Meet George and Jean, Our New Co-Chairs

PEC is excited to introduce the newly elected co-chairs of our Board—George Ohrstrom II of Clarke County and Jean Perin of Fauquier County.

George Ohrstrom II

George grew up in New York City, but VA’s Piedmont has been a part of his life since childhood. “As a young kid, I spent a lot of time playing outside on my grandfather’s farm in Fauquier;” he remembers. “There was a stream that ran through his property, and us kids were always in there. I think that’s where my love for the outdoors really started.” George and his family have a long history with PEC. In fact, the Ohrstroms helped start PEC in the 70s, and a number of his family members have been involved over the decades. George and his wife moved to a farm in Clarke in 1983, and he began his own journey of service and involvement with regional conservation groups—including PEC. “Natural resource protection became a second career for me,” he explains.

In 2000, PEC asked George to join the Board—and he has been an invaluable member ever since. “I appreciate PEC because I think it remains relevant, and actually becomes more relevant all of the time,” he says. “I also really appreciate PEC’s staff. They’re dedicated professionals and are doing great work in the region.”

This won’t be George’s first time serving as a board chairman, but—despite his experience—George says he’s both excited and nervous to serve as PEC’s Co-Chair. “It’s a big job! I’ve been involved with PEC for years, and I’ve been chairman for other organizations...but this is a much different deal. It takes a lot of time...It’s scary, but exhilarating at the same time.”

When asked about PEC’s biggest challenge today, George says it’s getting the next generation of activists involved. “Our old-guard funders are getting to be...well, old-guard,” he points out. “The generational funding issue is huge—finding the next generation of activists.” Yet, he’s confident that PEC will rise to the challenge—as it has risen to numerous other challenges over the past four decades.

Jean Perin

Jean was born and raised in Cincinnati, but VA stole her heart as a young adult. “I went down to DC while I was still in college,” she recalls, “and I loved to ride...that’s what introduced me to the Piedmont...Riding through the countryside, I’m able to appreciate how precious these landscapes are.” Jean now lives in Fauquier but lived in Loudoun from the ‘80s through 2004—where she witnessed the onslaught of sprawl from D.C. “It made me understand the need to protect this area,” she explains. “I’ve always been a social activist. I was brought up with the mindset that you give back and leave a place better than when you got there.”

An impassioned conservationist, Jean has worked with a number of regional organizations—and she was introduced to PEC in the ‘90s. “PEC is amazingly comprehensive and reaches into so many areas of life here in the Piedmont,” she says.

Teaming Up to Save the “Brookie”

PEC, Trout Unlimited and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service join forces to help the eastern brook trout

Virginia’s state fish, the eastern brook trout, is in trouble. The Commonwealth’s only native trout has seen a sharp decline in population due to a detrimental combination of rising temperatures, physical barriers to streamflow, pollution, and habitat loss. Many expect the species to be added to VA’s Wildlife Action Plan list in the near future.

According to PEC’s Wildlife Habitat Program Manager, James Barnes, trout are marquee species for water quality. “Brook trout are like a canary in the coal mine,” he explains. “If they’re doing poorly, other species that we’re also interested in are probably doing poorly as well.”

For this reason, PEC has partnered with Trout Unlimited—an international organization focused on cold-water fish conservation. The organizations
Meet George and Jean, Our New Co-Chairs

Continued from cover

“They also have an incredible staff that can bring a community to the front of issues and create effective campaigns, and they do so time after time.”

Jean has worked with PEC on various campaigns over the years, and she works tirelessly to help organize fundraising events. “Fundraising and networking are always challenges,” she explains. “You have to constantly work to expand your membership, while bringing current members up to date and connected.”

Though Jean has served on a few Boards over the years, this will be her first time as Chair. “It’s daunting,” she says, “trying to fit as much as possible in my schedule to network, as well as to bring new energy into the Board and to reach out to all nine counties. But, I think George and I are a good team for the job.”

