vanessa Ehrenpreis

- Supervisory Merit Review Manager | Competitive Programs
- National Park Service | Land and Water Conservation Fund

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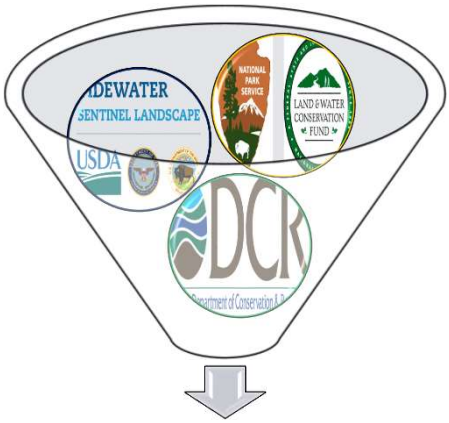
SENTINEL LANDSCAPES

Presentation Overview

- ★Sentinel Landscape Partnership
- ★Collaborating with the Military/ REPI
- ★National Park Service's Readiness and Recreation Initiative
- ★LWCF State Side
- ★Robinson–Baker's Creek Case Study



Robinson- Baker Creek Project

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SENTINEL LANDSCAPES

WHAT IS A SENTINEL LANDSCAPE?

- ★Sentinel landscapes are areas where **conservation**, **working lands**, and **national defense** interests converge.
  - Anchored by High-Value Military Installations
  - High-Priority Lands for:
    - USDA, DoW, and DOI

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SENTINEL LANDSCAPES

SENTINEL LANDSCAPE PARTNERSHIP

- ★ Founded in 2013
  - USDA, DoW, DOI
  - Federal Agencies, State and Local Governments, NGOs, and Landowners
- ★ The National Defense Authorization Acts
  - 2018, 2022, and 2024

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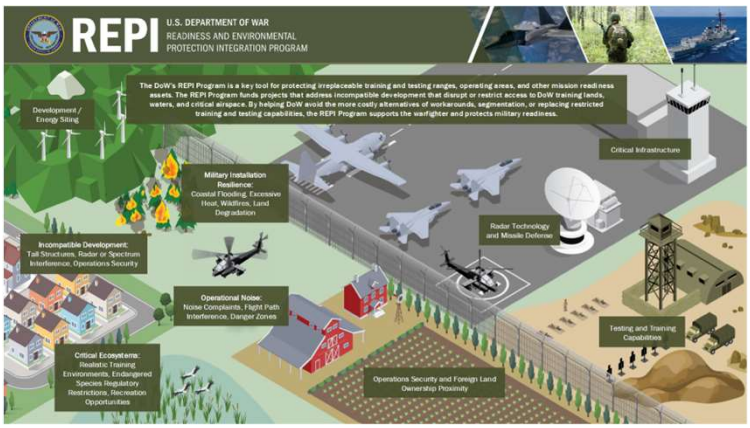
SENTINEL LANDSCAPES

WHY?

- ★ Address Vulnerabilities to Environmental Threats
- ★ Sustain Compatible Land Use
- ★ Leverage Multiple Resources



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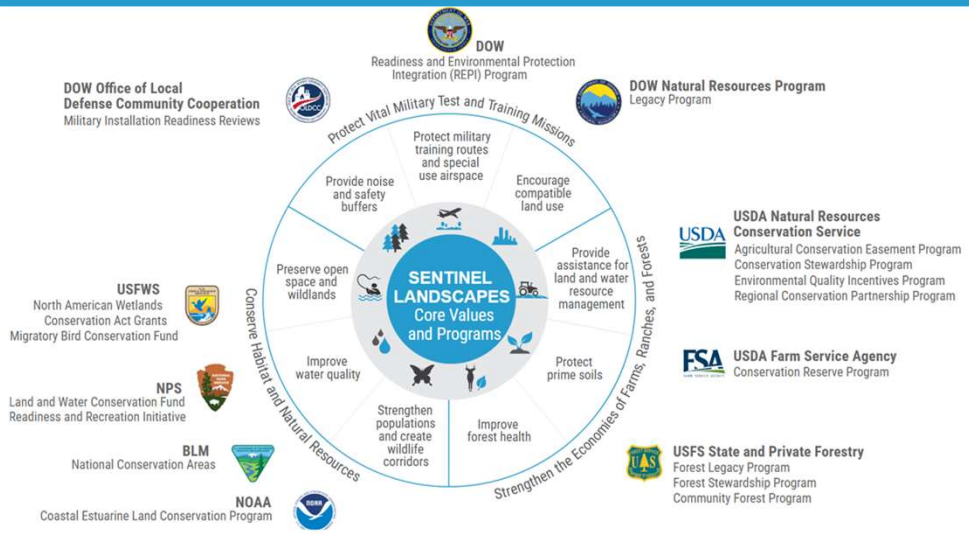
Sentinel Landscapes Partnership Core Values and Programs



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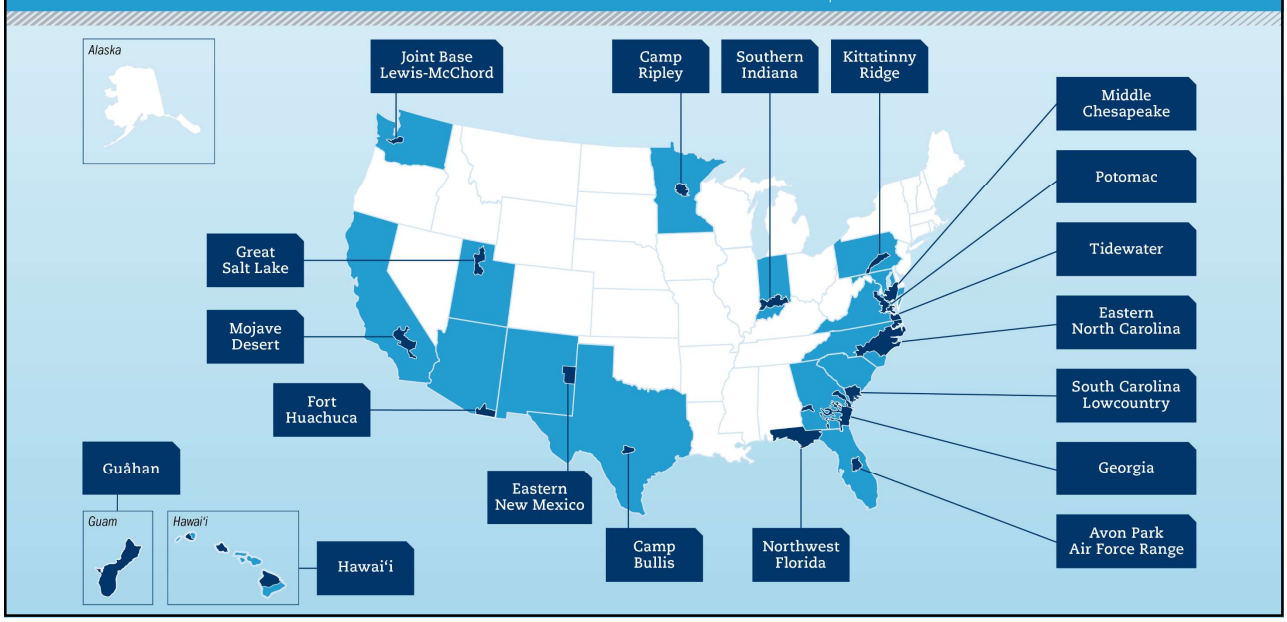
SENTINEL LANDSCAPES



