



Piedmont
Environmental
Council

ENGAGE · EDUCATE · EMPOWER

ANNUAL REPORT · 2016



VOLUNTEERS PLANTING TREES ALONG A STREAM AT MARRIOTT RANCH DURING OUR ANNUAL *FROM THE RAPPAHANNOCK* FOR THE RAPPAHANNOCK EVENT.
Photo by Paula Combs

"The Piedmont stands as an example of how civic engagement works."

COVER: SHENANDOAH MOUNTAIN PATH, WHICH WAS THE WINNER OF THE YOUTH CATEGORY IN OUR 2016 PHOTO CONTEST.
Photo by Jack Hardie

Dear Friends,

At the core of The Piedmont Environmental Council's work, we strive to engage, educate and empower people to protect and improve the places we all love and call home. Ultimately, we provide ways for people to act directly, to do it themselves. Our work on Federal, state, and local policy is especially designed to encourage and enable direct action.

We're continually energized by the countless ways that Piedmont residents act on their love of this place.

Over the years, Piedmont residents have:

- ▶ made phone calls, written letters and spoken at public hearings in support of conservation and smart land use decisions;
- ▶ purchased more food from local growers and farmers, even growing more themselves;
- ▶ planted rain gardens and native habitat meadows at their homes, neighborhood community centers and children's schools;
- ▶ installed solar panels at their homes and businesses;

- ▶ fought to protect important community resources from the impacts of new electric transmission lines and natural gas pipelines;
- ▶ banded together to erect memorials to displaced Blue Ridge families; and
- ▶ acted in countless other ways to preserve what they value about this place.

At a time of uncertainty, Virginia's northern Piedmont stands as an example of how civic engagement works. People participate in the decisions that shape their communities' futures. Local governments have acted vigorously to shape growth in ways that preserve our natural resources and rural heritage.

In the past year, more than 60 new families have joined the hundreds of Piedmont landowners who have chosen to place their lands under conservation easement. These individual decisions have created a culture of conservation. Land conservation in the Piedmont has gone viral. Today the 9-county region PEC serves has more than 394,000 acres of private lands permanently protected by conservation easements—an area twice the size of Shenandoah

National Park. At PEC, we work hard to support the right of landowners to make that decision.

More and more, we at PEC are looking for ways to tap the energy and creativity that comes from our love of this place. We are developing living laboratories for native habitat restoration and working farmland at our lands at Roundabout Meadows and the Piedmont Memorial Overlook, as well as our office in downtown Warrenton. We are working with Piedmont communities to build new trail and river connections that enable more people to get outside and directly appreciate what makes this region special.

Love of place is a powerful renewable resource, a gift that keeps on giving for the protection and improvement of the Piedmont. Thank you for your support and for being part of this movement!

Sincerely,



Chris Miller
President



Jean Perin
Co-Chair, Board of Directors



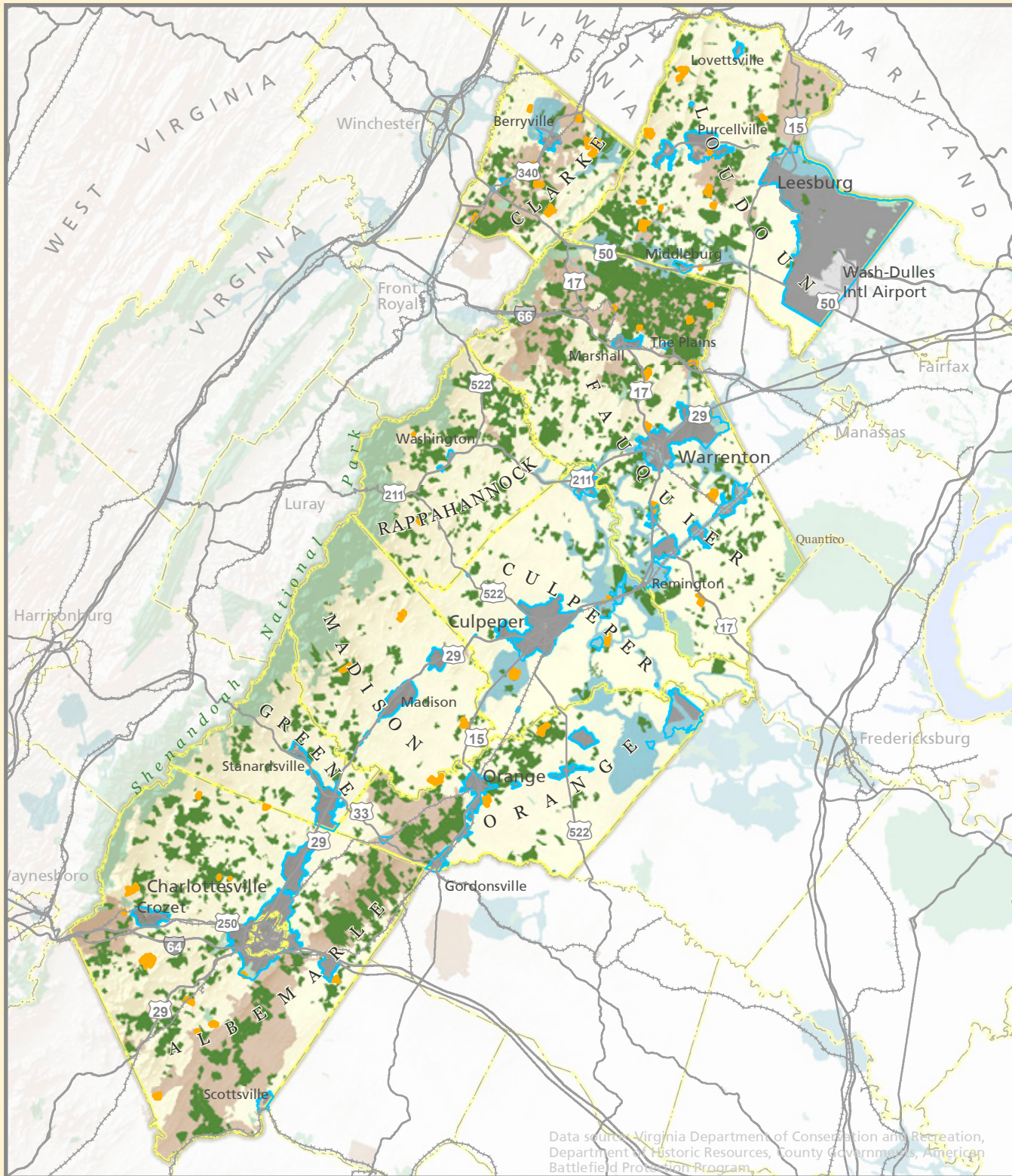
George L. Ohrstrom II
Co-Chair, Board of Directors