Like George, Jean also thinks PEC will have to attract a new generation of members and donors. She is optimistic. “Oh, absolutely,” she says. “It will continue to require a lot of hard work by many, but PEC is on a good course. They have incredible leadership from Chris Miller, who is supported by a great staff. It’s just admirable.”

THANK YOU, TONY!

PEC’s staff and board members thank Tony Vanderwarker for his six years of leadership as Chairman of PEC’s Board. Tony began his service to PEC and the Piedmont region in 1998, when he assisted with the Power Plant Campaign. During his tenure as Chair, PEC became an accredited land trust; led a number of crucial campaigns; launched our Rural & Agricultural Economy Program and our Wildlife Habitat Program; and nearly 80,000 acres of land were put under conservation easement in the region—Including key easements at Montpelier and Montalto.

Tony will continue to serve on PEC’s board and will be taking more time to devote himself to a writing career. His first book, Writing With The Master, is due out in early 2014!

RAPPANNOCK

Renovating Worn-Out Pastures

A farm in Rappahannock hopes to show the economic and environmental benefits of rotational grazing.

ike many Piedmont farms, Over Jordan Farm in Rappahannock has been a pasture-based operation for decades. After 20 years of overgrazing, however, it’s facing issues that are common in the region—poor soil health, a lack of grass and plant diversity and the resulting lack of nutrients for livestock. This not only decreases a farm’s profitability, but it’s also a major source of runoff and soil erosion in VA.

Due to the environmental and economic impacts of overgrazing, it’s an important issue for agricultural and conservation groups. But changing an agricultural operation can seem risky to farmers, and some are wary of trying new pasture management practices.

Walking the walk

In response to these issues, PEC and our partners are embarking on a new exciting project that’s funded by a grant from the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service. PEC, the Pasture-Based Enterprise Network and the Virginia Cooperative Extension are working with Michael Sands—the manager of Over Jordan Farm—to create a place where livestock producers can come see and evaluate different management practices and their effects on livestock health, weight gain, and soil and pasture health.

The overgrazed pastures of Over Jordan Farm are perfect for testing the effects of rotational and multi-species grazing—two techniques shown to improve the health of the land and livestock. Sands—who has over 30 years of experience in sustainable agriculture, environmental conservation and community-based economic development—will manage a combination of cows and sheep on 110 acres of the farm. He plans to graze them on multiple fields with different management objectives, including native grasses for summer grazing, stocked fescue for winter strip-grazing, and improved and unimproved mixed grass pastures. Measurements taken over a three year period will gauge any changes in livestock health, soil health and fertility, as well as plant and wildlife diversity.

Over Jordan Farm to create a place where farmers can come see and evaluate different management practices and their effects on livestock health, weight gain, and soil and pasture health.

Seeing another farmer’s experience can make trying something new less intimidating, so this project will also have a heavy focus on outreach. Through a variety of peer-to-peer meetings, field days at the farm, and focus group sessions—regional farmers will be able to see firsthand the effects Sands’ management practices have over time.

“The goal is to make money farming and improve the environment at the same time—not to see those as conflicting goals,” says Sands. “I’m excited! We don’t have all of the answers, so this will provide an opportunity for farmers to learn with us as we go.”

If you’d like to learn more about this project, contact Don Looch, PEC’s land conservation officer for Rappahannock and Clarke counties: dlooch@pecva.org

PEC’s David Holtzman Hits the Ground…Walking?

Our new land use officer hopes to spread the good news of walkability in Greene

David Holtzman joined PEC this summer as our new Land Use Field Officer for Culpeper and Greene counties, and the man likes to walk. “I usually take a walk on my lunch break, and I like to do that in a place where I’m not missing my life in the process.”

In Greene, you can walk around downtown Stanardsville—thanks to the sidewalks on either side of the main street. In Ruckersville, however, it’s much harder because of Rt. 29—a large, busy road that’s almost impossible to walk on or around. Yet, if nearby residents want to get from their house to a store in Ruckersville, Rt. 29 is often the only way to get there.

