

CONSERVATION
EDITION

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Totals for 2017



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Events!



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Your General Assembly Update

By Dan Holmes

The beginning of spring marks the end of the 2018 Virginia General Assembly session. Well, sort of. In the case of the budget, there was no resolution, which means the fate of conservation funding and the general path forward is still up in the air. To address this, the Governor has announced that a special session will convene on April 11.

One of the bigger issues taking up bandwidth this year was Medicaid expansion. The House's budget bill included the expansion, while the Senate's bill did not — this set up a showdown in the budget conference committee. Due to this and other differences, the conferees were unable to come to an agreement, meaning it will be some time before we know what programs will be affected.

The Budget, Mitigation and the Rate Freeze

Medicaid was not the biggest issue that affected conservation funding. That honor goes to mitigation agreements related to the two proposed gas pipelines and the Skiffes Creek (Jamestown) transmission line.

Mitigation money was cited by both the House and Senate as a reason to defund state conservation programs and agencies. Their argument: a windfall from the mitigation agreements have left conservation programs and agencies with plenty of money. In response, they made cuts to already underfunded programs like the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation (VLCF), as well as changes to the Land Preservation Tax Credit. The Senate also cut general operations

funding to the Virginia Outdoors Foundation, incorrectly assuming that mitigation funds could be used toward that end. Fortunately, the lack of resolution with the budget means there may still be time to increase funding for some of these programs.

Another major topic for the session was Dominion's requested rate freeze of 2015, locking in reviews despite known cuts in federal taxes and other costs of operation. Before I go any further, I have to stop and ask, does anyone remember a time when Dominion wasn't in charge of writing the rules under which they must live or determining the amount of profit they make? No? Me either. To further illustrate this, let's take a trip down memory lane...

In 1999, Dominion told us that, to reduce the cost of energy, we should allow the free market to provide what existing regulation of the industry could not — competition. So, they provided bill language. We passed it. Eight years later, they came back and told us deregulation had failed to provide us the competition we desired and that in order to reduce the high cost of energy, we needed to re-regulate. They happily supplied the bill language to accomplish this. We passed it. In 2015, they told us that we had to freeze rates in order to avoid a huge increase in energy prices related to climate change and



Our Director of State Policy, Dan Holmes, meets with Delegate Wendy Gooditis about conservation funding during this year's General Assembly.

the clean power plan. And we passed it. But the clean power plan stalled at the federal level and they collected over \$700 million in overcharges. Did we learn our lesson? Not so much. As you probably guessed, this winter Dominion happily stepped up to the challenge of correcting the "mistake" by providing us the bill language.

Thanks to many of you and our partners, some of the worst parts of Dominion's rate freeze correction bill failed to make it through, such as the 'double dip.' There are still significant problems. However, the late changes and discussion surrounding the bill gives me hope. Maybe we the people will one day wrest control back from the regulated monopolies. But for that to happen, we must be mindful of the past and hold our politicians and Dominion accountable.

Continued on page 5

Neighborly Effort to Protect the Piedmont

By Paula Combs

"This beautiful and agricultural open land was here before we purchased Waverley and it's my hopeful intention that it will look the same as it does today long after I'm gone," remarked Charlotte Tieken, Somerset resident and owner of Waverley Farm.

The Piedmont Environmental Council worked with Ms. Tieken

to put 669 acres of her property under conservation easement at the close of 2017.

Down the road from James Madison's Montpelier, the farm is located within the Madison-Barbour Rural Historic District and has over a mile of frontage on Constitution Highway. The district, known to have well-drained soils, rolling terrain and a mix of agricultural and forest land, now has a total of 14,645 acres conserved.

"As a cyclist, I enjoy the spectacular views that stretch all the way to the Blue Ridge Mountains when I ride by Waverley. I'm grateful to Ms. Tieken for her generous act of conservation, and it was a pleasure to work with her," said Peter Hujik, field representative for PEC.

The portion of Constitution Highway that runs along Ms. Tieken's property is part of the Journey Through Hallowed Ground National Scenic Byway, a 180-mile long route that stretches from Gettysburg, Pennsylvania to Monticello in Virginia.

The easement was the largest one on record in Orange County last year, as well as the largest in PEC's nine-county service region; and it protects approximately 419 acres of prime or significant farm soils.

"It was my husband's wish to conserve the farm; and after his passing, I didn't want to wait any longer," said Ms. Tieken. "It was our hope years ago that we could do this collectively with neighbors to keep this area looking as it does now in perpetuity."



Charlotte Tieken's Waverley Farm in Somerset, Va. was put under conservation easement with PEC at the close of 2017.

Photo by Paula Combs

Continued on page 5

Continued Interest in Land Conservation

By Paula Combs

We have 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. The largest easement we now hold was closed last year in Somerset, Va. To learn more about the valuable conservation project, read “Neighborly Effort to Protect The Piedmont” on the cover page.

“Conservation easements help 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.”

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

through programs like Virginia’s Land Preservation Tax Credit, there are financial incentives that make it possible for landowners to act on their love of the land through the donation of a conservation easement.”

