



SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2022.** Please include this submission form with the electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).

PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Page County

Program Title: Alma Boat Landing and River Access Project

Program Category: Community & Economic Development

CONTACT INFORMATION

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SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Amity Moler

Title: Page County Administrator

Signature: Amity Moler



BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Efforts led by the Page County Office of Economic Development and Tourism improved river access and facilitated greater recreational and angling opportunities on the South Fork of the Shenandoah River — and were achieved by a cross-functional collaboration.

After state funding was officially secured in 2020, the Alma Boat Landing and River Access project faced challenges posed by the pandemic. But in just several months in 2021, work to transform the primitive public boat landing was completed utilizing a county-owned parcel adjacent to the Alma Access Point and with the help of Page County's parks and recreation and solid waste departments.

Improvements include the construction of a new boat ramp, grading, additional parking, a cleared shoreline, the placement of drainage stone and tiles and the installation of picnic areas. The project serves as the first of two planned phases at the boat landing, ensuring that visiting river-goers and community members will continue to enjoy the natural beauty of the Shenandoah River and the surrounding Blue Ridge and Massanutten mountain views that surround it in Page County.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Aimed at increasing fishing and recreational access along the South Fork of the Shenandoah, the Alma Boat Landing and River Access project was selected in part because of its popularity among both locals and visitors for angling, wading and swimming and as a starting point or final destination for boat and float trips.

Located at the southwest corner of the intersection of US Route 340 and State Route 650, just south of the Town of Stanley, the Alma Boat Landing is one of 20 public access points along the entire length of the river, according to the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR). Eight of these access points, including the DWR access site at Alma, are located in Page County, facilitating an opportunity to plan a wide variety of float trips of varying distances for the thousands of visitors who take to the South Fork each year.

With this in mind, the Page County Office of Economic Development and Tourism in 2019 rolled out plans to improve the then-primitive Alma launch site. A new boat ramp was constructed to improve shoreline access. A newly graded and marked parking area improved trailer access and provided additional parking. Tree debris was cleared to create a shoreline fishing trail; drainage stone and tiles were added to help with water runoff; and picnic areas featuring tables and grills were added for river adventurers to enjoy a before- or after-float meal or snack, or for locals to relax. And land was cleared for potential future campsites, as well as walking trails, with the goal of establishing Alma not only as a starting-off or stopping point, but an overnight or afternoon destination.

Stalled by the coronavirus pandemic, work was completed in just a several-months span

and officially debuted in October 2021 during a community ribbon-cutting ceremony. County and town officials and community members gathered to celebrate the improvements on Oct. 22, touting the upgrades as not only helping to preserve the South Fork's beauty, but draw more visitors to Page County, provide a place for local residents to enjoy and serve as an economic driver by helping to attract new businesses to Virginia's Cabin Capital — an official designation Page County earned from the state in 2009 — where thousands of visitors travel to each year to relax in wide open spaces and explore the natural beauty of the Shenandoah Valley and river.

CHALLENGES / FINANCING

As one of Page County's most popular public access points along the South Fork of the Shenandoah River — particularly for river-goers making the 3-mile trip from the Newport to Alma access points and the 7-mile trip from the Alma to White House access points — the Alma Boat Landing in 2020 was in a primitive state, with shore access, parking and an entry road in poor condition.

Utilizing a 5.79-acre parcel adjacent to the Alma Shoreline Access that was donated to the county in 1986, Page County officially secured funding for the project in May 2020.

The \$54,932 improvements were paid for through a project grant from the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries using funds from a DuPont-Waynesboro Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration settlement. The 2017 settlement required DuPont, which once operated a textile manufacturing plant in Waynesboro, to pay more than \$42 million for restoration projects after the facility released mercury into the South River between 1929 and

1950. The mercury continues to affect fish and wildlife along the South River and South Fork Shenandoah River watershed, according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The onset of the coronavirus pandemic and statewide stay-at-home orders in spring of 2020 posed new challenges. As schools shuttered, businesses struggled and travel halted, the Alma Boat Landing and River Access project stalled. But as a new normal took shape in 2021 and the travel industry resumed with visitors along with locals looking for fresh-air excursions, improvements got underway at Alma and were completed in just a few months. The finished project — the first of two planned phases of improvements — officially debuted in October 2021, in time for the 2022 spring and summer seasons.

AWARDS CRITERIA: INNOVATION

Recognizing a need for improvements, the Page County Office of Economic Development and Tourism leveraged county-owned land to facilitate the needed upgrades at Alma. Utilizing a 5.79-acre parcel adjacent to the Alma Shoreline Access that was donated to the county in 1986, Page County was awarded funding in 2020 for the project based on a proposed site plan that included upgrades on the county-owned parcel as well as at the boat landing.

AWARDS CRITERIA: PARTNERSHIP/COLLABORATION

The Page County Office of Economic Development and Tourism in 2019 applied for a grant facilitated by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries through a program

launched by funds from the DuPont-Waynesboro Natural Resource Damage Assessment settlement. In September of that year, the Page County Board of Supervisors officially threw its support behind the project, which utilized a nearly 6-acre county-owned parcel, when the board adopted a Resolution of Support Endorsing the Plan of Improved River Access at Alma Bridge.

The partnership was strengthened by a cooperation between the Page County Department of Parks and Recreation, which designed the Alma Boat Landing and River Access project's upgrades, and the Page County Department of Solid Waste, which completed much of the on-site improvements, including building concrete pads, mulching walking paths and installing picnic tables and grills.

AWARDS CRITERIA: MODEL FOR OTHER LOCALITIES

Page County's improvements at the Alma Boat Landing are the result of a cross-functional collaboration between county departments that serves as a model for other localities. Similar achievements can be replicated by establishing an in-house cooperation between departments to find creative solutions to community challenges.

The Page County Office of Economic Development and Tourism prioritized needed improvements at the public boat landing and proposed a plan using county-own land to secure state funding. The Page County Board of Supervisors officially endorsed the project on the county-owned parcel through a resolution of support. A site plan was developed and designed by the Page County Department of Parks and Recreation. And much of the work was completed by the Page County Department of Solid Waste, ensuring that the Alma Boat Landing and River Access project, stalled by the pandemic, was completed in time.

RESULTS

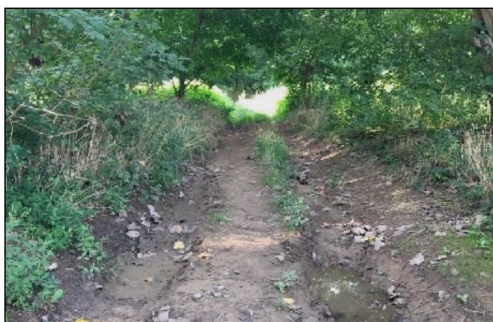
Improved river access allows for greater recreational and fishing opportunities on the South Fork of the Shenandoah River — a chief goal of the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries program that provided the funding.

The stretch of the South Fork surrounding the Alma Boat Landing offers a diversity of habitat — pools, runs and riffles that provide angling opportunities for smallmouth bass, rock bass, muskellunge, sunfish and channel catfish, according to the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources. A cleared and maintained shoreline offers new and improved opportunities for anglers, while enhancing and preserving the scenic landscape.

Upgrades at the Alma Boat Landing through a new boat ramp, improved entrance and additional parking provide the thousands of visitors who take to the South Fork each year better — and safer — access.

These improvements, combined with new picnic areas and plans for a second phase of upgrades that includes a campsite and walking trail, contribute to quality recreational development while fostering community and development opportunities.

Pre-improvements, circa 2019



Mid-construction, 2021



Finished project, 2022

