

CHAPTER 3: Natural and Historic Resources

INTRODUCTION

Prince Edward County boasts an abundance of natural features that have shaped local character and development. With three state parks, two wildlife management areas, and one state forest, there is no shortage of scenic landscapes and natural areas to experience. Rolling hills, lush forests, scenic water bodies, and historic sites contribute to the County’s rural character while also providing valuable ecosystems and anchoring thriving agritourism and ecotourism sectors. The importance of natural and historic resources is discussed throughout this chapter, along with strategies to promote sustainable growth and protect Prince Edward’s natural heritage.

KEY THEMES



Environmental Stewardship

Prince Edward County residents value the area’s natural resources and know that maintaining a healthy environment supports clean water and air, robust ecosystems, and scenic rural landscapes. Community engagement feedback consistently cited the County’s state parks, trails, and forests as vital assets to preserve for generations to come.



Livability

Responsible stewardship of natural assets has benefits well beyond preserving the environment itself. Prince Edward County boasts an abundance of outdoor recreational opportunities and scenic beauty that enhance the quality of life for locals and encourage visitors to stay. Prioritizing conservation and resilience will make Prince Edward County a community where people can live, work, and play in harmony with the environment.



Community Wellness

Protecting the environment and prioritizing the preservation of natural spaces offer numerous physical and mental health benefits to improve community wellness through increased physical activity, stress reduction, and social interaction. Addressing environmental challenges such as climate change is also crucial for building resilience and ensuring the long term wellbeing of Prince Edward County.



THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

LOCATION & TOPOGRAPHY

The topography of Prince Edward County is diverse and visually appealing, offering a variety of opportunities for outdoor recreation and exploration. Located in the Southern Piedmont physiographic province, the County's terrain reflects the region's topographic transition from the Blue Ridge Mountains to the west and the flat Coastal Plain to the east, with elevations ranging from roughly 300 to 715 feet above sea level.

The landscape is characterized by gently rolling hills, interspersed with more rugged terrain in the western portions of the County and low-lying plains on the eastern side and near natural water bodies. Numerous streams and rivers meander through the County, carving out valleys and contributing to its scenic beauty. These waterways not only enhance the landscape but also provide important ecological habitats and recreational opportunities.

STEEP SLOPES

Slope refers to the angle between the earth's surface and a horizontal plane. Slope is calculated as a percentage by dividing the change in elevation by the amount of horizontal distance covered. The potential for erosion is moderately severe in areas where slopes range from 12 to 20%. Slopes in excess of 15% are best left in a natural state.

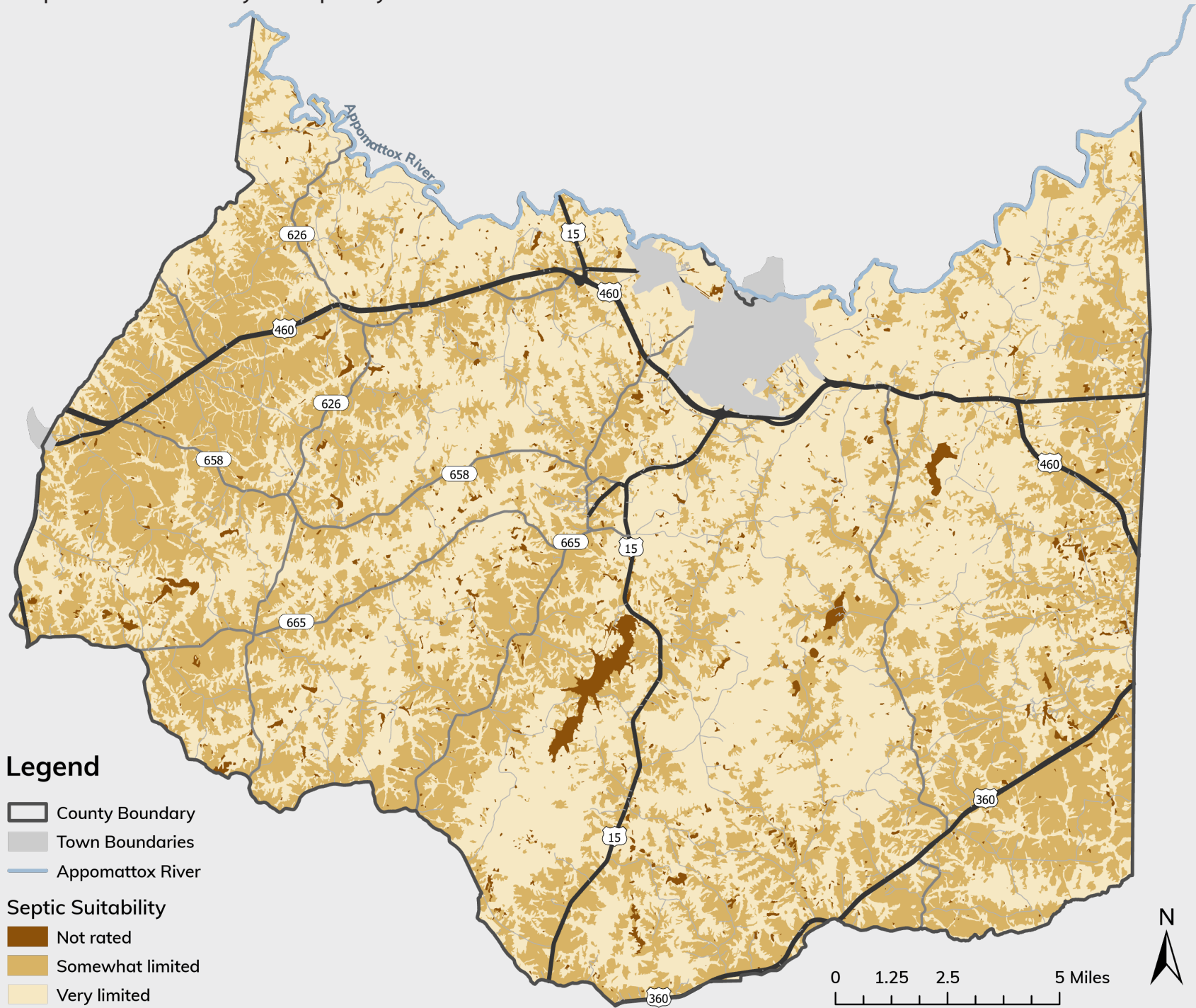
Development on steep slopes should be limited. Clearing, grading, and building on steep slopes can result in extensive erosion and stormwater runoff, which can lead to landslides and increased sedimentation in waterways. Septic systems should be avoided on slopes of 20% or greater to avoid hazards from system failures. Where land disturbance is necessary on steep slopes, erosion and sediment control measures should be enforced to the maximum extent possible to prevent unnecessary degradation.

SOILS

Prince Edward County is comprised of 11 major soil associations. A soil association consists of several soils that occur near each other in a characteristic pattern and are classified according to texture and the parent rocks from which the soils were derived. Soil characteristics are an important factor that should be considered during the development process, as they can be a significant factor in a building's structural stability and the potential for soil erosion before, during, and after the development review process. Site soil surveys should be conducted prior to any potential development to determine suitability and identify constraints.

Given Prince Edward's rural conditions and the limited availability of public sewer systems, many residences rely on onsite sewage disposal systems. Most systems distribute sewage effluent into the soil through absorption fields. Factors such as soil permeability, a high water table, depth of impermeable soil layers, existing vegetation, and flooding may affect the ability of the soil to absorb effluent. Map 3-1 shows the septic suitability of the County's soils, with roughly 57% of soils considered "very limited" for septic systems, while 42% of soils are "somewhat limited." While the soil survey may show an area with soils not suitable for an onsite sewage disposal system, a site and soil evaluation may reveal a feasible location within that area that can sustain a properly functioning system.

Map 3-1. Soil Suitability for Septic Systems



Source: Natural Resources Conservation Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture

NATURAL HABITATS & ECOSYSTEMS

ECOLOGICAL CORES

Ecological cores are large, unfragmented patches of natural land with at least 100 acres of interior cover. Cores provide habitats for a wide range of flora and fauna, as well as recreational and ecotourism opportunities for people. Over time, ecological cores may become fragmented and disconnected due to development and infrastructure such as roads and utility lines, making it difficult for wildlife to traverse the landscape and allowing invasive species to populate interior forests.

The Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation's (DCR) Virginia Natural Landscape Assessment has identified ecological cores in Prince Edward County and ranked them based on their potential for biodiversity, ecological function, and landscape conditions. The highest ranked ecological cores (with rankings of Outstanding, Very High, and High) are shown in Map 3-2. Development should be directed away from these areas whenever possible; where development is necessary, green infrastructure concepts and cluster developments can help maintain cores and connections between them.

