

# For the Love of the Land

100 Conservation Stories from Across Virginia



Piedmont Environmental Council





This book features 100 conservation stories from across Virginia, one from every legislative district. From a 29-mile cave to a beachfront park, from the headquarters of the great chief Powhatan to Virginia's oldest plantation, from a working dairy farm to an urban bike trail, all of these lands offer significant benefits for Virginians.



Fire pink blooming at Gravelly Nature Preserve. [See p. 82.](#)  
PHOTO BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

Land conservation protects the essential resources we need for life—farmland to grow food, and forests and wetlands to provide clean water. It keeps alive the rich sense of history that sets Virginia apart from any other place. It supports Virginia's three largest industries—agriculture, forestry, and tourism. It maintains wetlands that can absorb the impacts of floods and storm surges. It preserves vast wilderness areas and brings vital corridors of nature into our cities and suburbs. It sustains the views that fill our lives with beauty.

Many of the protected lands featured in this book are accessible to the public for recreation, hunting, fishing, wildlife-watching, outdoor education, or heritage tourism. Many others enhance people's experience when they visit public lands. Working farms and forests provide buffers for publicly accessible parks, preserves, and historic sites. They also make up the breathtaking views we enjoy from mountain overlooks and the lush scenery we take in along winding rivers.

**At a time when many of the special places in Virginia could easily be lost, these stories remind us why land conservation is so important.**

Jean Perin  
CO-CHAIR, PIEDMONT ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL

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# Land Conservation the Virginia Way

Land conservation is a Virginia tradition that goes back to the earliest days of the Commonwealth. After Thomas Jefferson encountered Natural Bridge, which he saw as “the most Sublime of nature’s works,” he took upon himself the stewardship of this amazing site, purchasing 157 acres in 1757. When James Madison noted with dismay the rampant cutting of Virginia’s native forests, he set aside a wood lot on his own estate, which still stands today as a rare example of old growth forest in the East. Across the Commonwealth, from the coast to the mountains, many families have been tending their land for generation after generation, carefully sustaining its resources and passing them on.

The modern conservation movement in Virginia began in 1966, when the Virginia Open Space Land Act created a way for landowners to permanently protect the places they care about, by granting conservation easements that run with the land. Public investments in parks, forests, preserves, wildlife management

areas, and other public lands work together with private conservation easements to preserve the landscapes that make Virginia great. Today, Virginians have protected over 1 million acres of private land and 3.5 million acres of public land.

That protected land is important to all aspects of life in Virginia. Protected forestland forms the headwaters for rivers that provide most Virginians with their drinking water. Protected farming soils provide not just food but vital jobs for a huge number of people throughout Virginia and beyond. And public recreation lands, historic sites, and cultural resources provide opportunities for Virginians to connect with their surroundings and heritage, while supporting a significant tourism industry throughout the Commonwealth.

We can be proud of these successes. But the work of conservation is far from done. All of us know places in Virginia where fertile farmland is being lost to development, where beautiful scenery is being replaced by uncontrolled growth, where historic character is eroding fast. We know places where children grow



Susan Bailey loved her trees more than a million dollars. [See p. 16.](#) PHOTO BY ROSE JENKINS

up without access to nature near their homes, or where native species like bobwhite quail or brook trout are in decline. The Virginia tradition of land conservation makes it possible for us to rise to these challenges—and pass on the land that we have known and loved for generations to come.

Land conservation is an issue that brings Virginians together, from all political perspectives and all walks of life. Champions of land conservation have included Governors Baliles, Holton, Warner, Kaine, and McDonnell, as well as diverse members of the General Assembly from both sides of the aisle. Clearly, protecting the places that make Virginia great is a cause that Virginians can agree on.

This book features 100 amazing places in Virginia, which were protected using a wide variety of tools. These include



Nathan Burrell manages 650 acres of wild parkland in the City of Richmond. [See p. 14.](#)  
PHOTO BY MARK GORMUS, RICHMOND TIMES DISPATCH



donated easements, purchased easements, public acquisition of land, and gifts of land to the public. These projects were supported by a wide variety of federal, state, local, and private funding sources, often in combination.

At the state level, there are four core programs that keep conservation strong: the Virginia Land Preservation Tax Credit, the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation, the Civil War Sites Preservation Fund, and state support for local Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) programs.

The **Virginia Land Preservation Tax Credit** is the single biggest factor in Virginia's conservation success. This incentive has dramatically increased the pace

of conservation in Virginia, resulting in a 450% increase in total acreage protected by easements, aiding in the protection of more than 560,000 acres since it was established in 1999. It is especially effective because it's transferable; easement donors can sell their excess credits for cash, making the incentive meaningful to landowners across the economic spectrum. The Virginia tax credit plays a significant role in many landowners' decisions to donate easements—with the result that, every year, tens of thousands of acres in Virginia are protected at a fraction of the cost it would take for the Commonwealth to purchase easements or acquire the land.

The **Virginia Land Conservation**

**Foundation** (VLCF) provides funding for high-priority conservation lands, including new public parks, pristine natural areas, important historic sites, and working family farms. The state's investments are matched with other funding sources to protect these resources so they continue to offer outstanding public benefits over the long term. As of September 2013, more than 122,000 acres have been protected with funds from VLCF.

The **Civil War Sites Preservation Fund** specifically purchases land and easements on core land within Virginia's Civil War battlefields. The funds are typically coupled with federal money as well as private dollars to protect the hallowed ground within the Commonwealth.

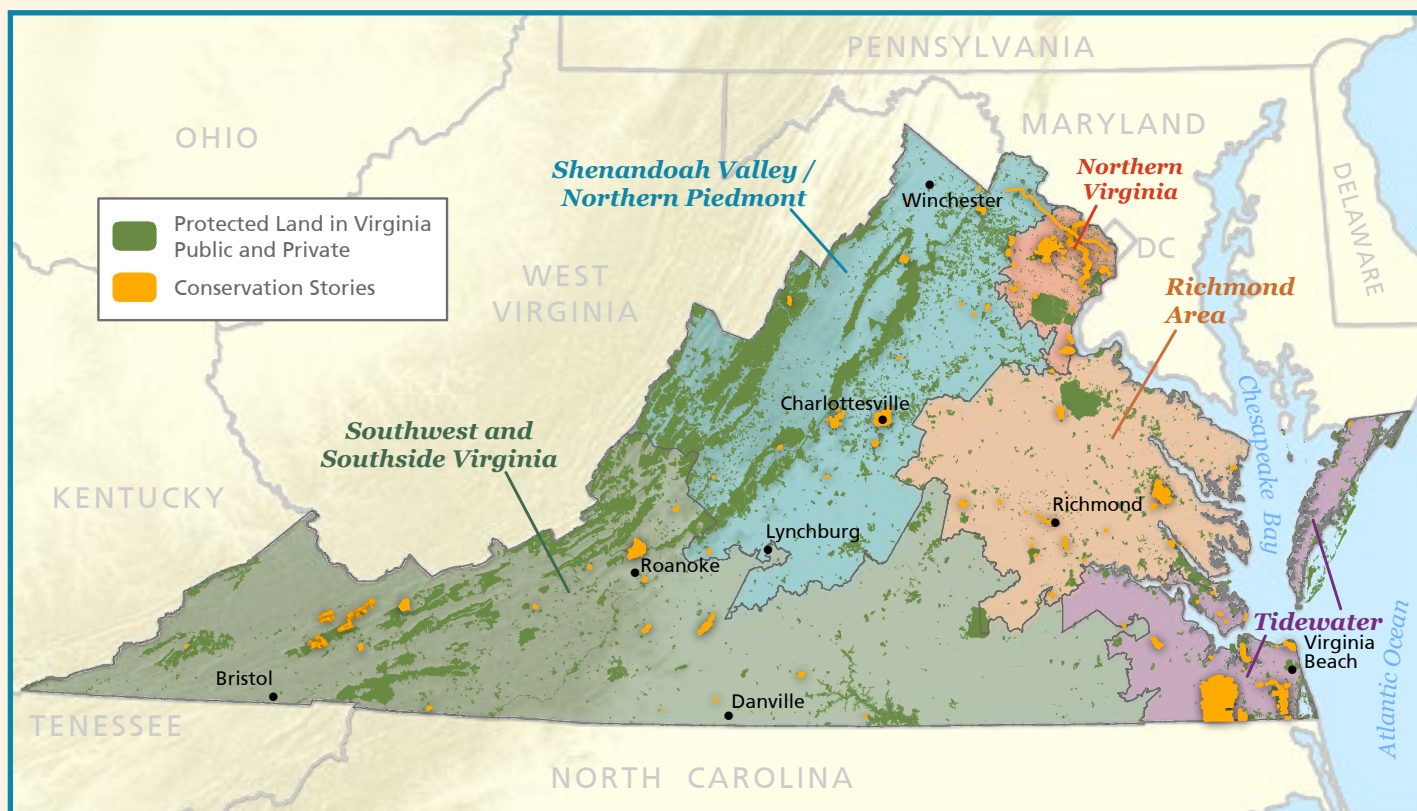
Local **Purchase of Development Rights** programs provide funding for landowners, often working farmers, who choose to sell their development rights. State support leverages local investment in these programs, which support goals such as farmland preservation, watershed protection, and planned growth. Often, local PDR programs provide a conservation option for landowners who do not feel that they can afford to donate an easement.

These programs are the tools we use to keep the Virginia tradition of land conservation going strong. In combination with citizens' desire to protect places that they love, they are powerful. These programs allow us to protect the land that we need to provide good food and clean water, the land that keeps our economy strong, the land where we go to play and explore, and the land that renews us with its beauty—amazing Virginia.



The Leech family are protecting their farm in order to pass on a productive business to the next generation. [See p. 61.](#)

PHOTO BY JASON MCGARVEY



**PLEASE NOTE:** The stories in this book feature both public lands and private property. Private land under conservation easement is not accessible to the public unless the landowners specifically grant public access.

An online version of this book can be found at [pecva.org/loveoftheland](http://pecva.org/loveoftheland)

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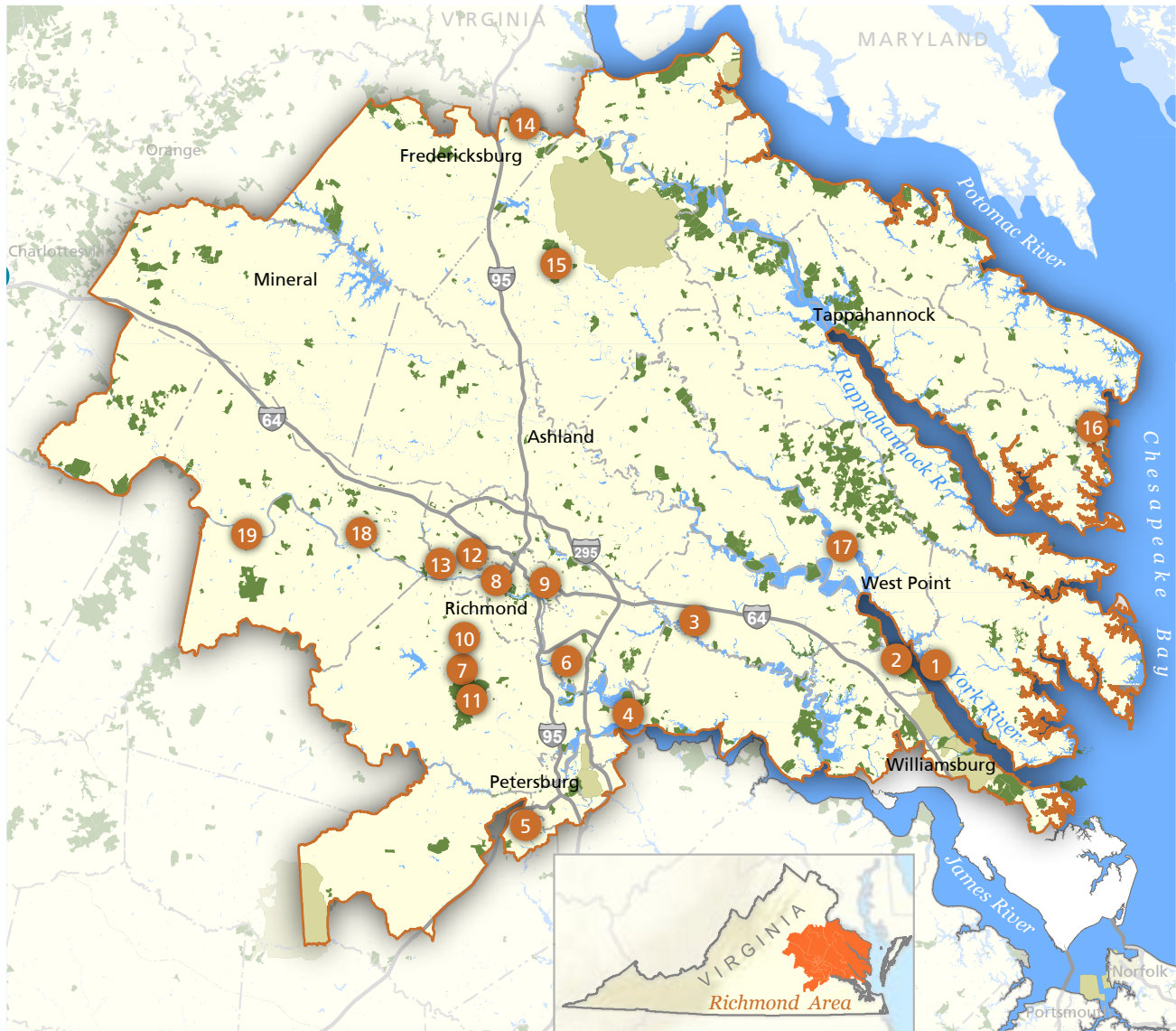
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# Richmond Area



1 Werowocomoco .....	PAGE 6	10 Gregory's Pond .....	PAGE 16
2 Taskinas Creek Reserve .....	8	11 Forest at Woodland Pond .....	17
3 Poplar Springs Farm .....	9	12 Fairfield .....	18
4 Shirley Plantation .....	10	13 Woodside .....	19
5 Breakthrough Battlefield at Petersburg .....	11	14 Slaughter Pen Farm .....	20
6 Fort Harrison and Fort Gregg .....	12	15 Mattaponi Wildlife Management Area .....	21
7 Atkins Acres Community Park .....	13	16 Gascony Farm .....	22
8 James River Park System .....	14	17 Chelsea Plantation .....	23
9 Tobacco Row .....	15	18 Brookview Farm .....	24
		19 Belmead .....	26

# The Place That Made Powhatan Powerful



**E**ight hundred years ago, a town stood on a peninsula extending into the York River that would eventually become the headquarters of an influential Indian leader, to whom many Virginia tribes paid tribute. Werowocomoco was already about four hundred years old when the political and spiritual leader Powhatan made it his headquarters.

Captain John Smith, leader of the Jamestown Colony, first saw Werowocomoco when he was brought there after being captured by Powhatan's military leader Opechancanough. It was there Smith met Powhatan and his daughter Pocahontas, who would later help establish Jamestown by her marriage to an Englishman. Archaeologists have uncovered the foundations of a building that may have been Powhatan's house, where the meetings between the two leaders took place.

Since 2003, archaeologists have been studying a property on the York River that was identified as a possible site of Powhatan's residence. After ten years of excavation, Dr. Martin Gallivan, a professor at The College of William and Mary and director of the archaeological team, reports that they can now say with certainty that this is the site of Werowocomoco.

Following this research, the current owners of the property, Lynn and Bob Ripley, placed a conservation easement

## Werowocomoco

Owned by Lynn and Bill Ripley  
58 protected acres  
Gloucester County  
House District 98  
Senate District 3

MAJOR PUBLIC BENEFITS: Historic Preservation, Water Quality, Scenic Views





on 58 acres at the site, protecting it from development or disturbance. The **Virginia Department of Historic Resources** holds the easement, which it purchased using funds from a special bequest. On the day of the summer solstice in 2013, a public ceremony was held to dedicate the easement, with Gov. McDonnell and representatives of seven Virginia tribes in attendance.

At the ceremony, Stephen Adkins, chief of the Chickahominy Tribe, said, "Today we honor the polity, social order, economic enterprise, religious customs, agricultural prowess, engineering feats, and craftsmanship of our ancestors who thrived in this area thousands of years before the settlers landed in 1607."

Dr. Gallivan likens Werowocomoco to the Vatican, Washington D.C., and New York City, all in one. In a video about the site he says, "The archaeology demonstrates that there were a series of ceremonial spaces... created at Werowocomoco well before Powhatan arrived at this place. So we believe Powhatan, who was born on the James River and moved to

Werowocomoco as he expanded his polity of tributaries, moved to Werowocomoco because of the power of that place. In fact, we've argued that it wasn't Powhatan who made Werowocomoco powerful; it was Werowocomoco that made Powhatan powerful." Virginia Indians, who first suggested this idea, would agree.



ALL PHOTOS COURTESY VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HISTORIC RESOURCES

## THE BIG PICTURE

Virginia was settled by established civilizations for thousands of years before the first European contact, with an **estimated pre-colonial population of 50,000 people living within the boundaries of the current Commonwealth of Virginia.** Virginia Indian communities practiced land management, ecological balance, and a sustainable lifestyle guided by values that are shared by conservationists today.



