

Land Conservation Update

A Publication of The Piedmont Environmental Council • 2022

Aligning Land with Nature

by Cindy Sabato

“When you get older, you start thinking about what you’ll leave behind, or what you did to make a difference. One of the ways we feel like our lives could make a difference is by doing something like this. We really love this property and have so much history here, and we want to do right by it,” said Susan Holden, sitting alongside husband Patrick on the farm his parents bought in 1958.



Susan and Patrick Holden at their Loudoun County farm. Photo by Hugh Kenny.

In 2021, the Holdens partnered with The Piedmont Environmental Council to permanently conserve their rolling 35-acre farm just south of the historic Quaker village of Lincoln in Loudoun County. They’d been thinking about conserving their land ever since they moved back to the family farm as a young married couple to help run the cow-calf operation and assist in Patrick’s mother’s health care. Their intentions became reality last year, when a number of programs fell into place that not only made donating a conservation easement possible, but will also help them realize their dreams for the future of the land.

The tax savings associated with donating a conservation easement are generally well known, but there are expenses too, from appraisals and land surveys to a stewardship contribution that conservation organizations use to care for the land in perpetuity. Many counties and conservation organizations have programs that help cover these costs for landowners,

and PEC was able to help the Holdens get support from both, including assistance from PEC’s James Rowley Goose Creek Conservation Fund.

“When we look across the fields, we take great pleasure in knowing it will never be developed and will always look much as it has during our time here.” But the Holdens also wanted to ensure their property would be attractive to their children or another landowner in the future. Every conservation easement is uniquely crafted, and the Holdens’ easement allows for an addition onto the house and outbuildings such as a garage or equipment barn.

Aside from protecting their land from development, the Holdens are avid birders and bee-keepers who also want to manage it into the future for wildlife habitat, “to bring the land back into balance with nature, to provide habitat for pollinators and birds, as well as maximize carbon sequestration,” Patrick said.

continued on page 2



Interested in Protecting Your Land?

The Piedmont Environmental Council’s conservation staff can help you explore your options. For more information, please contact your local PEC land conservation staff member.

Clarke & Loudoun Counties

Hallie Harriman
hharriman@pecva.org
(540) 347-2334 x7066

Culpeper & Fauquier Counties

Maggi Blomstrom
mbloomstrom@pecva.org
(540) 347-2334 x7067

Rappahannock County

Laura O’Brien
lobrien@pecva.org
(540) 347-2334 x7060

Orange & Madison Counties

Peter Hujik
phujik@pecva.org
(540) 347-2334 x7062

Albemarle & Greene Counties

Rex Linville
rlinville@pecva.org
(434) 977-2033 x7064

continued from page 1

Since the property is laced with 2,570 linear feet of streams, the Holdens have enrolled in PEC's riparian buffer program that provides qualifying landowners with free technical assistance, project design, materials and labor for the planting of native trees and shrubs along streams and waterways. They also look forward to partnering with their local Soil and Water Conservation District and the Natural Resources Conservation Service to convert several acres of former pasture land to native grasses and wildflower meadow. And they may also work with the Piedmont Grassland Bird Initiative on delaying haying on a portion of the property.



Within the broader landscape, the Holden property adds to the picture of publicly and privately conserved lands around it. Located in an area with a known history that goes back to the Manahoac tribe and later Quaker settlers, it has running water, lies within the viewshed of a scenic byway, and has agricultural soils of statewide importance, all situated within the Goose Creek Rural Historic District. This combination of attributes made this 35-acre property a conservation priority for The Piedmont Environmental Council.

Observing the rolling hills from his front door, Patrick says "It still looks very much the way I remember it growing up, and when we're gone, this is our gift to the land. We feel very fortunate and blessed to be able to express our values through an action like this. My mother was very environmentally aware and concerned, and she would be thrilled."

Holden farm, Loudoun County. Photo by Hugh Kenny.



**Piedmont
Environmental
Council**

Support Conservation

Since 1972, The Piedmont Environmental Council has proudly promoted and protected the natural resources, rural economy, history and beauty of the Virginia Piedmont. PEC empowers residents to protect what makes the Piedmont a wonderful place, and works with communities to conserve land, protect air and water quality and restore wildlife habitat.



