



The Piedmont View

A MEMBERSHIP NEWSLETTER OF THE PIEDMONT ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL

WINTER 2019

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A Fish Runs Through It

By Cindy Sabato

As the fog broke on a brisk November morning in Madison County, more than three dozen people arrived at the Whiteoak Canyon trailhead ready to celebrate the new, 35-foot, open-span bridge over Cedar Run. They marveled at the sounds of water bubbling over the rocky streambed from the north side of the bridge to the south. Many walked upright beneath the sturdy, brown, steel-framed structure. And all excitedly searched the deep pools for our guests of honor—the native brook trout, a species of concern on Virginia’s Wildlife Action Plan. As landowner Jimmy Graves and Shenandoah National Park Superintendent Jennifer Flynn ceremoniously cut the royal blue ribbon, all cheered this new installation in a long-term PEC initiative to help bring native brook trout back to these historic spawning grounds.

Clothed in shimmering blue and dark olive with spots the color of many sunsets, the beloved brook trout are surrounded in mystique for their beauty, brains,

and brawn. Their existence has been intertwined with the culture and livelihood of the people of the Appalachian Mountains and Shenandoah Valley for generations. And, since brook trout survive only in clean, cold water, their presence, or absence, speaks volumes about what’s happening in the environment around them. Sadly, once abundant in Virginia and all along the eastern seaboard, within the Virginia Piedmont they’ve almost vanished from all but the remote headwater streams in and around Shenandoah National Park.

Pollution, changing climate conditions and land use alterations have all played their role, but a major factor in the struggle for the brook trout is the man-made stream crossing. Designed for the passage of humans, rather than fish, “these undersized culverts pinch streams and break up hundreds of miles of trout streams into thousands of short, disconnected segments that prevent trout from reaching the spawning grounds so important to a thriving population,” said PEC Habitat



Landowner Jimmy Graves and Shenandoah National Park Superintendent Jennifer Flynn cut the ribbon to celebrate the opening of the new bridge at Whiteoak Canyon. Pictured, left to right: Celia Vuocolo, Chris Miller, Chris Hawk, Peter Hujik, PEC; Jennifer Flynn, Shenandoah National Park; Landowner Jimmy Graves Jr.; Seth Coffman, Trout Unlimited; Rachel Graves, landowner; Albert Spells, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Photo by Hugh Kenny

and Stewardship Specialist Celia Vuocolo.

PEC has been hard at work connecting local landowners, conservation partners, and funding to bring native brook trout back to the Piedmont since 2013. A PEC survey of 133 public and private road-stream crossings in Albemarle, Greene, Madison, and Rappahannock counties found that roughly half were acting as barriers to fish movement. “Our goal is pretty simple: by removing these barriers and replacing them with fish-friendly designs, we can reconnect miles of stream and

help brook trout not only thrive, but also give them the chance to move back into streams where they once historically lived,” Celia said.

A fish-friendly crossing could be an open-span bridge, like the one at Whiteoak Canyon, a roadway built upon a series of large, bottomless arch culverts, or properly-sized and “counter-sunk” culverts. These road-stream crossing options preserve natural streambed features and hydrology, which helps prevent localized

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What will tomorrow bring?

Expectations for the 2020 General Assembly session

By Dan Holmes

This year’s Virginia General Assembly promises to be an interesting one, as the November 2019 elections resulted in a change in leadership in both the House and the Senate. A new

Speaker of the House (Filler-Corn), Senate Majority Leader (Saslaw) and large shifts in committee memberships of both bodies are among the changes. With Governor Northam still in office, the Democrats have consolidated

control of state government for the first time in more than two decades. And that means we will see many of the priorities of the party at the forefront of the legislative agenda.

2020 Legislative Efforts

The new majority has already begun work on many of their priorities as it pertains to conservation and the environment, with a key focus on clean energy and climate change. As well, with 2020 being a budget year, we will see a push to make natural resource protection (consistently underfunded) a larger share of the state budget, largely focused on agency fund-

ing. Hopefully, the governor’s proposed budget will include full funding of the conservation programs we rely upon, as well as restore lost funding from numerous cuts that have been made to agency budgets over the last 20 years. However, we’ve heard budget conversations will be constrained by fear of a potential recession and that our community will have to fight hard to keep conservation from being overshadowed by other legislative priorities.