USING GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING TO CONNECT WILDLIFE HABITATS

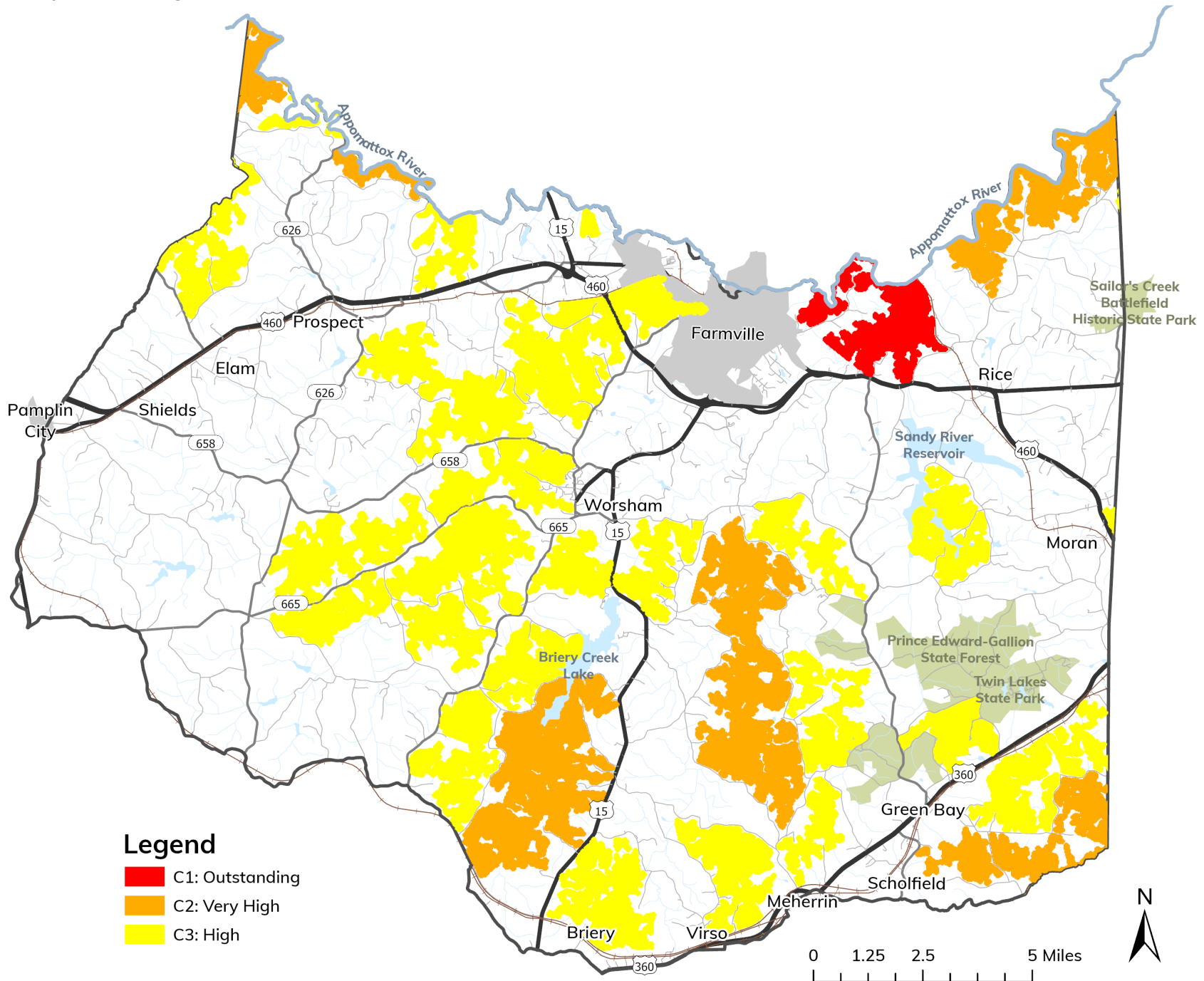
Wildlife moves both daily and seasonally to survive; however, the habitats and corridors that animals rely on can become fragmented by housing, roads, fences, energy facilities, and other man-made barriers. As a result, animals increasingly struggle to reach food, water, shelter, and breeding sites.

Habitat connectivity is defined as the degree to which the landscape facilitates or impedes animal movement and other ecological processes, such as seed dispersal. As habitats are fragmented, degraded, and lost to development, the need for a coordinated connectivity network is growing. Better habitat connectivity allows wildlife to migrate with the changing seasons, boosts biodiversity and resilience in degraded ecosystems, safeguards genetic flow between populations, and ensures species are better able to adapt to a changing climate.

Green infrastructure incorporates both the natural environment and engineered systems to conserve ecosystem values and support ecosystem services. On the local level, green infrastructure practices can include rain gardens, permeable pavement, green roofs, and rainwater harvesting systems. At the largest scale, the preservation and restoration of natural landscapes (such as forests, floodplains, and wetlands) are critical components of green infrastructure.

Green infrastructure planning seeks to preserve and maintain intact, connected cores to allow native wildlife and plants to thrive and move across the landscape. Knowing the location of key green infrastructure resources allows for better decision-making when locating new development and utilities.

Map 3-2. Ecological Cores



Source: Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, Natural Heritage Data Explorer

THREATENED AND ENDANGERED

Prince Edward County's undeveloped rural lands are home to unique ecosystems that support biodiversity and threatened species. Threatened and endangered species in Prince Edward County are shown in Table 3-1. Habitats supporting these species should be carefully managed and protected throughout the County.

Table 3-1. Threatened and Endangered Species

Common Name	Scientific Name	Federal Legal Status	State Legal Status
BIVALVIA (MUSSELS)			
Atlantic Pigtoe	<i>Fusconaia masoni</i>	Listed Threatened	Listed Threatened
Green Floater	<i>Lasmigona subviridis</i>	N/A	Listed Threatened
VASCULAR PLANTS			
Cream-flowered tick-trefoil	<i>Desmodium ochroleucum</i>	Species of Concern	N/A
Virginia Quillwort	<i>Isoetes virginica</i>	Species of Concern	Listed Endangered

Source: Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation Natural Heritage Database

FOREST RESOURCES

According to the Virginia Department of Forestry's publication *Virginia's Forests, 2016*, roughly 66% of Prince Edward County is forested. Of this, approximately 6,491 acres are located in Prince Edward-Gallion State Forest, which is Virginia's first official state forest and surrounds the adjacent Twin Lakes State Park. Eleven percent of the County's forestland is publicly owned while 89% is privately owned.

Forests offer more than just wildlife habitats and timber. They play a crucial role in preventing soil erosion along streams by anchoring soil with their roots and enhancing soil's ability to absorb rainwater. During storms, trees slow down and temporarily store rainwater, reducing the risk of flooding. They also act as natural filters, absorbing pollutants through their roots and transforming them into less harmful substances. Forested areas near water bodies are particularly important as they improve water quality by filtering runoff, preventing soil erosion, and providing habitats for a variety of wildlife species.

Forests and forest management play an important role in protecting water quality through riparian buffer establishment and protection. Good forest management will help maintain and improve the quality of the forestland in the County, and will also support healthy timbering practices to prevent unnecessary fragmentation of contiguous forest resources. Forest fire prevention is also essential, not only for public safety, but also to protect landowner investments. Policies and regulations that support sustainable forest management will allow property owners to continue to maintain their forested areas, providing ecosystem benefits such as clean water, clean air, and wildlife habitat preservation to the community at large.

PRINCE EDWARD-GALLION STATE FOREST

Prince Edward-Gallion State Forest, established in 1939 from land donated by Emmett D. Gallion, is a scenic expanse of woodlands encompassing approximately 6,491 acres. It is currently managed by the Virginia Department of Forestry. This forested sanctuary offers a rich tapestry of biodiversity, featuring a variety of native plant and animal species. An extensive network of hiking and biking trails plus boating and fishing opportunities create a recreational haven for local residents and visitors alike.



