



Land Conservation Update

A Publication of The Piedmont Environmental Council • 2018

Photo by Will Parson, Chesapeake Bay Program

Conservation Incentives Remain Strong

Virginia landowners have been permanently preserving and protecting their rural land with conservation easements since the late 1960's. As a result of 50 years of collective action, the Commonwealth can now boast that over one million acres of private land have been protected with easements. Further, Virginia's northern Piedmont is one of the most highly conserved areas in the state, with more than 401,200 acres protected.

This success would not be possible without the conservation ethic held by thousands of landowners who made a commitment to protecting their land. We are also fortunate there are state and federal tax incentives that help landowners wanting to conserve their land.

At the federal level, the U.S. Congress has consistently recognized the benefit to local communities of donated conservation easements. In 2015, they permanently expanded the rate and time that easement donors can use their allowed federal income tax deduction. Further, the changes to the

federal tax law that took place at the end of 2017 did not impact the deduction available for easement donors.

At the state level, Virginia has long been a conservation leader by offering a Land Preservation Tax Credit for landowners who permanently protect their property with an easement. In fact, Virginia offers one of the most generous state tax incentives in the nation. Local residents are eligible to receive a tax credit that is equal to 40 percent of the value of their donation, and they can transfer or sell the tax credit to other Virginia income tax payers.

Also, the Governor is expected to sign legislation from this year's General Assembly session that would allow the Land Preservation Tax Credit to be passed along to the heir of the original donor as part of their estate. Previously, this was not permitted, and the credits would be lost if the easement donor died with credits in their name.

To learn more about protecting your family's land with a conservation easement, please reach out to PEC staff, listed below, to set up a visit and receive additional information.



Mount Vernon Farm in Rappahannock County, Va.
Photo by Marco Sanchez



Interested in Protecting Your Land?

The Piedmont Environmental Council's conservation staff can help you explore your options.

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Piedmont Residents Step Up

The Piedmont Environmental Council collected the annual data for land protected in Albemarle, Clarke, Culpeper, Fauquier, Greene, Loudoun, Madison, Orange and Rappahannock Counties by landowners working with land trusts and public agencies, and the total is now 401,200 acres! This includes 6,237 acres from 2017.

“Conservation helps protect our local food supply, secure sources of water for the future, provide areas for wildlife habitat and preserve important historic and cultural sites,” says Chris Miller, President of PEC. “People love the rural character of the region and protecting the land is a way for them to take action and ensure that future generations will enjoy the same benefits.”

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

“Through programs like Virginia’s Land Preservation Tax Credit, there is a set of financial incentives that make it possible for landowners across the state to act on their love of the land through the donation of a conservation easement,” says Michael Kane, director of conservation at PEC.

At the close of 2017, PEC worked with Charlotte Tieken, landowner of Waverley Farm, to conserve 669 acres of her property in Orange County. It was the largest easement recorded in PEC’s nine-county service region last year; and it protects approximately 419 acres of prime or significant farm soils.

“The success of conservation in the Piedmont highlights the commitment families and other landowners have to the long-term protection of our region’s special places and resources,” says Kane.



Piedmont Environmental Council

Give Back

The Piedmont Environmental Council is a grassroots non-profit organization. We were founded in 1972 by citizens of Virginia who wanted to conserve what makes this region a wonderful place to call home. Four decades later, PEC has helped make the Piedmont one of the most successful places in the U.S. for private land conservation.



GIVE BY MAIL:

Post Office Box 460
Warrenton, VA 20188



GIVE BY PHONE:

(540) 347-2334 ext 7001



GIVE ONLINE:

www.pecva.org/donate

Improving the Health of Land and Livestock

“Polluted water is obviously bad for people and the environment, but it’s also bad for livestock as well,” says Celia Vuocolo, habitat and stewardship specialist at The Piedmont Environmental Council.

