

# Rappahannock Record

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## Two area historic sites are declared endangered by Preservation Virginia

Preservation Virginia, a nonprofit organization based in Richmond, on May 3 announced its annual list of Most Endangered Historic Places, including a Rappahannock River viewshed and Howland Chapel Graded School in Heathsville.

The Rappahannock River near White Stone, Coleman Mills near Wintergreen and Union Hill in Buckingham County were listed in a new category, "Natural, Historic and Cultural Resources Threatened by Utility Infrastructure Projects Statewide."

Other sites announced last week include African American cemeteries statewide, the General Assembly Building Complex in Richmond, Oak Hill Slave Dwelling near Danville and Westwood Tract in Richmond.



Preservation Virginia director of preservation initiatives and engagement Justin Sarafin announced the selection of the Rappahannock River near the Norris Bridge as an endangered resource because of Dominion Power's proposed transmission towers.

## Rappahannock River vista added to endangered list

by Audrey Thomasson

WHITE STONE—The Rappahannock River topped the "Natural, Historic and Cultural Resources Threatened by Utility Infrastructure Statewide" category of Preservation Virginia's Most Endangered Historic Places released last week.

The organization chose historic Pop Castle overlooking the Rappahannock River and Robert O. Norris Jr. Memorial Bridge to make its announcement.

Justin Sarafin, director of preservation initiatives and engagement, told a group of about a dozen citizens that the state's rich history attracts tourists from all over the nation and the world and is a driver in generating revenue and creating jobs.

"Viewsheds on the Rappahannock are an example" of areas that look nearly as they did when the first English settlers came to Virginia and have

the potential to strengthen the local community's economy and heritage tourism and offer a glimpse into the special history of the area, said Sarafin.

He said statewide utility infrastructure proposals like Dominion Power's proposed transmission towers threaten key natural and historic resources and thus, the health of the tourism industry, the jobs they create and the local businesses that benefit financially.

"From the Mountain Valley and Atlantic Coast pipelines, to the building of electrical transmission line towers alongside the Norris Bridge, the visual disruptions threaten the integrity of historic districts," he said. "The cumulative negative effects on our heritage can be substantial and unprecedented."

Sarafin noted that this year's list brings attention to the statewide threats. "Jamestown is our pride and joy. So we understand where you are."

Jamestown was saved because of a local group of citizens fighting against utility lines across the James River, he said.

In the 2016 General Assembly, HB 908 was introduced which would require new utility line routes first avoid historic sites and "work with the Department of Natural Resources" for balancing between preserving historic places and carefully sighting utility corridors, he said. A study committee will meet this summer to take up the bill's goals, according to the organization's literature.

Meanwhile, Dominion Power issued a related statement noting, "Dominion has served communities across Virginia like the Northern Neck for more than 100 years, and we have deep roots in these communities, some going back generations. So we have a genuinely personal stake in preserving Virginia's historic and cul-

tural treasures.

"Energy infrastructure is critical and needs to be developed in a way that preserves our rich heritage for the benefit of future generations. That is why we go to tremendous lengths when planning infrastructure projects to identify and minimize impacts to historic and cultural sites. The proposed project to rebuild an existing overhead line across the Rappahannock River takes into consideration infrastructure currently in place, the visage, the historic importance of the area and the economic importance that tourism has to the community.

"Our proposed project shifts the current overhead line off the bridge by approximately 85 feet. The shift will have a minimal impact to viewshed, but it will make a tremendous difference to more than 19,000 customers who rely on the line to provide safe, reliable electricity."