

Justification for Establishing the Virginia Piedmont Tourism Region

Attachment to VTC Regional Application—Form 702A

Introduction to the Proposed Virginia Piedmont Region

Visitors already experience this part of the Commonwealth as a unified destination. Day trippers from nearby metropolitan areas, weekend travelers seeking rural immersion, and extended-stay visitors exploring Virginia over several days routinely cross between the localities of *Fauquier, Rappahannock, Madison, Culpeper, Orange, Greene, Albemarle/Charlottesville, Nelson, Fluvanna, and Louisa* without distinguishing jurisdictional boundaries. Their movements follow an intuitive pattern shaped by the Route 29 travel corridor, the eastern slope of the Blue Ridge Mountains, and the interconnected Rapidan, Rappahannock, Rivanna, and James River systems. These patterns reflect a consumer perception of this area as a single, cohesive tourism region long before any formal designation.

**PROPOSED REGIONAL REALIGNMENT
WITH VIRGINIA'S PIEDMONT REGION**



The proposed Virginia Piedmont Region captures this existing visitor identity. Its localities share a consistent rural landscape—rolling farmland, small towns, Blue Ridge views, agricultural producers, outdoor recreation sites, and vibrant culinary and cultural destinations. Whether a visitor is hiking in Greene, wine tasting in Albemarle, antiquing in Orange, or exploring downtown Culpeper, the experience is seamless and fits naturally within a unified Piedmont narrative.



Background Information

The current VTC-designated *Central Virginia Tourism Region* encompasses an overly broad geography, stretching from the ridgeline of the Blue Ridge Mountains to suburban Richmond. This vast expanse dilutes the region's tourism identity and makes it difficult to develop cohesive marketing strategies for the counties of Nelson, Albemarle, Greene, Orange, Louisa, Fluvanna, Madison, and Rappahannock, and the City of Charlottesville.

Similarly, the *Northern Virginia Tourism Region* extends from the dense metropolitan area of Washington, D.C., to the rural foothills of Rappahannock County. Within this region, the counties of Rappahannock, Fauquier, and Culpeper share little common identity with Northern Virginia's more urban and suburban localities.



Alignment with State, Regional, and Planning Frameworks

The cohesive identity of the proposed region is reinforced by the fact that all eleven participating localities already function collectively as GO Virginia Region 9, a geography formally recognized by the Commonwealth for economic development coordination.

Both regional planning bodies—the Rappahannock–Rapidan Regional Commission (RRRC) and the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission (TJPDC)—recently completed their CEDS (Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies) in partnership with Camoin Associates. These plans were intentionally coordinated and explicitly describe opportunities for cross-regional collaboration, including tourism, outdoor recreation, agritourism, hospitality, and small-business development.

The GO Virginia Region 9 Super-Regional Strategies, produced jointly with both PDCs, further affirms that the participating localities share economic drivers and should pursue coordinated efforts in tourism and quality-of-life investments. All three documents identify tourism as a significant and growing regional economic driver.

The participating counties in these initiatives have a long-standing history of collaboration in economic development, viticulture, workforce initiatives, and entrepreneurial support. This collaborative foundation extends naturally to tourism, as nearly all participating localities DMO leadership also carry responsibility for Economic Development within their respective localities. Local Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) already coordinate marketing efforts through shared regional projects and events. Several localities—Fauquier, Orange, Culpeper, Rappahannock, and Madison—actively participate in the Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission’s ‘Purely Piedmont’ tourism initiative, which demonstrates strong regional cooperation. Building upon these partnerships, the Region 9 DMOs are committed to developing coordinated visitor itineraries, unified branding, and shared marketing campaigns under VTC’s guidance.



State Code Support for Regional Coordination

The importance of regional alignment in Virginia tourism is both strategic and statutory. Code of Virginia § 2.2-2320.2, which governs statewide tourism promotion grants, establishes caps on funding distribution:

- Localities within the same qualifying region may collectively receive no more than 20% of total statewide grant funds in a fiscal year (§ 2.2-2320.2(C)(3)).
- No single recipient may receive more than 15% of all statewide tourism grant funds (§ 2.2-2320.2(C)(4)).

Because these caps apply to defined “qualifying regions” in § 2.2-2484 (which includes GO Virginia Regions), alignment with the Commonwealth’s regional structure is essential for maximizing competitiveness, maintaining statewide balance, and ensuring equitable distribution of tourism investments.

Recognizing the Virginia Piedmont Region allows VTC’s regional map to align with the regional structure already used for economic development planning, funding, and performance measurement. This brings tourism coordination into sync with the Commonwealth’s broader regional framework.

Justification for Establishing the Virginia Piedmont Region

The creation of this region is justified by:

- **Visitor Behavior:** Multi-locality travel is the norm; visitors already perceive this area as a single region.
- **Shared Geography:** The Blue Ridge foothills, Route 29 corridor, and Piedmont river systems form a cohesive physical landscape.
- **Economic Development Alignment:** All participating localities are part of GO Virginia Region 9 and share CEDS-documented tourism priorities.
- **Marketing Clarity:** Visitors respond to simple, intuitive regional identities—“Virginia Piedmont” provides this clarity.
- **Grant Competitiveness:** A unified region strengthens applications for statewide VTC grants governed under § 2.2-2320.2.
- **Collaborative History:** DMOs in this geography have engaged in multi-year discussions and shared strategies that support a formal designation.



Visitor Profile

Day Trippers: From Northern Virginia, Fredericksburg, Richmond, Staunton–Waynesboro, Lynchburg, and beyond. Motivations include food & beverage, small-town charm, drives, and outdoor recreation.