Prince Edward-Gallion State Forest (Photo Source: Virginia Department of Forestry)

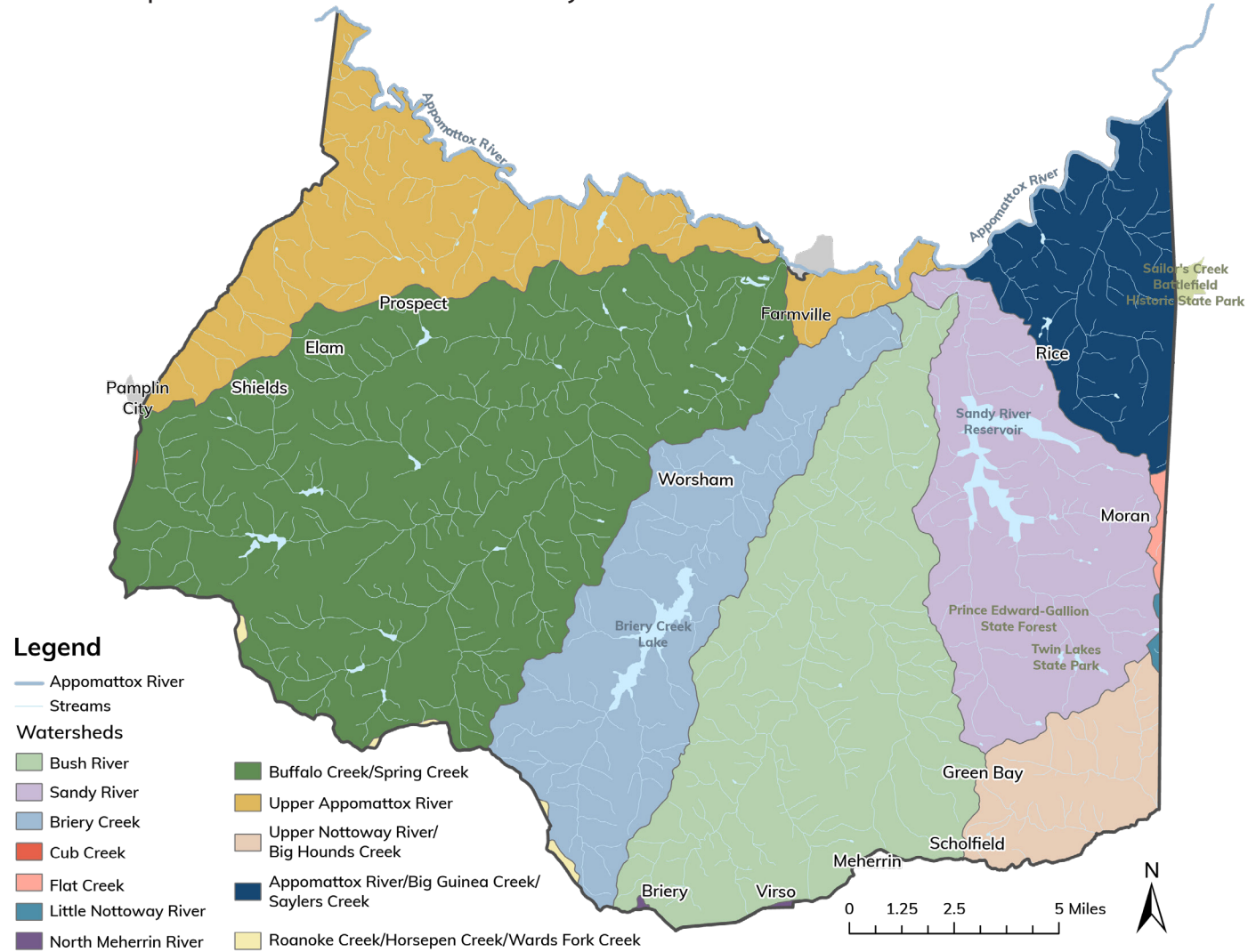
WATER RESOURCES

SURFACE WATERS

Prince Edward County's network of rivers, streams, and lakes contribute to the area's natural beauty and ecological diversity. The majority of the County lies within the Appomattox River Watershed, which is further divided into subwatersheds, as shown in Map 3-3. The Appomattox River forms the County's northern border and serves as the public water source for the Town of Farmville. Its principal tributary streams are Vaughans Creek, Buffalo Creek, Bush River, and Saylor's Creek. Two other notable streams, which flow into the Bush River, are Briery Creek and Sandy River. The southeastern portion of the County is located within the Nottoway River Watershed. The Nottoway River originates along the Prince Edward and Lunenburg County line with only small streams located in this drainage area of the County.

Prince Edward also has over 2,700 acres of lake surface water. Notable lakes include Briery Creek Lake, Prince Edward Lake, and Goodwin Lake. Additionally, the County is dotted with numerous smaller lakes and ponds, many of which are privately owned or part of agricultural landscapes. These smaller water bodies contribute to the county's rural charm and provide habitat for a variety of aquatic species, including fish, amphibians, and waterfowl.

Map 3-3. Watersheds and Waterways



Source: Virginia Department of Environmental Quality

Briery Creek Lake is an 845-acre reservoir managed by the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) and is within the Briery Creek Wildlife Management Area. Briery Creek Lake offers excellent fishing opportunities, particularly for largemouth bass, crappie, and bluegill, attracting anglers from across the region. Additionally, the lake provides opportunities for boating, kayaking, and wildlife observation, with scenic shoreline areas and designated wildlife management areas surrounding its waters.



Briery Creek Lake (Photo Source: Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources)

Prince Edward Lake and **Goodwin Lake**, the prominent features of Twin Lakes State Park, offer swimming beaches, boat launches, and fishing piers. The park initially operated as two racially segregated parks until the early 1960s. In 1976, the two parks formally merged, and the site was renamed Twin Lakes State Park in 1986. Goodwin Lake is known for its clear waters and sandy shoreline, making it an ideal spot for swimming during the summer. Prince Edward Lake offers excellent fishing opportunities for bass, catfish, and sunfish, attracting both novice and experienced anglers.



Prince Edward Lake (Photo Source: Prince Edward County)



Goodwin Lake (Photo Source: Prince Edward County)

GROUNDWATER

With Farmville's public water lines limited to the area adjacent to the Town's boundaries, groundwater tapped through private individual wells is the primary source of potable water for County households. Hampden-Sydney College's community water system also relies on groundwater and is the only local community system to do so. Prince Edward County does not fall within a Ground Water Management Area and, therefore, groundwater withdrawal permits are not required.

Local bedrock is covered by 25 to 70 feet of unconsolidated soil, alluvium, and weathered rock. Groundwater occurs in the lower portion of the unconsolidated material in fractured and weathered zones within the bedrock in floodplain alluvial deposits that extend below the water level of the streams, and in more permeable sandstone and shale strata. Depth of the water table averages about 45 to 59 feet.

WATER QUALITY IMPACTS

Prince Edward County's water resources are integral not only to the local community, but also to the health of the Appomattox River and ultimately the Chesapeake Bay. Protecting them from contaminants and degradation is vital. Surface waters and groundwater can be negatively impacted by land development and agricultural operations, among others.

Clearing and grading during construction strips building sites of the trees and vegetation that naturally intercept rainfall, so the water that normally gets absorbed during rain events instead gets converted into surface runoff. Once construction is completed, structures and pavement introduce new impervious surfaces that increase stormwater runoff and restrict groundwater recharge. The excess runoff carries sediments, pollutants, and animal waste into nearby waterways, which can erode streambanks and degrade the surrounding ecosystem. Agricultural operations can also degrade local water quality due to erosion, runoff from fertilizers, biosolids, and pesticides, and livestock access to streams. Agricultural activities generally introduce three types of contaminants into waterways: nutrients, sediments, and toxicants.

Groundwater can be particularly susceptible to pollution. Pollutants to groundwater come in a variety of forms, but the predominate sources include septic system failure, industrial and sewage treatment plant pollution, and agricultural pollution from animal waste, sediment, nutrients, pathogens, fertilizers, pesticides, metals, and salts. The groundwater supply is also susceptible to threats from leaking underground storage tanks (USTs) and abandoned wells. Abandoned wells provide a direct channel for surface pollutants to enter the groundwater and should be properly sealed to prevent contamination. Septic tanks in use should be pumped at least once every five years; abandoned septic tanks should be properly removed or sealed.