“‘If we want to protect our rural areas from sprawling development,’ David explains, ‘we have to make sure construction in our growth areas is high quality and livable. One thing we need to do to achieve this is require sidewalks on our new streets. Without sidewalks, Greene won’t get the great mixed-use development that it wants in the Comprehensive Plan.’

‘Since Ruckersville doesn’t offer easy walking paths, people are used to depending on their cars to get around. But, after decades of rapid suburban growth in the area, traffic on Rt. 29 has become a real problem. As more projects are proposed along this corridor, and as the Comprehensive Plan is reviewed in 2014, it is critical to make walkable streets a top priority. Walkable streets are not just about sidewalks, but also short blocks to provide a variety of routes; buildings close to the sidewalk rather than set back behind parking lots; and landscaping to make walking appealing.”

David hopes to organize some ‘walkability workshops’ in the community to get people focused on this issue, and to help ensure future development is pedestrian-friendly. If you’d like any more information about ideas to make Greene more walkable, or would just like to say “hi” to our new land use officer, email David at dholtzman@pecva.org.
THE BACK STORY—Trump Virginia Acquisitions LLC has submitted a plan to develop a rural Albemarle property into a commercial golf course. The property is zoned within the County’s Rural Area, is a part of an Agricultural and Forestal District, lies within the Southern Albemarle Rural Historic District, and 216 acres are protected by a conservation easement. PEC believes this proposal is inconsistent with the rural and agricultural character of the area, and that the development would undoubtedly have a negative impact on the surrounding agricultural properties. The golf course will only be allowed if the Board of Supervisors approves a Special Use Permit.

VOF Stands Up to Trump

The state agency says it won’t allow Trump to build a golf course on conserved land in Albemarle

Donald Trump seems to be a man who’s used to getting his way, but he may be in for a surprise when it comes to his proposed golf course in Albemarle County. The Virginia Outdoors Foundation (VOF) holds a conservation easement on the majority of the property where Trump is hoping to tee up, and the state agency has taken a firm stance against this proposal.

In a recent letter to County staff, VOF Executive Director Brett Glymph explained that, “based on the information currently available...VOF does not believe that the ground disturbance depicted on the concept plan or that would otherwise be necessary for a championship-style golf course would be permitted under the open space easement that we hold.” She later went on to say that VOF planned to “vigorously enforce this easement.”

In order to construct a golf course, Trump will need to: A) convince Albemarle’s Board of Supervisors to issue a special use permit, and B) get approval from VOF as the easement holder. With VOF outspokenly against the proposal, all eyes will be on the Board or Supervisors.

County staff have said that the application lacks some important details needed for them to make a recommendation. In addition to these questions, an advisory committee appointed by the Board recently voted unanimously to recommend that a golf course is not consistent with Agricultural and Forestal District regulations.

While this is all good news, the Board has yet to make a decision. If Trump meets all of the necessary deadlines, the earliest we can expect a public hearing about the proposal would be in late January. We will keep citizens posted when we hear an official date for a public meeting and as we learn more about this issue.

Standing Room Only at ‘You’ve Been Trumped’ Screening

In order to inform citizens in and around Albemarle County of the impacts this golf course would have on our region, PEC and our partners co-sponsored a free screening of “You’ve Been Trumped” at the Jefferson Theater in Charlottesville in October. This documentary tells the story of the effects a Trump golf course had on a community in rural Scotland. According to the producers: After the Scottish Government overrules its own environmental laws to give Trump the green light...the bulldozers spring into action...For the tycoon, the golf course is just another deal. For the residents, it represents the destruction of a globally unique landscape that has been the backdrop for their lives.

The film screening was a great success—standing room only as more than 450 people filled the Jefferson, and hundreds signed petitions. Thank you to everyone who came out to this great event!

If you’d like to learn more about this issue, visit our webpage: www.pecva.org/trump

The Western Bypass—Veering off course?

The results of the Albemarle Board of Supervisors’ election suggests the Western Bypass isn’t a “done deal” for county voters. Now, with a new Board and a new administration in Richmond, there’s an opportunity to stop the Bypass and reallocate funding to local transportation projects that are more effective and cost efficient.

