2019 General Assembly: What Happened?

By Dan Holmes

The 2019 General Assembly Session has concluded. The budget and survival legislation is now with the Governor awaiting action. It was a fast-paced short session — roughly 45 days in which thousands of bills were heard, including the budget bill. The budget had a couple of bright points. But legislators were clearly focused on tax conformity and teacher salaries, leaving little for the programs we rely on for land conservation. On the legislative front, we listened to old bills including pitches for the Route 29 eastern bypass study and unrestricted rents defined as agritourism. There was also an important discussion surrounding proffers. But unfortunately, the legislation was unwilling to address fundamental flaws resulting from the proffer bill from 2016, largely pushed by developer interests.

The next session will bring the Governor’s first full budget, as well as every legislative seat will be up for re-election in November. This means we have an opportunity to make real progress on multiple fronts. But if we are to see improvements in policy and funding levels for the 2020 session, we need each and every one of you to weigh in with your legislators and candidates on behalf of conservation and restoration, local land use authority and environmental protection over the next year. Below is a summary on the individual bills and budget matters we tracked and worked for this past session.

Budget

Unfortunately, we did not get needed increases for important conservation funding. There were no additions to the land conservation grant programs (Office of Farmland Preservation, Virginia Battlefield Fund and Virginia Land Conservation Foundation), which should be receiving a combined $20 million per year. Important conservation easement staffing positions with the Department of Forestry were left unfunded in light of staff currently turning down projects as they cannot keep up with demand for the program. We did see increased funding for Agriculture Best Management Practices (Ag BMPs), bringing the total to $89.7 million, and an additional $10 million for the Stormwater Local Assistance Fund to reduce pollution associated with agriculture and stormwater runoff. A few other important measures included:

- Restoration of the statutory formula for transferring funds to the Open Space Land Preservation Trust Fund, providing greater assistance to landowners pursuing conservation easements.
- The addition of a 281-acre parcel (which would be added to the 600-acres already owned by the state) for Sweet Run State Park in Loudoun.
- Increased Wildlife Management and Habitat Improvement funding for the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries.
- Support PEC

Support PEC

Make a donation or get in touch with PEC at:
Post Office Box 460
Warrenton, VA 20188
$40.347.2334
pec@pecva.org
Or visit: www.pecva.org
Thank you for helping to protect the Piedmont!

Let There Be Fruits and Veggies

The Piedmont Environmental Council’s Community Farm at Roundabout Meadows was founded with two ideas in mind: to connect residents to Loudoun’s vital agricultural economy and to provide locally grown fruits and vegetables for its food-insecure families.

Now, it is time for those ideas to blossom, literally...to be planted.

Starting this spring, the northwest corner of Roundabout Meadows will be the hub of activity. We have eight acres surrounded with deer fencing, and on approximately two of those acres, PEC’s community farm manager, Dana Melby, will work with volunteers to begin planting broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, potatoes, radishes, beets, turnips and collards, from mid-March to the beginning of April. Then, after the last frost, crops such as tomatoes, peppers, tomatillos, green beans, summer squash, watermelon and cantaloupe will be added.

“We will also be implementing cover crops to help improve our soil quality and increase the soil’s nutrition,” Dana explains. “Cover crops improve soil health, as well as attract pollinators and beneficial insects. They also help reclaim land that was previously fallow, allowing it to go back into production.”

The fruit and vegetable crops at the Community Farm were selected with the help of our partner, Loudoun Hunger Relief (LHR), who identified the needs of the local community. Feeding America reports that approximately 13,390 Loudoun County residents live in food-insecure households, defined by a chronic lack of access to sufficient nutritious food. In 2018, LHR serves many individuals and families in need, including over 1,000 families living without permanent shelter in the county. Nearly half of the people LHR helps are children who lack sufficient, nutritious food. To date, over one million meals have been distributed through the organization.

To address food insecurity and combat high rates of child obesity, diabetes and hypertension, local anti-hunger efforts are increasingly focusing on providing more produce. PEC plans to donate 100 percent of the

From left to right: PEC Farm Manager Dana Melby, PEC Director of State Policy Dan Holmes, Delegate Michael Weber, PEC Field Representatives Claire Catlett and Tracy Lind, and PEC Communications Coordinator Marco Sanchez.