IMPROVING WATER QUALITY

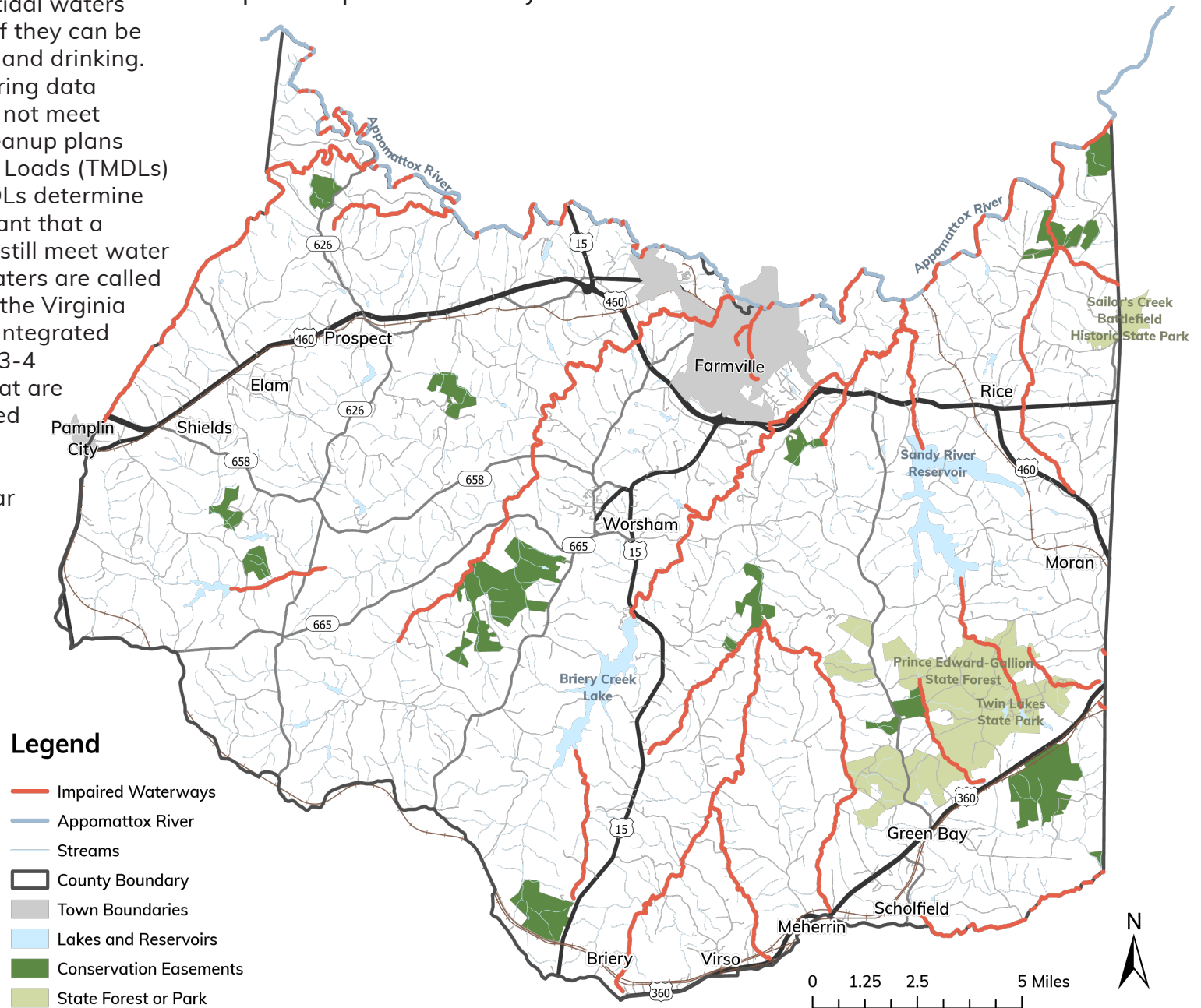
There are many best practices that Prince Edward County can encourage to help control the quantity of stormwater runoff and improve the quality of the water that eventually gets discharged. To continue protecting water quality, the County should ensure its local ordinances are in compliance with state standards and encourage low impact development (LID) practices in all site designs. County-owned properties and existing stormwater ponds can be retrofitted with LID measures; funding and grants may be available through programs such as the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality's (DEQ) Stormwater Local Assistance Fund. The County can also encourage residents to take advantage of cost-share programs offered through the Piedmont Soil and Water Conservation District (PSWCD).

- **Cost-Share Programs** facilitated by PSWCD can help Prince Edward County landowners pay for water quality best management practices (BMPs) on their properties. Programs are available for agricultural and residential properties. Eligible agricultural BMPs include nutrient management plans, riparian buffers, conservation tillage, cover crops, erosion control measures, and more that can be designed to fit the needs of the site and operation. Residential BMPs can include but are not limited to rainwater harvesting, conservation landscaping, and permeable pavement installation.
- **Erosion & Sediment Control (E&S)** and Stormwater Management Ordinances regulate stormwater runoff during and after construction-related activities. Virginia Erosion and Sediment Control Law requires that development activities with 10,000 square feet or more of land disturbance obtain a land disturbance permit through the locality. Construction activities involving more than one acre of land disturbance require a Virginia Stormwater Management Program (VSMP) construction general permit.
- **Low Impact Development (LID)** is a form of stormwater design that imitates natural processes to manage and filter stormwater as close to its source as possible. LID complements the native environment and improves water quality through low impact measures such as vegetated green roofs, permeable pavement, and rain gardens. LID is becoming increasingly preferred because it reduces the need for large, expensive stormwater infrastructure and can have bonus benefits such as supporting pollinators with native plants.

IMPAIRED WATERWAYS

In response to requirements under the Federal Clean Water Act, DEQ tests Virginia's rivers, lakes, and tidal waters for pollutants to determine if they can be used for swimming, fishing, and drinking. When water quality monitoring data shows that state waters do not meet water quality standards, cleanup plans called Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) are developed by DEQ. TMDLs determine the total amount of a pollutant that a waterbody can receive and still meet water quality standards. These waters are called "impaired" and are listed in the Virginia Water Quality Assessment Integrated Report. Table 3-2 and Map 3-4 show County waterways that are currently considered impaired by DEQ; those with "High" TMDL development priority are included on DEQ's 2-year priority list for 2023-2024.

Map 3-4. Impaired Waterways



Source: Virginia Department of Environmental Quality

Table 3-2. Impaired Waterways

Waterbody	Impairment Category	Impairment Cause	EPA Approved TMDL Date (if applicable)	TMDL Development Priority
Appomattox River	Recreation	E. coli		Low
Briery Creek	Recreation	E. coli	N/A	Low
Briery Creek	Aquatic Life	Benthic macroinvertebrates bioassessments	N/A	High*
Briery Creek Lake	Fish Consumption	Mercury in fish tissue	N/A	Low
Buffalo Creek	Recreation	E. coli	N/A	Low
Bush River	Recreation	E. coli	N/A	Low
Bush River	Aquatic Life	Benthic macroinvertebrates bioassessments	N/A	High*
Bush River, Upper	Recreation	E. coli	N/A	Low
Crane Creek	Recreation	E. coli	N/A	Low
Crane Creek	Aquatic Life	Benthic macroinvertebrates bioassessments	N/A	High*
Evans Creek	Recreation	E. coli	N/A	Low
Gross Creek	Recreation	E. coli	N/A	Low
Little Briery Creek	Recreation	E. coli	N/A	Low
Little Sandy Creek	Recreation	E. coli	N/A	Low
Little Saylers Creek	Recreation	E. coli	N/A	Low
Mountain Creek	Aquatic Life	Benthic macroinvertebrates bioassessments	N/A	N/A
Mountain Creek	Recreation	E. coli	N/A	Low
North Branch Sandy River	Aquatic Life	Benthic macroinvertebrates bioassessments	N/A	High*
Nottoway River	Recreation	E. coli	N/A	Low
Prince Edward Lake	Aquatic Life	Dissolved oxygen	N/A	Low
Prince Edward Lake	Recreation	Harmful algal blooms	N/A	Low
Rice Creek	Aquatic Life	Benthic macroinvertebrates bioassessments	N/A	High*
Sandy River	Recreation	E. coli	N/A	Low
Sandy River	Aquatic Life	Benthic macroinvertebrates bioassessments	N/A	High*
Saylers Creek	Recreation	E. coli	N/A	Low
Spring Creek	Recreation	E. coli	N/A	Low
Tanyard Branch	Recreation	E. coli	N/A	Low
Vaughans Creek	Recreation	E. coli	N/A	Low

FEMA's Community Rating System

The Community Rating System (CRS) is a voluntary incentive program that recognizes and encourages community floodplain management practices that exceed the minimum requirements of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). Over 1,500 communities participate nationwide.

