Western Bypass Shelved

Attention Turns Toward Fixing Route 29

Big things are happening, or rather not happening, with the costly Western Bypass of U.S. Route 29 just north of Charlottesville. We’re enthusiastic to report that the ineffective project has come to a halt, and we’re hoping this time it will be a permanent road block. With the Bypass off the table, we can finally get to work on fixing Route 29 for the majority of its travelers.

What Happened?

At a special public hearing on Feb. 19, 2014, the Albemarle County Board of Supervisors took a strong stance in opposition to the Bypass. The meeting was packed from wall to wall, and early on, some big news broke: the Federal Highway Administration had sent a letter to the state calling for additional study on the project’s purpose and need. Along with the reevaluation of the Bypass, the letter specifically asked VDOT to “reopen the consideration of alternatives.”

As the 5-hour hearing came to a close, the Board of Supervisors passed a resolution (5-1) to reinstate their opposition to the Bypass and request that VDOT focus their attention on real solutions to congestion on Route 29 and transfer any available funding to the projects laid out in Places29.

Some Background

Over the past 30 years, every time VDOT has studied traffic congestion on Route 29 north of Charlottesville, they have found that there is no silver bullet. No single bypass or road would fix the problem. All of their studies have shown that a series of improvements are needed, and that they should be implemented in a specific sequence. In 1990, the Commonwealth Transportation Board adopted a plan according to these findings.

VDOT had concluded that roughly 85% of the traffic along the Route 29 corridor was local. Their data showed that the construction of the Bypass alone would not alleviate congestion on Route 29. So, the state was only going to consider constructing a bypass after other more critical fixes were in place.

Coming Together to Save the Historic Waterloo Bridge

Often, protecting historic resources is seen as the domain of historic preservation groups, but the story is a little different when it comes to Route 29. Last fall, VDOT announced plans to possibly close the bridge to vehicular traffic due to safety concerns. PEC shared their news with local community groups and historic preservation advocates, which sparked overwhelming support for the bridge’s rehabilitation—support that transcended the usual demographics and organization affiliations.

In January, VDOT closed the bridge, which up until that point, had been estimated to carry approximately 840 vehicles per day. By this time, Kettle Run High School students, with the assistance of history and government teacher Mr. Richard Deardoff, started a Save the Waterloo Bridge Facebook page to share the structure’s history, their personal stories and photographs, and express their strong desire for its preservation. The page now has over 2,650 followers, and the number continues to grow.

“If we continue to build on, pave over, replace every part of our past, what legacy and ethic will we leave to our children,” asked Mr. Deardoff.

We couldn’t agree more. So this March, PEC sent out letters to residents within a two-mile radius encouraging them to contact their supervisors and sign a petition requesting that the Counties and VDOT keep the bridge open for residents and visitors to enjoy during their travels. The petition was shared in local stores, in news articles, on the Save the Waterloo Bridge Facebook page and on bridgehunter.com, and now has over 800 signatures.

If you haven’t signed the petition yet, visit www.pecva.org/waterloobridge!

As the community’s support continued to grow for the structure’s full rehabilitation, we reached out to Preservation Virginia, which placed the bridge on their list of Most Endangered Sites for 2014. What may further help the bridge’s chance at rehabilitation is its eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places, which means it is entitled to closer scrutiny during any process to permanently close it or

The Waterloo Bridge crosses the Rappahannock River from Fauquier to Culpeper County. Photo by Julie Bolthouse

Support PEC

Make a donation or get in touch with PEC at:
Post Office Box 460
Warrenton, VA 20188
540.347.2334 (general)
540.316.9972 (donations)
PEC@pecva.org
or make a secure online donation at www.pecva.org

Thank you for helping to protect the Piedmont!
Coming Together to Save the Historic Waterloo Bridge

Continued from cover

The Great Homecoming: An Open House at the McAllister Cabin

A

The Piedmont View

make significant changes to the structure. Backed by a coalition of partners such as Mosby Heritage Area Association, Goose Creek Association, Remington Community Partnership, Citizens for Fauquier County and Unicom Winery in Amissville, PEC also submitted a coalition letter to the Fauquier Board of Supervisors, which requested the Fauquier and Culpeper Board of Supervisors and VDOT rehabilitate the unique historic bridge for vehicular travel.

VDOT and the Board of Supervisors are now considering the bridge’s rehabilitation, but demolition is not off the table. The cost of each potential option is being weighed at this time.