PEC will be focused upon the budget conversation as well as several other legislative initiatives:

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The General Assembly meets annually, beginning on the second Wednesday in January. Photo by Philip Pericak

Year One on the Farm

By Cindy Sabato

Loudoun County is one of the most affluent counties in the nation and simultaneously home to some 14,000 people without reliable access to affordable, nutritious food. It is consistently one of the fastest-growing counties in the nation, and yet over 200,000 acres is planned to remain rural with over 58,000 acres of permanently conserved open space. Nestled among the three roundabouts of Routes 15 and 50 and Howser's Branch Road, lies PEC's Community Farm. Located at the literal intersection of suburban and rural Loudoun County, it is perfectly positioned both to shine a light on the value of conservation and to make practical, tangible progress to address food insecurity in the community.

The inspiration for the Community Farm at Roundabout Meadows is the Fauquier Education Farm, a few miles outside Warrenton. In a single growing season there, volunteers grew and donated more than 60,000 pounds of produce to food banks in Fauquier, Culpeper and Rappahannock counties. "I thought we could do something similar in Loudoun County, create a working farm that would help address food insecurity in Loudoun while also giving nearby suburban communities a way to connect with the land and open space," said PEC President Chris Miller. "Come, help us grow food for our neighbors who need it the most, and along the way, you'll learn about growing vegetables, and maybe you'll get hooked on being in the garden."

And come, they did. In spring 2019, farm manager Dana Melby opened the gates to 171 community volunteers who donated 544 hours of time planting, growing, and harvesting 4,711 pounds of produce, all donated to Loudoun Hunger Relief. "We grew a little of everything this year, the full market garden—tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, tomatillos were all really good. We also grew cucumbers, watermelon, cantaloupe, squash zucchini, some green beans," Dana said.

The 1.3-acre farm's production plan was tailored to complement what other nonprofit farms were producing and to provide the community what they wanted most. Dana spent several days last winter talking to Loudoun Hunger Relief clients. "They are big cooks who do a lot of home meal preparation. Besides what we planted, they were also asking for spinach, lettuce, and other greens, which we couldn't do this year because we don't have the cold storage."

With the first growing season and a lot of learning experiences behind us, Dana is excited about increasing the harvest and improving just about every aspect of the farm next year. "Cover crops and other best management practices will improve the quality of the soil. We'll double the planting area to three acres and add new varieties after learning what grows well and what is vulnerable to disease and other issues. A new greenhouse will allow us to do multiple plantings throughout the season. And our wonderful volunteer from George Mason University created recipe cards to help people try less familiar vegetables, such as bok choy," said Dana, who expects next year's harvest to more than double our contribution to Loudoun Hunger Relief.

The new greenhouse, which has been named in honor of Phyllis Mills Wyeth, will do more than increase the harvest; it will also create more opportunities for community members to get involved. "We'll be able to host volunteers throughout the winter and start our volunteer programs for next season as early as January," Dana said. "Of the 171 volunteers this year, 41 came back repeatedly throughout the season." Volunteers, most of whom had no prior connection to PEC, included the Western Loudoun Learning Cooperative, Brambleton Middle School, Loudoun and Frederick county high schools, retirees, and individuals who are just passionate about the mission of the farm.

Farm volunteers with farm manager Dana Melby. Photo by Marco Sanchez



The Community Farm at Roundabout Meadows as seen from above. Photo by Hugh Kenny

PEC hopes the farm and its surrounding 325 undeveloped acres will stir up passion for open space as well. The land at Gilbert's Corner was donated to PEC five years ago, at a time when most similar east-west and north-south intersections, such as in nearby Haymarket, were being rapidly developed. "Here is a major intersection that was also part of the Journey Through Hallowed Ground National Scenic Byway and National Heritage Area. We hope this can be a place to connect people to the landscape, to show the public the benefits of land conservation and restoration of native habitat, and to save important historic and cultural resources before it is lost," Chris said.

In just one season, the community farm has shown us clearly that the benefits extend far beyond improving soil health and water quality, or sustaining traditional agriculture. Chris continued, "We've created a platform at the farm where volunteers can make a huge difference for their community and where we are hopefully inspiring a new generation of conservation stewards."

Community members and organizations, school groups, and others who want to volunteer or learn more about the Community Farm can visit pecva.org/volunteer or contact Community Farm Manager Dana Melby at (540) 347-2334 ext. 7068 or dmelby@pecva.org.

Summer Fellowship Applications Open

Help spread the word that PEC is accepting applications for the 2020 Fellowship Program.

If you know undergraduates or recent graduates interested in learning more about a career in environmental conservation, send them our way!

Twelve deserving students will be selected to spend seven weeks in the Virginia Piedmont, while studying with seasoned professionals in land conservation, land use planning, agriculture, habitat and more.

