



Piedmont
Environmental
Council

ANNUAL REPORT · 2024

Dear Friends,

For more than 50 years, PEC has worked to conserve and restore the lands of the northern Virginia Piedmont and balance development with the protection of our natural and cultural resources. The results of that work are evident all around us. The stunningly beautiful landscapes of the Piedmont are a testament to our success in working with landowners to protect their lands with conservation easements. Even as our region has grown significantly, farsighted land use planning by our local governments has ensured that this growth is focused in our existing communities — helping preserve and revitalize our historic towns and villages while also protecting the Piedmont's open spaces.

PEC is a central catalyst for shaping positive change in our region. Never has our holistic, community-centered approach been more needed than today, as our region faces unprecedented challenges from data center and energy development. With northern Virginia holding the largest concentration of data centers in the world, data center development proposals are rapidly sprawling into the Virginia Piedmont with no signs of slowing. At the same time, we have tremendous opportunities

to accelerate land conservation through new partnerships with landowners and farmers.

To address these challenges and opportunities, PEC's Board of Directors and staff developed our 2023-28 strategic plan around four focus areas, centered on conserving and restoring the Piedmont's lands and waters; creating stronger, more sustainable communities; shaping and advancing Virginia's clean energy future; and setting an example through land ownership.

We have emerged as a national leader in developing and advocating for solutions on data centers, working at every level from our local communities to state and federal policy reform. PEC is also leading the way in developing new partnerships to expand conserved lands. Today, the Piedmont has more than 450,000 acres of private land conserved with easements. Our goal is to protect an additional 100,000 acres by 2030, which would achieve conservation of



PLANTING TREES ON THE SPERRYVILLE TRAIL.
Photo by Hugh Kenny

30 percent of the Piedmont's lands, concentrated along the Blue Ridge and the rivers and streams that flow into the Chesapeake Bay. To reach this important threshold, we must take advantage of a variety of tools to conserve land, including innovative structures that include purchased easements of large working farms. 2024 was a milestone year for our farmland conservation efforts, as PEC secured more than \$4 million in federal, state and private grants to complete easements of four major working farms.

Together we have made tremendous strides in protecting the Piedmont and building stronger communities, but there is still much more work to be done. Thank you for your support, and please help us continue our efforts toward achieving a sustainable and thriving Virginia Piedmont for years to come.

Sincerely,



Chris Miller
President



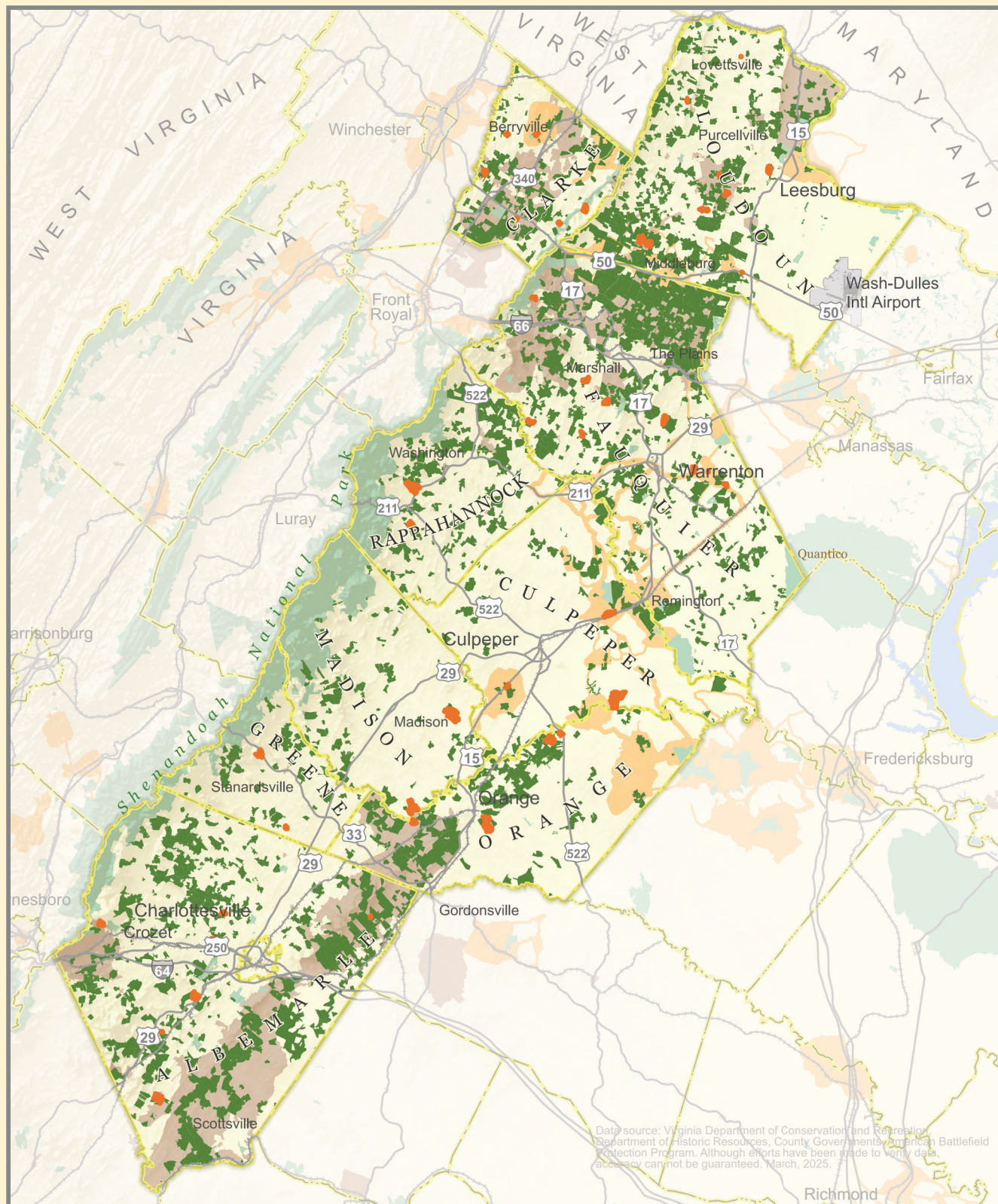
David Aldrich
Chair, Board of Directors



BLUEBELLS ALONG CEDAR RUN.
Photo by Scott Jenkins

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The Piedmont Region

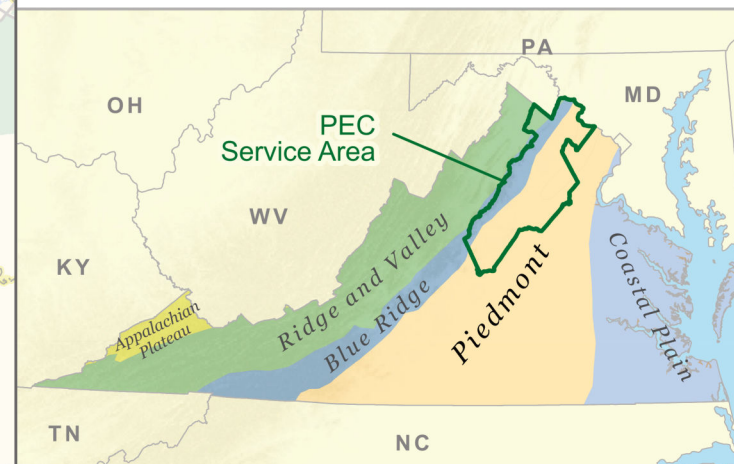
-  Easements Recorded in 2024
-  Conservation Easements
-  Publicly Owned Lands
-  Battlefield Areas
-  Historic Districts

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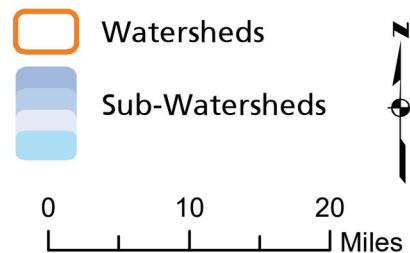
Virginia's northern Piedmont remains an exceptional place, despite development pressures. Residents have been strongly supportive of protecting its scenic beauty, agricultural economy, thriving communities, and unparalleled significance to America's history.

