Connecting Community
A park and trail effort in Gordonsville

By Paula Cambis

Parks, trails and sidewalks help weave a community together. Simply put, when we are connected to gathering places, we become better connected to each other. A walkable town or neighborhood allows for a stronger ‘sense of place’ to develop. This notion is behind a collaborative effort led by The Piedmont Environmental Council, residents and local businesses in Gordonsville, Virginia. The energetic group and initiative are called Town to Trail.

At the heart of the endeavor is Verling Park, located in the center of the Madison Barbour Rural Historic District, and just a short walk away from the town’s fairgrounds. Despite it being only two blocks off Main Street, there are no sidewalks leading to the open space. The park is surrounded by quaint family homes on all sides, but it has an outdated playground, a tennis court with severely cracked pavement, and the only public pool in the county, which has been around since the 1950s. Locals say it’s a place where many residents learned how to swim.

PEC’s Orange County field representative, Peter Hujik, explains how the Town to Trail effort began to unfold, “The University of Virginia School of Architecture hosted a planning charrette for the community in the fall of 2016 to flesh out concepts from the Gordonsville Comprehensive Plan. And I was pleasantly surprised to see emphasis put on parks and trails. They specifically proposed working on Verling Park and connecting it to the local fairgrounds.”

Peter wanted to ensure the ideas discussed in the charrette would come to fruition, so in the following spring, he started planning how to move forward.

Liz Samra, a Town Council member and resident whose family lives within walking distance to the park, remembers, “Peter, inspired by the Gordonsville visioning, came to us and said, ‘You know, we need to make sure this park happens.’”

“In my role on Council, I’ve had an opportunity to attend a number of statewide meetings about financing infrastructure and town planning, and everything reinforces that developing a park in the heart of town is the perfect continued on page 4
Train, Bus or Something New? Considering Trackless Trams

By Sean Tubbs

A s the population of Albermarle and Charlottesville continues to rise, a world-renowned professor of sustainability wants us to imagine how a new form of mass transportation could help create even better places to live.

"Most cities can see the problem because people sit in traffic and shake their heads and say 'there's got to be something better than this,'" said Peter Newman of Curtin University in Perth, Western Australia.

Newman is lead author for transport and land use at the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. He was invited by The Piedmont Environmental Council to share his thoughts on "trackless trams," autonomous vehicles that look like trains but have rubber wheels. They use LIDAR and satellite tracking to guide themselves along a fixed path without a rail.

Newman has written over 20 books and 300 papers on sustainability. He came to the United States in early April to promote the technology.

"We met with everyday American citizens about one of our country's and our world's greatest problems, which is automobile dependence," said Mark Cave, a local entrepreneur who went on the trip.

Transit As A Land Use Tool

Newman's experience with the link between transportation and land use dates back to the 1970s when he moved to Fremantle, a suburb of Perth.

"We were designed around the car, like most American cities," Newman said.

"We were going the way of automobile dependence and we've begun to reverse it."

Newman said the challenge in Fremantle is how to connect suburbs with the more dense urban core. Railways allow passengers to move faster than traffic because there is less competition for space on the rails.

"If you make a choice to put your money into rail, you will not just get better service, but you'll get better city because it will help you to develop centers rather than scattering land use," Newman said.

"You start to build along that train line so the city center revives."

However, building new rail lines is very expensive. Trackless trams are being deployed in fast-growing Asian cities as a cost-effective solution. He said the vehicles are half the weight of a typical diesel bus because there is no engine.

One potential pathway would be in a highway's shoulders where the vehicles could go around obstacles.

"It is fixed, but it's also flexible because you can overdrive it and go around anything," Newman said.

Left to Right: PEC's Sean Tubbs, Charlottesville entrepreneur Mark Cave and Professor Peter Newman. Photo by Charlie Hargroves, Curtin University

Linking Transit And Land Use Planning

For decades, Arlington County's General Land Use Plan has used the Metro line to help increase residential density by building up, providing more people opportunities to live close to their commute. He suggested something similar could happen in Albermarle on U.S. 29.