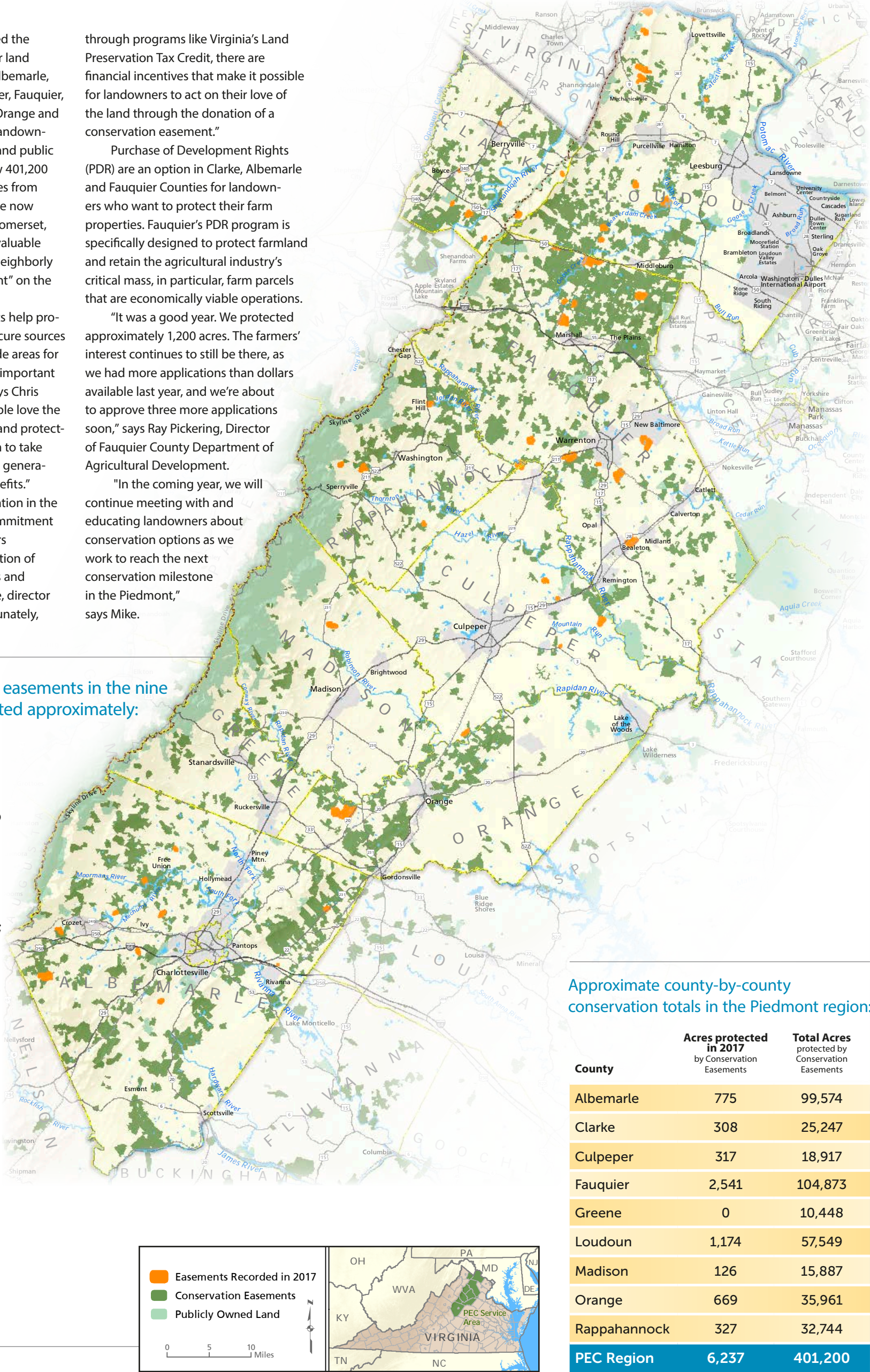
Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) are an option in Clarke, Albemarle and Fauquier Counties for landowners who want to protect their farm properties. Fauquier’s PDR program is specifically designed to protect farmland and retain the agricultural industry’s critical mass, in particular, farm parcels that are economically viable operations.

“It was a good year. We protected approximately 1,200 acres. The farmers’ interest continues to still be there, as we had more applications than dollars available last year, and we’re about to approve three more applications soon,” says Ray Pickering, Director of Fauquier County Department of Agricultural Development.

“In the coming year, we will continue meeting with and educating landowners about conservation options as we work to reach the next conservation milestone in the Piedmont,” says Mike.

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 farming soils;
- 186,265 acres of forests;
- 107,303 acres along scenic byways;
- 120,916 acres in the viewshed of the Appalachian Trail;
- 126,637 acres in historic districts; and
- 29,447 acres of Civil War battlefields.



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

Pollinator Garden Planted by Thornton River

By Paula Combs

PEC partnered with the Endangered Species Coalition (ESC), Cliff Miller Jr. and RappFLOW to install a pollinator garden next to a walking trail by the Thornton River in Sperryville, Va.

Using Virginia native plants such as perennials, grasses and shrubs from Hill House Farm and Nursery, the garden was installed during a volunteer planting event this past fall.

Celia Vuocolo, PEC’s wildlife habitat and stewardship specialist, is working with the ESC on their rusty patched bumble bee education campaign (the rusty patched was listed as federally endangered this past year — the first bumble bee to have that designation in the United States). The pollinator garden is part of the campaign to raise awareness for the plight of the rusty patched and other pollinators, including the monarch butterfly. Thirteen plant species were chosen for the new garden, and will provide nectar and pollen sources from April to October.

A sister garden was planted two weeks earlier in Fauquier County, between the Town of Warrenton’s Greenway trail and a new dog park. Native plants for that garden were supplied by Piedmont Nursery in Markham. Interpretive signs will be installed at both sites.

“It’s imperative that we do more to protect the at-risk pollinator species — including those currently listed as threatened or endangered — by expanding their habitat with new pollinator-specific gardens in Virginia and elsewhere throughout the country,” says Leda Huta, executive director of the ESC. “We are happy to partner with the Piedmont Environmental Council to help establish these special pollinator gardens in Warrenton and Sperryville, which will provide much needed habitat for the rusty patched bumblebee, monarch butterfly and other imperiled species.”

