

Roanoke River Basin Association Request for Financial Assistance

1. What is the proposal?

The City of Virginia Beach is requesting that the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission (HRPDC) provide an annual contribution of \$50,000 to the Roanoke River Basin Association (RRBA) to allow the RRBA to hire and support an Executive Director.

2. Who is the RRBA?

The RRBA is a non-profit, 501©(3) tax exempt organization whose mission is to establish and carry out a strategy for the development, use, preservation and enhancement of the resources of the Roanoke River basin in the best interest of present and future generations of Basin residents. More information can be found at the RRBA web site located at <https://rrbaorg.wordpress.com/home/>

3. Why is this important to Hampton Roads?

Lake Gaston is located within the Roanoke River Basin and provides a significant supply of water to south side Hampton Roads localities. The protection of water quality within Lake Gaston is critical to maintaining a water supply for the south side of Hampton Roads to meet the needs of residents and support economic development in the community. The RRBA provides an advocacy group within the Roanoke Basin to represent Hampton Roads interests in the protection of one of our most important water supplies.

4. What are specific examples of the RRBA's work?

The City of Virginia Beach and RRBA partnered to oppose uranium mining upstream of Lake Gaston to protect water quality in the Roanoke Basin and Lake Gaston. The RRBA also is working to clean up coal ash impoundments in the Roanoke River Basin, which includes major rivers that feed into Lake Gaston. In addition, the RRBA has worked with the City of Virginia Beach to address water quality issues related to hog lagoons and poultry processing mass operations that generate large amounts of waste.

5. Why is there a need for this funding?

The previous Executive Director for the RRBA passed away, and the RRBA is in need of a new Executive Director or full-time administrator. The RRBA is funded by dues and voluntary contributions from individuals and local governments. The region is mostly rural and is not a high-income area. Funds typically fluctuate with the economy averaging approximately \$30,000 per year. This is not sufficient funding for the RRBA to have full-time staff support.

6. Isn't this a south side Hampton Roads issue?

Water supply from Lake Gaston supports jobs on the south side of Hampton Roads that are enjoyed by residents living throughout the Hampton Roads region. In addition, the availability of water supply from Lake Gaston has eliminated the need for major groundwater withdrawals, which in turn maintains groundwater levels and potentially slows land subsidence throughout the region. For these reasons, it could be concluded that clean water supply from Lake Gaston benefits the entire Hampton Roads region.

7. How would this contribution be supported?

Typically, the costs of special projects such as this are divided among participating jurisdictions through a special assessment. This special assessment could be collected through the HRPDC and provided to the RRBA on an annual basis.

If the \$50,000 were divided among all 17 HRPDC localities based on a per capita assessment, the amount for each jurisdiction would be as follows:

Locality	Population	Contribution
Chesapeake	238,283	\$6,904
Franklin	8,535	\$247
Gloucester County	37,072	\$1,074
Hampton	138,626	\$4,016
Isle of Wight County	28,074	\$813
James City County	73,325	\$2,124
Newport News	183,454	\$5,315
Norfolk	247,189	\$7,162
Poquoson	12,359	\$358
Portsmouth	96,874	\$2,807
Smithfield	8,364	\$242
Southampton County	18,551	\$537
Suffolk	90,426	\$2,620
Surry County	6,819	\$198
Virginia Beach	453,500	\$13,139
Williamsburg	14,860	\$431
York County	69,466	\$2,013
TOTAL	1,725,777	\$50,000

If the amount were divided only among the localities that use water from Lake Gaston, the amount for each jurisdiction would be:

Locality	Population	
Chesapeake	238,283	\$11,267
Isle of Wight County	28,074	\$1,327
Norfolk	247,189	\$11,688
Suffolk	90,426	\$4,276
Virginia Beach	453,500	\$21,443
TOTAL	1,057,472	\$50,000

8. If our region contributes to the RRBA, would the HRPDC have any input regarding the RRBA’s budget, work program, etc?

One of the conditions for the Hampton Roads localities to fund this request could be the establishment of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that provides the HRPDC input regarding the following:

- Budget
- Work Program
- Executive Director salary and performance
- Legislative positions

The MOU could require updates to the Commission or an HRPDC advisory committee twice a year to improve coordination and align organizational objectives. Initially, funding should be limited to three years to evaluate the benefits of the funding support. It is also hoped that with a full time executive director, the RRBA will be able to expand its membership and financial support from within the basin, making it less dependent upon Hampton Roads.

9. What is the track record of the HRPDC in funding Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)?

This would be the first occasion where the HRPDC member jurisdictions have funded a NGO through the Commission.

10. If the HRPDC provides \$50,000 to the RRBA, what percent of the organization’s operating budget would we support?

Contributions from the RRBA’s other sources are approximately \$30,000. As a result, the Hampton Roads region would fund more than 50% of the RRBA’s operating costs.

11. What is the timeline for this issue?

Without an Executive Director, there is concern about the lack of a coordinated advocacy effort to protect the water quality within the Roanoke River Basin and Lake Gaston. Due to the importance of Lake Gaston water quality to the economic health of Hampton Roads, Virginia Beach representatives to the HRPDC believe this is an issue that should be addressed in the short term.

Additional Questions Raised by the Personnel and Budget Committee

12. What is the history of this organization? What type of issues have they addressed? (the following information was acquired from the RRBA web site)

After a record flood that devastated the Roanoke River basin in 1940, the RRBA was formed in 1945 by leading citizens of both Virginia and North Carolina to promote construction of Kerr Dam (also known as Buggs Island – completed in 1953) as well as other dams, such as Smith Mountain Dam, in the Roanoke Basin. After RRBA obtained the support of the Virginia Electric Power for the construction of the Roanoke Rapids Dam (completed in 1955) and Gaston Dam (completed in 1963) the RRBA turned its attention to promoting the development of the Smith Mountain Lake and Leesville dams. Since that time, RRBA has expanded its activities to include various aspects of the development, use, preservation and enhancement of the Roanoke River Basin.

