



# The Piedmont View

A MEMBERSHIP NEWSLETTER OF THE PIEDMONT ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL

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## New Maddensville Historic Site

Honoring U.S. Colored Troops and African American contributions in Culpeper County

By Cindy Sabato

At the quiet, rural crossroads of Routes 610 and 724, barely beyond the threshold of Ebenezer Baptist Church in Culpeper, the once-booming area of Maddensville is arguably one of the most intriguing and historical locations in Culpeper County.

It lay at one time along the main trade route between the Shenandoah Valley and Fredericksburg. Madden's Tavern, with its associated general store, blacksmith, and wheelwright shop, served as a popular business and rest stop for travelers and teamsters before the war, and for both Union and Confederate soldiers during the war. Thousands in the 4th Division 9th Corps Army of the Potomac marched through Maddensville. On May 8, 1864, three unidentified veterans—United States Colored Troops (USCT)—were captured and executed by 9th Virginia Cavalry troops nearby.

On the clear, crisp morning of Saturday, Nov. 6, just days ahead of Veterans Day, about 150 people from far and wide came together at these crossroads to witness history—the dedication of a new Civil War memorial site honor-

ing the men killed here and the African American Madden family, whose historic imprint on the area remains today. It is the first such memorial in Culpeper County, which has been called one of the most fought-over counties during the entire Civil War.

"It's easy to think of this dedication of a new collection of markers and memorials as simply that. But it is far more than that, in fact. This event is part of an inexorable, inevitable, and indispensable process of change... in how we see and understand our past...not by seeing less, but by seeing more.... And in that broader picture, it's easier for more of us to find our place in that story," said keynote speaker John Hennessey, retired chief historian with the Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park.

The new, beautifully landscaped Maddensville Historic Site now welcomes visitors and residents alike with an elegant granite obelisk memorializing the ultimate sacrifice of the three unnamed men. Three striking Civil War Trails markers stand before it, describing the



Nearly 150 community members attended the dedication of the Maddensville Historic Site. Many were USCT descendants, Ebenezer Baptist Church congregants, and Culpeper residents, but some came from as far as Washington, D.C. after hearing about it in the news.

Photo by Marco Sanchez

historical significance of the pre-Civil War Madden's Tavern, still standing within eyeshot; post-Civil War Ebenezer Baptist Church just across the road where congregants still gather today; and the service and sacrifice of 17 Culpeper-born USCTs who served in the 4th Division, 9th Corps Army of the Potomac.

The memorial is the culmination of a years-long labor of love for Howard Lambert, president of the Freedom Foundation of Virginia, in

partnership with The Piedmont Environmental Council, Civil War Trails, the Madden, Tingler, and Hawkins families, and many local citizens who contributed their time and talents on fencing, landscaping, hardscaping, a reflection bench and flagpole, and other elements of the site.

PEC is proud to have provided funding and support to help Lambert bring his vision to fruition, moving the project

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## The Land Along Life-Giving Water

By Cindy Sabato

Everyone knows that water is an essential element of life. But not just any water, it's clean water that we can't live without.

Within The Piedmont Environmental Council's nine-county region, thousands of creeks, streams, rivers, and aquifers are part of the 64,000-square-mile Chesapeake Bay watershed,

which provides drinking water to 18 million people. With a high concentration of livestock farming along their banks, and every resident living within just a few miles of any one of these waterways, many streams suffer from too much nitrogen, phosphorus, E. coli, sediment, and other pollutants—which all flow downstream to the Bay.

Virginia is part of a multi-state effort to reverse the impacts of pollution in both our inland waters and the Bay. Here within the Rappahannock and Potomac river watersheds, PEC is working with landowners to advance this effort through land conservation and beneficial land management practices, such as maintaining wide areas of vegetation along

stream banks—called riparian buffers. This fall, we received two important grants—a \$263,800 Chesapeake Bay Small Watershed Grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and a \$21,500 grant from the Virginia Environmental Endowment—to support and expand the work of this Headwater Stream Initiative, launched in 2016 in partnership with Friends of the Rappahannock.

"I'm excited about these grants because they are going to empower community members who may not otherwise have the means to improve water quality on their properties and downstream. It's also a golden opportunity to raise public awareness about the importance

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The Confluence of Goose Creek with the Potomac River near Leesburg. Photo by Hugh Kenny



# General Assembly Preview

By Adam Gillenwater and Dan Holmes

There's soon to be a new occupant in the governor's mansion, one with different ideas and priorities than the outgoing administration. Governor-elect Glenn Youngkin's victory in November's general election, coupled with Republicans retaking a narrow majority in the House of Delegates, means that Virginia will head into the 2022 General Assembly session with interesting challenges and opportunities across the levers of state government. By the time you read this, we expect Youngkin's transition team may have announced certain intended appointees for key cabinet positions and state agencies, including the Governor-elect's pick for Secretary of Natural and Historic Resources.

The Northam Administration has a few final things to do before handing over the keys, however. On Dec. 16, Governor Northam will release his final budget proposal. This fall, PEC joined more than 25 conservation and advocacy organizations in calling on the governor to dedicate over \$120 million for new and existing natural resources protection programs. Based on state agency funding requests made available in early October, we're optimistic that this call has not fallen entirely on deaf ears. For example, the Natural and Historic Resources Secretariat has included requests for \$12 million in funding for land conservation in tribal communities and \$10 million over two years for a new Black, Indigenous, and People of Color Preservation Fund.