Physiographic Regions of Virginia

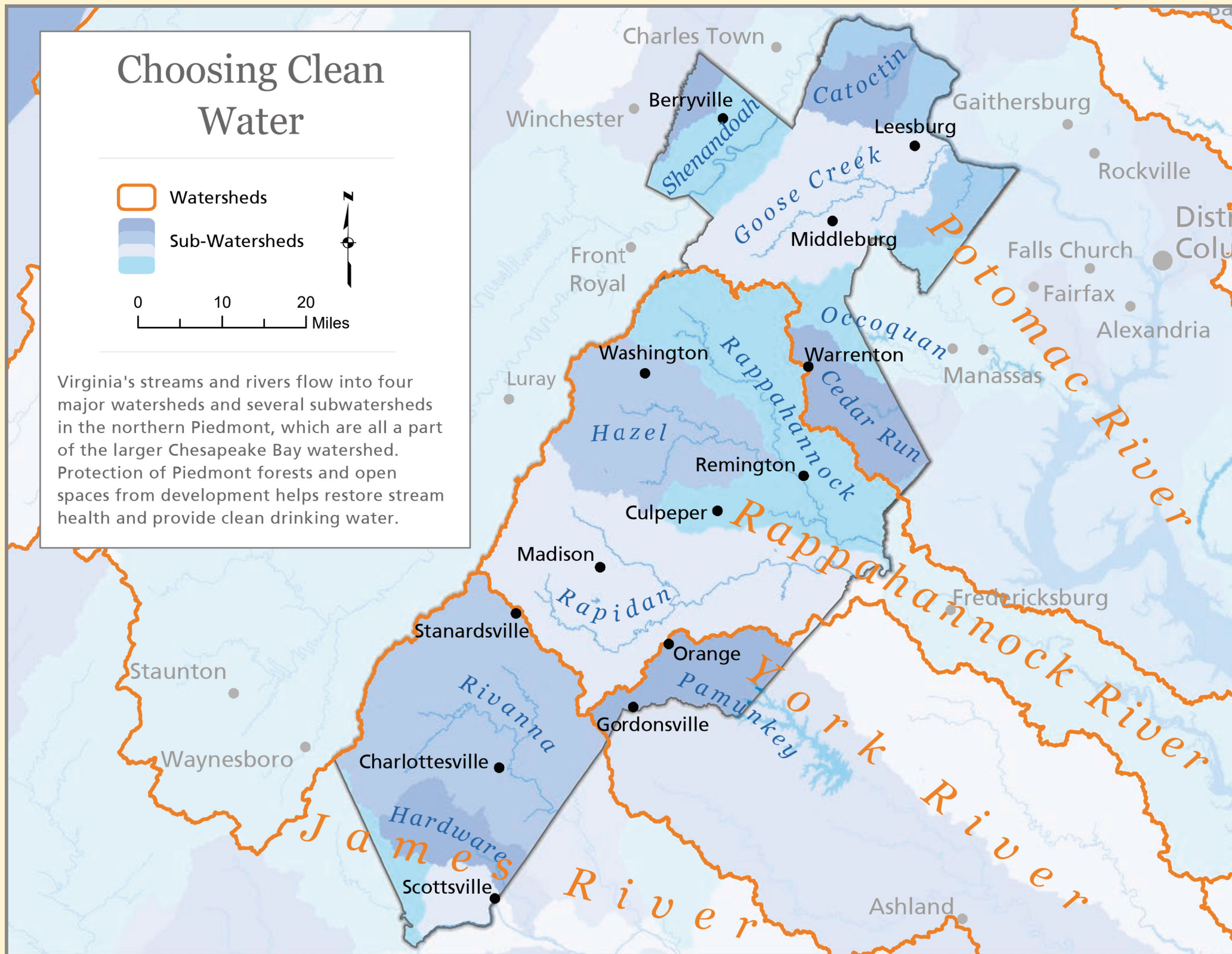


Data source: Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, Department of Historic Resources, County Governments, American Battlefield Protection Program. Although efforts have been made to verify data, accuracy cannot be guaranteed. March, 2025.

Choosing Clean Water



Virginia's streams and rivers flow into four major watersheds and several subwatersheds in the northern Piedmont, which are all a part of the larger Chesapeake Bay watershed. Protection of Piedmont forests and open spaces from development helps restore stream health and provide clean drinking water.





Conserving and Restoring the Piedmont's Lands and Waters

OPEN SPACE • WILDLIFE HABITAT • CLEAN WATER • RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

SHENANDOAH RIVER IN CLARKE COUNTY.
Photo by Hugh Kenny

A win-win for farmers

Mike Willis, his wife Judy, and stepson Wesley know that farming is not for the faint of heart. The Willises own and operate a thriving 450-acre cattle farm along the Rapidan River in Madison and Orange counties, selling directly to a natural food distributor who supplies beef to Wegmans and Chipotle. But the costs of mortgages on more land, fencing, waterers, wells and maintenance can be significant.

When Wesley's skill and love of cattle turned into an opportunity to partner with Mike's cattle operation, they decided to go all in and expand. This gave Mike, Judy, Wesley, Wesley's wife Mandi and even their two farming-inclined young boys confidence that there would be someone to care for the land they all loved so much.

The next piece of the puzzle was to make sure the land, and finances, were in place. This is why, after some initial hesitation, the trio behind M & W Farm decided to place their property under

conservation with PEC through the USDA's Agricultural Land Easement program. With a grant from USDA and matching funds, PEC purchased an easement that extinguished the development rights. Now, the land is reserved for the agricultural uses permitted by the easement, and the Willis family can use the cash and tax benefits how they wish.

M & W Farm is one of nine ALE farmland conservation projects that PEC has initiated since 2019, when we launched our Rappahannock-Rapidan conservation initiative with a focus on accelerating purchased easements on major working farms in the watershed. Thanks to a grant from The Volgenau Foundation, we have been able to leverage more than \$7 million in federal and state funding for these conservation easements.

