

Superintendent Report

April 2024

NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

James River Park System is working with Friends of James River Park to finalize a scope of work for a Natural Resource Management Plan (NRMP) that will compile data on natural resources (plant and animal) found in the JRPS, work with staff to develop an operations framework for conservation-informed management of the park, and establish priority conservation projects. The NRMP is planned to kick off in spring of 2024 and will be a six-month process that engages park and trails maintenance staff, partners, and park stewards.

PARK PROJECTS

Belle Isle Access Bridge

A new deck for the Belle Isle Access Bridge, located on the southern side of Belle Isle, is planned to be installed in late spring of 2024. The access bridge facilitates both vehicle and pedestrian access and will remain open during park hours throughout construction. The new deck will be timber construction, oriented parallel to the bridge railings. The design will shed water more efficiently and will be maintained by park staff.

Belle Isle Archeology

In partnership with Friends of James River Park, JRPS is pursuing an archeological assessment of Belle Isle. The assessment, to be completed by Black Star Cultural Resources, will guide preservation of historic objects and resources on Belle Isle and will inform future signage and interpretation.

Dock Street Site

JRPS staff is making progress on the interim opening plan for Dock Street park with the goal of opening in June 2024. A Dock Street park community engagement and park design process will begin in July 2024 to garner public input on further development of the site related to plants and vegetation, recreational access and use, and

Mayo Island

The City of Richmond Department of Public Utilities in collaboration with the Parks Department submitted documentation required by the state Department of Conservation & Recreation for the Community Flood Preparedness grant. Once approved, the City will be awarded funding for Mayo Island and community engagement related to the design of the new site will commence.

Pump House Ramp

Ramp construction has begun at Pump House Park with tree removal and site preparation complete. The project is funded by the Virginia Recreational Trails Program grant. Trees removed will be replaced at a 1:1 caliper inch ratio and all plantings will be native to JRPS and appropriate for the riparian area. Construction is planned to be complete in summer 2024.

GET INVOLVED

Belle Isle Improvements Open House
Thursday, April 18, 3:00 pm – 7:00 pm
Reedy Creek Nature Center
4001 Riverside Drive, Richmond VA 23225

All JRPS friends, visitors, and members of the public are invited to give input on proposed improvements to Belle Isle. (See attached flyer.)

Volunteer opportunities recur weekly on Wednesdays and Saturdays. Visit [cfengage.com](https://www.cfengage.com) to find out about events. From litter clean ups, to visitors center hosting, to invasive plant removal, there is a role for everyone to play to protect the James River Park System.

<https://www.cfengage.com/organization/001A000000aAvPSIAO>

BELLE ISLE IMPROVEMENT PLAN OPEN HOUSE

Hosted by the City of Richmond James River Park System,
Friends of James River Park, and Marvel

