

Minutes:

Historic Falls of the James Scenic River Advisory Committee  
5<sup>th</sup> Floor Conference Room  
Richmond City Hall

**Meeting:** November 16, 2023

Greg Velzy, Chair – Presiding

**Call to Order:** 12:10 PM

**Attending Committee Members:** Greg Velzy, Jim Hill, John Heerwald, Justin Doyle, Lynn Crump, Alex Dahm. Attending Community Guests: James Vonesh (Professor, Center for Environmental Studies, VCU), Giles Garrison (Superintendent, James River Park), Josh Stutz (Director, Friends of the James River Park)

**Minutes:** Minutes of October 19, 2023: Approved by all present.

**Current Issues:**

- **Riverfront Development Updates:** Kevin Vonck, Director, Dept. of Planning & Development Review, City Of Richmond: Kevin not present. Jim Hill has a meeting with Kim Chen, Planning Department, City of Richmond to discuss representation on the Falls Committee
- **CRLC Updates:** Parker Agelasto not present. No movement concerning Mayo Island until probably after the first of January 2024.
- **Brown's Island Improvement Plan:** Alex Dahm: Operations Manager, Venture Richmond, Inc.
  - Brown's Island improvement plan is moving forward. The first step will likely be the "Back Porch". We will be moving forward with replacing the concrete path on the east side of the island to get ready for next year's event season and the commencement of the initial improvements to the island.
  - Alex also reported on the success of the invasive species mitigation efforts on the south bank of Brown's Island along the river. They will be continuing this effort in the spring with an emphasis on making sure that the river is readily visible from the island.
  - VR will be adding trash cans and porter service of those cans to the area around the "floodwall walk" in Manchester in 2024
  - There was also a group discussion about the white fencing in Diversity Park and what might be done to advance on the aesthetics of that area in the short run. Greg Velzy suggested a desire to remove at least part of the white fence. Reach out to Lewis Evans with DPW and suggest that perhaps it could be replaced with split-rail fencing in keeping with the James River Park
- **Virginia Scenic Rivers:** Samantha Wangsgard was not present. No DCR report.
  - Lynn reported that Tricia has written a letter to DCR (November 7, 2023) to request that Melissa Lesh be able to use the unused film footage she shot for the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary film in order to create a short video promoting Virginia's Scenic Rivers Program. This video would be able to be used by anyone or group wishing to start a grass roots effort to get a Virginia river segment designated.
  - James Vonesh is thinking about having another scenic resources class. Since there are no rivers from DCR - he is looking at ones that could be done 'in place of' and ask permission. Lynn suggested to re-do the Historic Falls of the James section or do the extension segments, above and below the designated part. The Falls Group could chime in on that discussion with a recommendation.

- **Scenic Virginia:** Lynn Crump reported that Scenic VA has provided several dozen photographs that are being displayed in the halls of the General Assembly Building and in the foyer on a loop display. Scenic River photos are part of that display.
- **JRA Update:** Justin Doyle
  - Justin initiated discussion about meeting at new Buzzard Education building site in the next month or so.
- **James River Park:** Giles Garrison, Superintendent, James River Park.
  - Past month's report attached
  - Greg Velzy initiated discussion about park attendance (Year to Date). Seems it peaked in 2020 (~1.8mil.) according to trail counters and has steadily fallen to 1.56m now. Josh S. countered that according to "Streetlight" data the numbers may be more like 2.5m - 5m visitors. Alex Dahm stated that Brown's Island visitation numbers have also declined on a steady basis (Like the JRPS) since 2020.
  - Park Rangers, Amiee and Rick, have been out and about in the JRPS. They now have electric bikes and a Jeep purchased by the FoJRP.
- **DPU:** Grace LeRose not present. Tuesday, Dec. 5, 2023-RVAH2O Teams meeting 1:30pm – 3:30pm (EST)...CSO Update. (Justin suggested that we ask Grace to present the Final Plan – CSO at an upcoming Falls Meeting.)
- **Friends of James River Park Report:** Josh Stutz, Director
  - The transfer of ~6 acre property transfer from RR Co. to JRPS is in the works.
  - FoJRP purchased a new "Toolcat" (bobcat type of equipment) for the JRPS.
  - Josh spoke of and shared handouts about the "re-envisioning" of Belle Isle plan being spearheaded by FoJRP & Marvel Designs.
- **New Falls of the James Scenic River Advisory Committee Members:** In process of submitting resumés and letter of recommendations to DCR for Parker Agelasto, Shawna Shade and Will Isenberg.
- **New Business:**
  - Jim Hill is currently working on Mayo Bridge re-build re: discussion about traffic patterns that will change.
  - Greg Velzy announced that he is officially off the FoJRP board. It would be good ideas to always have a Falls member present at the FoJRP meetings as a matter of information exchange if necessary..