The alternatives to the Bypass are not only more cost effective, but they’ve also been vetted and approved in Places29—the community-supported plan to solve traffic issues within the Rt. 29 corridor. Places29 was all but ignored two years ago when the Board of Supervisors resurrected the Bypass during a midnight vote. The new supervisors, however, have all expressed concerns or skepticism about the proposed bypass. We’re hopeful that, in lieu of the Bypass, they will implement the plan that will actually alleviate congestion on Rt. 29 and benefit our community.

Even with this political shift, stopping the Bypass will take a concerted effort. It will require the diligence and determination of our elected officials, which will in turn require a continued push from the community. So, please stay involved and informed and, as always, PEC will keep citizens updated.

To learn more about this issue visit www.pecva.org/westernbypass

We hope that newly elected officials will stand by the alternatives laid out in the Places29 plan.
Helping Hands for Spout Run
Volunteers keep an eye on the watershed’s “creepy crawlies” to monitor stream health

Clarke County’s Spout Run watershed has the potential to provide clean water and support a large variety of wildlife species. Yet, the stream is on the State Impaired Waters List due to nutrient and sediment levels from fertilizers, livestock and other human-related activities. This is bad news not only for the wildlife and people living around the watershed, but also for communities downstream—including the Chesapeake Bay.

So, PEC’s Gem Bingol launched a volunteer stream monitoring program this year. Monitoring the macroinvertebrates in the stream will help determine whether the cleanup efforts are working in Spout Run.

Upper Right: PEC’s Gem Bingol and volunteer Lisa LaCavita
Right: Volunteers Lisa LaCivita and Wayne Webb

Meet Lisa—A volunteer Spout Run stream monitor
“...It’s fun to get outside and see what’s in the creek. You don’t realize what’s going on in the water until you start poking around and find all of these interesting critters. I think water quality is really important, and so it’s important to monitor to get an idea of what’s going on in the creek.”

Lououdn County residents should be on the lookout for wasteful, sprawling development proposals. Currently, there are 24 active proposals that have been submitted to the Board of Supervisors for consideration. Twenty of these proposals are residential and, if approved, would add another 9,800 residential units in Loudoun. Disturbingly, most of these proposals are not in line with the Comprehensive Plan and would increase sprawling development in the County’s Transition Policy Area— an area that is designated to maintain a lower density. Also, eight of the proposals reference the Outer Beltway as justification for breaking ground—further evidence that the proposed road will encourage sprawl in the Transition Area.

According to our estimates, Loudoun currently has over 29,000 units in the pipeline—an inventory of approved residences. This is more than a ten year supply of housing. With this many units in the pipeline, the aforementioned proposals are far from needed.

Need aside, approving more housing developments would not be good for Loudoun economically. Developers suggest that residential growth equals economic development, but they aren’t considering the consequential increase in taxes. Based on the most recent County analysis, each residential unit in Loudoun costs $1.62 for every dollar in taxes paid.

There are a number of additional issues that Loudoun residents experience from over development, including inadequate social services, environmental degradation, increased traffic, excessive school boundary line adjustments, and insufficient profers to make up for these costs. If there’s one thing that Loudoun County and our Board of Supervisors should have learned from our earlier explosive growth, it’s that adding more development to the pipeline will further degrade our community with sky-high debt and lower standards of living.

Your input is critical as the Board considers this new round of development applications. We will keep you informed as they move through the public process so that you can provide your input.

For more information about this issue, contact Ed Gorski, PEC’s Loudoun County Land Use Field Officer: egorski@pecva.org

Lououdn’s “Development Pipeline” Overloaded?

LOUDOUN

The Outer Beltway—Ask McAuliffe to pull the plug

In November, more than a dozen prominent conservation organizations—including PEC, the Coalition for Smarter Growth, the Southern Environmental Law Center, the National Wildlife Federation, the Virginia League of Conservation Voters, and the Sierra Club—sent a joint letter to Governor-Elect McAuliffe regarding the Outer Beltway. In the letter, we thanked McAuliffe for his commitment to supporting conservation and smart growth principles, and we explained why the Outer Beltway (a.k.a. the Bi-County Parkway) doesn’t line up with those values.