**Thursday April 18 from 3 pm - 7 pm
at Reedy Creek Nature Center
4001 Riverside Drive, Richmond VA, 23225**

**WE WELCOME YOU TO PROVIDE FEEDBACK ON
PROPOSED BELLE ISLE IMPROVEMENTS.**

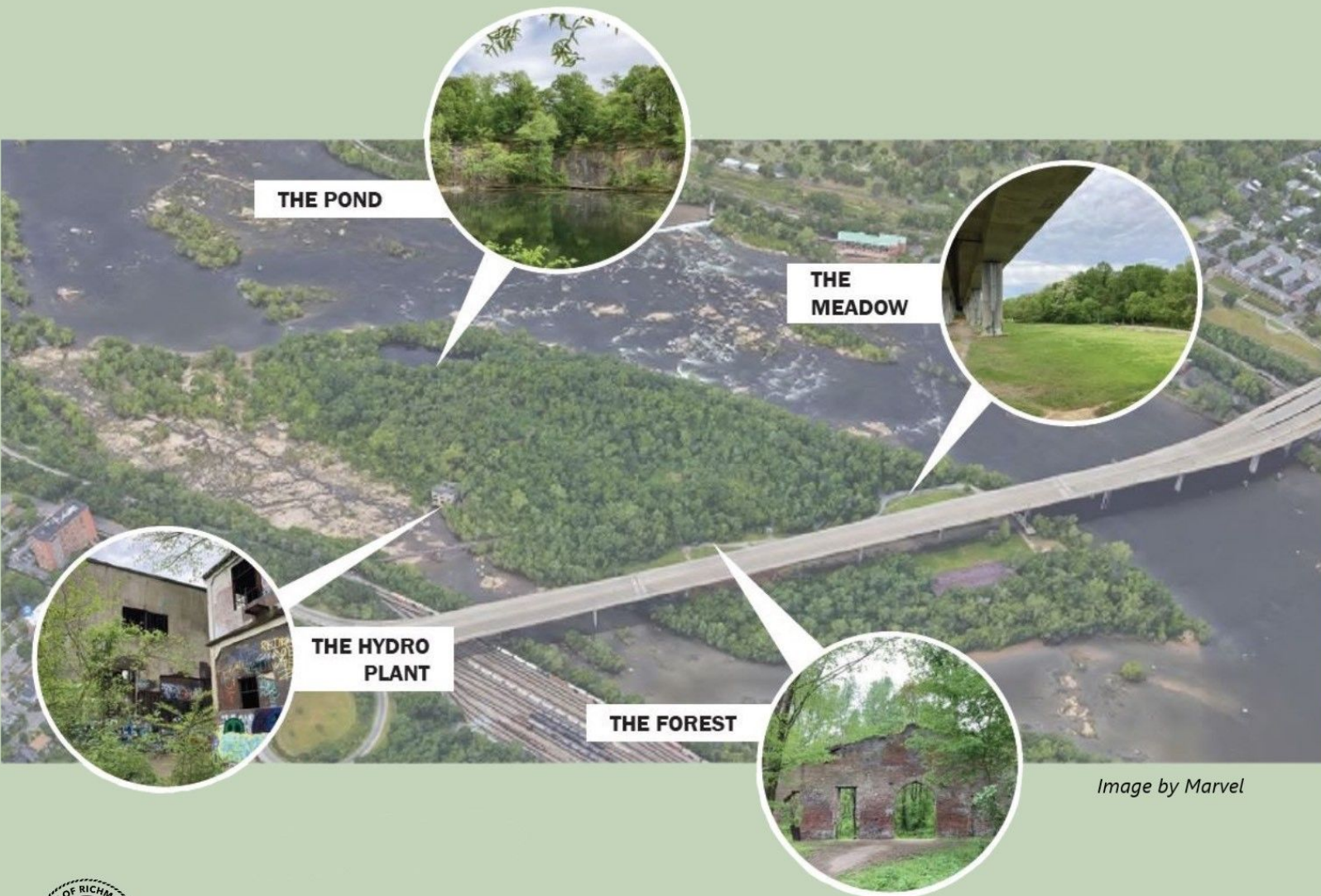


Image by Marvel



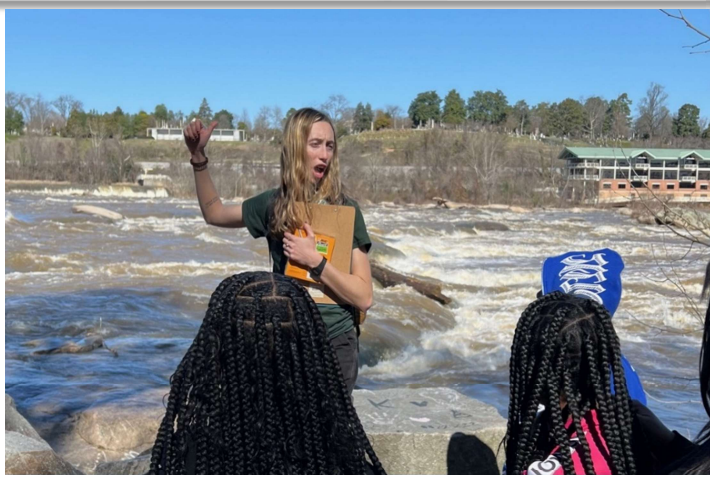
email friends@jamesriverpark.org with questions

James River Park System Outdoor Education - February/March 2024

Number Participant 656

Number Programs 42

Staff: Penelope Davenport
Tyler Twyford
Willa Moffatt



Date	Number Participants	Program Title	Organization/ Group	Activity Type
2/1/2024	8	After School Kids' Kayaking	Bellemeade Community Center	Adventure Education
2/2/2024	9	Pumphouse Tour	General Public	Cultural Heritage Program
2/2/2024	12	Pumphouse Tour	General Public	Cultural Heritage Program
2/6/2024	8	Blue Sky Fund Litter Removal	Private Group	Stewardship
2/8/2024	9	After School Kids' Kayaking	Bellemeade Community Center	Adventure Education
2/9/2024	12	Pumphouse Tour	General Public	Cultural Heritage Program
2/9/2024	8	Pumphouse Tour	General Public	Cultural Heritage Program
2/10/2024	25	Belle Isle History Tour	General Public	Cultural Heritage Program
2/12/2024	8	Owl Prowl	General Public	Ecology Program