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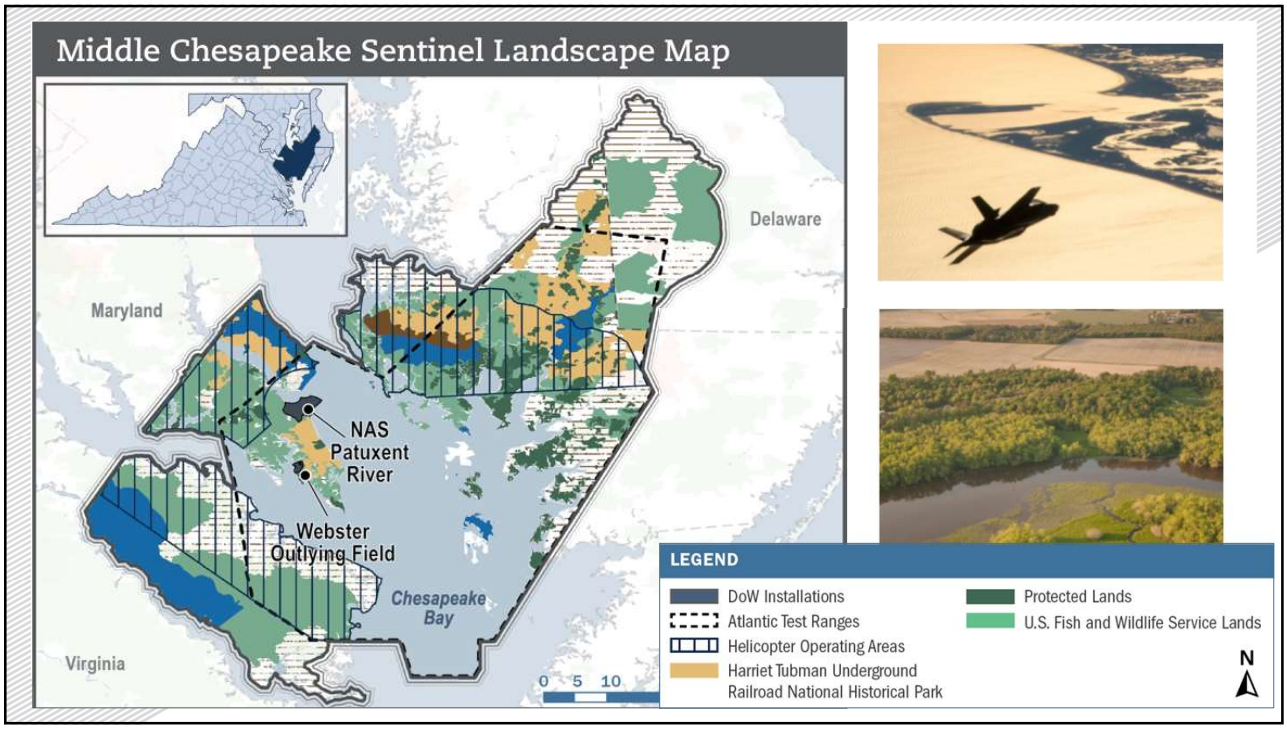
Middle Chesapeake Sentinel Landscape Map
Delaware
Maryland
NAS Patuxent River
Webster Outlying Field
Chesapeake Bay
Virginia
0 5 10
LEGEND
DoW Installations
Atlantic Test Ranges
Helicopter Operating Areas
Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad National Historical Park
Protected Lands
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Lands
N

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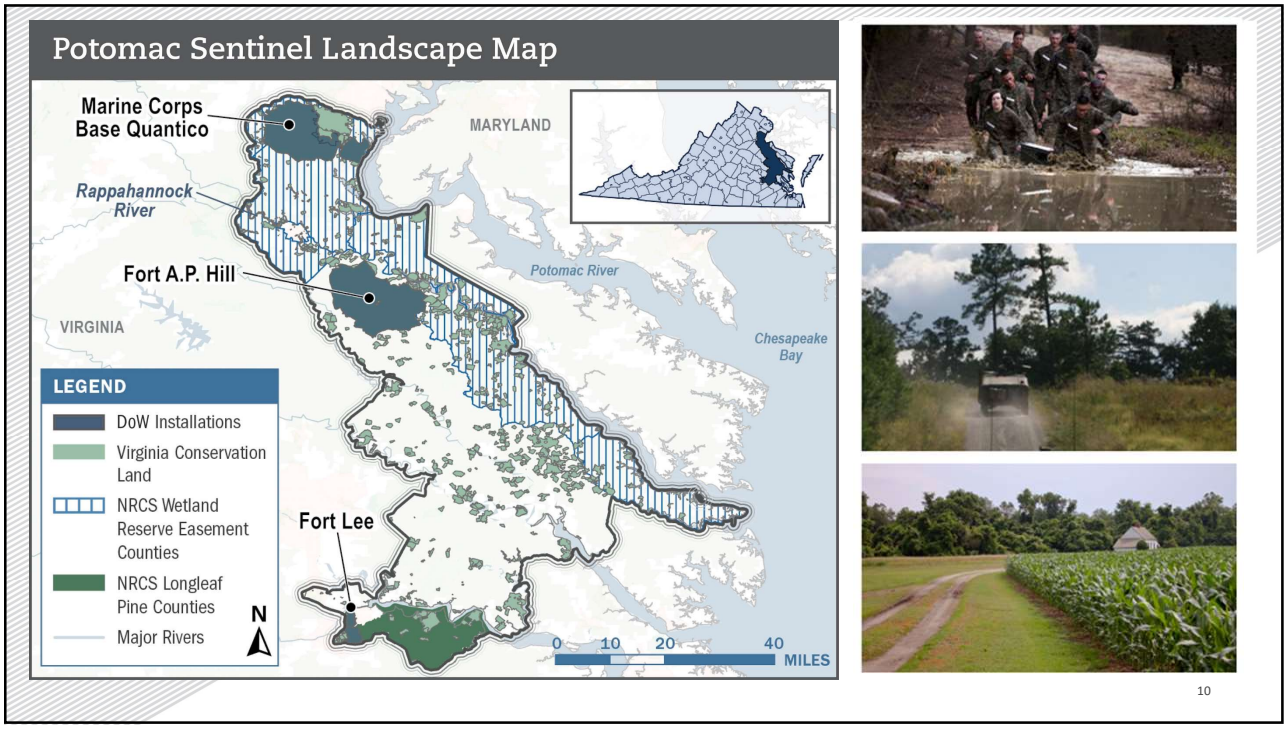
Potomac Sentinel Landscape Map
Marine Corps Base Quantico
MARYLAND
Rappahannock River
Fort A.P. Hill
Potomac River
VIRGINIA
Chesapeake Bay
LEGEND
DoW Installations
Virginia Conservation Land
NRCS Wetland Reserve Easement Counties
NRCS Longleaf Pine Counties
Major Rivers
N
Fort Lee
0 10 20 40 MILES
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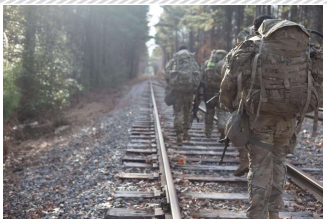
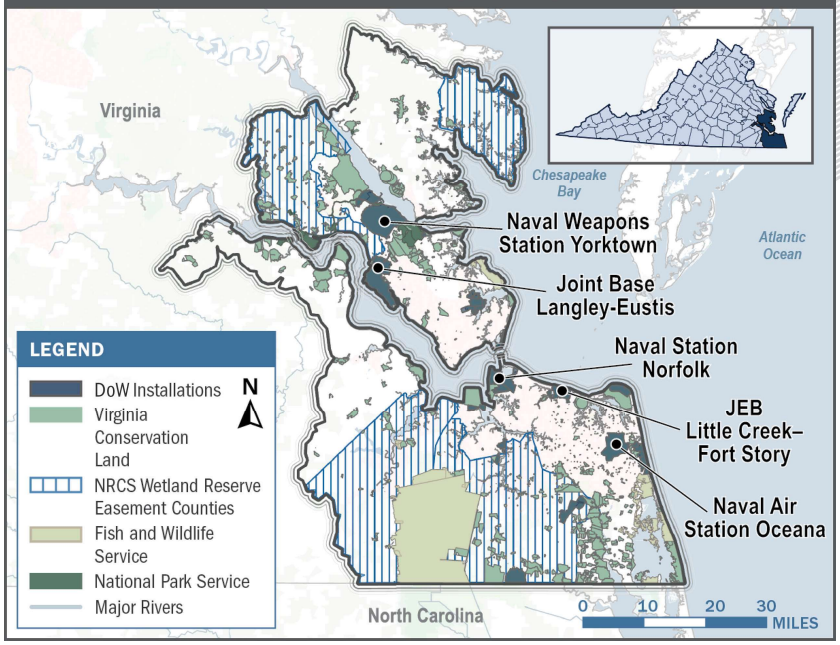


Tidewater Sentinel Landscape Map



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Mary Bennett
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TIDEWATER
SENTINEL LANDSCAPE

USDA

POTOMAC
SENTINEL LANDSCAPE

USDA

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MIDDLE CHESAPEAKE
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Joanna Ogburn
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FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH THE REPI PROGRAM

REPI Proposals

The Military Services work with conservation partners to submit annual funding requests to the REPI Program for activities that will preserve testing and training capabilities.