The first month of the fellowship begins with a combination of classroom discussions, field trips and hands-on activities to give participants a comprehensive understanding of the work that we do. Then, the remaining weeks include a collaborative practicum that focuses on the fellows' interests and a particular aspect of our work in the Piedmont.

Through this personalized experience, participants gain the practical knowledge and skills necessary to successfully transition into careers in conservation, urban planning, agriculture, historic preservation, public policy and other related fields. In addition to providing fellows with local housing, we cover program-related expenses and provide a stipend to help cover living expenses.

The application deadline is February 25, 2020. Program dates are June 7 through July 24. For more details, visit pecva.org/fellowship or contact Robin Cross at rcross@pecva.org or (540) 347-2334 ext. 7025.



The 2019 PEC fellows at The Farm at Sunnyside. Photo by Marco Sanchez

A Fish Runs Through It

Continued from cover

flooding and erosion. Nearby neighbors benefit from reduced property damage and lower maintenance costs. Miles downstream, less sediment makes its way into the Chesapeake Bay.

PEC has completed a series of trout stream restoration projects, beginning with two private driveway culvert replacements on the Robinson River in Madison County and Sprucepine Branch in Rappahannock County, both in 2017. These two projects have added more than seven miles of aquatic habitat and restored over 400 linear feet of streambank. In 2019, with the completion of its largest stream restoration project yet, PEC added another 1.4 miles of newly-restored aquatic habitat at Bolton Branch, near Huntly.

Working with Ecosystem Services and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for project engineering, and Shenandoah Streamworks, a stream restoration construction company, we removed a private driveway culvert on Bolton Branch, replacing the low-water ford with a 40-foot bridge that spans the natural channel completely and gives fish full access to travel upstream into the nearby Shenandoah National Park. Additionally, nearly two acres of riparian buffer are replanted with

300 native trees and shrubs; and nearly 800 feet of linear streambank are restored to significantly reduce pollutants like phosphorus, nitrogen and sediment.

“The Bolton Branch project was always about the brookies,” says Claire Catlett, PEC’s Rappahannock field representative who oversaw this stream restoration project. “Everyone involved in this project—three landowners and their families, multiple contractors, and a whole community of funders—made the brook trout a priority, and we are most humbled by this little fish and its ability to connect people back to their land.”

The next big leap for the brook trout is the expansion of our efforts beyond private crossings to include public crossings, largely owned by the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT). Two VDOT road-stream crossings at Piney River and Bolton Branch in Rappahannock County are slated for replacement in 2020-2021, and PEC has successfully put together nearly \$350,000 in grant funding and technical support from USFWS and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

“Ultimately, our long-term goal is to equip and empower VDOT with the tools and knowledge they need to seek out stream restoration projects for themselves, while we continue to bring funding and partners together to help landowners with private crossings,” Claire said.

Back at Whiteoak Canyon, the reality of that long-term goal has set in. Our work with Trout Unlimited to

Whiteoak Canyon, Madison County



The old low-water concrete crossing and culverts before removal and the new open-span bridge after installation. Photos by Hugh Kenny



replace the failing low-water culverts with the new bridge over Cedar Run goes a long way to restore not just fish passage, but the public’s access to the popular trailhead just a few hundred feet upstream.

“This bridge is an incredible gift to the American people. Visitors coming to Shenandoah National Park now have safe passage to their trailhead, and they will reap the benefits of improved fish habitat within the park,” said Jennifer Flynn, park superintendent. “The Piedmont Environmental Council and Trout Unlimited have done all the legwork to make sure this happens. They not only identified the problem and brought us a solution, they fundraised for it, they worked with the contractor to execute the work properly, and made sure that we were environmentally sensitive while we were doing it.”

Standing on the bridge over Cedar Run that November morning, USFWS project leader Albert Spells said, “This is a prime example of how partnerships work. We couldn’t do this alone, and we have been so blessed to have good partners to work with to bring these kinds of projects to fruition. This is a win-win situation for all of us.”

PEC is grateful to the partners and funders who have supported the trout restoration initiative to date: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Shenandoah Streamworks, Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, Trout Unlimited, Friends of the Rappahannock, VDOT, Shenandoah National Park, Ecosystems Services LLC, the Ohrstrom Foundation, Nimick Forbesway Foundation, and PEC’s Krebsner Fund for Rappahannock County Conservation.