Below is an excerpt from our letter. We hope that you will also contact VA’s new governor-elect and let him know that our tax dollars should be spent on projects that help our communities, not damage them.

“...The Bi-County Parkway is not just a road project—it is the project in Northern Virginia that would have the largest negative impact on the environment. Building (this road) would deal a significant blow to our efforts to restore the Chesapeake and would increase our output of the pollution that causes climate change and fouls the air that our children breathe...Building the Bi-County Parkway would be doubly tragic because there are so many alternatives to solving the transportation problems in the region, many of which we list below, that do not have these fundamental negative impacts. This is why we stand united in urging you in the strongest way possible to stop this project and instead work for the kinds of effective and sustainable transportation solutions that all Virginians can be proud of...

We would ask you to shift course and re-prioritize where our limited transportation dollars are spent. We can provide background documentation for all of the points we have made and hope that you will reject the Bi-County Parkway and North-South Corridor in favor of much more critical needs in Northern Virginia.”

To see the full letter and learn more about this issue—or to send your own letter to Governor-Elect McAuliffe—visit www.pceva.org/outerbeltway

Over 9,000 homes are proposed in current development applications. Several reference the Outer Beltway, pointing to its likelihood to spur more development.

Can Loudoun afford to allow more sprawl in undeveloped areas?
Comprehensive Plan Updates

Because a little planning never hurt

PEC believes that the Comprehensive Plan is a community’s most important document regarding land use, growth, development, transportation, and resource utilization. These documents are the road map for the future for our counties, towns and cities—something we all have a stake in.

PEC’s staff follows Comp Plan updates and revisions in our nine-county region closely, and we’re currently keeping a sharp eye on the process in Culpeper, Fauquier and Orange Counties.

Culpeper

Culpeper’s Comprehensive Plan will be going through revisions in 2014. Here are some aspects of the plan that Culpeper citizens may be interested in:

- When it comes to housing, Culpeper’s Plan needs to catch up with the times. The current Plan predicts rapid population growth in the County through 2030. Yet, since the recession, growth has dropped off dramatically. Moreover, future housing demand in Culpeper will likely be very different from the low-density, cul-de-sac subdivisions that were once the norm. There will be more young adults and more senior citizens, and both groups are likely to favor denser, mixed-use development. The County may want to revisit the Future Land Use Map to try to identify areas that are already slated for growth and would be suitable for high-density homes and shops rather than low-density sprawl.

- As for transportation, the big question is the Western Outer Loop—particularly whether the County will build the section between Rixeyville Road and Sperryville Pike. While congestion is an issue in the Town of Culpeper, the current plan for the Loop may do more to stimulate development than ease congestion. Furthermore, the town is about to build an Inner Loop that will have the same purpose and is in a better location. The County’s Plan also calls the second leg of the Loop (linking to Rt. 29) “problematic” since it would be built on agricultural land that is also near a source of drinking water.

Fauquier

Fauquier County is currently updating its Comp Plan. We’ve compiled the list below to highlight key points of the Plan that our staff will be keeping an eye on—and we hope you will too:

- The Opal Service District Plan update
  The Opal Steering Committee has developed a draft plan for the Opal Service District, and it’s ready for public review. PEC supports the proposed layout of the land use plan—which includes cost-effective transportation infrastructure. However, we are concerned about:
  1) The unnecessary expansion of the Opal Service District. The draft plan would expand the service district by an additional 100 acres, which is not necessary when the current 853 acres are largely undeveloped.
  2) New zoning districts that would eliminate special exception and permitting requirements. This would reduce the number of opportunities for public input about potentially highly-impact land uses.
  3) The lack of a planning to provide adequate water service in the district. A planned well will provide water for the residential, commercial and industrial development in the service district. As planned, however, the 6.5 million dollar well will only provide about half of the water needed for future development.

The Board will be looking at the plan in early 2014, and there will be public hearings. We will keep citizens updated as times and dates are solidified.

