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Connecting Community

A park and trail effort in Gordonsville

By Paula Combs

Parks, trails and sidewalks help weave a community together. Simply put, when we are connected to gathering places, we become better connected to each other.

A walkable town or neighborhood allows for a stronger 'sense of place' to develop. This notion is behind a collaborative effort led by The Piedmont Environmental Council, residents and local

businesses in Gordonsville, Virginia. The energetic group and initiative are called *Town to Trail*.

At the heart of the endeavor is Verling Park, located in the center of the Madison Barbour Rural Historic District, and just a short walk away from the town's fairgrounds. Despite it being only two blocks off Main Street, there are no sidewalks leading to the open space. The park is surrounded by quaint family homes on all sides, but it has an outdated playground, a tennis court with severely cracked pavement, and the only public pool in the county, which has been around since the 1950s. Locals say it's a place where many residents learned how to swim.

PEC's Orange County field representative, Peter Hujik, explains how the *Town to Trail* effort began to unfold, "The University of Virginia School of Architecture hosted a planning charrette for the community in the fall of 2016 to flesh out concepts from the Gordonsville Comprehensive Plan, and I was pleasantly surprised to see emphasis put on parks and trails. They specifically proposed working on Verling Park and connecting it to the local fairgrounds."

Peter wanted to ensure the ideas discussed in the charrette would come to fruition, so in the following spring, he started planning how to move forward.

Liz Samra, a Town Council member and resident whose family lives within walking distance to the park, remembers, "Peter, inspired by the Gordonsville visioning, came to us and said, 'You know, we need to make sure this park happens.'"

"In my role on Council, I've had an opportunity to attend a number of statewide meetings about financing infrastructure and town planning, and everything reinforces that developing a park in the heart of town is the perfect



PEC retained Land Planning and Design Associates to develop this concept design for a revamped Verling Park in Gordonsville, Va.

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Coming Together for a Better Loudoun

By Gem Bingol & Evan McCarthy

"I'm asking you to take a look at our existing suburban areas and focus your time and attention on making those great places to live. If you're thinking that we need new opportunity, we need new economic development, look at the places where people live now and help us," said Jane Kirchner, Cascades resident, and one of more than 180 citizens who spoke up at public hearings on the draft Loudoun County Comprehensive Plan this past April.

The perspectives and concerns shared by Loudoun residents were heartfelt and directed at the Board of Supervisors, with the hope that the plan under review will be significantly altered. The draft, which has been widely panned by the public, would dramatically increase scattered residential development and effectively end the Transition Policy Area, an important and environmentally sensitive area located between the Suburban and Rural Policy Areas.

Comments in opposition to the draft plan have come in from all ages and walks

of life, demonstrating how strongly people feel about the need to pursue a more sustainable growth rate in Loudoun.

"Our shared goal is that in 2040, citizens look back at Loudoun and remark on our legacy, 'Wow, they got it right.' Not, 'Wow, how'd they let this happen?'" said Mayor Bridge Littleton of Middleburg, speaking as a member of the Coalition of Loudoun Towns.

The Loudoun Board of Supervisors is scheduled to vote on a final draft of the Comprehensive Plan on June 20. In these next few weeks, PEC will continue working to ensure the draft reflects the desires expressed by the community in the previous public meetings.

How did we get to this point?

A comprehensive plan provides the vision for a county's future and guides the direction it takes, laying out community values and aspirations. It balances the rights of private property owners with societal goals. Comprehensive plans are required by Virginia state law, and localities must review them every 5 years while periodically updating them. Loudoun's last major revision occurred in 2001, with adoption of the current plan.



PEC's Gem Bingol and Evan McCarthy at a community meeting to discuss the draft Loudoun County Comprehensive Plan. Photo by Marco Sanchez

In 2016, the Loudoun Board of Supervisors initiated a comprehensive plan update that started with extensive public outreach. Residents' input was consistent

Continued on page 2

Train, Bus or Something New?

Considering Trackless Trams

By Sean Tubbs

As the population of Albemarle and Charlottesville continues to rise, a world-renowned professor of sustainability wants us to imagine how a new form of mass transportation could help create even better places to live.

"Most cities can see the problem because people sit in traffic and shake their heads and say 'there's got to be something better than this,'" said Peter Newman of Curtin University in Perth, Western Australia.

Newman is lead author for transport at the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. He was invited by The Piedmont Environmental Council to share his thoughts on "trackless trams," autonomous vehicles that look like trains but have rubber wheels. They use LIDAR and satellite tracking to guide themselves along a fixed path without a rail.