Weekend Visitors: Often, Albemarle/Charlottesville/Nelson are paired with Greene/Madison or Louisa/Fluvanna, while Orange/Culpeper are frequently linked with Fauquier/Rappahannock through curated experiences such as wine trails, hiking loops, heritage-based tours, and coordinated downtown dining itineraries.

Extended-Stay Visitors: Regularly explore multiple counties during multi-day trips, especially when visiting major attractions such as Montpelier, Shenandoah National Park, Blue Ridge Parkway, Charlottesville cultural sites, breweries, river recreation, and boutique lodging destinations. Strategic and cohesive marketing of the Virginia Piedmont has strong potential to establish the region as a compelling destination for extended-stay visitors.

Conclusion and Request for Recognition

Given consistent visitor behavior, shared geography, aligned economic development strategies, statutory support for regional frameworks, and a demonstrated history of multi-year DMO collaboration, we respectfully request that the Virginia Tourism Corporation formally designate the Virginia Piedmont Region.

Attached to this application, you will find the governing bodies' resolutions of support. In the case of Charlottesville and Albemarle County, the localities have delegated authority to the Charlottesville Albemarle Convention and Visitors Bureau (CACVB), which is a joint powers agreement housed within Albemarle County government (its fiscal agent). Given this delegation, the CACVB board passed the resolution on behalf of Charlottesville City Council and the Albemarle County Board of Supervisors with their representatives being voting members of the board.

Formal recognition will strengthen regional collaboration, extend and better target tourism investment, and maximize competitiveness under § 2.2-2320.2. It will also enable VTC to collect and analyze tourism data that more accurately reflects actual visitor behavior, supporting more effective statewide planning and grant allocation.

Establishing the Virginia Piedmont Region will further enhance Virginia's overall tourism marketing efforts by clearly positioning a cohesive destination that offers mountains, history, wine country, and authentic small-town experiences within an easily navigable geography. Currently this region has wine from two different American Viticultural Areas (AVAs), and several wineries in counties with no AVA. By creating this region, all wineries in this region would have regional representation. This designation will facilitate joint marketing initiatives, unified itineraries, and increased visibility for local businesses and attractions, ultimately driving increased visitation and new revenue for the Commonwealth.



Attachments

Appendix A: Current and Proposed Regional Maps

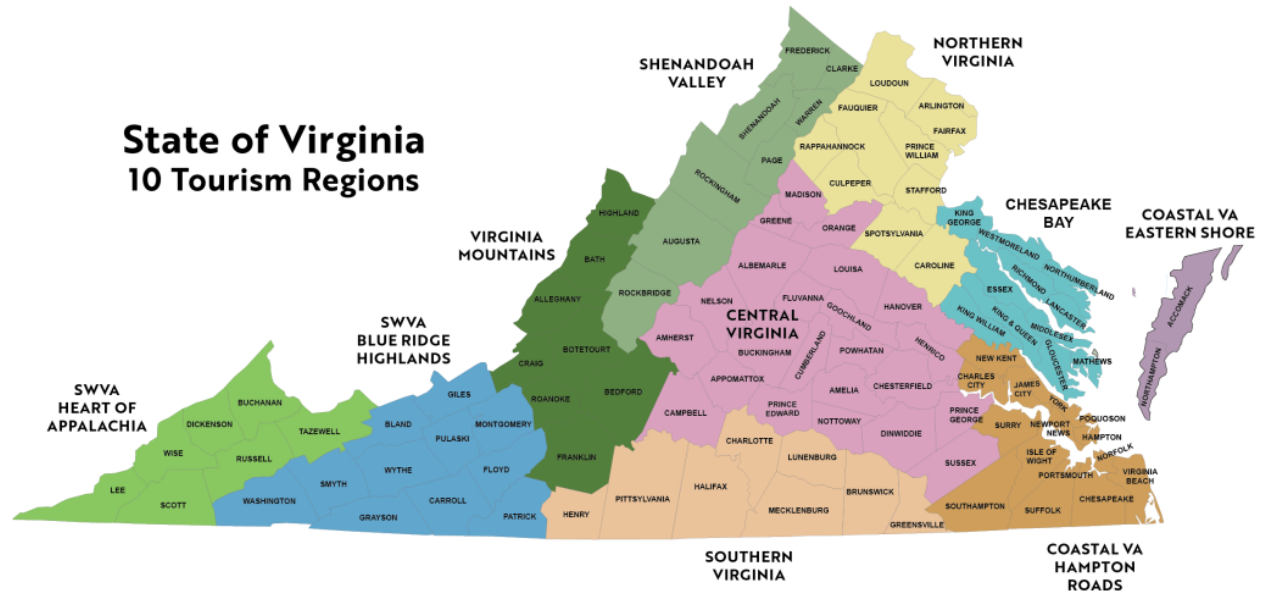
Appendix B: Governing Bodies' Applications and Resolutions of Support

Appendix C: Regional Support Letters

Appendix A: Current and Proposed Regional Maps

The following maps illustrate the current VTC regional structure and the proposed realignment to recognize the Virginia Piedmont Region.

CURRENT VIRGINIA TOURISM CORPORATION REGIONS



PROPOSED REGIONAL REALIGNMENT WITH VIRGINIA'S PIEDMONT REGION



Appendix B: Governing Bodies' Applications and Resolutions of Support

Alphabetical Attachments

- Charlottesville Albemarle Convention & Visitors Bureau
- Culpeper
- Fauquier
- Fluvanna
- Greene
- Louisa
- Madison
- Nelson
- Orange
- Rappahannock

Appendix C: Regional Support Letters