Regrettably, however, there were no agency requests for increased funding for the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation or trails funding. PEC will continue to press for more dedicated funding for natural resources conservation and public access, as well as robust funding for agricultural best management practices. Even with a change in leadership, we remain hopeful; these priorities have bipartisan support and Governor-elect Youngkin has demonstrated a commitment to conservation.

After nearly two years of coping with uncertainty wrought by the ongoing global pandemic, Virginia is closing out 2021 in a far better fiscal situation than initially anticipated. During a brief special legislative session in August, the General Assembly allocated \$3.5 billion of the \$4.3 billion that Virginia received from the federal government as part of the American Rescue Plan

Act (ARPA) passed by Congress in March 2021. The General Assembly did direct a portion of those funds to programs and projects designed to improve water quality, increase access to food and clean water, and address maintenance needs at state parks. However, we were disappointed that policy makers in Richmond did not seize this extraordinary opportunity to significantly increase the state's investment in land conservation, public access, trails, and maintenance of our shared natural spaces. As Virginia ends fiscal year 2021 with a \$2.6 million budget surplus—the largest in state history—we will press the incoming Youngkin administration and legislators in the General Assembly to make natural resources funding a higher priority in 2022.

The 2022 General Assembly session begins on Jan. 12 and legislators have already begun filing bills. Though we don't yet know the exact format that next year's regular session will take—in person, hybrid, or fully remote—we believe it important for the House and Senate to continue allowing people to participate virtually and via written comment.

Beyond plans to help lead the charge for increased and dedicated natural resources funding in the state budget, PEC staff are actively working with state policy makers on several other legislative priorities for the upcoming session. A few such efforts include:

➤ **Historic Preservation:** A watershed moment in 2020 was the passage of the Uniform Partition of Heirs Property Act, to help prevent involuntary loss of family land through partition, which disproportionately affects Black families in the South. The conservation community is exploring ways to strengthen this landmark legislation, including ensuring that low-income landowners do not face an undue tax burden and are more easily able to establish a clear chain of ownership, both important tools to keep land in the family.

➤ **Energy Generation:** With solar energy increasingly ascendant across Virginia, and particularly in the Piedmont, PEC will continue our work supporting access to renewable energy while ensuring that permitting of new industrial-scale solar facilities considers impacts to existing resources. To that end, we plan to push for



Photo by Hugh Kenny

## Virginia Survey Shows Support for Conservation

More than 75 percent of Virginia voters—across the state and party lines—say they support the General Assembly dedicating \$300 million annually toward conservation efforts to protect Virginia's land, water and wildlife. That is the takeaway from a recently-released study conducted by the bipartisan research team of New Bridge Strategy (R) and FM3 Research (D) and funded by The Nature Conservancy, The Piedmont Environmental Council, and the Trust for Public Land.

The survey, completed in June 2021, found that Virginians not only support increasing state conservation investment, but would also ask their elected representatives to support such a dedication of funds. Despite a very different economy today, the same proportion as in 2007 believe conservation deserves funding, even when the General Assembly faces tough budget decisions. Similarly, nearly all Virginians agree that investing in conservation benefits the state economy.

Over the last 50 years, Virginia's population has doubled to more than 8 million people, and the demands on lands and water have never been greater. The pandemic has resulted in record-breaking attendance throughout Virginia's parks and natural areas. But Virginia's investment in natural resources has not kept pace. Annual conservation spending has been inconsistent and has routinely fallen below one percent of the commonwealth's total budget.

"Virginia's lands and waters are second to none," said Senator Emmett Hanger of Augusta County. "This survey demonstrates that Virginians across the Commonwealth expect state government to protect our natural resources for future generations."

enhancements to the state's permit-by-rule process for utility-scale solar and greater incentives to support smaller-scale solar generation.

➤ **Event Centers:** The rural beauty of Virginia's Piedmont has led to more and more wedding venues and event centers throughout our region. While these businesses play an important role in bringing tourism revenue and tax dollars to localities, PEC wants to make sure these venues, particularly those housed in aging agricultural structures, are safe for all involved. Accordingly, PEC staff are considering working with legislators to tighten the inspection exception for certain agricultural buildings.

➤ **Land Conservation Tools:** In order to better provide for the preservation of Virginia's natural lands, PEC and the broader conservation commu-

nity are working to expand the tools available for land conservation in the commonwealth, as well as to protect and enhance existing programs. For example, PEC is committed to ensuring robust state support for the Land Preservation Tax Credit, one of the most effective private land conservation programs in the county.

January will be here before we know it, and with it renewed opportunity in Richmond to advocate for policies and programs that will help the Virginia Piedmont remain a beautiful place to live and visit for all of us, well into the future. As always, if you have any questions about PEC's work in Richmond, please feel free to reach out to Director of State Policy Dan Holmes ([dholmes@pecva.org](mailto:dholmes@pecva.org)) or Senior Policy Manager Adam Gillenwater ([agillenwater@pecva.org](mailto:agillenwater@pecva.org)).



Photo by Marco Sánchez



# New Maddensville Historic Site

Continued from cover

through various permitting processes and raising \$25,000 for the interpretive signage, obelisk and site development.

“Our 50-year history of working with landowners to preserve historic landscapes has expanded to include the untold and under-told stories of the region. Civil War history is almost exclusively focused on white history, and these markers are a tremendous opportunity to tell a more complete story and to forever memorialize the contributions of African American soldiers and communities,” said PEC President Chris Miller.