Newman has written over 20 books and 300 papers on sustainability. He came to the eastern U.S. in early April to promote the technology.

"We met with everyday American citizens about one of our country's and our world's greatest problems, which is automobile dependence," said Mark Cave, a local entrepreneur who went on the trip.

Transit As A Land Use Tool

Newman's experience with the link

between transportation and land use dates back to the 1970s when he moved to Fremantle, a suburb of Perth.

"We were designed around the car, like most American cities," Newman said. "We were going the way of automobile dependence and we've begun to reverse it."

Newman said the challenge in Fremantle is how to connect suburbs with the more dense urban core. Railways allow passengers to move faster than traffic because there is less competition for space on the rails.

"If you make a choice to put your money into rail, you will not just get better service, but you'll get a better city because it will help you to develop centers rather than scattering land use," Newman said. "You start to build along that train line so the city center revives."

However, building new rail lines is very expensive. Trackless trams are being deployed in fast-growing Asian cities as a cost-effective solution. He said the vehicles are half the weight of a typical diesel bus because there is no engine. One potential pathway would be in a highway's shoulders where the vehicles could go around obstacles.

"It is fixed, but it's also flexible because you can override it and go around anything," Newman said.



Left to Right: PEC's Sean Tubbs, Charlottesville entrepreneur Mark Cave and Professor Peter Newman. Photo by Charlie Hargroves, Curtin University

Linking Transit And Land Use Planning

For decades, Arlington County's General Land Use Plan has used the Metro line to help increase residential density by building up, providing more people opportunities to live close to their commute. He suggested something similar could happen in Albemarle on U.S. 29.

"This is a retail strip, and maybe there is a demand in the future to turn it into an urban opportunity, and an urban corridor, where there's a lot more density," Newman said.

The population of Albemarle County is estimated by the Weldon Cooper Center at the University of Virginia to be around 108,000. Their projections estimate that figure will climb to over 141,000 by 2040. To accommodate that potential growth, Albemarle's comprehensive plan calls for additional density within the development area.

Newman said five local governments around Perth in Western Australia are planning for mass transit along a 30-kilometer corridor. They are betting that if the housing market can provide

places to live that are close to urban centers, the trams will get passengers.

"People will get out of their cars if it's faster and convenient," Newman said. "That's how you regenerate your city while getting an electric transit system."

Thinking Local

Newman said citizen involvement in transportation issues is crucial.

"Who has the power here, really?" Newman asked. "Us. You get out there and create the movement that sets the agenda."

Citizens and residents interested in the future of mass transportation in our community should be aware that there are opportunities at the moment.

Albemarle County has been steadily increasing their funding for Charlottesville Area Transit, an agency of the city government.

The TJPDC created a regional transit partnership to help increase efficiency and effectiveness of Charlottesville Area Transit, JAUNT and the University's transit system. The partnership's meetings are open to the public and comments are taken at the start of each one.

Coming Together for a Better Loudoun

Continued from cover

from the beginning, with calls for the county to: manage growth, catch up on needed public facilities, protect the Transition Policy Area and preserve what makes Loudoun unique and desirable. Unfortunately, the public's main concerns and issues were diluted or ignored along the way, which is evident in the draft the Board of Supervisors received from the Planning Commission in late March of 2019.

Throughout the process, PEC

worked with the Loudoun County Preservation and Conservation Coalition, the Coalition of Loudoun Towns, the Transition Area Alliance and many other local groups who care deeply about the future of Loudoun to review and comment on the numerous iterations of the draft plan. This spring, we took the results of that review and conducted 13 presentations to communities throughout the county to empower and educate citizens about the potential threats the draft plan poses to residents' quality of life.

As a result of these joint efforts over several years, residents turned out at the two public hearings this past April in large numbers to share their thoughts with the Board of Supervisors. The Board is now holding a series of work sessions where they will consider making changes to the draft.

Two major issues with the draft plan:

1) It's too much, too fast and too scattered. The plan calls for

approximately 28,500 more residential units, which would increase Loudoun's total buildout to more than 73,000 units — a 50 percent increase over the 136,602 units that currently exist.

➤ For too long, county revenues have not covered the cost of residential growth. So in order to balance the books, the county has had to either raise taxes or cut back on the amount they spend on services for residents. This draft plan would force more of the same.

➤ A total of 33 new schools would need to be built, resulting in even more school boundary line adjustments.

2) It's a plan to destroy the Transition Policy Area. The Transition Policy Area provides a distinct visual and spatial separation between the heavily suburban development in the east and the rural area to the west. It was intended to permanently protect important drinking water sources, as well as environmental and heritage resources.