"This is a retail strip, and maybe there is a demand in the future to turn it into an urban opportunity, and an urban corridor, where there's a lot more density," Newman said.

The population of Albermarle County is estimated by the Weldon Cooper Center at the University of Virginia to be around 108,000. Their projections estimate that figure will climb to over 141,000 by 2040. To accommodate that potential growth, Albermarle's comprehensive plan calls for additional density within the development area.

Newman said five local governments around Perth in Western Australia are planning for mass transit along a 30-kilometer corridor. They are betting that if the housing market can provide places to live that are close to urban centers, the trams will get passengers.

"People will get out of their cars if it's faster and convenient," Newman said.

"That's how you regenerate your city while getting an electric transit system."

Thinking Local

Newman said citizen involvement in transportation issues is crucial.

"Who has the power here, really?" Newman asked. "Us. You get out there and create the movement that sets the agenda."

Citizens and residents interested in the future of mass transportation in our community should be aware that there are opportunities at the moment. Albermarle County has been steadily increasing their funding for Charlottesville Area Transit, an agency of the city government.

The TIPDC, created a regional transit partnership to help increase efficiency and effectiveness of Charlottesville Area Transit, JUNCT and the University's transit system. The partner's meetings are open to the public and comments are taken at the start of each one.

Coming Together for a Better Loudoun

Continued from cover

from the beginning, with calls for the county to manage growth, catch up on needed public facilities, protect the Transition Policy Area and preserve what makes Loudoun unique and desirable. Unfortunately, the county's main concerns and issues were blurred or ignored along the way, which is evident in the draft the Board of Supervisors received from the Planning Commission in March of 2019.

Throughout the process, PEC worked with the Loudoun County Preservation and Conservation Coalition, the Coalition of Loudoun Towns, the Transition Area Alliance and many other local groups who care deeply about the future of Loudoun to review and comment on the numerous iterations of the draft plan.

This spring, we took the results of that review and conducted 13 presentations to communities throughout the county to empower and educate citizens about the potential threats the draft plan poses to residents' quality of life.

As a result of these joint efforts over several years, residents turned out at the two school boundary line adjustments.

Two major issues with the draft plan:

1) It's too much, too fast and too scattered. The plan calls for approximately 28,500 more residential units, which would increase Loudoun's total buildout to more than 73,000 units — a 50 percent increase over the 136,602 units that currently exist.

2) It's a plan to destroy the Transition Policy Area. The Transit Policy Area provides a distinct visual and spatial separation between the heavily suburban development in the east and the rural area to the west. It was intended to permanently protect important drinking water sources, as well as environmental and heritage resources.

The draft plan would increase total residential buildout out of the Transition Policy Area from 11,382 units to approximately 35,000 units (tripling in size).

It would allow 6.5 million square feet of scattered commercial and industrial development throughout the Transition Policy Area.

It would diminish drinking water source protections for the Goose Creek and Occoquan reservoirs by reducing required open space from 70 percent to 50 percent. More development also increases impervious cover, lowering water quality.

A decision on the comprehensive plan by the Board of Supervisors is imminent. So far, as expected, the Board has struggled most with what to do about the Transition Policy Area. And their decisions on the Transition Policy Area will largely determine the future direction of the county. Will it stick with a plan that manages growth, protects quality of life and the environment, and preserve natural and heritage sources, or not?

Interested in learning more or taking action? Reach out to Gem Bingal at gbingal@pecva.org or visit pecva.org/loudoun.
A Trail Through History

A bucolic scene of sweeping vistas in the Crooked Run Valley, the views from PEC’s Piedmont Memorial Overlook are steeped in history. Beginning in the 1930s, members of the newly formed hiking group, known as the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club (PATC), began scouting the area around the Overlook in Fauquier and Clarke counties, exploring possible routes for blazing a new trail along the crest of the Appalachian Mountains. A memo from L.F. Schmeckebier to members of PATC in 1934 stated, “There is still another route south from Ashby Gap...along the crest of the ridge...At the end of the same wood road is a good site for a shelter. The land has been cleared and is in grass and there is a good spring close by. There was formerly a house here — the Marshall property — and the old foundation would probably yield enough stone.”