The last sighting of the rusty patched (*Bombus affinis*) in the Mid-Atlantic was also the last known one in Virginia. In 2014, citizen scientists from the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute’s Virginia

Working Landscapes program found one at Sky Meadows State Park. Prior to this finding, it had been several years since the bumble bee had been observed and was thought to have been extirpated from the Mid-Atlantic region. The rusty patched bumble bee’s population has declined by over 80 percent over the past 20 years.

“The monarch and the European honey bee have been the poster children for pollinator decline, but we have hundreds of native bee species in the United States that are at just as much risk. The best thing a homeowner can do to help pollinators is plant Virginia native plants that are pesticide-free, and that’s exactly what we are doing with this project,” says Celia.

If you are interested in planting natives to help the rusty patched bumble bee and other at-risk pollinators, visit www.pecva.org/gonative to view PEC’s *Go Native Go Local* guide for a listing of nurseries that carry native plants.

“Bumble bees are generalists, meaning that they visit a lot of different flowers, as opposed to other pollinators that specialize on certain plants,” says Celia. “The important thing to remember when selecting plants for native bees is variety. Variety of color, flower shape and size, and bloom time. You need to make sure you have native flowers blooming all through the growing season. And don’t forget your trees and shrubs! In the early spring, woody plants are the main source of nectar and pollen for bees.”



Volunteers help plant native species in the new pollinator garden by the Thornton River in Sperryville, Va.

Photo by Celia Vuocolo

PLANTS INCLUDED IN THE SPERRYVILLE GARDEN

Nasella tenuissima, Mexican feathergrass

Amsonia hubrichtii, threadleaf bluestar

Baptisia minor, blue wild indigo

Schizachyrium scoparium, little blue stem

Aster ericoides, heath aster

Antennaria neglecta, field pussy toes

Symphotrichum oblongifolium, aromatic aster
‘Raydon’s Favorite’

Pycnanthemum muticum, short-toothed mountain mint

Monarda fistulosum, wild bergamot

Solidago nemoralis, gray goldenrod

Danthonia spicata, poverty oatgrass

Asclepias syriaca, common milkweed

Muhlenbergia capillaris, pink muhly grass

Fothergilla gardenii, Fothergilla
“Appalachian Dwarf Form”

A Frog Song

If you've spent any time outside or near an open window lately, you may have heard the wood frogs singing! Wood frogs breed over the course of a few days in February or March. They are found in moist upland woods in the Piedmont and mountains of Virginia, but rely on vernal (seasonal) pools for breeding and laying eggs. Clean water is vital to all amphibians, but so is connectivity between woodland habitat to streams and ponds with healthy riparian vegetation.

We recently featured this as a post on our Facebook page. If you haven't already, like us on Facebook and Instagram to learn more interesting tidbits like this!



Photo by Ryan Hodnett

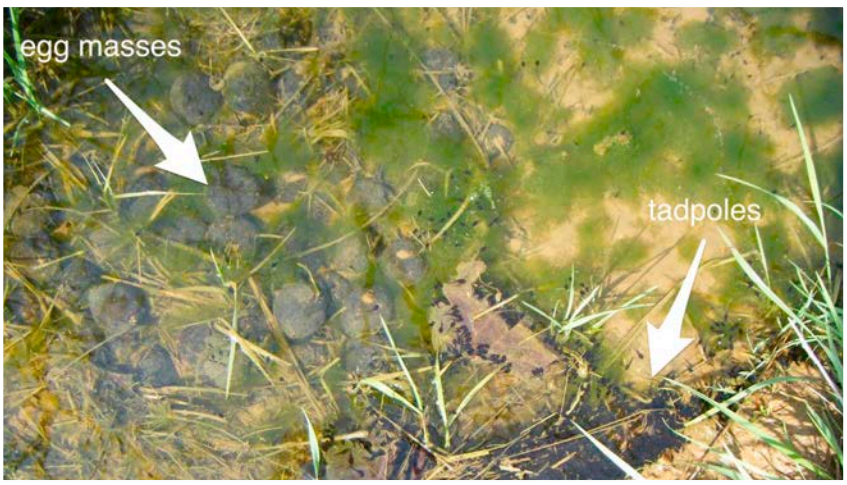


Photo by Celia Vuocolo

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Lending a Helpful Hand

Kelsey Schoenemann began volunteering at PEC with our Land Conservation program in November 2017, under Claire Catlett and Celia Vuocolo. She grew up in Martinsburg, W.Va., but moved to Delaplane, Va. when she was 12 years old and has lived in Fauquier County ever since. She volunteers for many local organizations, including Virginia Working Landscapes and the Middleburg Humane Foundation, and recently joined the Complementary Work Force Program at Virginia’s Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. Kelsey recently completed her Master’s degree in Biology at Queen’s University, and graduated with a Bachelor’s degree in Wildlife Conservation from Virginia Tech.

At PEC, Kelsey has assisted with stewardship and monitoring visits to private lands under conservation easement, taking photographs and recording notes about site conditions. She has also helped to research a myriad of topics ranging from field techniques for bee and plant surveys, designs for road-stream crossings that do not impede fish passage, and non-invasive methods for brook trout population monitoring.

“It’s been a real pleasure to work with the folks at PEC and participate in land conservation efforts in my local community. Already, I’ve learned a lot about both the obstacles and opportunities for protecting our region’s natural resources. I look forward to continuing to work for organizations like PEC, and doing what I can to find effective solutions for today’s difficult conservation problems,” says Kelsey.