INDIGO BUNTING IN RAPPAHANNOCK.
Photo by Denise Machado

contents

MAP OF THE PIEDMONT	2
land conservation	4
clean water	6
connecting people and nature	8
energy solutions	10
CELEBRATING 10 YEARS OF	
Buy Fresh Buy Local in Virginia	12
The PEC Fellowship	13
history and beauty	14
better communities	16
strong rural economies	18
THE PIEDMONT FOUNDATION	20
CONTRIBUTIONS	21
THE BILL BACKER LEGACY SOCIETY	29
REMEMBERING TWO LEADERS OF THE PIEDMONT	30
BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND STAFF	31
STATEMENTS OF FINANCIAL CONDITION	32



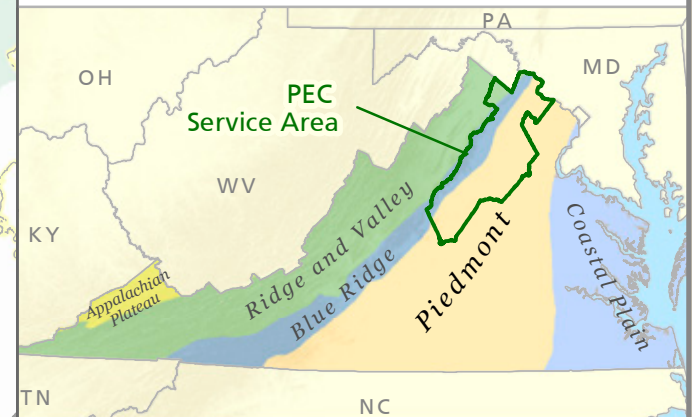
The Piedmont Region

- Easements Recorded in 2016
- Conservation Easements
- Publicly Owned Lands
- Civil War Battlefields
- Historic Districts
- Areas Designated for Development

0 10 20
Miles



Virginia's northern Piedmont remains an exceptional place, despite development pressures. Residents have been strongly supportive of protecting its scenic beauty, agricultural economy, thriving communities, and unparalleled significance to America's history.

Physiographic Regions of Virginia



Data source: Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, Department of Historic Resources, County Governments, American Battlefield Protection Program

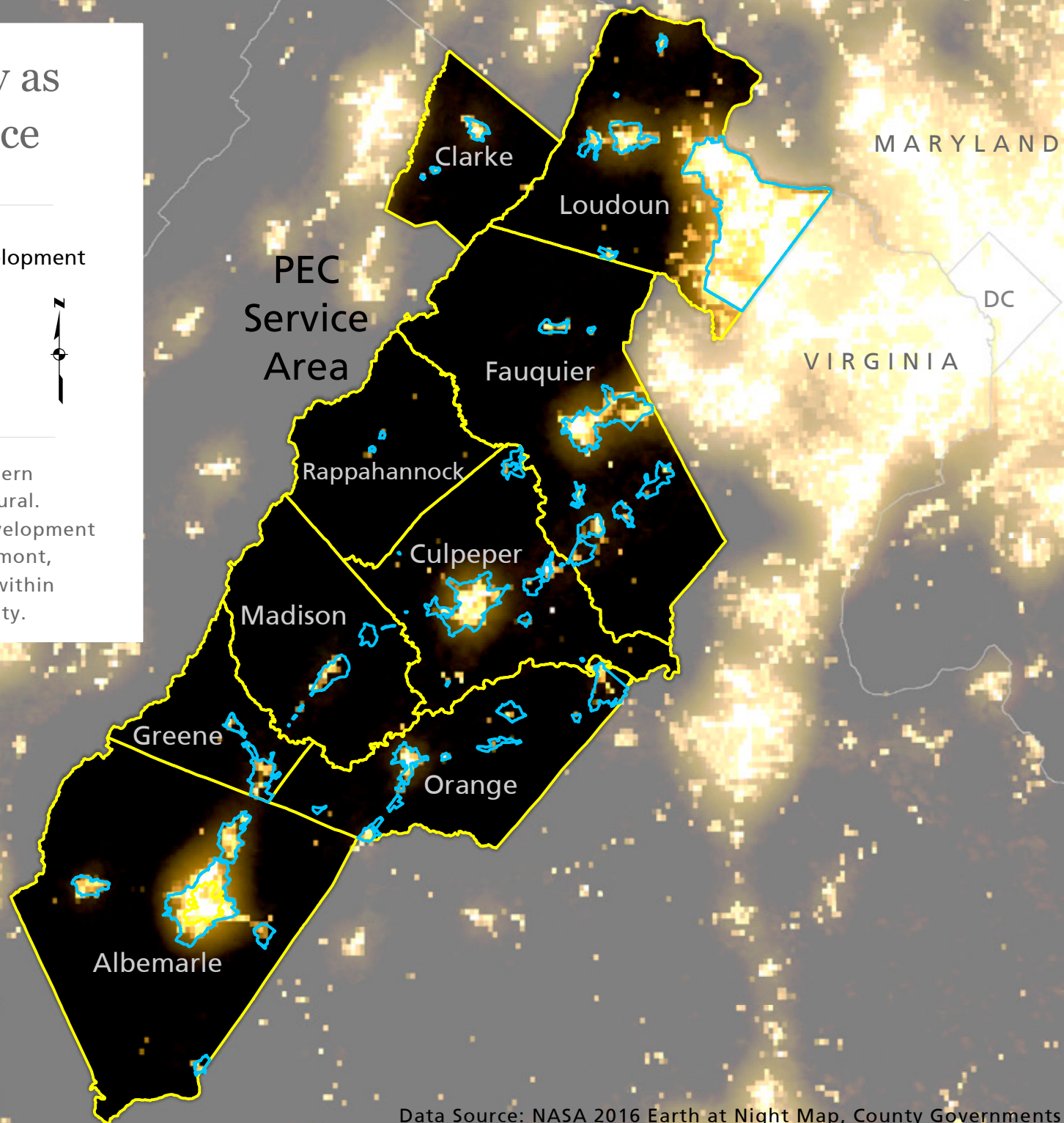
Land Use Policy as Seen from Space

-  Areas Designated for Development
-  PEC Counties

0 10 20
Miles



Night images show Virginia's northern Piedmont remains predominantly rural. Contrasting with the sprawling development of counties to the east, in the Piedmont, development is largely contained within the areas designated by each locality.