# Recreation and Research Near the Mouth of the Bay



VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND RECREATION

In 2002, **The Trust for Public Land** purchased 45 acres along Taskinas Creek, for an addition to the York River State Park. This land not only expands recreational opportunities and wildlife habitat within the 2,500 acre park, it supports scientific research at the 4,400 acre Chesapeake Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, which overlaps the park.

Located between Richmond and Virginia Beach, the Taskinas Creek watershed drains into the York River, a tributary of the Chesapeake Bay. The new 45 acre reserve along the creek supports outstanding natural forest communities, including a healthy population of the rare mountain camellia and high quality bald eagle habitat.

If conservationists had not taken action to protect this natural area, which was already approved for development, it would almost certainly have been lost forever. Instead, The Trust for Public Land was able to purchase it from landowner Virginia Gateway Harrison using federal funds through NOAA's Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program.

## Taskinas Creek Reserve

Public land - state  
45 protected acres  
James City County  
House District 96  
Senate District 3

**PUBLIC BENEFITS:** Tourism and Recreation,  
Scientific Research, Water Quality,  
Plant and Wildlife Habitat

Virginia said, "This is land that my father, Dr. William Lawrence Gatewood, purchased nearly 100 years ago. He always loved the land and I just wanted to make it available for other people to enjoy."

### THE BIG PICTURE

We might take natural systems for granted, but we could never afford to replace the services that they provide—from filtering our water to growing our food, from capturing carbon to providing amazing places for recreation. For example, **natural systems in Virginia provide about \$5.2 billion worth of water quality benefits every year**, including about \$810 million of benefits from public lands and \$140 million of benefits from land under conservation easement.

SOURCE: Piedmont Environmental Council





# Six Generations Farming the Same Soil

PHOTO BY CAREN SCHUMACHER



## Poplar Springs Farm

Owned by Jim and Regina Talley  
103 protected acres  
New Kent County  
House District 97  
Senate District 3

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Productive Farmland,  
Historic Preservation, Scenic Views,  
Water Quality

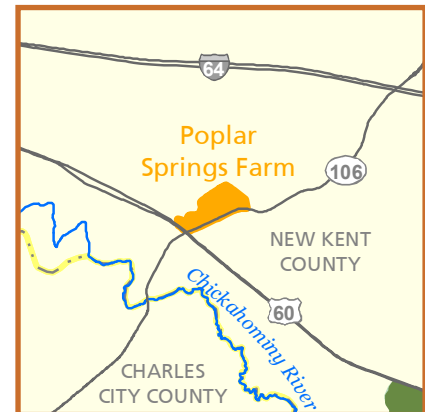
“I’d give somebody the house, but I’d want the dirt underneath of it,” Jim Talley said. On a visit to Poplar Springs Farm it’s easy to see why he feels that way. The beautiful 103-acre farm sits on Emmaus Church Road in historic New Kent, its level pastures home to grazing herds of Hereford and Black Baldy cattle. Walking over his farm, Talley stooped to the ground and scooped up a handful of soil. As the dirt ran through his fingers, he remarked how he farms the very same land that his great-great-grandfather did.

The Talley family has been farming Poplar Springs since the 1870s, passing the land down generation after generation. Talley talks about the many lessons he learned while working the land with his own father, Clarence, as he progressed from working for his father to farming with him as a partner.

The Talleys have made land conservation, as well as farming, an intergenerational activity. When Jim Talley and his wife, Regina, were thinking about donating a conservation easement on their land, they found their children very supportive. Their son, Ricky, who represents the sixth generation of Talleys to live on the farm, joined with his parents to place his section of the farm, called Oak Grove, under easement as well. The Talleys donated easements on both farms to the **Williamsburg Land Conservancy**.

A conservation easement limits development on the land forever—and forever is a long time. But Talley points out that development would also change the land forever. Once foundations are laid and the land is built on, the soil is no longer viable for farmland. Placing Poplar Springs under easement gives the Talleys peace of mind, even if they or their descendants ever need to sell the land. If the land passes out of their family, it will still remain open and available for farming. Talley likes this assurance because it leaves open the possibility that somewhere down the line, one of his descendants may take an interest in their family’s history at a property in New Kent. The conservation easement will keep that connection to their lineage alive.

In addition to historic significance and productive farmland, the easement on



Poplar Springs Farm protects three acres of wetlands that provide habitat for rare and endangered species in New Kent. It also keeps open the pleasant views of green farmland that their neighbors appreciate.

Ultimately, Jim and his family would like to see more of this historic landscape protected, and they have been encouraging their neighbors to look into conservation. When Jim walks onto his front step and looks over the two neighboring farms, Cedar Grove and Soldier’s Rest, he sees a vista that has remained constant for over 150 years—a vista that he would like to be available for generations to come.

# The Oldest Plantation in Virginia

## Shirley Plantation

Owned by Hill Carter family  
150+ protected acres  
Charles City County  
House District 74  
Senate District 9

MAJOR PUBLIC BENEFITS: Historic Preservation, Tourism and Recreation, Productive Farmland, Water Quality, Scenic Views



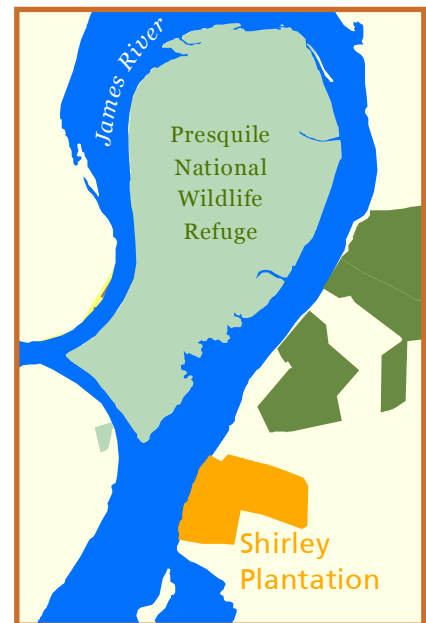
Shirley Plantation was established on the banks of the James River in 1613, only 6 years after the founding of Jamestown, the first permanent English settlement in the New World. In 400 years, the plantation has come through Indian uprisings, Bacon's Rebellion, the American Revolution, the American Civil War, and the Great Depression. And for more than 350 years, through all of those events, it has stayed in the same family.

Edward Hill I took ownership of the plantation in 1638, and it remains in his family to this day. The mansion was constructed starting around 1723, when Hill's great-granddaughter, Elizabeth Hill, married John Carter, the eldest son of Robert "King" Carter. Their daughter, Ann Hill Carter Lee, married "Light Horse" Harry Lee at Shirley and became the mother of Robert E. Lee. Today, the Hill Carter family continues to manage the land as a farm, making Shirley Plantation the oldest family-owned business in America. It is also the oldest plantation in Virginia.

Charles H. Carter III, a member of the eleventh generation of his family to live at Shirley, was born into a long tradition of preservation. Carter grew up in the brick, Georgian-style Great House that dates from 1723, with its matched pair of

two-story porticos and its extraordinary "flying" staircase that rises three stories with no visible means of support. He has lived in the house most of his life, joined recently by his newlywed wife. The ground floor of the house is open for tours, along with the formal gardens, and eight outbuildings, but it remains a family residence.

Carter remembers reading, as a youth, about the history of his family's home, and he was struck by a story about how the young Letitia Tyler (who would become First Lady) saw the place. She complained, in the early 19th Century, that Shirley Plantation was so old-fashioned—full of outdated furniture and archaic coats of arms. "Even back then," Carter says, "they had a tradition of maintaining the place, keeping the heritage... I had, from an early time, a sense



of identity, of where I was going, and what I wanted to do was protect Shirley, continue the legacy."

One way that Carter fulfilled this role was by donating a conservation easement on approximately 150 acres of the plantation, including the historic house and surrounding buildings, and approximately 1,600 feet of frontage on the James River. The easement, donated in



# Where the Line Broke— and Richmond was Lost



PHOTO COURTESY SHIRLEY PLANTATION

2006, is co-held by **Virginia Outdoors Foundation** and the **Virginia Department of Historic Resources**.

"It's a historic property of long standing, and we want to keep it that way and keep it open to the public," Carter says. The easement was also a valuable tool for estate planning. With property values soaring, the family was concerned about the burden of estate taxes. "You'd hate to have to sell the place to pay the taxes," Carter says. By giving up development rights, they were able to both reduce the value of the estate and qualify for federal estate tax incentives.

This easement protects a historic treasure that is listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register, the National Register of Historic Places, and the National Historic Landmarks Register. Nearly 30,000 people visit Shirley Plantation every year.



VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HISTORIC RESOURCES

## The Breakthrough Battlefield at Petersburg

Owned by Civil War Trust  
270 protected acres  
Dinwiddie County  
House District 63  
Senate District 16

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Historic Preservation,  
Tourism and Recreation

**T**he Breakthrough Battlefield at Petersburg, a major battle of the final days of the Civil War, was the scene of one of the most consequential actions of the entire conflict, leading to the Union capture of Richmond.

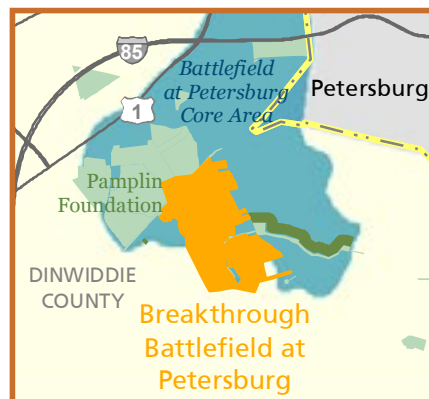
Following the Union victory at Five Forks, Major Generals Ulysses S. Grant and George Meade ordered an assault against the Petersburg lines on April 2, 1865. A handful of Confederates made a heroic defense of Fort Gregg and prevented the Federals from entering the city that night—but they could not hold the city. The Confederates also lost a key leader, Lt. Gen. A.P. Hill, who was shot and killed trying to reach his troops in the confusion. After dark, Lee ordered the evacuation of Petersburg and nearby Richmond.

Thus, Grant achieved one of the major military objectives of the war: the capture of Petersburg,

which led to the fall of Richmond, the capital of the Confederacy. Only a week after the Confederate lines here were overwhelmed by Union troops, on April 9, 1865, General Robert E. Lee surrendered to Major General Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox Courthouse.

Now, this vital tract of battleground has been preserved forever by **Civil War Trust** in partnership with the Commonwealth of Virginia. In 2005, a nearly 270 acre parcel at the Petersburg Breakthrough Battlefield known as the Mays tract, which is adjacent to the Pamplin Historical Park, became available for preservation, at an asking price of \$2.6 million.

Civil War Trust, in cooperation with the landowners, was able to raise the funds and purchase the land. The generous support of Civil War Trust members provided \$1.6 million and the remaining \$1 million came through a Civil War Battlefield Preservation Program grant. Civil War Trust went on to place a conservation easement on the land, held by the **Virginia Department of Historic Resources**, ensuring that this hallowed ground will be protected for generations to come.



# Black Soldiers in the Vanguard

## Fort Harrison and Fort Gregg

Public land - national; private land owned by Civil War Trust  
16 protected acres  
Henrico County  
House Districts 62, 70  
Senate District 9

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Historic Preservation, Tourism and Recreation

At the Battle of New Market Heights, black soldiers in the U.S. Army left no doubt that they could fight—and sacrifice—heroically. On September 29-30, 1864, troops led by Major Gen. Benjamin Butler attacked a range of Confederate fortresses south of Richmond, with 3,000 African-American men in blue uniforms leading the vanguard.

The Union assault succeeded in capturing several Confederate forts and forcing General Robert E. Lee to shift troops from Petersburg to Richmond, thus weakening his defense of Confederate supply lines through Petersburg. The victory cost more than 5,000 casualties on both sides, including over 800 casualties among the black soldiers. While some leaders had voiced skepticism about sending black men into combat, the soldiers' performance earned them widespread respect.

A Confederate soldier from Texas wrote that "no troops up to that time had fought us with more bravery than did those Negroes."

Gen. Butler reported, "My colored troops... carried intrenchments at the point of a bayonet... It was most gallantly done, with most severe loss. Their praises



Soldiers of the 4th U.S. Colored Troops  
COURTESY LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

are in the mouth of every officer in this army. Treated fairly and disciplined, they have fought most heroically."

Fourteen Medals of Honor were awarded to United States Colored Troops who fought in the Battle of New Market Heights, out of only 25 awarded to black soldiers and sailors during the Civil War.

In 2009, **Civil War Trust** listed New Market Heights as one of the most endangered battlefields in America, with none of its land under the stewardship of a preservation organization. Since then, preservationists have succeeded in setting aside 16 acres at two sites that comprised the New Market Heights battlefield, also called the Battle of Chaffin's Farm.

These include Fort Harrison, the most prominent of the fortifications at New Market Heights. In 2002, Civil War Trust



made a loan to the **Richmond Battlefields Association** to purchase 9 acres at this fort, in Henrico County. The land has since been incorporated into the Richmond National Battlefield Park. Civil War Trust also purchased 7 acres at Fort Gregg in Henrico County in 2010, using a grant from American Battlefield Protection Program and another grant from the Virginia General Assembly to cover some of the costs. The property is protected by an easement held by the **Virginia Department of Historic Resources** and indicated by a roadside historic marker.



# Protecting the Land that Provides



Paul and Anna Atkins, PHOTO BY JOHN & CAROLINE COE

Anna Atkins grew up in the hills of West Virginia, a teenager during the Great Depression, and she grew skilled at living off of the land. She kept a journal describing how her family would make their own soap, forage for wild berries, raise livestock, and make a delicious dinner from the most unlikely game—a young groundhog in one case.

Later, she moved to Virginia, where she and her husband, Paul, managed a farm in the countryside around Richmond, raising cattle, pigs, chickens, and other livestock and crops. They built a home and raised their family on 113 acres of rolling field and forest in Chesterfield County. They nurtured the land and the land provided them with both food and natural beauty. But the rural, agrarian landscape that they felt a part of was changing dramatically, as suburbs grew up all around them.

By 2007, Atkins was 89 years old, widowed, and concerned about the future of the acres that had been intertwined in her family's life for so long. Her property was increasingly surrounded by subdivisions, and developers contacted her on a

regular basis about buying the farm.

Atkins had a different vision. She understood how people rely on natural landscapes to provide the necessities of life, and she was particularly concerned about the impact of development on water supplies and the Chesapeake Bay. She wanted her land to stay a place where people can experience nature, and a place that provides essential natural services.

Atkins worked with the **Capital Region Land Conservancy** to explore conservation options and she was pleased with the solution they came up with. She decided to leave the farm to Chesterfield County, for a local park where the land's forests, streams and wetlands would be

## Atkins Acres Community Park

Public land - local  
113 protected acres  
Chesterfield County  
House District 62  
Senate District 11

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Tourism and Recreation,  
Urban Green Space, Plant and Wildlife  
Habitat, Water Quality



protected. Their arrangements allowed the County to develop up to 30% of the land for facilities like picnic areas, playgrounds, and ballfields, and she liked to think of children playing on the land. The remaining 70% would be preserved in a forested, natural state, undeveloped except for trails.

When Atkins passed away in 2011, the farm went to the County, as she directed, protected by a conservation easement that is co-held by **Chesterfield County** and **Capital Region Land Conservancy**. Because of her gift, generations of people growing up in Chesterfield will be able to experience some of what she did—a sense of their connection to the natural world.

# Wilderness Adventure in the Capital City

## James River Park System

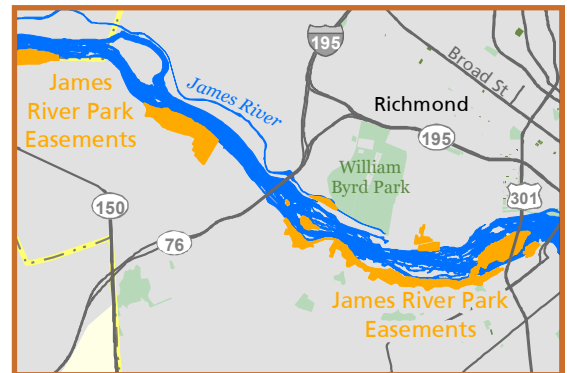
Public land - local  
250 protected acres  
City of Richmond  
House District 68, 69, 71  
Senate District 10, 16

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Tourism and Recreation,  
Urban Green Space, Public Water Access,  
Water Quality, Plant and Wildlife Habitat



Nathan Burrell, PHOTO BY MARK GORMUS, RICHMOND TIMES DISPATCH

The manager of the James River Park System, Nathan Burrell, describes the park this way: Here's a place with world-class mountain-biking, with rock-climbing spots, with all levels of river rapids up to Class 5, with trails through wooded islands that feel remote, with so many birds that at the peak of their migration "it looks like the Serengeti of prey birds." He asks, "Where else can you find those kinds of wilderness resources in the heart of a capital city? You'd have to go to Juneau, Alaska, to find that, but we've got it right here in Richmond."



The James River Park System is a collection of 20 wilderness areas that total about 650 acres, strewn along the James River as it runs through downtown Richmond. The park has become a major recreational asset, both locally and regionally, drawing between 600,000 and 1.5 million visitors every year. Sixty percent of those visitors come from outside Richmond.

The park's islands, forests, currents, and flat sunny rocks accommodate a wide range of activities, including the many suggested on the park's website: "strolling, whitewater rafting, paddling, fishing, tubing, hiking, mountain biking,

trail-running, swimming, sunbathing, bird-watching, picnicking, rock climbing, rock-hopping, dog-walking, nature study, photography, even recreational tree climbing, snorkeling, camps, and other guided activities."