2024 was a landmark year for PEC's farmland conservation efforts, with more than 1,700 acres of major working farmland protected by easements



M & W OWNER/OPERATORS MIKE, JUDY AND WESLEY WILLIS WITH WESLEY'S WIFE MANDI AND SONS GRANT AND ELI.
Photo by Hugh Kenny

in the highly agriculturally productive Rappahannock-Rapidan River Basin. Along with M & W Farm, PEC closed easements on the 596-acre Goodall Farm in Madison County and the 700-acre Western View Farm in Culpeper County. All of these easements were funded by USDA ALE grants, matched with funds from the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation and The Volgenau Foundation.

"There's a lot of money involved," Mike

says. "When you put things into easement, you can use those dollars to pay down debt to pay off farms. So, not only did we put it in easement because we'd like to protect the property, but it was a big money thing also. It helped keep the farm operating. I like to know that a hundred years from now, it hopefully will still essentially look the same. Somebody else may own it, and somebody else may do things differently than me, but it'll still essentially look the same."

2024 Highlights

- Among the 5,446 acres conserved in our region in 2024, **2,247 acres across nine easements are held by PEC**. This brings PEC's total easement holdings to 99, encompassing 13,700 acres, all of which will be stewarded in perpetuity through annual monitoring by PEC staff. In 2024, Michaela Weglinski (in photo on left, with PEC's Keely Murphy) joined PEC as our first full-time stewardship coordinator to manage this rapidly expanding portfolio of easements.

Photo by Hugh Kenny



- The **Virginia Grassland Bird Initiative**, a collaborative project led by PEC, Smithsonian's Virginia Working Landscapes, American Farmland Trust, and Quail Forever, engaged landowners and producers in 16 Piedmont, Blue Ridge and Shenandoah Valley counties to restore grassland habitat for the benefit of birds and farms. In 2024, 18 landowners controlling 1,527 acres enrolled in VGBI incentives to delay their first spring cutting of hay, or stockpile forage for the summer on select fields, in order to protect the critical nesting season for Virginia's grassland birds.

5,446 Acres Protected in 2024

County	Acres protected in 2024* by Conservation Easements	Total Acres* protected by Conservation Easements
Albemarle	664	114,034
Clarke	368	28,124
Culpeper	745	22,281
Fauquier	825	112,450
Greene	184	10,972
Loudoun	702	70,854
Madison	970	17,460
Orange	630	41,056
Rappahannock	359	34,311
PEC Region	5,446	451,542

* Numbers are rounded



HANS AND ANNE WACHTMEISTER.
Photo by Hugh Kenny



PEC PRESIDENT CHRIS MILLER (RIGHT) HOLDS THE BOW AS JENNIFER HURST-WENDER OF HISTORIC GERMANNA (SECOND FROM LEFT) CUTS THE RIBBON TO THE NEW BOAT LAUNCH AT SIEGEN FOREST.
Photo by Calreigh Starkston/Friends of the Rappahannock

- ▶ In April, Historic Germanna hosted a ribbon cutting to celebrate the new **Germanna Ford boat launch and the completion of a conservation easement on Siegen Forest**. By helping secure grant funds to purchase and complete the easement, PEC was instrumental in conserving the 163-acre historic forest and ensuring permanent public access to the Rapidan River from its miles of public trails.
- ▶ PEC began holding a new type of event to help landowners find the resources they need more easily. Originally developed by the Shenandoah Valley Conservation Collaborative and Virginia Grassland Bird Initiative partners, these **"Conservation Speed-Dating"** workshops bring landowners together in the same room with a wide range of conservation professionals for one-on-one conversations about the various applicable programs and funding opportunities for their properties. PEC held six Conservation Speed-Dating workshops throughout the Piedmont in 2024.
- ▶ Hans and Anne Wachtmeister completed a **conservation easement of a 177-acre tract of their Belmont Farm property** in Warrenton. In 2022, the Wachtmeisters closed their first easement at Belmont Farm, with both easements accepted and held by PEC. Now totalling 554 acres of protected land, the Wachtmeisters' property adds to a growing green buffer in the Warrenton service district.

- ▶ With the support of the Julian Scheer Fauquier Land Conservation Fund, PEC held a well attended **"Sources of Conservation Funding"** workshop at the Fauquier Livestock Exchange. Co-sponsored by the John Marshall Soil and Water Conservation District and Fauquier Agricultural Development, the workshop engaged more than 40 farmers and landowners in discussions about available funding programs for farm and rural land conservation.



PEC'S DON MCCOWN, CHRIS MILLER, SARAH PARMELEE AND JOHN MCCARTHY CELEBRATE THE NEW STATE PARK. Photo by Hugh Kenny

Conserving the **greater Shenandoah landscape**

Looking out from the Moorman's River Overlook in Shenandoah National Park, you're treated to a breathtaking sweep of the forested, rolling foothills of the Piedmont. What's not immediately apparent from this viewpoint is the fact that the majority of the land you see is privately owned. These thousands of acres of private forestlands play a major role within the greater Shenandoah landscape and as a buffer to the core of protected lands that make up the park. The continuous blocks of natural forestland are essential for biodiversity, climate resilience and drinking water protection.

Over the past few years, PEC has facilitated a large, landscape-scale conservation project to permanently protect the forests of these "Southern Shenandoah Borderlands." Starting in 2022, PEC successfully applied for two phases of federal grant funding through the U.S. Forest Service Forest Legacy Program on behalf of the Virginia Department of Forestry. The grants will be used to

purchase open-space easements on five properties to permanently protect more than 5,000 acres of forestland in the eastern foothills of the Blue Ridge. These conservation easements will protect not just the forest, but also the headwater streams that support native brook trout and flow into the public water supply for Albemarle, Charlottesville and other downstream communities, while maintaining crucial ecological services such as flood resilience and carbon sequestration.

The Southern Shenandoah Borderlands are part of the larger Blue Ridge Borderlands, a PEC conservation priority area that focuses on lands in the Blue Ridge adjacent to Shenandoah National Park. These lands within the Appalachian corridor have been identified as a global conservation priority for protection of biodiversity and as a migratory corridor for wildlife. At PEC's 2024 annual meeting, Dr. Travis Belote, the senior science director at The Wilderness Society, highlighted the connectedness of the greater Shenandoah landscape in the



CONSERVATION OF THE SOUTHERN SHENANDOAH BORDERLANDS WILL PROTECT MORE THAN 5,000 ACRES OF FORESTLAND NEAR SHENANDOAH NATIONAL PARK. *Photo by Hugh Kenny*

Blue Ridge and Appalachian corridor as one of the most ecologically important geographies in North America, and recognized our conservation work in the Piedmont as nationally and globally impactful (see page 32).

Our effort to conserve and connect the Southern Shenandoah Borderlands to the national park marks one more step toward building resilience and expanding the protection of this globally significant landscape.



Creating Stronger, More Sustainable Communities

.....
GREAT PLACES TO LIVE · CLEAN AIR · EVERYDAY WALKABILITY · HOUSING OPTIONS

SUNSET IN WARRENTON.
Photo by Hugh Kenny

Coming together, calling for change on data centers

Data centers are a critical part of our digital future. However, in Virginia, the data center capital of the world, the lure of local tax revenue and temporary construction jobs is clouding their true costs. Under our current system, information about the power grid impacts of a data center proposal — including energy demand, required infrastructure, right-of-way for transmission lines, interconnection conditions, and the cost to other ratepayers — are never

considered or evaluated proactively in a public process prior to local approval. Dominion Energy and data center operators have created an artificial “crisis by contract” that is straining the reliability of our electric grid and requiring the state to build expensive energy infrastructure. We need better oversight and policies that consider data centers’ impacts on ratepayers, communities and the environment.