Why Rehabilitation?

PEC and a coalition of local organizations believe that the bridge should be rehabilitated for continued vehicle traffic, and here’s why:

> The bridge is a coveted historic resource in Virginia. Residents and visitors take Waterloo Road, which for some is a slightly longer route to their destination, just so they can drive over the bridge and enjoy its historical nature and beautiful atmosphere.

> Moving the bridge to some other site would take it out of its historical context. Both the bridge and the area are historically significant together, and they should stay connected.

> Replacing it with a new bridge destroys the historical nature of the resource and could potentially cost more than rehabilitating the current bridge.

> The option of rehabilitation for pedestrian and bicycle traffic is impractical given the bridge’s remote location, lack of public parking for visitors, and its disconnection from established bicycle routes. Plus, there are still significant cost associated with this option.

Fauquier County previously lost a historic bridge over the Rappahannock River at Kelly’s Ford. And the railroad bridge over the river in Remington is also currently being threatened. The Waterloo Bridge is a unique distinguishing feature that contributes to the identity of rural Fauquier and Culpeper County.

“It’s part of the heritage and character of this area that sets us apart from the monotony of suburbia,” said Rebecca Bon-giovi, student at Kettle Run High School.

Add your voice to those advocating for saving this valuable historic bridge by following the Facebook page, signing our petition and contacting the Board of Supervisors in Culpeper and Fauquier.

For more information please check out www.pecva.org/waterloobridge, or contact Julie Balthouse at jbbalthouse@pecva.org.

Welcome PEC’s New Development Specialist

Greetings! My name is Pam Covington, and I’m the new development specialist for PEC. I’ve always admired PEC as an organization, which is why I’ve volunteered for them over the years. I have management and relationship building experience within the non-profit, technology and government sectors. Now, as a staff member, I have the incredible opportunity to give back to the community by assisting PEC with relationship building, fundraising, event planning and connecting good people.

The Piedmont has been my home for 26 years, raised in Upperkix. On my off time, I enjoy my favorite hobby—horseback riding. There are so many wonderful projects PEC manages and great residents to meet in our nine county region. I look forward to the new adventure! For inquiries or questions, I can be reached at pcovington@pecva.org or (540) 316-9978.

My wife and I have owned our farm for 33 years. From the outset, when I encountered this historic structure, it has been one of the physical things I like best about our bit of Paradise. Anytime I am travelling and have the chance, I cross this bridge, driving very slowly, perhaps stopping for a moment if there is no other traffic, so I can look up and down the river. I don’t believe that sight of the river and banks has changed much from Civil War times when Waterloo was an important location.

There is no other comparable view and all the land around it is in private hands. There may exist, but I don’t know where, other bridges like this. So far as I know it is the last of this type and stature.

—Lynn Coleman, Fauquier resident

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—Lynn Coleman, Fauquier resident
Proposed Natural Gas Line

This May we received word that landowners had begun receiving notices from Spectra Energy, referencing a proposal for a new natural gas pipeline through Virginia.

We immediately began collecting information—putting in calls to Spectra Energy, state and federal agencies, as well as a number of partner organizations who have a common interest in this pipeline or the resources it would impact. We quickly sent a letter to every landowner along the route. If you live along the route, or know somebody who does, we suggest that landowners get all the facts about the need and route of the pipeline before agreeing to allow any new right-of-way to cross their property. Talking to a qualified attorney about your rights is an important step before making any major decisions.

PEC is holding three meetings in the next coming weeks to discuss all of the information we’ve gathered thus far on the pipeline. The first of which is on June 24 from 6 – 8 p.m. at the Washington Fire Hall in Rappahannock County. Stay tuned for more information, and please check www.pecva.org for news or follow up with Dan Holmes at dholmes@pecva.org with questions.

Western Bypass Shelved

Continued from cover

improvements on Route 29 were completed.

Complicating matters, some businesses along the corridor began vigorously opposing the local improvements, particularly at Hydraulic and Rio roads, claiming they would turn Route 29 into an expressway and harm their businesses.

In a twist worthy of a Grisham novel, one of these business owners was appointed to the CTB. In 1995, without public notice or a hearing, he engineered a reversal of the approved sequencing agreement. The Bypass was leapfrogged ahead of the improvements at Hydraulic and Rio roads.