What sets the James River Park System apart, whether you come for relaxation or an adrenaline rush, is its sense of the "urban wild," Burrell says.

Richmond's riverfront could have gone from urban wilderness to concrete jungle, but it was saved by conservationists who saw the land's potential, starting in the 1970s, and bought up riverfront land and islands, which they later donated for

the park. The river corridor was also kept wild by citizens who fought successfully against proposals to build highways and other developments there.

To ensure that the park will be there for future citizens who love to play on the water and in the woods, the **City of Richmond** placed 250 acres that it owns under conservation easement in 2009. (Other sections of the park system are managed, but not owned, by the City.) **The Trust for Public Land**, the **Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation**, and **The Richmond Foundation** were all active in ensuring the permanent protection of Richmond's wild parkland.

# New Life for Old Tobacco Factories

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HISTORIC RESOURCES



## Tobacco Row

Multiple private owners  
3 historic buildings protected  
City of Richmond  
House District 71  
Senate District 9, 16

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Historic Preservation,  
Urban Revitalization

Where farmers once drove horses hitched to thousand-pound barrels of tobacco and where factory workers once turned those leaves into cigarettes, cigars, and chewing tobacco, now urban residents enjoy modern apartments and offices with a historic flair. The sought-after Tobacco Row buildings on Cary Street in downtown Richmond were originally tobacco warehouses and factories, built in a variety of styles, from traditional brick to sleek steel and concrete, between 1880 and 1930. Then as now, they were at the center of the action in the City of Richmond.

Tobacco Row is situated in the Shockoe Valley and Tobacco Row Historic District, which the architectural historian Mary Wingfield Scott has called “the valley where Richmond began.” The Shockoe Valley took its name from a Native American word for “flat rock” because of a large rock situated at the confluence of Shockoe Creek with the James River. This valley was the site of the earliest settlement in Richmond, with a trading post established in the late 1600s. The district was part of the original 1737 plan for the city, with streets laid out at right angles around blocks of four half-acre lots, which influenced the future development of the city.

The tobacco industry was established in the district by the 18th century and it kept growing into the 20th century. But by the 1960s and 70s, the factories and warehouses of Tobacco Row had been abandoned. Instead of allowing the facilities to deteriorate or be demolished, innovative developers made Tobacco Row a poster child for adaptive reuse—repurposing historic structures to meet demands in today’s economy. The **Virginia Department of Historic Resources** holds historic preservation easements on three of the buildings—the Cameron Building, the Kinney Building, and Enders Warehouse—granted between 1989 and 1999.



A representative of Forest City Residential Management, Inc., which owns many of the buildings, says in a video, “The design objective of the Tobacco Row development really was to take advantage of all the different building types that we had... You will have exposed brick. You will have wood beam ceilings. You will have floors that sometimes aren’t as even as they should be. But that is all part of the charm and the character of living in River Lofts and that’s why our residents like living here... The bones of the buildings are phenomenal. The big amenity here, the thing that separates us from everybody else is the buildings themselves.”



# Better than a Million Dollars

## Gregory's Pond

Owned by the Bailey family  
13 protected acres  
Chesterfield County  
House District 27  
Senate District 11

**PUBLIC BENEFITS:** Local Park Buffer, Urban Green Space, Plant and Wildlife Habitat, Water Quality

**H**elen Bailey and her husband first moved to the land beside Gregory's Pond, in Chesterfield County, during World War II. At the time, they were living with his parents. Bailey says, "I was absolutely overwhelmed by the beauty of this place and of course it was all country at that time."

So, they settled for good on the 13-acre property, which was surrounded by farms. Both of them made their living as artists, and she worked from a studio near the water. They raised three children who grew up swimming in the old mill pond—unscathed, although it's full of huge snapping turtles, Bailey says.

But, the landscape, in the expanding suburbs of Richmond, began to change dramatically. A two lane road became a highway. Farms became subdivisions. "A huge development went up between us and the highway," Bailey says. "It broke my heart because it used to be a farm up there with a beautiful old barn. It was lovely. But unfortunately, people are more fond of money than they are of the view."

She says, "As the years went by and



Susan Bailey, PHOTO BY ROSE JENKINS

things were settled more and more, out in Chesterfield County, I became alarmed about the way land was being apportioned out... I began to think wouldn't it be terrible if the land across the pond were settled in a development or something, because it's so beautiful." The escalating development posed another problem as well: "Being an artist, I never made much money, so I worried about the taxes."

Then, a neighbor gave his land to become a local park—now the 161-acre Rockwood Park—and someone suggested to her that conservation might be an option for her land as well.

She says, "I applied to the **Virginia Outdoors Foundation** and I was delighted to learn that they would take [an easement on] my land, because



they said it was so beautiful... The park looks out on the peninsula that I live on. Had that been made into a settlement of little houses, it would have ruined the view from the park... People in the park deserve to look out on trees and not a development."

Her land also expands the wildlife habitat surrounding Rockwood Park, where families go to walk nature trails, take archery lessons, and visit animals in the

# A Natural Gateway

Rockwood Nature Center. The mostly forested park is located on the edge of Gregory's Pond, separated from Bailey's property only by a couple of small parcels that her family has acquired in order to link the two protected properties.

Bailey reports that, by last count, their plot of woods is home to nine nests of great blue herons. And in the spring, she tallied 38 pink ladyslippers blooming. Among the other wild inhabitants, she has seen foxes, raccoons, coyotes, deer, snakes, geese, ducks, many kinds of birds, turtles, lizards, and "literally thousands of little baby frogs every spring."

"If you go walk in the park you would end up at the pond, and there's a beautiful view across there," she says. "My land has trees on it. They see nothing but trees, and now it can never be developed, and I'm tickled to death. Way back I was offered as much as a million dollars for this land, and I turned them down. I said I'd rather have the trees. You can imagine how much I loved it."

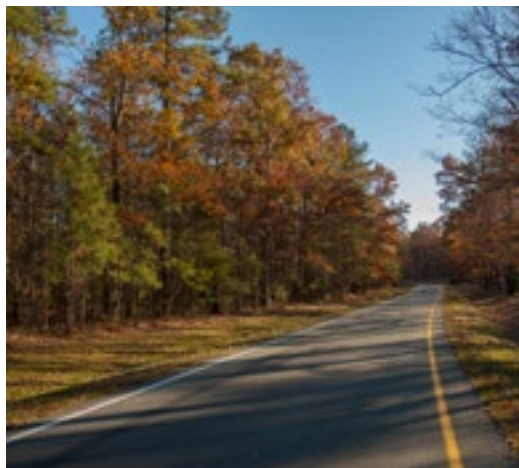


PHOTO BY JASON MCGARVEY

**W**hen the Woodland Pond neighborhood was built, in Chesterfield County, the developer set aside 124 acres of woodlands to remain undeveloped. This forest, at the gateway to the suburban community and bordering Pocahontas State Park, is protected by a conservation easement held by the **Virginia Outdoors Foundation**.

Ray Walsh, the president of the Woodland Pond Homeowners Association, appreciates the way the expanse of trees on either side of the main entryway to their neighborhood can subtly affect one's mood. "It's something that really makes an impression when people come into the neighborhood, because they drive down this long attractive area for a half mile before they get to the first street that has homes, and it's a nice tranquil introduction to the neighborhood... And it's a good thing for the residents. They can get here and relax with that little drive before they get to their homes."

The undisturbed forest that welcomes home the residents of Woodland Pond also serves as home to a variety of wildlife, including an abundance of birds. Walsh says, "I think we have 150 different birds of the 400 or so that exist in Virginia, and it's certainly a nice habitat for them. We have all the birds of prey, the eagles, and the hawks, and—we don't see them but they're there at night—the barred owls and great horned owls."

## Forest at Woodland Pond

Owned by the Woodland Pond Homeowners Association

124 protected acres

Chesterfield County

House District 66

Senate District 11

**PUBLIC BENEFITS:** State Park Buffer, Urban Green Space, Scenic Views, Plant and Wildlife Habitat, Water Quality

These woods are located just across the street from Pocahontas State Park, a nearly 8,000 acre park that serves as a major recreational resource in the Richmond area, offering opportunities for fishing, boating, swimming, hiking, biking, and horseback riding. The protected forests line the road approaching the park, so visitors to the park as well as people in Woodland Pond can enjoy a natural gateway and the wildlife that it supports.



# A Colonial Mansion Relocated and Restored

## Fairfield

Owned by Alice Preston Smith  
8 protected acres  
Henrico County  
House District 73  
Senate District 12

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Historic Preservation,  
Urban Green Space

Fairfield is a Georgian mansion situated on nearly 8 acres of landscaped grounds in Richmond's west end. The property is located between River Road and the James River. Formerly known as Rocky Mills, the dwelling was originally built around 1750 in Hanover County. In 1928, it was dismantled and reconstructed with some modifications on its present site. The reconstruction was careful, and much of the building's historic fabric, including interior woodwork and exterior stone trim, were preserved.

As originally built, Fairfield was a high-style Georgian plantation mansion notable for its exterior rusticated stone trim and finely detailed interior Georgian features. However, Fairfield is not only significant for its original and unusual 18th-century architectural features; it is also significant as an example of the Colonial Revival movement. The reconstruction transformed the house into an early 20th-century mansion with fine workmanship and modern amenities such as heating, plumbing, and electricity. This property is unique in its potential



VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HISTORIC RESOURCES



to tell the story of two distinctive eras.

Today, the Fairfield dwelling sits prominently at the top of a hill on the property, which extends to the canal below. The house is used as a full-time residence and is surrounded by a variety of gardens and historic outbuildings, including a pump house and servants' quarters. The owner, Alice Preston Smith, donated an easement on the property to the **Virginia Department of Historic Resources** in 2002.



# Grace and Craftsmanship

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HISTORIC RESOURCES



## Woodside

Owned by Ten Eyck Wellford  
20 protected acres  
Goochland and Henrico Counties  
House District 56, 72  
Senate District 12, 22

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Historic Preservation,  
Scenic Views, Water Quality

**W**oodside, on the outskirts of Richmond, is a Greek Revival villa dating from 1858 that has withstood the tests of time, both in its classic beauty and its steadfast functionality. The property was once part of Tuckahoe Plantation, where Thomas Jefferson spent much of his boyhood. The Jeffersons moved to Tuckahoe in 1745, when Thomas was two years old, to care for the three orphaned children of their relatives William and Maria Randolph.

In the early 1800s, the Woodside property was sold out of the Randolph family to John Wickham, the lawyer who successfully defended Vice President Aaron Burr against charges of treason after he shot and killed Alexander Hamilton in a duel. The Wickham family built Woodside according to plans by the Richmond architect Albert West.

The land remained in the Wickham family until 1996, when they sold it to a friend of their family, Ten Eyck Wellford and his wife-to-be Eleanor. Ten has known the land since he was a boy, when he would go there to cut Christmas trees and fish in Tuckahoe Creek. The Wellfords undertook the rehabilitation of the property, which is listed on both the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places. All changes to the property are guided by a preservation easement granted

in 1970, which is held by the **Virginia Department of Historic Resources**. The easement prevents any subdivision or additional home-building on the 20 acre property, and it requires that changes to the house are consistent with its historic character. The adjacent Tuckahoe Plantation is also protected by an easement with Department of Historic Resources.

Wellford says that preserving Woodside keeps alive a legacy of fine craftsmanship, with construction from local materials, using techniques that are lost arts today. On the exterior of the house, stucco was rendered to look like stone, while inside, plentiful pine wood was given the appearance of scarce oak, using a feather and a comb on the painted surface of the boards.

Wellford admires the simple beauty of the house, its understated lines and



classic symmetry. He also finds much to admire in its construction. The house endured a fair amount of "benign neglect" over the years, but it was so well-built that the structure persevered. Wellford says when they took over the house, its original, 138-year-old roof was still tasked with keeping out the weather. One of the columns on the porch had given way to wisteria and rot, but the column beside it took over its share of the work supporting the roof. Such reliable workmanship has helped to preserve a stellar example of the Greek Revival style. "There's no question that it's one of the rare examples of its type," Wellford says, with only a few peers in the state of Virginia.

# Telling the Whole Story at Fredericksburg Battlefield

## Slaughter Pen Farm

Owned by Civil War Trust,  
with public access  
208 protected acres  
Spotsylvania County  
House District 54  
Senate District 4

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Historic Preservation,  
Tourism and Recreation

**T**he struggle for the Slaughter Pen Farm was among the most intense

in Civil War history. More than 5,000 casualties were inflicted on the farm during the Battle of Fredericksburg on December 13, 1862. And this site, at the southern end of the Fredericksburg Battlefield, is the only remaining place where a visitor can follow the Union assault on that bloody day from beginning to end.

Nearly all the other land associated with Union attacks at Fredericksburg has been destroyed by development. Here, according to Ed Bearss, chief historian emeritus with the National Park Service, a visitor can still “walk in the footsteps of history.”

Yet, Slaughter Pen Farm was very nearly sold for industrial development. Located in an area that has witnessed tremendous industrial and commercial growth in recent decades, the property was zoned for industrial use, and sat immediately adjacent to a major rail line, making it extremely attractive to developers. When the property was put on the market in December 2005, the listing agent described it as “one of the best industrial sites in the Commonwealth of Virginia.” Preservation of the farm seemed a long shot at best.

Once this site was placed on the



PHOTO BY SCOTT JONES

market, preservationists were in a race against time. **Civil War Trust** worked with Tricord, Inc., a local development company, to quickly take the property off the market, giving the the trust time to raise the purchase price of \$12 million—an unprecedented sum for a Civil War preservation project.

Russ Smith, superintendent of Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park, remarked: “We view this as a rebirth of the Fredericksburg Battlefield. Preservationists had long ago given up on maintaining a vista from Union to Confederate lines, but the Civil War Trust and Tricord have given this historic landscape a second chance.”

Next began the hard work of raising the purchase price. “The veterans themselves referred to the farm as ‘the slaughter pen’ because of the enormous amount of blood that was shed there,” said Trust



President James Lighthizer. “Despite the price tag, we simply could not sit idly by and watch this irreplaceable battleground become an industrial park.”

The site is accessible to the public, providing opportunities for education and appreciation. In 2008, Civil War Trust opened a 13-stop interpretive trail at the site. In addition, Slaughter Pen Farm is one of the four tours included in the Trust’s Fredericksburg Battle App, which debuted in 2011. This GPS-enabled mobile battlefield tour utilizes the latest technology, including video and maps, to help visitors interpret the land under their feet.

# Preserving Habitat and Buffering Fort A.P. Hill



A new wildlife management area near Bowling Green provides over 2,500 acres for people to hike, hunt, fish, and experience nature, while maintaining the viability of the U.S. Army base at Fort A.P. Hill.

The preserve's diverse topography and varied ecosystems, from wooded hills to rivers and wetlands, make it a rich wildlife habitat and an excellent location for activities including hunting, fishing, hiking, paddling, and wildlife watching. Six and a half miles of the Mattaponi and South Rivers flow through the area, and these waterways are accessible to non-motorized watercraft. Wetlands provide excellent habitat for many shorebirds, wading birds, and amphibians, as well as prime opportunities for bird-watching or hunting waterfowl.

The property was protected in two phases. First, **The Nature Conservancy** purchased a large tract and held it until the **Virginia Department of Game**

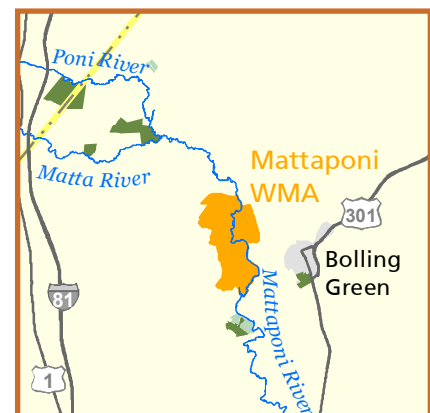
**and Inland Fisheries** (DGIF) was able to acquire it. DGIF then worked in cooperation with **The Trust for Public Land** in order to purchase an adjacent large parcel, with funding from a variety of sources, including the Army Compatible Use Buffer program.

This Wildlife Management Area will help to limit suburban encroachment around Fort A.P. Hill, so the Army can continue using this site to train soldiers for military operations. The Army's investment in the project also allows for wetlands and riparian corridor restoration, which can be used to mitigate the potential wetlands impacts of future projects on the military base.