Data Source: NASA 2016 Earth at Night Map, County Governments

land conservation

VOLUNTARY ACTION • OUTSTANDING SUCCESS • SAVING PLACES PEOPLE LOVE



HISTORIC SLAVE QUARTERS AT BEN VENUE FARM.
Photo by Joyce Harman

Restoring and protecting the forest

One of the lands newly conserved in 2016 belongs to Tom and Sandra Williams, whose property in the Blue Ridge foothills of Madison County has been in Tom's family for more than 50 years. Tom's father, Ellis, was determined to reforest much of the land.

"My father had an abiding interest in forest stewardship, and originally acquired the property to be a tree farm," says Tom. In the 1960s, with support from the Department of Forestry, Ellis Williams planted white

and loblolly pines on land that had previously been heavily grazed, and whose streams were highly eroded. Meanwhile, native tulip poplars regrew naturally, and quickly.

The property's pasture lands have also rebounded dramatically, thanks to Tom and Sandra's partnership with livestock farmers Jimmy and Robin Rider.

Jimmy and Robin, the owners of Rider's Backfield Beef, have been leasing the Williams' land for their grassfed beef operation since 2009, and their

rotational grazing practices completely harmonize with the Williams' stewardship ethic. "We could not have asked for a better partner," says Sandra.

In recent years, Tom and Sandra saw the pace of growth pick up in Madison. Nearby working farms were subdivided. In 2016, Tom met Peter Hujik, PEC's Conservation Representative for Madison, and began pursuing conservation options in earnest. Tom worked closely with the Department of Forestry, which holds the easement.



SANDRA AND TOM WILLIAMS, EASEMENT DONORS IN MADISON COUNTY. Photo by Douglas Stewart

The Williams' property now has more than three-quarters of its land in forest. The easement ensures that the property's legacy of forest stewardship will abide forever.

2016 Highlights

- After an advocacy campaign co-led by PEC, the state of Virginia **substantially increased funding for conservation** in 2016. The budget included \$10 million for three land conservation grant programs—the highest level ever for these programs—and \$61.7 million in FY2017 for conservation-minded agriculture practices that will improve water quality. Meanwhile, full funding of \$75 million annually for the Land Preservation Tax Credit was preserved.
- **PEC donated a 17-acre property to the National Park Service for inclusion in Shenandoah National Park.** The addition of the Rappahannock County property, which is surrounded by the park on three of its four sides, expands one of the most important wildlife corridors on the east coast.



CAROLYN SEDGWICK, PEC'S RAPPAHANNOCK FIELD REPRESENTATIVE, STANDS AT THE BORDER OF 17 ACRES THAT PEC DONATED TO THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE. Photo by Jonathan Marquisee

- PEC identified a 2.5-acre property next to Biscuit Run State Park for both its conservation value and its potential as part of a **trail corridor connecting the state park to nearby Albemarle County neighborhoods.** We then worked with conservation buyers John and Dudley Macfarlane, who purchased the property and donated it to PEC. PEC and the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation anticipate that the property will ultimately be incorporated into the state park.
- PEC worked with Dave Matthews and Coran Capshaw to facilitate the acquisition and transfer of a 27-acre property along Moores Creek to the City of Charlottesville. **The property is an important link along the Rivanna Trail,** opening a section of the trail that was previously routed along city streets. At one point, the property was slated for a 280-unit apartment complex.

7,595 Acres Protected in 2016

County	Acres protected in 2016 by Conservation Easements	Total Acres protected by Conservation Easements
Albemarle	1,736	98,799
Clarke	1,210	24,939
Culpeper	523	18,600
Fauquier	1,262	102,332
Greene	0	10,448
Loudoun	1,536	56,375
Madison	844	15,761
Orange	412	35,292
Rappahannock	72	32,417
PEC Region	7,595	394,963



clean water

SAFE DRINKING SOURCES • GOOD HEALTH • PLACES TO SWIM AND FISH

2016 PEC FELLOWS CANOE THE RAPPAHANNOCK RIVER.
Photo by Amanda Demmerle

Conserving and improving water quality

More than 100,000 acres in the Goose Creek watershed in Fauquier and Loudoun counties are now permanently protected. This is good news for Northern Virginia residents, for whom Goose Creek streams form a critical drinking water source. The conserved lands around many Goose Creek streams help reduce pollution by absorbing water and reducing runoff from storms.

Howser's Branch, a Goose Creek tributary stream, runs through Roundabout Meadows in Gilbert's Corner. In 2013, a group of conservation investors at Roundabout Partners LLC purchased the 141-acre property and gifted the land to PEC. PEC is improving water quality while maintaining a working livestock farm.

Decades of intensive grazing and cattle access to the

stream had affected the pastures and water quality at Howser's Branch. With funding through the Loudoun Soil and Water Conservation District, PEC installed two miles of fencing along the stream and an alternative watering system for the cattle. The fencing has also created discrete pastures, providing opportunities for the cattle to be rotated, which will improve the health of the pastures over time. PEC has developed a grazing plan that will enhance forage quality and soil health, and staff is working with the cattle farmer to institute it. A 7-acre wetland area has also been excluded from grazing and set aside for wildlife habitat use. Additionally, PEC staff is working to rehabilitate a 21-acre overgrown field into workable land for a sustainable agriculture project.

PEC staff and volunteers have been regularly monitoring the water quality at Howser's Branch, both before and after these improvements. We also



A FENCE RUNS ALONG THE ROUNDABOUT MEADOWS PROPERTY NEAR GILBERT'S CORNER IN LOUDOUN COUNTY, WHICH WILL HELP IMPROVE WATER QUALITY BY KEEPING CATTLE OUT OF STREAMS. Photo by Marco Sanchez

hold field walks and are planning other events at Roundabout Meadows. Both through science and hands-on outreach, we hope to make Roundabout Meadows a living laboratory for land stewardship and improved water quality.

2016 Highlights

- ▶ PEC President Chris Miller serves on the Steering Committee of the **Choose Clean Water Coalition**, an alliance of more than 200 organizations which has built strong bi-partisan support for public funding to improve water quality in the Chesapeake Bay watershed.



