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# OPEN SPACE RESOURCES



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ALBEMARLE COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



# Open Space Resources

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**GOAL:** Protect the County's natural, scenic, and historic resources in the Rural Area and Development Areas.

## Introduction

Open space resources include natural, scenic, and historic resources. Natural, scenic, and historic resources are essential to Albemarle County's character (both rural and urban), its economic vitality, and its citizens' quality of life. Natural resources discussed in this chapter include, among others, water resources, agricultural and forestry resources, biological resources, dark sky, and mountain resources.

Natural, scenic and historic resources are recognized in both the Rural Area and the Development Areas of the County, but these open space resources, and resource protection efforts, are more closely tied to the Rural Area through the Growth Management goal. There is a strong relationship between natural, scenic and historic resources, water supply protection, and agricultural and forestry resource protection, which are defining elements for the Rural Area.

The three types of open space resources are discussed separately in the following sections. Often, however, a single resource will serve all three functions. The Rivanna River, for example, is a *natural* resource that provides aquatic habitat and floodplain; it is a *scenic* resource that is designated a Virginia Scenic River; and it is a *historic* resource with evidence of canal locks remaining from the days when it was a major transportation route.

All open space resources have several properties in common:

- Open space resources *provide multiple benefits*: ecological, educational, recreational, aesthetic, and economic.
- They *share interdependency*. Protection or misuse of one resource will also protect or adversely affect other resources. For example, the maintenance of forested areas protects surface and ground water quality, wildlife habitat, critical slopes, and air quality.
- Open space resources *are non-renewable*. They can be depleted, such as through the conversion of farmland, or the destruction of a historic resource; or they can be degraded, such as through the pollution of drinking water supplies. These characteristics increase the importance of providing open space resource protection.

The ways that we currently use and protect our open space resources will determine whether we will be able to maintain our current quality of life into the future. The concept of sustainability provides a method to objectively look at our actions, and to ensure the stewardship of Albemarle County's resources for future generations.

The *Open Space and Critical Resources Plan*, adopted in 1992, consolidates information on open space resources in a comprehensive and integrated fashion in order to identify the most important areas to protect as open space. It identifies four major systems of open space that extend across the boundaries of the Rural Area and the Development Areas: Major Stream Valleys, Important Farmlands and Forests, Mountains, and Cultural Resources. This Comprehensive Plan continues that effort to identify resources and to recommend appropriate protection measures.