PEC Volunteer Kelsey Schoenemann

Wishin' I Was Fishin'

Spring is here and the fishing poles are ready to be taken out. Here is a collection of favorite fishing spots from PEC and our partners. Enjoy the warming weather and the region's bucolic landscape by spending some quiet time in the Piedmont's local streams and rivers.

RECOMMENDED BY
Woodie Walker, Friends of the Rappahannock

➤ **Upper Hazel River • Sperryville, VA**

I really enjoy rock-hopping in small streams for native brook trout, and my daughter and I fished the Hazel River, just outside Sperryville, a couple of summers ago. We accessed the river via Route 600 and found a place to park just after the bridge at the trailhead. The first stretch of the trail is through private property, so check out the rules online and know where you are going. Once we got to fishable water, we immediately started raising trout on Royal Wulffs. Like any stream this accessible, I'm sure it gets a lot of fishing pressure, but we saw lots of fish and got some memorable photos.

RECOMMENDED BY
Bryan Hofmann, Friends of the Rappahannock

➤ **Robinson River • Syria, VA**

One of my favorite spots to fish is a gorgeous stretch of the Robinson River in Madison County. There is a little pull off at the confluence of the Rose and Robinson River, and if you head up stream from there, you will find a series of great pools and riffles that provide wonderful habitat for a variety of fish species. You will want nice warm waders to stay dry and the banks are private property. The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries stocks this section several times per year, which means you can conquer some browns, rainbows and native brook trout! I like to use small streamers or bead head nymphs with a short 4wt fly rod. Tight Lines!



Photo by Jeanee Layman

RECOMMENDED BY
Kyle Settle, Rapidan Trout Unlimited

➤ **Conway River • Madison, VA**

I am in love with this stretch of water due to the chance to catch native brook trout and wild brown trout. Brook trout are often on the small side, with most being less than 8 inches, but brown trout in excess of 10 inches can be found on the lower section of the river. For an all-day outing, access Shenandoah National Park by heading down Route 29 to Route 230 and then hang a right on Route 667. Route 667 ends inside the limits of the park. From here, fish down the Conway River to Devil's Ditch. If you enjoy Brook Trout, only focus on Devil's Ditch. This section of the Conway and Devil's Ditch is heavily wooded and a short 6" 3wt with nymphs would serve you best. Please refer to special regulations for fishing within the limits of the Park before your outing.

RECOMMENDED BY
Dan Holmes, PEC

➤ **Rapidan River, Rapidan Mill to the Route 522 Bridge • Orange and Culpeper County, VA**

Warmer weather is preferred for this spot, as the water ranges from calf to chest deep. There's a pretty good range of species, but I personally enjoy going after the smallmouth bass. I must admit I hesitated to list this stretch. No angler wants to divulge the location of their prized fishin' hole. But more importantly, there is the lack of public access. Often times we are reliant on gracious farmers' and landowners' permission. Other times, we take the risk of scrambling down steep banks under bridges. So, while this is one of my favorite spots, it often reminds me of the work yet to do to increase public access to our waterways. PEC advocates for better access and will continue efforts to increase places for the public to enjoy our local waterways safely.



Be on the lookout for our *Buy Fresh Buy Local* Guides!

By Jess Palmer

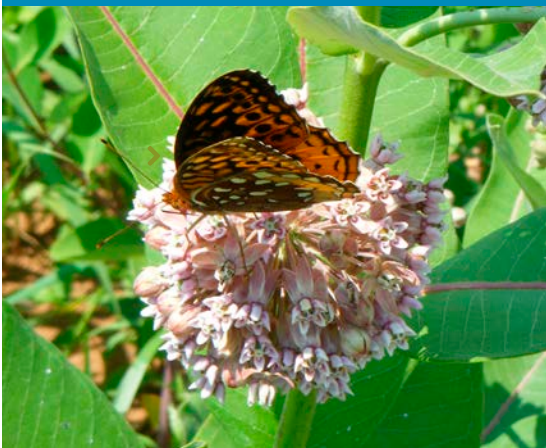
Last week, my four-year-old looked out the kitchen door to our small backyard garden and said, "Mom, where's our garden?" I really miss those little tomatoes." While my short lesson on the seasons only kept her attention for a few seconds, the deliciousness of picking and eating handfuls of Matt's Wild Cherry tomatoes last summer clearly made its mark!

As I work through updating our 2018 *Buy Fresh Buy Local* guides, I'm thinking about the local farmers who are planning now for those little tomatoes, the chefs who will be serving meals highlighting fresh summer bounty and the farmers' markets and grocer's shelves that will be spilling over with baskets of just-picked goodness.

What's your favorite locally grown food? Our *Buy Fresh Buy Local* guides, which come to a mailbox near you in April, list local farms, farmers' markets, restaurants and retailers, so you can fill that craving for your favorite locally grown snack!

Pop Quiz

QUESTION:
Can you identify this plant?



ANSWER
d) *Asclepias syriaca*, common milkweed. This native plant is the host plant for the monarch butterfly. Milkweed was planted by PEC in the Sperryville pollinator garden, which you can read about on page 3.

March Membership Month

There are only a few more weeks left of our March Membership Month! Take advantage of the \$35 membership fee, as it will raise to \$40 starting on April 1, 2018. If you were wondering when and how to get more engaged with us, the time is now and you can do it by 1) renewing your membership and 2) encouraging your friends and family to become a member and sign up for our email action alerts.

In a world and nation that is in the midst of massive changes, our goal of preserving a rural landscape and respecting scenic and historic resources is even more important. Every day we are reminded of how precious our local landscape is to the residents and visitors to Virginia's beautiful Piedmont.