## United States Colored Troops in Culpeper

Lambert describes Culpeper County as “a kind of ground zero” in the story of the USCTs, in that many formerly enslaved men who’d gone north returned to the place of their enslavement to fight for the Union cause. “They could have stayed free and enjoyed all the privileges thereof, but these men decided to join the Union army and come back as proud soldiers in blue to fight to free people who were still in bondage, knowing that if they were captured, they would be given no quarter, but would be lined up and shot, which is obviously what happened here near Madden’s Tavern,” he said. The Freedom Foundation of Virginia has identified nearly 120 USCTs who called Culpeper their home.

The many USCT descendants present at the ceremony gave faces to the names of the past, including Sgt. Daniel Steward and French Menefee, Sr. Menefee’s great-great-grandson, Eugene Triplett, of Brandy Station and vice president of the Freedom Foundation, said, “It gives me a better appreciation for this area, knowing that I had relatives who traveled through here and who fought here. It makes me proud.”

“I don’t think you can fully understand

the story of the Civil War without looking at the contributions of the nearly 200,000 United States Colored Troops who fought for the Union army, and you can’t tell a full story of Culpeper County without telling the story of the United States Colored Troops,” said Lambert, who calls Culpeper his hometown. “You’ve got to tell that story because it’s integral to how the country eventually turned out.”

## Madden’s Tavern

Constructed between 1840 and 1852, Madden’s Tavern is a story-and-a-half log structure designed, built and operated by Willis Madden, a free Black man whose biracial mother Sarah gave 30 years of indentured service in the household of James Madison, Sr. She used seamstressing skills she developed there to make a living and help Willis purchase his first 87 acres of land. Madden rose from poverty to become the respected proprietor of what is the only known Black-owned-and-operated tavern in the Virginia Piedmont prior to the Civil War.

Though troop raids destroyed the original outbuildings and dealt the tavern business a fatal blow, the building remained in the Madden family as a private home until 2017. It still stands today as “a rare relic of pre-Civil War Black entrepreneurship in rural Virginia” and is included in the Virginia Landmarks Register and National Register of Historic Places. In 2001, PEC helped get the tavern building and 199.5 acres of surrounding farmland permanently conserved in partnership with the Virginia Outdoors Foundation and the Virginia Department of Historical Resources.

Madden’s great-great-grandson, Bill Madden, unveiled the marker dedicated to the tavern, saying, “I remember many discussions by my dad and other family members about Madden’s Tavern and those who passed through its doors. It is remark-



Howard Lambert, president of the Freedom Foundation, addresses the crowd at the dedication of what has been a years-long labor of love for him. Photo by Hugh Kenny

able that it still stands today.” His brother, Thomas “Obed” Madden III, and Obed’s wife Evelyn were present to see their family’s legacy recognized. Their sister Thomasene Madden Tarasuk, now in Canada, said she likens the fortitude and stamina of Sarah Madden to that of the troops who fought here. “Like her, the martyrs who sacrificed their lives at Maddensville knew that they were fighting for a greater good—a better existence—for themselves and the Negroes who would come in future generations,” she said. Quoting Sir Isaac Newton, she added, “we all stand on the shoulders of giants.”

## Ebenezer Baptist Church

After the Civil War, African Americans were at last permitted to practice religion freely, and Willis Madden donated land and materials to help establish on Aug. 29, 1867 what was then the African Ebenezer Church just north of the tavern. It was one of the first post-Civil War Black churches in Culpeper County, doubling as a school for many years, and has long been a pillar in the African American community there. When the original church building burned down in 1884, Willis Madden’s grandson Thomas Obed Madden, Sr. helped rebuild it, and that building still stands today.

Ebenezer Baptist Church deacons

Michael and Betty Turner unveiled the marker dedicated to the church, as the names of its founders were read: Willis Madden, Maria Madden, Jack Davis, Robert Webb, Elizabeth Taylor, Thomas Fields and Henry Gillis. Reverend Douglass Green said, “We thank you for making this possible, because someone who didn’t know will now have a greater understanding of why Ebenezer stands here today for 150 years. Prior to 1865, no religious gathering of enslaved or free people of color was permitted without the presence of a white pastor. It was and has remained the purpose, to be devoted to preaching the gospel of Christ.”

Addressing the crowd on Nov. 6, Miller noted the significance of the dedication’s timing, between the November 2 election when all could vote and Veterans Day the following week. “We’re standing here today together as a democracy, and this is part of that. Our story is not always clean, it’s a little messy, sometimes it’s imperfect. I think collectively we’ve never given up on the idea that we can work together for a more perfect union,” he said. “This commemoration and elevation of the story of the U.S. Colored Troops serve to remind us of the courage and sacrifice of those who fought to save our nation and move it closer to the highest stated ideals of justice and equality.”

### MEET PEC

## October Greenfield

Wildlife Habitat Restoration Coordinator

By Sophia Chapin

“Everyone has a story about a bird,” says October Greenfield, an avid photographer and wildlife biologist who, in September, became PEC’s new wildlife habitat restoration coordinator. Her new role requires not only a love for wildlife, but a vast knowledge of how to restore habitat and communicate on their behalf, and she certainly has both!

As part of her new role at PEC, October is co-coordinating the Piedmont Grassland Bird Initiative with Virginia Working Landscapes—an effort to promote better land management for grassland bird conservation. “I applied for this role because I was really excited about working one-on-one with landowners across the region to achieve habitat restoration goals on their own properties.”

October grew up on 16 acres in the Mt. Rushmore State and attended South Dakota State University. Working with grassland birds here reminds her of those Midwest prairies. Since she’s been in Virginia, she’s worked with red-cockaded woodpeckers at Fort AP Hill and peregrine falcons in Shenandoah National Park, and her biggest passion is barn owls. Birds, she’s noticed, are especially useful as a communication tool. “I love being able to help connect people to the landscape through birds; they can tell such a compelling story about climate change and effects on habitat.”