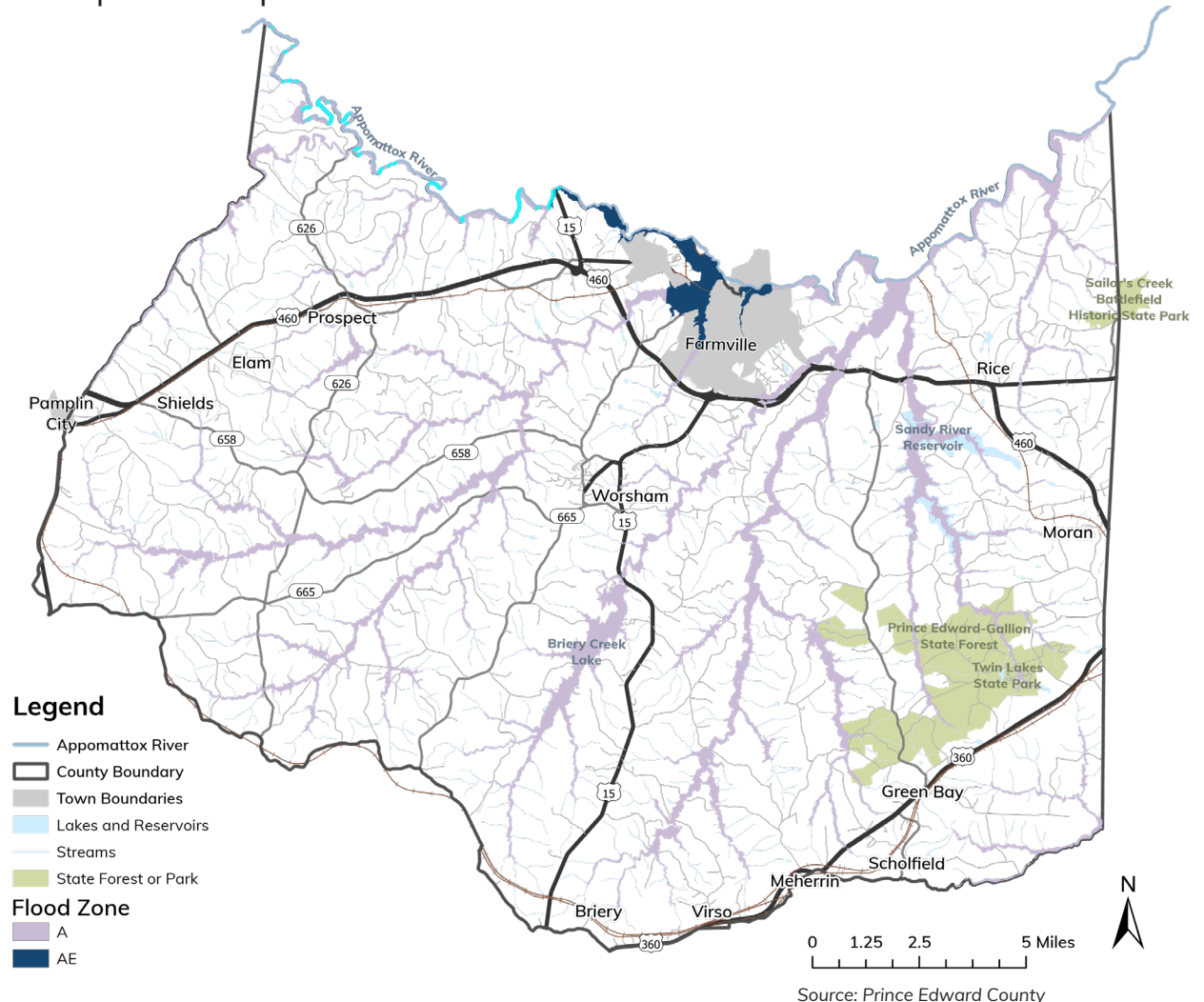
In CRS communities, flood insurance premium rates are discounted to reflect the reduced flood risk resulting from the community's efforts to address three goals of the program:

1. Reduce and avoid flood damage to insurable property.
2. Strengthen and support the insurance aspects of the NFIP.
3. Foster comprehensive floodplain management.

FLOODING

Floodplains are low-lying areas adjacent to waterways that serve hydrologic functions and are subject to varying levels of inundation. Wetlands can also occur in these low-lying areas. County Code Chapter 54 contains Prince Edward's floodplain management regulations, which regulate and restrict uses, activities, and development in flood-prone areas. The floodplain management ordinance was updated and readopted in March 2023 to comply with the requirements of the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). Prince Edward County can also choose to participate in FEMA's Community Rating System (CRS) to further improve floodplain management practices and reduce flood insurance premiums for the community.

Map 3-5. Floodplains



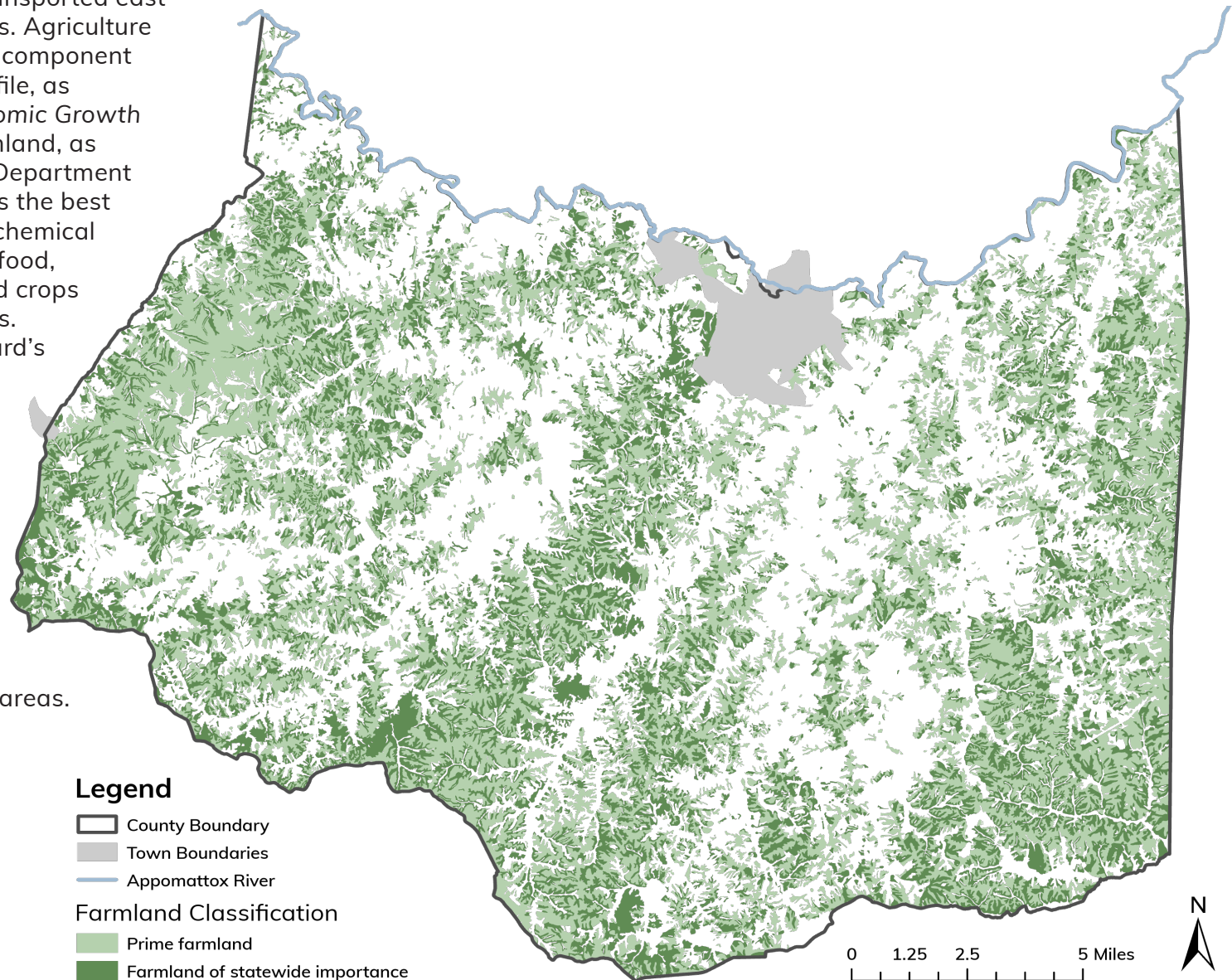
RURAL & HISTORIC ASSETS

AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

PRIME FARMLAND

Historically, agriculture developed along the Appomattox River, with early plantations producing crops that were transported east by river to Petersburg markets. Agriculture continues to be an important component of the County's economic profile, as discussed in Chapter 5, *Economic Growth and Development*. Prime farmland, as federally defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, is land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops and is available for these uses. Thirty percent of Prince Edward's soils are classified as prime farmland, with an additional 12% considered farmland of statewide importance, which have state or local significance. Areas with prime or important farmland classifications should be preserved for future agricultural and silvicultural use, with development directed to more appropriate areas.