➤ The draft plan would increase total residential build out of the Transi-

tion Policy Area from 11,382 units to approximately 35,000 units (tripling in size).

➤ It would allow 6.5 million square feet of scattered commercial and industrial development throughout the Transition Policy Area.

➤ It would diminish drinking water source protections for the Goose Creek and Occoquan reservoirs by reducing required open space from 70 percent to 50 percent. More development also increases impervious cover, lowering water quality.

A decision on the comprehensive plan by the Board of Supervisors is imminent.

So far, as expected, the Board has struggled most with what to do about the Transition Policy Area. And their decisions on the Transition Policy Area will largely determine the future direction of the county. Will it stick with a plan that manages growth, protects quality of life and the environment, and preserve natural and heritage resources, or not?

Interested in learning more or taking action? Reach out to Gem Bingol at gbingol@pecva.org or visit pecva.org/loudoun.



A Trail Through History

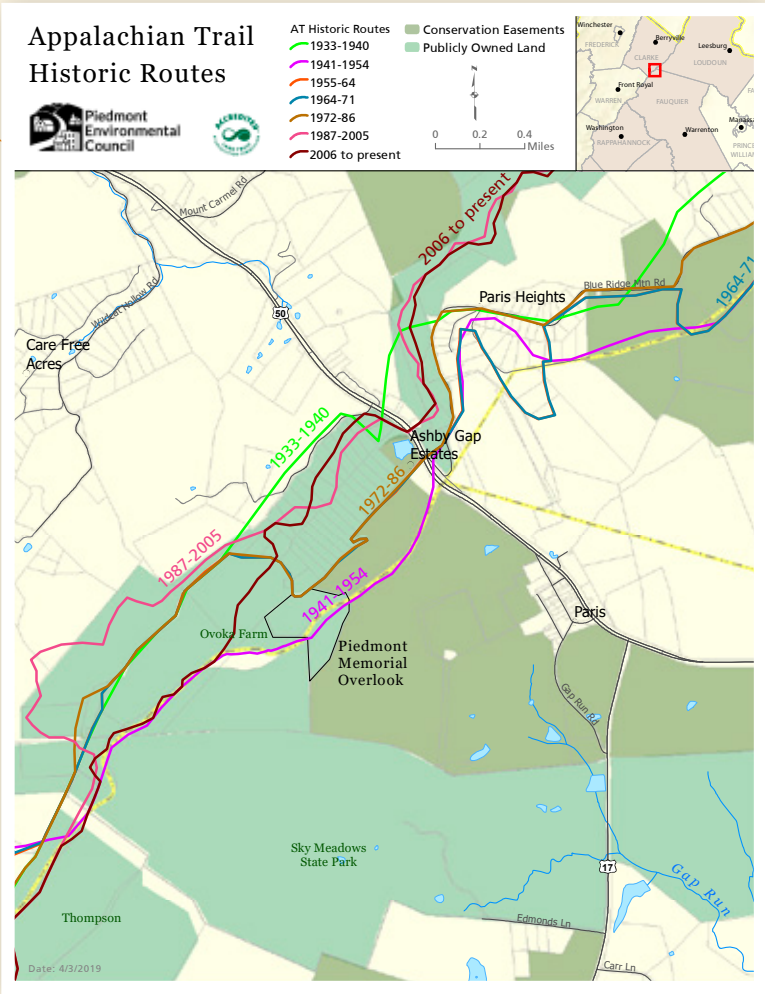
By Kristie Kendall

A bucolic scene of sweeping vistas in the Crooked Run Valley, the views from PEC's Piedmont Memorial Overlook are steeped in history. Beginning in the 1930s, members of the newly formed hiking group, known as the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club (PATC), began scouting the area around the Overlook in Fauquier and Clarke counties, exploring possible routes for blazing a new trail along the crest of the Appalachian Mountains. A memo from L.F. Schmeckebier to members of PATC in 1934 stated, "There is still another route south from Ashby Gap...along the crest of the ridge...At the end of the same wood road is a good site for a shelter. The land has been cleared and is in grass and there is a good spring close by. There was formerly a house here — the Marshall property — and the old foundation would probably yield enough stone."

By 1941, the Club had constructed a log lean-to shelter (Ashby Gap Shelter) to serve through hikers along the Appalachian Trail, and the trail itself had been re-routed along the crest of the ridge — approximately in the same location as the stone wall that runs through the Overlook property today.