Under PEC’s leadership, a state-wide coalition has come together to call for change in data center policies. Now more than 60 organizations strong, the Virginia Data Center Reform Coalition is urging state lawmakers to study the cumulative effects of data center development

in Virginia, and to institute several common-sense regulatory and rate-making reforms for the industry. We have elevated the issue of data centers in the local, national and international media; over the past year, most major newspapers and news outlets have run extensive coverage of data center development in Virginia.

We have made significant progress in building bipartisan support and action for reform, as well as awareness that the public has woken up to the impacts of the data center industry in Virginia and is pushing for positive change. Supported by the Data Center Reform Coalition, lawmakers across the aisle filed legislation in the General Assembly focused on four pillars of reform:

reporting of these same impacts for operating data centers.

- ▶ Establish a state review and permitting process for large data center proposals in addition to the local approval process to evaluate the regional impacts on air, water supply, the electric grid and ratepayers.
- ▶ Tie tax benefits to clean energy and efficiency standards by encouraging data center operators to meet much higher clean energy and efficiency standards to be eligible for sales and use tax exemption.
- ▶ Ensure that ratepayers (residential, other small business and commercial) are not subsidizing the energy infrastructure needs of the data center industry.

The bipartisan leadership we helped create this year provides a platform for a broader data center reform campaign that will continue to build in 2025 and beyond.



DATA CENTERS IN LOUDOUN COUNTY.
Photo by Hugh Kenny

2024 Highlights

- ▶ Along with the PATH Foundation, PEC’s Krebs Fund for Rappahannock Conservation provided funding to construct a **multi-use trail in the Town of Washington in Rappahannock**. The new trail will connect newly developed areas to the rest of the town.
- ▶ Thanks to the efforts of PEC and our partners in the Wilderness Battlefield Coalition, **the Wilderness Battlefield Area in Orange County achieved nationwide visibility** when the National Trust for Historic Preservation named it as one of America’s 11 Most Endangered Historic Places for 2024. The area in eastern Orange, where the 1864 Battle of the Wilderness took place, is threatened by a sprawling, 2,600-acre car-dependent development proposal of 5,000 homes and data centers.

PEC PRESIDENT CHRISTOPHER MILLER SPEAKING AT PRESS CONFERENCE ON THREATS TO THE WILDERNESS BATTLEFIELD. Photo by Hugh Kenny





PEC AND OUR PARTNERS IN THE VIRGINIA DATA CENTER REFORM COALITION SHOWED UP IN FORCE FOR DATA CENTER LOBBY DAY IN RICHMOND. Photo by Elena Schlossberg

- ▶ After concerted advocacy by PEC and our partners, **Loudoun has updated its zoning ordinance to make data centers a conditional use** in any area where they could be allowed, and to identify where future data centers will be considered, and where they won't. For all data center proposals filed after Feb. 12, 2025, Loudoun now requires developers to apply for a special exception permit, eliminating by-right development of data centers.
- ▶ Working with the Loudoun County Farm Bureau and other partners, PEC successfully advocated for changes to Loudoun's zoning to **protect prime farm soils from new residential development**. The new ordinance will require the protection of a minimum of 70% prime agricultural soils for any cluster subdivision that affects five or more acres of prime soils.
- ▶ In Fauquier County, developers have filed three proposals for new data centers outside of the two zoning districts that currently allow them. These proposals are concentrated in Remington, where the county is currently weighing rezoning applications for three new data center campuses, totalling 14 buildings. Collaborating with Citizens for Fauquier County, Protect Fauquier and Protect Catlett, **PEC is opposing these proposals, educating residents about their impacts and advocating for better alternatives** in line with Remington's plans for a walkable, connected community, with economic development that promotes tourism and directly serves residents.
- ▶ While Culpeper County is facing enormous threats to its rural and historic lands from new data center development, PEC and community groups have organized a broad-based grassroots effort for better alternatives that achieved some important victories in 2024. In December, the County Board of Supervisors unanimously approved a **proffer amendment explicitly prohibiting the development of data centers in Clevenger's Corner**. We've also made significant headway in raising community awareness about the impacts approved data centers and their associated transmission infrastructure will have on Culpeper's lands, businesses and community.

- ▶ PEC continues to closely follow **Greene County's efforts to address water supply planning**, which include funding and building a new reservoir and replacing treatment plants and aging sewer and water supply piping.
- ▶ In November 2024, Free Bridge Lane, an underutilized roadway in Albemarle County, officially closed to vehicle traffic as part of a one-year pilot. This result came after years of **resident and PEC input and advocacy to open the space up for barrier-free access to the outdoors**. It will help fill an identified need for quiet places where people of all ages can walk, stroll and roll.
- ▶ **The Coalition for Smarter Growth**, a division of PEC, continued to champion a more sustainable and inclusive future by promoting walkable, transit-oriented communities across the DC region. In addition to their work promoting transit and safer street designs, the CSG team has campaigned for more housing in infill locations near transit in DC, Montgomery and Prince George's counties in Maryland, and in Northern Virginia. Two key examples are their support for a mixed-use, 800+ home walkable development in Oakton and affordable housing in Franconia.



PEC'S CULPEPER LAND USE REPRESENTATIVE, SARAH PARMELEE, SPEAKS AT A COMMUNITY MEETING ON DATA CENTER DEVELOPMENT. Photo by Hugh Kenny

Biscuit Run Park: First-rate outdoors experiences for more people, every day

At nearly 1,200 acres, the new Biscuit Run Park in Albemarle is twice the size of the county's next largest park. Opened in December after more than 15 years of planning, engagement and advocacy by community partners including PEC, this vast new treasure of public open space is located in the heart of the community. The park is both close to Charlottesville and in the part of the county where most of its people live. Its many offerings, including seclusion, diverse habitats, more than 8.5 miles of well-marked trails, and abundant fresh air are now available to far more people within a walking, biking or a short drive's distance.

Still, much remains to be done to improve public access and enjoyment of this jewel in the midst of urban Albemarle and to restore its natural resources. PEC is collaborating with Albemarle County and neighboring communities to make the park better connected and more accessible to area residents.

For example, work is underway to build a second entrance and pedestrian bridge close to the Southwood community, the

location of many affordable homes and where many new ones are being created. PEC collaborated with local residents to plan and design this new bridge and trail to Southwood, and with support from the Anne & Gene Worrell Foundation, we were able to expedite its funding and construction. We are now working to design a mile-long streamside greenway that will connect the trailhead to Southwood's future Monacan Nation Tribute Park.

PEC is also working with Albemarle County and residents of the surrounding neighborhoods to expedite the creation of walk/bike connections to the rest of the community and the wider greenway network. Our next push will be to construct a greenway path along the stream valley to connect the park to the neighborhoods downstream, including Mill Creek and Foxcroft, as well as Fifth Street Station and the City of Charlottesville.

The new park marks a milestone capping 15+ years of advocacy by PEC and other community partners. The new greenway connections are an example of ways that PEC mobilizes public and private support and collaboration.