Legislation

Land Use and Transportation

In at least one way, this session was no different from last year with the inclusion of a study for the eastern bypass of Route 29. While the legislation (S1229, Peake) failed in Senate Finance, the measure continued to be discussed in the budget and as an offered amendment to other legislation (I-81). The legislature listened to many of you that acted on the matter, as the measure failed to progress in any form. Proffers and impact fee legislation was settled early leading to the the passage of “proffer reform” legislation, SB1373 (Favola) and HB2342 (Thomas), from their respective houses. We opposed the bills as they failed to
2018’s Land Conservation Totals

By Paula Combs

A total of 408,939 acres have been protected in Albemarle, Clarke, Culpeper, Fauquier, Greene, Loudoun, Madison, Orange and Rappahannock counties by landowners working together with land trusts and public agencies. The total includes 7,739 acres added in 2018.

“More and more people are interested in protecting the special qualities of their properties,” says Chris Miller, PEC President. “Working together, we have an opportunity to ensure that the Piedmont is a place that provides the land needed for good food, clean drinking water and great places to enjoy nature.”

An easement is a voluntary agreement between a landowner and a land trust (such as a public agency or a non-profit conservation group like PEC) to permanently protect natural, scenic and cultural resources on their land.

“Over 60 landowners and 12 different conservation organizations helped ensure the long-term preservation of our region’s landscape last year,” says Mike Kane, PEC’s director of conservation. “The 7,739 acres protected in 2018 represents an almost 25 percent increase over the acreage conserved in 2017.”

Conservation programs like Virginia’s Land Preservation Tax Credit and local initiatives like Loudoun County’s new Easement Assistance Program offer a set of strong financial incentives for landowners interested in conserving their land.

“One of PEC’s goals is to educate landowners in our region about their conservation options,” says Mike. “In addition to state and local financial incentives, we also have funding available to assist landowners with the cost of donating conservation easements.”

In total, conservation easements in PEC’s nine-county region have protected approximately:

1,689 miles of streams;
10,012 acres of wetlands;
26,229 acres adjacent to scenic rivers;
193,936 acres of prime farming soils;
192,907 acres of forests;
108,540 acres along scenic byways;
123,680 acres in the views of the Appalachian Trail;
128,985 acres in historic districts; and
29,848 acres of Civil War battlefields.

Approximate county-by-county conservation totals in the Piedmont region:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Acres protected in 2018</th>
<th>Total Acres protected by Conservation Easements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Albemarle</td>
<td>1,055</td>
<td>100,629</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarke</td>
<td>832</td>
<td>26,079</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culpeper</td>
<td>796</td>
<td>19,713</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fauquier</td>
<td>2,197</td>
<td>107,070</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greene</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10,448</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loudoun</td>
<td>1,313</td>
<td>58,862</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madison</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>15,914</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orange</td>
<td>1,419</td>
<td>37,380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rappahannock</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>32,844</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEC Region</td>
<td>7,739</td>
<td>408,939</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Map created by PEC for presentation purposes only. Data source: American Battlefield Protection Program, County Governments, USGS, VA Department of Historic Resources, VA Department of Conservation and Recreation. Although efforts have been made to verify data, accuracy is not guaranteed. For more information, please visit www.pecva.org / Waramont | JMR

www.pecva.org
Albemarle County Reaches Conservation Milestone

By Paula Combs

Only the second locality in the state to reach such a milestone, Albemarle County surpassed 100,000 acres of land permanently protected by conservation easement in 2018, an additional 1,055 acres were protected in the county, bringing the grand total to 101,059 acres.

“This conservation success is the effort of many different individuals, land trusts and public agencies, over the span of 40 years,” says Chris Miller, PEC President. “Thank you to all of the families that make conservation in Virginia such a great community effort!”

Albemarle County Board of Supervisor member, Ann Mallek, is a part of such a family who made land conservation a priority.