2/12/2024	12	After School Environmental Program	West End Branch Library	Out of School Time Program
2/14/2024	53	Walk-Up Spotting Scope Table	General Public	Ecology Program
2/15/2024	8	After School Kids' Kayaking	Bellemeade Community Center	Adventure Education
2/16/2024	11	Pumphouse Tour	General Public	Cultural Heritage Program
2/16/2024	10	Pumphouse Tour	General Public	Cultural Heritage Program
2/18/2024	7	Adventure Loop Hike	General Public	Adventure Education
2/21/2024	26	Community Center After School Program	Southampton Elementary School	Out of School Time Program
2/27/2024	1	After School Environmental Program	West End Branch Library	Out of School Time Program
2/28/2024	30	Community Center After School Program	Southampton Elementary School	Out of School Time Program
2/28/2024	3	Touch Table at Belle Isle	General Public	Ecology Program
2/29/2024	8	Homeschool Kids' Kayaking	Bellemeade Community Center	Adventure Education
2/29/2024	8	After School Kids' Kayaking	Bellemeade Community Center	Adventure Education
3/1/2024	20	Pumphouse Tour	General Public	Cultural Heritage Program
3/5/2024	0	Story Time at Westover Hills Branch Library	General Public	Ecology Program
3/6/2024	50	Animal Adaptations Field Experience	GH Reid Elementary School	4th Grade Field Experience
3/7/2024	7	After School Kids' Kayaking	Bellemeade Community Center	Adventure Education
3/8/2024	4	Invasive Species Bike Ride	General Public	Adventure/Ecology/Stewardship
3/8/2024	20	Pumphouse Tour	General Public	Cultural Heritage Program
3/9/2024	2	Riverside Readings	General Public	Public Program
3/11/2024	25	T-Pot Spotting Scope	General Public	Ecology Program
3/12/2024	40	Belle Isle Geology and Water Quality Field Trip	Boushall Middle School	Earth Science Field Experience
3/13/2024	39	Belle Isle Geology and Water Quality Field Trip	Boushall Middle School	Earth Science Field Experience
3/15/2024	20	Pumphouse Tour	General Public	Cultural Heritage Program
3/18/2024	34	Animal Adaptations Field Experience	Riverside School	Elementary School Field Experience
3/20/2024	35	Macroinvertebrate Field Experience	St. Catherine's School	High School Field Experience
3/21/2024	12	After School Kids' Kayaking	Bellemeade Community Center	Adventure Education
3/23/2024	20	Belle Isle Naturalist Hike	Virginia Master Naturalists	Ecology Program
3/25/2024	5	Spring Intercession Fish Camp	RPS Out of School Time	Out of School Time Program
3/26/2024	5	Spring Intercession Fish Camp	RPS Out of School Time	Out of School Time Program
3/26/2024	12	After School Environmental Program	West End Branch Library	Out of School Time Program
3/27/2024	20	Community Center After School Program	Community Center	Out of School Time Program
3/27/2024	5	Spring Intercession Fish Camp	RPS Out of School Time	Out of School Time Program
3/28/2024	5	Spring Intercession Fish Camp	RPS Out of School Time	Out of School Time Program

JRPS Outdoor Education Initiatives

February and March have been busy months. School field trips have picked, up while after school and programs for the general public continue to attract strong attendance.

Program Highlight: 5 intrepid fisher-people explored Richmond's waterways on the hunt for GIANT FISH. Staff and students had a dreamy (sometimes rainy) week growing as a team, learning skills, and catching fish!

Education Staff attended the **Virginia Association of Environmental Educators' Annual Conference** in February. We are looking forward to putting ideas from the conference into practice over 2024, including making our own "forever bugs" and prioritizing inclusion in our hiring practices.

Staff will bring new skills to spring and summer programs this year, as they put in the work to earn Facilitator certification for the Project Learning Tree curriculum and engaged in a weeklong workshop on the Principles of Interpretive Planning. Both of these trainings are nationally recognized for excellence.

Operations Report

JRPS Park Operations: March 2024

Park Visitation in March 2024:

145,395

2023 – 162,706

2022 – 154,615

2021 – 193,677

2020 – 219,247

Year to date: ----

Critical data missing from Pony Pasture



Updates

- Contractors begin work on Pump House ADA Ramp. First phase involves tree removal and excavation.
- Rapids restoration sign design is underway. This project is funded by the Wetlands Watch grant, a grant intended to bring awareness to invasives and natives in riparian buffer zones. This sign specifically aimed at the work being done at Pony Pasture by Invasive Task Force.
- JRPS hires two new seasonal operations staff.
- New entrance gate posts installed for 22nd st, 42nd st and Huguenot Flatwater parking lots. Final installation postponed until July.