Subsequently, in the widening of Route 29 was completed in the late 1990s, the sequencing agreement was abandoned and the necessary solutions were shelved. Then, VDOT accelerated its acquisition of property for the Bypass.

In 2003, after the courts responded to a 1998 legal challenge by the Southern Environmental Law Center on behalf of PEC and the Sierra Club, efforts to revive the Bypass were held in place, forcing a lack of federal funds for its construction and an opposition from members of the Metropolitan Planning Organization—a federally mandated organization made up of city and county elected officials and a representative from VDOT. Without funding or support from the MPO, the project stalled, but was not forgotten by its proponents (or by PEC staff for that matter). In a surprise move during the summer of 2011, after years in the dustbin, and with virtually no public notice, the Board of Supervisors voted (4-2) to rescind the county’s long-held opposition to the Bypass. Urged on by the McDonnell Administration, the CBT quickly resurrected the project and, with unprecedented speed, awarded a contract for the design and construction of the road.

Backlash to the project began immediately. Local and regional organizations, state policy makers and some local officials questioned the Bypass’s price tag, its effectiveness and the process by which the road had been resurrected.

In the fall of 2011, we were encouraged when both the EPA and the Army Corps of Engineers questioned the effectiveness of the Bypass and the draft Environmental Assessment for the project. The agencies pointed out that VDOT hadn’t adequately compared the road to alternatives—such as the community’s Places29 plan, which offers far more cost-effective and resourceful options to relieve congestion on U.S. 29.

Where Things Stand

Since February of this year, when the Board of Supervisors passed a resolution to reroute their opposition to the Bypass, things have been moving in a positive direction. In March, the Secretary of Transportation assembled a 10-person panel to assist with the study of alternative options to improve the corridor, and he suggested at least $200 million should be reallocated from the MPO’s budget. This package of solutions, if approved by the CBT, will result in a huge step forward in addressing traffic and congestion concerns on U.S. 29. The total cost of the alternatives comes to $230 million, which satisfies the requested minimum budget suggested by the Secretary of Transportation.

In a public hearing on May 27, the Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to reinstate the Bypass. In a surprise move, the CTB unanimously passed a similar resolution.

For the past 15 years, I’ve been fighting for real solutions for Route 29, and partners at SLEC, CATCO, ASAP, the Sierra Club, the League of Women Voters and others have been here all along too,” said Jeff Werner, land use field officer for Albemarle County at PEC. “But what ultimately won the day were the hundreds of local citizens who have remained committed to seeing real and effective improvements implemented on Route 29.”

The Alternatives

Many of the proposed alternatives are new, but drawn from the vetted solutions offered in the Places29 plan, which include:

Two parallel roads to give local drivers—who make up 85% of the traffic—other ways to reach their destinations on Route 29:

- Hillside Drive Extension: provides a new link on the east side of Route 29 connecting Rio Road to Hydraulic Road and continuing south to Holiday Drive.
- Berkmar Drive Extension: a new road connecting the existing Berkmar Drive from WallMart up to the Hollymead Town Center, establishing a long parallel route along the west side of Route 29.

- By removing local traffic, these parallel roads also free up capacity on Route 29 for drivers just passing through.

Four projects to unclog the bottlenecks:

- A compact overpass at the congested Rio Road intersection.
- Add a lane to the interchange at Route 29 and the 29/250 Bypass.
- Widen Route 29 to 3 lanes on each side between Polo Grounds Road and the Hollymead Town Center.
- Start engineering and design work for an overpass at the clogged Hydraulic intersection.

Turn red lights to green:

- Change the art traffic light synchronization that will smooth traffic flow on Route 29 all the way up to Airport Road.

Add a second Amtrak train to DC:

- 55 million toward the cost of adding a second dedicated train between Lynchburg, Charlottesville, and Washington, D.C. each day.

Involving local businesses:

- Form a panel of business owners and community leaders to ensure that the design and construction plan for the Rio overpass minimizes impacts to businesses.

Area Residents Give to Greenway Expansion

Give Local Piedmont was a community-wide online giving challenge that sought to inspire folks to make donations of $10 or more to local nonprofits for 24 hours on May 6. Part of a national campaign, Give Local Piedmont supported the effort for Culpeper, Fauquier, Madison and Rappahannock Counties. And the good news is—it worked!

Not sure what to expect, PEC set a goal to raise $1,500 toward the 1.5 mile extension of the Warrenton Branch Greenway trail. Well, not only was the goal met, it was surpassed by more than $1,000! A total of 48 donations were made toward the trail, totaling $2,721.