GIVE BY MAIL:

P.O. Box 460
Warrenton, VA 20188



GIVE BY PHONE:

(540) 347-2334 ext. 7000



GIVE ONLINE:

www.pecva.org/give

What is a Conservation Easement? And is it Right for Me?

A conservation easement is an agreement between a landowner and a private land trust or a governmental conservation agency that limits future development on a property. Its purpose is to protect that property's conservation values, whether that be its farm, forest, water, habitat, scenic or cultural attributes. Restrictions in easements run with the land and apply to all future landowners. With an easement, you can protect the land you love for the benefit of current and future generations.

Conservation easements offer flexibility, and each one is unique. The terms of an easement and the protections placed on the property are negotiated between the landowner and the conservation organization. Typically, those terms:

- Limit the amount of subdivision and development allowed on the property;
- Protect important natural resources, including streams, productive agricultural soils, forests and natural habitat areas;
- Limit dumping, mining, grading and/or blasting on the property;
- Allow continuation of productive rural uses, such as agriculture, forestry, hunting and fishing.

The landowner who donates the easement continues to own, use and control the land subject to the terms of the easement. The landowner decides who has access to the property and for what purpose, just as before. The conservation organization is responsible for enforcing the terms of the conservation easement.

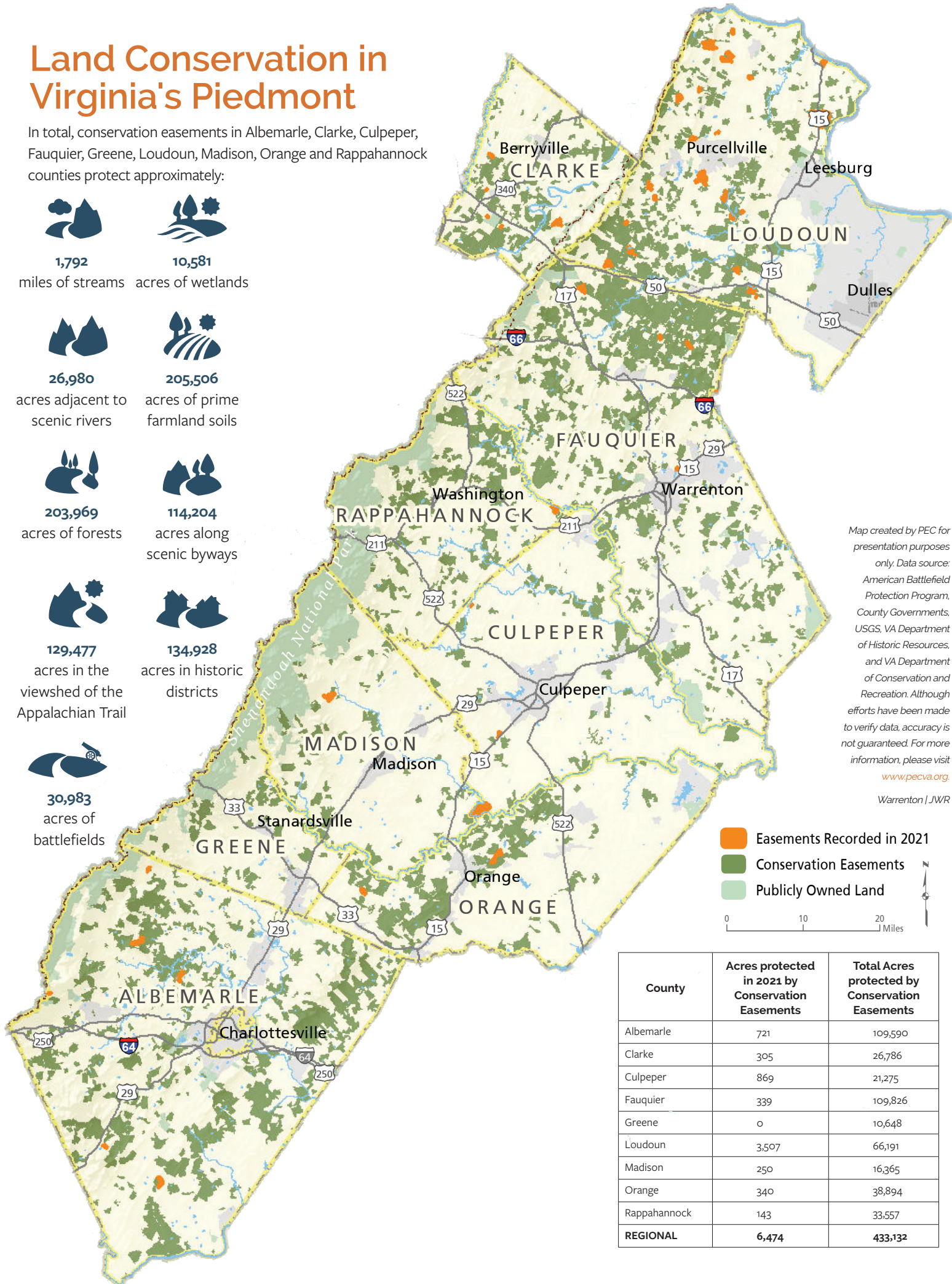
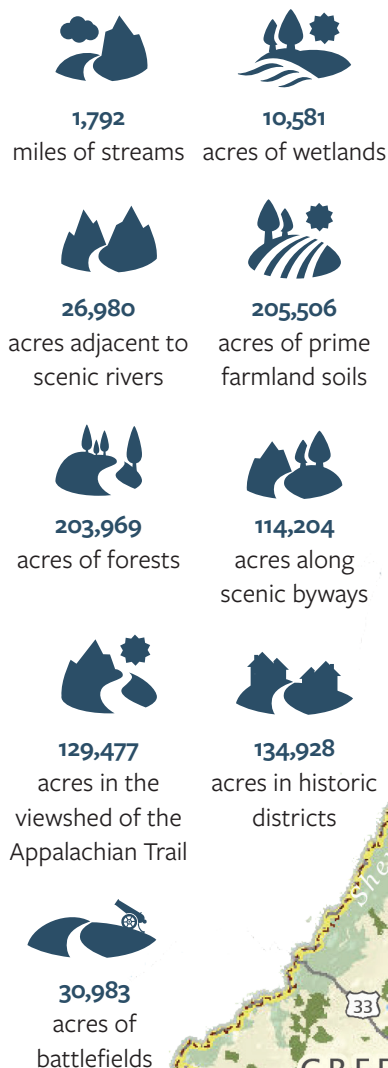
Landowners who donate conservation easements make a difference in shaping the future of their communities. Their actions benefit all of us by supporting clean water, productive farm and forestland, thriving natural habitats, climate resiliency and beautiful vistas.