WALKING TRAIL NEAR BISCUIT RUN PARK. Photo by Peter Krebs



LOCAL LEADERS CELEBRATE THE OPENING OF THE PARK. Photo by Hugh Kenny

The PEC Randal Fellowship

The Randal Fellowship is a unique immersion course in conservation leadership for college students and recent graduates from across the country. Now in its 19th year, this 8-week summer program gives young people a practical and comprehensive understanding of the role of nonprofit and local engagement in addressing the complex issues faced by communities today. Randal Fellows participate in classroom discussions, field trips and hands-on activities in the Virginia Piedmont to get real-world experience in topics including land conservation, agriculture, urban planning and historic preservation.

In 2024, PEC renamed the program in honor of the late Judy Randal, the long-time donor who has made the PEC Fellowship experience possible for so many college students and graduates. Judy was a strong believer in education and the importance of sharing PEC's successes in conservation, environmental policy and civic engagement. We hope the new name reflects the strength and value of an experience that has made a difference in the lives and careers of the 200+ program participants, now known as Randal Fellows.



"The PEC Fellowship is a great way to learn about real issues that environmental nonprofits face. We went over environmental advocacy, leadership, GIS policy, sustainability, sustainable agriculture, and many other topics that I wouldn't think would be in the field. This really makes me see that there are many career options."

— **Julianne Vinculado**, Mooresville, NC

Wake Forest University, 2024 Randal Fellow



"The program is valuable just because it connected me to so many people and experiences in conservation that I would have never encountered otherwise. I have a much better sense of what conservation looks like on a local level and feel more well equipped to try to find a place in that field."

— **Rebecca Popp**, Springfield, VA

University of Virginia, 2023 Randal Fellow

2024 RANDAL FELLOWS AT SHENANDOAH NATIONAL PARK.
Photo by Hugh Kenny



"After this fellowship, I feel like I finally have some direction, and that's something that's super important for people my age. I would describe the fellowship as 10 out of 10, better than I expected. Not only did I gain so much from it, but the people I met, I will never forget."

— **Maxwell Creager-Roberts**, Charlottesville, VA
Marquette University, 2024 Randal Fellow



"I think one of the most meaningful things I'll take away is importance of local, small-scale efforts when it comes to addressing environmental issues — how it's important to have relationships with community members—and how when it comes to addressing environmental issues, everyone has something to contribute."

— **Elizabeth Hernandez**, El Paso, TX
McKenna College, 2022 Randal Fellow



2024 RANDAL FELLOWS PARTICIPATE IN A "MOCK BOARD OF SUPERVISORS" MEETING. Photo by Hugh Kenny

Judy Randal (1929-2023)

The Randal Fellowship is named after Judy Randal, who supported the development of the PEC Fellowship program to provide direct conservation experiences for undergraduate and graduate students. A former Member of PEC's Board of Directors, Judy was a trailblazer for women in journalism, receiving numerous national awards for her science and health writing and serving as president of the National Association of Science Writers. Judy was also actively involved in the Loudoun County community and served on the boards of the Health Systems Agency of Northern Virginia, the Loudoun Health Commission and the Loudoun County Area Agency on Aging. She was an avid supporter of environmental groups locally and globally.



Photo courtesy Loudoun Times



Shaping and Advancing Virginia's Clean Energy Future

EXPANDED SOLAR OPTIONS · PLANNING FOR ENERGY DEMAND · LOWER ENERGY BILLS

TRANSMISSION LINES IN LOUDOUN COUNTY.
Photo by Hugh Kenny

Better solar

Virginia is a national leader in climate and clean energy, with state policies calling for 100% renewable energy by 2050. Rural areas will play a critical role in Virginia's clean energy future. However, a rapid build-out of renewables must be done in consideration of the impacts to our natural resources such as water quality, forests and farm soils. With that in mind, the Commonwealth still needs more large, utility-scale facilities and small, distributed projects such as rooftop solar.

PEC has been working in a variety of ways to advance Virginia's energy transition. This past year, we've helped develop better guidelines for where and how to build utility-scale solar. In 2022, PEC successfully advocated for legislation that requires solar developers to offset the negative impacts of large solar projects on water quality and agricultural and forested lands. The new law (HB206) requires that developers mitigate impacts on

solar projects permitted by the state Department of Environmental Quality between five and 150 megawatts – typically involving 50 to 1,500 acres of land – that impact at least 10 acres of prime agricultural land or 50 acres of forest.

During the past two years, we have been part of a regulatory discussion with solar developers, environmental advocates and state agencies working to define those requirements. The proposed requirements developed jointly and released for comment by DEQ provide a flexible range of ways to mitigate the impacts of large scale solar development. Over time, these regulations can help create better projects, which will lead to a more welcoming environment for solar development in Virginia, and we can work to achieve our clean energy goals in ways that bring together stakeholders and serve as a standard for other regions.

At the same time, PEC has been collaborating with a wide array of



SHEEP GRAZING AT THE AES SOLAR GRAZING SITE IN SPOTSYLVANIA. PEC ORGANIZED A SITE VISIT WITH PARTNERS TO DISCUSS BEST PRACTICES WITH DEVELOPERS. Photo by Ashish Kapoor

partners to promote distributed solar energy, including rooftop solar and dual-use agrivoltaics. We have been working directly to develop new solar demonstration projects, such as our agrivoltaics facility at Roundabout Meadows, and to connect

farmers and rural businesses with technical assistance to install solar. In Richmond, PEC's leadership in distributed generation helped encourage a cascade of bills this session that are building more and more momentum for expanded solar.

2024 Highlights

- ▶ PEC developed an **agrivoltaics project** — solar plus crops — at the Community Farm at Roundabout Meadows. The project will provide power for all the farm's operations and include battery storage to back up the well pumps, produce cooler, fans and electric heat mats in the event of a grid outage. Planned for installation in 2025, the new agrivoltaics facility will be the first of its kind in Virginia, and serve as a demonstration site where PEC will host tours and share the project's results.

- ▶ In the 2024 General Assembly, PEC took a lead role in advocating for a new **parking lot solar** program that provides incentives to developers to build solar canopies on surface lots. The bill inspired further progress on parking lot solar in the 2025 General Assembly, when PEC supported legislation that permits localities to require parking lot solar on certain non-residential lots.



PEC STAFF TOUR A SOLAR FACILITY IN REMINGTON. Photo by Hugh Kenny

- ▶ On behalf of ourselves and the Upper Mattaponi and Rappahannock tribes, PEC applied for and secured three technical assistance grants from the U.S. Department of Energy. The grants will help further develop our technical guidance on parking lot solar and agrivoltaics, and aid our work with our tribal partners to determine **best sites for small scale solar projects** on tribal lands and facilitate projects.
- ▶ PEC applied for and accepted a position on the Advisory Board for Virginia Department of Energy's \$156M Solar for All award. We will help advise and guide the administration of the grant, which will help facilitate **rooftop solar and storage for low-income communities**.
- ▶ PEC developed working partnerships for **ongoing and future projects related to agrivoltaics** with the U.S. Department of Energy's National Renewable Energy Lab, Virginia Tech, Virginia State University, American Farmland Trust, and the Northeastern University Agrivoltaics Network.