REPI Challenge

The REPI Challenge is an annual competition with dedicated funding for non-governmental organizations, universities, state and local governments, and other partners to advance project outcomes through large-scale innovation and conservation.

Readiness and Recreation Initiative

The REPI Program matches funding with the Department of the Interior's Readiness and Recreation Initiative to match unobligated balances from the Land and Water Conservation Fund for projects that provide public outdoor recreational opportunities without compromising military operations.

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	10 U.S.C. § 2684a	16 U.S.C. § 670 c-1 (The Sikes Act)	10 U.S.C. § 2679 (IGSAs)
Agreement Type	**Cost-sharing agreements**	**Cooperative agreements** or interagency agreements	**Intergovernmental Support Agreements (IGSAs)**
Eligible Entities	State or local governments and non-governmental organizations	State or local governments, Indian tribes, non-governmental organizations, and other federal agencies	State or local governments
Resilience Opportunities	DOW can build **installation** resilience by funding activities that enhance off-base natural infrastructure.	DOW can build **installation** resilience by funding activities that restore high value habitat or natural resources.	DOW can fund public services typically administered by state or local governments that build resilience to weather-related vulnerabilities in areas with installations.
Eligible Land	Projects can take place on properties already protected by the REPI Program.	Projects can take place on state land, local government land, tribal land, and private land.	N/A

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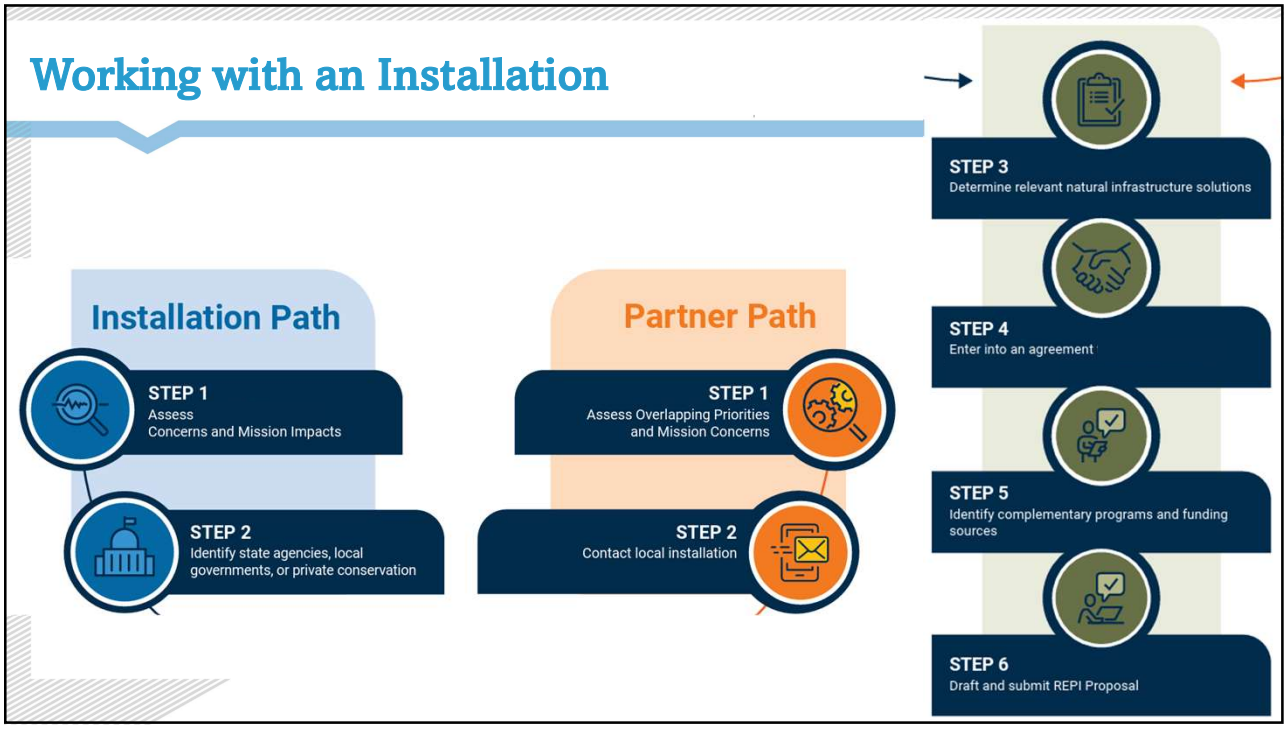

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REPI Review Process

Project Proposal Review Process

1. Local-Level Planning and Analysis (Ongoing) →
2. Installation to Service Headquarters (Annually July-Sep) →
3. Service Headquarters to OSW (Annually Sep-Oct) →
4. REPI Program Funding Decision (Annually Oct-Dec)

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ELEMENTS of SUCCESS: Communication

- Building strong relationships and trust with military and non-military stakeholders
- Clear communication and understanding of mutual goals
- Early and ongoing engagement throughout the project lifecycle
- Transparency and adaptability in project management

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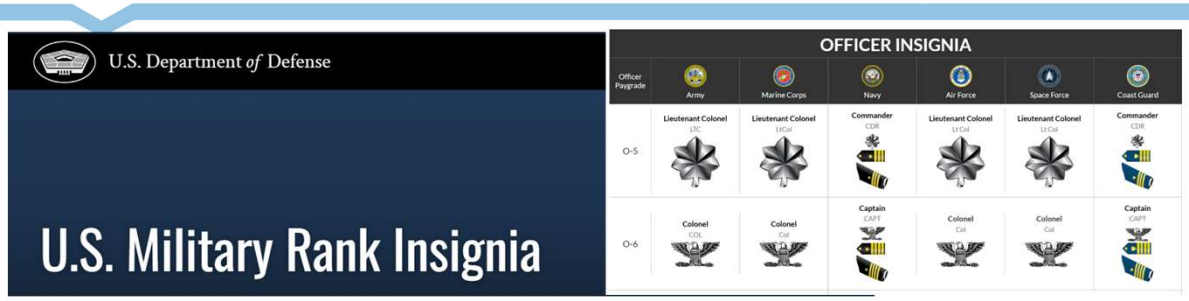
ELEMENTS of SUCCESS: Respect



Military rank is more than just who salutes whom. Military rank is a badge of leadership. Responsibility for personnel, equipment and mission grows with each advancement.

- ★ Example: Commanding Officer (CO) vs Commander – Know the difference.
- ★ When in doubt, **Ma'am and Sir**
- ★ You can always look up leadership online

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ELEMENTS of SUCCESS: Common Ground

- Leveraging funding sources and matching funds effectively
  - The right grant opportunity for the right partnership
- Integrating your organization's goals with military readiness objectives

DOD supports land conservation around local military bases, 'We love flying over farmland.'