October has already jumped into the work of conservation storytelling. Be on the lookout for her articles, photographs and other communications from her as she forwards PEC’s work to make a positive impact on biodiversity.



Photo by Sarah Cain

### MEET PEC

## Hugh Kenny

Multimedia Communications Specialist

By Sophia Chapin

If you’re not a bird, how do you get a bird’s eye view? Hugh Kenny, PEC’s multimedia communications specialist, is changing the way we think about landscape-level impacts—especially through drones. “I love making photographs and videos that allow people to see where they live,” he explains, “to connect people to their places in a different way.”

An environmental studies major at Bates College in Maine, Hugh first picked up a camera at the tail end of his time in college to make a mini-documentary on an agricultural zoning issue. After joining the PEC staff in 2019 and moving from the northeast to Virginia, he discovered drones. “I found my calling: the ability to make imagery of the broader landscape from a unique, novel perspective that most people haven’t seen of their own backyard.”

Ever since, Hugh has been blessing our social media feed with stunning views and short stories from our nine-county region—a place he has come to love. Drone photography creates an accessible visual for some of PEC’s more long-term, large-scale work: a quilt of far-reaching green farmland showcases the positive impacts of private land conservation; congested highway traffic contrasted with fragmented forest highlights the need for transportation solutions. To Hugh, an image is worth a thousand words and can help draw people into the underlying issues.

“I’m fascinated by the way that the natural landscape shapes the human landscape, and vice versa,” he explains. In addition to his own time behind the camera, Hugh runs PEC’s Annual Photo Contest. Outside of work, Hugh likes to bike the gravel roads in rural Fauquier and Loudoun counties—enjoying the landscape from a grounded perspective.



Photo by Niamh Micklewhite

# On the Ground

## Albemarle & Charlottesville

### > Climate Adaptation Planning

PEC has joined with Resilient Virginia and Albemarle County on a climate vulnerability risk assessment to identify climate hazards and short- and long-term vulnerabilities within the county. Using climate modeling and advanced techniques, the assessment will help inform development of the county’s forthcoming Climate Adaptation Plan.

### > Waste Drop Off

The Albemarle County Planning Commission found that a proposed “Convenience Center”—a centralized household waste dropoff location—in Keene is consistent with the comprehensive plan. During the public hearing, PEC raised concerns about the site’s potential negative visual impacts on the scenic Southern Albemarle Rural Historic District and is now working with county staff on ways to mitigate those impacts.

### > Comprehensive Plans

Albemarle County officially launched the periodic revision of its comprehensive plan on Nov. 3. Significant public engagement on the important question of growth management is expected to take place in winter and spring of 2022.

Charlottesville City Council approved the city’s own comprehensive plan at its Nov. 15 meeting. Details about the most contentious issue—medium-density residential zoning—will be sorted out when the zoning code is revised in 2022.

## Clarke

### > Short-term residential rental ordinance amendments

The board of supervisors will hold a public hearing for proposed amendments to the county’s short-term residential rental (Airbnb, Vrbo, etc.) ordinance. The amendments aim to limit potential adverse impacts of rental activities on onsite sewage disposal systems and groundwater quality. Similar amendments are proposed for country inns and bed and breakfasts.

### > 2022-2027 Capital Improvement Plan

The planning commission is currently reviewing the county’s draft capital improvement plan (CIP). Projects in the CIP include such community needs as broadband, fire and rescue, health and human services, parks and recreation, schools, and transportation. The commission will assess projects on several criteria, including conformance with the comprehensive plan; public convenience and accessibility; and need for extensions of public infrastructure beyond designated growth areas. PEC staff will be tracking the CIP review process.

## Culpeper

### > Solar Ordinance

In late October, the planning commission voted 6-2 to send to the board of supervisors

an amended utility-scale solar ordinance draft that would restrict such facilities to industrial-zoned land. PEC has expressed concern that this approach could open the door to the spot zoning of agricultural land to industrial. The board of supervisors, which will soon have two new members due to November’s election results, is not expected to vote on this issue until early 2022.

### > Comprehensive Plan

On Nov. 4, the county kicked off its comprehensive review plan process with a public webinar. Put on hold in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the process is expected to last through much of 2022. The county held a virtual policy engagement meeting to solicit public input on Nov. 18 and an in-person session on Dec. 2. The public is also encouraged to submit feedback via a survey available on the county’s website.

## Fauquier

### > Rappahannock River Access

Three public boat launches/river access points were completed in 2021: at Riverside Preserve in Marshall, Rector Tract in Remington, and Rogers Ford in C.F. Phelps Wildlife Management Area. These efforts were led by members of the Upper Rappahannock Water Trail coalition, including John Marshall Soil and Water Conservation District, Fauquier County Parks & Recreation, Friends of the Rappahannock, and PEC.

### > Headwater Streams Improvement

Thanks to grants from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and Virginia Environmental Endowment, the Headwater Streams Initiative has been expanded to the Potomac watershed, which includes all of Fauquier County. Our first tree planting event took place at Sky Meadows State Park, where over 100 volunteers planted 750 trees over 3.5 acres along a headwater stream of Goose Creek, which supplies drinking water for residents in northern Fauquier and Loudoun counties. Partners in this tree planting include the Goose Creek Association, Friends of the Rappahannock, John Marshall Soil & Water Conservation District, Sky Meadows State Park, We Plant Trees and many others!