- ▶ In partnership with the Local Energy Alliance Program, PEC participated in another successful **Solarize Piedmont** program, with a media campaign that included blog entries, a promotional video and an extensive FAQs document. This program helps bring solar power to more residents and businesses within our region every year.
- ▶ PEC worked with the Southern Environmental Law Center to support legislation around **Long Duration Energy Storage**, an emerging and viable technology that will make the solar we have more effective and decrease future land use impacts from solar development. The legislation includes a locally developed model ordinance, with input from the Virginia Association of Counties and Farm Bureau, that will facilitate better projects that are built with local impacts in mind.



PEC'S ASHISH KAPOOR DISCUSSES OPPORTUNITIES TO INSTALL SOLAR ENERGY AT A COMMUNITY EVENT IN CULPEPER. Photo by Scott Jenkins

A WARRENTON HOME WITH SOLAR PANELS INSTALLED THROUGH THE HELP OF SOLARIZE PIEDMONT. Photo by Hugh Kenny



Working for energy and data center policy reform

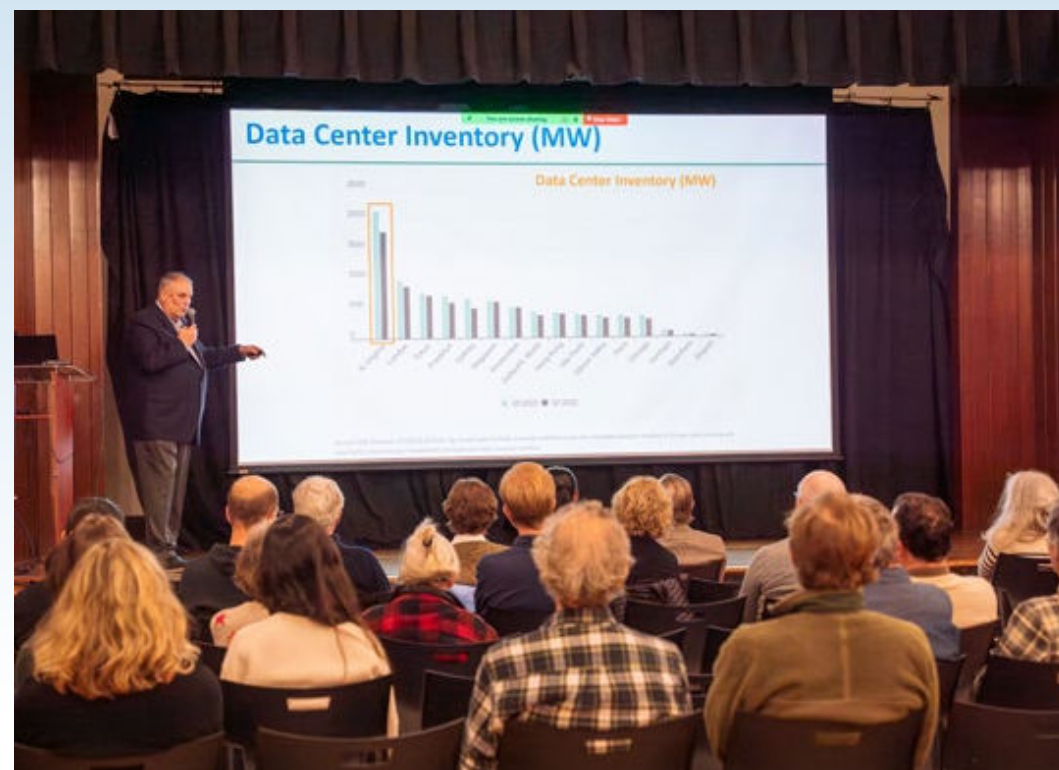
In the Piedmont, we have a strong motivation to improve our energy system because it so strongly affects the land we love. Over the years, PEC has developed expertise in evaluating energy proposals and recommending better alternatives, both for our lands and for a sustainable energy system.

However, the exponential, unfettered growth of data centers has created an unprecedented demand for energy, land and water. Such a massive expansion of our energy infrastructure is incompatible with Virginia's plans for a clean, carbon-free energy future. New transmission lines proposed across the Piedmont would connect to gas and coal-fired power plants, including one new gas plant every two years for 15 consecutive years needed to serve power-hungry data centers. While the clean energy transition had been on track in Virginia before the surge in data center growth, Dominion Energy has now contracted with data centers for a startling 40 gigawatts (GW) — about double the current peak energy capacity in Virginia. In the Piedmont, dozens of new transmission lines have

been proposed during the past year. The proposed lines would cut through a number of conserved lands and disrupt lands and communities.

PEC has educated local leaders and other community members about how data centers drive energy growth, encouraging public input and developing comments. To assist communities, we developed a publicly available map and clearinghouse of the myriad transmission lines proposed and organized numerous community and on-line meetings, attended by more than 1,000 individuals. In the near term, we were successful in preventing some of the most impactful new proposals, especially the U.S. Department of Energy's proposed Mid-Atlantic National Interest Electric Transmission Corridor through Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia, which would have allowed federal eminent domain to be used to build interstate transmission lines in designated lands across the Piedmont, and the Mid-Atlantic Resiliency Link through rural Loudoun.

Over the longer haul, PEC recognizes that Virginia needs systemic change in



PEC PRESIDENT CHRIS MILLER SPEAKS AT A COMMUNITY MEETING ON DATA CENTERS AND ENERGY.
Photo by Marco Sánchez

how it plans for the future of our energy system and who pays for it. That is why PEC is leading the Virginia Data Center Reform Coalition in advocating for more fairness and transparency in our electricity production and transmission system, to ensure that Virginia families, businesses and other ratepayers are not subsidizing the energy infrastructure

needs of the data center industry.

"We can't afford to wait any longer. Other states are taking action to protect their ratepayers, and Virginia must too," says PEC's President Chris Miller. "We can continue to be a good state for business — and set the standards for a smarter digital future for people and the planet."



Setting an Example Through Land Ownership

FOOD PRODUCTION · LAND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES · PUBLIC ACCESS · COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

PEC'S COMMUNITY FARM AT ROUNDABOUT MEADOWS.
Photo by Hugh Kenny

Preserving the **historic Aldie Tavern**

Ending a long saga that saw the future of a historic village volleyed about among many possible outcomes, PEC became the proud new owner in 2024 of 6 acres in the Village of Aldie. Known as the Aldie Assemblage, this property possesses an exceptional combination of significant historic and natural features.

Nestled in the historic Route 50 corridor just west of Route 15 and Gilberts Corner, the Village of Aldie marks a place where suburban life recedes and Loudoun's rural Piedmont communities and landscape take hold. But whether Aldie could retain its historic character came into question in 2015, when Loudoun County bought the Aldie Assemblage with plans to build a new fire and rescue station there. Located at the intersection of the Bull Run Mountains, Little

River, and Route 50, the site appeared incompatible with a station of the scale proposed by the county. Working with the Aldie Heritage Association and other community organizations, the people of Aldie pushed back. Loudoun County listened and, with help from local residents, found a new location for the station at nearby Gilberts Corner.