BY TONY KUKULICH TKUKULICH@POSTANDCOURIER.COM
FEB 16, 2024

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Pitfalls and Challenges

- Misaligned goals or lack of mutual understanding
  - Not leaning into/ leading with the military mission
- Insufficient communication and stakeholder engagement
- Inadequate Timing
  - For meeting with the installations
  - Letters of Support (it takes TIME)
- Failure to secure matching funds or leverage partnerships effectively
  - REPI Funds are not infinite; Match Matters

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PLACE-BASED ACTIVITY

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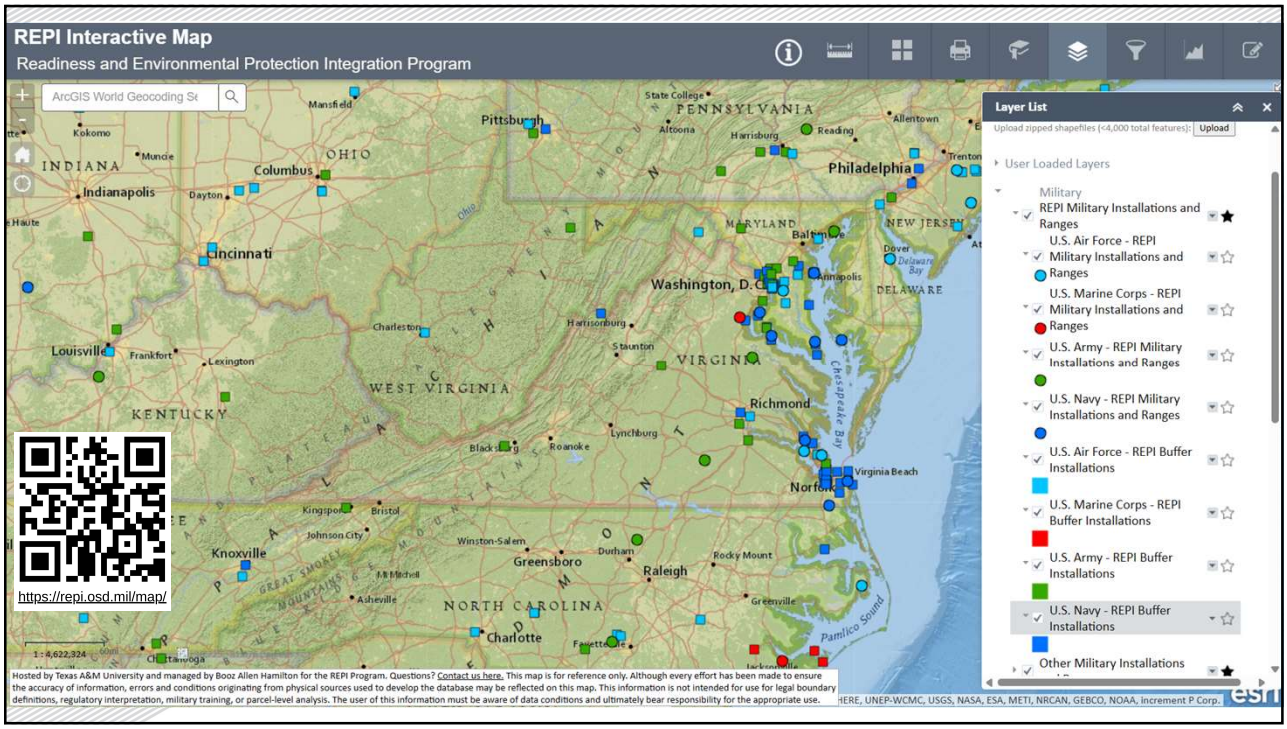
REPI Interactive Map
Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration Program
Layer List
Upload zipped shapefiles (<4,000 total features):
Upload
User Loaded Layers
Military
REPI Military Installations and Ranges
U.S. Air Force - REPI Military Installations and Ranges
U.S. Marine Corps - REPI Military Installations and Ranges
U.S. Army - REPI Military Installations and Ranges
U.S. Navy - REPI Military Installations and Ranges
U.S. Air Force - REPI Buffer Installations
U.S. Marine Corps - REPI Buffer Installations
U.S. Army - REPI Buffer Installations
U.S. Navy - REPI Buffer Installations
Other Military Installations
https://repi.osd.mil/map/
Hosted by Texas A&M University and managed by Booz Allen Hamilton for the REPI Program. Questions? Contact us here. This map is for reference only. Although every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of information, errors and conditions originating from physical sources used to develop the database may be reflected on this map. This information is not intended for use for legal boundary definitions, regulatory interpretation, military training, or parcel-level analysis. The user of this information must be aware of data conditions and ultimately bear responsibility for the appropriate use.
HERE, UNEP-WCMC, USGS, NASA, ESA, METI, NRCAN, GEBCO, NOAA, increment P Corp.

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Small Group Session
What are some ways you can connect with your Sentinel Landscape?
How could our land conservation community leverage Sentinel Landscapes/ Military to advance goals?
https://repi.osd.mil/map/
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Agenda

1. Land & Water Conservation Fund Basics
2. Intro to the Readiness & Recreation Initiative
3. Application Process
4. Tips for Crafting Your Application
5. Next Steps

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1. **Land & Water Conservation Fund Basics**
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Land & Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Basics

In 1965 Congress established the Land and Water Conservation Fund. LWCF fulfills a bipartisan commitment to *safeguard our natural areas, water resources and cultural heritage, and to provide recreation opportunities to all Americans.*

LWCF re-invests federal offshore oil and gas lease royalties. As a revenue-based program funds from the use of one natural resource supports the conservation of another: our land and water.

The 2020 Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA) permanently reauthorized LWCF for $900 million annually. $400 million is designated for state and local financial assistance.

46,000+
LWCF-funded projects across the country

98%
of counties across the U.S. have received LWCF funding

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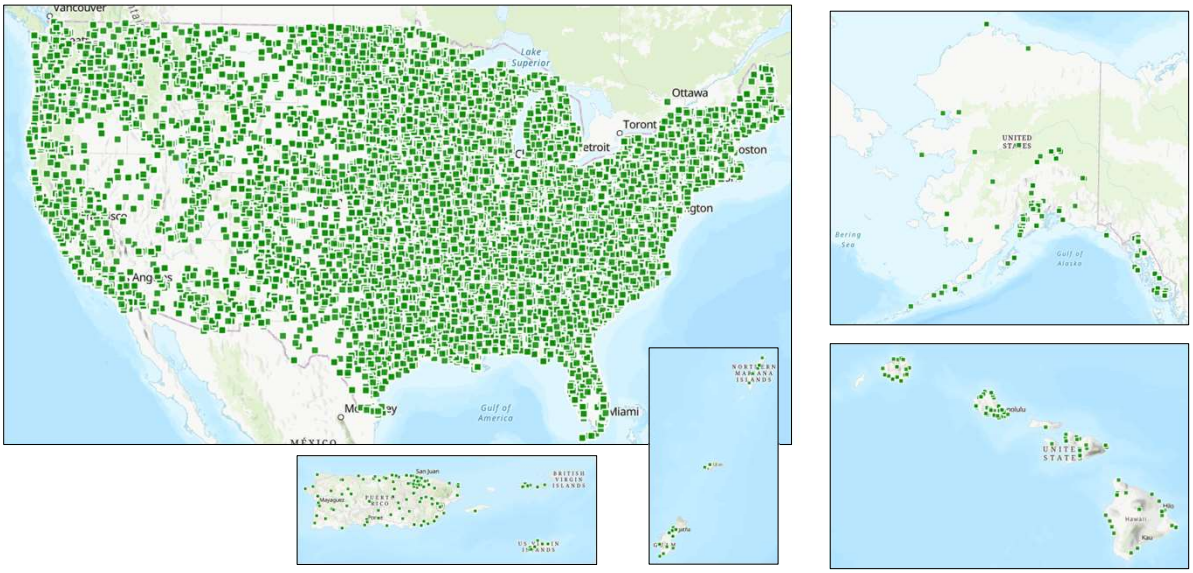
Okay but… What does that actually look like?



