



Piedmont  
Environmental  
Council

ANNUAL REPORT · 2019



## Dear Friends,

We love this place. We love the rolling hills as we drive along the Piedmont's scenic roads. We love seeing cycles of the seasons unfold in countless telltale signs, from the bits of osage oranges that dot the woods in the winter to the blooms of the bluebells in the spring. We love its bounty of butters, jams, apples and cider in the fall. We love living in, and visiting, the Piedmont's historic towns and villages.

We want to protect the things we love. How do we protect the Piedmont and make it an even better place to live through smarter growth? From the start, that has been the question and challenge animating the work of The Piedmont Environmental Council (PEC). We are proud to be part of what our communities are accomplishing, from new trails, greenways, and parks to investments in major infrastructure in the Metro system in Loudoun and intercity passenger rail to Richmond.

About 50 years ago, our founders wrote of the need for "a broadly based organization of representative leaders of the Piedmont area . . . which can act

The core of our work is empowering people to act on their love of the Piedmont.

as the 'watch dog'—or the conscience—for the orderly development of the Piedmont. . . [and] bolster those officials in positions of responsibility who are willing to stand up to opposing interests."

PEC grew out of this vision. The core of our work is empowering people to act on their love of the Piedmont. That might be through conserving their land, advocating for a new trail or river connection, planting native trees, helping restore native habitat by identifying birds, bees and butterflies at PEC's Larson Garden, volunteering at PEC's new Community Farm at Roundabout Meadows, or any number of other ways.

In 2019, Piedmont residents did all of these things and more. More than 60 Piedmont landowners permanently protected 12,475 acres with conservation easements, the



BRYAN HOFMANN OF FRIENDS OF THE RAPPAHANNOCK  
AND MARCO SÁNCHEZ OF PEC TAKE A BREAK  
FROM A STREAM-SIDE TREE PLANTING.  
*Photo by Hugh Kenny*

largest amount of land conserved in our service region in a single year since 2009. Today, nearly 20 percent of the region's private land—over 421,000 acres—is permanently protected.

But conservation is only part of PEC's effort. We continue to expand access to local, sustainable foods through an improved online *Buy Fresh Buy Local* listing of growers and markets. To ensure that more families have access to healthy food, we launched the Community Farm at Roundabout Meadows. In our first growing season, we engaged 171 volunteers to help us plant, harvest and pack more than 4,000 pounds of fruits and vegetables that were donated to food-insecure Loudoun residents.

PEC's work remains remarkably consistent with the framework set by our founders. It is a labor of love. Thank you for being part of the work and the journey!