We are all impressed and thankful for the generosity of the folks who made a special donation. Last year, PEC pledged to fund the remaining $38,000 to complete the trail’s expansion. And with these recent donations, we have now reached the halfway mark!

If you would like to contribute to the effort, you can send a donation earmarked for the “Warrenton Branch Greenway trail” to PEC at P.O. Box 450, Warrenton, VA 20188 or visit pecva.org/donate
Making Progress at the Piedmont Overlook

It’s been busy at the Overlook these past few months! PEC is in the final year of a cost-share agreement with the Natural Resources Conservation Service to improve the property’s habitat and increase its biodiversity. The main part of this grant is the creation of a 17-acre native grass and wildflower meadow on land that was formerly a pasture dominated by tall fescue.

Since PEC took control of the property, we’ve looked for ways to keep the fields open to maintain the viewshed, improve habitat for wildlife and bush-hog less. Native meadow does all of these things. After several years of planning and weed control, the meadow was seeded this May.

We planted native species, which are valuable to pollinators, resistant to deer browse, and bloom at different times and in different colors. These specific plants will grow to a maximum of four feet to maximize visibility.

The two acres that immediately surround the Memorial are “high diversity” meadow. This will be the showcase for the butterfly wildflower area, where visitors can see at least 13 different species of wildflowers and all the wildlife they support.

For the bulk of the meadow, we planted a “medium diversity” mix, which is about 50 percent grass and 50 percent wildflower. Grasses are present throughout the entire meadow, and they provide the structure for many wildlife, such as sparrows that like to nest in their clumpy tufts. On the steeper, less accessible areas, we planted a “low diversity” mix that is 70 percent grasses, which helps prevent erosion.

Our meadow may not look that impressive in the first year because most natives spend their youth growing strong roots before growing upward. Meadows take patience. We started ours in 2012, and it won’t be “finished” until 2015. These are very dynamic ecosystems, and they are always changing. So, we’ll have to wait and see what adjustments might be needed.

Besides the meadow, PEC has embarked on an innovative, long-term approach to restore native hardwood forest in a very invasive area by planting pine trees and letting natural succession occur. Stay tuned for more details on that effort. Also, be on the lookout for our public events at the Memorial! Visit pecva.org/events, and plan your next trip out to see us!

Shaping Tomorrow’s Leaders in Environmental Conservation

We are heading into our eighth Summer Fellowship Program, an annual seven-week educational program for college students and recent graduates. The course, participants study various aspects of PEC’s mission, which is followed by an individual practicum focused around their interests and PEC’s work in the Piedmont. Through this experience, the Fellows gain practical knowledge and skills necessary to successfully transition into careers in conservation, urban planning, agriculture, public policy and other related fields. After a competitive selection process, we are pleased to announce the 2014 Fellows!

2014 PEC Fellows

Laurel Abowd  Gamburt, NY
University of Virginia, Class of 2016
Environmental Sciences

Michael Ament  Defere, MI
University of Michigan, Class of 2012
Environmental Science and Anthropology

Lauren Faccinto  Sam Anselma, CA
Kenyon College, Class of 2014
Sociology and Environmental Studies

Natalie Sheffield  Charlotteville, VA
William and Mary, Class of 2014
Environmental Science and Policy, English

Laurel Abowd  Gamburt, NY
University of Virginia, Class of 2016
Environmental Sciences

Susanna Kirschner  Richmond, VA
University of Mary Washington, Class of 2014
Environmental Science-Natural Track

Peter Klemz  Manassas, VA
Virginia Tech, Class of 2014
Public and Urban Affairs

Lauren Faccinto  Sam Anselma, CA
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University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Class of 2014
Political Science and Geography (GIS)

Hannah Itzler  Ft. Lauderdale, FL
University of Florida, Class of 2014
Sustainability and the Built Environment

Alexa White  Riverhead, NY
University of Maryland, Baltimore County, Class of 2015
Environmental Science

Chelsea Johnson  Avon, IN
Lawrence University, Class of 2014
Environmental Studies (Policy Focus)

Preston White  Beaverton, VA
James Madison University, Class of 2016
Integrated Science and Technology

Sam Zacher  Columbus, OH
University of Chicago, Class of 2016
Environmental Studies and Economics

Meet PEC’s New Outreach Coordinator

Hello! I am Mary Liles, PEC’s new outreach coordinator. As a long time admirer of PEC’s mission, I am thrilled to be part of the team. One of my key responsibilities is promoting PEC’s mission and programs by engaging directly with citizens, students, community groups and partner organizations. In addition to managing the volunteer program, I am also in charge of organizing and directing the Summer Fellowship Program, which helps shape tomorrow’s environmental leaders.