“Local non-profit partner organizations have contributed significantly to the 100,000 acres under conservation easement in Albemarle. Our family, my parents, siblings and now my grandchildren, benefited from the assistance of two partners, The Piedmont Environmental Council and Virginia Outdoors Foundation, who brought our family farm easement into being in 1998,” says Ann. “Conserving our farm was a natural progression from establishing the Jacob’s Run

...Continued on page 4...
2019 General Assembly: What Happened?

Continued from cover

address fundamental flaws with the changes enacted in 2016. While we were unable to convince the legislators of our concerns, we were able to secure a future conversation (through SB 944) on impact fees and alternative tools to cover the costs of growth by the Virginia Housing Commission. While not ideal, it may offer an opportunity to point out the failings of the proffer discussion this year.

Lastly, there was HB 2364 (Knight), which after an amendment, would have added additional requirements to the list of agri-tourism activities. This was important to alert us of some more good news on Coal Ash clean up. As many may have read in late January, there is growing bipartisan support for the issue, and an agreement was reached. SB 1355 and HB 2786, the two main legislative vehicles, have passed both chambers and are on their way to the Governor’s desk for his signature. Many thanks to everyone who got involved and became a part of the solution!

In conclusion, we will be able to make progress on the topics discussed in this article. As always, thank you for any action you took this session to improve the Commonwealth. Please feel free to follow me directly at dholmes@pecva.org or 540-347-2334 ext. 7084, if you have questions on any of the bills or the final budget numbers.

2019 General Assembly: What Happened?
Working Toward a More Connected Community

By Peter Krebs

Greenways are safe and durable routes where people can walk, bike and run in nature-rich settings. For more than a year now, PEC has been working with the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission (TJPDC) to link communities in the Charlottesville-Albemarle urban core with greenways and other infrastructure for walking and biking, both for transportation and recreation.

High-quality greenways benefit residents and communities in a myriad of ways. Additionally, they improve the environment and make the community more appealing, prosperous and attractive to investment.

Not only do greenways make life better for urban commuters and others, they also provide urban residents with the kind of outdoor access to nature that so many people crave. Making better urban areas encourages development in designated growth areas. And that helps reduce the pressure to develop in the rural countryside.

Jefferson Area Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, which is expected to be approved by this March, is an important milestone in our partnership. This Plan covers Charlottesville and Albemarle, Fauquier, Greene, Louisa and Nelson counties, with a heavy focus on the combined Charlottesville/Albemarle urban core. It lays out a comprehensive network of on-and-off-street infrastructure, including sidewalks, urban bike lanes and routes, shared-use paths (aka greenways) and rural bike routes. The Plan also designates priority corridors and recommends ways for the city and county to work together to connect residents to jobs, shopping, healthcare, education and other resources. Once adopted, it will guide future transportation and land use decisions.

We conducted intensive community engagement to gather data and input for the Plan and to mobilize and coordinate public support for its implementation. Hosting and attending more than 300 meetings and gatherings collectively, we met with a diverse group of residents in community centers, parks, businesses, classrooms, art spaces, restaurants and even on the sidewalks!

In addition to our focus groups, discussions, maps exercises and other ways of hearing from residents, we created a survey that asked about walking, biking and running in the area. Respondents were invited to identify barriers and limitations, envision ideal conditions and make concrete suggestions for a better-connected community. Of 657 responses, the majority indicated concerns about automobile-related injury limit their ability to walk and bike for both transportation and exercise.

Among other findings, both men and women prefer to walk, bike and run in nature-rich environments, but many women have additional concerns about personal safety and prefer to be in spaces with other people around. Participants desired easier access to practical destinations like jobs and shopping, but also expressed strong affinity for parks and natural areas.

These results suggest that bike and pedestrian corridors must be protected from automobiles, and designed for personal safety, sociability and easy access to nature, while linking places where people live, work and play.

Of course, a plan is only the first step. Implementation requires several additional investments, funding not the least among them. We have been calling for local governments to make connectivity a priority and Albemarle is responding with $6 million in proposed new bike/pedestrian spending and a new position to oversee greenways planning. This is great news! Meanwhile, we are working with the City of Charlottesville to increase their ongoing commitment. Private and foundation donors will need to step up to the plate as well. All of this comes down to the will of the public, which is why organized mobilization is so essential.