*Sincerely,*



**Chris Miller**  
President



**Jean Perin**  
Co-Chair, Board of Directors



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

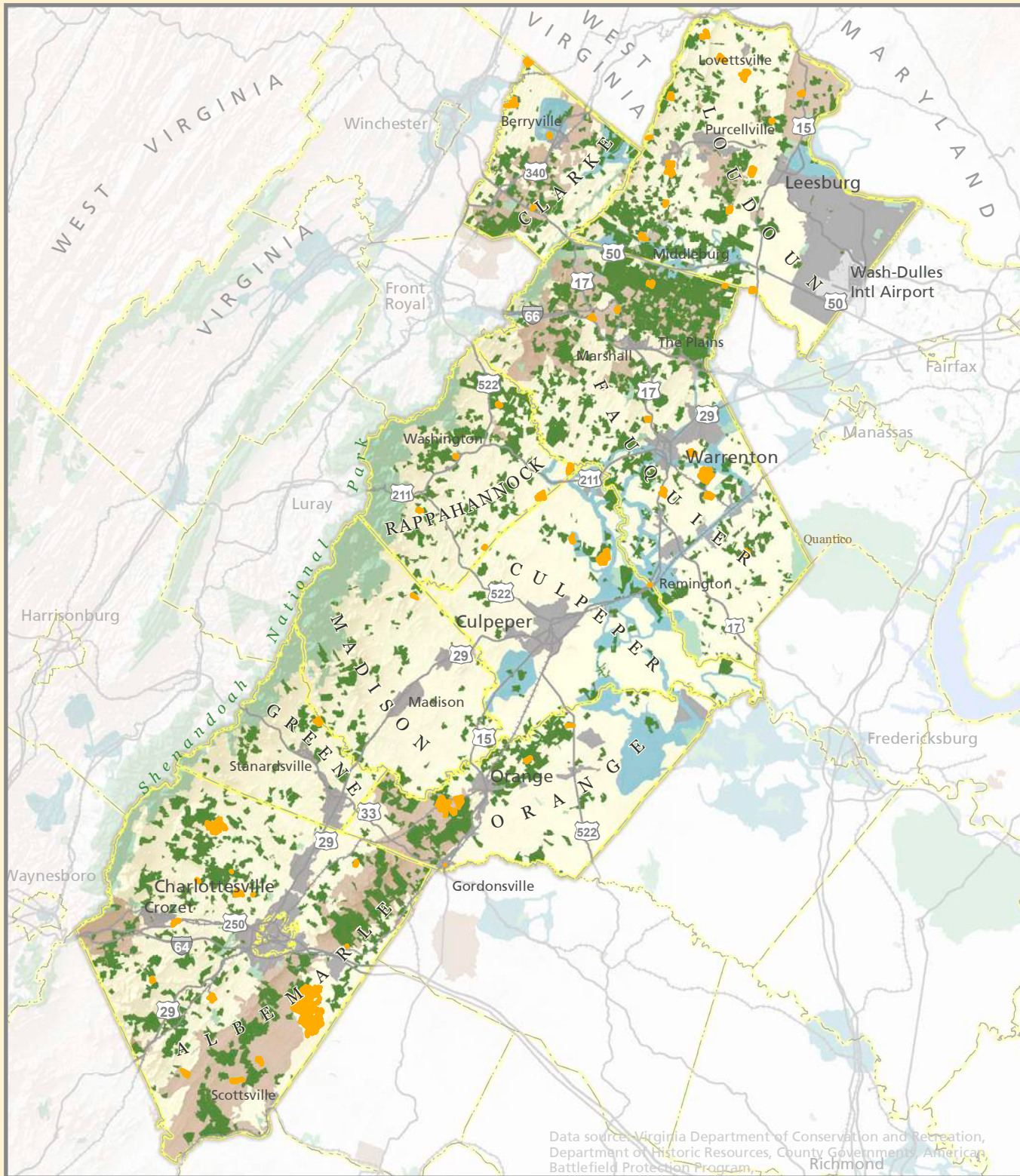


"DICKCISSEL"  
Photo by Ezra Staengl

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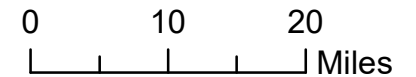
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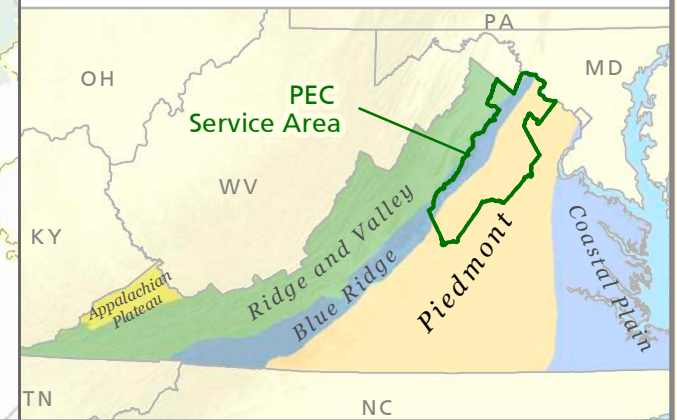
# Piedmont Region

-  Easements Recorded in 2019
-  Conservation Easements
-  Publicly Owned Lands
-  Civil War Battlefields
-  Historic Districts
-  Areas Designated for Development



PEC's nine-county service area has more than 421,000 acres of Virginia's privately conserved land, protecting natural, cultural, historic and scenic resources including 194,000 acres of prime farm soils, 160,000 acres of historic districts and battlefields, and 111,500 acres along Scenic Byways.

## Physiographic Regions of Virginia



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



# THE CUMULATIVE IMPACT OF LAND CONSERVATION

These comparisons help show how much has been protected by conservation easements in PEC's nine-county area.



421,415  
Acres of  
Land Easements



2,000  
Miles of  
Streams



10,000  
Acres of  
Wetlands



194,000  
Acres of  
Farmland



198,000  
Acres of  
Forest



160,000 Acres of  
Historic Districts  
& Battlefields



**2x**

The Area of  
Shenandoah  
National  
Park



**1x**

The Length  
of the  
Mississippi  
River



**12x**

The Area of  
Central Park  
in NYC



**5x**

The Area of  
the City of  
Richmond



**4x**

The Area of  
Acadia  
National  
Park, ME



**4x**

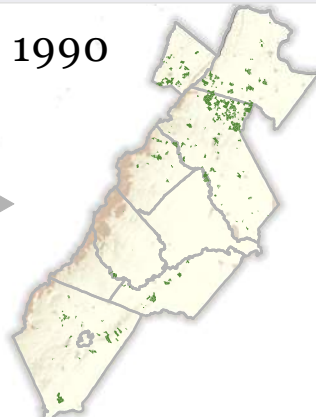
The Area of  
Washington  
DC

Conservation  
Easements in  
the Piedmont

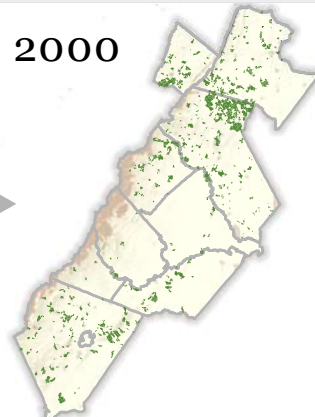
Conservation Easements  
Public Lands

0 25 50  
Miles

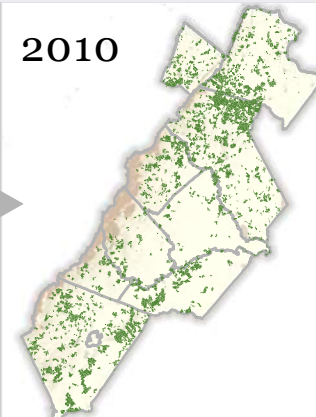
1990



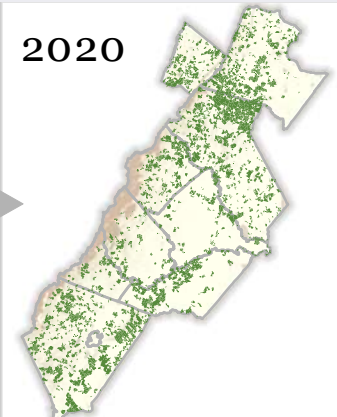
2000



2010



2020







# land conservation

.....  
VOLUNTARY ACTION • OUTSTANDING SUCCESS • SAVING PLACES PEOPLE LOVE

RAPIDAN RIVER  
Photo by Sanjay Suchak



# Accelerating conservation of the upper Rappahannock watershed

From their headwater streams along the eastern slope of the Blue Ridge Mountains, the Rappahannock and Rapidan rivers form the upper Rappahannock River watershed. This basin comprises land in Fauquier, Culpeper, Greene, Madison, Orange, and Rappahannock counties, with the confluence of the rivers in southeastern Culpeper, just upstream from the City of Fredericksburg. These rivers are a vital source of drinking water for hundreds of thousands of Virginians, and the Rappahannock is a major tributary to the Chesapeake Bay.

The watershed is also home to some of Virginia's most productive farmland, numerous historic battlefields and sites, intact forests, important wildlife habitat, and beautiful places for hiking, paddling and other forms of recreation.

