

8. STATE SCENIC RIVER DESIGNATION FOR THE BLACKWATER RIVER

You may recall a joint meeting with the Isle of Wight County Board of Supervisors in November 2007 regarding the state scenic river designation process and its potential application to certain segments of the Blackwater River. At that time, the Isle of Wight County Board voted to have its staff coordinate the details of the designation process with Southampton County. While it was the consensus of our group that designation was generally positive, no official action was taken. There are essentially 5 basic steps involved with the designation process:

1. The river must be evaluated by state officials to determine if it qualifies for the designation based upon 11 defined criteria;
2. A report is prepared by the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and distributed to the Virginia Scenic River Advisory Board for review and comment;
3. Copies of the report are then forwarded to the respective local governing bodies with proposed legislation to designate the river as scenic;
4. At the request of the local governing bodies, the legislation is introduced by a local member of the Virginia General Assembly; and
5. The legislation is passed and signed by the Governor.

There is an opportunity for public review and comment once the report has been received by the governing bodies, but prior to requesting a member of the General Assembly to introduce the legislation.

We are presently working in concert with staff members in Isle of Wight, Franklin and the City of Suffolk to seek authority from each respective governing body to formally request DCR to evaluate the river. It is our understanding that the report would be completed by the summer of 2009 and a bill could be introduced as early as the 2010 legislative session.

Mr. Randolph has put together a brief report regarding the designation process, including the minutes of that November 2007 joint session with Isle of Wight County.

MOTION REQUIRED: If the Board is so inclined, a motion is required authorizing the County Administrator to officially request the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation to evaluate the Blackwater River for designation as a state scenic river.