We will continue to act as a catalyst and keep you updated as we move forward. In the meantime, you can learn more about the survey, the Jefferson Area Bike and Pedestrian Plan and how you can be a part of our growing coalition for a safe and connected community by visiting www.pceva.org/cvillegreenways or by contacting Peter Krebs at pkrebs@pceva.org or calling (434) 977-2033 ext. 7065.

Connecting Charlottesville & Urban Albemarle

Community Connectivity Desires Summary

Concurrent diagram summarizing community connectivity desires and barriers. Full sized and interactive maps can be found on Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission’s website at tjpc.org.

Let There Be Fruits and Veggies

Continued from cover

Community Farm’s fruits and vegetables to LHR and other food pantries in the county.

“Loudoun Hunger Relief is thrilled to be partnering with the Community Farm at Roundabout Meadows. Produce is so important to good health and farm fresh produce is even better. We’re excited to provide locally grown, fresh produce to our neighbors in need,” says Jennifer Montgomery, Executive Director of Loudoun Hunger Relief.

Th e Community Farm will engage volunteers to help produce local food, which will have a meaningful impact on healthy food access in Loudoun. The long-term goal is to scale up production and volunteer programming over the next 5 years.

“I’m so excited for all that is to come this growing season,” says Dana. “With the tremendous help of our volunteers, we will be able to deliver fresh food to those who need it most.”

Are You Interested in Volunteering at PEC’s Community Farm at Roundabout Meadows?

Help us with planting and harvesting healthy food for Loudoun residents in need! Previous experience is welcomed but not required, as on-site training will be provided. Be prepared to work outside in variable weather conditions, get your hands dirty while doing a good deed, and learn about your local agriculture community. All ages are welcome, but children must be accompanied by an adult at all times. Check the calendar on our website for upcoming volunteer opportunities and events. If you are interested in volunteering, contact PEC’s Community Farm manager, Dana Melby, at dmelby@pceva.org or (540) 347-2334 ext. 7068, or visit pceva.org/farm.

MARCH – AUGUST: We need volunteers to plant vegetable transplants and seeds. Bring gardening gloves and a trowel (if you have them), snacks, water, sun protection, bug repellent and weather-appropriate clothing.

MAY – OCTOBER: Help us harvest fresh vegetables. Job stations include harvesting, weighing and packaging. Bring gloves and snips (if you have them), snacks, water, sun protection, bug repellent and weather-appropriate clothing.

Roundabout Meadows Community Farm is located at 39990 Howsers Branch Drive, Aldie, Virginia.
The Volgenau Foundation, we are committed to matching the county dollar for dollar if their final CIP from the Commonwealth. Thanks to a grant from which will allow them to secure matching funds for their Chase of Development Rights (PDR) program for the first time since it was drafted as part of the county’s Code for Agricultural Lands Preservation in 2007. The Board of Supervisors, who will be able to waive facility standards and a requirement for additional zoning ordinance that expedites cell tower proposals in “target areas.” While the ordinance does include facility standards and a requirement for additional review of sites located in sensitive areas, towers in “target areas” will be still be expedited to the Board of Supervisors, who will be able to waive facility standards and suggested mitigation. We are concerned about these changes because “target areas” have not yet been identified.

This past January, as Clarke County community members enjoyed lunch at the Locke Store, we led a discussion about land use, land conservation and advocacy-related topics for the county and the Commonwealth. We host luncheons on a regular basis throughout the region. To learn more, please contact Karissa Ealey at kepley@pecva.org.

This past December, Adam White donated a conservation easement to PEC, ensuring the protection of his family’s 67-acre farm in Culpeper County. In an effort to improve broadband coverage, the Board of Supervisors plan to vote in March on a new zoning ordinance that expedites cell tower proposals in “target areas.” While the ordinance does include facility standards and a requirement for additional review of sites located in sensitive areas, towers in “target areas” will be still be expedited to the Board of Supervisors, who will be able to waive facility standards and suggested mitigation. We are concerned about these changes because “target areas” have not yet been identified.