## Mattaponi Wildlife Management Area

Public land - state  
2,542 Protected Acres  
Caroline County  
House District 55  
Senate District 4

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Tourism and Recreation, Public Water Access, Military Base Buffer, Plant and Wildlife Habitat, Water Quality, Storm Resilience





# Senator Reunites 500+ Acres of Subdivided Land

## THE BIG PICTURE

During a one-inch rainstorm, about 1,360 gallons of water will run off of an acre of forest. But, if the same rain falls on an acre of parking lot, 25,800 gallons of water will run into streams! A sudden “flash” of stormwater causes problems that include flooding, erosion, sediment pollution, and an increase in microorganisms that bind to soil particles in the water. On top of that, the water goes away, rushing downstream. **Forests store water in the landscape, where it supports living things and gradually flows into rivers and aquifers.**

SOURCE: Prince William Conservation Alliance

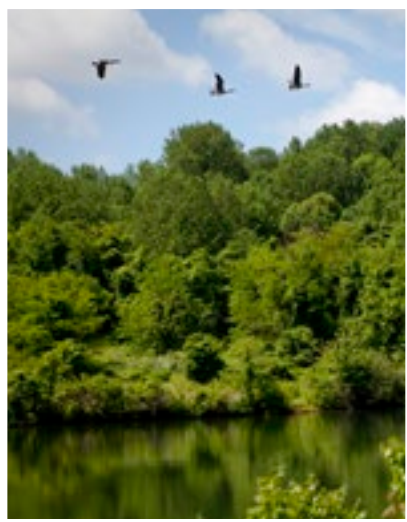


PHOTO BY KATHERINE VANCE



PHOTO BY ROBERT SUYDAM

## Gascony Farm

Owned by Sen. Paul Tribble and family  
508 protected acres  
Northumberland County  
House District 99  
Senate District 4

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Working Forests, Water Quality, Plant and Wildlife Habitat, Productive Farmland

At a time when many landowners were breaking up forest tracts into smaller parcels, U.S. Senator Paul Tribble was bringing subdivided land back together into one whole working landscape of forest and farmland. Sen. Tribble was able to reunite 508 acres of Gascony Farm, a property in Northumberland County that has been in his family for almost 100 years. Following his father's example of good stewardship, Sen. Tribble went on to protect the property with a conservation easement donated to the **Virginia Department of Forestry**.

Forestland Conservation Specialist Rob Suydam said, “The Department of Forestry was very excited when Sen. Tribble contacted us about helping him develop a conservation easement on his family's land. This beautiful piece of forestland protects the conservation values of forest, farm and open space. In addition, because this property is so close to the Chesapeake Bay, the watershed and wildlife habitat protection this easement provides is outstanding.”

“My family and I have owned Gascony for almost 100 years and love the rich natural beauty and history of the property. We want future generations to be able to know and love and experience this property as we do,” Sen. Tribble said.



# In the Footsteps of the Nation's Founders

PHOTO BY JOHN HASSLER



## Chelsea Plantation

Owned by William W. Richardson, III  
568 protected acres  
King William County  
House District 98  
Senate District 3

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Historic Preservation,  
Water Quality, Productive Farmland,  
Plant and Wildlife Habitat, Scenic Views

Visitors to Chelsea Plantation, on the banks of the Mattaponi River in King William County, which dates from 1709, follow in impressive footsteps. Captain John Smith passed by the site on his way to meet the paramount chief Powhatan, when he was taken captive. The royal lieutenant governor Alexander Spotswood formed the Knights of the Golden Horseshoe expedition there. During the Revolutionary War, General Lafayette and his soldiers camped there, just before the Battle of Yorktown, where they defeated General Cornwallis.

Augustine Moore, who had the plantation built, was a highly successful tobacco entrepreneur and well-connected both socially and politically, so many prominent figures in Virginia's political history are connected with the plantation. George Washington was a guest at the elegant manor house, and Thomas Jefferson attended a good friend's wedding there. Robert E. Lee's grandmother was born and married at the plantation.

Chelsea is the second oldest plantation in Virginia that is open for tours. Now this historic site is protected for future generations, because its owner

William W. Richardson, III, granted a conservation easement on the land to the **Williamsburg Land Conservancy**.

Here, people can see a manor house that is one of the finest examples of early 18th Century Georgian architecture, which is listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Historic Registry. The grounds also encompass nearly five acres of lawn with extensive English Boxwood gardens, overlooking the Mattaponi River. Numerous other historic buildings stand on the property, including a schoolhouse, smokehouse, kitchen, seed building, milking parlor, a barn with two silos and a wash house.



In addition, the 586-acre property contains prime agricultural soils, which support active farming operations. There are mature forests, as well as numerous springs, marshes, wetlands, and streams. The land is home to extensive wildlife and plant species.

"Ensuring that Chelsea Plantation would be preserved for the generations to come was paramount to me and my family," Mr. Richardson said, when he donated the easement in 2012. "We take great pride in knowing that the protection of this land through a conservation easement will forever preserve an important piece of Virginia's history."

# Local Beef and Local Views Near Richmond

## Brookview Farm

Owned by Sandy and Rossie Fisher  
Approx. 300 protected acres  
Goochland County  
House District 56  
Senate District 22

**PUBLIC BENEFITS:** Productive Farmland,  
Historic Preservation, Water Quality,  
Scenic Views, Plant and Wildlife Habitat

Sandy and Rossie Fisher donated an easement on their farm in Goochland County so they could pass on a legacy of beautiful, productive land to their son and daughter, who both wanted to see it protected. But, Rossie says, they protected the land “not only for them, but even more for the community at large, for Virginia. It’s part of the fabric of Virginia.”

At their 300-acre Brookview Farm, the land rolls from wooded slopes to hilly pastures where brown and white cattle graze on lush grass. It sits, with other protected farms, within an expanse of open land graced by large trees not far from Richmond, along Route 6, a designated Virginia Byway. The farm includes several historic buildings, including four former slave quarters, which are listed on the state and national registers of historic places. The farm provides clean water, through the forests that prevent runoff from steep slopes and riparian buffers along streams and a pond. And it produces food—currently beef from cattle that are grass-fed and grass-finished, sold to local customers who appreciate the wholesomeness and flavor of the meat.



Rossie and Sandy Fisher, PHOTO BY ROSE JENKINS

“It’s a beautiful piece of land. It deserves to be given a chance to grow and provide comfort to others,” Rossie says. She adds, “[The decision] goes way beyond our immediate family. Because forever is a long time. It’s a very long time.”

Both Sandy and Rossie started learning to grow food as children. She grew up on a farm nearby (organic before anyone used that word) and he was raised in a family with a big garden. Sandy served in the Peace Corps in Colombia and later, after he and Rossie got married, they lived there for seven more years. Sandy says they learned about natural farming practices from the Colombians, who, at the time, grew all their food without chemicals. Now, Sandy and Rossie have



been married for 45 years, farming the whole time.

At Brookview, they started out growing commodity crops, but they converted the farm to grass-fed beef as the local food movement in Virginia grew, creating new and sometimes more profitable markets for farmers. Their cattle live their whole lives at Brookview, on pastures



managed with minimal chemicals, and they are never treated with antibiotics or hormones. "People eat the beef and they say I've never had anything like that in my life it's so good!" Rossie says. "It's really good, really tender. So we're proud of it."

For twelve years, the Fishers sold their products from a farm store, but recently they switched to an online co-op. Customers place their orders for Brookview's beef and honey, along with their choice of goods from over 75 other local farms, and the co-op delivers them to pick-up sites. The Fishers miss the personal interaction with the people who eat their

food, but find that the co-op adds convenience for both them and their customers.

The Fishers protected their land in 2001, with an easement on the historic buildings held by the **Virginia Department of Historic Resources** and an easement on the farmland held by the **Virginia Outdoors Foundation**. They've also been active in promoting conservation among other land-owners in Goochland County. In 2007, the American Farmland Trust gave the Fishers their annual Steward of the Land Award, for their leadership in conserving farmland and protecting the environment.



PHOTO BY ROSE JENKINS

## THE BIG PICTURE

### Cows don't go to school— which makes farms a lot easier on local budgets than subdivisions.

Preserving open land makes fiscal sense because farms and other open lands require substantially less spending on services than they generate in taxes—just \$0.35 for every dollar of tax revenue. The opposite is true for residential properties, which make much higher demands for schools, roads, police, fire and rescue, and so on. On average, residential properties require \$1.18 in spending for every dollar they generate in taxes.

SOURCE: American Farmland Trust



# Beautiful Campus of Historic African-American Schools

## Belmead

Owned by Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament  
1,004 protected acres  
Powhatan County  
House District 65  
Senate District 10

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Historic Preservation,  
Working Forests, Water Quality,  
Scenic Views



VIRGINIA OUTDOORS FOUNDATION

A group of Roman Catholic nuns transformed two plantations built by slaves into a pair of high schools that empowered generations of African American and Native American students, from the 1890s to the 1970s. Katherine Drexel, who would become one of only two American-born saints in the Catholic Church, founded two schools—one for girls and one for boys—on adjacent plantations overlooking the James River in Powhatan County.

The schools were divided by Deep Creek as it flows toward the James, and connected by a bridge. At St. Francis de Sales, girls studied academics, music, home economics, and business, and were trained to work as nurses or teachers. At St. Emma Military Academy, boys learned military regimens, academics,

and their choice of a trade, such as farming, carpentry, tailoring, welding, or auto mechanics.

In 2006, the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament donated a conservation easement on more than 1,000 acres of the beautiful riverfront campus of the schools that nurtured so many young lives. The conservation easement protects 2.5 miles of frontage along the James River, as well as two perennial streams—Deep Creek and Lick Creek—and numerous intermittent streams. The easement is co-held by the **Virginia Outdoors Foundation** and the **James River Association**.

The protected land is adjacent to the site of the school buildings, which the National Trust for Historic Preservation listed as one of the most endangered historic sites in America in 2011. The

buildings, including an 1845 Gothic Revival manor house, have fallen into disrepair. A comprehensive plan for the site calls for their adaptive reuse in keeping with the mission of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament.

On a website about the conservation easement, the Sisters describe the land surrounding the schools as “a sacred place.” They write:

*Land is much more than a parcel of real estate to be used, bought, or sold.*

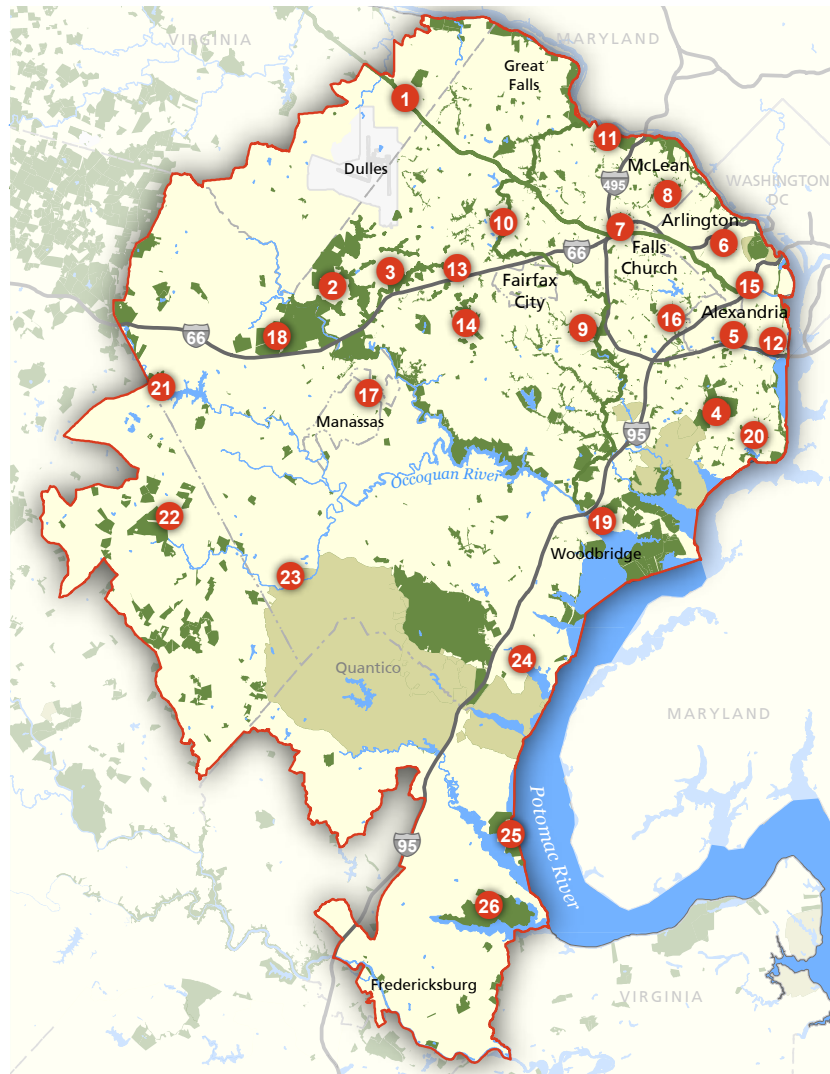
*Land is part of the living organism called Earth, on loan to us from the Creator.*

*Land is one of the primary revelations of the love, mercy, wisdom, and beauty of our Creator.*

*In an era in which the natural world is being relentlessly destroyed, a unique tract of land on the James River is entrusted to the entire Earth community. The natural beauty of this land, manifested in its forests and wildlife, its streams and wetlands, compels us to advocate and care for the land by preserving in perpetuity its primordial wonders.*



# Northern Virginia



	PAGE
1 Washington & Old Dominion Railroad Regional Park .....	28
2 Sully Woodlands .....	30
3 Ellanor C. Lawrence Park .....	31
4 Huntley Meadows Park .....	32
5 Battery Heights .....	33
6 Clarendon School .....	34
7 Lily Ruckstuhl Neighborhood Park .....	35
8 Eight Oaks .....	36
9 Oak Hill .....	37
10 Gerry Conolly Cross County Trail .....	38
11 Eagle Property .....	39
12 Franklin and Armfield Slave Office (Freedom House) .....	40
13 Ox Hill Battlefield .....	41
14 Piney Branch Stream Valley Park .....	42
15 Long Branch Stream Corridor .....	43
16 Green Spring Gardens .....	44
17 Liberia .....	46
18 Gray and Smith Tracts at Manassas Battlefield .....	47
19 Old Colchester Park and Preserve .....	48
20 Little Hunting Creek .....	49
21 Village of Buckland .....	50
22 Still Waters Farm .....	52
23 Merrimac Farm Wildlife Management Area .....	53
24 Waller Property .....	54
25 Widewater State Park .....	55
26 Crow's Nest Natural Area Preserve .....	56



# 45 Miles of Rail Trail

## Washington & Old Dominion Railroad Regional Park

Public land - regional

45-mile trail

Arlington, Fairfax, and Loudoun Counties; Cities of Falls Church and Vienna

House Districts 10, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 47, 49, 53, 86, 87

Senate Districts 13, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35

**PUBLIC BENEFITS:** Bike and Pedestrian Network, Tourism and Recreation, Urban Green Space

At just 100 feet wide, the W&OD Trail is the skinniest park in Virginia, but it's also one of the longest, running 45 miles from Arlington, just across the Potomac River from D.C., to Purcellville, at the edge of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Following the route of the former Washington & Old Dominion Railroad, the trail offers a paved path popular with cyclists, walkers, joggers, inline skaters, and stroller-pushing parents. For 32.5 miles, the paved path is paralleled by crushed stone and dirt bridle paths for equestrians.



PHOTO BY CARL ZITZMANN

Over two million people use the W&OD Trail every year, making it the most popular park in the **Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority** system. A good portion of those people use the trail to bike to work—so it contributes significantly to the region's transportation network. The popularity of the bike trail reduces traffic on



the region's crowded roads, improves air quality, and makes for fit commuters. The trail connects to a number of other long bike routes in the DC region, connecting both commuters and recreational cyclists with the 40-mile Fairfax Cross County Trail (see p. 38), the 7-mile Four Mile Run Trail, and the 18-mile Mount Vernon Trail.

Karl Mohle, the manager of the Washington & Old Dominion Regional Park, says, "The trail gives people an opportunity to escape from the daily grind. It lets them get away from the rigors of life for a while, so they can enjoy nature, or get some exercise, or discover some of the history along the trail."



PHOTO BY CARL ZITZMANN

Trains began to run along the W&OD railroad in 1859, just two years before the outbreak of the Civil War. Although railroads went on to play a major role in the Civil War, a skirmish along the W&OD line, on June 16, 1861, marked the first time that a railroad ever held tactical significance in a military conflict. In a few minutes of fighting, Confederate troops attacked and captured a train full of Union soldiers.

The railroad was nearly destroyed during the Civil War; afterwards, it was slowly rebuilt. It reached its peak early in the 20th century when it ran three times a day between Arlington and Purcellville, carrying passengers to and from rural hamlets along the way. When the train stopped running in 1968, a company that became Dominion Virginia Power bought the right-of-way for a transmission line. The Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority tried for years to acquire the right-of-way and finally purchased it in 1982. However, the agency was able to build the first section of the trail years earlier, in 1974. That section went up as a trial run, to test whether a bike route from the city to outlying communities would catch on. It did.

## THE BIG PICTURE

### **Attractive city parks increase property values near the park and thus increase local tax revenue.**

In Washington, D.C., the additional property tax revenue gained due to city parks is estimated at \$7 million per year. In addition, the nearly 5,000 acres of forest cover in D.C.'s parks provide air quality benefits valued at nearly \$20 million per year. Other economic benefits from city parks include reduced need for stormwater management, increased tourism income, and reduced health care costs because parks give residents opportunities to improve their physical and mental health.

SOURCE: The Trust for Public Land



C&O Canal, Washington DC. PHOTO BY CHRISTINA B. CASTRO



# 4,400 Acres of Parks in Western Fairfax



PHOTO BY CARL ZITZMANN

In recent years, the **Fairfax County Park Authority** acquired approximately 2,150 acres of new parkland in western Fairfax County, adding to approximately 2,250 acres of existing parkland. Together, these holdings present exciting opportunities for enhancing quality of life in Fairfax County as well as protecting natural resources.

Sully Woodlands is comprised of several large parks as well as an array of smaller parks and stream corridors, among the rapidly growing neighborhoods north of Manassas National Battlefield Park and south of Dulles Airport. It is located in the Cub Run and Bull Run watersheds, which drain into the Occoquan River, a major source of drinking water in Northern Virginia.