Between 1941 and 1955, many hikers stopped and stayed at the Ashby Gap Shelter, including the AT's first through hiker, Earl Shaffer, and took in the spectacular views from the meadow along the

ridgeline. Due to increasing pressures from nearby landowners, this location of the trail was abandoned and the trail's path went through several re-routes over the next four decades. In 2000, PEC acquired 1,250 acres of land on and adjacent to Ovoka Mountain, with the goal of preserving the area and its vistas. Approximately 445 acres were transferred by PEC to the National Park Service in 2003 to re-route the AT and give it a permanent location. At the top of Ovoka Mountain, PEC designated 50 acres to become the current Piedmont Memorial Overlook. Today, PEC is actively exploring ways to honor the history of the AT and the role the Overlook played in its early days. The shelter no longer stands on the property — it was recently disassembled due to its deteriorated state — but, in the future, PEC hopes to provide interpretation and visitor engagement in the area where it once stood.



The route of the Appalachian Trail has been rerouted a number of times since it was originally created in 1933. This map depicts the changes to the trail that have occurred near PEC's Piedmont Memorial Overlook in Fauquier County and Clarke County.

The view from PEC's Piedmont Memorial Overlook. In the 1930s, members of the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club began scouting the area around the Overlook in Fauquier and Clarke Counties to explore possible routes for blazing a path for the Appalachian Trail along the crest of the Appalachian Mountains. Photo by Paula Combs

Preserving Historic Lands and Working Farms

Thanks to a substantial grant from The Volgenau Foundation, PEC has funding available to preserve working farmland and historic lands in Culpeper, Fauquier, Madison, Orange and Rappahannock counties. The Volgenau Foundation grant will accelerate PEC's efforts to assist landowners with conserving some of the most fertile agricultural areas in Virginia.

Over the next two years, PEC hopes to work with farm owners and operators to conserve an additional 1,000-3,000 acres, focusing on lands in the Rappahannock-Rapidan watershed. With its prime farm soils and plentiful water, this area has sustained a strong agricultural economy. PEC is partnering with The Volgenau Foundation to leverage public and private funds and conserve more prime farm and historic lands faster.



Historic Caledonia Farm. Photo courtesy of Phil Irwin

Earlier this year, PEC approached Culpeper County with an exciting opportunity for matching funds, and this spring the county put money into its farmland Purchase of Development Rights program for the first time. Culpeper's \$100,000 appropriation will be matched by \$100,000 in Volgenau Foundation funds. This could leverage an additional \$200,000 if Virginia fully funds its Farmland Preservation Program.

Welcome 2019 Fellows!

Twelve college students from around the country will arrive in Warrenton this June to kickoff the 13th annual Fellowship Program. They will spend seven weeks immersed in everything PEC is involved in: land conservation, agriculture, transportation, historic preservation, land use policy and more. In addition to classroom instruction, the fellows will visit properties to see conservation easements and best management practices in action. They will also participate in stream monitoring to measure water quality and learn about native aquatic life. Visits to the Virginia State Capitol in Richmond and the Clarke County Planning Commission will provide an opportunity to learn about local and state policies and how they impact the environment. They will also visit agricultural lands, including PEC's Community Farm at Roundabout Meadows, which helps feed Loudoun County's food-insecure populations.



Every year, PEC fellows visit local farms to learn about best management practices and how habitat conservation efforts can be integrated with agriculture.

George Castillo Yale University Class of 2020	Kaitlin King James Madison University Class of 2020	Philip Pericak Christopher Newport University Class of 2019
Molly Cullen University of Virginia Class of 2021	Benjamin Landolt The College of William & Mary Class of 2019	Katelyn Schmidtman High Point University Class of 2019
Emily Dalton Virginia Tech Class of 2021	Jake Nicastro Vanderbilt University Class of 2020	Merissa Shebell University of Richmond Class of 2019
Ariel Gans University of California - Berkeley, Class of 2019	Nell Pearson Bates College Class of 2020	Annabelle Stanley Cornell University Class of 2020

Connecting Community

Continued from cover

thing to do.”

Three community meetings were held to garner feedback from residents and discuss ways to improve the public space for everyone.

“The *Town to Trail* goal is to connect, whether you’re walking or exercising or biking,” said Emily Winky, the Vice Mayor of Gordonsville and a passionate advocate for the effort.

Throughout the public feedback meetings, residents expressed their desire for a more functional park that serves the whole community. With that input in mind, PEC retained Land Planning and Design Associates to develop a concept design for a revamped Verling Park.

Some elements in the concept design include a complete overhaul of the swimming pool area, a plaza entrance, a circuit of fitness stations and an updated playground. Additionally, enhanced stormwater management was incorporated into the plan, as a stream runs directly through the park.