Efforts to designate a new scenic corridor between Crozet and Front Royal took a big step forward this past January. The Greene County Board of Supervisors is in support of designating Rt. 230 and 810 as Virginia Scenic Byways, a major coup for PEC’s efforts to help promote the rural economy. If approved by VDOT, travelers looking for rural places to explore will have a new guide. This also fits in with part of Greene’s emphasis on linking tourism with economic development, and will connect Blue Ridge Heritage Project monuments related to the construction of the Shenandoah National Park and the displacement of many who were forced to leave their homes.

PEC is partnering with Clarke County and Friends of the Shenandoah River to monitor local stream quality by looking for macroinvertebrates. These bugs tolerate different stream conditions and levels of pollution, so they are great indicators of stream health. Findings will be shared among partners to help efforts in protecting water quality. The program starts this spring. If you would like to volunteer, contact PEC’s field representative Tracy Lind at tlind@pecva.org.

PEC is now offering educational opportunities and conservation events! The master plan includes a prioritized list of environmental projects and outreach activities, including volunteer work days to help build community Farm at Roundabout Meadows, continues to prepare for the growing season and recruiting volunteers (see cover article to learn more).

This page includes this funding. This program recognizes the important agricultural heritage of Culpeper, creating viable economic solutions for farmers who seek to protect their land with a conservation easement.

In December, the Board of Supervisors unanimously approved the creation of a Conservation Easement Assistance Program. The board’s action set aside $150,000 in funding for conservation easements. The program will provide grants of up to $15,000 to qualifying landowners. Additional information about the program can be found at www.loudoun.gov.
UPCOMING EVENTS

Event details subject to change. Please check pecva.org/events for the latest information.

Turning the Map Green
When: Sunday, March 24 - 4:30 pm - 7 pm
Where: Waterford Old School, 40222 Fairfax St, #424 b, Waterford, VA
PEC will be discussing land use and conservation issues in Loudoun County and the Catoctin Creek watershed. Learn how conservation and agriculture work together and about a fund that helps rural landowners with conservation easement costs.
Free. Registration required. Contact Tracy Lind at tlind@pecva.org or 540-347-2334 ext. 7066.

Annual Bluebell Walk at Cedar Run
When: Saturday, April 13 - 2 pm - 3 pm
Where: Bonny Brook Farm, 8446 Old Dumfries Road, Catlett, VA
Celebrate spring and walk through a conserved farm to see native bluebells along Cedar Run. Outdoor clothing with waterproof boots is recommended. Donations can be made at the event for PEC’s Julian W. Scheer Paquier Land Conservation Fund. No dogs allowed on property.
Free. Registration required. Contact Karissa Epley at kepley@pecva.org or 540-347-2334 ext. 7002.

Loudoun Nature Days
When: Saturday, April 6 - 10 am
Where: PEC’s Community Farm at Roundabout Meadows
Join PEC in celebrating the second annual Loudoun Nature Days. Come learn about Roundabout Meadows Community Farm and get your hands dirty!
Free. Registration not required. Contact Dana Melby at dmelby@pecva.org or 540-347-2334 ext. 7068.

From the Rappahannock, For the Rappahannock
When: Sunday, April 7
Where: Marriott Ranch, Hume
Join Friends of the Rappahannock, PEC and the John Marshall Soil and Water Conservation District for a day at the iconic Marriott Ranch to celebrate the Rappahannock River watershed. There will be Rappahannock River oysters from the Oyster Company of Virginia, catered barbecue from Marriott Ranch, local wine and beer, live music, hayride tours, fish shocking demonstrations and more.
Tickets are $35, which includes two drinks, BBQ and local oysters. To register, visit www.riverfriends.org/events. For questions, contact Bryan Hoffman at Bryan.Hoffman@riverfriends.org or 540-373-3448 ext 112.