Projects

- 3/1 – Winter Meadow Mowing
- 3/8 – Bug Garden French Drain
- 3/9 – 42nd st Roadwork Continued
- 3/16 – HFW Pedestrian Bridge
- 3/20 – Dock St. Prep
- 3/24 – 42nd st Azalea Bed

3/1 – Winter Meadow Mowing

Annual meadow mowing completed in JRPS. This includes meadows located at Reedy Creek, The Wetlands, Belle Isle, and Dock St.



3/8 – Bug Garden French Drain

Addressed a water hang up issue at Reedy Creek Bug Garden by creating a French drain. Sheet flow water during rain events now divert to the French drain as not to overwhelm the bug garden or cause silt build up on the ADA ramp to HQ.



3/9 – 42nd st Roadwork Continued

More #3 stone base aggregate and 21A Crusher Run added to service road heading toward 42nd tower.



Huguenot Flatwater Pedestrian Bridge

A pedestrian bridge recently failed due to erosion and a faulty bridge footing, resulting in the structure to fall into a creek at Huguenot Flatwater.

- Park staff begin making forms and digging footers for bridge relocation. The forms provide support for concrete by adding a gravel base and metal supports.
- 3/16 - JROC volunteer forces aid park staff by mixing and pouring concrete, removing invasive winter creeper, and adding woodchips to the new trail. (7 volunteers)
- Park staff return to the site once concrete had dried, add an erosion mat, disassemble old bridge, and begin re-assembling bridge onto the new footings. Additional railings were installed and heavy duty anchor brackets keep the bridge in place.





3/20 - Dock St. Park Preparations.

The beginning stages of preparations are underway for the new park parcel, Dock st. Park!

- Field bush hogged, Harley raked and mowed.
- New trail systems pin flagged and added to GIS field maps.

Plan to combat invasive grasses and plant wildflowers has been pushed back to fall season. The next phase will be to rough in trail systems, treat invasive trees, and plant native trees. Finally, there will be removal and installation of fencing. The expected completion date will be June 2024.





3/24 – 42nd st Azalea Bed Volunteer Project

The Forest Hill Gardener's Group and park staff worked together to spruce up the Azalea beds at 42nd st location. Together they:

- Added 5 cubic yards of mulch.
- Pulled weeds.
- Added bed edging.



JRPS Invasive Species Management – March 2024 report

Management activities including volunteer events (does not include events led by volunteer task force members)

- Most volunteer events in March were part of the Richmond Invasive Species Awareness Week schedule of events.
- Staff dedicated most field time to treatment of *Ficaria verna* (fig buttercup), for which March is the seasonal control window.
- Staff conducted a total of 16 management events in 4 park units, and educated 33 park visitors.
- This included a total of 141 volunteer participations (could include repeat volunteers) contributing 3,807 volunteer hours.

Primary management targets

- Vine groundcover manual removal and Free-A-Tree were primary activities with volunteers.
- The team conducted eight days of treatments of *Ficaria verna* (fig buttercup) this month in Pony Pasture and The Wetlands and along sections of Buttermilk Trail. Rainy weather, RISAW and the R.K. Mellon Foundation project impacted the team's ability to cover all park units. Treatments will continue into early April.

Education and Outreach

- Em, Laura, and IPTF member Emily Gianfortoni conducted four community workshops funded by the R.K. Mellon Foundation task force grant. The workshop presentations focused on the impact of invasive plants on the JRPS and surrounding neighborhoods and how park neighbors can help by managing invasive plants at home. An online survey developed by IPTF member Vicky Shivy with support from the rest of the grant team preceded the workshops along with traditional and digital promotion of the workshops. 39 people attended the workshops held on the last two Saturdays of the month. Attendees' surveyed feedback was overwhelmingly positive.
- Gera began working with Rachel Hill's Biology 497 Ecological Service students on invasive plant removal.
- Laura was one of the presenters at VDOF's Virginia Urban Tree Council workshop in Roanoke on March 12th. Though this presentation on urban invasive plant management was separate from her role with the JRPS, the invitation reflects the reputation beyond Richmond of invasive plant management in the JRPS. The workshop had over 150 attendees from the private, public, and nonprofit sectors.