Until recently, there was a dilapidated house on Linney Street, which created a visual barrier for neighbors on the northeast side of the park.

PEC secured funds so the town could purchase the property and incorporate the land into the park. The house was demolished last December, and now Verling Park is an entire block, opening it up visually and physically to all neighbors. The old residential lot is now a green field and blends in with the rest of the land.

“The park project holds the prospect of improving recreational access for the Gordonsville area, including underserved

populations,” said Peter. “So many plans sit on shelves and are never implemented. I’m thrilled the town is making this project a priority.”

A Partnership Award was given to Gordonsville Mayor Robert Coiner by PEC for his leadership in improving the park and expanding it to a full block.

“Parks and trails enhance the overall quality of life in communities by providing convenient recreational options,” said Peter. “Studies show it’s easier to become healthy and stay healthy, in both body and mind, when people have such options where they live.”

Localities throughout the Commonwealth and around the country are using park and trail projects to revitalize communities and foster economic development. For example, hikers along the Montpelier-Grelen trail in Orange County, which PEC helped develop a few years back, have increased sales at the Market at Grelen by almost 10 percent.

Together, the town, local citizens and PEC, have made a lot of progress in Gordonsville, but there is still work to be done.

“The early stage of expanding and refurbishing the park is already beginning to bring people together,” said Peter. “Once completed, the park will no doubt breathe fresh life into the Gordonsville community.”

If you would like to help support this community park project, contact Peter Hujik at phujik@pecva.org or (540) 347-2334 ext. 7062.



UPCOMING Events

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

Pollinator Walk at Roundabout Meadows

When > Saturday, June 15, 2019

Where > Mt. Zion Historic Park
40309 John Mosby Highway, Aldie, VA

PEC staff will lead an informative walk through the wetland and wildlife management area of our Roundabout Meadows farm property. Participants will learn about pollinator habitat, life histories and conservation.

Register at pecva.org/events. For questions, contact Celia Vuocolo at cvuocolo@pecva.org or (540) 347-2334 ext. 7086.

Rappahannock Land Conservation Workshop

When > Wednesday, July 24 • 5 – 7 PM

Where > Washington Fire Hall
10 Firehouse Lane, Washington, VA

PEC’s Krebsler Fund invites Rappahannock landowners to learn about the variety of local conservation options available to them, such as conservation easements, farm plans, fencing cost-share, riparian buffers, habitat restoration and more! Hear an overview of conservation programs offered by: Virginia Department of Forestry, Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District, USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service and PEC.

Registration required. Visit pecva.org/events or contact Claire Catlett at ccatlett@pecva.org or (540) 347-2334 ext. 7060.

Community Farm Fest

When > Saturday, August 17

Where > The Community Farm at Roundabout Meadows
39990 Howsers Branch Drive, Aldie VA

Join PEC in celebrating the inaugural season of our Community Farm! Come out for an afternoon of food, local breweries, activities for the whole family and live music. More details coming soon!

Contact Dana Melby at dmelby@pecva.org or visit pecva.org/events for more details.

Meet Volunteer Intern Nicole Bartholomaus

While Nicole was a senior at Fauquier High School in Warrenton, Va., she assisted PEC’s conservation and land use representatives with numerous tasks this past winter and spring. She was always willing to lend a helping hand.

She learned about land conservation easements, pollinators and environmental policy while working on assignments.

“My favorite part about interning at PEC was attending the pollinator survey training,” says Nicole. “It was something I didn’t know much about and I enjoyed getting to expand my knowledge on the subject.”

“Thank you PEC for helping to teach me and for giving me the opportunity to experience a workplace. I will take these valuable experiences with me into my future.”

We want to express our thanks to Nicole for doing a great job!



Meet Volunteer Intern Yasmin Zarabni



Yasmin just completed her junior year at Highland School in Warrenton, Va, and has been interning with us since January. She assists staff with a variety of tasks in our headquarters office.

“I’ve been able to learn more about environmental issues and topics in our community by helping with the daily news email and learning about the Goose Creek watershed for a water quality easement project,” explains Yasmin.

She says her favorite part about volunteering with PEC is “getting to be more involved with our community and learning new skills, such as interpreting easements and using newsletter software.”

Thank you for your continued efforts, Yasmin!

Pop Quiz

QUESTION

Who was the first person to hike the Appalachian Trail from beginning to end, and what year?

ANSWER

a) Earl Shaffer was the first person to complete the Appalachian trail in **1948**. The AT passes just west of PEC’s Piedmont Memorial Overlook in Fauquier County. See page 3 for details about the Overlook and AT’s history.