Solarize Piedmont
When: April 16 - June 14
Where: Albemarle/ Charlottesville, Clarke, Culpeper, Fauquier, Greene, Loudoun, Madison, Orange and Rappahannock counties
Residents and businesses within PEC’s service territory can take advantage of competitive rates and financing mechanisms designed specifically for solar energy systems. If you’ve been thinking about installing solar panels on your home, farm or business, this is your opportunity to find out if it will work for you. This campaign is a cooperative program with PEC, Local Energy Alliance Program, the Northern Virginia Regional Commission and the Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission.
To get started or learn more, visit pecva.org/solarize.

Earth Day Ice Cream Social with Moo-Thru
When: Monday, April 22 - 2 pm - 5 pm
Where: PEC Office, 45 Horner St., Warrenton, VA
Come celebrate Earth Day with free dessert from Moo-Thru, who will bring their ice cream truck to PEC’s Warrenton office parking lot. Join us for good conversation, delicious local ice cream and celebrations!
Free. Registration not required. For questions, contact Karissa Epley at kepley@pecva.org.

Raptors on the Farm
When: Saturday, May 4
Where: PEC’s Community Farm at Roundabout Meadows
Join PEC and wildlife rehabilitators Dr. Burwell and Nikki Stamps for an informative talk on birds of prey. Learn about their important role as predators of agricultural pests, and how PEC is improving habitat for raptors and other birds on our Community Farm. A few raptor ambassador ships will be attending.
Free. Registration required. See pecva.org/events to register. Contact Dana Melby at dmelby@pecva.org or 540-347-2334.

Rivanna Riverfest
When: Saturday, May 11 - 10 am - 5 pm
Where: Darden Towe Park and Rivanna River Company
Join Albemarle County, the City of Charlottesville and many community partners to celebrate one of our greatest shared treasures. Activities include canoe, kayak and foot races, arts and crafts and a fun party. Family-friendly event.
For questions, contact Peter Krebs at pkrebs@pecva.org.

Goose Creek Watershed: Conservation Funding Workshop
When: Thursday, May 16 - 5:30 pm - 7:30 pm
Where: Hill School, 130 S Madison St, Middleburg, VA
The Goose Creek watershed represents a national model for land conservation. Join PEC and our partners for a free dinner and review of conservation successes and challenges in the watershed, including an overview of conservation programs that are available to assist landowners.
Free. Registration required. Contact Tracy Lind at tlind@pecva.org or 540-347-2334 ext. 7066.

Farm Leasing Panel and Meet & Greet
When: To Be Announced
Where: Springhouse Farm, 16848 Hamilton Station Rd, Hamilton, VA
Access to affordable farmland is one of the primary barriers for next generation farmers. Hear from Andrew Crush, owner of Springhouse Farm, and others about the challenges and steps they took to establish their operations and land leasing relationships. Meet other landowners and farmers interested in leasing land during a speed meet and greet session.
Free. Registration required. Contact Tracy Lind at tlind@pecva.org or 540-347-2334 ext. 7066.

Sunset Safari: The Final Year!
When: Saturday, June 8 - 4 pm - 9 pm
Where: Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute, Front Royal, VA
A collaborative benefit for PEC, Shenandoah National Park Trust and Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute. Enjoy wildlife tours, followed by cocktails and dinner at Racetrack Hill overlooking the beautiful landscape and Shenandoah National Park.
Tickets: $300 per person. For more information and sponsorship opportunities, contact Karissa Epley, kepley@pecva.org or 540-347-2334.

Tour de Solar
When: To Be Announced
Where: Community Bikes, 405 Avon St to Sun Tribe Solar, 1801 Broadway, Charlottesville, VA
Join a neighborhood bike tour to see homes that have participated in LEAP’s Solarize campaign. Installers and experts will talk about the process and benefits of solar. The ride will conclude with a free lunch and tour of Sun Tribe’s warehouse facility.
Free. RSVP encouraged. Contact Peter Krebs at pkrebs@pecva.org or 434-977-2033 ext. 7065.

Good Bug, Bad Bug
When: Saturday, June 15 - 10:30 am
Where: PEC’s Community Farm at Roundabout Meadows
Join Piedmont Environmental Council and the Loudoun County Master Gardeners for a on farm lecture about which bugs are our friends and which are our foes.
Free. Registration required. Contact Dana Melby at dmelby@pecva.org or 540-347-2334 ext. 7068.