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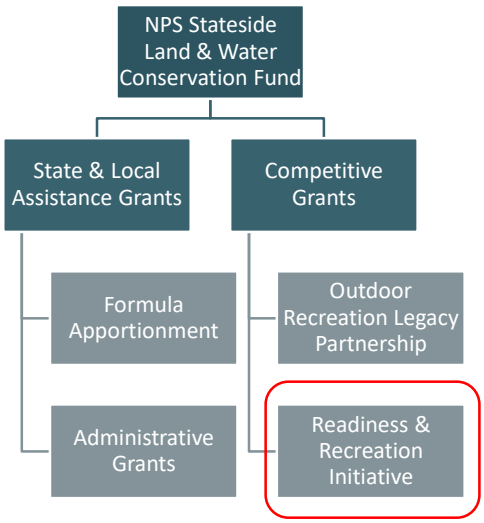
LWCF is divided into two program areas



The Land and Water Conservation Fund is divided into two programs: 1) formula grants and 2) competitive grants.

The 1965 LWCF Act authorizes all our programs and outlines program requirements, including:

- All projects must be maintained and accessible for public outdoor recreation use in perpetuity.
- Awards are dollar-for-dollar match, aka LWCF funds up to 50% of project costs.
- All states must have an approved State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP).
- Funded projects must align with SCORP priorities.

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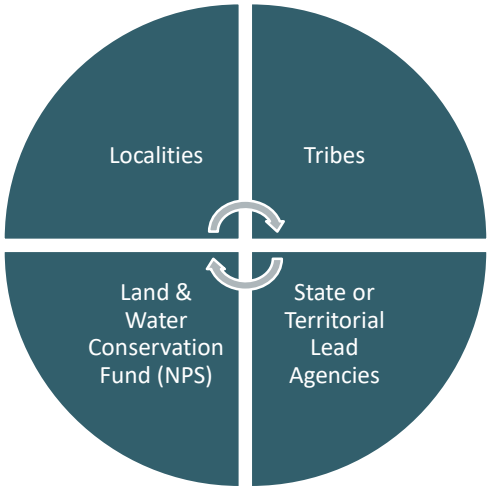
LWCF operates *in partnership* with states, territories, tribes, and communities



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Agenda

1. Land & Water Conservation Fund Basics
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Readiness and Recreation Initiative (RARI) Basics

The Department of the Interior and Department of Defense established RARI in 2023 to:

- protect military readiness by promoting compatible land use near military installations.
- enhance community relationships
- preserve the environment
- boost disaster resilience for military installations and communities
- provide public outdoor recreation opportunities

RARI projects must benefit military families *and* the public. ~$9 million/ year is available to meet these objectives.

DoD's Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) funds can be used to meet the LWCF Act's cost-share requirement. **This means successful applicants can fund 100% of project costs using federal funds.**

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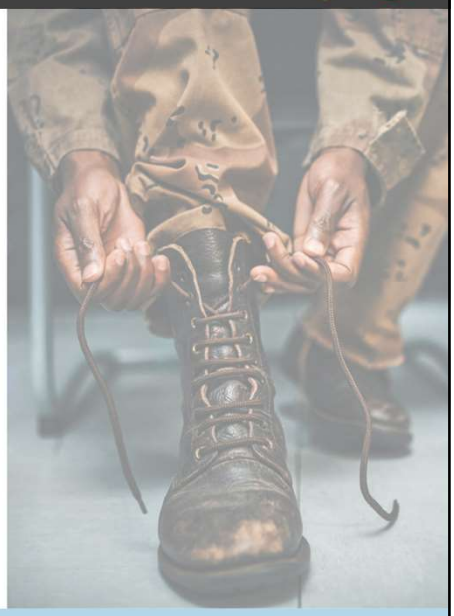
RARI-funded projects in 2024

$7.4m

In RARI funding distributed in 2024



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RARI Frequently Asked Questions

Applicant & Project Eligibility

What are the basic eligibility requirements?

- Be located in an active REPI Partnership Opportunity Area or a Sentinel Landscape.
- Have the support of the relevant Military Installation or Range Commander.
- Include a land acquisition component. Combination acquisition and development projects are also eligible.

Who can apply?

- State lead agencies
- Localities, federally recognized tribes, etc. are eligible sub-recipients.

What's the award min/max?

- Awards can range from $250k to $3 million.
- Note, this is just for the NPS-funded portion of the project, total project costs can exceed $3 million.

What can I fund through RARI?

- Community Parks
- Campgrounds
- Playgrounds
- Sport Fields and Courts
- Picnic Areas and Open-air Pavilions
- Trails and Tracks for Hiking, Walking, Skating, or Biking
- Water Based Recreation Facilities
- Fishing and Hunting Facilities
- Publicly Accessible Nature Preserves or Conservation Areas
- *….and more!*

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What else do I need to know?

LWCF operates through reimbursement. We do not provide project funds upfront.

REPI Opportunity zones are largely dependent on base leadership. If you have a potential project near an opportunity zone it may still be eligible.

Matching commitments are not required up front. You must provide information on how you will obtain non-federal cost share. Confirmed 1:1 match is required for final award.

Sites that received RARI or other LWCF funds in the past will be considered.

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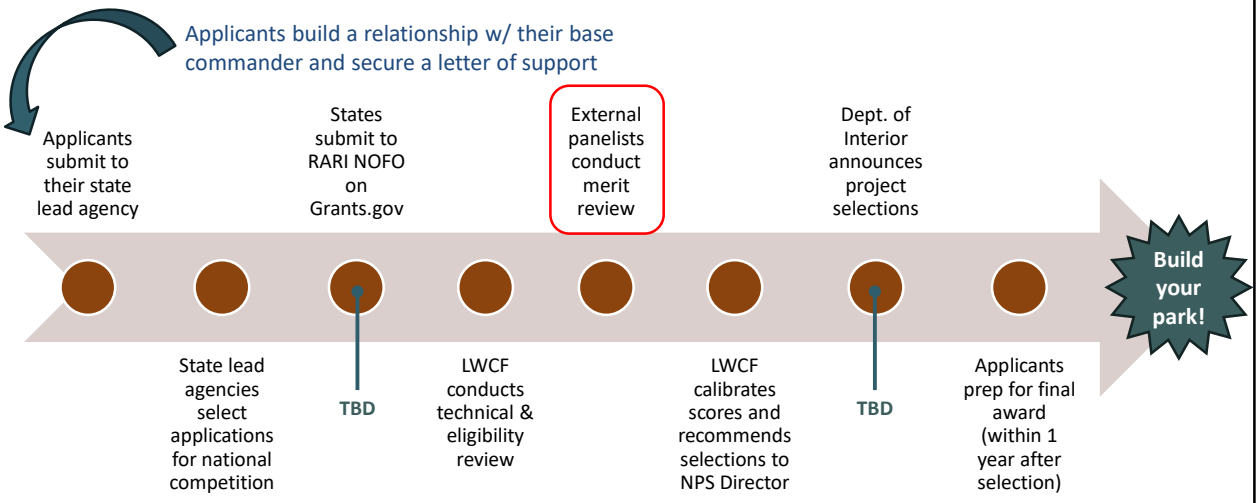
RARI Application Process



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How are projects evaluated?

- External panelists review every application.
- Panelists assess the strengths and weaknesses of each application against set merit review criteria.
- Criteria are published in the Notice of Funding Opportunity, and typically include:
  - Contribution to LWCF and RARI missions
  - Community alignment and benefit
  - Project Feasibility
  - Alignment with Executive and Secretarial priorities

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1. Land & Water Conservation Fund Basics
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4. **Tips for Crafting Your Application**
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RARI Application Best Practices

Keep your narrative focused and concise

- Address all parts of the notice of funding opportunity (NOFO).
- Only include information relevant to the project and its context.