Photo courtesy of National Museum of American History

On the Ground

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Albemarle

> Keeping Albemarle Balanced

PEC continues to monitor a development boom in Albemarle County. The good news is that most proposals for new homes are within the designated development area. However, some residents question whether the county can keep up with growth. Under new county executive Jeffrey Richardson, county planners are creating and updating master plans to make sure there are parks, sidewalks and trails. Through our advocacy efforts and your support, PEC helped secure \$12 million in the county's capital budget to help pay for them.

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Clarke

> Conservation and Water Quality Education

PEC is helping plan the Clarke County Conservation Fair for the twelfth year in a row! Clarke's fourth-grade students will spend a day at Powhatan School in September to learn about the environment through 15 stations hosted by area organizations. Additional good news is the Powhatan School was recommended for 2019 funding from the Chesapeake Bay Restoration Fund. This grant will help further education in water quality and conservation by providing teachers and students (grades 4-5) with materials needed to participate in an interactive hands-on approach to water quality monitoring in the streams located on their property. PEC will help train staff and work with the classes.

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Culpeper

> A Target for Utility-Scale Solar?

Submissions for utility-scale solar applications continue. The Cricket Solar, LLC application is scheduled for the Planning Commission public hearing on July 10. Given its proximity to numerous natural, cultural and historic resources, PEC has raised concerns about the application. Two additional projects are also being discussed:

- 1) A "live application" for Mountain View Farm, LLC on 195.1 acres, forested-tract in northwest Culpeper, off of Route 522, without supporting documents; and
- 2) A "forthcoming application" south of the Town of Culpeper off of Route 522.

In addition to these applications, a rezoning request associated with a data center has been submitted to the Planning Commission by Red Ace Capital Management, LLC. The company is applying to rezone six parcels totaling 84.79 acres from commercial to light industrial. The rezoning is requested for the northeast corner of the Route 29 and Route 3 intersection.

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Fauquier

> Data Centers and Rural Lands Comprehensive Plan

The county is evaluating its third data center application. The first was in Vint Hill, the second

on Lucky Hill Road in Remington and the third is between Route 29/15 and Business Route 29/15 in Remington, just north of town. PEC has expressed concerns about this third proposal because it is inconsistent with the Remington Comprehensive Plan, it may impact the adjacent neighbors, and there is potential for increased flooding downstream.

The Rural Lands Plan is being reviewed by the Board of Supervisors after receiving a recommendation for approval from the Planning Commission. The county has held several community meetings and integrated many of the changes that PEC and others have suggested. We are supportive of the current draft and are encouraging adoption without significant changes.

> Rain Garden in Rady Park

Through the Virginia Conservation Assistance Program and support from PEC, the Town of Warrenton partnered with John Marshall Soil and Water District to install its first rain garden at Rady Park. This rain garden features a pollinator-friendly palette of native plants and shrubs that will help slow, spread and soak up water, ultimately benefiting water quality in the adjacent stream and Warrenton's Cedar Run watershed.

> Native Plant Demonstration Garden

PEC staff and five volunteers installed a native plant demonstration garden at Powers Farm & Brewery in Midland this past April. The garden includes plants, shrubs, trees and grasses that support pollinators and beneficial insects, which complement Powers' sustainable farming practices.

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Greene

> Monitoring Growth in Greene

Greene County's comprehensive plan calls for a growth management strategy that protects agricultural lands and the beauty of the rural area. Greene's new administrator Mark Taylor told the Board of Supervisors at his first meeting in April that he is attracted to those qualities. That same night, Supervisors delayed consideration of a zoning change that would have created more residential units along U.S. 29, a location that has been designated for future development in the comprehensive plan. At the same time, the county is moving forward with plans to build a reservoir to support the additional growth. PEC will continue to monitor this and will weigh in on issues as they arise.

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Loudoun

> Development Moving Forward

PEC's aggressive 2019 outreach campaign, as well as ongoing partnerships with other local organizations, have helped invigorate public involvement as land development pressure increases across the county. In the Rural Policy Area, seven pre-applications are currently in process to monetize rural lands with event centers that lack connection to a land-based rural economy. Last year's True North Data Center approval has spurred additional data center applications in the Transition Policy Area, further threatening source water protection goals as developers press for suburban-level residential densities. In the Suburban Policy Area, data centers have increased land values while environmental concerns are being downplayed. (For information on the comprehensive plan, please see the cover article.)

> Roundabout Meadows

The Community Farm at Roundabout Meadows is up and growing! As of this past May, the farm had over 60 volunteers, who helped with seed starting, habitat improvements and planting vegetables in the field.