The RRBA consists of an all volunteer citizen appointed Advisory Board of Directors. In addition to the activities noted in question # 4, other activities/areas of involvement include:

- RRBA has a permanent seat on the Corps of Engineers Stakeholders Water Management Committee. This group meets by teleconference each week and at a face to face meeting on a bi-monthly basis. Water flow conditions, lake level projections/strategies and plans to deal with both flood and drought conditions are discussed and agreed upon. All government agencies and concerned municipalities are asked to provide status reports and offer suggestions for improvement of conditions. The RRBA is almost always the sole volunteer citizens advocate group at these sessions.
- RRBA educates basin residents and other affected parties about the resources of the Roanoke River basin. As part of this effort, RRBA publishes a newsletter, Basin Bulletin, for its supporters and constituents.
- RRBA monitors non-basin municipalities in North Carolina and Virginia who might seek an inter-basin transfer of water out of the Roanoke River Basin.
- RRBA monitors activities that might negatively impact the quality of water resources within the basin.

- RRBA promotes and helps to fund recreational and safety facilities in the basin.
- RRBA maintains relationships with regional basin organizations such as the Dan River Basin Association, Roanoke Rapids Lake Association, Roanoke River Partners, The Nature Conservancy, as well as other municipal organizations such as NC Wildlife Association, National Wildlife Association and VA Department of Game and Inland Fisheries.
- The RRBA has initiated a new program called “Upper Reach” which promotes adventure education and eco-tourism which furthers RRBA’s mission of stewardship of the Roanoke River Basin.

13. Do the planning district commissions in the RRBA service area contribute to the RRBA?

To respond to this question, the HRPDC Executive Director sent emails to each PDC Executive Director located within the RRBA service area (see attached map). Each PDC was asked if they have a working relationship with the RRBA and whether their PDC contributes funding to this organization. The responses received from each PDC are provided below:

Region 2000 (Lynchburg) PDC

Region 2000 does not have a working relationship with, nor do we contribute to, the Roanoke River Basin Association. Once in a while, we recommend names to serve on the Board, but do not directly appoint nor receive any feedback from members.

West Piedmont PDC

Yes, the WPPDC does have a relationship with the RRBA. We attend their meetings, receive communications from them, and otherwise comment or provide input on their work as appropriate. As a matter of fact, I had planned to attend their meeting in Weldon, NC tomorrow. No, the WPPDC does not provide any funding to the RRBA. However, some of our local governments may be providing funding.

Southside PDC

To answer your first question, we do “indirectly” work with the Roanoke River Basin Association through our representation on the Advisory Council and the BI-State Commission. Our PDC went on record with our localities opposing uranium mining upstream. In 2015, our Board also opposed the Interbasin Transfer Certificate for the Kerr Lake Regional Water System (in North Carolina). We felt like the EIS did not fully evaluate all potential impacts from this interbasin transfer from the Roanoke Basin.

Our PDC does NOT contribute funding to the RRBA. Our localities I believe do but will verify that for you.

A board member indicated that the RRBA is a very good organization and would serve your localities well as they address issues of state-wide and multi-state applicability. He mentioned fracking as one of those issues the Advisory Council will become more involved in.

Roanoke Valley–Allegheny Regional Commission

The RVARC does not contribute to the RRBA or have a seat on its Board. I talked to our rep to the Roanoke River Basin Advisory Committee, and he said the RRBA seems like a good organization but he hasn't worked with them lately. Also, I'm not sure if they have ever asked any communities in our region for funding.

**The following comment was submitted
by a Personnel and Budget Committee member**

- 14. First of all, I'd like to thank you for the staff report regarding the RRBA. I also appreciate the follow-up questions that have been raised by other members of the Personnel and Budget Committee.**

Having said that, I'd like to make a couple of observations. When I initially joined others in asking to continue the consideration of this matter, I did so predominantly because I was concerned a relatively minor funding issue might prove to be divisive between south side and peninsula jurisdictions.

At the time, I didn't know the exact dollar differences, depending on whether funding was spread over all the HRPDC jurisdictions or was limited to only the south side jurisdictions most directly impacted. However, I believed then and I still believe now that fostering consensus on the major issues and big ticket items facing the region is far more important than questions about equity involving more collateral issues with a fairly limited financial impact.

If my numbers are correct, these are the financial impacts as they relate to the jurisdictions most impacted by the RRBA:

City/County	These Jurisdictions Only	Everyone in HRPDC	Difference
Chesapeake	\$11,267	\$6,904	\$4,363
Isle of Wight County	\$1,327	\$813	\$514
Norfolk	\$11,688	\$7,162	\$4,526
Suffolk	\$4,276	\$2,620	\$1,656
Virginia Beach	\$21,443	\$13,139	\$8,304

I want to emphasize that I am more than comfortable supporting either funding option and I certainly have no objection to the additional inquires that have been raised. I'm just apprehensive about assigning the HRPDC staff a further responsibility to research all the historic positions and actions of the RRBA and, by extension, to continually monitor and report to the HRPDC about future RRBA positions and initiatives. If this degree of scrutiny is necessary to assure a comfort level for all HRPDC jurisdictions to participate in funding the RRBA, I would suggest it may be more effective to support a plan that limits funding to the five jurisdictions impacted most directly. For these five jurisdictions, the value of maintaining a viable RRBA to protect the quality of our water source is clear cut and evident, even if the way they balance environmental and development concerns could sometimes differ from the approaches our jurisdictions may take.

Staff recommends that the Personnel and Budget Committee discuss the points raised in this comment.