STUDENT ENJOYING THE RAPPAHANNOCK RIVER AFTER A TREE PLANTING. Photo by Marco Sanchez

- ▶ PEC and Friends of the Rappahannock launched the **Headwater Stream Initiative**, which provides free technical assistance, project design, materials and labor for planting native trees and shrubs on properties fronting headwater streams of the Rappahannock River.
- ▶ PEC moved forward with planning replacements of two culverts that will **reconnect over 7 miles of eastern brook trout habitat** in Blue Ridge headwater streams. The new culverts restore natural flow to enable brook trout and other aquatic organisms to move freely. Construction is scheduled for spring 2017.
- ▶ With support from The Volgenau Foundation, PEC helped six landowners in the **Thumb Run watershed** in Fauquier County plant native habitat gardens and meadows that filter stormwater and reduce polluted runoff. PEC also collaborated with the Orlean Community Trail System to plant a half-acre native habitat meadow at the Orlean Fire Hall.
- ▶ **Twenty-five miles** of streams in the Piedmont region were protected by conservation easements in 2016, bringing the total number of stream-miles protected by easements to 1,633. In addition, **221 acres of wetlands** were protected, bringing the total to 9,603 acres. All of these protected resources contribute to the restoration of the Chesapeake Bay, since water flowing through the Piedmont eventually enters the Bay.



connecting people and nature

OUTREACH • PARKS AND TRAILS • OUTDOOR EVENTS • NATURE AT HOME

PEC HELPED BRING DOUG TALLAMY, RENOWNED AUTHOR
OF *BRINGING NATURE HOME*, TO WARRENTON.

Photo by Paula Combs

Bluebell Walk a rite of spring

Each April, a sky-colored carpet of Virginia Bluebells blossoms along many parts of Cedar Run. For 14 years, Margrete and Mike Stevens have given hundreds of residents the chance to experience this beautiful and fleeting bloom at their historic property near Warrenton.

For Margrete and Mike, the Bluebell Walk is an opportunity to appreciate the Piedmont's land and waters. "When you open your farm for a walk like the one we do each year for the Bluebells, you really get to appreciate what it means to have preserved the land," says Margrete. "Many people return year after year, and every year there are newcomers who come to discover the Cedar Run valley."

In 2010, the Stevens' permanently protected their land—a nearly 200-acre spread of crops and

hayfields, and a house that dates from 1820. "My husband and I come from England and Denmark, respectively, and grew up surrounded by history," Margrete explains. "We felt that preserving this small part of American history was a privilege."

Visitors to the Bluebell Walk walk through a wildflower meadow along Cedar Run, which is both an important source of drinking water and the lifeblood of the farming economy in southern Fauquier County. Small family farms still dot the landscape of Cedar Run, much as they have done for the past two centuries. Community leaders in Cedar Run have worked hard to preserve this landscape.

Visitors enjoy both the spectacular bloom of the bluebells, and the beauty of a landscape that has been improved by human hands over so many



OFF TO SEE THE BLUEBELLS.
Photo by Cynthia Benitz

generations. The walk, observes Margrete, "allows children to explore nature in ways that are not otherwise available. Older people recognize the charms of land that has been preserved since colonial times. Photographers find inspiration in the wildflowers.

"I think it is healthy for a community to have opportunities of this kind to meet other people informally."

2016 Highlights

- PEC teamed up with Friends of the Rappahannock and the John Marshall Soil and Water Conservation District to hold the second annual **"From the Rappahannock, For the Rappahannock"** event, at Marriott Ranch in Fauquier County. Attendees planted 250 trees along Fiery Run, took hayrides to see the ranch's conservation practices, and enjoyed Rappahannock oysters with their friends and neighbors.
- More than 25 local residents participated in **two birdwatching walks** led by PEC at a private nature preserve in little Washington, focused on the roles of conservation and native habitat for bird diversity. Forty-two attendees also participated in three pollinator field walks led by PEC staff at the nature preserve in May, June and September.

- In February, PEC teamed up with Trout Unlimited, US Fish and Wildlife Service and Early Mountain Vineyards in Madison to provide an update on our efforts to open brook trout habitat in Blue Ridge headwater streams. More than 75 people gathered for a wine reception, fly tying, dinner and a presentation on PEC's stream crossing survey.

- In partnership with the American Bird Conservancy and Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, PEC reissued an updated edition of *Managing Land in the Piedmont of Virginia for Birds and other Wildlife*, which provides land management and conservation techniques to benefit wildlife and counter some of the threats faced by declining bird species.



BIRDWATCHING AT JONES NATURE PRESERVE.
Photo by Celia Vuocolo

- In June, PEC staff collaborated with the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club to host the **"Appalachian Trail History Hike"** at the Piedmont Memorial Overlook. Twenty-two participants spent the morning hiking and learning about the history of the AT and PEC's habitat restoration efforts on the property and local conservation work.
- PEC held its 4th annual **"Sustainable Landscaping Workshop"** at Brookside in Fauquier County in October. This popular event featured presentations from a range of local experts on topics such as sustainable lawn care, landscaping with native plants, and managing small woodlots.

energy solutions

EFFICIENCY FIRST • LOCAL RENEWABLES • SENSIBLE APPROACH TO TRANSMISSION



INSTALLERS PUT UP SOLAR PANELS
ON PEC'S OFFICE IN WARRENTON.
Photo by Paula Combs

Efficient, affordable solar power

When it comes to energy, residents of the Piedmont want to be part of the solution. The good news is that solar power systems have become more efficient and less expensive. Even so, it takes effort to find the right materials and contractors, and make solar work for household budgets.

That's where *Solarize Piedmont* comes in. Over the past two years, PEC has partnered with the Local Energy Alliance Program and Northern Virginia Regional Commission to demystify the process of going solar, and help navigate financing options and the local approval process.

Among the participants in the 2016 *Solarize Piedmont* campaign were Jim and Lynn Wiley. They installed solar panels on a barn at their home and on a commercial building they own in the historic town of The Plains.

"We just got our second bill for our house, and we're already saving; we're only paying a third of what we were," says Lynn, who also serves on PEC's Board of Directors. "In our solar analysis, you can see how much solar power you're generating every day."

At the end of the month, the data converts the savings into something "interesting, especially for someone who is not a science person," says Lynn. "My last house bill says I've saved the equivalent of 16 trees."

As a real estate agent, Lynn also appreciates that the solar installation adds value to her properties. "It's a win-win."

PEC is practicing what we preach. In 2016, we had 38 solar photovoltaic panels installed on the roof of our headquarters office. The new system has saved PEC more than \$1,400 in electric bills over the past year, while enabling us to do our part to reduce pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.