Like many Piedmont residents, I lived and worked in the Washington, D.C., area for most of my career. My background includes managing international economic development programs for the American labor movement under grants from the United States Agency for International Development and the National Endowment for Democracy. After moving to the beautiful Piedmont region eight years ago, I have focused my career on environmental conservation and, most recently, worked for the American Bird Conservancy.

I’m looking forward to meeting you all! If you have any ideas for outreach, please contact me at mcliles@pecva.org.

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Photo by Paula Combs

Pop Quiz

Which produce is in season from June to August in Virginia?

a) Tomatoes and watermelon
b) Blueberries and blackberries
c) Broccoli and pumpkins
d) All of the above

ANSWER

b) Blueberries and blackberries

Tomatoes are in season from July to October, watermelon is in season from July to September, broccoli is in season from September to November, and pumpkins are in season from September to October.

To see what is in season, check out our “Fruit & Vegetable Availability Calendar” at pecva.org/farmsandfood

The Piedmont Overlook was seeded this past Spring.

PEC fellows pose at the top of Old Rag.

Photo by Paula Combs
Sustainable Landscaping Workshop Success!

Gem Bingol, PEC’s Clarke and Loudoun County Land Use Field Officer, is seeing success with her sustainable landscaping workshops. The meetings have included experts from Loudoun Master Gardeners, Magee Design, Lush Life Landscapes, Loudoun County and Clean Water Action who share information about sustainable landscaping and yard care practices, garden ecology and backyard habitat creation with residents.

A total of three workshops have been held over the last year, and each one received positive feedback such as “extremely informative” and “the list of local resources is very helpful as well as the responsible lawn maintenance tips.” Attendees have asked PEC to continue the workshops in order to “make more people aware.”

One of the three HOA’s has already implemented the sustainable practices from the workshop, and another HOA is in the progress of relandscaping their grounds with native species. “There’s a clear thirst for information at the workshops. People want to know more about native plants, including the relationship between natives and wildlife. Many have shown interest in converting more of their lawns to shrubs, gardening in a more eco-friendly way and increasing the sustainability of their gardening practices,” says Gem.

Lending a Lens
Meet Volunteer Carl Zitzmann

At PEC, we have the privilege of working with countless individuals who are dedicated to protecting this wonderful region. Carl Zitzmann is one such person. Some of you might not immediately recognize his name, but there’s a good chance that you’ve seen his photographs in one of our publications, weekly news emails, or on our website.

Carl has volunteered his photographic talents to us for about seven years. “I really admire the mission of PEC, so I love that I can contribute my experience in a meaningful way,” says Carl.

With over 30 years in photography, Carl is familiar with capturing people in special moments and landscapes in the perfect light. He gained part of his experience at the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority before moving onto work as an assistant director of photography at George Mason University.

Whether he’s helping out at a PEC event or spending time near his home in the beautiful countryside of Rappahannock County, he’s driven to get that great shot. “I’m always looking for those moments when things align. It could be people, nature, or architecture, but when I’m able to capture that decisive moment, it’s magic,” says Carl.

Like so many of our members, Carl has made PEC a better organization. We are so very appreciative and lucky to have volunteers like him!

The 2014 Buy Fresh Buy Local Guide Has Arrived!

We’re excited to announce the release of PEC’s 2014 Buy Fresh Buy Local guides. As a service geared towards promoting the local food economy, the guides were mailed to approximately 266,000 homes in the Charlottesville area, Loudoun County, and the Northern Piedmont—bringing with them the promise of sunny farmers’ market days, fresh vegetables, and plenty of reasons to get out and enjoy our local farming community.

The guides include lists of local farms and orchards, farmers markets, wineries and distilleries, restaurants and caterers, and retailers. Other items include upcoming events, a fruit and vegetable availability calendar, and a fact sheet explaining various common food labels.

“I’m always amazed to see the number of different products listed in the guide, and I think the guide does something important by building a community around food and reminding us to take advantage of our agriculturally rich area,” said Jessica Palmer, coordinator for the Buy Fresh Buy Local program at PEC.