We have a unique opportunity to protect these incredible resources. Increased conservation funding in the 2018 Farm Bill, when matched with state, local and private dollars, can help accelerate conservation in the upper Rappahannock watershed. In 2019, a grant from The Volgenau Foundation

allowed PEC to expand our landowner outreach and provided the private philanthropic funding necessary to secure an additional \$800,000 of federal and state funding for farmland conservation in the watershed.

PEC also organized the Rappahannock-Rapidan Conservation Partnership, comprising organizations with diverse priorities, constituencies, and resources for conserving land, improving water quality, enhancing wildlife connectivity, and promoting public access. This emerging partnership aims to establish



CONGRESSWOMAN SPANBERGER AND PEC PRESIDENT CHRIS MILLER AT VERLING PARK IN GORDONSVILLE.  
Photo by Chris Hawk

a continuous conservation reserve connecting the Blue Ridge Mountains to the Chesapeake Bay.

PEC's upper Rappahannock watershed conservation initiatives are funded by generous grants from The Volgenau Foundation, Virginia Environmental Endowment, and the Chesapeake Bay Land and Water Initiative of the Chesapeake Bay Funders Network and Land Trust Alliance.

## 2019 Highlights

- ▶ 12,475 acres of private land were permanently protected by conservation easements in 2019—the largest amount of privately conserved land in a year since 2009. **PEC's service region now has 421,415 acres of permanently protected private lands**, representing nearly 20 percent of the entire land area in the nine counties.
- ▶ PEC has taken a leadership role in organizing the **Blue Ridge Conservation Alliance**, a regional conservation partnership stretching from Front Royal to Harpers Ferry. In June, BRCA brought together more than 30 organizations at Boyce in Clarke County, to discuss opportunities to work together.
- ▶ **The Ragged Mountain Natural Area in Albemarle County now has an additional 142 acres of parkland**, thanks to PEC's leadership in connecting the City of Charlottesville with a federal grant to purchase the forested land at a bargain sale from the owner, Louisa Heyward. This not only keeps the land from being developed, but also expands public trails and access to nature near a densely-populated part of the Charlottesville region.



PEC'S MIKE KANE AT A LANDOWNER WORKSHOP IN LOUDOUN COUNTY.  
Photo by Marco Sanchez

## 12,475 Acres Protected in 2019

County	Acres protected in 2019* by Conservation Easements	Total Acres* protected by Conservation Easements
Albemarle	6,211	106,840
Clarke	424	26,504
Culpeper	693	10,406
Fauquier	1,617	108,687
Greene	124	10,572
Loudoun	1,662	60,524
Madison	61	15,975
Orange	1,173	38,554
Rappahannock	508	33,352
<b>PEC Region</b>	<b>12,475</b>	<b>421,415</b>

\* Totals do not sum due to rounding





# strong rural economies

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

SORTING VEGETABLES AT PEC'S COMMUNITY FARM.  
Photo by Marco Sánchez



## Providing fresh food and engaging volunteers at Roundabout Meadows

Nestled among the roundabouts of Routes 15 and 50 and Howsers Branch Drive in Loudoun County, lies PEC's Community Farm at Roundabout Meadows. In 2019, fulfilling a long-time vision for this property, PEC opened the gates to 171 community volunteers who donated 544 hours of time planting, growing and harvesting 4,711 pounds of produce. Through our partnership with Loudoun Hunger Relief, a local food pantry, all of the food was donated to food-insecure Loudoun residents.

"We grew a little of everything this year," says Farm Manager Dana Melby. "Tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, tomatillos were all really good. We also grew cucumbers, watermelon, cantaloupe, zucchini squash, some green beans."

The 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.

Volunteers included Brambleton Middle School, Loudoun and Frederick County high schools, Boy Scout troops, multigenerational families and individuals who are just passionate about the mission of the farm.

In 2020, PEC is expanding the farm production area to four acres, and we aim to triple food production to 15,000 pounds. In response to the COVID-19 crisis and the heightened community need for fresh food, we have accelerated production and expanded our partnership with Loudoun Hunger Relief. We have also added a greenhouse, which has allowed us to provide food to residents in need this spring and to do multiple plantings throughout the season.



VOLUNTEERS HELP WITH PLANTING FOR THE YEAR AHEAD. Photo by Hugh Kenny

"We've created a platform at the farm where volunteers can make a huge difference for their community," says President Chris Miller, "and hopefully we are inspiring a new generation of conservation stewards."

### 2019 Highlights



► PEC assessed **beef cattle supply in Virginia's northern Piedmont** for opportunities to expand the local beef industry. We are now working with 4PFoods and The Local Food Hub to encourage partnerships between Piedmont livestock producers and institutions such as hospitals and universities to sell and purchase more local beef.

COWS AT MOUNTAIN HOLLOW FARM. Photo by Hugh Kenny

► PEC published and mailed the 14th annual **Buy Fresh Buy Local** guide to more than 290,000 **Piedmont households**, connecting residents with local farms and food businesses selling locally-grown farm products.

► Through our **new revolving loan program for agricultural landowners**, PEC enabled the Elgin family to finance the installation of stream fencing and other agriculture Best Management Practices at their livestock farm in northern Fauquier County. PEC is now working with two other agricultural operations on similar revolving loan projects.





# clean water

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

THE NEW BRIDGE AT WHITEOAK CANYON.  
*Photo by Hugh Kenny*



## New bridge eases passage for fish, and people

A new 35-foot span bridge across Cedar Run offers hikers and nature-loving community members improved access to the popular Whiteoak Canyon trail-head outside of Shenandoah National Park. It also opens up three miles of stream habitat to native fish for the first time in decades. The bridge was installed through a collaborative effort of Shenandoah National Park, Trout Unlimited, PEC and the local landowners, the Graves family.

Trout Unlimited developed the design plans and coordinated construction of the bridge. PEC is facilitating negotiations between the National Park Service and the neighboring landowners to move the parking area away from Cedar Run and restore a riparian buffer,

two enhancements that will reduce erosion and allow for more visitors.