#### **Reports:**

- Parade of Lights: December 9, 2023- Rocketts Landing or Osborne Landing
- JRPS may host a Solstice Celebration as well-stay tuned

**Open discussion:** None

**Adjourn:** 1:35 pm

#### **Next Public Meeting: December 21, 2023**

Meetings begin at 12:00 noon in the Conference Room on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor of Richmond City Hall and/or conducted via Zoom. Meetings are scheduled for the THIRD Thursday of each month. All meetings are open to the public. If you are not now receiving e-mail meeting notices and wish to receive them, please provide your name and e-mail address to [velzyg@verizon.net](mailto:velzyg@verizon.net). If you would like to be removed from the list, so indicate at the above e-mail address.

Tricia Pearsall – Secretary (Compiled reports from Greg Velzy, Lynn Crump, Giles Garrison, Alex Dahm)

# Operations Report

JRPS Park Operations: October, 2023

Park Visitation in Oct 2023:

144,610

1,556,470 Year-to-Date



## Projects

- 10/3 – Altria Volunteer Workday at Ancarrow’s Landing
- 10/5 – Headquarters Beautification
- 10/12 – Belle Isle View Shed and Overlook
- 10/17 – Trevor Wilson Memorial Benches
- 10/21 – JROC Workday: Tredegar View Shed
- 10/25 – Pony Pasture Roadwork
- 10/26 – Arbor Day: Reedy Creek Meadow Walk
- 10/29 – Arbor Day: Canoe Run

Updates:

- New Tool Cat Utility Loader arrives. Courtesy of Friends of James River Park
- Art Rings Cleared of Vegetation at Tpot Park
- Cable Slings Purchased for Buoy at Z-Dam
- Service Bridge to Belle Isle scheduled for repairs by contractor
- Porta Potty services switched from Art & Striping to Capital Waste
- Maintenance Technician Senior Position filled by Thomas Cohoon
- Huguenot Flatwater entrance paved by contractor
- All new River Level Flip Signs have been installed
- Huguenot Flatwater’s new kiosk installation is underway

## 10/3 – Altria Volunteer Workday: Ancarrow’s Landing

The parks department facilitated another massive landscaping project by partnering with Altria and Richmond Toolbank and several other supportive groups to enhance and beautify Ancarrow’s Landing. This project included:

- Two 60’ diameter planter beds
- 12 native landscape trees
- Picnic table builds
- Bench build and installation
- Murals and flowering plants
- Homeless aid kit assembly



## 10/5 – Park Headquarters Beautification

Recreation staff chipped in to rid JRPS headquarters of unwanted wire grass growing into it’s landscape beds. They managed to pull the roots from the soil, cover with cardboard and added mulch.



## 10/12 – Belle Isle View shed and Overlook

A popular overlook of the river has undergone a much needed renovation. Some of the improvements include:

- Removal of failing asphalt pad
- View shed cleared of vegetation
- Installed footer for a bench
- added new gravel

In addition, a memorial bench and interpretive sign will be installed in the near future.