> Parks and Trails

Emerald Ribbons continues to move forward in the form of "linear parks and trails," as mentioned in the most recent draft of the 2019 comprehensive plan. PEC and partners are working with the PROS Board to provide input on challenges, opportunities and planning. A brief draft plan is due to the Board of Supervisors for review in June.

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Madison

> The Not-So Rural Resort

PEC alerted residents to, and weighed in on, the "Rural Resort" zoning amendment in Madison County. Since the beginning of 2019, the Planning Commission has been working to incorporate language into its zoning ordinance that allows for "Rural Resorts" as a special use in agriculturally zoned areas. Per the ordinance, which was passed unanimously by the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors on May 1, 2019, a "Rural Resort" is a "destination designed to provide recreation, entertainment and accommodations to transient guests." Madison's community crowded the Administration Center and submitted written comments during March, April and May, displaying concerns with the future implications of the proposed land use.

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Orange

> Comprehensive Plan and Healthy Watersheds

The Orange County Planning Commission voted (approved 4-1) on May 2, 2019 to create a work group to "review the current draft of the comprehensive plan update, and to review and incorporate in the Healthy Watersheds project elements." The work group will be comprised of four members, including the Chair and Vice Chair of the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors. The work group will report the substance of its review to the Planning Commission and recommend any revisions to the current draft, along with the Healthy Watersheds elements. The Healthy Watersheds project seeks to promote proper conservation of forested land to promote the health of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

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Rappahannock

> All Things Fish Friendly

PEC has been restoring trout habitat in and around the Rappahannock watershed since 2015, and we are happy to share that we have been working hard this spring to restore two miles of habitat at Bolton Branch, near Huntly, for native brook trout. Construction began in May 2019, and is funded by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, PEC's Krebsner Fund for Rappahannock County and the Ohrstrom Foundation. PEC looks ahead toward a partnership with USFWS and VDOT for more fish-friendly pilot projects at Bolton Branch and Piney River.

Out&About

From the Rappahannock, For the Rappahannock

MARRIOTT RANCH
HUME, VA • APRIL 7, 2019



▲ During the event, which celebrates conservation and clean water, the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries conducted a fish shocking demonstration to teach guests about how they survey fish populations. *Photo by Marco Sanchez*



▲ PEC’s Celia Vuocolo (left) and Chris Miller (right) reconnect with former PEC staffer Maggie Lovitt while they enjoy the beautiful, conserved landscape of Marriott Ranch. *Photo by Marco Sanchez*

Annual Bluebell Walk

BONNY BROOK FARM
CATLETT, VA • APRIL 13, 2019



▲ Guests walk along Cedar Run, among the native bluebells that blossom during spring. *Photo by Chris Miller*

Public Art Bike Ride

CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA • APRIL 14, 2019



▲ Local art lovers learned more about Charlottesville’s murals and their community during the Public Art Bike Ride. This tour was part of the Tom Tom Founders Festival and co-sponsored by PEC, Charlottesville Bicycle-Pedestrian Advisory Committee and the Bridge PAI. *Photo by Peter Krebs*

Spring Flower Walk

BEARS DEN FARM
JEFFERSONTON, VA • APRIL 14, 2019



▲ PEC’s Celia Vuocolo leads a walk along the Rappahannock River in Jeffersonton to view spring ephemerals. *Photo by Kelly Krechmer*

Volunteering at PEC’s Community Farm at Roundabout Meadows

LOUDOUN COUNTY, VA • APRIL–MAY 2019



▲ The PEC crew came out for a staff planting day to learn about our Community Farm and help plant over 1,400 vegetable seedlings! *Photo by Tracy Lind*



▲ Members of The Fauquier and Loudoun Garden Club played a critical role in helping to start the 4,500 transplants that will be planted at the farm. They helped to sow everything from broccoli to tomatillos! *Photo by Dana Melby*

Middleburg Spring Races

MIDDLEBURG, VA • APRIL 20, 2019



▲ Julia Dolan (left) and PEC’s Karissa Epley (right) pose at the Middleburg Spring Races. PEC attended this year’s races and spoke with people about land conservation and land use topics in the Piedmont region. *Photo by Chris Miller*

Historic Garden Week

PEC’S HEADQUARTERS OFFICE
WARRENTON, VA • MAY 2–3, 2019



▲ Left to right, PEC President Chris Miller, Garden Club members, Ingrid Hinckley Lindsay, Ann Rodman Shook and Margrete Stevens, and PEC development advisor Doug Larson. The Garden Club used PEC’s office as their headquarters for Historic Garden Week and incorporated the Larson Native Plant Garden into their tour. *Photo by Marco Sanchez*

Earth Day Ice Cream Social

PEC’S HEADQUARTERS OFFICE
WARRENTON, VA • APRIL 22, 2019



▲ Over 100 people stopped by our office on Earth Day for Moo Thru ice cream, good conversation and a tour of the Larson Native Plant Garden.