At Bolton Branch, this new bridge replaced an old concrete low-water ford. Photo by Claire Catlett

MEET PEC

Kat Imhoff

Senior Conservation Fellow

When it comes to conservation, Kat Imhoff is nothing short of a virtuoso, as abundant in inspiration and innovation as she is in action. At the helm of Montpelier, Monticello, and The Nature Conservancy in Montana, she led conservation and restoration projects that preserve significant historical, cultural and rural legacies. PEC is proud to welcome Kat into its fold as senior conservation fellow, working out of our Charlottesville office.

Kat has worked for PEC twice before, in the 1980s and 1990s. During her first tenure, she led the labor-intensive process of getting the Southwest Mountains Rural Historic District named on the National Register of Historic Places. That effort laid the groundwork for 17 more rural historic districts throughout the northern Piedmont.

Her return to PEC, Kat says, “goes to the heart of what PEC offers as an organization. It looks not just at rural preservation and agriculture protection, but also makes the connection between rural conservation and livable, desirable cities as an ecosystem. I have always been intrigued that PEC is willing to take on complex issues and talk about complex solutions, to have an

impact at a local, regional and state level, and to offer what can be a model at the national level.”

She hopes to reflect on what is being done in conservation throughout the region and nation, integrate work that others have already started and look for new openings. Enhancing public access and mitigating climate impacts within the conservation framework are two of her motivators.

“If people don’t have the chance to be out in nature, if you don’t grow up with that as part of your ethic and opportunity, it becomes harder later on to see the value of an investment in open space. I think the work PEC has been doing in the areas of greenway connection and bike paths and pedestrian areas are terrific, and I hope I can help PEC do more of that,” she said.

She’d also like to explore how PEC’s work can contribute to a national model for addressing climate issues. “PEC’s work has always been done within a paradigm that is about being sensitive to impacts on climate, environment, sustainable agriculture, smart growth, land management. All of these things pieced together are

many of the tools in the toolbox for addressing climate issues on a larger scale,” she said.

“And if nothing else, I’m hoping to draw more friends and supporters from the southern part of PEC’s nine-county service area into the cause and really shine the light on the impressive work that has been done in Albemarle County, Madison, Orange and Greene,” she said. “When we set aside land for future generations and to save the character of the Piedmont, it is a gift beyond measure. Because we really don’t know 100 or 200 years from now what the importance of those lands will be, but we can guess that water quality, species protection and even providing breathing space for human beings will all add up.”



Kat Imhoff on conserved land at James Madison’s Montpelier. Photo by Eduardo Montes-Bradley

On the Ground

Albemarle & Charlottesville

> New parkland

The Ragged Mountain Natural Area in Albemarle County now has an additional 142 acres of parkland thanks to PEC's leadership. We helped connect the City of Charlottesville with a federal grant to purchase the forested land from the Heyward family. This not only keeps the land from being developed, but also expands recreational opportunities in the area.

> Bike/Pedestrian Advocacy

As traffic congestion continues to worsen in Albemarle County and Charlottesville, PEC has continued to advocate for solutions that don't involve building more roads. This year we helped shepherd the adoption of the Jefferson Area Bike and Pedestrian Plan, and have boosted efforts to improve the regional transit system. Greater Charlottesville can lead the way by showing how Virginians can get around without a car, and PEC knows how all the moving parts need to fit together.

Clarke

> Fall Supper

The Clarke County Land Conservation Fund was established to protect at-risk properties in Clarke County by funding the purchase of conservation easements or properties or providing financial support to landowners who wish to donate a conservation easement. Since 2006, the Fund has contributed more than \$400,000 towards the protection of 774 acres in Clarke County; 667 acres are conservation easements held by the Clarke County Conservation Easement Authority. This October, the Fund's local advisory committee hosted a dinner that raised over \$60,000 in one evening for land conservation and stewardship in the county.

> Powhatan Water Quality Curriculum

In October, PEC hosted a stream monitoring training session for Powhatan School teachers. This training was part of a Chesapeake Bay Restoration Fund license plate grant that will help them purchase stream monitoring equipment and incorporate stream monitoring into their curriculum.

Culpeper

> Utility-Scale Solar

Subsequent to the withdrawal of the Cricket Solar, LLC application in August, the Board of Supervisors unanimously approved the update of the county's Utility-Scale Solar Facility Development Policy. The update includes, but is not limited to, setting a county-wide utility-scale solar target (2,400 acres or 240 megawatts), setting a single project size (300 acres of panels), and limiting mass grading (50 acres at a time). Since the first proposal for a utility-scale solar project came before the county, PEC has been working diligently to ensure appropriate consideration is given to solar siting and larger policy issues. By weighing in on this and other proposals, publish-

ing an editorial in the Culpeper Star Exponent and submitting our Utility-Scale Solar Policy document, we have significantly improved the conversation and county policy.

