



# DCR interoffice MEMORANDUM

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**To:** Kelly McClary, file

**From:** Lynn Crump

**Date:** December 19, 2019

**Subject:** Extension of the Staunton River Scenic River Designation

On March 19, 1975, a segment of the Staunton River in Campbell, Pittsylvania and Halifax Counties was designated as a Virginia Scenic River; with the provision that the act would be effective July 1, 1978. Specifically, the segment is from State Route 761 bridge to Brookneal Public Landing, a distance of approximately 10.8 miles. In 2001 and 2003 additional river extensions were enacted designating the entire river segment from State Route 761 to State Route 360, a distance of 51.3 miles, which includes a portion in Charlotte County, as a Virginia State Scenic River.

In 2019, Halifax and Charlotte Counties requested that the 11.5 mile section of the Staunton River from State Route 360 to the boat landing at Staunton River State Park be studied for possible Virginia Scenic River designation. The evaluation was conducted on October 25, 2019, by staff from the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), local citizens and a member of the 50<sup>th</sup> Virginia Scenic River Program Anniversary Steering Committee.

Based on the evaluation, it was determined that the extended section of the Staunton River from State Route 360 to Staunton River State Park boat landing, a distance of approximately 11.5 miles, qualifies for Virginia Scenic River designation. If added to the currently designated 14 miles, the length of this segment of the Staunton Scenic River will total approximately 62.8 miles.

Following are the findings that support this designation.

## FINDINGS:

The Staunton River originates in Virginia's Ridge and Province as the Roanoke River at the confluence of the North Fork and South Fork of the river and flows southeast across the Piedmont to Albemarle Sound in North Carolina. The proposed Staunton River section studied flows through rural and forested landscapes owned and managed by John H. Kerr Reservoir of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Staunton River State Park of the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation. This river section has a twisting and turning channel that provides access to moderate views.

The Staunton River as a whole has a long history of transportation and industry, in the form of

mills, fishing, agriculture and transportation. While there are sections that have some industry the section studied here has no industry along its banks. Staunton River State Park, one of the original six state parks that opened in 1935, was created by the Civilian Conservation Corps and is the terminus of the proposed section.

All of the corridor is undisturbed with buffers of greater than 100 feet in width. Beyond the buffers, the land is mostly forested with some open fields beyond the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) property boundary. Less than 2 miles of the section closest to Staunton River State Park is inundated by Kerr Lake Dam, the rest is free flowing except during floods when the lake level is higher.

No houses are visible from the river. Nor are there any parallel roads along the corridor. The only negative visual impacts are the two power line crossings and the pipeline crossing where the buffers are eliminated and the banks are rip rapped to stabilize them.

Since the corridor runs through the Piedmont Region of Virginia, there few views of over a mile. Occasionally a cliff or rock outcropping adds interest along the corridor. The moderate views and forested slopes create a backdrop to the river, especially in the fall when the autumn colors reflect off the smooth water surface.

Fish quality was rated as excellent by the study team and with input from the local Department of Game and Inland Fisheries staff due to the varieties and quantity of sport fishing varieties. There are a few documented significant natural heritage resources along the corridor, including several intact natural plant communities, two mussel varieties and a plant variety.

Extensive buffers, islands, seasonal wildflowers and vegetation, in-stream rock outcroppings, and remoteness add interest and visual variety to this winding section of river corridor. The aesthetic appeal is in the moderate range.

Public river access is acceptable with public access points at the beginning and end of the section. The upstream launch is a DGIF launch and the downstream access is on Staunton River State Park land. All of the entire corridor is permanently protected by the ACOE in public ownership.

The corridor rates well due to the fact that all the lands along this stretch of the river are protected by ACOE. There are also three Federal Wildlife Management Areas along this stretch of the river that are Managed by the US Army Corps of Engineers named: Buffalo on the Staunton, Clover, Cargills Creek, and Hogan Creek WMA - Kerr Reservoir.

Based on the evaluation, the overall score for the proposed Staunton River extension in Halifax and Charlotte Counties is well above the minimum score for designation; therefore, it is recommended that the studied 11.5 miles of the Staunton River be added to the existing Staunton River submitted for designation.

## THE PROPOSED CODE OF VIRGINIA CHANGE FOLLOWS:

### EXISTING CODE

#### **§ 10.1-418. Staunton State Scenic River.**

The river, stream, or waterway known as the Staunton or the Roanoke, from State Route 360 to State Route 761 at the Long Island Bridge, a distance of approximately 51.3 river miles, is hereby designated as the Staunton State Scenic River, a component of the Virginia Scenic Rivers System.

### PROPOSED NEW LEGISLATION

#### **§ 10.1-418. Staunton State Scenic River.**

The river, stream, or waterway known as the Staunton River, from State Route 761 at long island bridge to the boat landing at Staunton River State Park, a distance of approximately 63 river miles, is hereby designated as the Staunton State Scenic River, a component of the Virginia Scenic Rivers System.