The Sully Woodlands Regional Master Plan, which the Park Authority developed in 2006, notes that this expanse of parkland contains "some of the richest natural, cultural, and scenic resources in the County." The forests, fields, and streams of Sully Woodlands provide habitat for 618 identified species of mammals, reptiles, amphibians, birds and butterflies, including numerous rare or threatened species. The parks also contain historic resources, including a

plantation built in 1799, a portion of the Manassas Gap Railroad, and Native American artifacts.

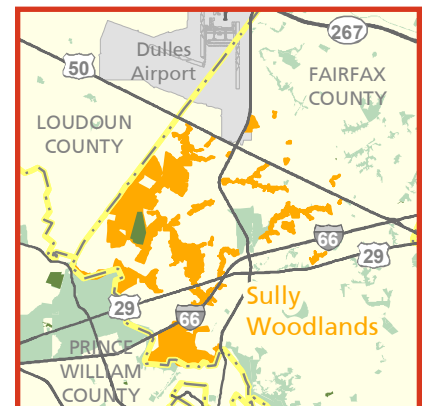
The Park Authority seeks to protect natural and cultural resources while meeting people's needs for recreation. It also describes Sully Woodlands as a "large outdoor laboratory" offering opportunities for hands-on outdoor education. This assemblage of natural areas also goes a long way toward creating a network of greenways to serve as both wildlife corridors and trail systems.

The more recent 2,150 acres were acquired from the late 1990s to the early 2000s, using a variety of methods including purchases, donations, proffers from developers, and state grants. Since the development of the 2006 Master Plan, the Park Authority has acquired an additional large parcel in the Sully Woodlands

## Sully Woodlands

Public land - local  
Approx. 4,400 protected acres  
Fairfax County  
House Districts 37, 40, 67, 86  
Senate District 32, 33, 34, 37

**PUBLIC BENEFITS:** Tourism and Recreation, Bike and Pedestrian Network, Urban Green Space, Water Quality, Plant and Animal Habitat, Historic Preservation



area, which it is incorporating into its overall vision for a network of connected parks in western Fairfax.



# A Green Oasis for Nature and Play

PHOTO BY CARL ZITZMANN



What was once a country retreat for a busy Washington couple has become an oasis of green space in a highly developed, suburban area, thanks to the generosity of Ellanor C. Lawrence, who requested that the land be given to Fairfax County upon her death. Today, the 640-acre park that bears her name, between Centreville and Chantilly, offers residents much-needed opportunities for outdoor recreation, sports, and connection with nature.

Ellanor Lawrence grew up in South Carolina and moved to Washington, D.C. around 1916, where she married David Lawrence, the founder of U.S. News and World Report. The Lawrences purchased the 620-acre Walney Estate, which dated from the late 18th century, and went there to escape from city life. In 1942, Ellanor purchased an additional 20 acres with a historic stone mill and house, called Cabell's Mill and the Middlegate House, which date from the late 18th century and early 19th century, respectively.

The Lawrences nurtured both cultural and natural resources on their property. They renovated the historic buildings and they allowed pasture lands to grow

up into meadows and forests. Ellanor wanted to leave the land as a legacy for the public, and David honored her request, deeding the property to the **Fairfax County Park Authority** in 1971, in memory of her.

Today the Ellanor C. Lawrence Park makes up a large portion of the Big Rocky Run Stream Valley Park. Route 28, a busy thoroughfare, divides the park into two sections—one that is partially developed for recreational use and one that is managed as a natural area and historic site.

The park includes coniferous and deciduous forests, stream valleys, and open meadows. To cultivate thriving

## Ellanor C. Lawrence Park

Public land - local  
650 protected acres  
Fairfax County  
House District 67  
Senate District 34

MAJOR PUBLIC BENEFITS: Tourism and Recreation, Urban Green Space, Plant and Wildlife Habitat, Scenic Views, Historic Preservation



and diverse natural habitats, the Fairfax County Park Authority actively controls invasive species. They manage the meadows through prescribed burns and relief cuttings, which promote the growth of native grasses and wildflowers. Visitors can walk along four miles of trails through the meadows as well as upland and bottomland forest. In addition, bicyclists can use the Big Rocky Run Stream Valley Trail. Approximately 35 acres are devoted to athletic fields and a sports complex for local teams.

Charles Smith, a manager with the Fairfax County Park Authority, says, "The size and largely undeveloped character of the park provide tremendous quality of life, educational, recreational and property value benefits for residents and visitors."

# Bringing Back Habitat In Alexandria

## Huntley Meadows Park

Public land - local  
1,425 protected acres  
City of Alexandria  
House District 43, 44  
Senate Districts 30, 36

**PUBLIC BENEFITS:** Plant and Wildlife Habitat, Tourism and Recreation, Historic Preservation, Water Quality, Storm Resilience, Urban Green Space



PHOTO BY CARL ZITZMANN

At Huntley Meadows Park, a public wildlife sanctuary in southern Alexandria, an ambitious project is underway to restore habitat and increase biodiversity. The goal is to create a hemi-marsh, a condition that this wetland hasn't experienced since the 1980s. When a marsh goes through a dry phase, plant life grows aggressively in the low water, while during high-water phases, most plants cannot survive. Between these dry marsh and lake marsh phases is a phase called a hemi-marsh which offers the ideal balance for biodiversity—half open water and half vegetated water.

Declared surplus federal land in the 1970s, the 1,425-acre Huntley Meadows Park was deeded to Fairfax County in 1975. It features the largest non-tidal wetland area in Northern Virginia, shaped by a meander in the Potomac River. But habitat at the park has been compromised by a number of factors. Beavers have built dams and flooded the area, and then migrated, abandoning their dams and leaving the marsh to dry up. Invasive species have overgrown some areas. And large amounts of silt have flowed into the wetlands from surrounding suburban neighborhoods, from poorly managed construction sites and from ditches carrying stormwater runoff.

With funding from a \$3 million bond, and with input from dozens of public

meetings, the **Fairfax County Park Authority**, which manages the park, has begun to restore conditions that will support abundant and diverse populations of plants and animals. The restoration plan includes a system to regulate water levels, allowing for important seasonal fluctuations. It also includes excavated pools that will benefit diving animals, and brush shelters and logs, offering animals places to sun or shelter near the water. In addition, the plan calls for doubling the size of the wetland's central pool, creating valuable flooded forest habitat.

The restored wetland habitat will benefit numerous species including otters, fish, crayfish, reptiles, amphibians, dragonflies, and birds, and it will support many



species that are locally or regionally rare. As a result, residents of Alexandria and surrounding neighborhoods will be able to experience a robust natural environment, teeming with all kinds of life, near their homes.

Huntley Meadows Park offers historic as well as natural resources. The land was once a plantation owned by the founding father George Mason IV—the author of the Virginia Declaration of Rights and a major advocate for the U.S. Bill of Rights. One of Mason's descendants built a grand house on the property in 1825, which is now part of the park and available for tours. This building, called the Huntley House, is listed on national, state, and local historic registers.

# Alexandria at the Ready



**A**ge-old trees stand like sentries at Battery Heights, a Civil War fortification in the City of Alexandria. Although no battle took place here, this site links contemporary Alexandria to a time when communities near the U.S. capital stood at the ready for attack.

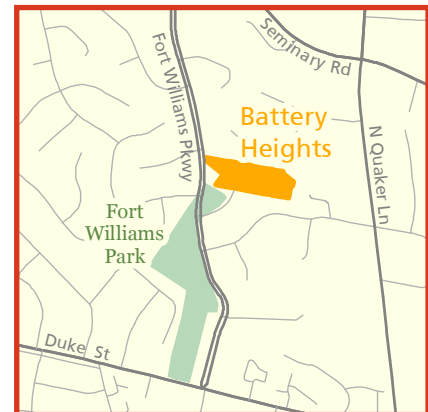


Nearly three acres of green space contain the remains of an earthen battery and rifle trench, positioned at the top of a ravine, about 1,000 feet from the site of Fort Williams, one of four forts built for federal troops in Alexandria. The fortifications at Battery Heights were built in 1863, as part of a line of earthworks that extended to the fort. Had there been an assault, according to a 2001 archaeological survey, "troops and a field piece would have been moved into position here. Enemy troops entering the ravine below would have been raked by crossfire from this battery and a similar fortified hill to the northwest." The battery looms

## Battery Heights

Owned by Battery Heights Homeowners Association  
3 protected acres  
City of Alexandria  
House District 46  
Senate District 39

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Historic Preservation, Tourism and Recreation, Urban Green Space, Water Quality



about 30 feet above the ravine floor, with the rifle trench positioned below it. The fortifications curve, crescent-shaped, 140 feet long and about 50 feet wide.

In 2003, the Battery Heights Homeowners Association donated an easement on this property to the **Northern Virginia Conservation Trust**, to preserve Battery Heights for all time.

The easement protects natural as well as cultural resources for the benefit of local residents: a spring, wetlands, a stream, and a stand of forest where white oaks, tulip trees, American beeches, Mayapples, and spicebush grow.

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY NORTHERN VIRGINIA CONSERVATION TRUST



# From Elementary School to Arts Center

## Clarendon School

Owned by Arlington Arts Center  
Historic building protected  
Arlington County  
House District 47  
Senate District 31

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Historic Preservation

The Clarendon School in the Arlington County is a historically significant building currently serving as a community arts center. It features elements of the Classical Revival style popular during the first phase of construction in 1910. A rear addition to the school was completed in 1954. The building was designed by Charles M. Robinson, a Richmond architect known for his school designs.

The school was renamed the Matthew Maury School, in 1944, in honor of the 19th Century master navigator Matthew Fontaine Maury, a native Virginian. From the time its doors opened in 1910 to its closing in 1973, this building served as the sole elementary school in the suburb of Clarendon.

The Clarendon School was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1999 for its architectural and educational significance. The school was built to serve a growing community in a swiftly

expanding part of Virginia, and its use reflects both the community's investment in early education and its response to the changing needs of the community. In 1977 the school became the home of what is now the Arlington Arts Center, which offers exhibits, arts education, and studio space for artists. The property is protected by a historic preservation easement held by the **Virginia Department of Historic Resources**, which helps to protect a local landmark while allowing it to continue to flourish as a cultural resource in the community.



# A Beloved Farm Becomes Suburban Parkland

PHOTOS COURTESY NORTHERN VIRGINIA CONSERVATION TRUST



## Lily Ruckstuhl Neighborhood Park

Public land - local  
7 protected acres  
Fairfax County  
House District 53  
Senate District 35

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Tourism and Recreation,  
Urban Green Space, Plant and  
Wildlife Habitat

**D**r. Lillian (Lily) Ruckstuhl earned her medical degree in 1958 at a time when few women became doctors, and she developed a well respected practice. Yet, she came to treasure a refuge from her busy professional life—the seven acres of woods and meadows she owned in Fairfax County.

Here, she watched her beloved horse, Picollo, graze in the field behind her house, and she cared for several generations of sheep, goats, horses, and dogs. She also tended to the historic Lindsay Cemetery next door.

But her community was rapidly urbanizing. Residential and commercial developments were sprouting up all around her little farm, located in Falls Church between Route 66 and Idylwood Road. She grew increasingly concerned that her property would also be developed after her passing.

Instead, Dr. Ruckstuhl created a legacy of natural open space by donating a conservation easement to the **Northern Virginia Conservation Trust**. When she passed away in 2008, she left the property to the land trust, with an additional bequest enabling the land trust to continue her role as caretaker of Lindsay Cemetery, where she is now buried. The land trust went on to convey the seven acre property, as a bargain sale, to the **Fairfax County Park Authority**, so this

farm can continue to provide a beloved natural refuge for local residents in the midst of a busy world.

In this region, the site of rapid, high-density development, there are fewer and fewer opportunities to set aside land for parks. “As Tyson’s Corner has developed, we have continued to look for green spaces in these urbanized areas,” said Julie Cline, Manager of Land Acquisition at the Fairfax County Park Authority.

In 2014, the Park Authority will work with the public to develop a master plan that fits with Dr. Ruckstuhl’s vision for her land. Sandy Stallman, the Manager of Park Planning, emphasizes their two-part mission: to protect the natural and cultural resources of the county and to provide recreational activities to improve local residents’ quality of life. The land that Dr. Ruckstuhl made a gift to the public can contribute to both parts of this mission, providing vibrant plant and wildlife habitat, as well as green space where people can take a rejuvenating break from city life.



Dr. Lily Ruckstuhl

# Saving the Great Trees at Eight Oaks

## Eight Oaks

Owned by the Symmes family  
2 protected acres  
Fairfax County  
House District 48  
Senate District 32

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Historic Preservation,  
Urban Green Space

One Christmas Eve, Jean Symmes received a unique gift from a friend—a book of pressed leaves from the many plants found on her three acre historic property in McLean, as well as a map of all the significant shrubs and trees on the land. The map features several of the original oaks for which the property, Eight Oaks, was named. These magnificent, large trees, which may be as old as 300 years, bear witness to this region's rural past.



The Symmes, who purchased Eight Oaks in 1968, describe their role as “caretakers of history.” The property consists of almost two beautiful acres surrounding a house said to have been built in 1858, with architecture reminiscent of Mount Vernon. Eight Oaks was given its name by a previous owner, Dr. Hugh Bennett, known as the “father of soil conservation” for his work creating and serving as chief of the Soil Conservation Service.

Jean Symmes said, “When the family began thinking about the future of Eight Oaks, we



spoke to real estate agents who always identified the ‘highest and best’ use as squeezing five or six lots out of it and making the maximum profit.” However, her family “decided that was not our definition of ‘highest and best use’, and that we favored conservation and community history.” The family worked with the **Northern Virginia Conservation Trust** to donate a conservation easement on the property, preserving its historic character and grand trees.

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY NORTHERN VIRGINIA CONSERVATION TRUST



# Remnant of a Grand Estate

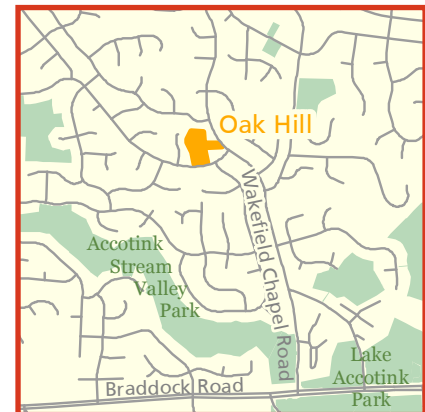
PHOTO BY DON SWEENEY



## Oak Hill

Owned by David and Amanda Sheetz  
2.6 protected acres  
Fairfax County  
House Districts 39  
Senate District 37

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Historic Preservation



After 223 years, Oak Hill stands as the last remnant of what was once the nearly 25,000-acre Ravensworth estate in Northern Virginia. But it, too, was nearly lost before a conservation easement and bargain sale was completed to protect the historic and cultural landmark.

Oak Hill was built in 1790 by Richard Fitzhugh, the grandson of William Fitzhugh who, in the 1670s, held the largest land grant in America. Members of the Fitzhugh family were major players in the early history of Fairfax County. In the 1930s, the house was expanded from a rural, Georgian-style, four-room plantation house to a magnificent Revival-inspired mansion. That renovation was done by Walter Mayo Macomber, a restoration architect for Colonial Williamsburg and Mt. Vernon. The historic landscape surrounding the mansion remains intact, including 200-year-old boxwoods.

By 2004, Oak Hill was vacant and nearly engulfed by newer houses, and a developer wanted to subdivide the remaining

2.6 acre property into three lots—keeping the manor house, but destroying the historic boxwoods and gardens. The **Northern Virginia Conservation Trust**, working with the **Fairfax County Park Authority** and the Board of Supervisors, helped to negotiate a bargain-sale purchase of a historic preservation easement, preserving the historic site for just over one-third of the cost of buying the property.

However, the future of Oak Hill took another precarious turn with the decline in the housing market. The house remained unsold and in disrepair for the next several years, and entered foreclosure in 2008. This time it was sold to private buyers, David and Amanda

Sheetz, who were happy to revive the beautiful house and grounds, in keeping with the easement.

Amanda Sheetz says, “David and I feel like we’re caretakers of history. It’s really cool. It’s also really humbling.” They share their passion for the historic home by continuing to open it for the annual Oak Hill community day, sponsored by Fairfax County and the Park Authority, so others can experience this precious piece of history.

# From Great Falls to the Occoquan River

## Gerry Conolly Cross County Trail

Public land - local  
27 protected acres  
Fairfax County  
House Districts 34, 35, 36, 37, 39, 41, 42  
Senate Districts 31, 32, 34, 35, 37, 39

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Tourism and Recreation,  
Urban Green Space, Bike and Pedestrian  
Network, Scenic Views

Fairfax County has succeeded in linking public lands together to create a 40-mile long multi-use trail that crosses the entire county—from the Potomac River at Great Falls National Historic Park to the Occoquan River near the Town of Occoquan. The Cross County Trail, or CCT, runs through some of the most picturesque landscapes in the county, offering an abundance of recreational opportunities and a safe corridor for cyclists and pedestrians.

The trail was initiated by **Fairfax Trails & Streams**, a local grassroots environmental advocacy group, which worked for nearly a decade to link public lands into a long, unbroken trail. The leader of the group, Bill Niedringhaus, meticulously researched the deeds in the courthouse, mapping out existing public lands. His research revealed a line of green snaking through the county from north to south, with only a few gaps. He first approached Fairfax County about his idea for a cross-county trail in 1995, and continually pushed the idea until he won the County's support. U.S. Rep. Gerry Connolly, at the time the Chair of the Board of Supervisors, championed the trail and provided leadership throughout all the stages of the project. By 2000, the **Fairfax County Parks Authority** had developed a blueprint to connect existing trails with a number of stream valley parks.