Align project components with community needs and priorities

- Demonstrate effective community and partner engagement.
- Specify how the project will benefit the military community and public. What need or gap does the project fill?

Show your ability to implement and manage complexity

- Give reviewers a sense of organization's track record. How will you ensure the project is successful?

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An Inside Look at RBC's Application

"Through this project, MPCBPAA would establish a new recreational area utilizing the 513 acres on the York River for public and military family outdoor recreation uses...

This plan includes regular, designated days for active military members to utilize the new recreational amenities and property. These plans support the Middle Peninsula's Regional Featured Projects in the 2018 Virginia Outdoors Plan (SCORP) including to "Develop water access at road endings" (2018 VOP, 13.108) and MPCBPAA would pursue additional grants and matching funds to achieve developments to open the park for public use within 3 years.

- Describes a plan for increasing recreation access for military members.
- Demonstrates alignment with state priorities.

What would you add or adjust?

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Next steps will vary depending on your organization's readiness

New to the world of federal grants? Start here:

- Visit the Grants.gov Learning Center for a primer on the world of federal grants.
  - We particularly recommend their Grants 101 sections to learn about the grant lifecycle, general federal policies, etc.

Interested in RARI but want to learn more? Start here:

- Determine if your potential project is in a REPI Opportunity Zone or Sentinel Landscape using DoD's interactive mapping tool.
- Meet with your State Lead Agency staff to learn about the state-level process. Some great starter questions:
  - What is our state's application process for RARI?
  - What are our state's recreation priorities for funding?

Eligible and ready to rock and roll on an RARI application? Start here:

- Meet with your State Lead Agency staff to learn about the state-level process.
- Connect with your local base leadership to secure their support while putting together an application.
- Read through the Notice of Funding Opportunity (once published) to familiarize yourself with full application requirements.

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Questions?

Scan for RARI Website

Reach out anytime to
RARI_Inquiries@nps.gov
or
Vanessa_Ehrenpreis@nps.gov

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LWCF RARI State Process

Department of Conservation & Recreation
Planning & Recreation Resources Division – Grants Management

1926-2026 Celebrating 100 Years DCR

Kristal McKelvey – Chief Recreation Grants Manager – Kristal.McKelvey@dcr.virginia.gov

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Virginia's Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP): Virginia Outdoors Plan (VOP)

- **Recreation oriented and conservation focused**
- Leads the **priorities and recommendations** for local/regional planning and grant application goals
- **Dynamic and interactive** modern web-based platform on ESRI Hub
- Survey data and dashboards
- Maps and regional results

https://vop-vdcr.hub.arcgis.com/

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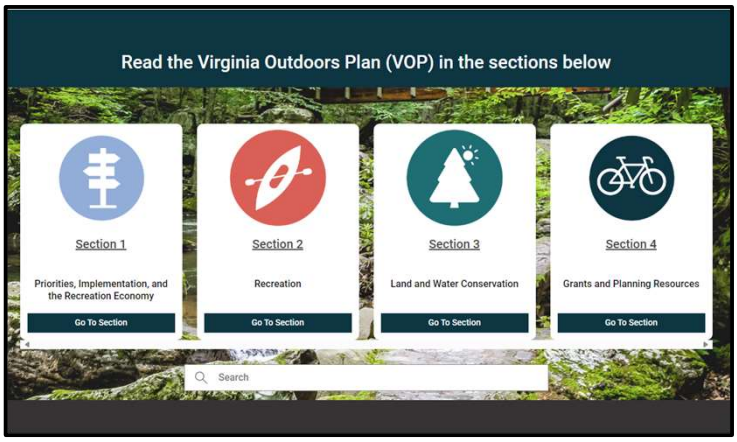
The 2024 VOP is *Distinctive*

- The **first-of-its-kind** statewide plan, this product is a digital, living document.
  - **Hub Site with Story Maps**
- It contains the linked resources and partnership opportunities to **plan recreation projects and find grants**.
- **Policy-makers** can use the site to learn about recreation and conservation projects, needs, and challenges across the state.



A navigation block on the VOP Home Page

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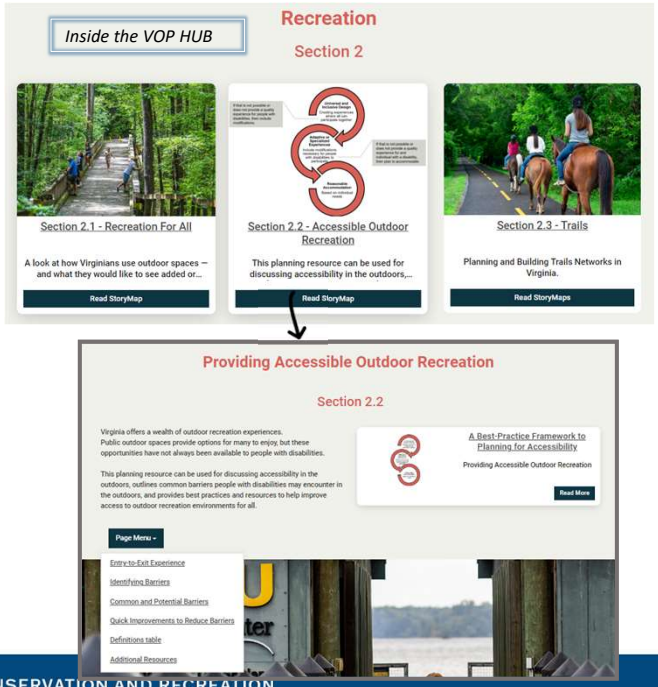
Section 2 – Recreation

Key Takeaways

- Focus on **recreation activities**.
- Planning priorities include - **expanding access**, **safety,** individual and community **health**, and **resiliency**.
- Improving **accessibility** – planning barrier-free entry-to-exit experiences.
- Recreation activities on **trails**, and the current state of trail planning, funding, and needs.



Celebrating 100 Years 1926-2026 DCR

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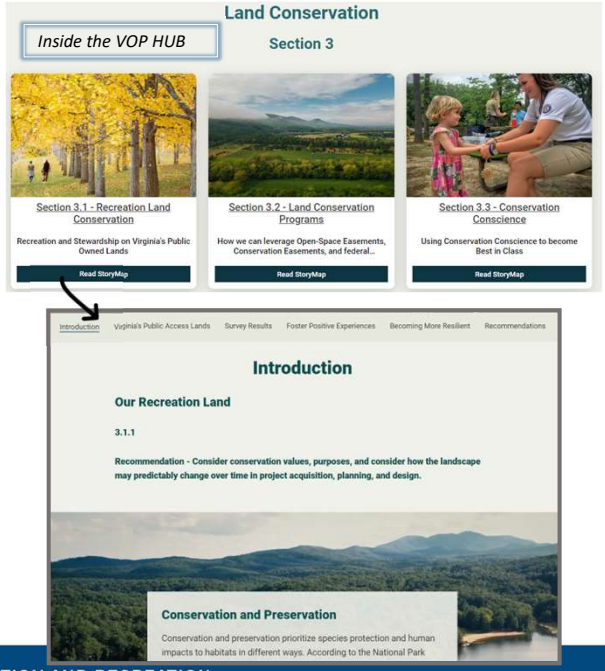
Section 3 – Conservation

Key Takeaways

- Focus on **protection and stewardship** of recreation lands and waters.
- **Descriptions and examples** of conservation and preservation projects
- A view of Virginia's **Public Access Lands** for all related agencies and partners
- Conservation programs that serve all to have a **resilient future**
- How a **Conservation Conscience** leads to protecting lands and ecological assets for all to enjoy



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Section 4 – Grants

Inside the VOP HUB

Gateway for Funding - devoted to assist applicants and promote grant programs

- **Recommendations** during all **steps of planning** a recreation or conservation project
- Guidance to **achieve success** and access funding
- Navigating **agency coordination** for NEPA and Section 106 - compliance for Federal funding
- Finding grant, cost-share, and agency **programs** that suit specific planned project

