

Land Conservation Update

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Family Farm Preserved for the Future

by Paula Combs

Nestled at the bottom of Clark Mountain and along the Rapidan River in Orange County, Glenmary Farm sits on some of the best agricultural soils in Virginia. Its rich farming history dates back to the eighteenth century.

The Nixon family purchased the property in 1980, and the farm has since become an award-winning cattle, turkey and grain operation.

In an effort to preserve the prime farmland and help ensure continued operations,

the Nixons chose to permanently protect 382 acres of their land through a conservation easement with The Piedmont Environmental Council (PEC), Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) and USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

"We want our kids to be able to farm and provide for future generations. And that's kind of the whole goal of this," said Tom Nixon, who owns and operates Glenmary Farm with his wife Kim. "Both of our children have developed a strong passion for working on our farm and for today's agricultural industry."

With complementary interests, their daughter Elizabeth, a 2016 Oklahoma State graduate, helps manage the cow herd and handles

communications; and their son Robert, a 2017 University of Northwestern Ohio graduate, focuses on crop work and mechanics.

"We look at all the different farms in the area and in other places — families we know — and many are struggling to survive in agriculture," said Tom.

"The older I get, the more I hate to see farmland being lost," added Kim.

The Nixons were unable to rely solely on the Virginia Conservation Tax Credits associated with donated conservation easements, so they pursued a different option.

In a more unique approach to private lands protection, PEC partnered with NRCS and the Culpeper SWCD to help the Nixon family leverage funding from the federal Agricultural Conservation Easement Program and the state Virginia Land Conservation Foundation program to make long-term preservation and stewardship of the farm possible.



The Nixon family, owners of Glenmary Farm in Rapidan, Va.

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Interested in Protecting Your Land?

The Piedmont Environmental Council's conservation staff can help you explore your options. For more information, please contact your local PEC land conservation staff member.

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“This model is one that farmers and other landowners can use to access federal and state funding opportunities in an effective way,” said Chris Miller, PEC President.

With the Agricultural Land Easement component of the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program, NRCS works through conservation groups like PEC to protect prime and important farmlands.

“Virginia NRCS has partnered with land trust groups and private landowners to help protect more than 14,300 acres in 139 easements over the past 25 years,” said Jack Bricker, state conservationist. “The Glenmary Farm easement has special significance due to its high percentage of productive farmland, riparian protection and wildlife habitat.”

Approximately 45 percent of Glenmary Farm has prime statewide significant soils,

260 acres of which are open fields used for hay production, row crops and pasture. Another 90 acres are working forest for sustainable timber production. The property also has over a mile of land that borders the Rapidan River, a tributary to the Rappahannock River.

“In an area with increasing residential and commercial development pressure, protecting valuable farmland like Glenmary is a constructive investment by society to ensure we have soils for growing food and working toward sustainable agricultural practices. PEC’s Peter Hujik and our partners have worked diligently with the Nixons to conserve Glenmary Farm. We hope that this can be an example for similar projects throughout the region in Virginia,” said Miller.

**Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.*



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Since 1972, The Piedmont Environmental Council has proudly promoted and protected the natural resources, rural economy, history and beauty of the Virginia Piedmont. PEC empowers residents to protect what makes the Piedmont a wonderful place, and works with citizens to conserve land, protect air and water quality and restore wildlife habitat.



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What's Happening Around the Region?

by Michael Kane

In 2018, public agencies and private foundations took bold action to make land conservation and stewardship a financially attractive choice for landowners in the Piedmont region. Leading the way was The Volgenau Foundation, which made a significant gift to The Piedmont Environmental Council to help landowners conserve working farms. If you are interested in conserving your land, here are some conservation funding options for you to consider:

- The recent enactment of the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018, more commonly known as the Farm Bill, holds the promise of substantial new funding for farmland conservation in Virginia. Under the Farm Bill, funding for the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) dramatically increases, from \$250 million per year to \$450 million per year. Virginia’s share of those funds could be as much as \$4 million to \$10 million per year. ACEP funds can be used by public agencies and private non-profit land trusts to purchase conservation easements from interested landowners to keep high-quality and productive farmland open and available for future agricultural use. These funds require a 50 percent non-federal match. PEC is committed to finding matching funds for qualified projects.
- With 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 3,000 acres in the region.
- The Loudoun County Board of Supervisors established a *Conservation Easement Assistance Program* in December 2018. This program reimburses landowners up to \$15,000 for costs associated with donating a conservation easement to a private non-profit land trust or public agency. The county’s program will cover expenses like legal fees, survey and appraisal costs, and other costs related to donating an easement.
- Over the next two years, PEC is providing \$50,000 to the Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District (CSWCD) to help landowners adopt agricultural practices that enhance water quality. The funding which is provided through PEC’s Krebsner Fund for Rappahannock County Conservation, is in addition to funding and assistance available to landowners through CSWCD for installing agricultural best management practices that provide water quality benefits, like livestock exclusion fencing along streams. When PEC was provided a similar grant in 2009, the CSWCD worked with 30 landowners to protect more than 22 stream miles.