## Greene

### > Entry Run stream restoration

PEC is working with Friends of the Rappahannock (FOR) to replace a culvert currently impeding native brook trout passage along Entry Run with a full span bridge that will allow the river to flow free. The project began in 2019, when PEC helped secure a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service grant to replace the culvert, which leads into land owned by the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club. We also helped secure funding from the Greene County Economic Development Authority for a public trailhead access component. FOR is leading this project, with partner support from Rapidan Trout Unlimited, Greene County, Virginia Tech, PEC, and a private donor. Project completion is expected this winter.

### > Anticipated Public Hearings

PEC, the Greene County Farm Bureau, and concerned citizens have expressed opposition to a proposed zoning text amendment that would allow for the permitting of “rural enterprise centers” in agriculturally-zoned areas via special-use permits. The planning commission in November voted to recommend that the county not proceed with this proposed amendment. The board of supervisors is expected to take up this issue in December. Separately in 2022, the planning commission is expected to hold a public hearing on a proposed 144-site glamping center to be located in the Mutton Hollow area.

## Loudoun

### > Route 15 North tour and community planning efforts

PEC has been working with community members and partner organizations to offer tours of the Lucketts area for county decision-makers. The first was held Oct. 29; others are being planned. The goal of this effort is to ensure a full understanding of the community and local impacts that should be considered with the Route 15 North, Phase II Comprehensive Plan Amendment (CPAM). The CPAM was addressed in a Nov. 30 public hearing by the planning commission and will be addressed by the board of supervisors in early 2022.

### > Rural sidewalk and trails prioritization meetings

PEC staff and other community-based organizations are participating in several rounds of meetings with county staff to identify missing sidewalk and shared-use path segments along major roadways in rural Loudoun. This stakeholder group will develop a list of priorities for bicycle and pedestrian connections and facilities and draft a report for the board of supervisors to review and potentially adopt. The meetings started in September and will continue through June 2022.

### > Telecommunications tower proposal

Preliminary plans have been filed for a 155-foot tower at Mickie Gordon Park along Route 50 near Middleburg. PEC staff are working with local residents and partner organizations to assess the potential viewshed impacts of the tower on nearby rural landscapes.

## Madison

### > Solar Proposal

In the coming months, the board of supervisors is expected to reconsider a request to rezone an approximately 92-acre parcel next to Yoder’s County Market to industrial in order to accommodate a proposed industrial-scale solar facility. The planning commission had previously recommended approval of the request and the board delayed its decision at the request of the applicant. In public comment, PEC has expressed concerns about potential impacts to prime agricultural soils and the adverse implications of rezoning agricultural land to industrial to



accommodate such facilities.

➤ Crescere Lawsuit

In November, Madison County District Court Judge David Franzen released his decision in the lawsuit brought by William and Christina Rother against Madison County and the owner of the Crescere agri-resort, Crystallis LLC. Judge Franzen upheld the special use permit granted by the board of supervisors in August 2020, ruling that the approval process was not improper and did not violate either the zoning ordinance or Virginia Code. PEC had opposed the use permit request for Crescere when it was considered last year.

Orange

➤ Siegen Forest Conservation

PEC helped the Germanna Foundation successfully apply for a \$647,370 Virginia Land Conservation Foundation grant to permanently conserve Siegen Forest, 170 acres bordering the Rappahannock River and Route 3. In its long history, the property has served as territory for Siouan Indians, German settlement in the 1700s, and Civil War battlegrounds; it still holds various 19th-century archeological artifacts today. The property contains seven miles of walking trails that are accessible year-round, and it borders the Rapidan River for 1.4 miles. Germanna will work toward allowing public access to the river.

Germanna Foundation is working in partnership with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources to complete the easement, along with American Battlefield Trust and PEC.

Rappahannock

➤ Rush River Commons

In September, the Town Council of Washington approved the town’s first mixed-used development proposal, Rush River Commons, owned by town resident Chuck Akre, on the former Black Kettle motel property on the southern edge of the town. Ground-breaking is expected in early 2022. The development is planned to house local nonprofits, including the Rappahannock Food Pantry, as well as affordable housing to serve existing county residents.

➤ New Field Representative

We are pleased to announce the addition of Laura O’Brien to PEC’s staff as our Rappahannock County Field Representative. Laura graduated from Ithaca College with a degree in environmental studies. She has worked at a variety of environmental nonprofits, including Trout Unlimited and the Cornell Lab Ornithology’s Land Trust Bird Conservation Initiative. Laura grew up in northern Massachusetts with a love for the outdoors and appreciation for community-based conservation efforts. We’ll share more about Laura in an upcoming issue.

Pop Quiz

QUESTION

About how many African American men served in the United States Colored Troops during the Civil War?



ANSWER

a) 180,000

By the end of the American Civil War in 1865, around 180,000 African Americans had served in the United States Colored Troops. It is estimated that about 120 of these men called Culpeper, Virginia their home, including Thomas Scott (shown above) of the 62nd USCT. The 175 regiments of the USCTs accounted for 10 percent of the Union army, and on the day that Lee surrendered at Appomattox Court House, Virginia, there were more African American soldiers fighting for the Union than the total of all Confederate forces. More than 40,000 African American soldiers paid the ultimate price for their country and for their journey toward self-emancipation.