SOLAR BY THE NUMBERS

- ▶ **65%** increase in solar industry jobs in Virginia in 2016
- ▶ **\$857,700** value of solar installation contracts through *Solarize Piedmont*



LYNN WILEY SMILES IN FRONT OF THE SOLAR INSTALLATION ON HER BARN IN THE PLAINS. Photo by Bri West

2016 Highlights

- ▶ PEC helped community groups **prevent 9.2 miles of new transmission line right-of-way through land in eastern Fauquier County** as part of the Warrenton-Wheeler-Gainesville project. After hearing testimony from PEC, Dominion and Fauquier County, the State Corporation Commission (SCC) approved a less intrusive option that would use mostly existing right of way.
- ▶ Working with the University of Virginia Law Clinic, PEC advocated successfully with the SCC to **remove barriers to large-scale solar generation** as part of a permit application for a solar facility in Remington.

- ▶ PEC collaborated with the Shenandoah Valley Network to **defend conservation lands from Dominion Energy's proposed Atlantic Coast Pipeline**. After Dominion submitted a request to the Virginia Outdoors Foundation to route the natural gas pipeline through 10 properties protected by conservation easements, PEC and SVN sent an action alert that resulted in hundreds of public comments to VOF, and PEC's President and Co-Chair testified to VOF in opposition to the request.



- ▶ PEC and our partners at the Orange-Madison-Culpeper Alliance led a successful campaign to **prevent the construction of a new electric transmission line that would have run through some of the most historic and conserved lands in Madison and Orange counties**. Instead, Dominion has proposed a rebuild of the existing line between Gordonsville and Remington. We are now awaiting a decision from the SCC on the modified route and supporting mitigation measures including shorter, rust-colored towers and lower visibility lines and conductors.

Celebrating 10 years of ***Buy Fresh Buy Local*** in Virginia

In 2006, PEC started the first Virginia *Buy Fresh Buy Local* chapter. Our goal was to support local farmers, productive agricultural lands and rural economies by helping consumers easily find and purchase locally produced foods. Since then, the Virginia *Buy Fresh Buy Local* network has expanded to eight chapters statewide. PEC manages three chapters covering 11 counties, and mails annual print guides to more than 275,000 households each spring.

PEC also coordinates the BuyLocalVirginia.org website, which provides a year-round, easy way to find locally grown food anywhere in the state that a *Buy Fresh Buy Local* chapter exists.

Today, more than 600 local farms and businesses are listed in PEC *Buy Fresh Buy Local* guides. Most participating farms and businesses have said the guide is a significant source of advertisement for them. By being promoted in the guide, partners say they have been able to establish new markets and enhance business with current customers.

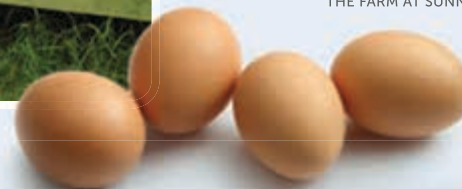
Local food is big business in Virginia. In a recent survey of 30 states by the US Department of Agriculture, Virginia ranks 9th in the nation for direct farm sales of food – bringing in more than \$217 million annually. More than 30 farmers' markets in PEC's service region now dot the region, and more local products are finding their way into restaurants and retailers, large and small.



Photo by Cindy DeVore



CASEY GUSTOWAROW AND STACEY CARLBERG,
THE FARM AT SUNNYSIDE IN WASHINGTON, VA.
Photo by Marco Sanchez



Happy 10th Anniversary **PEC Fellowship!**

The PEC Fellowship is a unique immersion course in conservation careers for college students and recent graduates from across the country. Boasting more than 100 alumni since its inception, the seven-week Fellowship Program has helped future environmental leaders gain hands-on experience in a unique mix of topics with experienced professionals, including land conservation, land use, sustainable agriculture, energy policy, habitat stewardship, historic preservation, transportation planning and geographic information systems.

The PEC Fellowship Program has been made possible by generous support from an anonymous donor, grants from the Luck Companies Foundation and the in-kind support of a number of individuals. PEC members and other local residents have provided housing for the fellows. Numerous guest speakers donate their time and expertise through leading tours and classroom discussions. In addition, many local businesses, nonprofits and landowners host field trips each year.



2007
PEC Fellows at
Paris Mountain
in Fauquier
County.



"The PEC Fellowship prepared me for a major transition into post-graduate life and specifically into the process of finding a job in the D.C. area. I was hired as a Research and Publications Intern at the Environmental Law Institute just three weeks after the program ended, mostly thanks to the Fellowship and the fact that it showed my employers that I had a keen interest and knowledge of environmental land use issues. I also gained an incredible group of friends throughout the summer and a great resource in the form of the PEC staff."

— **Lauren Faccinto** • 2014 PEC FELLOW

San Anselmo, CA • Kenyon College, Class of 2014



"The PEC Fellowship was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity! I was not only able to refine my knowledge and skills regarding topics in environmental energy policy, smart growth, and agriculture through classroom discussion, but I was also able to learn about these in practice. This method of learning is something that you do not get in the typical University setting and has truly been invaluable to me."

— **Chantal Madray** • 2015 PEC FELLOW

Bowling Green, VA • University of Virginia, Class of 2016



2016
PEC Fellows visiting
Bruce Jones'
Nature Preserve
in Rappahannock
County.



"The Fellowship Program has influenced me to be more curious about the world in which we live from a greater interdisciplinary perspective. The experiences through PEC are practical and have helped me understand and codify a stronger interest in the field of historic preservation."

— **Joseph Mutter** • 2015 PEC FELLOW

San Antonio, TX • Middlebury College, Class of 2015



"Being around so many passionate people who do so many good things, day in and day out, has been a lesson in itself. This fellowship has been an incredible experience for me because it has taught me much more about environmental stewardship in the context of a region that I love and call home."

— **Haley Wilbanks** • 2016 PEC FELLOW

Orange County, VA • Sewanee: University of the South, Class of 2017

history and beauty

SENSE OF PLACE • SCENIC VIEWS • BATTLEFIELDS • HISTORIC DISTRICTS



CARS APPROACH PEC'S 2016 MOUNTAIN HERITAGE
EVENT IN MADISON COUNTY. Photo by Bri West

Honoring the families of the Blue Ridge Mountains

“The story of the people who lost their homes in the creation of Shenandoah National Park was largely untold or poorly told for years,” writes Bill Lohmann of the Richmond Times Dispatch. PEC honors the history and heritage of the families that once lived in the Blue Ridge Mountains through a range of activities, events and partnerships.

Both Roy Dye of PEC’s Board of Directors and Kristie Kendall, PEC’s historic preservation manager, serve on the Board of Blue Ridge Heritage Project, which has been working to dedicate memorial sites, including a stone chimney monument, commemorating the displaced Blue Ridge communities in each of the eight counties where land was acquired for the national park. Madison County dedicated and installed the first monument in 2015. Last November, Albemarle became the second county to establish a memorial, at a ceremony attended by more than 200 people.