## 10/17 – Trevor Wilson Memorial Bench

A series of memorial benches will be installed at Belle Isle to honor the passing of Trevor Wilson. These 7 benches were graciously donated to the park by the Trevor's New Day Foundation. These new benches will be thoughtfully placed at Trevor's favorite hang-out-spots.



## 10/21 – JROC Workday: Tredegar View shed

Operations staff, Invasive Species Task Force, and JROC volunteers worked together to rid the view shed at Tredegar St. of invasives, particularly targeting the Mimosa tree population. This pest has been taken out and herbicide has been applied to prevent future growth. Next year the park system target Ailanthus and Mulberry at the end of the summer for the Herbicide application to be most effective.



## 10/25 – Pony Pasture Roadwork

JRPS Staff revisit Pony Pasture parking lot to address several ruts and pothole formations. The high water table makes the challenge of draining the parking lot rely solely on correctly shaping the road to allow water to pass. Park staff will continue to make efforts on making this lot pothole free.



## 10/26 – Arbor Day: Reedy Creek Meadow Walk

JRPS was involved in several Arbor Week Tree plantings this year. For Reedy Creek, we revisited a previous Arbor Day RVA planting to remove unwanted vegetation from the mulch beds that border the meadow walk. The volunteers moved several cubic yards of mulch, applied sheets of cardboard, pulled weeds from tree cages and restored the beds to their intended beauty.



## 10/29 – Arbor Day: Canoe Run

Another great Arbor Day RVA planting, this time at Canoe Run. 50 Costar employees joined Parks and Rec and Capital Trees to plant 50 new native trees around the park's vita course. These trees will provide shade for those seeking to traverse the vita course and offer a beautiful aesthetic for years to come



# Trails and Greenways Monthly Report – October 2023

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## Highlights:

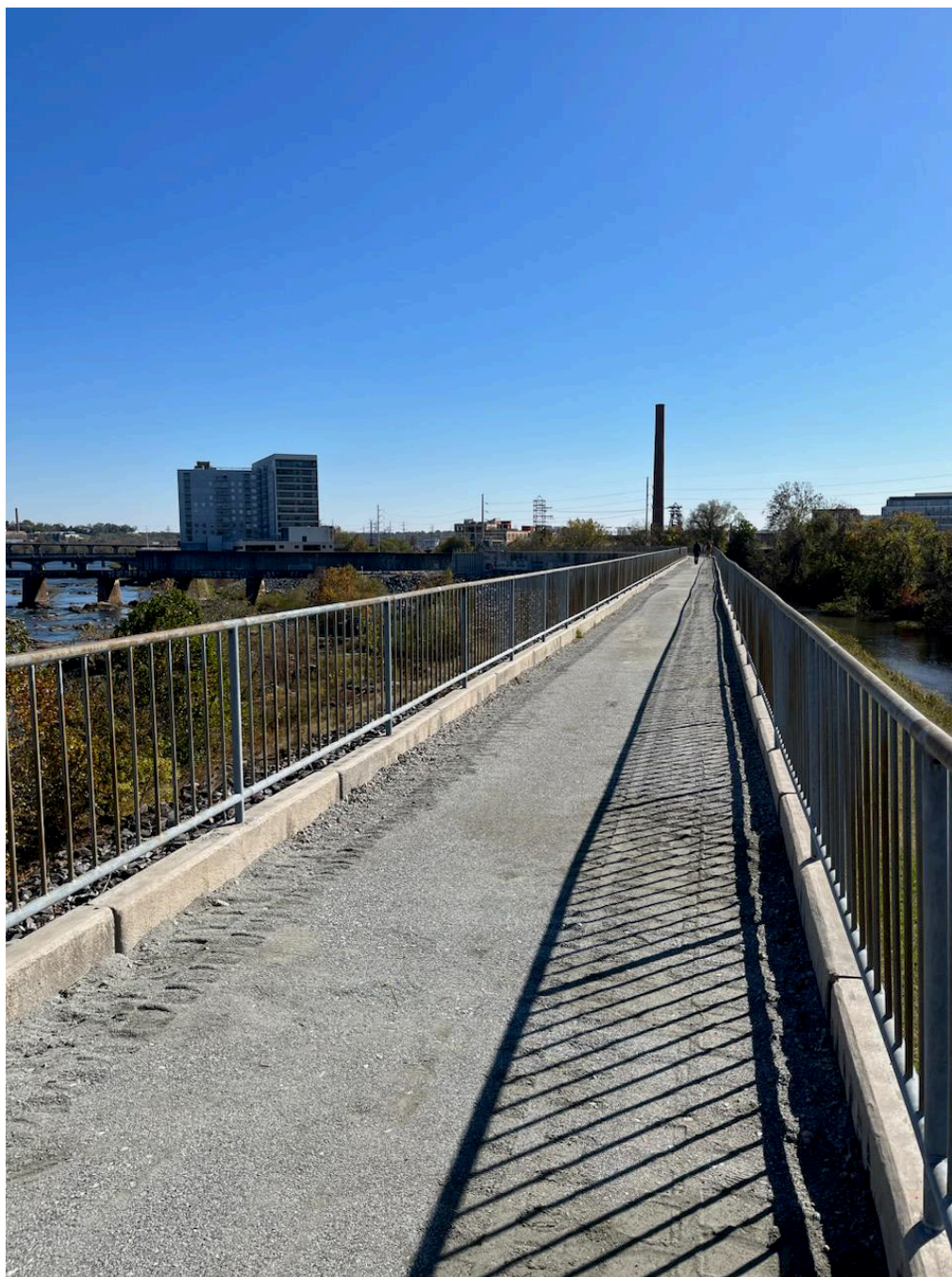
-Trail crew conducted a large clean up event in coordination with RVA More and Pine Camp community center on the new trails