The project was made possible through a \$950,000 initial investment by the County, federal grants totalling over \$1 million, local bond funds of more than \$3 million, and dedicated volunteer efforts.

Today the Cross-County Trail is a popular destination for naturalists, cyclists, hikers, equestrians, runners, and parents with strollers. The trail is 8-10 feet wide, with a variety of surfaces including dirt, stone dust, and asphalt. It connects to nearby neighborhoods via numerous access points for people who arrive by vehicle, bicycle, or on foot.

An assortment of flora and fauna, including rare wildflowers, can be seen along the trail. Bluebells, cut-leaved toothwort, trout lilies, and harbinger-of-spring blossom along its route. Tree species in the heavily wooded areas along stream



valley corridors include river birch, sweetgum, pawpaw, willow, and alder.

Steven Kendall, a Fairfax County cyclist who regularly uses the trail, finds that the "CCT not only provides a safe means of travel, but also miles of well maintained mountain bike trails. In addition to the CCT itself, it connects many of Fairfax County's best mountain bike parks such as Wakefield and Lake Fairfax."



PHOTO BY CARL ZITZMANN

# Wild Woods on the Potomac River Gorge

PHOTO BY TABITHA EAGLE



**F**redette Eagle grew up in Memphis but attended boarding school near Washington, D.C. It was during a school field trip to Great Falls National Park that she first took in the unique splendors of the Potomac Gorge and became enchanted by the incredible landscape of huge, gold-leaved trees and steep cliffs towering over a roaring river. She immediately fell in love with it.

Years later, Eagle and her husband moved to the D.C. area. It was 1967 and Georgetown was the place to be—but not for her. She convinced her husband to live in the Virginia woods by this special river, and they bought a modest home on a large, wild tract overlooking the Potomac. On their 70 acres of majestic poplar, beech and oak trees, just off Georgetown Pike, they raised three children, Bryan, Tabitha and Hunter.

Although she had found her ideal home, Eagle was dismayed to learn that only the Maryland side of the Potomac Gorge was largely protected from development. Over the years the Eagles watched with dismay as much of the area around them was cleared and consumed with estate residences.

Meanwhile, property values increased, and so did taxes, as well as visits from interested developers.

Eagle did not want to leave her treasured forest, but was becoming anxious about the tax pressures. She initially took in boarders and later placed the property in Fairfax County's Agricultural and Forestal Program, which lowers the tax assessment if the owner keeps the property open for forest uses. But her goal always remained to permanently protect her refuge along the river. In 2006, she asked her three children what they thought about granting a conservation easement to permanently restrict development on the property. They had the most to lose by giving up valuable building rights on the land they would

## Eagle Property

Owned by the Eagle family  
70 protected acres  
Fairfax County  
House District 34  
Senate District 31

MAJOR PUBLIC BENEFITS: National Park Buffer, Scenic Views, Water Quality, Plant and Wildlife Habitat



inherit, but they made their mother proud when they all told her to go for it.

So, she did. Eagle worked with the **Northern Virginia Conservation Trust** to protect the property. This donated conservation easement preserves scenic views enjoyed by myriad visitors to Great Falls National Park. It also protects water quality in Bull Neck Run, which flows through her property to the Potomac River—providing cleaner drinking water for Northern Virginia and a healthier Chesapeake Bay. Further, the property is located on a stretch of the Potomac River Gorge that hosts a multitude of rare plant species—adding to the treasure of this wild, rushing river that flows through the U.S. capital area.



# The Business of Slavery

## Franklin and Armfield Slave Office (Freedom House)

Owned by Northern Virginia Urban League  
Historic building protected  
City of Alexandria  
House District 45  
Senate District 30

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Historic Preservation

In 1828, Isaac Franklin and John Armfield leased a three-story brick building in Alexandria, with access to nearby wharves and docks, as a holding pen for slaves that they were shipping to ports in the deep south. By the 1830s, Franklin and Armfield ran one of the largest slave-trading companies in the United States, buying, shipping, and selling as many as 1,800 people in a year. They bought slaves at low prices from their offices in Northern Virginia, then sold them at higher prices in Natchez, Mississippi, and New Orleans, Louisiana.

Today, the testimony of a former slave, William J. Anderson, is displayed at the old slave prison: "Sometimes their little children are torn from them, and sent far away to a distant country, never to see them again...[F]or the sake of money, they are sold separately, sometimes 200 miles apart. O, such crying and weeping when parting from each other!"

The building, which Franklin and Armfield purchased in 1832, was continuously owned by slave traders through 1861. It was also known as the Alexandria Slave Pen. Now called Freedom House, the property is owned by the **Northern**



PHOTO BY CARL ZITZMANN

**Virginia Urban League**, which has turned it into a museum recalling the suffering and struggle of people who were subjected to the slave trade and the greed of those who benefited from it. The property is protected by an easement granted to the **Virginia Department of Historic Resources** in 2009, with funding from the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the National Park Service. The site is noted by historic marker and the museum is open to the public five days a week, free of charge.

Among the exhibits at Freedom House



are these lines from the contemporary African-American poet Maya Angelou:

*Bringing the gifts that my  
ancestors gave,*

*I am the hope and the dream of  
the slave.*

*I RISE. I RISE. I RISE.*

# A Remnant of Battlefield in Chantilly

PHOTO BY CAROLINE MASSIE



## Ox Hill Battlefield

Public land - local  
5 protected acres  
Fairfax County  
House District 35  
Senate District 34

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Historic Preservation,  
Tourism and Recreation, Urban Green  
Space

In the center of modern, urban Fairfax County, a 5-acre parcel in Chantilly provides a time capsule transporting visitors back to 1862 and the Battle of Ox Hill. Today this fragment of battlefield serves as a park, where farm fields and split-rail fences recall the landscape of the Civil War. The park provides both open green space and a historic resource commemorating the only significant Civil War battle fought in Fairfax County.

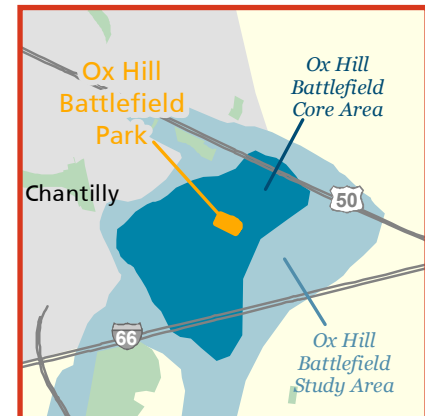
The Battle of Ox Hill, as the Confederates named it, or the Battle of Chantilly, as the Union called it, erupted two days after the Second Battle of Manassas. General "Stonewall" Jackson, with about 15,000 troops, moved to outflank General Pope's forces as they retreated. However, General Pope and approximately 5,500 Union troops countered the attack. The two forces collided at Ox Hill, in the midst of a violent thunder and lightning storm. Major Oliver Bosbyshell of the 48th Pennsylvania described the event as "outrivaling pandemonium itself. It was a terrible, horrible, phantasmagoria." Although the battle, which ended in a stalemate, lasted a mere two hours, it left 1,000 Union soldiers and 500 Confederate soldiers dead.

Farm owner and former Confederate soldier John Ballard built a simple monument on the site, and later deeded a small tract to serve as a memorial, where

two granite monuments were erected. Otherwise, the battlefield was largely neglected. Even neighborhood residents were unaware of its existence.

During the second half of the 20th century, preservationists occasionally made a plea to protect the battlefield, but Fairfax County planned for growth on the site. Newspapers began to cover the issue in 1985 when a grave was discovered in an adjacent townhouse development, containing the remains and the uniform buttons of a Confederate soldier.

Historian "Bud" Hall stumbled across the granite monuments while jogging through the neighborhood, and later discovered already approved plans to develop the site. Along with Ed Wenzel and Brian Pohanka, he formed the **Chantilly Battlefield Association** in 1986, which fought for 22 years to preserve the



battlefield. "We did everything we could," Hall says.

The battlefield spans approximately 500 acres, of which only 4.9 acres was saved from townhouse and commercial development. The developer donated half of the land in 1987 and **Fairfax County** purchased the other half in 1994. Wenzel says, "We were lucky to get the most important ground on the battlefield."

Since its first opening in 2008, the battlefield park has hosted several events, including tours, reenactments, and a 150th anniversary commemoration. Visitors from near and far can walk through the restored fields and follow a trail with interpretive signs about the battle.

# A Corridor for Water Quality, Trails, and Habitat

## Piney Branch Stream Valley Park

Public land – local  
180 acres protected  
Fairfax County  
House Districts 37, 40  
Senate District 37

**PUBLIC BENEFITS:** Plant and Wildlife Habitat, Water Quality, Urban Green Space, Tourism and Recreation, Bike and Pedestrian Network



PHOTO BY KRISTIE KENDALL

One hot spot for development in western Fairfax County from the late 1940s through the 1970s was the group of neighborhoods now known as Leehigh Woods, Leehigh Village, and Brentwood Farms.

As developers built these subdivisions, they would plan the community around good perc sites. Parcels that didn't perc well were given to the **Fairfax County Park Authority**. As a result, by the 1980s, the Park Authority had amassed 180 acres of parkland along Piney Branch, the stream that flowed through these neighborhoods. The County turned these holdings into a new stream valley park,

one of the first of many.

The Piney Branch Stream Valley Park serves multiple purposes. For one, the wide swath of natural area along the stream helps to manage stormwater runoff and improve water quality by allowing plants and soil to soak up water and filter out pollution. The parcels also form an unbroken corridor of habitat

for wildlife and a trail corridor for recreational use. The trail system that winds along Piney Branch leads to Brentwood Park, a local community park, with swing sets, fishing ponds and ecological demonstrations.

Now, three generations of families in the more than 200 homes surrounding Piney Branch have reaped many benefits from the park—green space where people can play, unwind, or work out, neighborhood forest land where children and adults can learn about nature, and a community asset that enhances property values.

### THE BIG PICTURE

**Land conditions determine our water quality.** When natural systems such as forests and riparian buffers are in place, they filter and purify the water that flows into streams. By contrast, hard surfaces and chemical-treated lawns pour polluted runoff into streams. **Conserving and restoring natural systems, compared to new water treatment systems, can save taxpayers many millions of dollars and deliver cleaner water.**

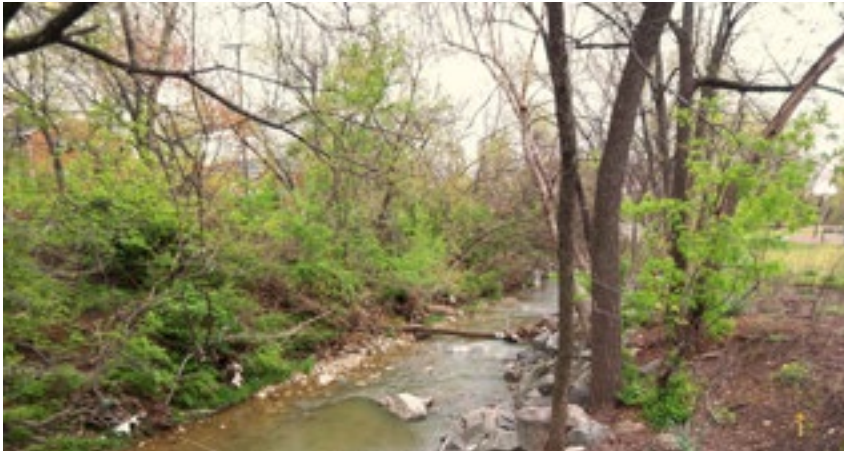
The Goose Creek watershed in Fauquier and Loudoun Counties provides a good example of how private land conservation can substantially protect a public resource. So far, over 80,000 acres have been protected—a full 30% of the watershed. Goose Creek is a tributary of the Potomac, a major water supply source for Northern Virginia. In the Occoquan watershed, which provides drinking water for 1.7 million people in Prince William and Fairfax Counties, 15% of the land has been protected, including 44,700 acres of public land and 22,200 acres of land under conservation easement.

SOURCE: Prince William County Conservation Alliance



# Many Benefits from an Urban Stream

NORTHERN VIRGINIA CONSERVATION TRUST



## Long Branch Stream Corridor

Owned by Shirley Park Leasing Investments Limited Partnership  
2.5 protected acres  
Arlington County  
House District 49  
Senate District 30

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Water Quality, Urban Green Space

Northern Virginia

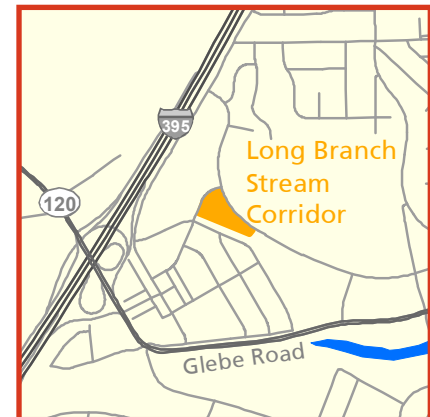
**E**ven a short stretch of natural area along a stream provides numerous benefits for urban and suburban residents.

A 2.5 acre conservation easement near the Arlington Ridge neighborhood covers part of the Long Branch Stream Valley, including a 35 foot buffer on either side of the stream. This corridor offers a pleasant walk on a shady path beside The Park at Arlington Ridge complex and it links two local parks, Troy Park and Fraser Park.

For local residents, it increases quality of life by offering shade in the summer,

opportunities for outdoor recreation, habitat for bird-watching, and green space that makes their neighborhood more attractive.

The natural corridor also improves water quality in the region. It provides a buffer of trees, shrubs, and grass that moderates the flow of stormwater runoff into the stream and filters out pollution. Long Branch is a tributary to Four Mile Run, which Arlington County and community



organizations have been working to restore.

Long Branch is a wide stream, about 45 feet across in this area. Although it appears that the stream was redirected at one point, it has regained a natural structure and beauty. The easement ensures that the stream runs above ground through a natural environment which enhances the surrounding neighborhoods. The easement was donated to the **Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority** by a company called The Colonies, now Shirley Park Leasing Investments, L.P., in 2003. Since the property has been placed in easement, the owners have planted trees to enhance this already attractive stream valley, making it even more of an asset to the community.



PHOTO BY DAVID ANHOLD

# Inspiration for the Home Gardener

## Green Spring Gardens

Public land - local  
27 protected acres  
Fairfax County  
House District 38  
Senate District 35

**PUBLIC BENEFITS:** Outdoor Education,  
Tourism and Recreation, Plant and  
Wildlife Habitat, Historic Preservation



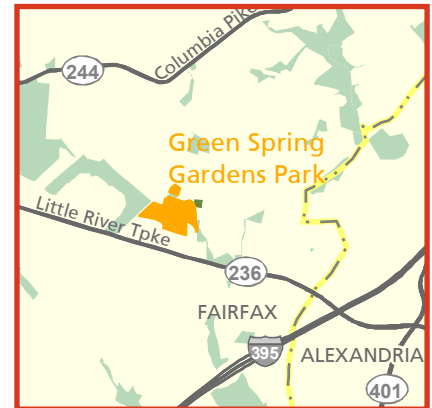
ALL PHOTOS BY CARL ZITZMANN

**G**reen Spring Gardens is a unique horticultural haven, offering a wealth of resources for plant lovers and gardeners interested in native landscaping techniques.

Located just outside the City of Alexandria, the 27 acre local park offers a two acre native plant garden, seasonal display beds, a horticultural center, growing houses, rock gardens, notable collections of irises and witch hazel, two ponds and a gazebo, a gardening library, and a wide range of gardening and naturalist programs for adults and children. A stream called Turkeycock Run meanders through the largely forested park.



The park also includes a house that dates from 1784 and a historic spring house. John Moss built the substantial brick home on 540 acres in 1784, and farmed there on reclaimed tobacco fields. A later owner, Fountain Beattie, raised not only farm crops but twelve children when he owned the property from 1878 to 1917.



Michael and Belinda Straight's family purchased the house in 1942 and during their 30+ years of ownership, they saw their land become an island in the midst of development. The Straights wanted to preserve their own beloved property, so they stipulated that their house and land be preserved in perpetuity as a public park. They donated the land to the **Fairfax County Park Authority** in 1970. Local bond issues were passed in the 1980s, providing nearly \$1.6 million for capital projects at the park. In 2002, **Northern Virginia Conservation Trust** accepted a 1.5 acre easement which buffers the park's northeast corner.

This park not only offers beautiful native gardens for the residents of greater D.C. to enjoy; it teaches people to create garden spaces full of natural beauty and vitality at their own homes.



## Insects like to eat what they know.

In fact, they depend on the native plants that they evolved to eat—so if we want the full range of butterflies and plenty of bees and a general abundance of bugs, which feed birds and the rest of the food chain, **we need native plants**. Want 29 times more biodiversity? Then go with native ornamental plants over exotic ornamentals. Some all-star plants for habitat are oaks, which support 532 kinds of moths and butterflies alone; dogwoods which support 117 kinds; and goldenrod, which supports 115 kinds.