The newly installed bridge replaced an undersized concrete crossing that impeded fish movement and frequently became clogged with woody material and river cobble during high flows. As a result of two extreme rainfalls in 2018, the crossing had deteriorated to the point of being unsafe for vehicle and pedestrian traffic. Fortunately, the planning phase of this project was well underway at that point, so that the failing crossing could be replaced with a fish-friendly one in 2019.

By allowing water to flow freely beneath it, the new bridge reconnects Eastern brook trout habitat and makes the area much less vulnerable to flooding. The project was funded by



PICTURED, LEFT TO RIGHT (FRONT): CELIA VUOCOLO, CHRIS MILLER, PETER HUIK, PEC; JENNIFER FLYNN, SHENANDOAH NATIONAL PARK; JIMMY GRAVES JR. AND RACHEL GRAVES, LANDOWNERS; ALBERT SPELLS, U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE. (BACK): JIM SCHABERL, SNP; CHRIS HAWK, PEC; LISA MOSS, USFWS; JOHN ODENKIRK, VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF GAME AND INLAND FISHERIES. Photo by Karissa Epley

grants from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, Orvis, Nimick Forbesway Foundation and The Ohrstrom Foundation.

This project is part of a regional initiative led by PEC to reconnect stream habitat for brook trout and improve water quality for other at-risk

aquatic species in headwater streams of the upper Rappahannock and Rapidan Rivers. To date, PEC and partners have completed five restoration projects on private lands adjacent to Shenandoah National Park. PEC is also initiating work with the Virginia Department of Transportation to move toward more fish-friendly and flood-resilient bridge replacement standards.

### 2019 Highlights

- ▶ As a partner in the **Headwater Stream Initiative**, PEC helped plant more than 7,940 stream-side trees along 25 acres of private lands in the Rappahannock-Rapidan River Basin, along with more than 250 volunteers and fellow partners: Friends of the Rappahannock, John Marshall and Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation Districts and Virginia Department of Forestry.



PLANTING AT RADY PARK IN WARRENTON.  
Photo by Marco Sánchez

- ▶ With support from the Virginia Conservation Assistance Program and PEC, the Town of Warrenton partnered with John Marshall Soil and Water Conservation District to install its **first rain garden at Rady Park**. The native plants at the garden show off beautiful flowers for pollinators, and help improve water quality of the adjacent stream and in the Cedar Run watershed.
- ▶ PEC led a collaborative effort to **restore Eastern brook trout passage to the headwaters of Bolton Branch** in Rappahannock County. Working with three private landowners, PEC replaced a driveway culvert with an open-span bridge and restored approximately 800 linear feet of stream with a natural channel designed to improve fish habitat and water quality. Surveys of fish populations before and after construction show a 72% increase in aquatic organism counts and an increase in species diversity and fish passage.



# Protecting the Piedmont

## Striking the Right Balance on Solar Siting

Over the past few years, the declining cost of solar panels and rising demand for green energy sources have spurred interest in the development of utility-scale solar facilities throughout Virginia. The Piedmont is a prime target for utility-scale solar installations, due to its proximity to green-energy friendly businesses, such as data centers, and the abundance of open space. PEC has stepped up to help Piedmont communities craft appropriate responses that balance the need for sustainable energy with preservation of the Piedmont's natural, agricultural and historic resources.

PEC supports solar energy, especially rooftop and other distributed systems designed to meet local demand. Utility-scale solar facilities are often located in rural areas and consume numerous acres. When they are poorly planned, they negatively affect critical resources. Forests and healthy soils store vast amounts of carbon. Preserving and restoring these natural resources need to be part of the climate solution.

We have helped local governments in the Piedmont develop stronger ordinances and policies on utility-scale solar siting. PEC has published a policy

document on utility-scale solar, using it to educate public officials, community groups and citizens about best practices and policies.

We bolstered Culpeper community groups' opposition to a poorly sited application by Cricket Solar, LLC, for an approximately 80-megawatt/1,500-acre facility on agricultural, forested and historic lands. Cricket Solar withdrew its application in August, after sustained opposition. In October, Culpeper updated its utility-scale solar policy, sharing many of the same views articulated by PEC, including limits to project size and mass grading.

PEC also advocated for responsible utility-scale solar land use decisions in Madison County. We agreed with the county's decision to base the total allowable utility-scale solar production on county energy use. Unfortunately, Madison County elected to limit these

facilities to industrially-zoned land, instead of placing a per-project maximum acreage for energy production.

We are also collaborating with environmental partners and solar developers to develop a common approach for expanding solar generation. This includes prioritizing utility-scale solar siting on already developed areas, such as parking lots and commercial buildings.



UTILITY-SCALE SOLAR. Photo by Will Parson, Chesapeake Bay Program



## Exposing a dirty secret, and developing solutions

PEC took the lead in exposing the problem of construction fill dirt being irresponsibly dumped in rural Piedmont communities, and we engaged local and state officials to develop solutions.

As road projects and development have picked up in the state, the need for places to dispose of dirt has also increased. Some rural landowners have found that they can make significant money by accepting large quantities of dirt and rubble on their land. The impact has been severe. Neighbors are now dealing with increased traffic and truck noise, road damage from overweight vehicles, property damage by mud runoff, health hazards of airborne dust and the lingering fear of groundwater contamination. Some neighboring property owners have seen their property values plummet.

PEC has responded by magnifying the issue for the public and policymakers. We reached out to civic groups and landowners to gather more information

on the nature and extent of the problem, and initiated discussions with officials from the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality and local officials and elected leaders. We are advocating for strong zoning ordinances and enforcement.

In May, PEC collaborated with the Northern Virginia Regional Commission and Rappahannock Rapidan Regional Commission to organize a workshop on construction dirt disposal issues. More than 60 local and state officials and private industry representatives attended. Later in the year, we worked with Delegates Elizabeth Guzman (D-Prince William and Fauquier) and Michael Weibert (R-Fauquier) on two related bills that passed the General Assembly in 2020. The first bill requires notice to be sent to localities so that they can enforce their local zoning provisions. The second forms a working group to recommend changes to regulations and guidance.