By 1941, the Club had constructed a log lean-to shelter (Ashby Gap Shelter) to serve through hikers along the Appalachian Trail, and the trail itself had been re-routed along the crest of the ridge — approximately in the same location as the stone wall that runs through the Overlook property today. Between 1941 and 1955, many hikers stopped and stayed at the Ashby Gap Shelter, including the AT’s first through hiker, Earl Shaffer, and took in the spectacular views from the meadow along the ridgeline. Due to increasing pressures from nearby landowners, this location of the trail was abandoned and the trail’s path went through several re-routes over the next few decades.

By late 1984, the Club had reconnected with the state of Virginia and the National Park Service. The first milestones were laid out from the Ashby Gap property today. In 1987, the Club purchased a property — and the old foundation would soon become the site of a lean-to shelter (Ashby Gap Shelter) to serve through hikers along the Appalachian Trail. The land has been cleared and is in grass and there is a good spring close by. There was formerly a house here — the Marshall property — and the old foundation would probably yield enough stone.”

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In 2000, PEC acquired 1,250 acres of land on and adjacent to Ovoka Mountain, with the goal of preserving the area and its vistas. Approximately 445 acres were transferred by PEC to the National Park Service in 2003 to re-route the AT and give it a permanent location. At the top of Ovoka Mountain, PEC designated 50 acres to become the current Piedmont Memorial Overlook.

Today, PEC is actively exploring ways to honor the history of the AT and the role the Overlook played its in early days. The shelter no longer stands on the property — it was recently disassembled due to its deteriorated state — but, in the future, PEC hopes to provide interpretation and visitor engagement in the area where it once stood.

Preserving Historic Lands and Working Farms

Thanks to a substantial grant from The Volgenau Foundation, PEC has funding available to preserve working farmland and historic lands in Culpeper, Fauquier, Madison, Orange and Rappahannock counties. The Volgenau Foundation grant will accelerate PEC’s efforts to assist landowners with conserving some of the most fertile agricultural areas in Virginia.

Over the next two years, PEC hopes to work with farm owners and operators to conserve an additional 1,000-3,000 acres, focusing on lands in the Rappahannock-Rapidan watershed. With its prime farm soils and plentiful water, this area has sustained a strong agricultural economy. PEC is partnering with The Volgenau Foundation to leverage public and private funds and conserve more prime farm and historic lands faster.

Earlier this year, PEC approached Culpeper County with an exciting opportunity for matching funds, and this spring the county put money into its farmland Purchase of Development Rights program for the first time. Culpeper’s $100,000 appropriation will be matched by $100,000 in Volgenau Foundation funds. This could leverage an additional $200,000 if Virginia fully funds its Farmland Preservation Program.

Welcome 2019 Fellows!

Twelve college students from around the country will arrive in Warrenton this June to kick off the 13th annual Fellowship Program. They will spend seven weeks immersed in everything PEC is involved in: land conservation, agriculture, transportation, historic preservation, land use policy and more. In addition to classroom instruction, the fellows will visit properties to see conservation easements and best management practices in action. They will also participate in stream monitoring to measure water quality and learn about native aquatic life. Visits to the Virginia State Capitol in Richmond and the Clarke County Planning Commission will provide an opportunity to learn about local and state policies and how they impact the environment. They will also visit agricultural lands, including PEC’s Community Farm at Roundabout Meadows, which helps feed Loudoun County’s food insecure populations.