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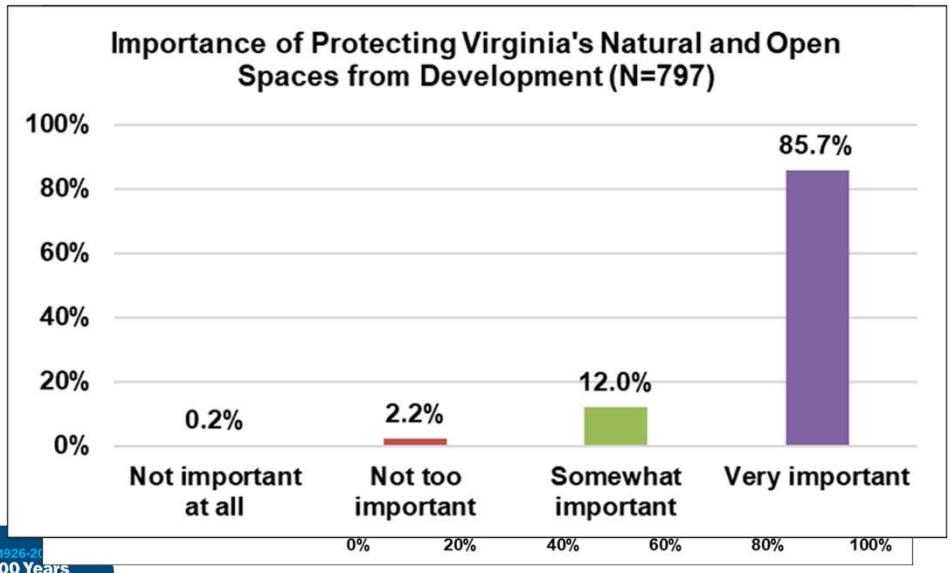
Virginia Outdoor Survey (VOS) Results - What do Virginians value?



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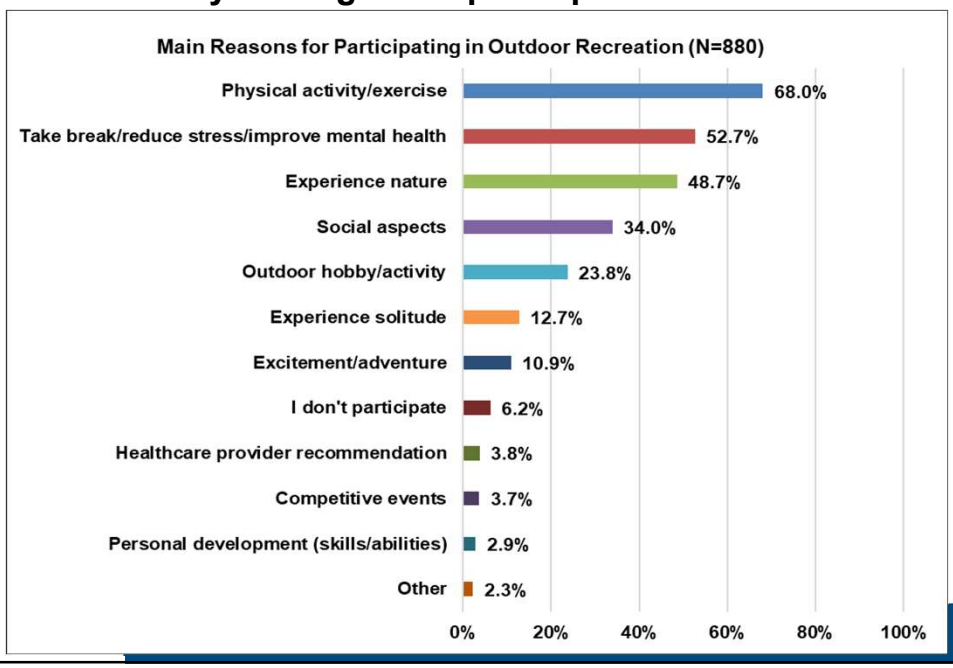
Survey Results - Why do Virginians participate in outdoor recreation?



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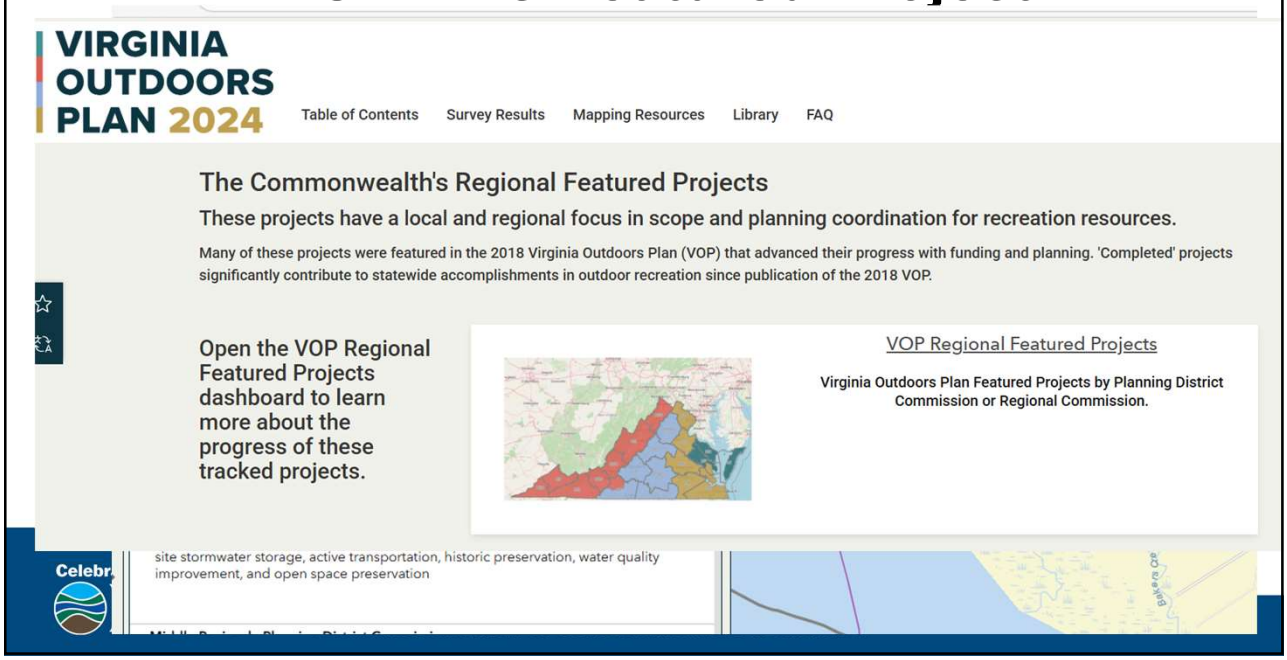
VOP PDC Featured Project



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Robinson-Bakers Creek

Recreation Activities
Region 1 Analysis

VOP Category | Reset Data Table | Sports and Free Play | Trails | Water Access | Wildlife and Nature-Oriented

Filter by Activity (Optional)
No activity selected

VIRGINIA OUTDOORS PLAN 2024

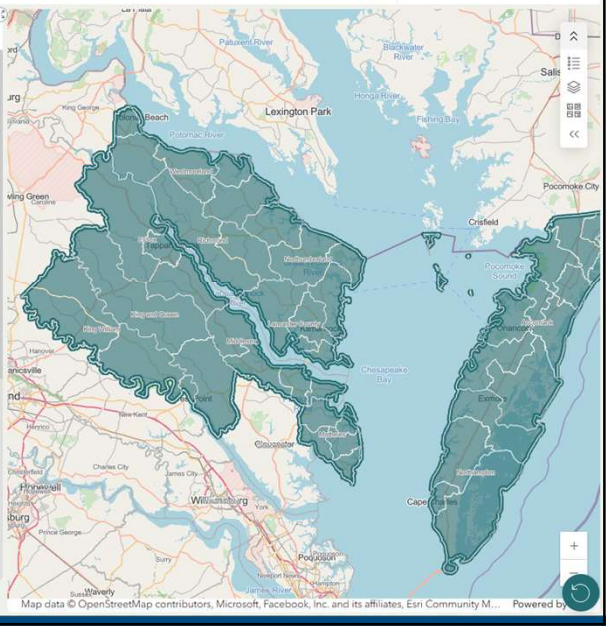
Table of Contents | Survey Results | More

1. Introduction - Our Recreation Lands
2. Virginia's Public Access Lands

   Jump to Dashboards that show statewide recreation access lands for each agency and locality. Discover partnership opportunities that help expand outdoor recreation access across the Commonwealth.