Why I Give

Year-end giving provides important resources to PEC. Many of our members continue to send contributions by check to P.O. Box 460, Warrenton 20188. More and more supporters have found it convenient to make contributions online at [pecva.org/give](https://pecva.org/give). Both one-time gifts or recurring monthly gifts can be made online. We also can accept gifts of securities, gifts from donor advised funds, and Qualified Charitable Donations (QCD’s) directed from a donor’s IRA (for those 70.5 years and older). For more information on giving options, contact Kendra Atkins at [katkins@pecva.org](mailto:katkins@pecva.org) or (540) 347-2334 ext. 7005.

“Worry over climate change can leave you overwhelmed, or you can do something tangible and get involved right here. We are fortunate to have this amazing organization right here in the Virginia Piedmont in PEC. When I volunteer and give to PEC, I am helping those with food insecurity in our area, improving local water quality and more.”

– Monica Florio, Loudoun County



“The Piedmont Environmental Council has for many years been a champion for preserving the land, water and air within their multi-county purview. I continue my deeply felt support for their work and encourage every citizen who wants to maintain the beautiful and healthy environment we all enjoy to support their legislative, informational and on-the-ground efforts as well.”

– David Goetz, Culpeper County



“Spending time outdoors in this region is crucial to my sanity these days. Contributing monthly to PEC is one way I can give back to ensure these spaces are not only conserved, but made more accessible through new trails and greenways.”

– Jennifer Bisgaier, Albemarle County



Without supporters like you, PEC wouldn’t be able to carry out the holistic mix of conservation, planning and advocacy that we are known for. Make a secure, tax-deductible donation online at [pecva.org/give](https://pecva.org/give). You can also send a check made payable to PEC to **P.O. Box 460, Warrenton VA, 20188** or make a gift over the phone by calling Kendra Atkins at **(540) 347-2334 ext. 7005**. Or consider a gift of stock. Please go to our website at [www.pecva.org](https://www.pecva.org) for instructions. Thank you and Happy Holidays!



# The Year's Winning Photos

2021 was another great year for PEC's annual photo contest! Our thanks to all the photographers who shared their talents with us, our professional judges who help us narrow hundreds of entries to finalists, and to the many community members who voted for our winners.

Entries to our photo contest help us build a gallery that lets us share the immense beauty of the Piedmont and tell its stories visually. We are grateful for so many talented photographers in our region who are willing to share their work with us.

By public vote, the winners of PEC's 2021 Annual Photo Contest are:

BEAUTIFUL LANDSCAPES

▼ **Glow Rime Glow**, Nick Palastro of Fairfax County

*Rime ice at the summit of Mary's Rock glowing during a beautifully cold sunrise in Rappahannock County.*



PEOPLE AND PLACES

▼ **A Walk in the Garden**, Bill Shaw of Orange County

*An early spring stroll in the garden of Montpelier, Orange County.*



NATIVE PLANTS AND WILDLIFE

▼ **Short-Eared Owl Eye Contact**, Matthew Huntley of Fredericksburg

*A short-eared owl staring me down as it flew through a Fauquier County farm field while hunting.*



YOUTH CATEGORY

▼ **Under My Wing**, Margreta Grady, Fauquier County

*Father swan flapping with cygnets floating below, at The Clifton Institute, Fauquier County.*



## Save the Date

Plan to join us on **Saturday, May 28, 2022** for **PEC's 50th Anniversary Annual Meeting!** This celebration will feature keynote speaker of high regard, Terry Tempest Williams. Currently the writer-in-residence at Harvard Divinity School, Williams is an award-winning author, renowned naturalist, activist, and environmentalist, and Ecology Hall of Fame honoree whose life's work is driven by love of naturally beautiful places, a passion for multigenerational land stewardship and opposition to resource destruction, especially when it affects human life.



## Event Highlights

The fall events season is always a busy one, and this year was no different! PEC hosted a mix of in-person and virtual events geared toward audiences throughout the Piedmont. Catch recordings of any of our webinars at [pecva.org/webinars](https://pecva.org/webinars) and visit [pecva.org/events](https://pecva.org/events) to see what's coming up next!

### Quarterly Keynote Speaker Series

On Sept. 23, **Trevor Potter**, founder and president of the Campaign Legal Center, and PEC President Chris Miller discussed potential impacts of election law developments on the Piedmont region and how we can be more effective advocates.

And on Dec. 14, **Ebonie Alexander**, executive director of the Black Family Land Trust, led an important conversation about efforts to retain and conserve Black-owned farms and family lands in the commonwealth.

### Fall Fun

Some 20+ bicyclists gathered at Peloton Station and headed out on the road for thrills and chills on a **Hal-loween Social Bike Ride** with the Piedmont Mobility Alliance, followed by fellowship, refreshments and conversation. This collaboration of PEC, Charlottesville Community Bikes and UVA Sustainability is supported by the Bama Works Fund of Dave Matthews Band at the Charlottesville Area Community Foundation.



### Upcoming Learning Opportunity

THIS WEEKEND, on Dec. 18, at the Blue Valley Vineyard and Winery in Delaplane, we are co-sponsoring a public Q&A and **book signing with Dr. Katharine Hayhoe**, renowned scientist and author of "Saving Us: A Climate Scientist's Case for Hope and Healing in a Divided World."



# The Land Along Life-Giving Water

Continued from cover

of land conservation and how individual management practices can benefit the region as a whole,” said PEC Potomac Watershed Field Representative Hallie Harriman.

## Land Conservation

Fundamentally, one of the best tools for protecting and improving stream health is the conservation easement. They can protect land from unsustainable development and can require beneficial management practices that minimize stormwater runoff, erosion, pollution and loss of aquatic habitat. One of our grant goals is to work with landowners and conservation partners to protect 1,200 more acres of streamside land in this region.