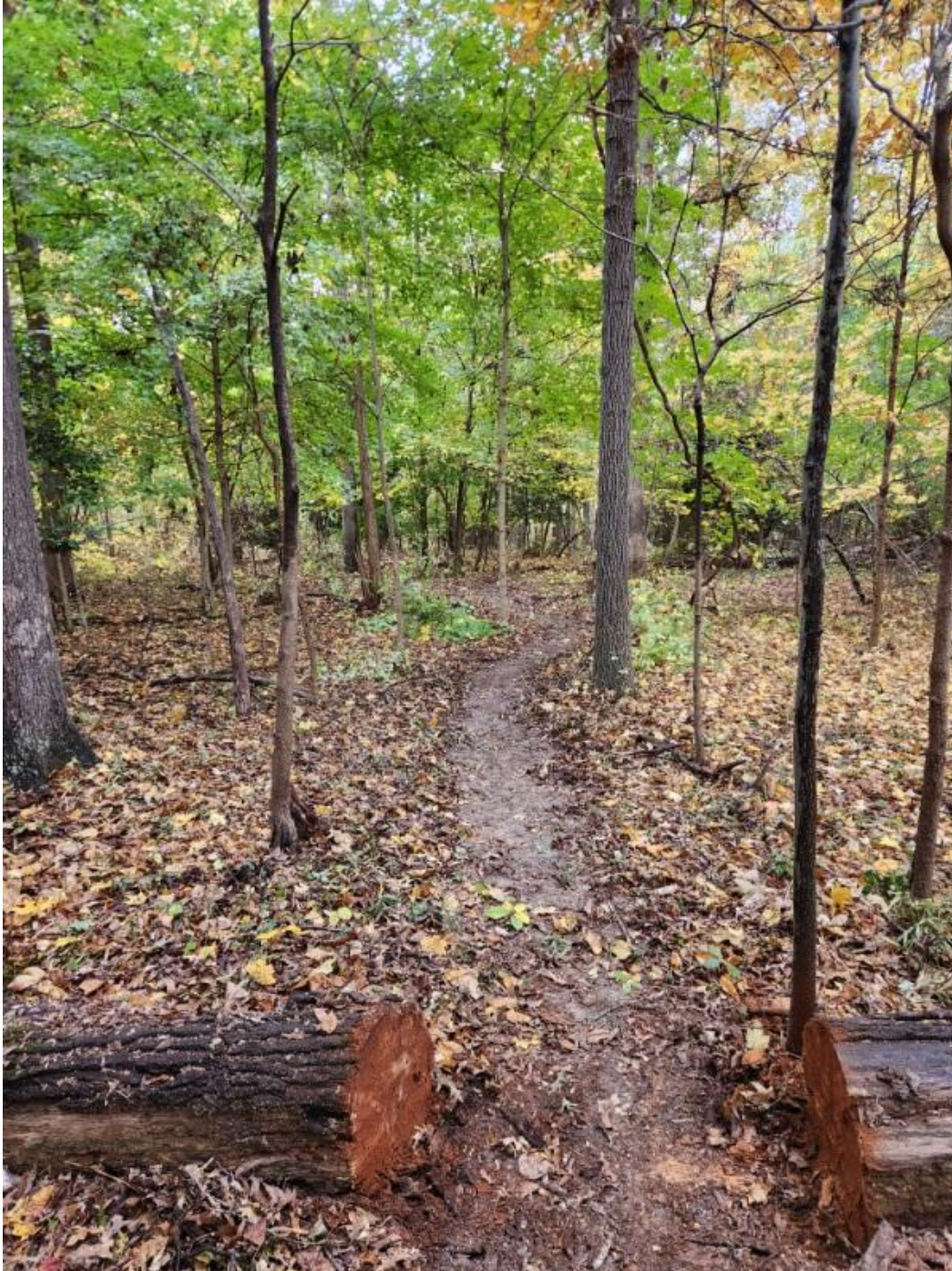




-Trail Crew completed Flood Wall trail resurfacing (dust). This new material is more park user friendly, especially for ADA access and families with strollers.



- Trail Crew constructed Pine Camp trail reroute ahead of the Creek Restoration project



- A large Altria workday took place at Ancarrow's landing which included bench installation on the Historic Slave trail



### **Other notable tasks/jobs:**

- AA and MB joined CSX coordination and potential parcel/easement acquisition
  - AA MB SY toured JRA James Buzzard center construction site to discuss further coordination
  - AA CW met with DIT to further expand GIS capabilities in parks
  - AA met with Qui to plan native plantings along the Reedy Creek Bypass trail
  - AA MB and Mike Webb will meet at Powhite to assess tree hazard complaint from Ryan Homes neighborhood
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- AA attended the Texas Beach tower repair plan meeting.
  - AA Attended the Fall line trail stakeholder input session
  - Replacement maps for vandalized kiosks have been updated and ordered.
  - Trail crew held another volunteer event at Pine Camp with RVA MORE.
  - Materials for a new kiosk at the Stone House were ordered and construction has begun
  - AA and MB met for Capital Trail tree root bump issues and are exploring methods to reduce this issue in the future
  - AA Attended Fall line Trail quarterly stakeholder meeting
  - AA and MB met with Norfolk southern to receive approval on re paving the damaged section of trail for Hull St to the Flood wall.
  - AA met with an Eagle Scout who will be replacing the upper Dogwood Dell Trail Kiosk.
  - AA MB attended the phase 2 RVA 311 development for parks
  - Trails (Labor Crew Chief) interviews were conducted, and a candidate was chosen and sent to HR.
  - Trail crew lead a RVA MORE volunteer workday on the new Pine Camp trails
  - A Gillies bike jumps workday was conducted by the nonprofit group "Radshare"

## James River Park System Volunteers - October 2023

**Hours of Service**

**368**

**Events Completed**

**26**

**Total Volunteers**

**130**

*Average Hours per volunteer*

2.8

*Avg. Volunteers per event*

5.0



**Metric Summary**

	Cleanups	Invasives
<b>Hours of Service</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>224</b>
<i>Average Hours per volunteer</i>	3.20	2.64
<b>Events Completed</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>17</b>
<i>Avg. Volunteers per event</i>	5.00	5.00
<b>Total Volunteers</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>85</b>