George Castillo
Yale University
Class of 2020

Molly Cullen
University of Virginia
Class of 2021

Emily Dalton
Virginia Tech
Class of 2021

Ariel Gans
University of California Berkeley
Class of 2019

Kaitlin King
James Madison University
Class of 2020

Benjamin Landskot
The College of William & Mary
Class of 2019

Jake Nicastro
Vanderbilt University
Class of 2020

Neil Pearson
Bates College
Class of 2020

Philip Pericak
Christopher Newport University
Class of 2020

Katelyn Schmidthmann
High Point University
Class of 2019

Merissa Shebell
University of Richmond
Class of 2019

Benjamin Thompson
Cleveland State University
Class of 2020

Annabelle Stanley
Columbia University
Class of 2020
connecting community

Continued from cover

thing to do.”
Three community meetings were held to garner feedback from residents and discuss ways to improve the public space for everyone.

“The Town to Trail goal is to connect, whether you’re walking or exercising or biking,” said Emily Wink, the Vice Mayor of Gordonsville and a passionate advocate for the effort.

Throughout the public feedback meetings, residents expressed their desire for a more functional park that serves the whole community. With that input in mind, PEC retained Land Planning and Design Associates to develop a concept design for a revamped Verling Park.

Some elements in the concept design include a complete overhaul of the swimming pool area, a plaza entrance, a circuit of fitness stations and an updated playground. Additionally, enhanced stormwater management was incorporated into the plan, as a stream runs directly through the park.

Until recently, there was a derelict house on Linney Street, which created a visual barrier for neighbors on the northeast side of the park. PEC secured funds so the town could purchase the property and incorporate the land into the park. The house was demolished last December, and now Verling Park is an entire block, opening it up visually and physically to all neighbors.

The early stage of expanding and refurbishing the park is already beginning to bring people together,” said Peter. “Once completed, the park will no doubt breathe fresh life into the Gordonsville community.”

Meet Volunteer Intern

Nicole Bartholomais

While Nicole was a senior at Fauquier High School in Warrenton, Va., she assisted PEC’s conservation and land use representatives with numerous tasks this past winter and spring. She was always willing to lend a helping hand.

She learned about land conservation easements, pollinators and environmental policy while working on assignments.

“My favorite part about interning at PEC was attending the pollinator survey training,” says Nicole. “It was something I didn’t know much about and I enjoyed getting to expand my knowledge on the subject.”

“Thank you PEC for helping to teach me and for giving me the opportunity to experience a workplace. I will take these valuable experiences with me into my future.”

We want to express our thanks to Nicole for doing a great job!

Meet Volunteer Intern

Yasmin Zarabni

Yasmin just completed her junior year at Highland School in Warrenton, Va., and has been interning with us since January. She assists staff with a variety of tasks in our headquarters office.

“I’ve been able to learn more about environmental issues and topics in our community by helping with daily newsletter and learning about the Goose Creek watershed for a water quality easement project,” explains Yasmin.

She says her favorite part about volunteering with PEC is “getting to be more involved with our community and learning new skills, such as interpreting easements and using newsletter software.”

Thank you for your continued efforts, Yasmin!

Upcoming Events

Pollinator Walk at Roundabout Meadows

When: Saturday, June 15, 2019
Where: Mt. Zion Historic Park

PEC staff will lead an informative walk through the wetland and wildlife management area of our Roundabout Meadows farm property. Participants will learn about pollinator habitat, life histories and conservation.

Register at pecva.org/events. For questions, contact Celia Vuocolo at cvuocolo@pecva.org or (540) 347-2334 ext. 7086.

Rappahannock Land Conservation Workshop

When: Wednesday, July 24 - 5 – 7 pm
Where: Washington Fire Hall

PEC’s Krebser Fund invites Rappahannock landowners to learn about the variety of local conservation options available to them, such as conservation easements, farm plans, fencing cost-share, riparian buffers, habitat restoration and more! Hear an overview of conservation programs offered by: Virginia Department of Forestry, Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District, USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service, and PEC.

Registration required. Visit pecva.org/events or contact Claire Catlett at ccatlett@pecva.org or (540) 347-2334 ext. 7060.

Community Farm Fest

When: Saturday, August 17
Where: The Community Farm at Roundabout Meadows

Join PEC in celebrating the inaugural season of our Community Farm! Come out for an afternoon of food, local breweries, activities for the whole family and live music. More details coming soon!