Family Fishing Day at Rappahannock Park
When: Saturday, June 8 - 9 am - 12 pm
Where: Rappahannock Park, 10 Park Lane, Washington, VA
Join Rappahannock County Parks Facilities Authority (RCRFA), PEC, RappFLOW, VA Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, Friends of the Rappahannock, and Trout Unlimited. Riparian Chapter for a family fishing day at the Rush River.
Free. Open to public. Contact Claire Catlett, ccatlett@pecva.org or 540-347-2334 ext. 7060.

Spring 2019
Dear Friends,

As I sit in my office, I can see the maple trees budding and about to burst open with the excitement that comes with every springtime in the Piedmont region. And that is how I feel about all of the upcoming activities we have planned this spring to help create better, more sustainable communities throughout our region.

I am encouraged by the positive efforts PEC is sponsoring across so many issues and places. In every case, we are trying to address the challenges our region faces with constructive, proactive solutions. The future faces many threats that have complex origins. We are working hard to provide you with the best information available to understand the challenges of land use, transportation, energy, food systems, and pollution control.

Sometimes, the solutions are straightforward. For example, we know planting native trees helps produce habitat and food for wildlife, create riparian buffers to filter pollution before it enters streams and rivers, and provide shade to keep native fish cool in the summer. Planting many native trees can even reduce flooding and the effects of stormwater runoff. PEC’s Headwaters Stream Initiative, our collaborative effort with Friends of the Rappahannock, works to get more trees planted in the Rappahannock River watershed; and so does our work with suburban Homeowner Associations in Loudoun County in the Goose Creek and Potomac watersheds. If you are looking for something positive to do, plant some native trees from a local nursery!

Every day, I get updates on the progress at PEC’s Community Farm at Roundabout Meadows — and I can’t wait until the next bulletin! Skilled volunteers from the Fauquier and Loudoun Garden Club have already helped with planting seed trays, which are now sprouting and growing in the greenhouse at Blandy, the Virginia State Arboretum. The deer fencing is in, the tractor and plow are ready, and we are just waiting for the sun and wind to dry the soil enough so we can prepare the crop beds! This entire effort is to provide delicious, healthy food for families in need, while providing residents an opportunity to volunteer.

Every day, I get updates on advocacy efforts happening in each of our nine counties, in the General Assembly, and in Congress, where we are working hard to build support for funding the conservation and restoration of land and water. Despite turmoil in the headlines, we are making progress and building on the momentum of the bipartisan agreement on the Farm Bill that authorizes $450 million for the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program, which funds projects like the Glenmary Farm easement we reported on last fall. Elected officials know programs that address quality of life issues are central to most people’s priorities for government.

Every day, I get updates on the long list of events PEC is sponsoring for people to see and learn about the history, natural resources and beauty of the Piedmont. The more I learn, the more I am motivated to provide for long-term conservation. This spring and summer, come participate in the pollinator survey at the Larson Native Plant Garden at our offices in Warrenton, and learn which plants provide the most attractive food for bees and butterflies. You can also join our staff experts to learn about the current programs for funding conservation and restoration. And do not miss out on the special opportunity to see bluebells and other native plants as they come into bloom on a conserved property along Cedar Run. We look forward to seeing you this season!

Sincerely,

Chris Miller, President

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Bluebells from PEC’s Annual Bluebell Walk at Cedar Run. See page 7 for a list of upcoming events. Photo by Cynthia Benitz

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**Pop Quiz**

**QUESTION**

What does Rappahannock mean in the Native American Algonquian language?

a) Bottom of the mountain  
b) Quick rising waters  
c) Winding river  
d) River of plenty

**ANSWER ON PAGE 5**

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Dear Friends,

Bluebells from PEC’s Annual Bluebell Walk at Cedar Run. See page 7 for a list of upcoming events. Photo by Cynthia Benitz

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**2018’s Land Conservation Totals, Pollinator Survey, Sustaining Gift, Greenway Study and more!**

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