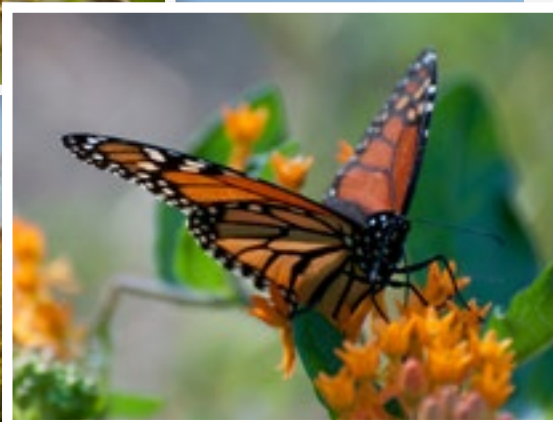
SOURCE: *Bringing Nature Home* by Doug Tallamy



ABOVE: Bee on a coneflower  
PHOTO BY TOM LUSSIER



LEFT: Yellow-breasted chat  
PHOTO BY MARK L. WATSON



BELOW: Monarch butterfly  
PHOTO BY KATHERINE VANCE



PHOTO BY BRUCE JONES



# The Last House Standing in Manassas

## Liberia

Public land - local  
18 protected acres  
City of Manassas  
House District 50  
Senate District 29

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Historic Preservation,  
Tourism and Recreation, Urban Green  
Space, Water Quality



VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HISTORIC RESOURCES

The Civil War raged around Liberia plantation, within the walls of the manor house as well as on the nearby battlefields. When the war ended, the brick house was the only sizeable structure to remain standing on the plains of Manassas. In a mere four years, the house had gone from an emblem of a flourishing Southern aristocracy to a relic.

The plantation came through the family of Robert "King" Carter, the wealthiest man in colonial Virginia, who, when he died in 1732, left an estate including 333,000 acres of land. Liberia, on 1,660 acres, was one of twelve plantations parcelled out from his holdings on the Lower Bull Run. The plantations were named for the twelve signs of the zodiac; originally, Liberia was called Libra.

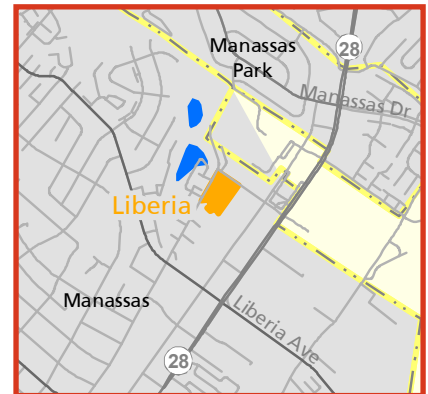
The land passed down to one of Carter's great-granddaughters and her husband, Harriett and William Weir, who had the five-bay brick house built in a blend of Georgian and Federal styles, in 1825. After Harriet died in 1841, William remarried. In 1860, he owned 80 slaves, making Liberia one of the largest slaveholding operations in Prince William County.

When the Civil War broke out, in 1861, its first major land battle was fought at Manassas, about five miles to the north. As the panicking Union army pulled

back toward Washington, Jefferson Davis, the President of the Confederacy, who had arrived by train, met with his military leaders at Liberia. Davis was eager to pursue the Union troops as they retreated, but the officers persuaded him that their soldiers were too exhausted to pursue further battle.

Less than a year later, it was the Weir family that was running away and Union commanders who occupied Liberia. In 1862, William Weir and his wife Louisa fled before the arrival of the U.S. Gen. Irwin McDowell, who set up military headquarters in their house. President Abraham Lincoln visited Liberia to confirm that Gen. McDowell was recovering from an injury.

At the end of the war, the Weir sons, who had fought for the Confederacy, returned to the devastated landscape of Manassas to farm, but their plantation never prospered as it had. They sold the land in 1888, and two subsequent sets of



owners managed a dairy farm at Liberia. In 1986, Hilda and I.J. Breeden donated the mansion, along with 5.6 acres, to the **City of Manassas**. The City purchased an adjacent 12.6 acres to buffer the historic site from development.

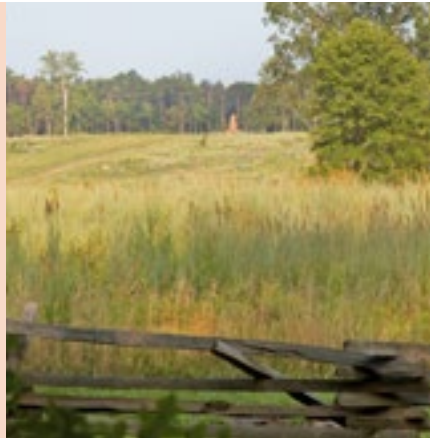
In 2012, the City placed Liberia under a historic preservation easement, held by the **Virginia Department of Historic Resources**. The easement was funded by a General Assembly grant. The City's master plan for the site calls for restoring the historic house and opening it to the public for tours and events, and opening the 18-acre grounds as a park.

# Filling a Gap at Manassas Battlefield

## Gray and Smith Tracts at Manassas Battlefield

Public land - national  
10 protected acres  
Prince William County  
House District 40  
Senate District 13

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Historic Preservation,  
Tourism and Recreation



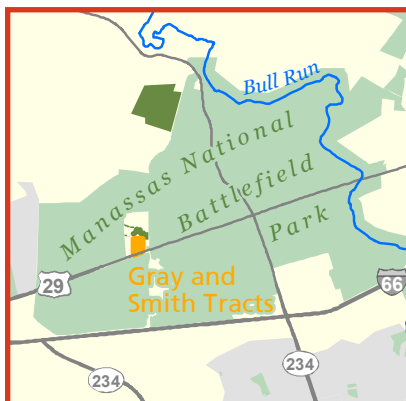
CIVIL WAR TRUST

**C**ivil War Trust has preserved an important piece of Manassas Battlefield, filling a gap within the much-visited Manassas National Battlefield Park, in Prince William County. In 2010, the Trust purchased 10 acres adjacent to the park, including the Gray property, the site of significant fighting during the Battle of Second Manassas.

During that battle, Union troops advanced through this area, launching repeated assaults against the positions held by Confederate Maj. Gen. T. J. "Stonewall" Jackson's forces along an unfinished railroad. The largest of these Union assaults, on August 30, 1862, originated from the Gray tract and adjacent tracts, as troops under Maj. Gen. Fitz John Porter deployed in the Groveton Woods and advanced across the Sudley-Groveton Road (Featherbed Lane) to

strike Jackson's positions along a section of the unfinished railroad known as the Deep Cut. The Confederates drove back the Union troops, forcing them to withdraw across this site, with elements of Stonewall Jackson's forces in pursuit. Because of this property's role in the Second Battle of Manassas, the land is of national significance.

Civil War Trust purchased the Gray Tract, along with the nearby Smith Tract, in 2010, preserving this land in partnership with the National Park Service, the Commonwealth of Virginia, and Prince William County. Much of the purchase price of \$400,000 was provided through the generosity of Civil War Trust members from around the country. However, a substantial portion came from the Virginia Civil War Battlefield Protection Program. The following year, the Trust gave both the Gray and the Smith tracts to the National Park Service, in order to more completely preserve this major battlefield.



## THE BIG PICTURE

### Over 120,000 acres of Civil War battlefields have been protected in Virginia, and these

landmarks are a major draw for heritage tourists. In Virginia, visitors to Civil War sites stay twice as long—and spend twice as much money—as the average tourist. The average family of four spends \$1,000 during its battlefield visit.

SOURCE: Civil War Trust



PHOTO BY CHRIS HEISEY

# A Lost Colonial Town on the Potomac Path

## Old Colchester Park And Preserve

Public land - local  
140 protected acres  
Fairfax County  
House District 42  
Senate District 36

**PUBLIC BENEFITS:** Historic Preservation, Tourism and Recreation, Plant and Wildlife Habitat, Water Quality, Storm Resilience

Once, at the mouth of the Occoquan River, where the water grows wide and flows into the Potomac, there was a colonial town. But long before the Town of Colchester was built, this site lay along a major thoroughfare lined with seasonal villages.

It is located on the route of the Potomac Path, an important Indian trail that ran north/south, following the fall line and making use of river crossings low enough to ford. For thousands of years, Native Americans moved through this area, drawing from the bounty of the estuarine environment, where the river is influenced by the bay and the sea.

As Europeans arrived, they also used the Potomac Path to travel overland. In 1684, Col. George Mason (the great-grandfather of founding father George Mason IV) established a ferry where the path crossed the Occoquan River. The Mason family continued to operate this ferry business for over a hundred years. Around 1710, the trail was widened to a road by tobacco farmers, and it became a part of Kings Highway, the major road from Boston to Charleston. By 1729, a tavern, and blacksmith shop, as well as the ferry, all stood

ready to serve travelers. The settlement grew, and the Town of Colchester was chartered in 1753.

But the town began to fade toward the end of the 18th century. Tobacco wore out the soil, and crops failed. Port trade and commerce were diverted to Alexandria. The settlement dwindled and around 1817, a fire destroyed many of its buildings.

Today, this site has largely returned to forest and marshes, although a few original buildings remain, including Colchester Church and cemetery, which is the oldest church site in Fairfax County. While most of the surrounding area has been converted into suburban neighborhoods, 140 acres of this historic site remain undeveloped, and the **Fairfax County Park Authority** acquired the land in 2007, for use as a park and for archaeological study.



PHOTO BY CARL ZITZMANN



The Park Authority obtained the property through a Federal Lands to Parks Program operated by the National Park Service. In 1999, the federal government granted the local authority a 115-acre quarry site, with the expectation that this property would be exchanged for valuable park land. Accordingly, the Park Authority sold the quarry and purchased the land that is now Old Colchester Park and Preserve. Archaeological research is underway at the site, and the Park Authority is in the process of creating a local park here that will preserve natural and cultural resources.



# George Washington's Creek

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY  
NORTHERN VIRGINIA CONSERVATION TRUST



## Little Hunting Creek

Owned by Northern Virginia Conservation Trust, Fairfax County, and private landowners  
19 protected acres  
Fairfax County  
House District 44  
Senate Districts 30, 36

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Water Quality, Plant and Wildlife Habitat, Urban Green Space, Scenic Views, Historic Preservation

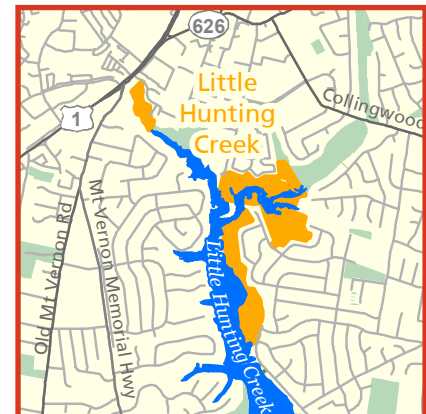
Northern Virginia

As Little Hunting Creek makes its three-mile journey from its headwaters to the Potomac River, it flows past centuries of history. Here in the homeland of the Doeg tribe, by the end of the 17th century, George Washington's great-grandfather owned a large stretch of land. His property was then known as Little Hunting Creek Plantation, which became Mount Vernon. At the birth of the nation, the land on both sides of the creek was part of George Washington's estate.

Today the creek is home to egrets, ospreys, great blue herons, geese, and ducks, even as it flows through urban neighborhoods in Fairfax County. Conservation of this rich wildlife habitat is made possible by a collaboration between the **Northern Virginia Conservation Trust, Fairfax County,** and private landowners. Together, they have protected approximately 19 acres along the creek, in an area designated for resource protection under Fairfax County's Chesapeake Bay Ordinance.

The Northern Virginia Conservation Trust owns a two acre parcel adjacent to a 16-acre parcel owned by Fairfax County, known as the Pumping Station. Both of these tracts were originally set aside by groups of landowners who joined forces over 40 years ago to purchase them and keep them from

being developed. In addition, two families in the neighborhood have donated easements on a pair of small, creekside lots, adding to the total habitat protected along the creek that ran through George Washington's farm. From a vantage point on the banks of



Little Hunting Creek, the nightly show of egrets filling the trees on the grounds of Mount Vernon is breathtaking.



# Saving Buckland

## Village of Buckland

Multiple private owners  
258 acres protected  
Prince William and Fauquier Counties  
House District 13  
Senate District 28

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Historic Preservation,  
Tourism and Recreation, Water Quality,  
Productive Farmland, Scenic Views

**H**ow do you preserve a historic Virginia town surrounded by a Civil War battlefield when it's directly in the line of sprawl and a busy highway runs through it? That's what the **Buckland Preservation Society** wants to know.

This grassroots group has spearheaded efforts to keep the village of Buckland, on the border of Prince William and Fauquier Counties, from losing its historic riches. Buckland boasts an archaeological site full of artifacts from a Native American trade hub and a town with 21 buildings that date from the 18th and early 19th century—and there's more. Buckland was the home of one of the earliest automated mills in the world, the first paved road in Virginia, a precedent setting community of free blacks before the Civil War, and a cavalry battle that was both

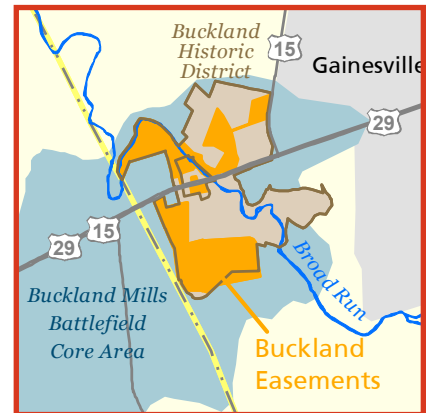
J.E.B. Stuart's last hurrah and Custer's "first stand."

David Blake, Chairman of the Buckland Preservation Society, sees Buckland as a place to tell the story of America, across many time periods and inclusive of all kinds of people. He says, "There are very few places in the United States that have such a huge amount of cultural resources, from thousands of years ago to today, concentrated in one spot."

Here's the problem. Buckland looks like the next stop in a line of communities that have exploded with sprawl. Located



ALL PHOTOS COURTESY BUCKLAND PRESERVATION SOCIETY



on Rt. 29, less than an hour from D.C., it's just down the road from towns where so many housing developments and shopping centers have gone up that Blake finds them "unrecognizable."

"I've watched the sprawl all my life," he says. "And now we're the next ones on the chopping block."

A major challenge, if you want to save Buckland, is Rt. 29—a key conduit between central Virginia and DC and a packed commuter route. The highway passes right through the historic town and the core of Buckland Battlefield—and VDOT is continually considering



1863 sketch of Buckland

plans to widen the road beyond its current four lanes.

In response to such intense development pressure, landowners in Buckland have organized to protect the town and battlefield. They've sponsored extensive archaeological and historic research. They've succeeded in listing Buckland as a 400-acre historic district on the state and national historic registers, and establishing a 19-acre local historic overlay district. They've teamed up with the National Trust for Historic Preservation, Virginia Department of Historic Resources, and other groups to prevent projects that would impact the historic site. They're advocating an alternative plan for improving Rt. 29 commissioned by the Piedmont Environmental Council. They're working with the Journey Through Hallowed Ground to promote Buckland as a destination for heritage tourism that might feature a working water powered mill and restoration of the town's historic taverns.

Buckland landowners have also taken action by granting conservation easements on properties they could have sold for development for millions of dollars. Over the last five years, five different landowners have granted easements on properties totaling over 250 acres. Partial funding for the easements came through the American Battlefield Protection Program. The easements, held by the **Virginia Department of Historic Resources**, protect the Buckland Mill (first built in the 1770's), five other buildings dating from the 1770's through 1825, a sizeable portion of the Buckland Mills battlefield and two-thirds of a mile of frontage along Broad Run, a tributary of the Occoquan River. For a village in the line of sprawl, these protected properties offer a measure of permanence and a foundation for preservationists to build on.

## THE BIG PICTURE

### The greatest concentration of historic resources anywhere in America

can be found along a corridor from Monticello to Gettysburg: 9 Presidential homes and birthplaces, 57 historic towns and villages, 18 state and national parks, hundreds of Civil War battlefields, and thousands of historic sites. The 175-mile corridor, including 130 miles in Virginia, has been recognized as the Journey Through Hallowed Ground Natural Heritage Area—a landscape for all Americans to explore.

**Nearly 500,000 acres have been protected** within the Journey Through Hallowed Ground corridor in Virginia, preserving historic landmarks and the scenic landscapes that connect them. Approximately one third of these protected acres are public land; the other two thirds are private land under conservation easement.

SOURCE: Journey Through Hallowed Ground



James Madison's Montpelier. PHOTO BY CAROLINE GODFREY



# Good Stewardship Along Cedar Run

## Still Waters Farm

Owned by the Nissley family  
738 protected acres  
Fauquier County  
House District 31  
Senate District 27

**PUBLIC BENEFITS:** Productive Farmland,  
Water Quality, Scenic Views, Plant and  
Wildlife Habitat

John Nissley has lived his whole life among the rich, nearly level farm fields of southern Fauquier County, and he raised twelve children at Still Waters Farm, a large dairy farm on the banks of Cedar Run.

Nissley, a Mennonite, values farming as “a simple way of life.” He describes it as an occupation that is “worthwhile” and “upbuilding,” one that “calls us to grow mentally and in almost every area of life.” Farming doesn’t allow for narrow specialization, he says. It requires breadth. “If you can farm, you just get into most everything... It covers it all.”