> Clevengers Village

The Board of Supervisors unanimously approved an update to the 2005 proffer statement associated with the Clevenger's Village Planned Unit Development (PUD) in the northeast portion of the county. The updated proffer includes \$8.5 million to assist with public health, safety, and welfare. This proffer includes funds for the Little Fork Volunteer Fire Department, education, and transportation, in addition to two potential school sites, both located at Clevenger's Village. The scope of Clevenger's Village, located on approximately 1,400 acres, includes 774 residential units, 188,000 square feet of commercial space, and 210,000 square feet for a village employment center.

Fauquier

> Sanctuary at Barrel Oak

On October 17, the Planning Commission evaluated an application for a restaurant, hotel, and event venue on a 50-acre residential property in rural zoning next to the Barrel Oak Winery in Delaplane. Numerous non-profit organizations, including PEC, expressed significant concern about the proposal and around 40 letters of opposition were received. The Planning Commission voted 3-2 to recommend denial, referencing concerns about scale, noise, and inconsistency with the Rural Lands Plan for the county. The application could go before the Board of Supervisors as early as December 12.

> Solar Proposal near Bealeton

sPower is proposing a 150 MW solar energy project between Morrisville and Bealeton. An open house was held on November 20, but no application has been filed as of yet with the county. This 1,100-acre project is proposed in an area adjacent to land in Fauquier County's PDR program and the Southern Fauquier Agricultural and Forestal District. It would likely impact prime agricultural soils and be visible from Rt. 17.

> Bus Tour of Southern Fauquier

This November, PEC's Julian Scheer Fauquier Land Conservation Fund hosted a Southern Fauquier Bus Tour that visited many of the region's historic, scenic, and working farmlands. The tour educated local funders and PEC board members about the longstanding success of conservation easements and the Purchase of Development Rights program in Fauquier County to protect natural resources and farmland alike. The tour included stops at Cool Lawn Farm, Messicks Farm Market, and many colonial and Civil War-era historic sites that define the landscape of Fauquier County.

Greene

> Ruckersville and Reservoir

Greene County's long-term plans call for future residential growth to be built along U.S. 29 in order to preserve the county's rural quality. This December, the county begins an extensive audit of the zoning ordinance for Ruckersville in an attempt to create a more walkable area. This work

will include the planning and implementation of a parallel street network to limit the impact on the highway. PEC has actively monitored these developments and will be weighing in as needed, including on the possibility of a reservoir. If oversized, the capacity of the reservoir could fuel undesirable levels of growth. We encourage the public to weigh in with county supervisors as options are considered.

Loudoun

> Rural Uses Review

PEC is partnering with various groups and individuals to create a set of recommendations for the Zoning Ordinance. These recommendations could, if implemented, help achieve the vision laid out in Loudoun's revised Comprehensive Plan by improving the long-term viability of farming and increasing land stewardship in the Rural Policy Area. Stay tuned for next steps and how you can get involved in the solution!

> HOA Coalition

PEC is working with a small group of homeowners association leaders to explore the benefits of a coalition that would provide an HOA perspective on county policies, practices and decisions. Given that well over 60% of Loudoun residents live in HOAs, this could provide additional resident-based input during the Zoning Ordinance revisions.

> Goose Creek Watershed Easement Analysis

Thanks to funding from the Virginia Environmental Endowment, PEC recently completed an analysis of all 540+ conservation easements within the Goose Creek watershed. PEC identified properties that would benefit from updated easement terms and/or agricultural cost-share programs that enhance land and water resource protections. PEC is working with partners to reach out to landowners to discuss these opportunities.

Madison

> Criglersville School

Over the past decade, Madison County has struggled over how to properly manage the outdated Criglersville Elementary School. The Board of Supervisors was asked to review and vote upon the *Criglersville School Demolition Contract Award & Permit Fee Waiver* during the October 29th public hearing. Instead of voting to undergo the demolition process that would cost the county approximately \$250,000, the Board of Supervisors decided to wait and consider other potential routes — mainly those that would not pose direct fiscal impacts to the county, including the sale of the property.

> Mitchell's Mountain

Madison resident Rosanna Gilbert worked with PEC staff to conserve her 43-acre farm on Mitchell's Mountain near Etlan. The conservation easement protects scenic views of Mitchell's Mountain from Whippoorwill Road, along with forests on its steep slopes. Her conserved farm adds to the growing number of protected properties in Hidden Valley in northwestern Madison County.