PEC implemented a series of agricultural Best Management Practices (BMPs) at their 141-acre Roundabout Meadows property in Loudoun County to address water pollution. More than 2 miles of fencing and almost a mile of pipeline were installed for a livestock watering system, which will keep livestock away from the property’s streams and provide a clean source of water for cattle.

Loudoun Soil and Water Conservation District provided technical and funding assistance for the BMPs implemented at Roundabout Meadows. “It’s exciting to see the property continue in active agricultural use and also see so many conservation practices being put to use,” says Chris Van Vlack, urban and agriculture conservationist at LSWCD.

Previously, the cattle grazing at Roundabout Meadows had free access to the property’s streams, including Howser’s Branch. This was leading to degradation of the property’s stream banks and causing fecal contamination of its waters.



A series of agricultural Best Management Practices, such as fencing, were implemented at PEC’s Roundabout Meadows property in Loudoun County. | Photo by: Marco Sanchez

The installed fencing is set back from Howser’s Branch by 50 feet to allow for the establishment of a forested riparian buffer, which will help the banks heal. The new vegetation will hold the soil in place and filter runoff from the nearby pastures.

Agricultural BMPs restore water quality, which benefits the health of livestock. “After an exclusion project is completed, cattle farmers will often see a decrease in parasite loads, intestinal diseases and calf mortality in their herds. This leads to better market weights and less money they have to spend on medication. It’s really a win-win for everybody,” says Vuocolo.

Local Soil and Water Conservation Districts offer technical assistance and funding to help landowners adopt agricultural BMPs like those implemented at Roundabout Meadows. Contact your local SWCD to learn more about improving stewardship of your land and water resources.

Culpeper SWCD

Greene, Culpeper, Madison,
Orange, Rappahannock
(540) 825-8591

John Marshall SWCD

Fauquier
(540) 347-3120

Loudoun County SWCD

Loudoun
(571) 918-4530

Lord Fairfax SWCD

Clark, Frederick, Shenandoah,
Warren, Winchester
(540) 868-1130

Thomas Jefferson SWCD

Albemarle, Charlottesville,
Fluvanna, Fluvanna, Nelson
(434) 975-0224

Land Conservation in Virginia's Piedmont

In total, conservation easements in the nine counties have protected approximately:



1,658

miles of streams



9,839

acres of wetlands



26,217

acres adjacent to scenic rivers



189,965

acres of prime farmland soils



189,265

acres of forests



107,303

acres of along scenic byways



120,916

acres in the viewshed of the Appalachian Trail



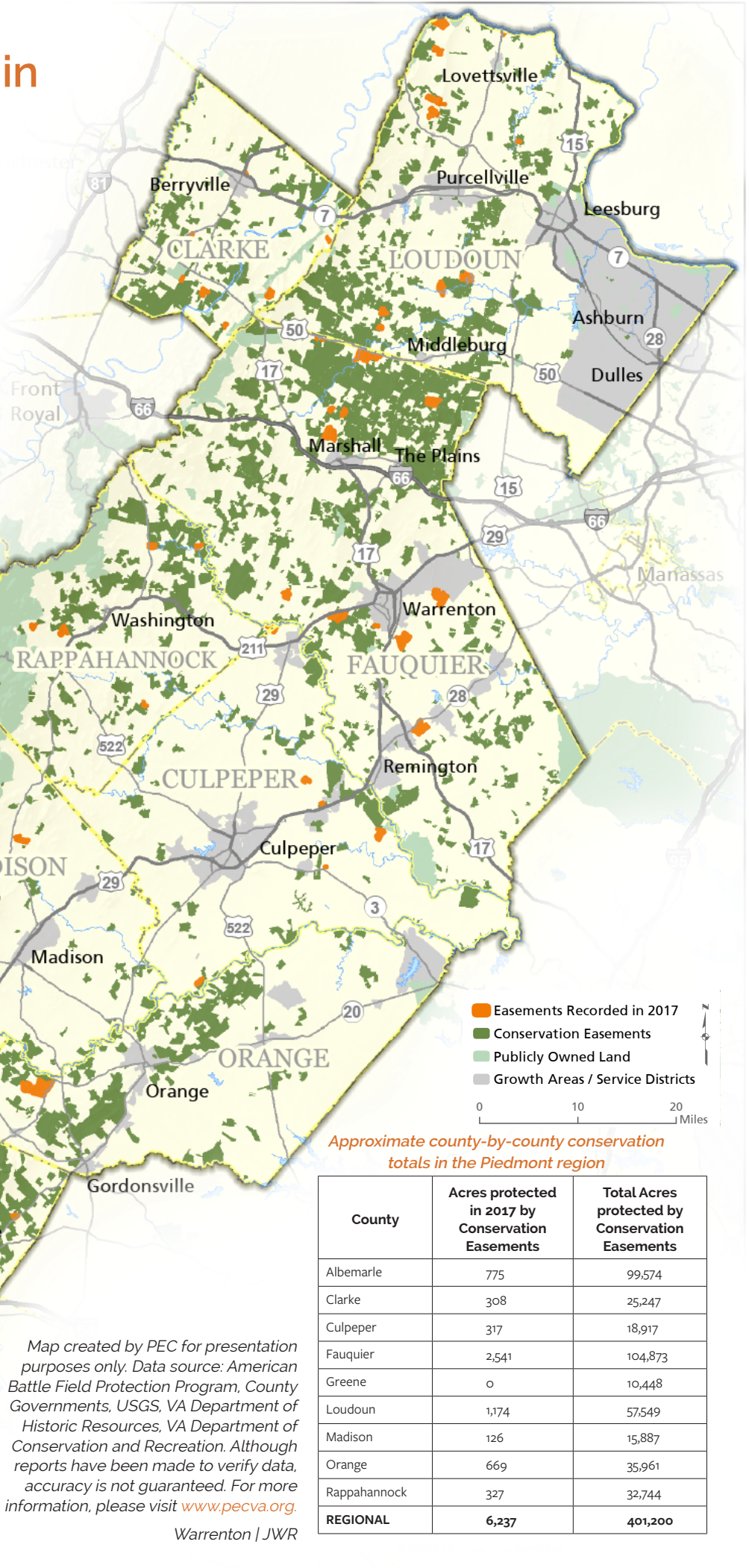
126,637

acres in historic districts



29,447

acres of Civil War battlefields



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

County	Acres protected in 2017 by Conservation Easements	Total Acres protected by Conservation Easements
Albemarle	775	99,574
Clarke	308	25,247
Culpeper	317	18,917
Fauquier	2,541	104,873
Greene	0	10,448
Loudoun	1,174	57,549
Madison	126	15,887
Orange	669	35,961
Rappahannock	327	32,744
REGIONAL	6,237	401,200

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

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Upcoming Events

There are a wide variety of land management and land conservation programs offered by private non-profit organizations as well as local, state and federal conservation agencies. Please join PEC and our partners as we provide a comprehensive overview of the available programs and sources of funding that could be available for your property!

Sources of Conservation Funding Workshop

May 10, 2018 • 6:00 – 8:00 PM

Jack's Shop Kitchen,
 14843 Spotswood Trail,
 Ruckersville, Va.
 Dinner will be provided.

May 16, 2018 • 5:30 – 7:30 PM

Waterford Old School
 40222 Fairfax St, #142-B,
 Waterford, Va.
 Light refreshments will be provided.

May 22, 2018 • 5:30 – 7:30 PM

Hill School
 130 S. Madison St,
 Middleburg, Va.
 Dinner will be provided.

Space is limited. Free event but registration is required.

Register at pecva.org/events or contact Tracy Lind at (540) 347-2334 ext. 7066

Event sponsors and presenting organizations include:

