



For Immediate Release

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**More Than 300,000 Acres Conserved in the Piedmont
14,100 Acres Conserved in Piedmont Region for 2008
Portions of Three Civil War Battlefields Protected**

In 2008 residents of the Piedmont permanently protected 14,100 acres of open space through the use of conservation easements. More than 300,000 acres of land are now conserved in the nine-county Piedmont region.

The movement to protect privately-held rural land from development has been experiencing tremendous momentum in Virginia's Piedmont region, with landowners conserving an average of 23,714 acres every year for the last five years. The total for 2008 brings the number of acres conserved in the nine counties served by the Piedmont Environmental Council (PEC) to 307,464 acres, an acreage that is larger than Shenandoah National Park.

“We’re immensely pleased at what communities in the Piedmont have been able to accomplish to provide a legacy of conserved open space for our children and future generations,” says Chris Miller, President of PEC. “When it comes to conservation, this is one of the most successful regions in the entire country.”

The Piedmont region continues to lead the state of Virginia, which is among the top five states in the nation for protecting land through private conservation easements. The nine counties of Virginia’s Piedmont—including Loudoun, Clarke, Fauquier, Culpeper, Rappahannock, Madison, Orange, Greene, and Albemarle—have conserved more land than almost any state in the nation.

Bob Lee, the Executive Director of the Virginia Outdoors Foundation (VOF) said, “VOF had its second best year in 2008 in terms of conservation easement acreage – 64,840 acres in 64 localities. This land conservation movement that was incubated in the nine-county PEC region has now expanded throughout Virginia. VOF has done more land conservation in the last four years, since 2004, than was accomplished in the previous 38 years. VOF now has over 525,000 acres under permanent conservation protection – this represents an area more than half as large as the state of Rhode Island. The PEC coordination model with VOF has now spread to other land trusts and conservation organizations throughout Virginia. Today, VOF holds easements in 102 cities and counties.”

According to a 2003 study that was done by the American Farmland Trust in Culpeper County, farms and other open lands use only \$0.32 in local services for every dollar of taxes paid, while homes require \$1.22 for every dollar paid. Easements also support two major industries of the

Piedmont: agriculture and tourism. Like other landowners, farmers can gain needed capital by voluntarily conserving their land and earning a substantial state tax credit which they may either use or sell on the open market. Farmers also benefit from reduced appraisal values on their land, which lightens their tax burden. In Albemarle, Clarke, and Fauquier counties, working farms also have the option of receiving money from publicly supported Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) programs.

Portions of three Civil War battlefields sites have been conserved.

The first site contains a portion of the battlefield where the Rappahannock Station battle occurred on August 22-25, 1862 during the Northern Virginia Campaign of the Civil War and also a key portion of the Rappahannock Station battlefield during the Bristoe Station Campaign in November 1863. The property contains 1,775 LF of frontage on the Rappahannock River that is a State Scenic River and an important source of public drinking water. The second site is a part of the Brandy Station battle, which occurred on June 9, 1863. Brandy Station was the largest cavalry battle of the war and the opening engagement of the Gettysburg Campaign. The third site is part of the Aldie Battlefield in Loudoun County that occurred on June 17, 1863 as part of the Gettysburg Campaign.

“Conservation easements help us to maintain the quality of life and strong sense of place that has kept families here for generations, and attracted new residents in the past several decades,” said Heather Richards, Director of Land Conservation for the PEC.

County	2008 Acres	2008 Projects	Total Acres	Acres per County	% Land Base Protected
Albemarle	2987.839	13	76236.629	471325.5757	16.18%
Culpeper	361.128	3	9201.988	244588.342	3.76%
Clarke	255.063	11	18802.573	114033.305	16.49%
Greene	193.48	1	7459.53	100449.3876	7.45%
Fauquier	4447.84	25	86389.1	417099.537	20.71%
Loudoun	1514.19	23	43836.85	333481.521	13.15%
Madison	548.052	2	10365.622	205938.8438	5.03%
Orange	2474.71	12	27597.16	219766.8661	12.56%
Rappahannock	1317.187	13	27569.017	170782.746	16.08%
Totals	14100.489	103	307464.469	2277466.124	13.50%