- New Baltimore Service District’s Transportation Plan
  A draft transportation plan for the New Baltimore Service District presented last spring wasn’t widely accepted by the community. The draft is currently being reviewed, discussed and amended in response to concerns—work that we expect to carry on through the winter. If you’d like to add your voice, the County is collecting online survey responses from stakeholders. You can find the survey on our webpage: www.pcvva.org/fauquierplan

Orange

Orange County’s Board of Supervisors is considering a draft plan that calls for major development along Rts. 20, 15, and 3—as well as increased residential and commercial development on agriculturally zoned land. If adopted, this plan could negatively impact housing values, future tax rates, and the rural nature of this county.

Orange County residents speak out

These changes concern many Orange County residents, a point that was made clear at the County’s public hearing in October. Over 120 people attended the Tuesday night meeting—more people than there were seats! More than 60 citizens spoke, and the vast majority were against the proposed changes to the Comp Plan. They argued for stronger protection of our agricultural resources, limiting the growth areas, and greater public input during the planning process.

Thanks to these active and concerned citizens, the Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to table the issue until their meeting on December 17th. It’s unclear whether they will make any substantial changes to the draft before this meeting. PEC encourages citizens to continue to let the Board know that we need a plan that truly reflects the vision of the community rather than the interests of the developers. PEC’s staff will continue to keep residents updated as we approach the December meeting. If you have any questions in the meantime, contact PEC’s Dan Holmes at dholmes@pcvva.org

Pop Quiz

Name this warbler (hint: it can be found in the Piedmont during the winter months).

Answer: The Yellow-rumped Warbler

Most warblers travel to the tropics during the winter, but many Yellow-rumped warblers stick around. Part of what sets it apart is that it can digest the waxy fruit of bayberries and myrtles during the cold months, unlike other warblers. So, if you see a warbler in winter, it’s probably a Yellow-rumped!
The Piedmont View

'Tracking' on Conserved Land? VOF Takes a Second Look

The Virginia Outdoors Foundation (VOF) is an important state public agency that has taken part in conserving land in the Commonwealth since 1966. Today, VOF is the largest easement holder in Virginia, and PEC is proud to have partnered with them over the decades.

Over the past two years, however, VOF reviewed and approved a number of new easements permit oil and gas drilling—including the potential for hydraulic fracturing (a.k.a. “fracking”)—in areas that have little to no history of energy extraction. PEC was concerned because we believe that allowing this type of industrial mineral extraction on conserved land is contrary to the purpose of most easements. Given the potential long-term environmental impacts, we felt that a policy that explicitly allows for industrial gas drilling on conserved land didn’t make sense.

So, we sent an alert about the issue to our email list—asking folks to send VOF a note of concern about allowing gas and oil development on conserved land. More than 350 people sent in letters!

A Big ‘Thank You’ to VOF

Thanks to the flood of letters, VOF’s Board responded quickly, deciding to stop approving easements that could allow oil and gas development until they’ve had a chance to review their policy. They plan to bring the public into the discussion, do more research, and then revisit the issue at their next board meeting in March.

“We appreciate that VOF took a second look at this important policy decision,” said PEC President Chris Miller, “and we look forward to continuing our work with them on land conservation in Virginia.”

More Ways To Give

▶ Give PEC gift memberships to your friends and family.
▶ Look for PEC’s gift guide in the mail and choose a specific project that you want to support.
▶ Make a stock donation.
▶ Gifts to PEC are tax-deductible. Call Karen Hursberger at (540) 316-9972 for more information.

Local Feasting & Native Planting

PEC produced two great publications this fall—our Buy Fresh Buy Local holiday guides and our first ever Go Native Go Local guide!