Contact Dana Melby at dmelby@pecva.org or (540) 347-2334 ext. 7060.

pop quiz

Who was the first person to hike the Appalachian Trail from beginning to end, and what year?

ANSWER

a) Earl Shaffer

Join PEC in celebrating the inaugural season of our Community Farm! Come out for an afternoon of food, local breweries, activities for the whole family and live music. More details coming soon!

Contact Dana Melby at dmelby@pecva.org or (540) 347-2334 ext. 7060.

Photo courtesy of National Museum of American History
Albemarle

Keeping Albemarle Balanced

PEC continues to monitor a development boom in Albemarle County. The good news is that most proposals for new homes are within the designated development area. However, some residents question whether the county can keep up with growth. Under new county executive Jeffrey Richardson, county planners are creating and updating master plans to make sure there are parks, sidewalks and trails. Through our advocacy efforts and your support, PEC helped secure $12 million in the county’s capital budget to help pay for them.

Clarke

Conservation and Water Quality Education

PEC is helping plan the Clarke County Conservation Fair for the twelfth year in a row! Clarke’s fourth-grade students will spend a day at Powhatan School in September to learn about the environment through 15 stations hosted by area organizations. Additional good news is the Powhatan School was recommended for 2019 funding from the Chesapeake Bay Restoration Fund. This grant will help further education in water quality and conservation by providing teachers and students (grades 4-5) with materials needed to participate in an interactive hands-on approach to water quality monitoring in the streams located on their property. PEC will help train staff and work with the classes.

Culpeper

A Target for Utility-Scale Solar?

Submissions for utility-scale solar applications continue. The Cricket Solar, LLC application is scheduled for the Planning Commission public hearing on July 10. Given its proximity to numerous natural, cultural and historic resources, PEC has raised concerns about the application. Two additional projects are also being discussed:

1) A “live application” for Mountain View Farm, LLC on 195.1 acres, forested-tract in northwest Culpeper, off of Route 522, without supporting documents; and

2) A “forthcoming application” south of the Town of Culpeper off of Route 522.

In addition to these applications, a rezoning request associated with a data center has been submitted to the Planning Commission by Red Axe Capital Management, LLC. The company is applying to rezone six parcels totalling 84.79 acres from commercial to light industrial. The rezoning is requested for the northeast corner of the Route 29 and Route 3 intersection.

Fauquier

Data Centers and Rural Lands Comprehensive Plan

The county is evaluating its third data center application. The first was in Vint Hill, the second on Lucky Hill Road in Remington and the third is between Route 29/15 and Business Route 29/15 in Remington, just north of town. PEC has expressed concerns about this third proposal because it is inconsistent with the Remington Comprehensive Plan, it may impact the adjacent neighbors, and there is potential for increased flooding downstream.

The Rural Lands Plan is being reviewed by the Board of Supervisors after receiving a recommendation for approval from the Planning Commission. The county has held several community meetings and integrated many of the changes that PEC and others have suggested. We are supportive of the current draft and are encouraging adoption without significant changes.

Rain Garden in Rady Park

Through the Virginia Conservation Assistance Program and support from PEC, the Town of Warrenton partnered with John Marshall Soil and Water District to install its first rain garden at Rady Park. This rain garden features a pollinator-friendly palette of native plants and shrubs that will help slow, spread and soak up water, ultimately benefiting water quality in the adjacent stream and Warrenton’s Cedar Run watershed.

Native Plant Demonstration Garden

PEC staff and five volunteers installed a native plant demonstration garden at Powers Farm & Brewery in Midland this past April. The garden includes plants, shrubs, trees and grasses that support pollinators and beneficial insects, which complement Powers’ sustainable farming practices.

Greene

Monitoring Growth in Greene

Greene County’s comprehensive plan calls for a growth management strategy that protects agricultural and the beauty of the rural area. Greene’s new administrator Mark Taylor told the Board of Supervisors at his first meeting in April that he is attracted to those qualities. That same night, Supervisors delayed consideration of a zoning change that would have created more residential units along U.S. 29, a location that has been designated for future development in the comprehensive plan. At the same time, the county is moving forward with plans to build a reservoir to support the additional growth. PEC will continue to monitor this and will weigh in on issues as they arise.