Orange

> Dollar General Barboursville

The Planning Commission unanimously denied the Dollar General Barboursville application for a rezoning and special use permit in the Barboursville Village Overlay District (BVOD), during the October 17 public hearing. The Planning Commissioners’ determination was heavily based on the proposed building’s size (9,000 square feet), transportation impacts to Routes 20 and 33, and public outcry opposing the application. PEC submitted written comments and spoke at the public hearing, citing inconsistency with the Comprehensive Plan and BVOD, transportation impacts, lack of public connectivity, and the need for more aesthetic design and landscaping as a means for denial. Given the negative reaction of the public and the county, the applicant has withdrawn its application.

> Gordonsville Parks Grow

As part of its Town to Trail initiative, PEC acquired a small tract of land in Gordonsville near Firemen’s Fairgrounds. The property, located on Allen Street, was identified as a key parcel for acquisition in “Gordonsville Visions,” a conceptual plan for parks and trails developed by the community in collaboration with the University of Virginia School of Architecture. This is the second parcel that PEC’s Town to Trail initiative has helped the community acquire over the past 18 months. The first parcel enabled the town to expand Verling Park to an entire block. The second parcel helps

connect Verling Park and Firemen’s Fairgrounds, two well-used open spaces in Town.

Rappahannock

> USFWS Stream Surveys at VDOT Pilot Projects

PEC, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and VDOT are teaming up to remove barriers to fish passage, especially for the beloved Eastern brook trout, in Rappahannock County. PEC has identified two pilot projects that best improve fish habitat, water quality and flood resiliency at public road-stream crossings on Mill Hill Rd. (Rt. 631) and Sycamore Ridge Rd. (Rt. 653). This fall, USFWS completed stream surveys that are being used for 30% Conceptual Designs. PEC and VDOT plan to begin construction in 2020 for these two pilot projects, with more news to come soon.

> Headwater Stream Initiative

PEC, Friends of the Rappahannock (FOR), VA Department of Forestry, and Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) have worked to provide free technical service, native trees and planting materials to help landowners establish forested riparian buffers in the Rappahannock-Rapidan River watershed. This fall, PEC helped FOR add 1.2 new acres of riparian buffer to the Hazel River watershed, planting native species of river birch, witch hazel, persimmon, red oak, and plenty of sycamore to improve wildlife habitat and water quality at Smith Hill Farm.

PEC
By the Numbers

2019 was a busy year as always. With your support, here are just a few of the ways that The Piedmont Environmental Council worked to promote and protect the Piedmont’s natural resources, rural economy, history and beauty!

Outreach Events: **More than 60**

Landowner Meetings: **More than 200**

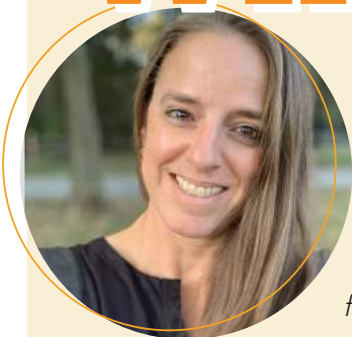
Conservation Easement Workshops: **9**

Volunteers Engaged: **Nearly 300**

Press Mentions: **Over 110**

New Facebook followers: **500**

Why I Give



“I choose to give to PEC because of the work they do to conserve and protect Virginia. Whether it is building a new bridge at Whiteoak Canyon or helping landowners preserve their land for the future, they do excellent work. I want my money to go towards organizations that value views, land, and conservation. And as a local photographer, I get to see first-hand just how important this kind of environmental work is to our quality of life.”

– Jennifer Gonzalez



“I support PEC because they work tirelessly to conserve and protect our farmland, our forests, and our watershed. Programs like the Greenway Project here in Charlottesville and Albemarle County foster a closer connection to the natural beauty and bounty in our region, which I greatly appreciate!”

– Teri Kent



“I give because seeing the endless sprawl in southeastern Loudoun in the ’90s piqued my interest and concern for land conservation. Over a decade ago I was discussing this with a PEC member who told me I’d really like what the organization does. I had never heard of PEC, but after this conversation, I investigated and was thrilled to see there was a voice and venue for me to participate in this cause.”

– Trent Berger



“We give to the PEC because they have a strong, proven track record of safeguarding our quality of life in this part of Virginia. Building on that legacy, we want to help the organization continue its critical research and advocacy into the 21st century when wide-ranging environmental pressures are going to be even more serious and frequent than what has been the case in the past.”

– Mike and Margrete Stevens



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

The Year's Winning Photos

This was another spectacular year for PEC's Photo Contest! We're happy the public decides who the winners are, because it would have been too difficult for us to choose. Thank you to everyone who submitted images and who voted!