Our Buy Fresh Buy Local holiday guides for the Northern Piedmont and the Charlottesville area offer an abundance of local options for your holiday celebrations—from Christmas trees and wreaths to winter produce, jams, honey, eggs, meat, cheese and more. You can download the guide or search local listings at our Buy Fresh Buy Local website: www.buylocalvirginia.org

We’re also really excited about the release of our inaugural Go Native Go Local guide. This new guide lists regional businesses that promote our native biodiversity—including nurseries, seed companies, landscape architects, invasive species management companies, and groups that work to manage and restore native wildlife habitat. Check out the guide at pecva.com/gonative

Getting to work: Stream crossings inventory

Analyzing and mitigating stream barriers in our region could do wonders for brookies. PEC and Trout Unlimited have started this process in the Rappahannock River Basin. The first step is to collect a thorough inventory of stream crossings in the watershed—a big job that Celia Vuocolo, PEC’s Habitat Program Assistant, has taken on with intern Ashleigh White.

“We’re taking a variety of measurements to help us assess how easily trout can move through these crossings,” Celia explains. “We’ve been seeing a lot of culverts that are perched above the waterline or have collapsed over time—both major impediments to trout passage.” Celia and Ashleigh plan to measure more than 110 crossings in the river basin. “This is a first phase of what we hope is a long-term project,” says James. “After completing this inventory, we can develop a prioritized list of crossings that are most problematic for trout. Ideally, we can then roll into the next phase—working with landowners to create crossings that are not only better for fish, but also more durable and a better investment for the landowner. We’re focusing on stream crossings, but more broadly this is about rehabilitating and protecting our region’s water quality—from the headwaters to the Chesapeake Bay.”

If you would like to learn more about this project, contact James Barnes: jbarnes@pecva.org

Teaming Up to Save the “Brookie” Continued from cover

sent a joint mailing to every landowner in PEC’s region who lived on or near a trout stream to see what conservation issues interested them. An issue that a number of landowners showed interest in was stream crossings. Many people have crossings over streams that can be problematic for brookies. Whether it’s bridges, culverts or make-shift cement slabs, poorly-designed crossings can prevent trout from moving upstream to cooler waters as temperatures rise—a move they have to be able to make in order to survive hot summers.

Well-designed stream crossings allow for better water flow, benefitting fish and humans alike. Fish can travel up stream more easily, and there is less flooding and property damage after severe weather—meaning lower costs to landowners and the state.

Analyzing and mitigating stream barriers in our region could do wonders for brookies, and—after securing grant funding from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service—PEC and Trout Unlimited have started this process in the Rappahannock River Basin.

Photo by Kathy Russell

About this guide

Go Native Go Local

A regional listing of products and services that promote native flora & fauna

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McAuliffe Backs VA’s Uranium Moratorium

Governor-Elect Terry McAuliffe has said he’ll veto any legislation that would overturn VA’s moratorium on uranium mining. This is good news, and his bold statement is sure to be a major hurdle in mining proponents’ plans for the upcoming General Assembly session.

Not quite time to relax

Virginia’s citizens need to remain alert, however. It’s possible that mining proponents will attempt to direct the Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy to draft regulations for uranium mining and milling without lifting the ban. This approach is intended to serve as a “compromise” to give legislators a look at how mining would be implemented before they actually have to vote on lifting the ban.

We think that this is a flawed approach. The Commonwealth should not have to expend any more resources to see whether there is a good way to mine and mill uranium in VA—that work was already done by the National Academy of Sciences. Also, regulations are created based on legislative direction in the State Code. Drafting regulations prior to any such direction being in place is backwards.

Keep an eye on this issue during the upcoming General Assembly session, and as always, PEC will work to keep you updated.

“The Piedmont Memorial Overlook

PEC’s Piedmont Memorial Overlook is a special place. The 50 acre-site sits above the village of Paris, VA, just off the historic Appalachian Trail, and it offers stunning views of the surrounding countryside— including Middleburg, Upperville and the Bull Run Mountains. The view is made more remarkable by the fact that it is of a landscape that has been largely protected by conservation easements—ensuring the land will remain unspoiled in perpetuity. This view is part of the over 357,000 acres of protected land in PEC’s nine-county region—a feat of conservation made possible in large part by private landowners who chose to donate an easement.