Louderoun

Development Moving Forward

PEC’s aggressive 2019 outreach campaign, as well as ongoing partnerships with other local organizations, have helped invigorate public involvement as land development pressure increases across the county. In the Rural Policy Area, seven pre-applications are currently in process to monetize rural lands with event centers that lack connection to a land-based rural economy. Last year’s True North Data Center approval has spurred additional data center applications in the Transition Policy Area, further threatening source water protection goals as developers press for development in the comprehensive plan. At the same time, the county is moving forward with plans to build a reservoir to support the additional growth. PEC will continue to monitor this and will weigh in on issues as they arise.

Rappahannock

All Things Fish Friendly

PEC has been restoring trout habitat in and around the Rappahannock watershed since 2015, and we are happy to share that we have been working this spring to restore two miles of habitat at Bolton Branch, near Huntly, for native brook trout. Construction began in May 2019, and is funded by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, PEC’s Krebser Fund for Rappahannock County and the Ohrstrom Foundation. PEC looks ahead toward a partnership with USFWS and VDOT for more successful trout projects at Bolton Branch and Piney River.

Roundabout Meadows

The Community Farm at Roundabout Meadows is up and growing! As of this past May, the farm had over 60 volunteers, who helped with seed starting, habitat improvements and planting vegetables in the field.

Parks and Trails

Emerald Ribbons continues to move forward in the form of “linear parks and trails,” as mentioned in the most recent draft of the 2019 comprehensive plan. PEC and partners are working with the PROS Board to provide input on challenges, opportunities and planning. A brief draft plan is due to the Board of Supervisors for review in June.

Madison

The Not-So Rural Resort

PEC alerted residents to, and weighed in on, the “Rural Resort” zoning amendment in Madison County. Since the beginning of 2019, the Planning Commission has been working to incorporate language into its zoning ordinance that allows for “Rural Resorts” as a special use in agricultural zoned areas. Per the ordinance, which was passed unanimously by the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors on May 1, 2019, a “Rural Resort” is a “destination designed to provide recreation, entertainment and accommodations to transient guests.” Madison’s community crowded the Administration Center and submitted written comments during March, April and May, displaying concerns with the future implications of the proposed land use.

Orange

Comprehensive Plan and Healthy Watersheds

The Orange County Planning Commission voted (approved 4-1) on May 2, 2019 to create a work group to “review the current draft of the comprehensive plan update, and to review and incorporate in the Healthy Watersheds project elements.” The work group will be comprised of four members, including the Chair and Vice Chair of the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors. The work group will report the substance of its review to the Planning Commission and recommend any revisions to the current draft, along with the Healthy Watersheds elements. The Healthy Watersheds project seeks to promote proper conservation of forested land to promote the health of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

Rappahannock

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Out & About

From the Rappahannock, For the Rappahannock

MARRIOTT RANCH
HUME, VA • APRIL 7, 2019

PEC’s Celia Vuocolo (left) and Chris Miller (right) reconnect with former PEC staffer Maggie Lovitt while they enjoy the beautiful, conserved landscape of Marriott Ranch. Photo by Marco Sanchez

Annual Bluebell Walk

BONNY BROOK FARM
CATLETT, VA • APRIL 13, 2019

▲ Guests walk along Cedar Run, among the native bluebells that blossom during spring. Photo by Chris Miller

Public Art Bike Ride

CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA • APRIL 14, 2019

▲ Local art lovers learned more about Charlottesville’s murals and their community during the Public Art Bike Ride. This tour was part of the Tom Tom Founders Festival and co-sponsored by PEC, Charlottesville Bicycle-Pedestrian Advisory Committee and the Bridge PAI. Photo by Peter Krebs