We cannot thank you enough for your continued support. It is because of you that we are able to accomplish all of the great work that you see in this issue. **No action or donation is too small to make a difference.**

Make a secure, tax-deductible donation online by using the "Join or Renew" or "Additional Gift" option. You can also send a check made payable to PEC to P.O. Box 460, Warrenton VA, 20188, or call Danielle Castellano at (540) 347-2334 ext. 7001 to make a donation by phone.



PEC's goal of preserving a rural landscape and respecting scenic and historic resources is even more important now.

We'd love to hear from you ... Why do you support PEC?

Please email your response to Danielle Castellano at dcastellano@pecva.org, call (540) 347-2334 ext. 7001, or send a note to the address listed in this article.

Your General Assembly Update

Continued from cover

Conservation Funding and Legislation

At the beginning of session, we emailed about our priorities related to conservation funding and a slate of bills, both good and bad. Let’s deal with the funding issues first.

We saw minor improvements in the House and Senate budgets related to Agricultural Best Management Practices and the Stormwater Local Assistance Fund. However, as mentioned before, the mitigation money had a negative impact on the three main conservation grant programs — VLCF, the Office of Farmland Preservation (which provides PDR program funding), and the Battlefield Preservation Fund. Both the House and Senate made cuts to VLCF, and refused to add needed support to the already underfunded grant programs for battlefields and farmland. Lastly, the change to the Land Preservation Tax Credit would reduce the individual claim to \$20,000 instead of returning it to \$50,000, as required in Virginia code. This change represents a failure of the Commonwealth to honor contracts made with those donating easements, as well as those who purchased credits, raising issues of fairness and ultimately compromising the stability of the credit market.

And now for the bills. While conservation funding issues remain, two bright spots for conservation this session are the defeat of SB499 (Carrico), a bill that would

have allowed for the termination of an easement based on economic hardship. Had the bill progressed, it would have severely eroded public confidence in the permanence of conservation easements. As well, we were successful in assisting Delegate Fariss with his legislation, HB1490, a bill to make clear that land conservation tax credits associated with an easement can be transferred to a beneficiary. This will go a long way to ensuring the financial benefits of conservation remain with the family and with the property of origin.

As always, transportation was challenging, with multiple attempts to forward harmful projects outside of the Smart Scale scoring process — a ranking process developed to remove the politics from transportation funding decisions. Most of these attempts died, including an attempt to push the Eastern Bypass of Route 29, both in the budget and with SJ32 (Peake), a study resolution seeking to revive this destructive zombie road.

Anti-regulation bills took center stage this year. While most of this legislation was caught up in an agreement with the Northam administration to review the areas where regulations could be reduced, there were two problematic constitutional amendments (HJ111 Head and SJ69 Vogel) from last session. We are happy to announce that both have died. Had these passed, the issue would have bypassed the Governor and gone to the public for a vote in the November election.

How the budget is created

- 1:** The Governor introduces the biennial budget.

2: The House and Senate submit amendments.

3: The relevant committees (House Appropriations and Senate Finance) support or reject amendments and report their version of the budget to their respective bodies.

4: The House and Senate pass their version of the budget.

5: When the House and Senate budget are not aligned, a Budget Conference Committee is appointed. Typically it is made up of six members of the House
- of Delegates and six Senators. (They’re called conferees.)

6: Conferees negotiate the final version of the budget and present to House and Senate. If agreed upon, the budget bill is communicated to the Governor for his amendments.

7: The bill is then sent back to the House and Senate for their approval or rejection of proposed Gubernatorial amendments.

8: House and Senate can accept or reject the Governor's amendments, and then they send the budget back to the Governor for his signature.

Note: This session ended without agreement on a budget. To address the issue, the Governor has announced that a special session will convene on April 11.

Lastly, there were a lot of bills related to the pipelines. Unfortunately, most of them failed to gain traction, and only two bills passed, SB698 and SB699 (Deeds). This legislation grants the Department of Environmental Quality additional authority related to the inspection of stormwater management and erosion and sediment control and awaits the Governor’s signature.

Conclusion

In summary, there was some good and some bad and a lot left to be determined. Along with tremendous help from

you and our partners within the Virginia Conservation Network, we are pleased to have moved the needle in a positive direction some of the bills. Yet we remain concerned with the fate of conservation funding. One thing is clear to us: regardless of where you stand on the mitigation agreements for the pipelines, the money is there to address known and unknown impacts to the natural, scenic and historic resources of the Commonwealth. It should not be used to offset other obligations or commitments Virginia has to protect the water we drink, preserve farms that grow our food and save places for people to experience our natural resources.

Neighborly Effort to Protect the Piedmont

Continued from cover

Before moving to Somerset over three decades ago, Ms. Tieken and her husband lived in Illinois, where they became familiar with land conservation efforts.

“My husband’s family farmed throughout the midwest. While living in Chicago, his family spent weekends on their farm thirty miles northwest of the city, which they bought around the 1950’s. There were six different families in that area who owned adjoining land,” said Ms. Tieken. “And never did they think that suburbia would crawl out that far. However, by 1980 large tracts were in the process of being developed and farmland was disappearing.

“These six neighbors, independently, but with a common vision put their farms

“This beautiful and agricultural open land was here before we purchased Waverley and it’s my hopeful intention that it will look the same as it does today long after I’m gone,” remarked Charlotte Tieken, Somerset resident and owner of Waverley Farm.

under easement. What that land looks like today is a ‘large green preserve’ because every inch of land surrounding those conserved properties is new towns and housing developments. So, I have seen firsthand what sprawl can do and how quickly this can happen. Why should we



A view of Waverley Farm, which was recently put under easement with PEC. The Blue Ridge Mountains can be seen past the property from the historic Constitution Highway. *Photo by Mike Kane*

sacrifice something that is so regionally unique here in Somerset? I'm reminded of the old adage, 'you don't know what you've got 'til it's gone.'"