Map 3-6. Prime Farmland



LOCAL LANDSCAPES

CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

Conservation easements are essential investments in making Virginia a desirable place to live and visit. ConserveVirginia was codified into law in 2021 as a key tool in guiding state investments for land conservation to ensure the highest conservation outcomes. Landowners can work with their choice of several land conservation organizations listed by DCR to preserve their land according to Virginia policies.

A conservation easement is a voluntary legal agreement between a landowner and a land trust or agency that permanently limits future development of the land to protect its conservation values. Under a conservation easement, landowners continue to own, use, and control their land, and can sell it or pass it on to heirs. Easements allow for and encourage rural land uses, such as forest management, agriculture, hunting and fishing, as well as protection of historically significant landscapes such as battlefields and archaeological sites. In return, landowners qualify for federal, state, and local tax benefits.

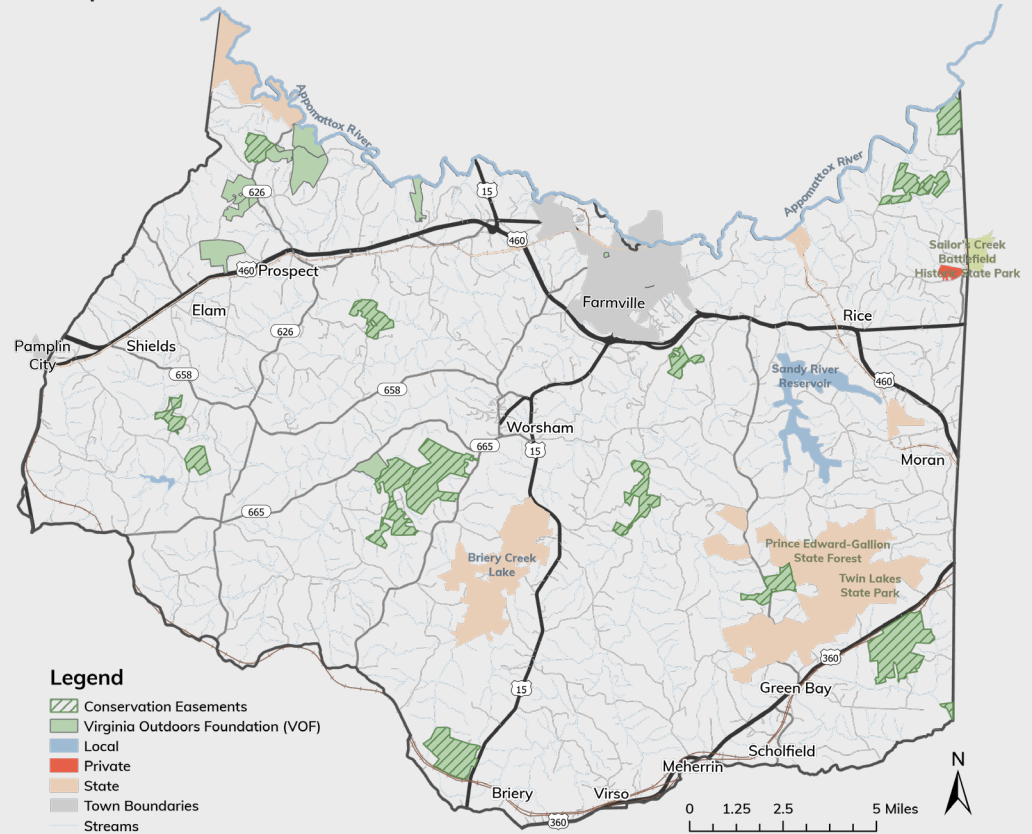
AGRICULTURAL AND FORESTAL DISTRICTS

Agricultural and Forestal Districts (AFDs) are rural preservation districts designated for the production of agricultural products, timber, and the maintenance of open space as an important economic and environmental resource. A district is voluntary – it is initiated by a landowner or group of landowners as a mutual undertaking with local government. By establishing a district, property owners agree not to convert their farm, forestland, and other open space to more intense commercial, industrial, or residential uses for a term of four to 10 years. In return, the County and the Commonwealth agree not to take actions or make infrastructure investments that will place increased pressure on landowners to convert land to more intense land uses during the term of the district. Unlike easements, AFDs are intentionally renewed and not perpetual. While there are no AFDs in the County currently, Prince Edward can establish a local program as a tool for rural preservation.

USE-VALUE TAXATION ASSESSMENT

Land used for agriculture or forestry operations is assessed and taxed by the County relative to its actual use, as opposed to its fair market value. If minimum acreages are met for certain uses (i.e., agriculture, horticulture, forestry, or open space), then the land may be eligible for use-value taxation. While this may result in less revenue based on lower real estate tax assessments, the County can apply for reimbursement through the Virginia Department of Forestry's Forest Sustainability Fund for Local Government to help offset the decreased revenue.

Map 3-7. Conserved Lands



Sources: Prince Edward County; Virginia Outdoors Foundation (VOF); Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation

PURCHASE OF DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS PROGRAMS

A Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program is a land conservation strategy available to localities that protects land from development while compensating landowners for the development rights to their property. Purchasing development rights is the same as purchasing conservation easements or that portion of the “bundle of rights” that allows landowners to construct dwellings or non-farm commercial structures on the property. When a locality purchases development rights from a landowner, it essentially buys the right to develop the land then retires that right by placing a permanent conservation easement on the property restricting further development. Typically, these easements run in perpetuity. Prince Edward County can consider establishing a PDR program as an option for permanently protect valuable rural lands.

AMBIENT RESOURCES

DARK SKIES

Light pollution is the overabundance of inefficient and improperly directed electrical lighting at night. Light pollution can disrupt human circadian rhythms, exacerbate sleep and mood disorders, and cast unsafe glare on roadways. It can also negatively impact natural ecosystems and wildlife.

Prince Edward County has relatively low levels of light pollution compared to more densely developed areas. The Zoning Ordinance’s exterior lighting provisions should be updated to better reflect best practices for dark sky preservation, such as requiring full cutoff fixtures, directing light sources downward, limiting light intensity, prohibiting glare across property lines, and other standards recommended by the International Dark Sky Association. Through the zoning process, additional conditions may be considered to address the potential light impact of specific development proposals. Reducing sources of ambient light and incorporating best practices to prevent unnecessary glare will help Prince Edward County retain highly valued dark sky views and contribute to a safe, healthy, and peaceful environment.

AIR QUALITY

Virginia DEQ monitors air quality in accordance with the Clean Air Act and National Ambient Air Quality Standards. If the air quality in

a geographic area meets or is cleaner than the national standard, it is called an attainment area; areas that do not meet the national standard are called nonattainment areas. Currently, Prince Edward County has met or exceeded air quality standards and is designated as an attainment area.

Air quality is an important component to environmental and public health. Although Prince Edward County is an attainment jurisdiction, there is a need to remain vigilant of the Commonwealth of Virginia's direction concerning air quality. Maintaining vegetation along highway corridors can help mitigate the effects of automobile emissions in addition to providing other environmental benefits. Measures to reduce fossil fuel consumption and emissions, such as promoting public transportation, supporting e-vehicle charging stations, enacting a government vehicle idling policy, planting trees and vegetative buffers, protecting wetlands and floodplains, and minimizing solid waste by promoting recycling and composting, will also help to maintain air quality.

NOISE POLLUTION

Prince Edward County regulates noise through its Noise Ordinance (Chapter 46 of the County Code), which generally restricts loud noises after 11:00 p.m. The Noise Ordinance is enforced through the Prince Edward County Sheriff’s Office. In addition to adhering to the Noise Ordinance, careful consideration should be given to proposed site developments that could generate high levels of noise, especially when located next to residential or rural areas. Noise impacts can be further mitigated through the zoning process by requiring noise generators (e.g., speakers, amplifiers, loud equipment) to be oriented away from adjacent properties, planting enhanced vegetative perimeter buffers, and installing sound barriers.

Care should also be taken to consider steady ambient noise, such as noise generated from modern data centers. While such facilities may not generate specific loud noises, they are likely to produce constant ambient noise that can be heard from neighboring properties. Mitigating ambient noise will contribute to the peaceful rural atmosphere that residents and visitors appreciate about Prince Edward County.

HISTORIC RESOURCES

Prince Edward County has a rich history dating back to the colonial era. Originally inhabited by Native American tribes such as the Monacan and Tutelo, the area was later settled by European colonists in the early 18th century. The County was officially formed in 1754 and named after Prince Edward, the son of King George II.