   - Local Parks and Conserved Public Access Land
   - VA Department of Forestry State Forests
   - VA Department of Conservation and Recreation State Parks
   - VA Department of Conservation and Recreation Natural Area Preserves
   - VA Department of Wildlife Resources Wildlife Management Areas
   - Multiple agencies - Battlefield Protection
   - Multiple agencies and Localities - Greenways
3. Survey Results and Public Support

   Natural Areas and Developed Parks
4. Foster Positive Experiences



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Robinson-Bakers Creek = How it relates to the VOP

Virginia's wetland systems support a variety of outdoor recreation experiences that include boating, fishing, wildlife viewing, and hunting. The state boasts about 1 million acres of wetlands, and the majority are located in the coastal plain*. Degraded and fragmented wetlands do not support outdoor recreation activities that Virginians enjoy. To support long-term recreation enjoyment, wetlands should be prioritized for protection and be restored to connected and functional ecosystems.

Virginia Wetland Program Plan

access, improve safety, give rise
astructure and resources

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Robinson-Bakers Creek = How it relates to the VOP

Our Recreation Land

3.1.1

Recommendation - Consider conservation values, purposes, and consider how the landscape may predictably change over time in project acquisition, planning, and design.

support migratory songbirds, waterfowl, and aquatic species.

3.3.2 VOP Quote

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Robinson-Bakers Creek = APPLICATION

*"Acquisition of the property for **conservation in perpetuity** strengthens **community resilience to climate change** through **preservation of wetlands** and woodlands, which **safeguard habitat, water quality, and reduced flood risk.** "*

*"Acquisition of the site will guarantee that **underserved** residents will have access to **scenic outdoor waterfront conservation** and **recreational assets** in an area that lacks such assets."*

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Case Study:
First RARI/REPI in Virginia

Middle Peninsula Chesapeake Bay Public Access Authority (MPCBPAA)

To purchase and acquire property from Town of West Point

REPI = Naval Weapons Station Yorktown

50% REPI & 50% LWCF-RARI Funding

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DCR as LWCF Liaison:

MPCBPAA
- Applies to DCR
- *Coordinates compliance application package*
- *UASLFA Appraisal and review*
- *Deed verification*
- **Accepts sub-award agreement**
- **Works with willing seller to acquire**
- **LWCF language in final deed**

Town of West Point

DCR
- Opens Grant Round; submits projects to NPS
- *Coordinates sending NPS full application package*
- **Releases sub-award and proceeds with project administration**
- **Guides through process and closeout**

NPS
- Accepts applications and reviews for eligibility & merit
- Informs DCR project selection
- Receives compliance and application package for review and approval
- **Releases project award to DCR**

Military Installation & REPI

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LWCF RARI DCR Grant Round:

- Dates will be determined upon NPS NOFO release & other recreation grant rounds timing
- "Pre-Application Process"
- Map, Budget, & Project Narrative
- *Appraisal ("Yellow Book") – will be required if selected*
- MUST have letter of support from military installation

- **REPI and RARI application simultaneously.**
- **REPI deadlines are based on the military branch.**
- **REPI Challenge is national competition**
- Don't necessarily have to have REPI funds (may not score as well, would have to find match funds elsewhere).

Upon NPS Selection, DCR will notify project sponsor and assist completing required docs KM1 project award.

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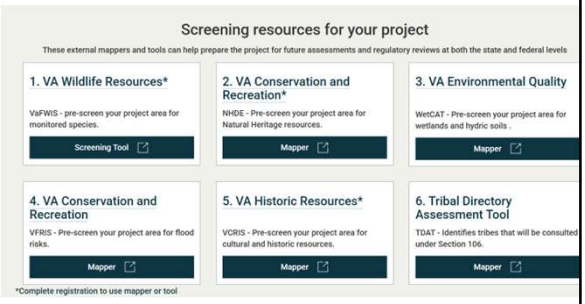
ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

LAND & WATER CONSERVATION FUND APPLICANTS

PROCESS GUIDANCE - 2025

https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/recreational-planning/document/2025-environmental-review-and-cultural-resources-guidance.pdf

- **Map – be consistent** through the review process with project boundary, area of potential effect, current land conditions.
- **Project description** – include depth of disturbance and the scope of LWCF proposed work; include it is for consideration for Federal LWCF Grant Funding
- **Allow for 30 days** at minimum per agency, plus more for correspondence



https://vop-vdcr.hub.arcgis.com/pages/navigating-federal-and-state-requirements

DCR Virginia Department of Conservation & Recreation

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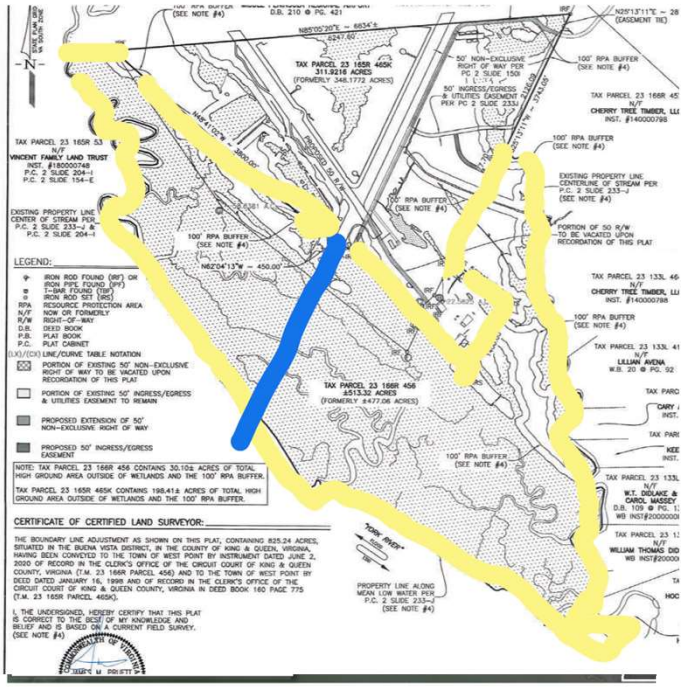
Slide 59

KM1 Verify timelines of REPI and REPI Challenge.
McKelvey, Kristal (DCR), 2026-04-03T15:29:16.456

Robinson-Baker's Creek Acquisition:

***Still in progress* Some lessons learned:**

- **Appraisal** needs to be done per UASFLA ("Yellow Book"); and separately reviewed
- Be clear that it is **fee simple acquisition,** not actually a 'conservation easement'
  - The 'easement for water access' not to be included in the appraisal – retained by Town
- Make sure Military Installation, NPS, and Project Sponsor are **all on the same page** – recommend team meetings as needed.
  - Military Installation may want to **appurtenant easement** language
- Have a **willing seller** that is **willing to wait** – can take up to 3 years – keep communication open



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Thank you!

To be added to grant round contacts: recreationgrants@dcr.virginia.gov

https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/recreational-planning/grants

Recreational Trails Program (RTP) Dates:

March 10 – May 5, 2026

Land & Water Stateside (LWCF) Grant Round Dates:

Tentative July – August 28, 2026

RARI – TBD with NPS Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)

Virginia Land Conservation Foundation (VLCF) Dates:

https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/land-conservation/vlcf

Tentative mid June – August, 2026

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