Ms. Tieken is not alone in Orange County when it comes to conserving land, as she explained, “Bill and Sandra Speiden, our immediate neighbors, were the first to put their farm under easement. I feel fortunate to live in Somerset, and I feel equally fortunate to be amongst my neighbors who feel this mutual commitment towards conservation.”

Rivandale Farm, another nearby property, is owned by Mark Warren, who purchased his land with a portion of it already under easement; and he later conserved additional acreage.

“This is something I feel strongly

about. The only way we’re really going to protect the Piedmont is through these open space easements,” said Warren.

As of 2017, a total of 35,961 acres in Orange County have been protected by landowners working together with land trusts and public agencies.

“I’ve heard the same old story too many times, ‘We’re too far away, sprawl will never happen here.’ Well, 30 years ago, there were very few stop lights between Waverley and Charlottesville,” said Tieken. “If you believe in the preservation of open land as a force for the collective wellbeing of our culture for future generations, and if you believe in good stewardship, then I feel conservation is the right thing to do.”

Waverley Farm has a mile of frontage on Constitution Highway (also known as Route 20). *Photo by Mike Kane*



On the Ground

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Albemarle

> Biscuit Run & Courthouse Relocation Updates

On January 4, Albemarle County entered into a 99-year lease for the approximately 1,200-acre Biscuit Run property that was slated to become a state park. Gov. McAuliffe had proposed full funding of \$42.5 million to open the park in 2016, but the proposal was not passed by the General Assembly. Then, in 2017, we worked with Del. David Toscano and Sen. Creigh Deeds to seek enough funding for a day-use parking area, which also failed to gain traction. PEC will continue to advocate for prioritized funding to open the property to the public and hopes that this new chapter will allow Albemarle County to prioritize funding to open the park more quickly.

As we’ve mentioned in previous updates, Albemarle County was seriously considering a move of the County Courthouse last year from the historic location of the past 250 years in downtown Charlottesville to a new location in the County’s urban growth area. Along with many other organizations and individuals, we spoke against this proposed move. At the end of December, the Board of Supervisors voted to suspend discussions on the relocation decision until March 2, 2018. Despite that positive step to allow time for additional discussions and negotiations with the City of Charlottesville, this issue is not resolved and we will continue to monitor developments.

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Clarke

> County Updates and Ordinances

The Planning Commission has several updates to County planning and zoning documents that are in process or planned to continue this year and into 2019. In the coming months, county staff will provide revisions of the Water Resources Plan, which includes ground and surface waters. Revisions to the Historic Resources Plan are on the same timetable. A comprehensive review and update of the zoning and subdivision ordinances is underway and will be completed in 2019. Five-year reviews of the Comprehensive Plan and Transportation Plan will be scheduled this spring, and they are expected to be finished in the spring of 2019. The Economic Development Plan review will be scheduled in this fall and finished in the fall of 2019.

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Culpeper

> Waterloo Bridge Update

Thanks to the efforts of supporters and to the Hitt family, who donated \$1 million in private funding, we remain optimistic that the Waterloo Bridge rehabilitation will move forward. The project has made it through the first funding hurdle and has been accepted as a revenue share project. The next step is for VDOT to rank the Transportation Alternatives Program funding application for the remaining funds. If the project scores high enough in this process, the Waterloo Bridge will finally have the funding it needs to be rehabilitated.

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Fauquier

> Data Centers, Development Proposals & Stormwater Pollution Solutions

With the arrival of OVH data center in Vint Hill last year, Fauquier is starting to look harder at how to attract these tax revenue generators. Currently, the Town of Warrenton does not allow data centers but is weighing the pros and cons of adding them as an allowable use in industrial zoning. In the Remington Service District, just outside the town, a developer is proposing space for up to 1.8 million square feet for a data center. However, the developer has tied the Remington proposal to a request for \$2.7 million in proffer relief at a subdivision in Bealeton. Not only is this a bad deal involving two non-related properties, but if the county even entertains the idea, it could create the perception of a pay-to-play scenario.

There are a number of other development proposals being considered in Fauquier — such as the Blackthorne event center and resort near Upperville and the Mendleson LLC (a nine-lot subdivision) in The Plains. For details about these or other land use proposals, contact Julie Bolthouse at jbolt-house@pecva.org or (540) 347-2334 ext. 7042.

In positive news, the Town of Warrenton has been actively planning ways to treat stormwater pollution with conservation landscaping, rain gardens and more at Rady Park. Along with John Marshall Soil and Water Conservation District, we have been assisting the Town in this work and will be looking to get some shovels and native plants in the ground later this spring!

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Greene

> White Run Reservoir

In December, the Greene County Board of Supervisors approved a resolution that allows reservoir funding of up to \$60 million for the White Run Reservoir Project. The goal of the project is to supply Stanardsville and Greene County with a reliable water supply through 2050. This project proposes to build a 75-foot-tall and 1,460-foot-long dam along Whites Run and would inundate 125 acres. We have some questions on the growth assumptions related to this project and will be monitoring it as it moves forward.

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Loudoun

> True North Data Center & Leesburg Transportation

True North Data Center was approved in a disappointing 5-4 vote that conflicts with the Comprehensive Plan and was made despite overwhelming public opposition. Please thank Chair Randall, Vice-Chair Buona and supervisors Buffington and Higgins for standing firm for the Plan, the Transition Area vision and for representing the public will.

This spring, the Board is expected to vote to make Route 15 a four-lane road from Leesburg to Montresor Road. Now the County must avoid creating new problems. With this lane increase, safety and

access become more challenging for residents east of Route 15. To help keep traffic moving safely, one suggestion we have is to put roundabouts at the Whites Ferry and Montresor intersections to avoid new problems.