Because of these public benefits, charitable donation of an easement may qualify landowners for tax incentives. Some counties have PDR (Purchase of Development Rights) programs, in which the county buys development rights from a landowner and then places an easement on the land. Also, in unique situations PEC staff may be able to work with the landowner to secure state or federal funding to purchase a conservation easement.

If you or someone you know is interested in learning more, please reach out to The Piedmont Environmental Council and visit pecva.org/easements. PEC is a private, accredited, nonprofit land trust, and our knowledgeable staff can guide you through the land protection process and provide you with up-to-date information on tax incentives or other tools available to help protect your land!

Land Conservation in Virginia's Piedmont

In total, conservation easements in Albemarle, Clarke, Culpeper, Fauquier, Greene, Loudoun, Madison, Orange and Rappahannock counties protect approximately:



Map created by PEC for presentation purposes only. Data source: American Battlefield Protection Program, County Governments, USGS, VA Department of Historic Resources, and 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.

Warrenton | JWR

County	Acres protected in 2021 by Conservation Easements	Total Acres protected by Conservation Easements
Albemarle	721	109,590
Clarke	305	26,786
Culpeper	869	21,275
Fauquier	339	109,826
Greene	0	10,648
Loudoun	3,507	66,191
Madison	250	16,365
Orange	340	38,894
Rappahannock	143	33,557
REGIONAL	6,474	433,132



Post Office Box 460
Warrenton, VA 20188
www.pecva.org

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit #57
Warrenton, VA

Inside

Aligning Land
with Nature

What is a Conservation
Easement?

Protected Land in
Virginia's Piedmont



pecva.org/conservation

"When you get older, you start thinking about what you'll leave behind or what you did to make a difference. We feel very fortunate and blessed to be able to express our values through an action like this."

- Patrick and Susan Holden, Loudoun County



Piedmont
Environmental
Council