RISAW 2024

- ~240 participants throughout the week of 15 events including 9 volunteer events and other educational and social activities
- Kickoff - 20 volunteers, 40+ attendees throughout the day
- Film screening - 21 attendees
- Party - 60+ people

- Intentionally included more events at locations outside of the park and available to folks of different ages, interest, and ability levels
- Generated interest, interaction, and engagement on social media and in person about invasive plants, RISAW, and the taskforce.

Top L: Gera discussing plant ID with RISAW participants.

Top R: Some of several folks involved in the RISAW kickoff March 3, 2024.

Bottom: ISM team.



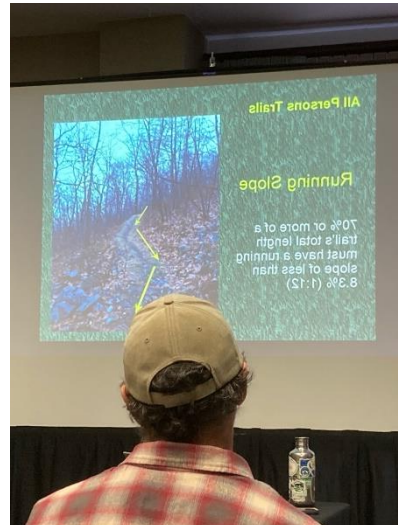
Trails and Greenways Monthly Report – March 2024

Highlights:

Construction of the new Northbank Trail boardwalk has been completed! This wider and more durable boardwalk will allow for safer user passage and boasts a large viewing deck for nature viewing. This project was funded by the Friends of James River Park and built by Backyard Farmer.



Trail Crew attended the Professional Trail Builders Association Conference in Georgia. This conference provides a great opportunity for our crew to get up to date on the newest industry standards. The trail construction industry is a rapidly growing field and the crew brought home many new concepts that we will apply to our trail system.



Trail Crew completed a necessary trail reroute at Larus Park. The old trail had severe erosion issues and was too close to the creek bank. The new trail is on higher ground and will shed water much more effectively.



A section of shared use path along the flood-wall trail (eastern portion) at Hull St) has been re-paved. The old surface had been severely damaged to root upheaval. These invasive trees were removed ahead of the construction. This project was paid for by DPU.



Parks in partnership with DPW and WRA conducted the James River Branch Trail Public Engagement meeting. The meeting had a great turn out with overwhelming support for the trail. The plan will be presented to the UDC as the next step for the project.



Southern Division Volunteer Hours - March 2024

Hours of Service **511** **Events Completed** **26** **Total Volunteers** **238**

Volunteers Remove English Ivy on Buttermilk



VCU Athletes Belle Isle Cleanup



Free a Tree Volunteer Event



Date	Number Volunteers	Duration (hrs)	Hours Served	Project	Notes
3/13/24	4	2	8	James River Cleanup	
3/20/24	2	2	4	James River Cleanup	
3/23/24	1	2	2	James River Cleanup	
3/27/24	3	2	6	James River Cleanup	
3/30/24	10	2	20	James River Cleanup	
3/7/24	9	3	27	Belle Isle Invasive Management	
3/14/24	8	3	24	Belle Isle Invasive Management	
3/21/24	6	3	18	Belle Isle Invasive Management	
3/28/24	5	3	15	Belle Isle Invasive Management	
3/2/24	13	2	26	Buttermilk Invasive Management	
3/15/24	7	2	14	Buttermilk Invasive Management	
3/30/24	13	2	26	Buttermilk Invasive Management	
3/1/24	16	2	32	Ancarrow's Invasive Management	
3/3/24	15	2	30	Pony Pasture Invasive Management	
3/5/24	6	2	12	Texas Beach Invasive Management	
3/6/24	3	2	6	Buttermilk Invasive Management	
3/8/24	25	2	50	Ancarrow's Invasive Management	
3/8/24	9	2	18	Ancarrow's Invasive Management	
3/15/24	12	2	24	Ancarrow's Invasive Management	
3/16/24	7	3	21	Wetlands Invasive Management	
3/16/24	6	2	12	Buttermilk Invasive Management	
3/20/24	10	2	20	Pony Pasture Invasive Management	
3/22/24	8	2	16	Buttermilk Invasive Management	
3/23/24	5	2	10	Buttermilk Invasive Management	
3/29/24	12	2	24	Buttermilk Invasive Management	
3/29/24	15	2	30	Buttermilk Invasive Management	
3/30/24	8	2	16	Buttermilk Invasive Management	
TOTALS:	238		511		