

# A VALUABLE NATURAL RESOURCE

The James River is a critical part of our history, daily lives, and the legacy we leave for future generations.



### Rich History

Where Virginia Indian Tribes, enslaved Africans, and European colonists converged, whose shared heritage helped shape the nation



### Source of Drinking Water

The James and its tributaries are sources of drinking water for millions of Virginians



### Wildlife Habitat

Iconic species including the Atlantic sturgeon and bald eagle call the James home



### Place for Recreation

Federal, state, and local parks provide us with plenty of ways to enjoy the James



### Community Identifier

The James defines communities with its rich heritage and beauty



### Legacy for Future Generations

Our actions today impact the James for years to come

## KEEP THE COMEBACK COMING

### About the James River Association

The James River Association (JRA) is a member-supported nonprofit organization founded in 1976 that serves the waterways and communities of the James River. Our mission is to protect the James River and connect people to it.

JRA is the only organization solely dedicated to protecting and improving the James River and the 25,000 miles of tributaries that flow throughout its 10,000 square mile watershed. Our vision is of a fully healthy, Grade-A James River valued by all communities in the watershed, from the headwaters in the Allegheny Mountains to the river's confluence with the Chesapeake Bay.

As JRA celebrates its 50th anniversary in 2026, we look forward to building on five decades of impactful programming as we keep the comeback coming.

For more information about the James River and how you can help the James River Association bring it back to full health, please visit [thejamesriver.org](https://thejamesriver.org).

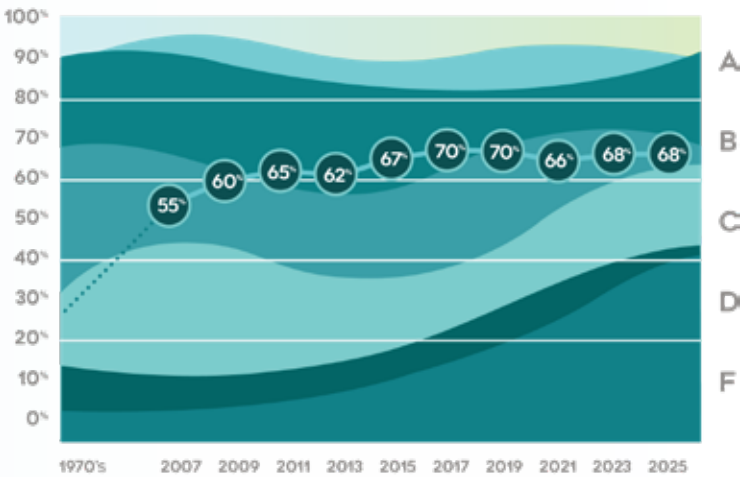


# STATE OF THE JAMES 2025



The health of the James River is vital to the quality of life, economic prosperity, and future generations of its surrounding communities.

The State of the James is a report card issued every two years to examine the status and trends of 18 indicators that fall within two categories – **River Health** and **River Restoration**.



## KEY CONCLUSIONS

### GOOD NEWS

**Big comeback over 50 years:** In 1975, the James River was shut down to any kind of fishing due to toxic contamination. Untreated raw sewage and industrial waste also made the river very unhealthy. Since then, things have gotten much better. The State of the James now gets an overall grade of B with a score of 68%.

**Healthier upstream areas:** Upstream indicators like stream health, smallmouth bass, and riparian buffers have high scores and saw increases over the past two years. This reflects the good watershed health of the Upper James as well as restoration efforts across the watershed.

**Investments are paying off:** Virginia's investments in clean water programs – wastewater treatment, agricultural practices, and stormwater management – are making a real difference. The more we invest, the better the river gets.

### MORE WORK NEEDED

**Trouble in tidal areas:** Underwater grasses, oysters, and tidal water quality declined in the last two years. Despite progress in river restoration, the tidal James still faces heavy stress from pollution sources, including wastewater, erosion, agricultural runoff, and stormwater. To restore these waters, we must reduce pollution at its source and rebuild critical habitats so the tidal James – and the whole river – can thrive.

**Migratory fish at risk:** American shad remain at zero and striped bass numbers also declined substantially since our 2023 report. To bring back these and other iconic migratory fish, Virginia needs to act fast to deal with problems like invasive catfish, pollution, blocked waterways, water intakes, and degraded habitats.

**Challenges remain:** Progress has slowed over the past 10 years because of population growth, land development, and climate change. To keep improving the James River, everyone needs to help protect it for the future.





# STATE OF THE JAMES 2025

SCORE   GRADE		
FISH & WILDLIFE HABITAT	62%	B-
RIVER HEALTH	62%	B-
POLLUTION REDUCTIONS	70%	B
PROTECTION & RESTORATION ACTIONS	77%	B+
RIVER RESTORATION EFFORTS	74%	B
OVERALL	68%	B
GRADING SCALE: A 80%-100% B 60%-79% C 40%-59% D 20%-39% F LESS THAN 20%		



For each indicator, the James River Association utilizes the most current data available and compares it to benchmarks set by the state or other authorities to define what is needed to achieve a fully healthy river.

**RIVER HEALTH SCORE** Ten indicators including fish and wildlife species, as well as habitat features that help these species thrive.

**RIVER RESTORATION SCORE** Eight indicators that track our progress as a watershed to implement restoration actions called for in Virginia's Chesapeake Bay Cleanup Plan and to meet water quality standards for the James River.