A new threat emerged in 2021, when the county considered handing over the Aldie Assemblage to a developer in a land swap intended to prevent an ill-conceived residential project that threatened the nearby Village of St. Louis' fragile water supply. Once again, Aldie residents rallied and worked with partners including PEC to find better options.

Ultimately, PEC stepped in to make an offer to purchase the property

and conserve it in perpetuity. After a year of review and negotiations, Loudoun County finalized the sale of the property to PEC in the summer of 2024.

PEC has created a concept plan to guide ownership of the Aldie Assemblage over the next three to five years. "Four basic objectives guide this plan," says Director of Conservation Mike Kane. "We want to realize restoration of the historic tavern building, ensure that any future restoration of the property preserves the integrity of the Village's historic character and fabric, and conserve the

array of natural and historic resources. And we wish to explore the creation of a public green along the banks of the Little River to expand public access opportunities to both the Bull Run Mountains and the river."



THE ALDIE ASSEMBLAGE (LOWER RIGHT) NESTLED ALONG HISTORIC ROUTE 50 AND THE BULL RUN MOUNTAINS. Photo by Hugh Kenny



2024 Highlights

- In Gordonsville, local leaders proudly broke ground on the **Gordonsville Park Improvement Project** (left), which will expand the Town's signature park, include a new swimming pool and better connect the park to surrounding neighborhoods. PEC has been involved in the Park Improvement Project from its inception nearly 10 years ago, and has assisted with strategic land acquisition, fundraising and community engagement.



VOLUNTEERS AT THE COMMUNITY FARM. Photo by Hugh Kenny

► At Gilberts Corner in Loudoun County, PEC has been the driving force in conserving this iconic area and stewarding its future as a vibrant hub for the northern Piedmont's rural and agriculture-based economy. PEC now owns two signature properties in the area, the 141-acre Roundabout Meadows and the 30-acre Gilberts Corner Market property, where we are working to grow healthy food, expand public access, and model sustainable land management and renewable energy. Our 2024 activities and accomplishments included:

► **PEC's Community Farm at Roundabout Meadows engaged 589 volunteers to grow and harvest more than 50,000 pounds of fruits and vegetables**, all of which we donated through partnerships with hunger relief organizations to food-insecure residents of Loudoun and Clarke counties. A key part of our work at the Community Farm is rebuilding our soils to ensure that our farm operations are productive and improve the land over the long haul. To accomplish this, we have implemented a multiyear covercropping strategy, converted select areas to no-till, and utilized conservation tillage practices.

► On Roundabout Meadows' extensive pasture lands, PEC expanded our efforts with LazEHill to practice and model adaptive grazing practices. For the second year in a row, PEC and LazEHill participated in the **Virginia Grassland Bird Initiative Summer Stockpiling program**, excluding cattle from selected lands to improve native bird habitat and monitoring the results.

► PEC owns and manages the **Gilberts Corner Farmers Market**, which had which had a successful summer and continued to welcome new vendors into the fall. PEC also extended our lease with Wegmeyer Farms, a popular strawberry operation that sells directly during the season to customers at Gilberts Corner. In addition, PEC has fully evaluated the possibilities for the Gilberts Corner gas station building and market site. In this process a full architectural record of the building was completed.

► We continued to expand public access at Roundabout Meadows with the **completion of the Bull Run Overlook and expansion of the Old Carolina Road Trail**. Students from George Mason University documented the forbs found growing in the meadow, as part of a larger floristic study led by Mason Professor Andrea Weeks that is documenting the changes in vegetation at Roundabout Meadows as the land heals itself.



GILBERTS CORNER FARMERS MARKET. Photo by Hugh Kenny

Piedmont Memorial Overlook

From the Piedmont Memorial Overlook, you look out at the heart of the northern Virginia Piedmont. To the west, Ovoka farmlands stretch across the Fauquier-Clarke County line at the crest of the Blue Ridge, meeting with the Appalachian Trail and other National Park Service land. To the south lies the Crooked Run Valley and farms of Delaplane. On the north, the land runs adjacent to historic Route 50 as it crosses the Blue Ridge Mountains, an important westward travel route since colonial times.

In the late 1990s, this property and the surrounding area were threatened by several development projects. Fortunately, in 2000, PEC was able to purchase 1,235 acres with assistance from local families and foundations who support conservation in the Piedmont. We subsequently transferred nearly 450 acres to the National Park Service to realign and improve the Appalachian National Scenic Trail and provide public access to this exceptional viewshed. After securing conservation easements on the rest of the land, PEC sold most of it to conservation buyers, while retaining the 50-acre Piedmont Memorial Overlook at the top of Paris Mountain.

In 2024, PEC continued our work toward our three main goals for this land: to act as a memorial site for this region's conservationists; to be a showcase and

demonstration site for good habitat management practices; and to provide the public access to a spectacular overlook along the Appalachian Trail adjacent to Sky Meadows State Park.

The memorial site, conceived by the late William M. Backer and supported by The Piedmont Foundation, is dedicated to supporters who spent their lives working to protect this landscape. In November, PEC held a reunion event that gathered together family members and friends of these visionaries to honor their lasting legacies.

The Overlook also serves as a living laboratory of land management practices to restore native habitat and biodiversity. PEC has worked extensively to monitor and remove invasive species, plant native grasses and wildflowers, and manage the land with conservation practices such as prescribed fire. We are collaborating with Smithsonian's Virginia Working Landscapes and other partners to monitor the impacts and benefits of these practices in restoring biodiversity and bringing back native birds, butterflies and bees. The native meadow is the jewel of the property, home to songbirds, butterflies, raptors, bees and black bears. In 2024, PEC organized a wide range of walks and tours at our native meadow and other areas of the Overlook to connect landowners and other visitors with the land and native habitat.



ON NOV. 1, PEC AND SMITHSONIAN'S VIRGINIA WORKING LANDSCAPES HELD A REUNION OF FAMILY MEMBERS AND FRIENDS TO REMEMBER THE INDIVIDUALS WHO HELPED LAY THE FOUNDATION FOR PROTECTING THIS REGION AND THE LANDSCAPE SEEN FROM THE OVERLOOK. Photo by Montana Lanier Ruffner



PEC AND SMITHSONIAN'S VIRGINIA WORKING LANDSCAPES LED A SUMMER MEADOW WALK ON THE OVERLOOK TO INTRODUCE PEOPLE TO ITS DIVERSE NATIVE PLANTS. Photo by Hugh Kenny



The Piedmont Foundation

Photo by Hugh Kenny

Established to hold and manage special funds in support of PEC, The Piedmont Foundation assures PEC's capacity to respond to key opportunities and challenges as they arise and to fulfill our core mission over the long term. A separate 509(a)3 charitable organization, the Foundation accepts gifts of cash, securities, property and appreciated assets. The Foundation also offers opportunities for tax-advantaged planned gifts, including trusts, bequests and life income plans.