In the 19th century, Prince Edward County became a center of education with the founding of Hampden-Sydney College in 1775, one of the oldest colleges in the United States. The founding of Longwood University in 1839 (then known as Farmville Female Seminary) led to the area being known as “America’s First Two-College Town.”

The County also played a role in the Civil War, witnessing significant military activity and serving as a staging ground for Confederate troops. Following the Civil War and Reconstruction, Prince Edward County, like much of the South, experienced economic and social changes. The decline of the tobacco economy led to diversification into other agricultural sectors, such as dairy farming and forestry.

In the 1950s, Prince Edward County gained national attention during the Civil Rights Movement when students at Moton High School staged a walkout to protest segregated schools. The resulting lawsuit *Davis v. County School Board of Prince Edward County* was incorporated into the precedent-setting Supreme Court case *Brown v. Board of Education*, which declared segregated schools unconstitutional.

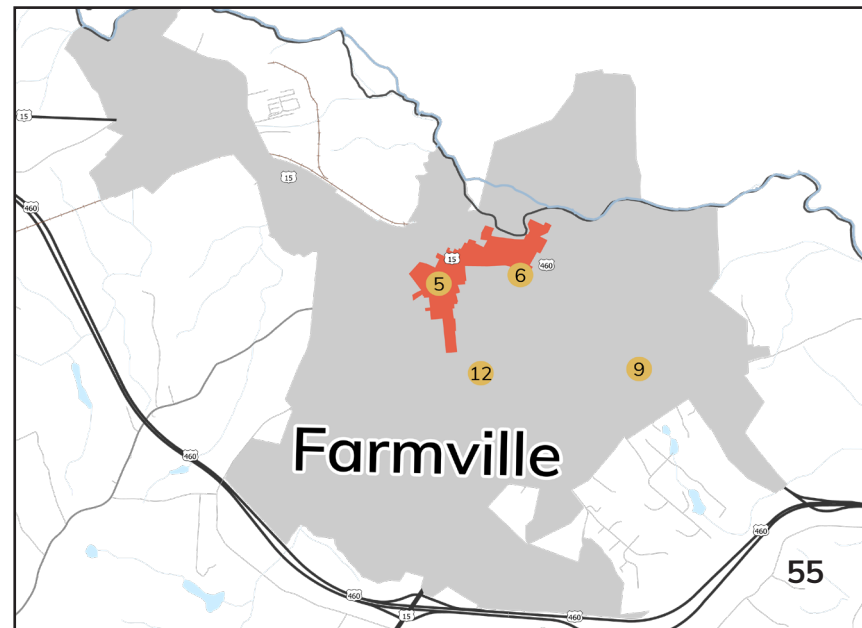
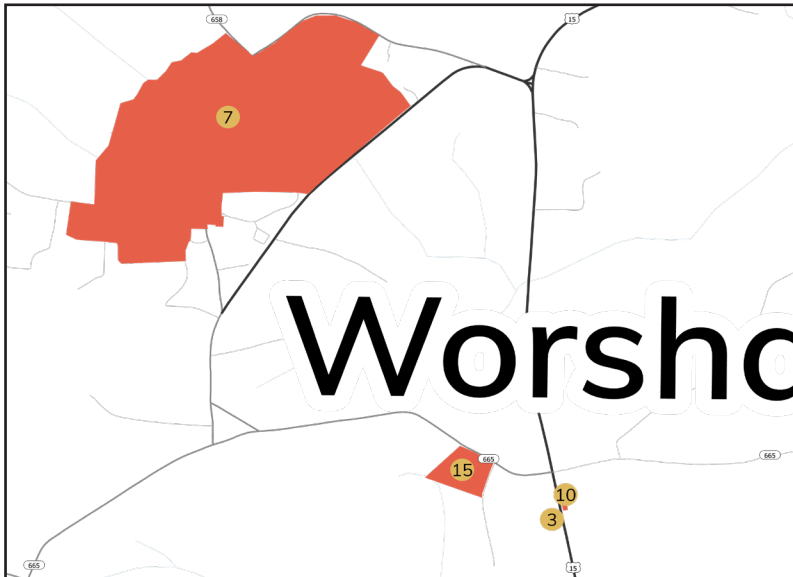
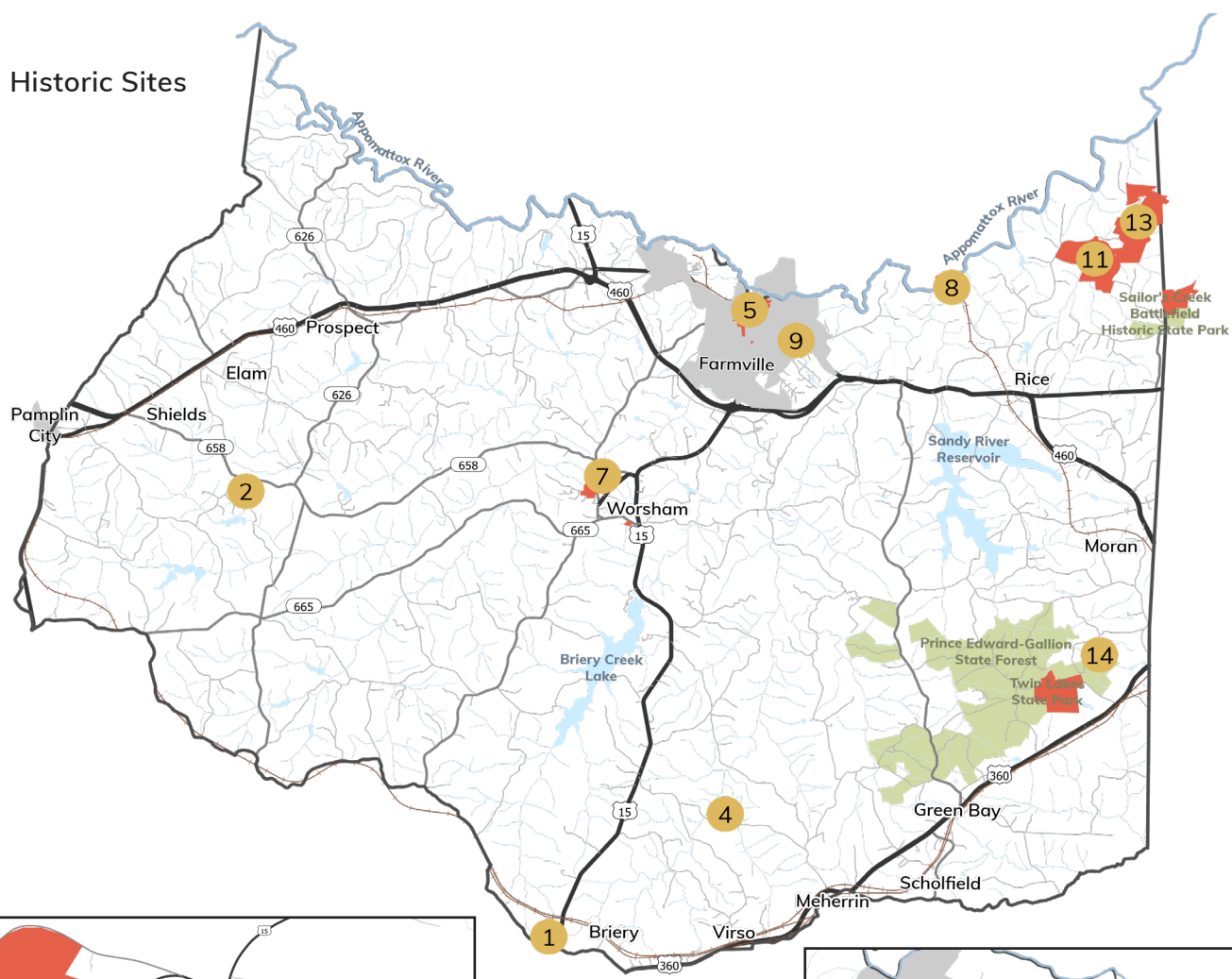
Although Prince Edward County actively resisted desegregation for many years, since then it has undergone significant social, economic, and demographic changes. Today, Prince Edward is a diverse community with a mix of agricultural, educational, and commercial activities, while also preserving its historical heritage and cultural identity. Fifteen local sites are listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register and National Register of Historic Places. The County should continue to work with local, regional, and state agencies and organizations to preserve the County’s history. Property owners of non-registered historic sites should be encouraged to apply for register status.