Also, farther north on Route 15, there is a rezoning proposal to locate a 24-pump gas station. The site is inappropriate for this use because it would create traffic and environmental problems. Planning Commission discussions will continue in March.

In the spring, county staff will hold public input sessions on proposed new uses for the rural area. These include commercial shooting ranges, indoor recreation uses and amendments to outdoor recreation uses, among other changes. Your input will be critical.

Also, six open houses for public input on the new Comprehensive Plan draft have been scheduled for the latter half of May. The upcoming dates will be posted on envision-loudoun.org. Be on the lookout for our email alerts too!

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Madison

> Septic System Program

Thanks to a recently awarded two-year grant, Culpeper Soil & Water Conservation District will now be able to expand its septic system program to Madison County. Under the program, residents are eligible for a reimbursement up to fifty percent of costs for pumping, maintaining, repairing and replacing septic systems to residents in CSWCD’s five-county service area, which includes **Greene, Madison, Orange, Culpeper and Rappahannock**. According to the District, the program “is a win-win for both water quality and property value.” For more information, contact District staff at (540) 825-8592.

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Orange

> Subdivision Ordinance

Orange County is in the process of rewriting its subdivision ordinance, including how it pertains to agricultural and family subdivisions. For more information, check out the Planning and Zoning page at the Orange County website (orangecountyva.gov) or contact Planning Department staff at (540) 672-4347. We will be providing input and tracking the revision process.

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Rappahannock

> Putting Farms First

Over 100 local farmers, entrepreneurs and rural residents came together on Jan. 20 to discuss the future of farming and conservation for Rappahannock at the “Agriculture Community Discussion with American Farmland Trust” event, held at the Washington Fire Hall. Attendees gathered to hear AFT President John Piotti give a presentation and learn about his organization’s national conservation initiatives and policy. This event will be followed by successive agricultural community meetings, which will be organized by a steering committee composed of local producers and interested persons, including PEC’s John McCarthy.



UPCOMING Events

Event details subject to change. Please check pecva.org/events for the latest information.

Solarize Piedmont

When > April 2 - May 31

Where > Albemarle/ Charlottesville, Clarke, Culpeper, Fauquier, Greene, Loudoun, Madison, Orange and Rappahannock Counties

If you missed PEC's Solarize Piedmont campaign last year, you have another chance to sign up this spring! Residents and businesses within our service territory can take advantage of competitive rates and financing mechanisms designed specifically for solar energy systems. If you've been thinking about installing solar panels on your home, farm or business, this is your opportunity to find out if it will work for you.

This campaign is a cooperative program with PEC, Local Energy Alliance Program (LEAP), the Northern Virginia Regional Commission and the Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission. To get started or learn more, visit pecva.org/solarize.



Lynn Wiley, a 2016 Solarize Piedmont participant, points to solar panels she had installed on her office building in The Plains. Photo by Bri West

Celebrate Loudoun Outdoors at Roundabout Meadows

When > April 12

Where > Roundabout Meadows, Loudoun County

Celebrate Loudoun Nature Days with your choice of a tour and/or stream monitoring activity at PEC's Roundabout Meadows farm property near Gilbert's Corner. We are offering nature walks in the afternoon at Roundabout Meadows and at the neighboring Mt. Zion Historic Church. There will also be a chance to try stream monitoring. Registrants can participate in one or both activities. Great for adults and families! Come learn about our efforts to protect water quality, restore habitat, conserve the region's farming legacy and preserve local historic resources.

Register on our website at pecva.org/events. For questions, contact Celia Vuocolo at cvuocolo@pecva.org. Rain date is April 27.

Bluebell Walk

When > April 14

Where > Bonny Brook Farm, Catlett, VA

Join PEC and the Julian W. Scheer Fauquier Land Conservation Fund for our Annual Bluebell Walk. Take a casual stroll through picturesque farm fields that have been preserved forever with a conservation easement on your way to the bluebell covered banks of Cedar Run.

The event is free, but registration requested — visit pecva.org/events or contact Nan Moring at (540) 347-2334 ext. 7005.

The Path to Native Plant Landscaping

When > April 15

Where > Grelen Nursery, Somerset, VA

We demand a shrubbery! A native shrubbery to be exact. Come enjoy an hour and a half guided trail walk with Dan Gregg, owner of Grelen Nursery, and Dan Holmes, designer of PEC's native plant landscape in Warrenton, to learn about the use of natives at your home and to see the many specimens Grelen has to offer. Maybe you will even leave with a native shrubbery of your own.

Registration is \$10 for PEC members, and \$15 for non-members. Children under 12 are free. For more information, contact Karissa Epley at kepley@pecva.org or (540) 347-2334 ext. 7002.

For the Rappahannock, From the Rappahannock

When > April 22

Where > Marriott Ranch, Hume, VA

Join Friends of the Rappahannock, PEC and the John Marshall Soil and Water Conservation District for a day at the iconic Marriott Ranch to celebrate Earth Day and the Rappahannock River watershed. There will be Rappahannock River oysters from the Oyster Company of Virginia, catered barbeque from Marriott Ranch, local wines and beers from the Piedmont region, live music, hayride tours of the property and conservation practices, fish shocking demonstrations, and more! This event provides an excellent opportunity to showcase Marriott Ranch's conservation work and celebrate healthy water.



Friends of the Rappahannock's Bryan Hofmann and PEC's Celia Vuocolo shuck oysters at the "For the Rappahannock From the Rappahannock" event. Photo by Paula Combs

Tickets are \$35, which includes delicious food and local oysters. To register, visit www.riverfriends.org/events. For questions, contact Bryan Hoffman at Bryan.Hofmann@riverfriends.org or (540) 373-3448 ext 112.