We also hope to update some of the 168 existing conservation easements, covering 22,588 streamside acres, that were put into place before the benefits of management practices were fully understood. “By updating these easements to include and protect a 35-foot buffer of trees on either side of the stream, or fencing to keep livestock out of stream, we can make a big difference in improving our drinking water,” said PEC Rappahannock-Rapidan Conservation Initiative Coordinator Maggi Blomstrom.

## Streamside Buffers

Whether they’re on conserved land or not, the benefits of riparian buffers are many. Streamside vegetation and their root systems filter out excess nutrients and pollution before it can enter a waterway. By stabilizing the stream bank, buffers help reduce flood water velocity, erosion, and sediment pollution during periods of rain. They also serve as wildlife corridors, providing food and shelter for numerous wildlife species.

That’s why another grant goal is to create or restore 80 acres of riparian buffer in the region. Our first of many such projects took place at the end of October. “It was a cold and rainy weekend, but despite the mud, grit, and more mud, over 100 volunteers from many different partner organizations came together with us at Sky Meadows State Park. Together, we planted 750 trees on 3.4 acres of former farmland that contains an intermittent stream of the Goose Creek watershed, which is part of the Potomac watershed,” Hallie said.

## Community Education

Another component of this grant project is working with our conservation partners to blanket the region with information about land conservation, riparian



The Boldt family of Warrenton were among 100+ volunteers who helped plant 750 trees at Sky Meadows State Park in the Goose Creek watershed in October.

buffers, and water quality, and to connect landowners with the partners and resources needed for best management practices. Our goal is to connect with at least 100 rural landowners directly, through mailed informational packets, community workshops, and one-on-one meetings, whether they be virtual or in-person. And we hope these will all inspire a lot of word of mouth sharing by neighbors and friends.

Maggi said that an important value of these grants is that they bring together PEC’s expertise in land con-

servation with tremendous knowledge and additional funding of our watershed partners, including Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Virginia Department of Forestry, Goose Creek Association, Friends of the Rappahannock, We Plant Trees, Appalachian Conservation Corps, and the Natural Resource Conservation Service. “Our combined resources help us give landowners technical assistance, project design, materials, and labor for the riparian buffer plantings. We know this kind of collaborative, partner-based work makes a tangible difference in water quality.”

# Working Together for Clean Water and the Brook Trout

By Sophia Chapin

Lovingly called “brookies,” eastern brook trout spend their lives in the freshwater streams of Appalachia. Brook trout can only survive in cold, clean water, so their presence or absence in streams is a sign of ecosystem health, making them an important “indicator species.”

Unfortunately, brookies are more often absent than not; even their population within Shenandoah National Park has declined with the rise of various human impacts. One of the biggest

is man-made barriers in the form of collapsed concrete culverts and rusted metal tubes. These impede fish passage by raising the stream’s flow too far above the streambed or by constricting flow of water and collecting too much sediment to allow fish through. A 2013 PEC survey of 133 stream crossings in the Piedmont, which consisted of 58 percent public roads and 42 percent private drives, found that fewer than half allow full movement for aquatic species.

That’s why PEC has been working with state agencies, partner organizations and landowners to improve fish passage across the Piedmont, one barrier at a time. In the last five years, we have reconnected more than 20 miles of streams for better fish passage, and in

the process, both cleaned these stream waters and improved their resiliency against the increased stream flows predicted under climate change.

This summer, we completed our second of three restoration projects at the headwater stream Bolton Branch in Rappahannock County. Flowing from the Blue Ridge Mountains, it’s one of the last stretches of trout habitat and, until recently, was fragmented by both public and private stream crossings.

In 2019, we worked with a conservation-minded landowner to replace a low-water ford with a 40-foot open-span bridge and restore 800 feet of Bolton Branch with native vegetation. It was a significant effort, but with the great reward of lush wildflowers, stabilized streambanks and a gentle stream flow.

A stone’s throw away was another crossing, with a small, raised culvert, barely spanning five percent of the bank—not ideal for brook trout travel.

PEC teamed up with Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) and the National Park Service to engineer a better, wider-spanning crossing completed this August. This stream crossing is now opened up to over 50% of the bank, allowing brook trout and other aquatic wildlife to swim freely.

“VDOT has long been concerned with improving stream crossings in our inventory to include stronger protections for aquatic species,” says VDOT Resident Engineer D. Mark Nesbit, who worked on the project. “We were excited about the opportunity at Bolton Branch and hope this sort of design and installation can be

a model for future projects.”

And we’ve seen lots of native fish, thanks to the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources’s help conducting electrofishing surveys. After the first Bolton Branch project, brook trout population counts increased by over 30 percent. This year, we spotted an abundance of various-sized brook trout and other characteristic stream species like mottled sculpin and black-nosed dace near the newly replaced crossing.

With two restoration projects complete and a capstone crossing replacement already slated for work by Trout Unlimited, brookies in Bolton Branch will have soon two full miles of reconnected habitat for use as refuge—a stark difference from the eroding banks, fast-moving currents and shrapnel rocks trout previously had to navigate.

Bolton Branch is just one success story of collaboration for the brook trout. With 100+ miles ahead in the Piedmont alone, a coordinated, continued effort is essential. Visit [pecva.org/trout](http://pecva.org/trout) to learn how you can get involved.

We’d like to thank the following partners and funders: the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Shenandoah Streamworks, Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources, Trout Unlimited, Friends of the Rappahannock, VDOT, Shenandoah National Park, Ecosystems Services LLC, the Ohrstrom Foundation, George L. Ohrstrom, Jr. Foundation, Nimick Forbesway Foundation, and PEC’s Krebsler Fund for Rappahannock County Conservation.