DUMP TRUCKS UNLOADING FILL DIRT.  
Photo by Henry Harris







# better communities

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

PEC'S LOUDOUN COMPREHENSIVE PLAN  
COMMUNITY MEETING IN WATERFORD.  
*Photo by Marco Sánchez*



# A better future for Loudoun

In June, Loudoun County adopted new land use plans that strengthened rural protections of the county's central Transition Policy Area. The Board of Supervisors' action signaled a more vigorous approach to managing growth. It happened because PEC collaborated with other local groups to mobilize thousands of Loudoun residents to stand up and make their voices heard.

As soon as Loudoun began the process of updating its Comprehensive Plan, PEC hit the streets to talk to residents and groups about how it mattered to their daily lives. We made dozens of presentations to community groups all over the county.

"I thought it was phenomenal—it was the essence of what participatory and representative government is all about. I mean, who would've thought you would've had hundreds of citizens to come and talk about land use?"

— Middleburg Mayor Bridge Littleton, as quoted in the *Loudoun Times-Mirror*, Aug. 8, 2019

We talked one-on-one to thousands of Loudoun residents. We heard how poorly-planned growth affects school redistricting, traffic, access to parks, tax rates, clean drinking water and other concerns close to their hearts. We motivated them to act on their concerns by writing to their Supervisors and Planning Commissioners, voicing their concerns at meetings and speaking at public hearings.

Loudoun's leaders heard loud and clear the need for more focused growth. They acted to limit development in Loudoun's central Transition Policy Area through 2040 to 2,100 residential units, compared to the 19,000 units originally recommended. Additionally, the plan incorporates key priorities for conservation and connectivity of trails and public access.



PEC'S GEM BINGOL AND EVAN MCCARTHY WERE RECOGNIZED FOR THEIR EFFORTS AS PART OF THE LOUDOUN "SWAT TEAM" LEADING THE CIVIC EDUCATION EFFORT IN LOUDOUN BY THE FRIENDS OF THE BLUE RIDGE. Photo by Julie Bolthouse

PEC remains engaged in the next phase, the update of the county's zoning ordinance, and is organizing local groups to be involved in ensuring that the ordinance accomplishes the goals of the plan.

## 2019 Highlights

- ▶ **The Coalition for Smarter Growth**, a division of PEC founded by PEC and partners, is credited with the 2019 agreement by DC area jurisdictions to locate 75% of future growth in transit-oriented activity centers. Its field staff in Northern Virginia, Washington DC and Maryland won transit-oriented development, led a better buses campaign, and increased adoption of accessory dwelling units to expand housing options.



- ▶ PEC's **campaign for a network of greenway trails connecting the Charlottesville-Albemarle urban area** reached a milestone this year with the adoption of the Jefferson Area Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan. The plan maps a comprehensive network of bike lanes, sidewalks, and shared use paths that connect Charlottesville and Albemarle neighborhoods to schools, shopping, downtown and natural areas, while also identifying bicycle connections to and among adjoining counties. Now PEC is working with groups around the region to advocate for implementing the plan and realizing its vision of a world-class greenway trail network.

PEC-LED BIKE RIDE IN CHARLOTTESVILLE. Photo by Peter Krebs

- ▶ PEC helped Loudoun County groups develop and advance a vision of **"Emerald Ribbons," a county-wide network of multi-use trails and green spaces**. The Emerald Ribbons plans got a major boost with the County's recent approval of funding for a detailed study of a linear parks and trails system.
- ▶ PEC is working with residents and businesses to **expand and refurbish Verling Park in downtown Gordonsville and to create a network of trails** connecting Gordonsville to other parts of the Madison-Barbour Rural Historic District, including James Madison's Montpelier and Grelen Nursery. We reached a milestone in 2019 with the purchase of a neighboring property that will allow for the park's expansion. The PEC acquisition complements the recent purchase of two additional parcels made by the Town of Gordonsville over the past 18 months.





# history and beauty

.....  
SENSE OF PLACE • SCENIC VIEWS • BATTLEFIELDS • HISTORIC DISTRICTS

MONTPELIER AERIAL VIEW.

*Photo by Aaron Watson, courtesy of The Montpelier Foundation*



## A view for the ages

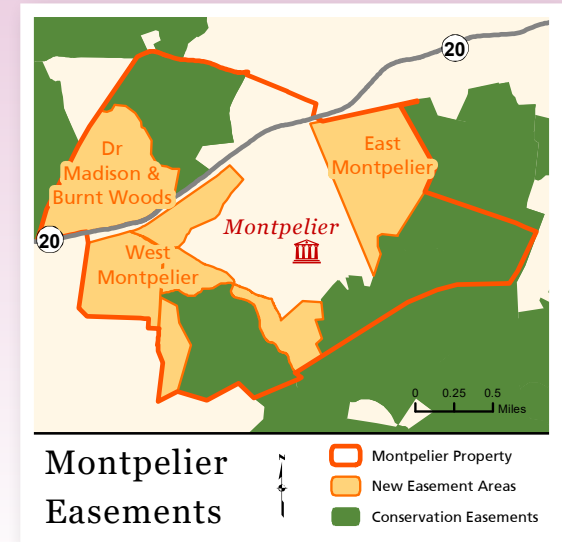
In June 2019, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, working with The Montpelier Foundation, donated conservation easements to PEC that permanently protect 1,024 acres at James Madison's Montpelier in Orange County. Made possible by a generous gift from the Mars family, the easements will ensure the protection of agricultural resources, forest resources, scenic open space, historic landscapes and views, and wildlife habitat on the property.

