

2026 RRBC ANNUAL CONFERENCE

September 30, 2026
The Center at Belvedere



- 9:30 ● **Check in** | *Refreshments available*
- 10:00 ● **Ann Mallek**, RRBC Chair | *Welcome*
- 10:15 ● **Kristal McKelvey**, DCR | Virginia Outdoors Plan
- 10:50 ● **JD Brown & Mona El Khafif**, UVA | Biophilic Region Framework
- 11:30 ● **Break** | *Networking*
- 11:50 ● **Gabe & Sonya Silver** | Stewardship & the Rivanna River Company
- 12:20 ● **Lunch** | *Fabio's Pizza*
- 1:20 ● **Penelope Gorman**, FJRP | Community Stewardship in RVA
- 2:00 ● **Local Projects Panel**
- 2:50 ● **Closing remarks**

About the RRBC



The Rivanna River Basin Commission (RRBC) provides guidance for the stewardship of water and natural resources of the Rivanna River Basin and promotes activities by local, state, and federal governments, and by individuals, that foster resource stewardship for the environmental and economic health of the Basin.



Ann Mallek
RRBC Chair

Supervisor Mallek represents the White Hall Magisterial District on the Albemarle County Board of Supervisors and is the Chair of the Rivanna River Basin Commission. She is an Educator and Program Coordinator for Central Virginia for the Virginia Museum of Natural History. She received her BA in Zoology from Connecticut College and serves on the Blue Ridge Committee for Shenandoah Park Relations, Historic Preservation Committee, Rivanna Water and Sewer Authority Committee, and Metropolitan Planning Organization Policy Board. She was the 2024 president of VA Association of Counties and continues to serve on their Environment, Energy, and Land Use Committee. She also serves on the Local Government Advisory Committee to the EPA Administrator.

RRBC 2026 Speakers



Kristal McKelvey

Virginia Department of
Conservation and Recreation

Kristal McKelvey is Chief Recreation Grants Manager in the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation's Division of Planning and Recreation Resources. She and her team manage programs including the Land and Water Conservation Fund, American Battlefield Protection Program, Outdoor Recreation Legacy Program, Readiness and Recreation Initiative, and Recreational Trails Program, and she oversees the Virginia Outdoors Plan. Her prior work includes helping farmers and landowners implement agricultural and living shoreline best management practices with the Tidewater Soil and Water Conservation District and serving as a coastal locality liaison for DCR's Natural Heritage Division. A lifelong Virginian, Kristal enjoys kayaking, hiking, and visiting local and state parks with her daughter.

With a law degree from the Georgetown University Law Center and a Master's in Urban and Environmental Planning from the University of Virginia, JD works at the intersection of urban planning and policy to support public and private partners in conserving and restoring nature at many scales to sustain community health and resilience. Over more than two decades of legal practice, JD has developed extensive knowledge of land use, municipal, and environmental law, representing a range of public interest, governmental, and corporate clients. He has authored an array of guiding documents to assist cities in implementing the concepts of biophilic cities and nature-based policy and practice, including Planning for Biophilic Cities published by the American Planning Association. JD is a Policy & Planning Senior Associate with Second Nature Ecology + Design and the Program Director for Biophilic Cities, located in the University of Virginia's School of Architecture, where he collaborates with partners in cities around the world to shape innovative mechanisms to advance the planning and design of biophilic cities.



JD Brown

UVA / Biophilic Cities



Mona El Khafif is an architect, urban designer, and academic leader working at the intersection of urban design, ecological urbanism, public space, and design pedagogy. She is a tenured Associate Professor at the University of Virginia School of Architecture and Graduate Program Director for Urban Design. Educated in Germany and Austria, she earned her professional architecture degree from RWTH Aachen University and a doctorate in Urban Design with distinction from the Technical University of Vienna. Her internationally recognized work focuses on urban prototyping, adaptive public space, and emerging urban ecologies. At UVA, she has led major urban design curriculum initiatives, including the Urban Design Certificate and development of the Master of Urban Design program.

Mona El Khafif
UVA / Biophilic Cities

Gabe and Sonya Silver founded Rivanna River Company in 2015 as Charlottesville's first paddlesports outfitting service. Drawing on their experience as outdoor educators and their lifelong enthusiasm for the water, they help people of all backgrounds enjoy accessible river adventures through outfitting, skills instruction, and educational programs. Together with their staff, they provide the gear, logistics, and guidance that allow families, schools, organizations, and businesses to enjoy memorable time outdoors.



Gabe & Sonya Silver
Rivanna River Company



Penelope Davenport Gorman is Executive Director of Friends of the James River Park. Over the past decade, she founded and managed the City's outdoor education team, developed partnerships, created programs, and advanced policies that strengthened the Park's role in Richmond. Her priorities include bringing the Nature Exploration Area on Belle Isle to life, pursuing invasive species management projects, and strengthening relationships with partners, supporters, and neighbors. An avid whitewater kayaker and mountain biker, she lives in Richmond's Forest Hill neighborhood.