**A special thanks to The Volgenau Foundation for their support of this mailing and of land conservation in the Rappahannock watershed.*

Land Conservation in Virginia's Piedmont

In total, conservation easements in Albemarle, Clarke, Culpeper, Fauquier, Greene, Loudoun, Madison, Orange and Rappahannock counties protected approximately:



1,689

miles of streams



10,012

acres of wetlands



26,229

acres adjacent to scenic rivers



193,936

acres of prime farmland soils



192,907

acres of forests



108,540

acres along scenic byways



123,680

acres in the viewshed of the Appalachian Trail



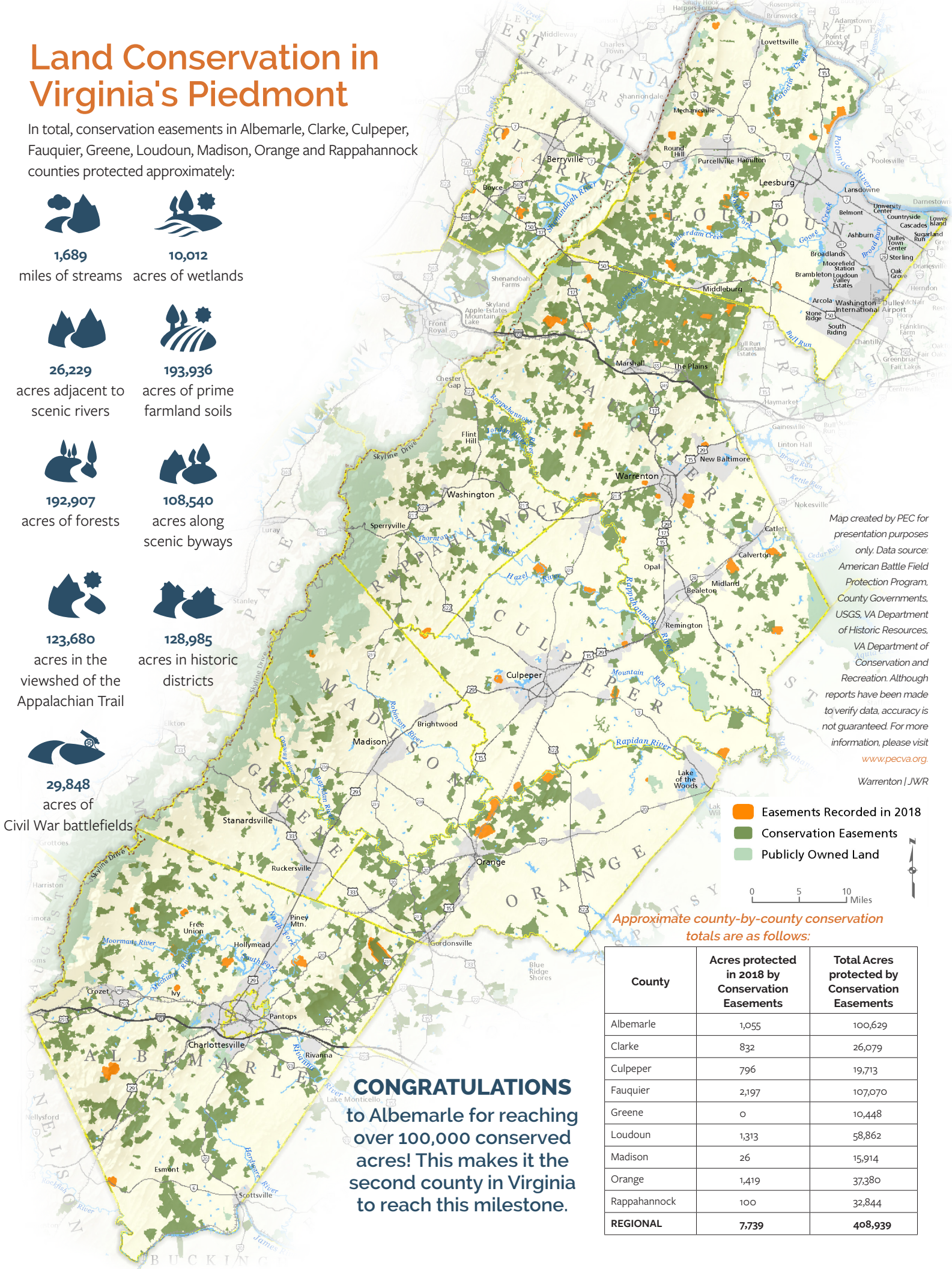
128,985

acres in historic districts



29,848

acres of Civil War battlefields



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

Warrenton | JWR

- Easements Recorded in 2018
- Conservation Easements
- Publicly Owned Land

Approximate county-by-county conservation totals are as follows:

| County | Acres protected in 2018 by Conservation Easements | Total Acres protected by Conservation Easements |
|-----------------|---|---|
| Albemarle | 1,055 | 100,629 |
| Clarke | 832 | 26,079 |
| Culpeper | 796 | 19,713 |
| Fauquier | 2,197 | 107,070 |
| Greene | 0 | 10,448 |
| Loudoun | 1,313 | 58,862 |
| Madison | 26 | 15,914 |
| Orange | 1,419 | 37,380 |
| Rappahannock | 100 | 32,844 |
| REGIONAL | 7,739 | 408,939 |

CONGRATULATIONS to Albemarle for reaching over 100,000 conserved acres! This makes it the second county in Virginia to reach this milestone.



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Landowners in the Virginia Piedmont have permanently conserved **over 400,000 acres**. You can be part of this grassroots effort to preserve and protect the region for future generations.

Look inside to learn more!



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