More than two-thirds of Montpelier, or 1,941 acres, are now protected with conservation easements. Ten years ago, PEC

collaborated with The Montpelier Foundation and National Trust to conserve more than 700 acres at Montpelier. Through the leadership of PEC board member Jack Snyder and former staff member John "Jeep" Moore, we raised \$2 million to purchase the easement. This initial effort resulted in the conservation of frequently visited areas of Montpelier, including Gilmore Farm, the Civil War encampment, and Chicken Mountain.

The easements build on PEC's work with community partners to preserve the unique landscapes and historic communities of the

Madison-Barbour Rural Historic District. Today, the views of the rolling, semi-mountainous terrain along the Route 20 Scenic Byway, the Blue Ridge Turnpike, and other historic roads are little changed from those of Madison's time. The iconic views we enjoy today of the Blue Ridge Mountains from Montpelier are the same views Madison enjoyed. That is largely the result of 25+ years of successful initiatives led by PEC, including the designation of the Madison-Barbour Rural Historic District and the permanent protection of more than 15,900 acres of private lands with conservation easements.



MORE THAN 1,900 ACRES AT MONTEPIER ARE NOW PERMANENTLY PROTECTED.

## 2019 Highlights

- ▶ PEC, NOVA Parks and the Mount Zion Cemetery Association collaborated to open a **walking trail along the historic Old Carolina roadbed that lies between Mt. Zion Historic Church and our Roundabout Meadows property**. The public trail was made possible with support of the Fauquier/Loudoun Garden Club and the Oak Spring Foundation, both of which brought their energy and expertise to design a trail that respects the roadbed's unique history and is in harmony with the natural environment.



VIEW FROM THE PIEDMONT MEMORIAL OVERLOOK.  
Photo by Paula Combs

- ▶ PEC is partnering with Rappahannock County Courthouse and James Madison University (JMU) to **digitize thousands of documents pertaining to the acquisition of properties in Rappahannock County** in 1928 for the creation of Shenandoah National Park. Once the project is complete, the record will be publicly available on JMU's website.
- ▶ PEC is exploring ways to **honor the history of our Piedmont Memorial Overlook property** on Ovoka Mountain straddling Fauquier and Clarke counties. We are working with the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club to provide interpretation and visitor engagement in the area where the Ashby Gap trail shelter once stood. We are also working to interpret the home site of the Marshall family, which once owned over 250 acres on Ovoka Mountain, including the 50-acre overlook.



A woman with long brown hair, wearing a white baseball cap and tan waders over a blue and black long-sleeved shirt, is crouched in a shallow, rocky stream. She is holding a large, silver-framed net with a yellow handle, and water is splashing as she lifts it. In the background, another person in a blue shirt and tan waders is also working in the stream. The stream bed is covered with rocks and fallen leaves, and the water is clear and flowing.

# habitat restoration

WILDLIFE CORRIDORS • BIODIVERSITY • POLLINATORS • NATIVE PLANTS

SAMPLING WATER QUALITY AT A PIEDMONT HEADWATER STREAM.  
*Photo by Hugh Kenny*



## Restoring the Thumb Run watershed

Private landowners hold the key to restoring lands for wildlife and pollinators and for the health of the Piedmont's streams and rivers. The Thumb Run watershed, extending along Route 688 in western Fauquier county from the village of Hume to Orlean, is a case in point. The state has designated Thumb Run as an impaired water body due to *E.coli* bacteria contamination from farm animals, wildlife, pets, and malfunctioning septic systems.

In 2013, The Volgenau Foundation awarded PEC a multi-year grant to work with landowners to restore wildlife habitat and improve water quality in Thumb Run. At around the same time, increased state funds for landowner and homeowner practices

that help improve water quality were made available through the John Marshall Soil and Water Conservation District (JMSWCD).

PEC collaborated with JMSWCD and other partners to encourage and help Thumb Run landowners restore native habitat and implement agricultural management practices, such as fencing cattle out of streams and planting buffers along the stream banks. PEC launched a backyard habitat program that helped fund native plant gardens and small habitat projects for small-acreage landowners. We provided garden designs and made recommendations for maintaining these areas, while landowners provided "sweat equity" and paid a

subsidized cost for plant materials. Property owners completed 15 native habitat restoration projects on their lands, including flowering buffers along stream banks, shade gardens and pollinator habitat.

Thumb Run landowners have also accelerated their implementation of agricultural management practices, such as stream fencing, thanks to PEC and JMSWCD's expanded promotion of available cost-share programs.

Based on water quality monitoring data taken continuously over the past

15 years, we are starting to see an improvement where these collective restoration activities have taken place. During this time, *E.coli* bacteria exceedance rates have dropped by 19.1% on the main stem, 25.3% on the West Branch, and 15.6% on the East Branch of Thumb Run.



STREAM MONITORING AT THUMB RUN LED BY JOHN MARSHALL SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT. Photo by Claire Catlett

### 2019 Highlights



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

► PEC held our **7th Annual Sustainable Landscaping Workshop** in Fauquier on September 29. It featured presentations from local experts from Virginia Cooperative Extension, Virginia Department of Forestry and Hill House Nursery.

CELIA VUOCOLO LEADS A NATIVE PLANT TOUR AT PEC'S WARRENTON OFFICE DURING HISTORIC GARDEN WEEK IN VIRGINIA.  
Photo by Marco Sánchez

► PEC supported **new environmental stewardship events at the Rappahannock County Park**, organized by the County Recreational Facilities Authority (RCRFA). These included Rush River Family Fishing Day in June and Rappahannock Conservation Day in October. PEC's Krebser Fund is now supporting RCRFA's completion of a Master Plan that will remove invasive species and bring to the park more native plants and trees as well as new and improved trails.