**Penelope Davenport
Gorman**

Friends of the James River Park

Local Projects Panel



Tim Padalino
Albemarle County

Tim Padalino, AICP serves as the Chief of Parks Planning for Albemarle County, Virginia. His work involves collaboration with numerous County departments, other government agencies, community and non-profit groups, and the general public to increase and enhance access to public parks, trails, and recreational amenities.

Tim's work is guided by the power of public open spaces, access to natural areas, and outdoor recreation experiences and the multitude of benefits they provide – including physical health, mental and emotional well-being, social connection, and economic vitality, and overall community quality of life. When not working, you can find Tim riding his bikes, running on trails, or sitting still next to flowing waterways.



Lisa Wittenborn
Rivanna Conservation Alliance

Lisa Wittenborn is the Executive Director of the Rivanna Conservation Alliance, where she has been overseeing all aspects of the nonprofit's river conservation work for the past seven years. She has more than twenty years of experience in environmental nonprofit and project management, stakeholder engagement, environmental outreach and education, research, and hands-on landscape restoration work.

Lisa studied environmental science as an undergraduate at UVA, and has a Master's and Ph.D. from UNC-Chapel Hill, focused on environmental and water quality management. She loves spending time outside with her two teenage boys and husband, and working on her property near Charlottesville, VA.

Local Projects Panel



Scott Clark is the Conservation Program Manager for the Albemarle County Community Development Department, and currently serves as the secretary of the Albemarle Conservation Easement Authority and the County's staff liaison to the Natural Heritage Committee. He has over 25 years of experience in rural land-use planning and land conservation, and has a Master's in Urban and Environmental Planning from the University of Virginia. Outside of work, he enjoys doing nature photography.

Scott Clark

Albemarle County



Anne Coates, Executive Director of the Thomas Jefferson Soil and Water Conservation District, has more than twenty-five years of experience in land use, land management, and environmental planning with private landowners and local, state, and federal agencies. A Virginia native, she spent about nineteen years working in California, including six years as Executive Director of a resource conservation district serving more than 1.9 million acres. She previously served as Conservation Director for a 14,000-acre working cattle ranch along the Gaviota Coast and as a land-use planner for Santa Barbara County. Anne earned a B.A. with honors in Geography from the University of California, Santa Barbara, and is a graduate of the California Agricultural Leadership Program.

Anne Coates

Thomas Jefferson Soil & Water
Conservation District

Local Projects Panel



Jen Fleisher is a Charlottesville City Council member whose priorities include transit, bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, affordable and supportive housing, and services for residents experiencing homelessness. She previously served as a Program Officer with the Blue Ridge Health District and has worked as a print designer, birth doula, and health educator. Fleisher holds a B.A. in Journalism and a Master of Public Health from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Her community service includes transportation and mobility organizations, the Rivanna River Basin Commission, the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission, and other regional boards.

Jen Fleisher
City of Charlottesville



Michael Payne is a Charlottesville City Council member focused on affordable housing, public transportation, living-wage jobs, climate action, multimodal transportation, renewable energy, and protection of local green space. A graduate of Albemarle High School, he earned a B.A. in Government from the College of William and Mary and has worked in affordable housing with Habitat for Humanity Virginia and PACEM. His regional service includes the Rivanna River Basin Commission, the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission, the Regional Housing Partnership, and housing and energy organizations.

Michael Payne
City of Charlottesville

Local Projects Panel



Laurel Williamson
Albemarle County

Laurel Williamson has been the Watershed Stewardship Manager for Albemarle County since 2020. She is the liaison for the County's municipal stormwater (MS4) permit program and works to restore impaired local streams and reduce pollution into the Chesapeake Bay. Immediately prior to this role, she spent eleven years with the Center for Watershed Protection working in communities throughout the mid-Atlantic and beyond. She's a graduate of the University of Virginia where she double majored in Environmental Science and Environmental Thought & Practice.



Serena Gruia,
Moderator
Department of Delight

As Civic Engagement Coordinator for Albemarle County, she led award-winning engagement frameworks that reach residents at scale. She also founded the Design Marathon, mobilizing student and professional designers to deliver more than \$500,000 in pro bono creative services to over 60 nonprofit partners — proof of what happens when creative talent and generosity meet a real community need.

A graphic designer at heart, Serena believes visuals aren't decoration — they're how complex ideas become clear, and how strategy becomes something people can actually act on. Her work moves fluidly between toolkits and campaign materials, community workshops, and brand storytelling, always grounded in three core principles: curiosity to ask better questions, generosity in how she shows up for collaborators and communities, and creativity as the throughline connecting every project she touches. Her philosophy is simple: delight isn't a nice-to-have — it's a design principle.