▲ **BEFORE:** Stream flow and fish passage is restricted to one undersized culvert.  
Photo by Claire Catlett.



► **AFTER:** The new crossing spans the entire channel, which improves stream resilience during high flow flood events and allows fish passage.  
Photo by Celia Vuocolo.



Dear Friends,

The vibrant colors of the forests this fall have been a source of inspiration and hope for thousands of residents and millions of visitors to the Piedmont region. Whether an individual tree with a complete crown in full display or the more complex patterns of a forested hillside, their effect is an awesome reminder of the power of the natural world to recenter our lives around a sense of place.

I cherish the time I spend each day walking through the woods near my home and the incredible views I get to experience driving as part of my work for PEC. These help me reconnect to nature and be present in the moment, while also giving structure and dimension to our work.

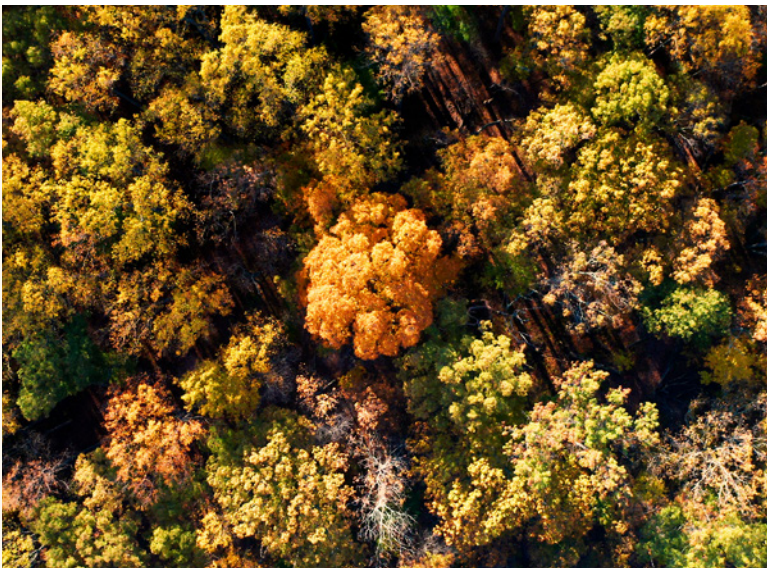
Recently, participating in PEC-sponsored forest buffer plantings in the Goose Creek and Upper Rappahannock watershed, where the collective efforts of hundreds of volunteers results in thousands of native trees along critical stretches of headwater streams, got me thinking about trees and forests and the importance of connecting the dots.

The collective efforts of hundreds of individuals and groups over 20 years has resulted in critical reforestation along stretches of headwater streams and cleaner drinking water for hundreds of thousands of Virginians across three counties. As these trees grow and form an interconnected canopy, their impacts are multiplied. They represent the long-term push for improved water quality in all of our waterways and, ultimately, the Chesapeake Bay. They help retain precipitation, replenish our aquifers, and support clean drinking water. They also provide patches and pathways of habitat for critical wildlife migration and adaptation.

Much like the forests that flow down the slopes of the Blue Ridge and along the Piedmont region’s rivers and streams, scenic roads, and property lines, The Piedmont Environmental Council is a complex mosaic of programs and activities that, individually and combined, all contribute to better communities and an increasingly conserved and restored landscape.

As we accelerate specific programs to permanently conserve farm and forest lands, we are adding to the strong foundation of nearly 25% of the landscape already permanently conserved—close to 430,000 acres. At the largest scale, we are working to protect thousands of additional acres of forest along the Blue Ridge and throughout our region, where we can plant new forests, improve management of existing forests, and ensure we are contributing to the Chesapeake Bay Program goal of riparian forest buffers along 90-95% of our stream and rivers. By replacing invasive and non-native plants with native trees, shrubs and other vegetation, we both increase habitat and address climate change challenges such as potential for drought, increased flooding from more violent storms, and the health impacts of the heat island effect.

At the same time, our smaller-scale projects highlight and commemorate important aspects of our region—from the urban/suburban Larson Native Plant Garden to the more rural Roundabout Meadows and the Piedmont Memorial Overlook, to stream restoration along Bolton Branch and public access to the Rappahannock River. Each is a chance




Seeing the Forest and the Trees. Photo by Hugh Kenny

to use native trees and plants to demonstrate their potential in more sustainable landscape design and to balance design for visitors with habitat for wildlife and climate mitigation. We are grateful to work with leading experts and local garden clubs.

The hope and solace that autumn foliage inspires is a welcome counterpoint to the tough challenges and complex choices facing our communities, from rapid shifts in the real estate market, to growing demand for land and pressures for development, to the changing energy landscape—each influenced by the pandemic, climate change and more. One hopes that we can see both the forests and trees as valuable to our collective future, critical to long term resiliency in the face of real change.


Sincerely,

Chris Miller, President



# The Piedmont View

A MEMBERSHIP NEWSLETTER OF THE PIEDMONT ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL WINTER 2021/22



**INSIDE**  
General Assembly 2022 Preview, Photo Contest Winners, Maddensville Historic Site Dedication, Stream Restoration Update, Meet PEC staff members, and more!

At the summit of Mary’s Rock, rime ice glows during a beautifully cold sunrise in Rappahannock County. Photo by Nick Palastro

## Pop Quiz

About how many African American men served in the United States Colored Troops during the Civil War?


a) 180,000

b) 58,000

c) 810,000

d) 82,000

ANSWER ON PAGE 5





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