Photography Contest

If you’re a photographer, amateur or professional, make sure to enter PEC’s photography contest! More details will be posted to the PEC website in July. Stay tuned!
On the Ground

ALBEMARLE

Conservation Options and Staying up to Date on the County’s Comprehensive Plan

Landowners in Albemarle County have a number of options available for protecting their property with a conservation easement. Currently, residents are able to donate a conservation easement for various tax deductions and credits, but they can also apply to sell a conservation easement to Albemarle County through the Acquisition of Conservation Easement program. At this time, the program has over $1,000,000 in funding for the current class of applicants, and an additional $640,000 or more will be budgeted for the next cycle.

In other news, over the next several months the Albemarle Board of Supervisors will review, by individual chapter, proposed revisions to the County’s Comprehensive Plan. On June 4, a meeting was held to discuss the section on historic, cultural and scenic preservation. At a meeting scheduled for July 9, the board will review the Rural Area chapter. There are recommendations in this chapter that PEC is wary of, particularly the revision of the county’s long-standing policy to strictly limit the Rural Area non-agricultural commercial activities. We’re also concerned about the consideration to allow commercial development at interstate interchanges. Be on the lookout for PEC email alerts on the proposed Comprehensive Plan revisions or contact Jeff Werner at jwerner@pecva.org for more details.

CLARKE/RAPPAHANNOCK

Getting Started in Clarke & Rappahannock

We would like to welcome the new Rappahannock and Clarke Conservation Officer, Carolyn Sedgwick, who joined PEC this month. Carolyn has a background in ornithology and land conservation. She will be getting settled in over the next couple of months, but please feel free to contact her at csedgwick@pecva.org with any questions or to introduce yourself.

FAUQUIER

Walking Through the Bluebells

We had sunny weather and high attendance for this year’s 11th Annual Bluebell Walk. The crowd hiked across the picturesque farm fields, which have been preserved forever with a conservation easement, to see the banks of Cedar Run covered with bluebells. Naturalists were among the crowd to help identify native vegetation. The day was filled with a lot of wildlife and picture-taking. Now that’s what we call a success!

GREENE

Towering Voices

PEC voiced opposition recently to a proposed 199-foot wireless tower that would be erected on Dyke Road, one of the more scenic vistas in Greene County—a short distance from Shenandoah National Park. PEC proposed that the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors limit the height of any individual tower to minimize the visual impact, even if it meant allowing more towers. Our comments, together with those of the church located across the road from the proposed tower site and other Greene residents, forced AT&T Wireless to look elsewhere for a site. It remains to be seen whether this story ends well. The company found another site nearby where the County approved a 200-foot radio tower over 20 years ago. AT&T Wireless may try to build something close to that height. The good news is there’s now significant energy to reform Greene’s wireless ordinance to avoid divisive projects like this in the future.

LOUDOUN

Celebrating a Conservation Success and an Earth Day Thank You

PEC was excited to celebrate the conservation of 141 acres near Gilbert’s Corner at the historic Mount Zion Old School Baptist church, this past May. We have worked with area partners for almost twenty years to conserve the rural and historic landscape around Gilbert’s Corner, and the preservation of the landscape took a major step forward when concerned residents, organized as the Roundabout Partners, came together to save the farmland from an approved residential development and a proposal for 66,000 sq. ft. of commercial space. Roundabout Partners raised funds in order to purchase the land, which they donated to PEC at the end of 2013. Containing portions of the June 1863 Battle of Aldie and a section of the Old Carolina Road, this historic land has special significance as part of a larger landscape marking the transition from suburban Loudoun County to the rural Piedmont.

We’d also like to send a big thank you to the 6,400 people who made it out to Loudoun Earth Day this year! PEC staff had a great time speaking with residents who stopped by our tents. We had a huge map this year of Loudoun County, on which adults and kids alike loved to mark their favorite spot with a colorful star sticker. Be sure to put this fun and educational event on your calendars for next year!

MASSACHUSETTS

State Wildlife Grant

PEC has received support from a State Wildlife Grant from the Virginia Department of Game & Inland Fisheries, the Virginia Environmental Endowment and members of PEC for habitat restoration in the Upper Conway. Over the next two years, this project will address items such as controlling invasive plants, restoring native vegetation and assessing brook trout barriers. The grants will also help fund land conservation and public outreach efforts. This is a multi-agency effort led by PEC, and includes Trout Unlimited, Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, Shenandoah National Park, Virginia Department of Forestry, Madison County Parks and Recreation and local residents.