Entries to our photo contest help us build a gallery that enables PEC to tell the visual stories of the Virginia Piedmont. We are thankful for your participation and also for so many talented photographers in our region!

We also want to give a big shout out and thank you to our guest judge, local photographer Ken Garrett, who helped us select the finalists.

By public vote, the winners of this year's contest are:

BEAUTIFUL LANDSCAPES & STREETSCAPES WINNER

▼ *Moonset Crozet* by Cass Girvin



NATIVE PLANTS AND WILDLIFE WINNER

▼ *The Fisherman* by Susan Tucker



OUTDOOR RECREATION WINNER

▼ *Spring Into The Abyss* by Cass Girvin



YOUTH WINNER

▼ *Subsistence Living* by Ezra Staengl



What will tomorrow bring? Expectations for the 2020 General Assembly session

Continued from cover

Conservation Funding and Policy

PEC is supporting full funding of important conservation grant programs (\$20M per year) and will continue to defend the Land Preservation Tax Credit. In addition, we will be working with our Virginia Conservation Network partners on the Heirs Bill, a bill meant to remedy procedural flaws in Virginia's partition law that have disproportionately affected minority-owned properties. Developers often take advantage of these flaws, heavily impacting conservation outcomes.

Transportation

We expect additional attacks on the Smart-Scale Scoring system for transportation. Earlier attempts have focused on removing certain criteria (environmental/land use impacts) and increasing others, like congestion relief. Limiting

the consideration of environmental and land use impacts and increasing the congestion relief factor would artificially elevate the score of some of the worst projects in our region, like the Bi-County Parkway/Outer Beltway.

Energy

As always, we will be working with our partners to pursue a cleaner, more efficient energy system. We will also be working with our partners in the Virginia Energy Reform Coalition to pass an omnibus utility restructuring bill, seeking to eliminate the current monopoly structure that has failed the environment and ratepayers for so many years. For more on the goals of the coalition, please visit the VERC website at: www.virginiaenergyreform.org.

Land Use and Agriculture

We will be pursuing legislation in

response to the fill dirt/landfill issues that have arisen in the last year. As well, we expect the administration will pursue several ideas with regard to the management of agricultural properties. These ideas include mandatory stream exclusion for cattle and potentially the extension of the Chesapeake Bay Act to localities west of I-95. If not handled appropriately, these changes could result in lost conservation opportunities and the conversion of agricultural lands to development. PEC will be working to ensure any changes in policy are phased and funded appropriately, do not place an undue burden on Virginia's farmers or risk further loss of agricultural lands.

For more on these issues or any other questions about the 2020 session, feel free to contact Dan Holmes, PEC's state policy director at dholmes@pecva.org.

Pop Quiz

Ideal native brook trout habitat is cool, clean water (no warmer than 68°F) found in which of the following:

- a) Deep pools
- b) Gravelly or cobbly stream bottoms
- c) Among boulders or tree roots in and along streams
- d) All of the above



Photo by Chris Hawk

ANSWER
d) All of the above

Out&About

Family Day at PEC's Community Farm

COMMUNITY FARM AT ROUNABOUT MEADOWS
ALDIE, VA • OCTOBER 13, 2019



▲ Over 100 people came to the Community Farm to celebrate our first growing season. Photos by Cat Kutz (top), Beth Miller-Herholtz (bottom, left), and Hugh Kenny (bottom, right)

Raptor Release

PIEDMONT MEMORIAL OVERLOOK
PARIS, VA • OCTOBER 19, 2019



▲ Wildlife rehabilitator Dr. Belinda Burwell getting ready to release a barred owl. Attendees also got to see her release a red-shouldered hawk and a black vulture. Photo by Sharon Fisher

Conservation Easements 101 Presentation to Congressional Staff

U.S. CAPITOL, WASHINGTON, DC • OCTOBER 30, 2019



▲ Glenmary Farm owners Tom and Kim Nixon, with their daughter Elizabeth (2nd, 3rd & 4th from left), joined PEC staff and other land trusts from California, Montana, Texas, and Vermont to talk about conservation easements. Photo by Lori Faeth / Land Trust Alliance

Friends of the Blue Ridge Mountains Award

BLUEMONT, VA • NOVEMBER 14, 2019



▲ PEC's Evan McCarthy, Gem Bingol and the rest of the Loudoun Preservation and Conservation Coalition were awarded the annual Friend of the Mountain Award by Friends of the Blue Ridge Mountains for their work advocating for a better Loudoun County Comprehensive Plan. Photo by Julie Bolthouse

Land Conservation & Management Workshop

UNISON, VA • NOVEMBER 21, 2019



▲ PEC organized a panel of experts to talk to landowners about conservation programs. Left to right: Beth Sastre, VA Cooperative Extension; Isa Bryant, Land Trust of Virginia; Sarah Parmelee, VA Dept. of Forestry; Tracy Lind, PEC; Tara Connell, Unison Preservation Society; Chris Van Vlack, Loudoun Soil & Water Conservation District. Photo by Marco Sanchez

Dear Friends,

Earlier this fall, my dad passed away peacefully at home with my mom by his side.

