

Resolution of Support for the Clinch River Valley Initiative

August 22, 2012

Preamble: The Clinch Valley of Southwest Virginia contains a unique and nationally important combination of natural, scenic, cultural, and recreational assets. These assets create enormous potential for the region to become an attractive eco-tourism destination, providing ongoing opportunities for creating new businesses and meaningful jobs. The signature natural feature of the Clinch Valley is the Clinch River itself, which contains the nation's greatest concentration of rare and imperiled freshwater animals and is a globally important biodiversity hotspot (Figure 1). In addition to its remarkable natural heritage, the Clinch provides exceptional canoeing, fishing, tubing, bird watching, swimming, and environmental education opportunities.

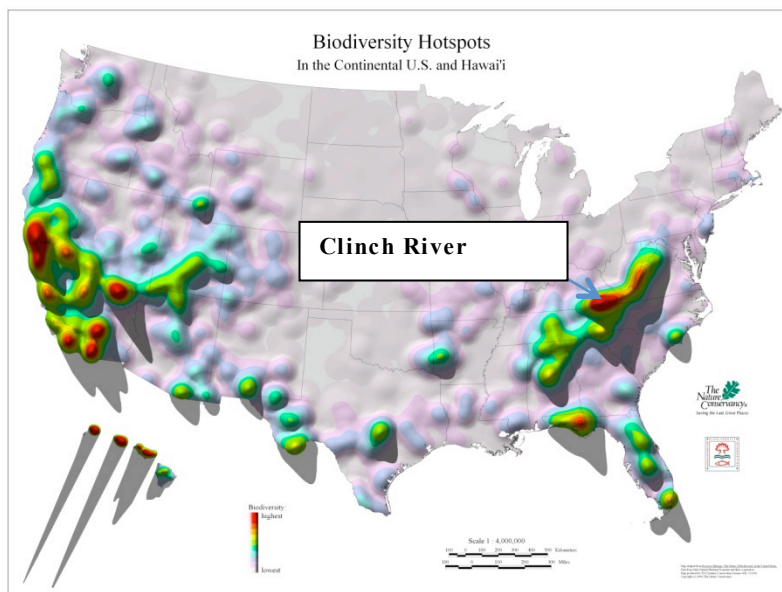


Figure 1: The Clinch River Valley is a National Hotspot of Biodiversity (The Nature Conservancy).

The Clinch River Valley Initiative (CRVI) is a collaborative effort in southwest Virginia focused on raising awareness about the Clinch River Valley's tremendous potential to become a cultural and outdoor destination. CRVI involves a number of key partners including but not limited to, citizen leaders, citizens at large, towns and municipalities, planning districts - all from and including the counties of Tazewell, Russell, Wise and Scott.

Additional support is being provided to the CRVI by the University of Virginia, Virginia Tourism Corporation, Southwest Virginia Cultural Heritage Foundation, Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development, Mountain Heritage, The Clinch Coalition, Upper

Tennessee River Roundtable, The Nature Conservancy, Spearhead Trails, Heart of Appalachia Tourism Authority, and others.

Utilizing a consensus-based approach, CRVI has developed an overall vision of contributing to a vibrant economy and quality of life in Southwest Virginia; as well as specific goals for connecting downtown revitalization, outdoor recreation, water quality, entrepreneurship, and environmental education along the Clinch River. CRVI began at a forum at UVA-Wise in September, 2010 called Building Local Economies in Southwest Virginia, and additional information may be found at the website www.clinchriverva.com. Taking a regional approach, CRVI connects with cultural and natural heritage efforts including Heartwood: Southwest Virginia's Artisan Gateway, 'Round the Mountain, Crooked Road, and other regional networks. CRVI is also making connections among a variety of individuals and organizations that want to conserve the river's incredible natural character while creating new recreation and education-based economic development strategies that can benefit local communities.

Building on the Clinch River Valley Initiative, five action groups are now focused on individual goal areas.

Clinch River Valley Initiative Vision: *By 2020, the Clinch River Valley will be a global destination based on its unique biodiversity, natural beauty, cultural attractions and outdoor opportunities. The Clinch River Valley Initiative will bring measurable economic, environmental and social benefits to local communities while protecting the Clinch's globally rare species.*

Goal 1: Develop a Clinch River State Park

Goal 2: Develop and Integrate Access Points, Trails, and Campgrounds along the Clinch River.

Goal 3: Enhance Water Quality in the Clinch River.

Goal 4: Develop and Enhance Environmental Education Opportunities for all Community Members in the Clinch River watershed.

Goal 5: Connect Downtown Revitalization along the Clinch River and Expand Entrepreneurship and Marketing Opportunities.

CRVI has experienced tremendous support from citizens and community leaders, and is seeking active participation from Clinch River Valley communities.

Resolution: To achieve this vision and these goals we are seeking broad support for the Clinch River Valley Initiative. We respectfully request that your organization voice its support for our efforts by signing the following Resolution of Support:

WHEREAS, the Clinch River has tremendous scenic and cultural character, and is one of the most ecologically significant rivers in the United States; and

WHEREAS, outdoor recreation, nature, and history are important parts of the tourism industry in southwest Virginia and overall economic development efforts in Southwest Virginia; and

WHERAS, Southwest Virginia localities have been successful with local citizens and tourists enjoying outdoor activities from the existing public river access points in Tazewell, Russell, Wise, and Scott Counties; and

WHERAS, securing additional public access points in strategic locations (in voluntary cooperation with landowners) will enhance public opportunities to enjoy the Clinch River; and

WHERAS, the placement of new interpretive panels, kiosks, and way finding signage in strategic public locations will enhance public opportunities to enjoy the Clinch River while providing additional educational opportunities; and

WHERAS, the first step in an effort to establish a new Clinch River State Park is to complete a study to determine costs and economic impacts, and to share the results of that study with localities and other partners; and

WHERAS, developing and enhancing environmental education opportunities for visitors to, and community members of, the Clinch River watershed will increase the appreciation for, and ultimately help conserve our critical natural resources; and

WHERAS, connecting downtown revitalization and outdoor recreation efforts along the Clinch River, while expanding entrepreneurship and marketing opportunities, will provide lasting benefits to the residents of our region while providing a much needed boost to our regional economy; and

WHERAS, the Counties of Tazewell, Russell, Wise, and Scott, have all determined that the Clinch River offers our citizens an unequalled opportunity to boost tourism, attract investment and thus spur economic development; and

WHERAS, the CRVI has demonstrated success in raising funds and forming partnerships, and its members will continue to seek opportunities for finding resources, forming partnerships, and raising funds in support of its vision and goals.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the undersigned parties fully support this resolution and will work in partnership to accomplish the vision and goals of the Clinch River Valley Initiative to enhance the lives of our citizens through increased economic, educational, and conservation opportunities.