MASSACHUSETTS

New Orange Office and a Big Turnout for Conservation Workshop

To better serve our Orange constituents, PEC opened a new office at the old Esso station at Montpelier station this spring. This historic landmark was built by the DuPont family in 1910. It also served as a place for people to stop and fuel up their automobiles on their way back to the city after spending the weekend at Montpelier watching thoroughbreds race. Also in Orange County, PEC had a successful “Sources of Funding for Land Management & Land Conservation” workshop on April 30 with over 100 attendees. Participants learned about programs and funding options for enhancing stewardship of farm and forest land.

MADISON

State Wildlife Grant

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www.pecva.org
UPCOMING EVENTS

Ale for More Acres

**WHEN:** Saturday, June 20, 4 – 7 pm

**WHERE:** Old Bust Head Brewery in Vint Hill

Bring your friends and family and join us at Old Bust Head Brewery for a fundraiser to benefit our Fauquier Land Conservation Fund! OBH is generously donating 50% of proceeds from all pints and sample flights sold to assist the Fund in our continued effort to support land conservation efforts throughout the county, specifically our partnership with Fauquier’s Purchase of Development Rights program.

Contact Maggi MacQuilliam at (540) 454-9599 or mmacquilliam@pecva.org for more details.

**Into the Wild With Blue Ridge Wildlife Center**

**WHEN:** Sunday, June 22, 4 – 5:30 pm

**WHERE:** Piedmont Memorial Overlook, Paris

Join us at PEC’s 50-acre property that’s located on Ovoka mountain in Paris! Come learn about our wildlife neighbors and what you can do to make your backyard more habitat friendly. Located next door to Sky Meadows State Park, the Overlook boasts stunning ridgetop views. You can also see our restoration efforts! Learn about how PEC is renovating an old cow pasture into a native meadow and creating a pine forest on the property. Blue Ridge Wildlife Center will be co-hosting the event and bringing educational animals on site as part of their presentation.

Contact Celia Vuocolo, (540) 347-2334 ext. 25, cvuocolo@pecva.org

Registration is required.

**Food for Thought: Local Food and Farming Speaker Series**

**WHEN:** Thursday, June 26, July 10 and August 14

**WHERE:** Downtown Culpeper

June 26 at the Culpeper Museum at 113 S. Commerce St.
July 10 & August 14 at St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church, 115 N. East St.

Culpeper residents! You are invited to hear from some of the growers and producers who bring food to your table. Come meet your farming neighbors, hear about their struggles and successes, and develop your own gardening and foodie dreams.

More info at pecva.org/foodtalks

**River and Roots**

**WHEN:** Friday, June 27, 1 PM – 12 AM

**WHERE:** Watermelon Park, Clarke County

PEC will share a booth with Shenandoah Riverkeeper at this music festival that celebrates the river and our local food roots. We’ll have a watershed model and seed necklaces. We’ll also be sharing our food and habitat guides and coordinating on the cooking demo using local ingredients.

**Hunted and Gathered Dinner**

**WHEN:** Sunday, June 29, 5 pm

**WHERE:** Grace Estates, 5273 Mount Juliet Farm, Crozet, Albemarle County

We are taking a step back in time with a hunted and foraged dinner set inside a teepee (courtesy of Skyline Tent Co.) in a secluded area of Grace Estates with guest chef Matt Greene of JM Stock Provisions. Wines from Grace Estates will be paired with a four-course rustic dinner. Proceeds support PEC. Tickets are $100 and can be reserved at www.hillandholler.org/events.php

**A Feast from the Field**

**WHEN:** Saturday, July 26, Tour of farm 5 – 6 pm Dinner 6 – 8 pm

**WHERE:** Moriah Farm, 8317 Meeteze Road, Warrenton

PEC, in cooperation with Moriah Farm, will hold a 2nd Annual Field to Plate Dinner to benefit the Faquier Education Farm. Come and celebrate locally grown food and wine while learning about the work of the Faquier Education Farm. Enjoy bluegrass music by locally renowned band “The Cabin Raiders.” A tour of the Faquier Education Farm will take place before dinner.