Rappahannock was the third county to install a monument to Blue Ridge families. In 2016, PEC worked with Rappahannock community leaders to advocate successfully for the approval of a memorial site. Russell Jenkins donated an easement on his property for the memorial, and residents performed duties ranging from publicizing the memorial to collecting

and moving the stones for the memorial.

“A core group of volunteers worked tirelessly to ensure that this effort moved forward,” says Missy Sutton, a leader in the Rappahannock effort. “Kristie Kendall of PEC was instrumental in keeping this effort moving forward as well and not only helped coordinate committee meetings but also identified the farm on which the stone was retrieved and did all of the research that produced the list of family names for the memorial plaque.”

Dozens of local residents responded to a PEC action alert and communicated the importance of the monument to Rappahannock leaders. The county board of supervisors unanimously approved the easement for the memorial site in December 2016.



PEC'S KRISTIE KENDALL BESIDE THE MONUMENT IN MADISON COUNTY. Photo by Bri West

2016 Highlights



▶ PEC held our fifth annual **Mountain Heritage celebration**, at Graves Chapel in Madison County. Nearly 300 attendees learned about the rich culture and traditions of the families that once called the Blue Ridge Mountains home.

▶ More than **800 acres of Civil War battlefields** were protected in 2016, for a total of approximately 28,626 acres.

THE ACE STRINGS BAND PERFORMING AT THE MOUNTAIN HERITAGE EVENT. Photo by Paula Combs

▶ PEC pushed throughout the year (and is still pushing) to preserve and rehabilitate **Waterloo Bridge**, a historic metal truss bridge spanning the Rappahannock River.

▶ PEC received a grant from the National Park Service’s American Battlefields Protection Program to research the history of two previously undocumented Civil War battles that occurred at **Jack’s Shop and James City** in Madison County.

▶ PEC President Chris Miller continues to serve as Trustee to the **Journey Through Hallowed Ground** Partnership, which manages the National Heritage Area and other programs, including the Living Legacy program.

▶ **More than 3,996 acres along Scenic Byways** were protected last year for a total of approximately 106,184 acres.



better communities

CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT · GREAT PLACES TO LIVE · MANAGING TRAFFIC AND TAXES

COMMUNITY LEADERS DISCUSS HOW TO GREEN THEIR HOA'S LANDSCAPING PRACTICES. *Photo by Marco Sanchez*

Common space for the **greater good**

Homeowners' Associations are major players when it comes to the environment. In Loudoun County, HOAs control more than 33,000 acres, including stormwater ponds, playgrounds and open spaces.

PEC is partnering with Loudoun HOAs to look at ways to manage their common areas to filter stormwater, reduce pollution and provide native habitat for birds, bees and butterflies. In 2016, more than 150 residents, property managers, and landscape representatives from over 37 HOAs throughout Loudoun attended a county-wide forum on "Common Space for the Greater Good," co-sponsored by PEC and Loudoun County. The forum

provided ideas and examples of native habitat landscaping practices that protect the environment and strengthen communities.

The forum inspired Kim Spiegel, who manages Sycamore Hill, a community of 475 townhomes in Leesburg.

"I worked with PEC, the Audubon at Home program of Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy and Matt Coughlin, Blake Landscapes' community representative, to design and plant a native habitat garden at the community center," says Kim. "By fall, our garden had already helped one Monarch butterfly lay her eggs and provided a place for one of her caterpillar babies to complete the cycle into

butterfly." Residents have noticed, and many have told Kim that they would like classes on how to "naturescape" at their homes.

The Belmont Community in Ashburn has been a leader in native habitat restoration. Since hosting a PEC workshop on stream-friendly landscaping in 2013, this community of more than 2,100 homes in Ashburn has re-landscaped their civic center with all native plants, planted more than 1,000 native trees along the stream running through the community, and removed invasive plants to restore the health of the community's forested area.

"Early adopters like Belmont and



MATT COUGHLIN AND KIM SPIEGEL AT SYCAMORE HILL'S NATIVE HABITAT GARDEN. Photo by Gem Bingol

Sycamore Hill are critical to encouraging other HOAs to consider making changes," says Gem Bingol, PEC's Loudoun field representative. "Their enthusiastic leadership is inspiring. And we'll continue to support HOAs in shifting toward a more sustainable model of landscape management."

2016 Highlights

- ▶ PEC serves as the fiscal sponsor for the **Coalition for Smarter Growth**, one of the nation's preeminent regional smart growth organizations. In 2016 CSG helped organize a regional effort to increase funding for the Metro transit system, and successfully advocated for expanding housing options in the District of Columbia.
- ▶ Working with the Prince William Conservation Alliance and CSG, PEC helped advocate successfully for **more cost-effective transit alternatives to a proposed commuter rail extension to Haymarket**.
- ▶ PEC engaged and educated Orange residents about **proposed design standards for commercial development in Barbourville**. While not as strong as we would have liked, the standards were adopted and represent a good first step at protecting this community's character.
- ▶ PEC's **Loudoun school partnerships** enabled a high school to host a Nature Stewardship event for their community and an elementary school to plant over 60 native trees to provide shade and enhance the school grounds.
- ▶ PEC worked with local residents and groups to help **reverse VDOT's decision to build a truck stop west of Markham off I-66**.
- ▶ PEC participated in a planning charrette conducted by the University of Virginia School of Architecture focused on **revitalizing and preserving historic Gordonsville**. The resulting plan includes a parks district and trail that connects to the Montpelier trail network.
- ▶ PEC partnered with the Virginia Department of Transportation, Clarke County staff and numerous other organizations to **plant more than 1,000 native plants at the VDOT park and ride lot in Boyce**. The new plantings will not only attract pollinators, but also better filter stormwater and reduce polluted runoff.



MARKHAM TRUCK STOP INPUT SESSION. Photo by Bri West

strong rural economies

THRIVING FARMS • LOCAL FOOD • INNOVATION • HEALTHY, WORKING LAND



PASTURE WALK AT HERITAGE HOLLOW FARMS, CO-HOSTED BY PEC AND
FUTURE HARVEST CHESAPEAKE ALLIANCE FOR SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE.

Photo by Marco Sanchez

Finding a **place to grow**

With the high price of land in the Piedmont, buying prime farmland is not a feasible option for most beginning farmers. Many Piedmont landowners are interested in starting or expanding agriculture on their land. PEC sees an opportunity to bring the two parties together.