Ruckersville: Conservation Funding Workshop

When > May 10

Where > Jack's Shop Kitchen, 14843 Spotswood Trail, Ruckersville, VA

Join PEC and our partners as we provide a comprehensive overview of the available conservation programs and sources of funding that could be available for your property! Free dinner will be provided.

Space is limited. Registration required. Visit pecva.org/events.

Catoctin Creek Watershed: Conservation Funding Workshop

When > May 16

Where > Waterford Old School, Waterford, VA

There are a variety of land management and land conservation programs available to farm and forest landowners in Loudoun County, and more generally, in Virginia. Join PEC and our conservation partners for a free dinner and learn about these federal, state, and local programs. Also, hear a review of conservation successes and challenges in the Catoctin Creek watershed.

To register, contact Tracy Lind at tlind@pecva.org.

Goose Creek Watershed: Conservation Funding Workshop

When > May 22

Where > Hill School, Middleburg Theater, Middleburg, VA

The Goose Creek watershed represents a national model for land conservation. Join PEC and our partners for a free dinner and review of conservation successes and challenges in the watershed, including an overview of conservation programs that are available to assist landowners.

To register, contact Tracy Lind at tlind@pecva.org.

8th Annual Summer Safari

When > June 9

Where > Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute, Front Royal, VA

A collaborative benefit for PEC, Shenandoah National Park Trust and Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute. Enjoy wildlife tours, followed by cocktails and dinner on Racetrack Hill overlooking the beautiful landscape and Shenandoah National Park.

Tickets: \$250 per person. For more information and sponsorship opportunities, contact Karissa Epley at kepley@pecva.org or 540-347-2334 ext. 7002.

Dear Friends,

With the close of the General Assembly, I think it's worth addressing the elephant in the room — Dominion Energy — and its outsized influence on the political process in Virginia.

At PEC, we recognize there are a broad range of perspectives within our community and we respect different philosophies and opinions. Much of our work is trying to provide objective information on the choices that individuals, businesses and agencies have on critical land use, infrastructure and conservation actions. Over the years, we have found the common interest in preserving and enhancing open space and communities in the Piedmont unites people of diverse views.

But from time to time, major decisions are not driven by facts or coherent philosophy. Rather, they are driven by unethical behavior, and the decision-makers belief that the ends justify the means. The ends, in the case of Dominion, are not those typical of a public utility — providing reliable, safe and cost effective electrical service to customers in Virginia — but rather those of a multinational corporation with diverse investors maximizing short term profits and returns, whether or not they are in the best interest of Virginia ratepayers and citizens.

This seems to be the case too often in situations involving Dominion and its many subsidiaries, partnerships and other entities. Having Virginia ratepayers provide a steady stream of revenue helps Dominion leverage billions of dollars of favorable financing for ventures such as the Atlantic Coast Pipeline and outsized high voltage electric transmission to serve potential commercial customers outside of Virginia. In other words, Dominion is using its regulated monopoly, Dominion Virginia Power, to tax customers to pay back commercial venture capital investments.

In each of these cases, Dominion's pursuit of

maximum returns for shareholders and investors has put the public interest at risk. In order to limit oversight, Dominion lobbyists have pushed legislation that allows them to determine the rules for oversight by the State Corporation Commission. Over the years, this has included prohibiting any audit or review of the accounting for investments that are the basis for the rates that customers pay. Now, in exchange for the authority of the SCC to review rates every three years, Dominion gets to offset any surpluses with the costs of new generation, transmission and undergrounding of power lines, without requiring prior approval by the SCC.

Dominion also generally opposes environmental protection policy that impacts their myriad of operations in electrical generation, transmission and distribution and natural gas development and transportation.

Now, in a cruel twist, the General Assembly is pointing to the money Dominion agreed to provide for offsetting the harm its pipeline will do to communities and the environment as a reason not to fund conservation programs in the regular state budget. (Read more about this issue on page 1.)

Throughout the years, Dominion has used disproportionate political contributions to influence both legislative and administrative process. Until very recently, the corporate donations of Dominion and its corporate officers far exceeded any other entity in the state.

However, in the past few election cycles, there has been signs of change. Most important of which has been some successful candidates publically



Too often federal and state law minimizes the impacts of energy and transportation infrastructure. Efforts to seek reforms have been blocked by the undue political influence of Dominion.

refusing to accept Dominion contributions. If that becomes the norm rather than the exception, then there is a greater chance for objective oversight by the legislature, the SCC and environmental agencies.

The bottom line: Too often federal and state law minimizes the impacts of energy and transportation infrastructure. Efforts to seek reforms have been blocked by the undue political influence of Dominion. Even as public opinion demands change, Dominion seeks limits on liability and the ability to charge ratepayers for improved energy efficiency and environmental protection. First, we need to encourage the “No Dominion dollars” pledge by candidates for public office. And then we need to encourage permanent reform of elections to restore the importance of individual voters.

Sincerely,

Chris Miller, President

The Piedmont View

A MEMBERSHIP NEWSLETTER OF THE PIEDMONT ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL SPRING 2018

INSIDE

General Assembly Update, 2017's Annual Land Conservation Totals, Pollinator Garden, Favorite Spots for Anglers, and more!

Milkweed Tussock Moth Caterpillar. Photo by Ann Callaway

Pop Quiz

QUESTION:

Can you identify this plant?

- a) *Monarda fistulosum*, wild bergamot
- b) *Solidago nemoralis*, gray goldenrod
- c) *Aster ericoides*, heath aster
- d) *Asclepias syriaca*, common milkweed

ANSWER ON PAGE 4



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