Ticket price: $75 per person

Contact Karen Hunberger Adam, (540) 316-9972, khunberger@pecva.org

**Taste of the Mountains**

**WHEN:** August 30, 9 AM – 4 PM

**WHERE:** Town of Madison

Join PEC at this heritage street festival that celebrates the mountain and traditional cultures of 18th & 19th century America as reflected in the customs and history of the Blue Ridge Mountains region. The entire family can enjoy the day browsing, shopping, playing games, riding ponies, listening to great music, eating and taking pleasure on historic Main Street.

**Heritage Harvest Festival**

**WHEN:** Saturday, September 13

**WHERE:** Thomas Jefferson’s Monticello, 931 Thomas Jefferson Pkwy, Charlottesville

PEC and our Buy Fresh Buy Local campaign will be part of the 8th annual Heritage Harvest Festival! Join us for tomato tasting, homesteading exhibits, agriculture and food workshops, local food, drink and music.

**Celebrating Catoctin Creek**

**WHEN:** Sunday, September 14, 4 – 6 PM

**WHERE:** John Wesley Church, Waterford

PEC’s James Barnes will speak on “Maximizing your Land for Wildlife and other Biodiversity” and Chesapeake Alliance for Sustainable Agriculture’s Chip Planck will address "Past and Future Efforts: Farming and Farmland Preservation in Loudoun County.” Includes family-friendly displays and a walk on Phillips Farm.

Contact Gem Bingel, gbingel@pecva.org, or Mike Kane, mkane@pecva.org for details

**A Taste of the Harvest**

**WHEN:** Sunday, September 14, 3 – 7 PM

**WHERE:** Middleburg Community Center, 300 W. Washington St, Middleburg, VA

A celebration featuring locally grown foods, wines and specialty products. More than 20 area farms will be on-site with an array of products for sale. Top chefs from outstanding area restaurants like the French Hound, the Red Fox Inn, Sallamander Market and Goodstone Inn will offer a tasting preview of specialty dishes featuring local farm products. Early bird tickets are $25 adults and $10 children (under 12). After 8/15, tickets will be $30 adults and $15 children. Proceeds benefit PEC’s Buy Fresh Buy Local campaign. To purchase, visit www.pecva.org/events or contact Trish Carter at (540) 316-9980.

*For more events and additional information, please visit pecva.org/events*
Dear Friends,

For those of you who have met me, you know I want to share everything I can about what PEC has been up to... and that can make it difficult to write a letter like this one because I have a limited word count! However, as I think about some of our recent successes and upcoming challenges, one consistent theme keeps coming to mind—resilience.

Perhaps it is because the term resilience is very much in the current discourse about response to natural disasters, the economy and climate change. If you look up the word resilience, it’s defined as the ability to withstand or recover quickly from difficult conditions.

It’s a trait I look for when hiring PEC employees, and it’s also a trait that defines the PEC members I’ve had the opportunity to meet over the past twenty years. When it comes to our work, sometimes you pull off a quick victory. But more often, the work we undertake has long timelines—with ups and downs and twists and turns that make it easy to get disheartened.

One such long-term initiative has been advocating for better solutions to congestion on Route 29 north of Charlottesville. Jeff Werner, PEC’s land use officer for Albemarle County, has worked relentlessly over the years with partners and community members to help push more effective solutions than an ill-conceived Western Bypass. He spent countless hours learning everything one can know about the project specifics, including the players and the process—and then worked to share that information with anyone who would listen.

A decade later, instead of a half billion dollar road that would do little to relieve congestion, Charlottesville and Albemarle are finally moving forward with projects that will make a real difference in the daily lives of local residents and help both local residents and commuters on Route 29.

The importance of resilience also comes through when thinking about landscape level conservation work. The timelines are long, and it often takes a multi-generational commitment. This is why it’s been great to see so many young faces at a number of our recent events, as well as a growing following on our online social networks. Recently, we hosted our annual Summer Safari with partners at the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute and the Shenandoah National Park Trust. Aside from being a very successful event, I was heartened to see multiple generations of people who care about this region. In fact, I brought one of my daughters, and PEC Board Co-Chair George Ohrstrom brought his niece.

One such challenging issue that I see on the horizon is the gas pipeline proposed by Spectra Energy (map on page 3). PEC will investigate what’s driving the project, what resources it would impact, what the alternatives are, and questions concerning compensation and mitigation. And that’s our role—being there over the long haul to help residents stay informed and take action.

Sincerely,

Chris Miller,
President