# The Piedmont Foundation

Photo by Hugh Kenny

**E**stablished 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 eight-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:

- ▶ **Conservation Stewardship Fund**
- ▶ **Easement Defense Fund**
- ▶ **Ever Green Fund**
- ▶ **General Endowment Fund**
- ▶ **Ovoka Memorial Fund**
- ▶ **Land Conservation Fund**

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

<i>Albemarle County Land Conservation Fund</i>	<i>Krebsner Fund for Rappahannock County Conservation</i>
<i>Bull Run Mountains Conservation Fund</i>	<i>Madison County Land Conservation Fund</i>
<i>Clarke County Land Conservation Fund</i>	<i>Orange County Conservation Fund</i>
<i>Culpeper County Land Conservation Fund</i>	<i>James M. Rowley Goose Creek Conservation Fund</i>
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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 2019. 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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RELEASING A BARRED OWL AT THE PIEDMONT MEMORIAL OVERLOOK. Photo by Sharon Fisher





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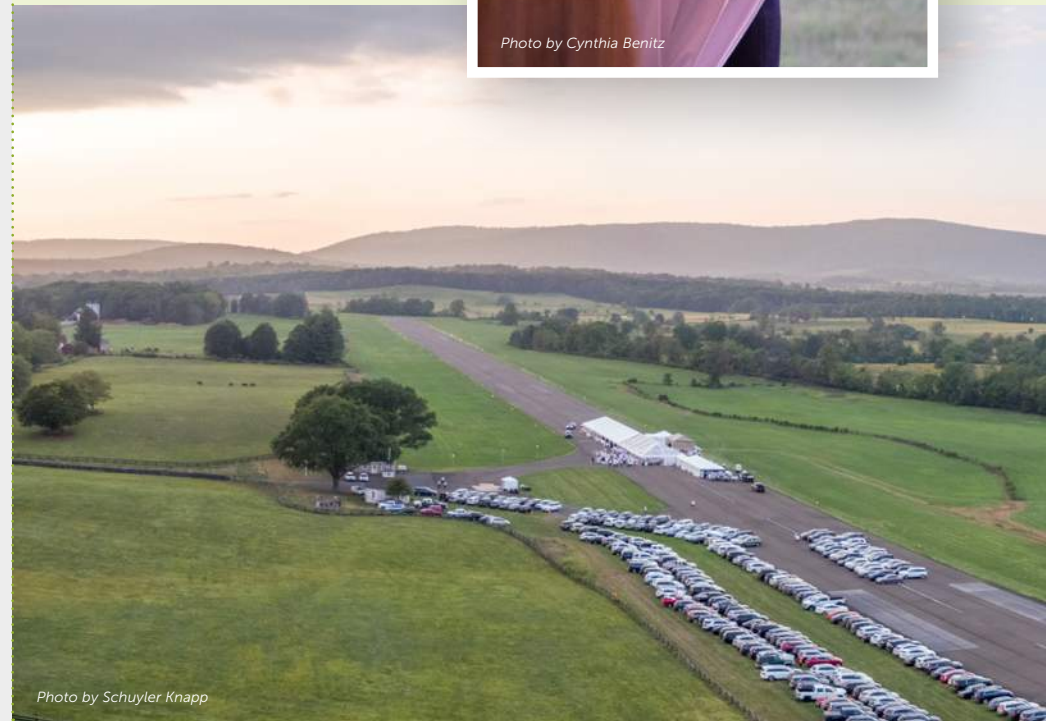
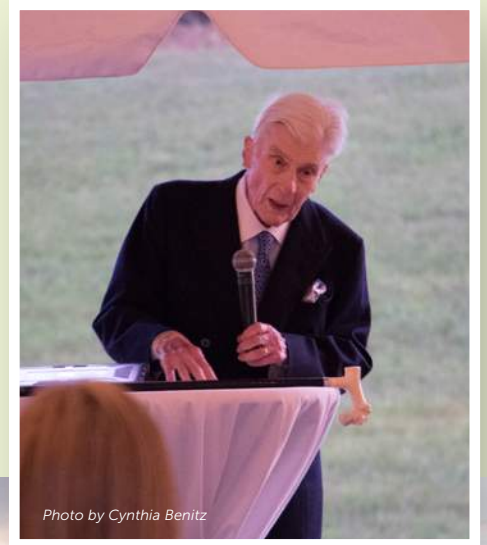
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# Dinner on the Runway

Oak Spring Garden Foundation hosted PEC's 2019 farm-to-table "Dinner on the Runway" fundraiser on September 14. Senator John Warner was honored for his leadership in conserving the Piedmont and Virginia with a standing ovation from all 540 guests.







PEC STAFF VISIT DELEGATE MICHAEL WEBERT DURING CONSERVATION LOBBY DAY. Photo by Paula Combs

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# The Bill Backer Legacy Society

**N**amed 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.

If we want strong, resilient communities for generations to come—then it's essential and urgent for us to

invest in conservation. We invite you to make a commitment to preserve the Piedmont by leaving a gift in your will and becoming a member of the Bill Backer Legacy Society. Help ensure the Piedmont



remains a beautiful and productive place to live, work and visit for generations to come.

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: Doug Larson, at (540) 347-2334 or [dlarson@pecva.org](mailto:dlarson@pecva.org).

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PARTICIPANTS IN PEC'S 2019 SUMMER FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM CELEBRATE AFTER THEIR FINAL PRACTICUM PRESENTATIONS.  
Photo by Bri West





VOLUNTEERS XAVIERA HESSIFER, HER DAUGHTER CHLOE AND HER SISTER CAROLINA HERRERA HELP OUT AT PEC'S COMMUNITY FARM. *Photo by Marco Sánchez*

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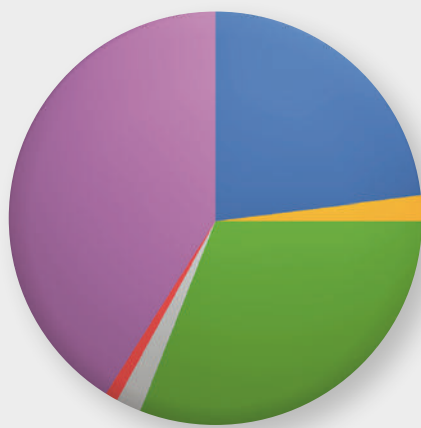
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NOT PICTURED: Peter Hujik, Kristie Kendall, Hugh Kenny, Peter Krebs, Rex Linville, Diana Norris, Leigh Ross, Celia Vuocolo.