Spring Flower Walk

BEARS DEN FARM
JEFFERSONTON, VA • APRIL 14, 2019

▲ PEC’s Celia Vuocolo leads a walk along the Rappahannock River in Jeffersonton to view spring ephemerals. Photo by Kelly Kreitmer
Volunteering at PEC’s Community Farm at Roundabout Meadows

LOUDOUN COUNTY, VA • APRIL–MAY 2019

The PEC crew came out for a staff planting day to learn about our Community Farm and help plant over 1,400 vegetable seedlings! Photo by Tracy Lind

Members of The Fauquier and Loudoun Garden Club played a critical role in helping to start the 4,500 transplants that will be planted at the farm. They helped to sow everything from broccoli to tomatillos! Photo by Dana Melby

Middleburg Spring Races

MIDDLEBURG, VA • APRIL 20, 2019

Julia Dolan (left) and PEC’s Karissa Epley (right) pose at the Middleburg Spring Races. PEC attended this year’s races and spoke with people about land conservation and land use topics in the Piedmont region. Photo by Chris Miller

Historic Garden Week

PEC’S HEADQUARTERS OFFICE
WARRENTON, VA • MAY 2–3, 2019

Left to right, PEC President Chris Miller, Garden Club members, Ingrid Hinckley Lindsay, Ann Rodman Shook and Margrete Stevens, and PEC development advisor Doug Larson. The Garden Club used PEC’s office as their headquarters for Historic Garden Week and incorporated the Larson Native Plant Garden into their tour. Photo by Marco Sanchez

Earth Day Ice Cream Social

PEC’S HEADQUARTERS OFFICE
WARRENTON, VA • APRIL 22, 2019

Over 100 people stopped by our office on Earth Day for Moo Thru ice cream, good conversation and a tour of the Larson Native Plant Garden.

Raptors on the Farm

WILEY CONFERENCE ROOM
LOUDOUN COUNTY, VA • MAY 4, 2019

Wildlife rehabilitators Nikki Stamps (pictured above) and Dr. Belinda Burwell gave an engaging talk on the diversity of owls and the important role they play in agricultural ecosystems.
Dear Friends,

Over the summer, Virginia will continue to grapple with changes to both the natural and the political environments. The elections of 2018 brought new faces to the Virginia Congressional delegation, with three incumbents losing races in districts with large urban and suburban populations in Northern Virginia, Richmond and Virginia Beach.

This year, state elections include all of the 100 Delegates, 40 Senators and many local elected offices. In 2020, the national census will begin a new process of redistricting, which many experts believe will result in a long-term shift of House and Senate districts to the north of the Rappahannock River, as well as the configuration of the Commonwealth’s congressional districts.

In the natural world, last year’s pattern of frequent heavy rains and increased coastal flooding are all part of accumulating evidence of long-term climate change, requiring us to reassess planting schedules, flood zones, permitting standards for water quality protection, especially for erosion and sedimentation controls during construction, and the design of roads and bridges. PEC has experienced this directly on our properties at the Piedmont Memorial Overlook and Roundabout Meadows.

The state framework for many water quality policies is being reviewed in the Virginia Watershed Implementation Plan to achieve the goal of cleaner rivers and streams and the Chesapeake Bay. This year, state elections include all of the 100 Delegates, 40 Senators and many local elected offices.

Virginians should not have to choose between beneficial forests and renewable energy. PEC has provided a detailed set of recommendations for localities to help them protect important conservation values while encouraging use of large rooftop areas and parking lots as alternative sites.

As we grapple with these types of choices, it is crucial that citizens hold candidates and agencies accountable for supporting policies that sustain and strengthen conservation.

At the state level, there is growing momentum to reduce the influence of regulated monopolies like Dominion Energy over elections and policy, with the formation of the non-partisan Virginia Energy Reform Coalition (VERC). The group consists of nine organizations, including PEC, from a wide range of public policy ideologies.

In the end, it is the day-to-day contact with our elected officials that makes the biggest difference.

We as citizens should become well informed on the issues and policy debates happening around us, and then take the time to communicate directly with our elected officials and government agencies.

Sincerely,

Chris Miller, President