Table 3-3. Registered Historic Sites

	Site	Year Listed on VA Landmarks Register	Year Listed on National Register of Historic Places
1	Briery Church	5/13/69	11/17/69
2	Buffalo Presbyterian Church	4/28/95	4/7/95
3	Debtor’s Prison	8/15/72	9/22/72
4	Falkland	3/20/79	6/22/79
5	Farmville Historic District	4/18/89	10/30/89
6	First Baptist Church	12/13/12	2/27/13
7	Hampden-Sydney College Historic District	12/2/69	2/26/70
8	High Bridge	6/19/08	9/12/08
9	Longwood House	10/18/83	3/8/84
10	Old Prince Edward County Clerk’s Office	6/19/79	9/10/79
11	Robert Russa Moton Boyhood Home	6/24/13	4/14/14
12	Robert Russa Moton High School*	3/19/97	10/24/95
13	Sailor’s Creek Battlefield*	10/16/84	2/4/85
14	Twin Lakes State Park	9/18/08	10/31/12
15	Worsham High School	3/18/10	6/24/10

Source: Virginia Department of Historic Resources
 *Also designated as a National Historic Landmark

Map 3-8. Registered Historic Sites



Source: Virginia Department of Historic Resources

PLANNING FOR RESILIENCE

RESILIENCE & CLIMATE CHANGE

While the origins of climate change are global in nature, its impacts are inherently local – stronger storms, rising temperatures, and periods of drought can directly impact a community's wellbeing and smooth operation. Moreover, with climate change and rising sea levels, residents in coastal regions are seeking places to move that they perceive to be resilient to climate challenges, resulting in an emerging pattern known as climate migration.

Inland communities are increasingly being targeted as havens from the uncertainties of climate change. Prince Edward County can proactively prepare for both the impacts of climate change and climate migration by collaborating with neighboring regions on hazard mitigation planning. Development policies and regulations should steer growth to areas that can accommodate new development and away from environmentally sensitive areas. Strengthening local infrastructure and proactively planning for future water resources will further equip Prince Edward to attract a growing population effectively and preemptively address potential emergencies.

HAZARD MITIGATION

Natural hazards such as severe storms, tornadoes, wildfires, and flooding can occur with little warning. Climate change can exacerbate these issues with higher temperatures, stronger storms, and changing weather patterns. The impacts to resident safety, property, the economy, and quality of life can be overwhelming if not adequately prepared.

Hazard mitigation planning is accomplished regionally through the Commonwealth Regional Council (CRC). The CRC works with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM), and local emergency managers to develop and maintain the Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan. The Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP) is updated every five years with details on how localities can prepare for natural disasters before they occur.

The HMP helps ensure the region is poised to minimize the disruption which often accompanies disasters, thereby increasing resilience and speedy recoveries. The plan includes strategies developed specifically for Prince Edward County to improve resilience and meet regional goals. Implementing these strategies as part of PEC2045: Forward Together will help the County adopt to changing weather

patterns, mitigate hazardous conditions, increase renewable energy, and provide for the health, safety, and welfare of the community. Six mitigation strategies were recommended for Prince Edward:

- Update and improve GIS data for tax parcels, public works, existing businesses, and Master Street Address Guide.
- Review all permits for new development and substantial improvements for compliance with the County's ordinances as they relate to flood areas.
- Designate and equip emergency shelters in several existing locations in the County; install quick-connect system and make building/facility renovations to Central Shelter/State-Managed Pet Shelter location.
- Install quick-connect system and purchase generator for County fueling system, which serves County government and schools, public safety and public works vehicles.
- Update Prince Edward County and Town of Farmville Regional Water Supply Plan and drought ordinance.
- Acquisition and removal of remaining homes in floodplain areas of the County.

ALTERNATIVE ENERGY FACILITIES

Alternative energy facilities, such as solar energy systems, can have many positive benefits, including stabilizing the energy grid and promoting independence from fossil fuels. Small-scale solar energy systems can be appropriately positioned on building rooftops and over already-paved surfaces such as parking lots. Medium-, large-, and utility-scale solar facilities can render the land useless for other activities, including agriculture, and introduce an industrial aesthetic to rural landscapes.

Electric utility companies often site solar facilities on undeveloped land in order to lower installation costs. To protect agricultural lands and rural character, Prince Edward County's Zoning Ordinance regulates small-, large-, and utility-scale alternative energy facilities. Visual and noise impacts generated by solar facilities are addressed through requirements such as vegetative buffers, anti-reflective coatings on panels, and minimum setbacks to property lines.

Along the County's most sensitive scenic vistas, particularly near the High Bridge Trail and other key tourist areas, care should be taken to avoid the impacts of solar facilities on scenic viewsheds, existing vegetation, and wildlife habitats. Appropriate siting of solar facilities and any associated equipment or battery storage systems should consider the proximity to existing residences, impact on scenic viewsheds, preservation of the natural environment and native vegetation, and incorporation of green infrastructure principles into site design to preserve wildlife corridors. Clear-cutting of vegetation should be deterred. Facilities should also be directed to existing impervious surface whenever possible, such as parking lots or vacant developed sites. By mitigating the negative land use impacts of solar energy systems, the positive benefits for the energy grid can be maximized.

SolSmart

SolSmart is a national program that helps cities, towns, counties, and regional organizations encourage solar market growth at the local level. SolSmart offers no-cost technical assistance to help local governments follow national best practices to expand solar energy use, with designations ranging from Bronze to Platinum. Prince Edward County can consider joining the SolSmart program to facilitate solar development in appropriate areas while prioritizing preservation of key rural landscapes.



GOALS & STRATEGIES

Prince Edward County's natural resources and community character will be stewarded for future generations by protecting the natural environment, preserving rural and historic assets, and planning for resilience.

3.1 PROTECTING THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

- 3.1.1** Direct development and infrastructure away from ecological cores, migration corridors, and environmentally sensitive areas.
- 3.1.2** Encourage green infrastructure principles to preserve and connect natural habitats to support native species and wildlife.
- 3.1.3** Support the use of low impact development and stormwater best management practices to reduce nonpoint source pollution in local waterways.
- 3.1.4** Encourage landowners to work with local organizations, such as PSWCD, for cost-share opportunities to install LID and BMPs catered to agricultural, residential, and commercial sites.

- 3.1.5** Continue to participate in Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) implementation plans for impaired waterways.
- 3.1.6** Identify and seal or remove abandoned wells, septic tanks, and underground storage tanks to prevent contamination of the groundwater supply.

3.2 PRESERVING RURAL & HISTORIC ASSETS

- 3.2.1** Direct development away from areas with prime or significant farmland soils.
- 3.2.2** Establish a local Agricultural and Forestal District program to encourage the preservation of valuable agricultural and silvicultural lands.
- 3.2.3** Maintain use-value taxation criteria and qualifications in the best interest of the County and landowners to ensure long-term viability of agricultural, horticultural, and forestal operations.
- 3.2.4** Utilize the Virginia Department of Forestry's Forest Sustainability Fund to offset reduced tax revenue due to forestland use taxation.
- 3.2.5** Consider creating a Purchase of Development Rights program to permanently preserve rural lands.
- 3.2.6** Maintain vegetated buffers along major road corridors, both to enhance aesthetic beauty and to provide environmental benefits.
- 3.2.7** Strengthen performance standards for ground-mounted solar energy systems to protect existing landscapes, such as limiting clear-cutting on undeveloped parcels, specifying minimum vegetation requirements, and increasing perimeter buffer widths.
- 3.2.8** Create a visual impact overlay district along the High Bridge Trail corridor to protect valuable viewsheds from industrial facilities, including but not limited to solar energy facilities.
- 3.2.9** Carefully consider noise-intensive uses near residential or rural properties and require noise mitigation such as perimeter buffers and sound barriers.

3.2.10 Adopt an outdoor lighting ordinance with design and performance standards that increase safety and protect dark skies, consistent with International Dark Sky Association recommendations.

3.2.11 Encourage assessment of unlisted historic sites for inclusion on the Virginia Landmarks Register and/or National Register of Historic Places.

3.3 PLANNING FOR RESILIENCE

3.3.1 Continue to work with regional partners to update and implement the Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan strategies for Prince Edward County.

3.3.2 Continue improving flood resiliency by updating the floodplain management ordinance (County Code Chapter 54) as needed to reflect new flood maps and best practices, and participating in FEMA's Community Rating System.

3.3.3 Consider applying for SolSmart Bronze designation and implementing the required criteria in County regulations and processes.

3.3.4 Consider amendments to existing ordinances to encourage installation of solar panels on existing impervious services, such as rooftops and parking lots.

3.3.5 Encourage and incentivize green building certifications, energy efficiency, and renewable energy sources for new developments and existing development retrofits.