Raptors on the Farm

WILEY CONFERENCE ROOM
LOUDOUN COUNTY, VA • MAY 4, 2019



▲ Wildlife rehabilitators Nikki Stamps (pictured above) and Dr. Belinda Burwell gave an engaging talk on the diversity of owls and the important role they play in agricultural ecosystems.

Dear Friends,

Over the summer, Virginia will continue to grapple with changes to both the natural and the political environments. The elections of 2018 brought new faces to the Virginia Congressional delegation, with three incumbents losing races in districts with large urban and suburban populations in Northern Virginia, Richmond and Virginia Beach.

This year, state elections include all of the 100 Delegates, 40 Senators and many local elected offices. In 2020, the national census will begin a new process of redistricting, which many experts believe will result in a long-term shift of House and Senate districts to the north of the Rappahannock River, as well as the configuration of the Commonwealth's congressional districts.

In the natural world, last year's pattern of frequent heavy rains and increased coastal flooding are all part of accumulating evidence of long-term climate change, requiring us to reassess planting schedules, flood zones, permitting standards for water quality protection, especially for erosion and sedimentation controls during construction, and the design of roads and bridges. PEC has experienced this directly on our properties at the Piedmont Memorial Overlook and Roundabout Meadows.

The state framework for many water quality policies is being reviewed in the Virginia Watershed Implementation Plan to achieve the goal of cleaner rivers and streams and the Chesapeake Bay. The current draft plan emphasizes the need to fund investment in agricultural practices like riparian buffers that reduce sediment and pollution from entering streams, but it also requires increased funding to help towns and suburban areas install stormwater controls to reduce pollution from streets, parking lots and rooftops. PEC has also called for a commitment to increase funding for land conservation, which

reduces future pollution from new development.

Responses to climate change continue to be debated. PEC has historically focused on land use patterns that reduce the number and length of vehicle trips needed to connect people with jobs, schools and other aspects of life by encouraging smarter growth policies and investments. We also support investment in energy efficiency and distributed renewable energy. Our offices in Warrenton feature high energy efficiency construction and lighting, geothermal heating and cooling and solar panels on the roofs to offset electricity demand from computers and lighting.

But growing momentum for 100 percent renewable energy policies to meet historic levels of consumption and support an electric vehicle fleet in the future could convert hundreds of thousands of acres of forest and farm land to industrial solar and wind production. Each megawatt of solar can consume as much as 10 acres of land. The current state goal of 5,000 megawatts of renewable energy could result in the conversion of up to 50,000 acres. Already, Spotsylvania County and Virginia state agencies have approved the conversion of 6,350 acres of forestry land for a industrial solar installation. Culpeper has approved one 700-acre industrial solar facility and is considering several others.

Virginians should not have to choose between beneficial forests and renewable energy. PEC has provided a detailed set of recommendations for localities to help them protect important conservation values while encouraging use of large rooftop areas and parking lots as alternative sites.



Photo by Will Parson, Chesapeake Bay Foundation

As we grapple with these types of choices, it is crucial that citizens hold candidates and agencies accountable for supporting policies that sustain and strengthen conservation.

At the state level, there is growing momentum to reduce the influence of regulated monopolies like Dominion Energy over elections and policy, with the formation of the non-partisan Virginia Energy Reform Coalition (VERC). The group consists of nine organizations, including PEC, from a wide range of public policy ideologies.

In the end, it is the day-to-day contact with our elected officials that makes the biggest difference. We as citizens should become well informed on the issues and policy debates happening around us, and then take the time to communicate directly with our elected officials and government agencies.

Sincerely,


Chris Miller, President



The Piedmont View

A MEMBERSHIP NEWSLETTER OF THE PIEDMONT ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL SUMMER 2019



INSIDE

Welcome 2019 PEC Fellows, History of the Appalachian Trail and Piedmont Memorial Overlook, Preserving Historic Lands and Working Farms, and more!

Photo by Rose Jenkins


Pop Quiz

QUESTION:

Who was the first person to hike the Appalachian Trail from beginning to end, and what year?

- a) Earl Shaffer, 1948
- b) Myron Avery, 1941
- c) Emma Gatewood, 1956
- d) Orville Crowder, 1960

ANSWER ON PAGE 4





Piedmont Environmental Council

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