As anyone who knows me is aware, I have always been proud of my dad. He was a deeply patriotic American who resigned from the Foreign Service to protest abuse of executive power during the Vietnam War. He led the staff effort in Congress to end funding for the bombing in Cambodia and was made staff director of the Select Committee to Investigate National Emergency Powers, which led to greater oversight of our intelligence agencies. Then he returned to diplomatic affairs, where he worked in U.S.-Soviet relations, served as Ambassador to Ukraine and as senior fellow at the Woodrow Wilson Center. His career was one of integrity and of speaking truth to power.

My choice to work at PEC and on long-term solutions to sustainability is a direct response to what I learned from him.

He loved his house in Hollin Hills, a neighborhood located in the woodlot of Mason Hill plantation just south of Alexandria in Fairfax County, between Route 1 and Fort Hunt Road. The development, designed by Charles Goodman, is now on the National Register of Historic Places and is an excellent example of modern and intentional suburban community design. What made it special for my dad, who grew up in a small, dark Jackson Heights apartment in Queens, New York was that the modern design of floor-to-ceiling windows in wooded lots brought light and nature indoors. He loved to sit and read and listen to classical music, with the sun pouring in and the forest coming through on every side.

In the last two years, Dad and Mom would linger at the breakfast table, watching birds at the feeders and fountains that were all around. My brother repaired all the fountains the past few months so Dad could enjoy the sound of running

water. His home and garden in the woods was his Eden.

I will miss him. He was a quiet person, spending more time listening than talking. Perhaps it was because he had deaf parents and was comfortable not talking. But he was relentless, and profoundly committed to peace, to the Constitution, and to a fair and open society here and for other countries.

He and I argued for years over the best place to put effort into changing the world. He believed in national and international affairs. I argued for local civic engagement grounded in making all communities better.

Early in my career, I staffed a negotiator in the early treaty discussions around climate change and global warming. I thought I was on the cutting edge and in a new area of foreign policy. Three months later my dad informed me he had created the International Foundation on the Survival and Development of Humanity with Andrei Sakharov and Mikhail Gorbachev, with an initial focus on climate change!

Ultimately, I found my work on international and federal environmental policy frustrating, and I have never regretted shifting my career to focus on the local level, where I believe real change happens. In our last conversation, Dad conceded, and asked me to carry on his work with the new goal of motivating municipal leaders to save the world.

And that is what we get to do every day at PEC. We get to work with an incredible group of people on our staff, our Board and within our



PEC President Chris Miller stands with his mother and father, Suzanne Miller and William Miller, after being presented with the Coalition for Smarter Growth's Sanders-Henn Community Hero Award in 2017.
Photo by Matt Ha Photography

communities to push forward on making a peaceful, healthy and equitable world.

As the world strives for a response to the climate crisis, we are working hard to protect the natural and human resources and encourage a sustainable pattern of development and conservation. We are lucky to be working on the solutions, whether it's helping plan for better cities and towns where we can walk and ride or helping save a watershed like the Rapidan.

This work gives me joy and a sense of accomplishment every day.

Sincerely,

Chris Miller
Chris Miller, President



The Piedmont View

A MEMBERSHIP NEWSLETTER OF THE PIEDMONT ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL WINTER 2019



INSIDE

2019 Photo Contest Winners, 2020 General Assembly Preview, Trout Stream Restoration Efforts, Year One at PEC's Community Farm, Welcome Kat Imhoff, and more!

Owl in the Morning. Madison County, Virginia. Photo by Jennifer Gonzalez
Banner photo by Kathy Russell


Pop Quiz


Ideal native brook trout habitat is cool, clean water (no warmer than 68°F) found in which of the following:

- a) Deep pools
- b) Gravelly or cobbly stream bottoms
- c) Among boulders or tree roots in and along streams
- d) All of the above

ANSWER ON PAGE 6

Photo by USFWS





**Piedmont
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