Currently, the Piedmont Foundation manages funds in the following categories:

- ▶ **Conservation Stewardship Fund (Board Directed)**
- ▶ **Legal Defense Fund—"Evergreen" (Donor Directed)**
- ▶ **General Endowment Fund**
- ▶ **Piedmont Memorial Overlook Fund**
- ▶ **Albemarle County Land Conservation**
- ▶ **Officers Endowment Fund**
- ▶ **Albemarle General Endowment Fund**
- ▶ **Backer Endowment Fund**
- ▶ **Land Conservation Officers Endowment Fund**
- ▶ **Backer CRUT Fund**

▶ **Land Conservation Fund (Donor Directed)**

Within this fund, the following Regional Land Conservation Funds have been established:

Bull Run Mountains Land Conservation Fund
Clarke County Land Conservation Fund
Culpeper County Land Conservation Fund
Greene County Land Conservation Fund
Krebsner Fund for Rappahannock County Conservation
Madison County Land Conservation Fund
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*This list includes Board members who served at any
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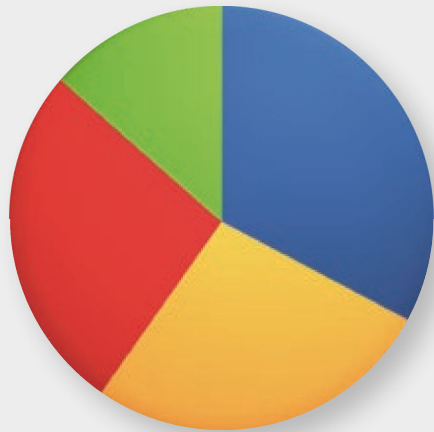
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2024 Financial Report

Sources of Organizational Support

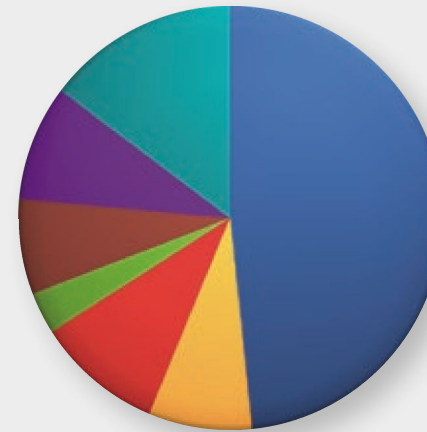


● Individuals	\$ 3,935,650	32.7%
● Foundations, Businesses and Institutions	3,260,351	27.1%
● Government*	3,213,467	26.7%
● Piedmont Foundation	1,620,077	13.5%
Total	\$ 12,029,545	100%

The above figures include the activities of the Coalition for Smarter Growth, a division of PEC. They do not include the activities of the Piedmont Foundation. Copies of the consolidated financial statements of PEC and the Piedmont Foundation, and of PEC's IRS form 990, may be found at PEC's website at www.pecva.org/donate. For more information, please contact PEC's accounting office at (540) 347-2334.

* The vast majority of these funds were passed through PEC to pay for land conservation easements.

Program and Operating Expenditures

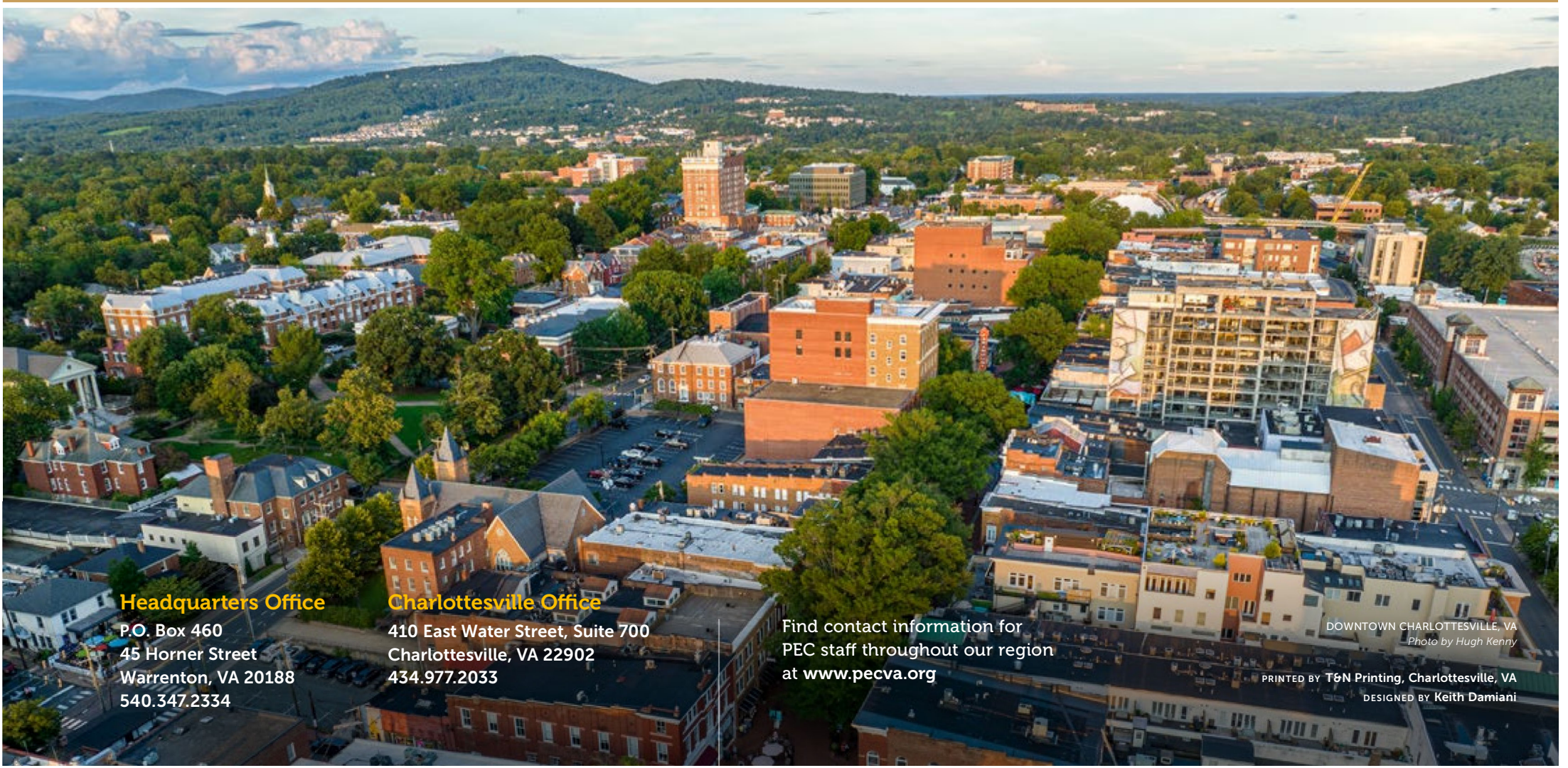


● Conservation, Stewardship and Habitat	\$ 5,228,982	48.3%
● County Issues and Planning	855,793	7.9%
● Policy	1,050,780	9.7%
● Farms and Food	348,354	3.2%
● Outreach and Education	794,358	7.3%
● Advancement	956,868	8.8%
● Administration	1,592,239	14.7%
Total	\$ 10,827,374	100%



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Headquarters Office

P.O. Box 460
45 Horner Street
Warrenton, VA 20188
540.347.2334

Charlottesville Office

410 East Water Street, Suite 700
Charlottesville, VA 22902
434.977.2033

Find contact information for
PEC staff throughout our region
at www.pecva.org

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