“We saw a gap between aspiring farmers and landowners who want their land in agriculture,” says Jessica Palmer, farm and food program coordinator for PEC. “So we began hosting a lively happy hour style event, where landowners and landseekers can mingle and talk about their property or their business ideas—it’s an opportunity for connections to be made.”

It was at one of PEC’s events for landowners and

landseekers last year that Katharine Wilson, a farm intern at the time, met Holly and Peter Maillet, who owned land in Madison County.

“We have a really strong feeling about the local economy and the local food movement,” says Holly, “and we were wondering if there was a way for us participate in that—in a more meaningful way.”

The discussions led to Katharine developing a business plan for a farm and Community-Supported Agriculture business providing ecologically grown vegetables, herbs and blueberries, along with eggs from pasture-raised hens. Holly and Peter formed Berrey Hill Farm, LLC, and Katharine moved onto the property this past November as the acting farm manager.



FARMER KATHARINE WILSON (LEFT) AND HOLLY MAILLET AT BERREY HILL FARM IN MADISON COUNTY. Photo by Paula Combs

“If you can connect and have a good relationship, farmer to landowner, this can be an amazing, beautiful and productive thing. It really can work,” says Katharine.

Healthy and **profitable pastures**

Through a Conservation Innovation Grant from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, PEC partnered with one Piedmont farmer to implement new pasture management practices and demonstrate their



benefits for the soil, biodiversity and farm profits.

In 2012 Mike Sands started Bean Hollow Grassfed, a 110-acre cattle and sheep farm in Rappahannock County. The land had been continuously grazed during the past two decades, and its soils and pastures were worn down. Mike was intent on employing soil building and rotational grazing methods.

Mike used grant funds to install fencing and paddocks for a rotational grazing system and provide water access at different parts of the property. He also planted native warm season grasses on part of the pasture lands, which had several benefits

MIKE SANDS OF BEAN HOLLOW GRASSFED. Photo by Paula Combs

including increasing water infiltration and providing needed nutrients to livestock during summer months.

More than 100 local landowners and farmers visited the property during six field days organized by PEC. PEC regularly collected soil samples and surveyed plant life to measure changes in soil health and biodiversity, and installed cameras to record changes to the pastures by the day.

“Over the past two years we’ve seen an improvement in both the productivity of the pastures and the financial returns,” says Mike. “Two years is a short period, but we expect to see increased productivity and returns over the next few years.”

The Piedmont Foundation

Established to hold and manage special funds in support of PEC, the Piedmont Foundation assures PEC's capacity to respond to key opportunities and challenges as they arise and to fulfill our core mission over the long term. A separate 501(c)(3) charitable organization governed by a seven-member Board, the Foundation accepts gifts of cash, securities, property and appreciated assets. The Foundation also offers opportunities for tax advantaged planned gifts including trusts, bequests and life income plans.

Currently, the Piedmont Foundation manages funds in the following categories:

- ▶ **Core Mission Endowment**
- ▶ **Conservation Stewardship Fund**
- ▶ **Legal Defense Fund**
- ▶ **Education and Outreach Fund**
- ▶ **Headquarters Expansion Fund**
- ▶ **Land Conservation Fund**

Within this fund, the following Regional Land Conservation Funds have been established:

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Bull Run Mountains Land Conservation Fund
Clarke County Land Conservation Fund
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"MORNING DEW"
Photo by Jacob Chang-Rasche

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With much gratitude, PEC presents the names of individuals, families, foundations, businesses and organizations that supported the Piedmont Environmental Council during 2016. Although we do not have the space to honor everyone, we are extremely grateful for the generosity of each of our members. We offer sincere thanks for your ongoing commitment to promoting and protecting the Piedmont region.

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LANDOWNERS CHAT WITH LAND SEEKERS AT OUR FARMLAND LEASING SOCIAL HOUR IN CHARLOTTESVILLE. Photo by Jeff Werner





PEC'S GEM BINGOL WITH LOCAL STUDENTS AT NATURE STEWARDSHIP DAY IN LOUDOUN COUNTY.

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ANN BACKER ACCEPTING AWARD FROM CHRIS MILLER AND SUSAN SHERMAN
 AT THE SUMMER SAFARI. Photo by Gregorio Photography





SUMMER SAFARI ATTENDEES GIVE A STANDING OVATION TO DOUG LARSON, PEC'S OUTGOING VICE PRESIDENT OF DEVELOPMENT, WHO RETIRED IN 2016. *Photo by Photo by Gregorio Photography*

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JULIE, EVAN AND CHARLIE BOLTHOUSE ENJOY A HAYRIDE AT THE FROM THE RAPPAHANNOCK FOR THE RAPPAHANNOCK EVENT. Photo by Paula Combs





PEC'S KRISTIE KENDALL WITH HER PARENTS, GREAT UNCLE JESSE TANNER, JR., AND OTHER EXTENDED FAMILY MEMBERS. THEY REPRESENTED THE SHOTWELL FAMILY AT THE 2016 MADISON MOUNTAIN HERITAGE DAY, WHO HAD LIVED IN SYRIA'S SHOTWELL HOLLOW SINCE THE MID-1700S. *Photo by Paula Combs*

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GEORGE OHRSTROM AND CLEO GEWIRZ AT OUR 2016 SPORTING CLAYS
EVENT FOR CLARKE COUNTY CONSERVATION. *Photo by John Moring*





JOHN MAGEE DISCUSSES GREEN LANDSCAPING PRACTICES AT THE HOA SYMPOSIUM.
Photo by Marco Sanchez

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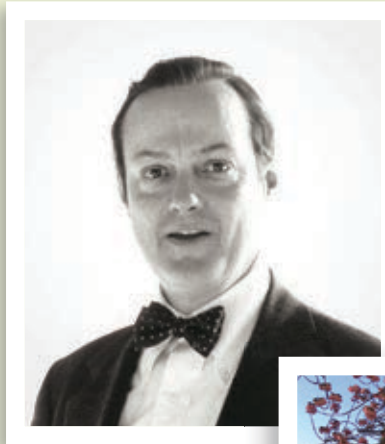
The Bill Backer Legacy Society

Named for the avid conservationist and former Piedmont Foundation President Bill Backer. Bill rallied concerned citizens to participate in early efforts to plan for future growth and conservation in Virginia.

His engagement took on national stature during the debate over the Disney's America development. His ideas became known as the "Disney: Take a Second Look Campaign," which focused on alternative sites. The campaign became the basis for the Coalition for Smarter Growth's Blueprint for a Better Region, a vision for transit-oriented development that has shaped smart growth in our region.