# 2019 Financial Report

## Sources of Organizational Support

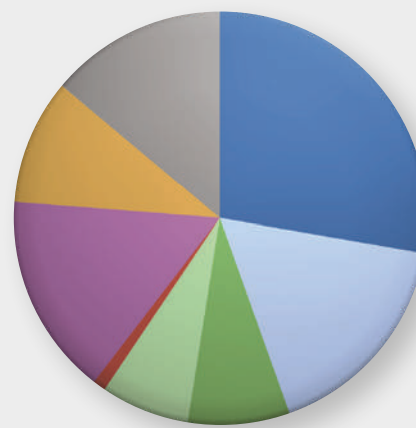


● Individuals	\$ 1,829,354	22.7%
● Government	183,475	2.3%
● Foundations	2,509,165	31.2%
● Special Events, Net	139,898	1.7%
● Investments, Other	58,947	0.7%
● Real Estate Transactions	3,328,051	41.4%
Total	\$ 8,048,890	100%

The above figures do not include the activities of the Coalition for Smarter Growth, a division of PEC. Copies of PEC's audited financial statements and IRS forms 990 are available upon request. Copies of our most recent statements may also be found at PEC's website at [www.pecva.org/donate](http://www.pecva.org/donate). For more information, please contact PEC's accounting office at (540) 347-2334.

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

## Program and Operating Expenditures

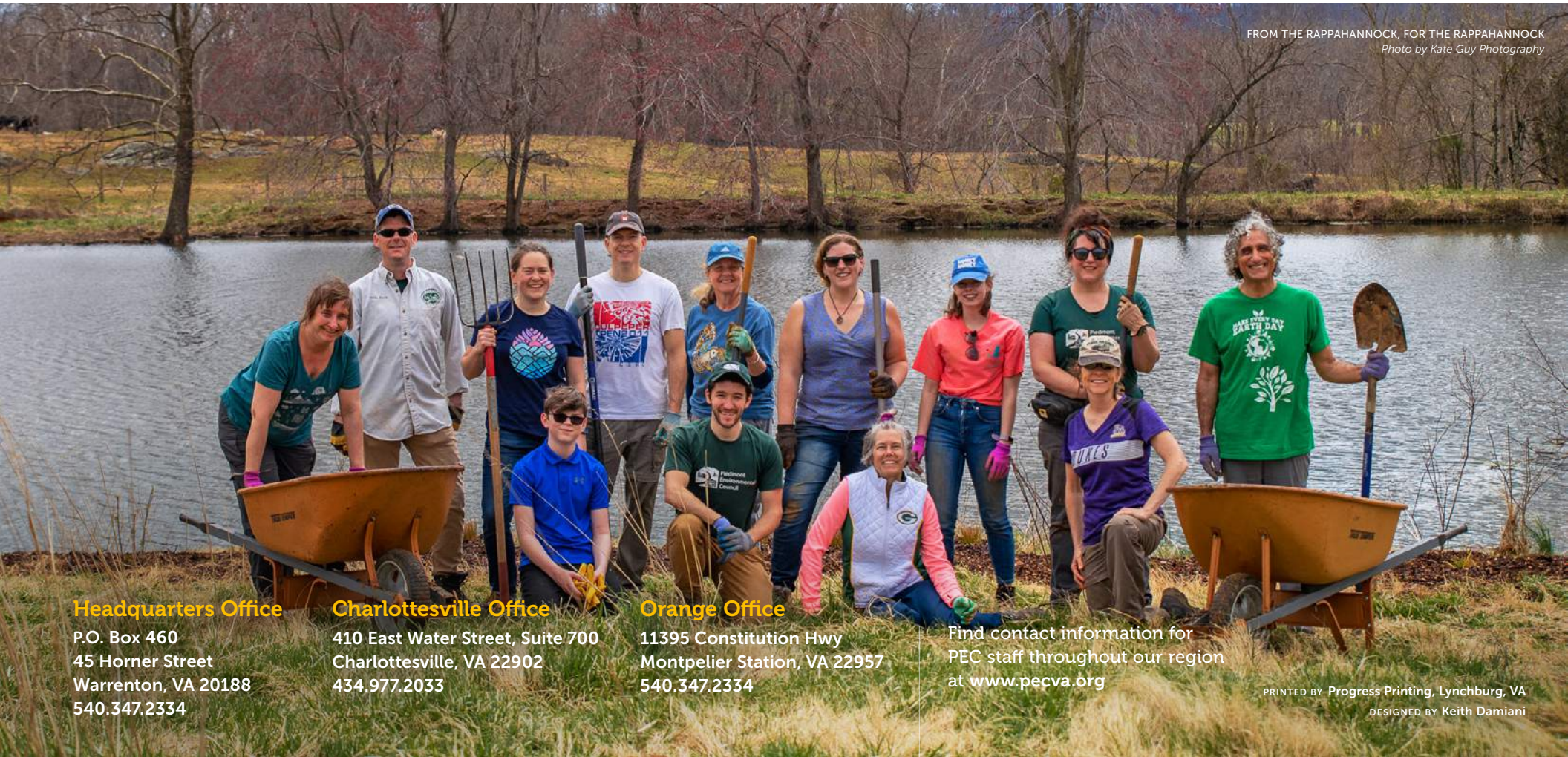


● Conservation, Stewardship and Habitat	\$ 1,311,852	28.3%
● County Issues and Planning	767,965	16.6%
● Policy*	354,812	7.7%
● Farms and Food	316,277	6.8%
● Transportation and Growth Management	13,481	0.3%
● Outreach and Education	749,568	16.2%
● Development	454,670	9.8%
● Administration	661,505	14.3%
Total	\$ 4,630,130	100%



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FROM THE RAPPAHANNOCK, FOR THE RAPPAHANNOCK  
*Photo by Kate Guy Photography*

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