Date	Number Volunteers	Duration	Hours Served	Project	Column1	Column2	Invasive (Y/N)	Notes
10/4/2023	4	2	8	James River Cleanup			No	
10/7/2023	9	2	18	James River Cleanup			No	
10/11/2023	2	2	4	James River Cleanup			No	
10/14/2023	3	2	6	James River Cleanup			No	
10/18/2023	2	2	4	James River Cleanup			No	
10/21/2023	5	2	10	James River Cleanup			No	
10/28/2023	7	2	14	James River Cleanup			No	
10/5/2023	1	3	3	Belle Isle Invasive Management			Yes	
10/12/2023	2	3	6	Belle Isle Invasive Management			Yes	
10/19/2023		3	3	Belle Isle Invasive Management			Yes	
10/26/23		3	9	Belle Isle Invasive Management			Yes	
10/14/23		2	2	Buttermilk Invasive Management			Yes	
10/21/23		2	2	Buttermilk Invasive Management			Yes	
10/28/23		2	10	Buttermilk Invasive Management			Yes	
10/11/2023	4	2	8	Flatwater Invasive Management			Yes	
10/20/2023	15	2	30	Flatwater Invasive Management			Yes	
10/7/2023	10	3	30	Pony Pasture Invasive Management			Yes	
10/10/2023	1	2	2	Pony Pasture Invasive Management			Yes	
10/19/2023	16	1.5	24	Pony Pasture Invasive Management			Yes	

## JRPS Invasive Plant Management - October 2023 report

October marks the beginning of fall to early winter treatment priorities and methods.

### **Volunteer events** (does not include events led by volunteer task force members)

- Twelve staff-led volunteer events at multiple park units that are project focus areas (Flatwater, Pony Pasture, The Wetlands, Buttermilk Trail, Ancarrow's Landing).
- 98 volunteer participations, 243 volunteer hours.
- Special groups included Carrie Wu's University of Richmond biology class, two sections of Todd Lookingbill's geography class (both were arranged as dual education/volunteer events); an Altria employee group; a VCU student group; and a William and Mary student group.

### **Primary management activities and auxiliary project areas**

- Free-A-Tree; shrub removal and treatment; manual groundcover removal (no chemical treatment); vine treatment (wisteria); Ailanthus treatment, multiple methods.
- Evelyn Byrd & Riverside Drive 'triangle'; the ISM team dedicated a work session primarily to cutting and treating woody species in this area designated for contractor treatment where Invasive Plant Control, Inc. conducted an initial foliar spray on June 30<sup>th</sup> and will be conducting a second foliar treatment late spring 2024.
- Treatment of mimosa with JROC at Tredegar.

### **Special projects**

- *Wetlands Watch grant project at Pony Pasture Rapids Restoration Area*  
Laura and Megan continued with planning and tasks in preparation for the understory restoration planting scheduled for November 4<sup>th</sup>. All plants are coming from Reedy Creek Environmental and Moulton Hot Natives.
- *RK Mellon Foundation grant project with task force* Em and Laura continued to participate in team meetings and began preliminary work on survey and workshop content for this community outreach and capacity-building project.

### **Other news**

- The JRPS Invasive Plant Task Force received a blue ribbon in the Conservation category for its participation in the Garden Club of America exhibit the end of September. Em assisted significantly with the design of the winning display, a project led by founding task force member Emily Gianfortoni.
- In December Laura will be participating in Blue Ridge PRISM's statewide "Future Search" three-day workshop in Charlottesville (*Building a Statewide Coalition and Strategic Blueprint to Reduce Invasive Plants and Increase the Availability of Native Plants*). This by-invitation event will identify actionable statewide initiatives, delegate responsibilities, and form a leadership team.