The Piedmont Memorial Overlook provides a lasting tribute to a number of conservation leaders— whose names are commemorated on a plaque at the site. With the help of landscape designer Dana Westring, PEC’s memorial blends with the natural landscape and is a beautiful place to reflect upon the hard work and dedication that made such views possible.

For those who wish to utilize the site as a final resting place, there are opportunities for memorial services that can include the scattering of remains.

For more information about PEC’s Piedmont Memorial Overlook, please contact Trish Carter at (540) 316-9980 or tcarter@pecva.org

McAuliffe Backs VA’s Uranium Moratorium

Not quite time to relax

Virginia’s citizens need to remain alert, however. It’s possible that mining proponents will attempt to direct the Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy to draft regulations for uranium mining and milling without lifting the ban. This approach is intended to serve as a “compromise” to give legislators a look at how mining would be implemented before they actually have to vote on lifting the ban.

We think that this is a flawed approach. The Commonwealth should not have to expend any more resources to see whether there is a good way to mine and mill uranium in VA—that work was already done by the National Academy of Sciences. Also, regulations are created based on legislative direction in the State Code. Drafting regulations prior to any such direction being in place is backwards.

Keep an eye on this issue during the upcoming General Assembly session, and as always, PEC will work to keep you updated.

“American Toad” Wins 2013 Photo Contest!

A big ‘thank you’ to everyone who participated in the 4th annual PEC Photo Contest by either submitting photos or voting for the winners. We’d also like to thank our accomplished guest judge, Sunny Reynolds, who helped select the finalists for the public vote. There were so many stunning images this year, and we can’t wait to see what next year brings!
Dear Friends,

Happy holidays! Thank you for taking the time in this busy season of family, friends, and holiday events to keep up with things happening at PEC. As you can see from this issue, your hard work and support has produced some very positive outcomes on many fronts—congratulations! I hope that you will share the news with your family and friends.

Speaking of great company, I’d like to thank everyone who attended PEC’s Fall Meeting in October. It was a great success, and over 150 people attended despite the rain! Your commitment to support PEC in the face of tough circumstances is deeply appreciated by the entire staff, who had to shift venues with less than 24 hours notice.

The meeting featured a number of interesting workshops that covered a wide range of topics—including the use of fire as a habitat management tool, the history of the African-American community in Thoroughfare Gap, and the current debate over the Outer Beltway. Bill Backer—a long time supporter of PEC and the Chair of the Piedmont Foundation—reminded us all of the courage of Ambassador Charlie Whitehouse and his wife Janet; the innovative strategy of Julian Scheer and Nick and Mary Lynn Kotz; and the incredible grassroots work by thousands of individuals throughout America that all played a part in the Disney campaign.

The real highlight for me, however, was hearing from Hedrick Smith—a Pulitzer Prize winning journalist and the meeting’s keynote speaker. Hedrick spoke of the importance of civic activism to promote an ever-improving quality of life on the local, state and national levels. He pointed out that citizen engagement is particularly important with today’s crippling partisan political culture:

“We have to rise above the economics of selfishness and the politics of partisan advantage and revenge—rethink the bonds of a people committed to building a strong common destiny…Citizens must get active, be vocal and be heard…That means taking direct civic actions.”

Civic engagement is about recognizing ourselves as a member of a larger whole—whether that be a nation, a state, a town or a county—and then taking an active role in determining the future of our communities. It’s about our right to take part in defining the public good, determine the policies that will make the public good a reality, and then reform institutions that don’t serve the public good. Active citizens stay informed, learn of the differing perspectives, attend public meetings and engage officials. They vote, but their work doesn’t end with election day. They are persistent and intentional in playing their role as members of a democratic society.

PEC is only able to do the work that we do in the Piedmont with the support of engaged citizens. Thanks to these people, we have been able to do good work for over four decades. Our work together has not gone unnoticed. As Hedrick Smith has pointed out, PEC is a model for sustained civic engagement within the environmental and land conservation community.

All of us at PEC are grateful for citizens like you who choose to be active and participate. My ask of you this year is that you continue that good work and encourage others to do the same.

Sincerely,

Chris Miller, President