As President of the Piedmont Foundation, he raised funds for the Piedmont Memorial Overlook, a conserved property with views of one of the most protected landscapes in the eastern United States. Bill's vision was a nationwide campaign to save open space, which he considered critical to the planet's future.

We invite you to share his vision and make a commitment to preserve the Piedmont by leaving a gift in your will and becoming a member of the Bill Backer Legacy Society.



PIEDMONT FOUNDATION PRESIDENT BILL BACKER WAS AN AVID CONSERVATIONIST AND LONG-TIME FRIEND OF PEC'S.



BILL BACKER WITH REV. BROWN MORTON AT THE PIEDMONT MEMORIAL OVERLOOK DEDICATION IN PARIS, VA. Photo by Jay Clevenson

“Heaven is under our feet
as well as over our heads.”

—Henry David Thoreau



BILL BACKER SITS ON THE PORCH AT HIS FARM NEAR THE PLAINS. Photo by Chris Miller

If you have already included PEC in your estate plans, please let us know so we can include you in the Legacy Society. For more information please contact Nan Moring, Director of Development, at (540) 347-2334 ext. 7005 or nmoring@pecva.org.

Remembering two leaders of the Piedmont

PEC would like to remember **John Jaske** and **Su Webb**. John and Su served on PEC's Board with distinction, and were among the most dedicated and effective leaders for preserving the Piedmont.

John Jaske

John served on the Board of Directors of PEC since 1998, following the lead of his wife Pam, who served on the Board in the early 1990s. He helped lead the fight against Disney's America, championed the creation of the Coalition for Smarter Growth, and encouraged a new approach to transportation and land use in Virginia.

John chaired the Virginia League of Conservation Voters, presiding over the successful effort to make the League a major force in Virginia politics, both in the General Assembly and in elections to statewide offices. He supported PEC's Orange County effort and championed the beautiful Rapidan River valley.

John was always a great supporter, an objective legal mind, and a kind friend. He was a great counselor,

patiently listening to all sides, then delivering a succinct summary and set of choices. He did this professionally with great success. His willingness to volunteer that role for the conservation community of the Piedmont and the Commonwealth of Virginia was a priceless gift to us all.

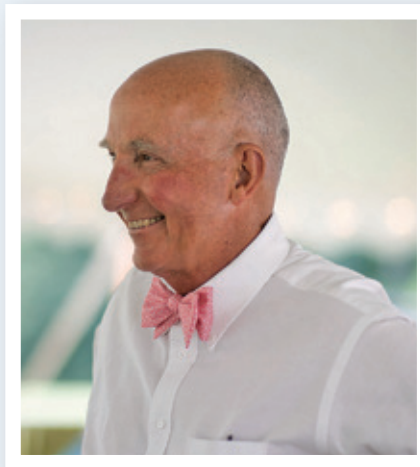


Photo courtesy of the Virginia League of Conservation Voters

Su Webb

Su Webb served on the PEC Board of Directors beginning in 2012 and chaired the PEC Loudoun advisory board as one of her many leadership positions in Loudoun County. She was honored for her lifetime of work when she was named the 2012 Heritage Hero by the Mosby Heritage Association and was inducted as a Loudoun Laurel.

Su pushed to make the former Greenvest development project into a state park, spearheaded the efforts to create a regional park at Gilbert's Corner, sponsored our *Buy Fresh Buy Local* campaign in Loudoun, and provided a bridge to many Loudoun organizations. She led the effort to create and sustain the Loudoun Heritage Farm Museum and its collection of farming implements and records. She was also a founding member of the Blue Ridge Foothills Conservancy.



Additionally, Su had a passion for public recreation, having served as Chair of the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority and spending 20 years on the Loudoun County Parks, Recreation and Open Space Advisory Board, 6 years as vice chair and 12 years as chair.

All of us who work on issues in Loudoun will miss Su and her absolute dedication to conservation and preservation.

PEC Board of Directors

This list includes Board members who served at any time between Jan 2016 and Jan 2017

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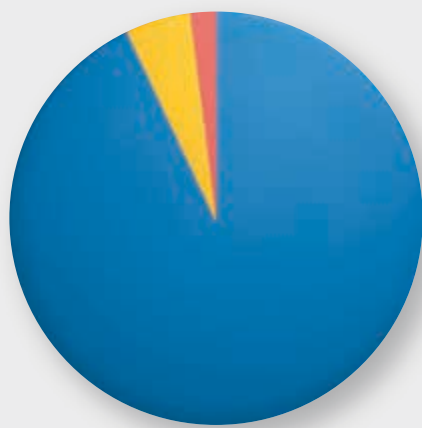
LEFT TO RIGHT: Paula Combs, Chris Miller, Tiffany Parker, Michael Kane, Watsun Randolph, Jessica Palmer, Celia Vuocolo, Julie Bolthouse, Dawn Wilmot, Nicole Erickson, Danielle Castellano, Karissa Epley, Kristie Kendall, Peter Hujik, Robin Cross, Tom Bolan, Diana Gebhart, Douglas Stewart, Jeff Werner, Gem Bingol, Daniel Holmes, Nancy Terseck, Claire Catlett, Bri West.

NOT PICTURED: Rex Linville, John McCarthy, Nan Moring, Diana Norris, Marco Sanchez.



2016 Financial Report

Sources of Organizational Support



Donations and Grants	\$ 3,364,822	93%
Special Events, Net	171,714	5%
Investments, Other	63,111	2%
Total	\$ 3,599,647	100%

The above figures do not include the activities of partner organizations for whom we act as fiscal sponsor, including the Coalition for Smarter Growth, Shenandoah Valley Network and the EarthDay@Loudoun Family Festival. Copies of our audited financial statements and IRS forms 990, which include the aforementioned partner organizations, are available upon request. Copies of our most recent statements may also be found at PEC's website at www.pecva.org/donate. For more information, please contact PEC's accounting office at (540) 347-2334.

Program and Operating Expenditures



Conservation, Stewardship and Habitat	\$ 1,026,619	28%
County Issues and Planning	367,134	10%
Policy*	343,094	10%
Farms and Food	149,038	4%
Transportation and Growth Management	79,969	3%
Outreach and Education	771,143	21%
Development	431,790	12%
Administration	448,579	12%
Total	\$ 3,617,366	100%

* Policy reflects regional and state-level work on policy related to energy, air quality, water quality, telecommunications, land conservation and land use.



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KIDS ENJOY THE NEW MONTPELIER-GRELEN TRAIL.
Photo courtesy of The Montpelier Foundation

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