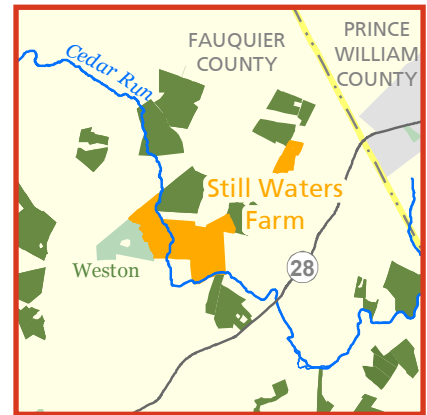
As he and his children, who are mostly grown, continue the family tradition of farming, they are taking that tradition further in the direction of good stewardship of the earth. “When I grew up, we did some of it,” Nissley says, “but we’re getting away from tilling more and more, and preserving the land more. We’re working toward that all the time.”

They have fenced their livestock away from the creek, allowing trees and shrubs to grow beside the water and provide habitat for wildlife. With more habitat, they’ve started to see an increase in deer, turkey, and small game, and they’ve

noticed quail coming back. The family has also started using no-till methods to cultivate their fields, to minimize erosion.

In recent years, they have also protected most of the farm with a conservation easement through the **Fauquier County Purchase of Development Rights (PDR)** program. Nissley says, “The thing I like about the easement is, they require good farming practices which encourages it all in the right direction.”

Still Waters Farm includes one mile of frontage on Turkey Run, which flows into Cedar Run and 1.75 miles of frontage on Cedar Run, a tributary of the Occoquan River. Well over half of the farm has been designated as prime or important farm soils by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The easement on Still Waters Farm is co-held by Fauquier County and the **Piedmont Environmental Council**, and it was purchased, in part, with funds from the Federal Farm and Ranch Protection Program.



“One of the main reasons I did it was to preserve it for the next generation so there wouldn’t be so much temptation to sell it for whatever might come up that looks like it’s worth more than farming—so it’ll stay in farming,” Nissley says. “They can’t develop it or do something else with it, so they might as well farm it. And it’s a good practice. I like it. I think it’s the place to raise a family and teach our children the responsibilities of life.”

PHOTO BY ROSE JENKINS

# Spring Bluebells, Clean Water, and Buffer for a Military Base



PHOTO BY RYAN WICK

**M**errimac Farm was established as a state Wildlife Management Area in 2008, providing a place for citizens in a rapidly developing suburban area to enjoy the outdoors—from walking through an exceptional display of spring bluebells to fishing or paddling on Cedar Run. Its conservation also helps to provide clean water for the reservoirs that supply much of Northern Virginia and provides an open space buffer for the Quantico Marine Corps Base.

Perhaps Merrimac Farm's most noteworthy feature is the expanse of Virginia bluebells that bloom each spring in the floodplain forest along Cedar Run—one of the single largest patches in the state. Throughout the year, visitors to Merrimac Farm can also enjoy hiking, wildlife viewing, and nature photography. Anglers can cast their lines along more than a mile of frontage on Cedar Run, as well as a small pond. Canoeists and kayakers can access the river. Hunters with permits can take deer and turkey.

Merrimac Farm also offers vital wildlife habitat, including forested wetlands and vernal pools, some of the most

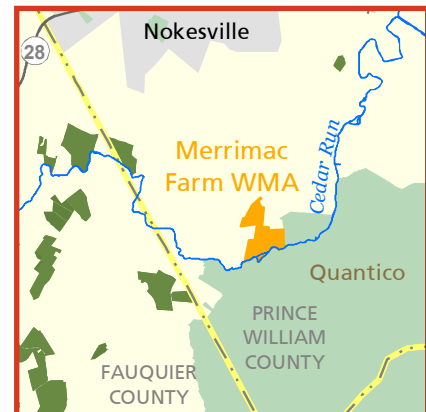
threatened habitat types in the United States. Wildlife at the preserve includes bobwhite quail, songbirds, waterfowl, deer, fox, rabbits, frogs and salamanders.

By preserving wetlands and forests along Cedar Run, Merrimac Farm also helps to provide clean water for Northern Virginia communities and contribute to the restoration of the Chesapeake Bay. Cedar Run flows into the Occoquan River, a tributary of the Potomac River, which flows into the Chesapeake Bay. Along the way, this water supplies the Occoquan Reservoir, a major source of public water for Prince William, Fairfax, Fauquier, Loudoun and Stafford counties.

## Merrimac Farm Wildlife Management Area

Public land - state  
301 protected acres  
Prince William County  
House Districts 51, 31  
Senate District 28

**PUBLIC BENEFITS:** Tourism and Recreation, Public River Access, Water Quality, Storm Resilience, Scenic Views, Plant and Wildlife Habitat, Military Base Buffer



This protected land also helps to ensure that suburban development will not interfere with the Marine Corps' ability to train soldiers on the adjacent Quantico Marine Corps Base. Quantico Base Commander Colonel Charles Dallachie said, "This partnership not only allows us to continue our mission of training Marines, but also lets the local community enjoy important Virginia habitat in its natural state."

The **Prince William Conservation Alliance** helped to secure funds for the **Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries** (VDGIF) to purchase this property, from sources including VDGIF, Virginia Land Conservation Foundation, and the U.S. Department of the Navy.

# A Haven on the Atlantic Flyway

## Waller Property

Owned by Chris Waller  
69 protected acres  
Prince William County  
House District 52  
Senate District 36

**PUBLIC BENEFITS:** Plant and Wildlife Habitat,  
Water Quality, Scenic Views, Storm  
Resilience



ALL PHOTOS BY ROBERT PRICE

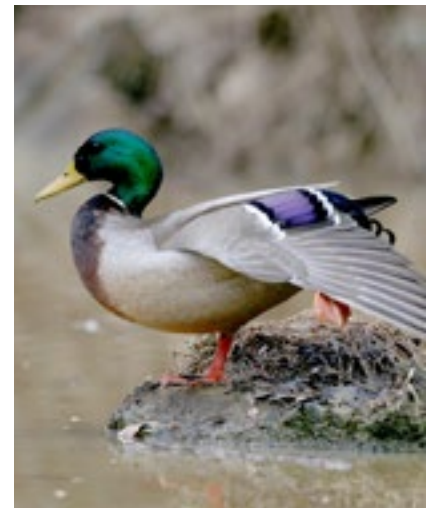
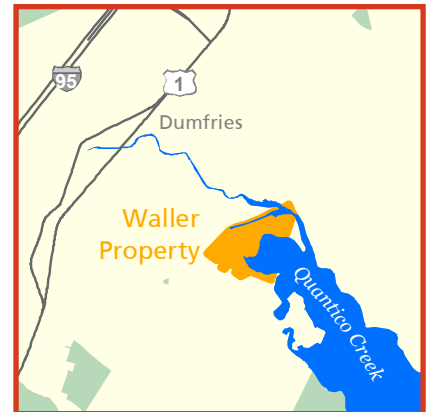
Ducks need places to rest as they make their way along the 3,000 mile Atlantic Flyway, from the Caribbean to the Arctic tundra. They need places where they can find food and recharge, or stay and nest a while. And they can't always find those habitats along stretches of the eastern seaboard where paved and developed areas far exceed marshes and grasslands. By and large, the suburbs of eastern Prince William County aren't the most duck-friendly place. Then there's Chris Waller's place on Quantico Creek—a haven where it's needed most.

The 69-acre property has 1,000 feet of frontage on the wide creek near its confluence with the Potomac River. All but 15 acres is marshland, and the marshes are full of reeds, wild rice, and other plants for forage. They're also full of ducks, geese, swans, eagles, herons, egrets, and other birds. Sometimes, the surface is all but covered in migrating waterfowl. "With all that marshland, it's just prime duck habitat," Waller says.

Wood ducks come in abundance, and they thrive. Waller has enhanced the natural habitat with cedar duck boxes, which stand in for the hollow trees where wood ducks like to nest. Often, he'll find 12 or 13 eggs at a time in a box and the birds may lay 2 or 3 clutches of eggs in a season. Pintails, mallards, canvasbacks, and black ducks are also

plentiful. Waller has seen as many as two or three hundred tundra swans covering his marshes in the winter months. He's also seen bald eagles by the dozen, congregating on the ice.

Properties like this offer much-needed rest stops and seasonal homes for migrating birds, filling gaps in the vast corridors they need to make their journeys across continents. Waller, who calls himself "an avid outdoorsman," was inspired to protect the land because of the pleasure he takes in all kind of outdoor activities—hunting, fishing, water-skiing, and snow skiing, to name a few. He is an enthusiastic supporter of **Ducks Unlimited**, which conserves habitat for waterfowl, and he worked with Ducks Unlimited to protect the land, donating an easement in 2009.





# Upscale Development or Waterfront Park?

ALL PHOTO BY LYNN CRUMP



The future could have gone very differently for Widewater Peninsula, at the confluence of Aquia Creek and the Potomac River in fast-growing Stafford County. One vision for the land included numerous luxury homes, a marina, a golf course, and a conference center. Even as developers pushed to convert the peninsula's natural landscapes into an upscale subdivision, **The Trust for Public Land** was working with the state and the landowner toward a conservation solution.

In 2006, The Trust for Public Land negotiated the purchase of the land from Dominion Resources, and then conveyed the land to the **Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation** for a new state park. The 1,100-acre park will provide public access to the Potomac River, as well as a variety of recreational activities among its forests, fields, wetlands, and almost five miles of river and creek frontage.

The vision for the peninsula that prevailed is expressed in the master plan for the park: "The purpose of Widewater State Park is to provide premier water and land based educational and outdoor

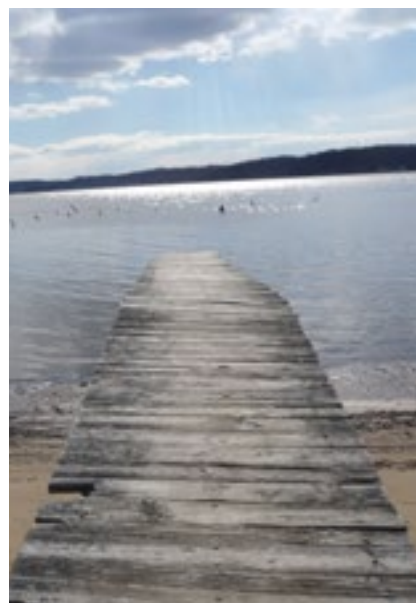
recreational opportunities while protecting and interpreting the unique natural, historical, and cultural resources of the peninsula of land cradled between Aquia Creek and the Potomac River in Stafford County."

Today, planning for the future of the park is well underway, with the first amenities—including a day-use area overlooking the Potomac, with parking, restrooms, a playground, picnic shelters, a fishing pier and structures for bank fishing, a canoe launch, landing and campsites, a boat launch on Aquia Creek, and trails—expected to open by 2016.

## Widewater State Park

Public land - state  
1,100 protected acres  
Stafford County  
House District 2  
Senate District 36

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Tourism and Recreation, Public Water Access, Water Quality, Storm Resilience, Plant and Wildlife Habitat



# Saving a Pristine Peninsula

## Crow's Nest Natural Area Preserve

Public land - state  
2,872 protected acres  
Stafford County  
House District 28  
Senate District 28

**PUBLIC BENEFITS:** Tourism and Recreation, Public Water Access, Water Quality, Storm Resilience, Plant and Wildlife Habitat, Scenic Views, Historic Preservation



PHOTO BY IRVINE WILSON

**T**he Crow's Nest peninsula has long been known as a biological gem, but for many

years its future lay in doubt. Located north of Fredericksburg, on the edge of the Potomac River, Crow's Nest was a high, narrow peninsula of mature hardwood forests, bounded by two creeks and rimmed with wetlands. It offered a rich habitat for bald eagles, herons, and migratory songbirds, for fish and shellfish, for rare plants, and many other species.

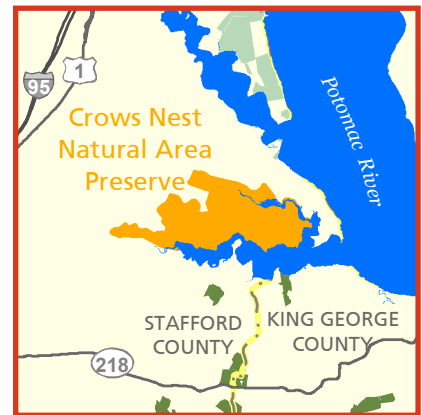
But the peninsula also made an attractive site for development. Over the years, the land passed through the hands of various land developers. In the early 2000s, the company that owned it was pushing to build as many as 8,000 homes there. This pristine peninsula was in danger of fragmentation, clear-cutting, erosion, water pollution, wetland loss, and habitat destruction.

Fortunately, a broad array of conservation partners were able to save Crow's Nest, securing its future as a protected wilderness area and public nature preserve. In 2008 and 2009, **The Nature Conservancy** assisted **Stafford County** and the **Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation** to purchase the land in two parts, totalling 2,880 acres. Numerous partners contributed to this effort, including Northern Virginia Conservation Trust, Virginia Aquatic Resources Trust Fund, Virginia

Land Conservation Foundation, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Stafford Lakes Partnership, which sold the land as a bargain sale.

Now known as the Crow's Nest Natural Area Preserve, this extraordinary peninsula supports:

- ▶ 750 acres of tidal and non-tidal wetlands, including some of the most biologically diverse wetlands in the Potomac River watershed;
- ▶ 21 miles of buffers along streams, rivers, and wetlands;
- ▶ 2,200 acres of mature hardwood forest including two rare forest types;
- ▶ habitat for bald eagles, endangered short-nosed sturgeon, and 22 significant plant species;
- ▶ habitat for about 60 species of neotropical migratory songbirds, of

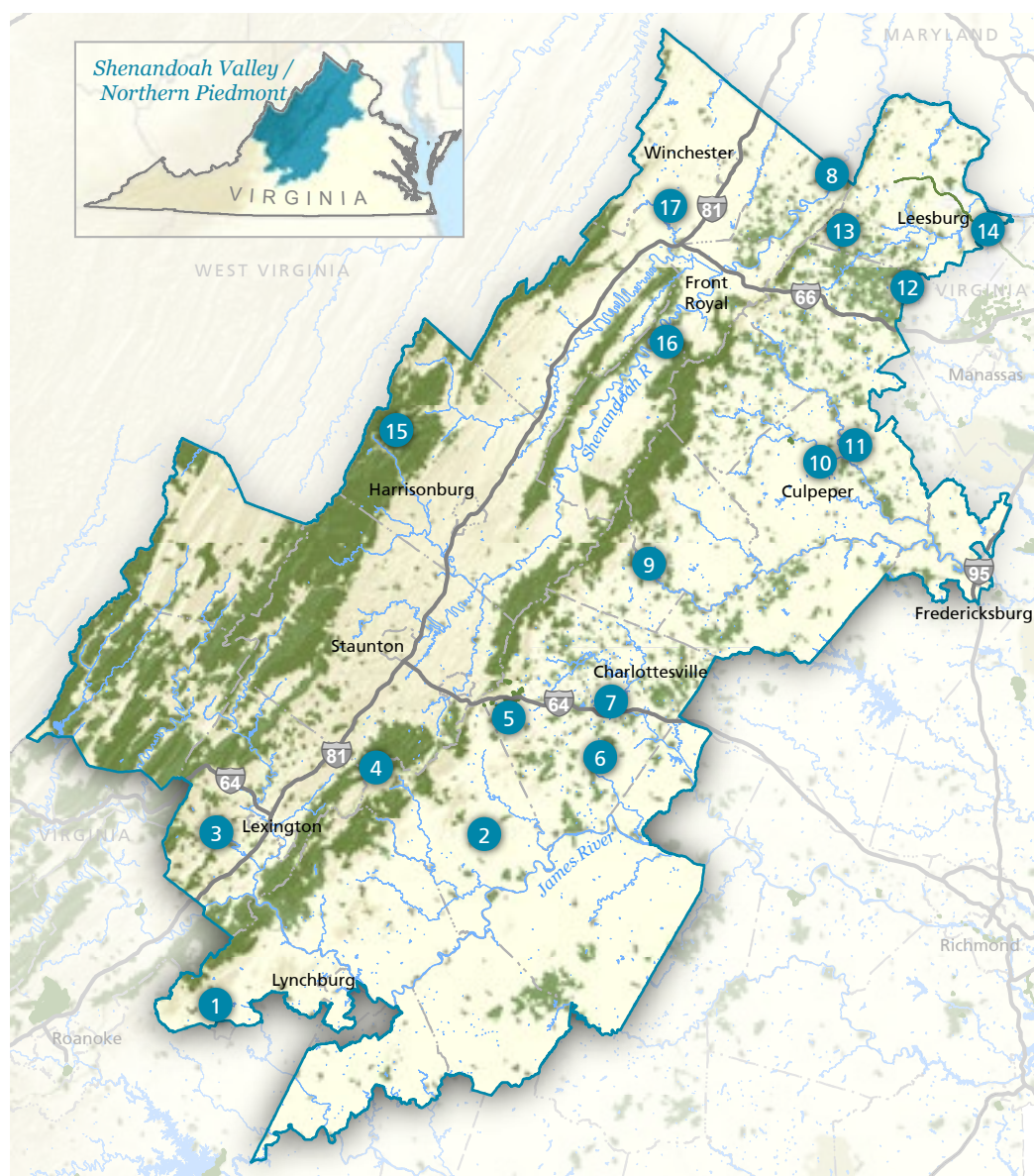


which nearly 60 percent are experiencing population declines;

- ▶ habitat for 49 species of migratory fish and seven species of mussels and commercially valuable shellfish;
- ▶ sites with an important role in Native American, Colonial and Civil War history.

A short birding and nature trail is open at the preserve, and efforts to expand public access are underway. Plans include a paddling trail and hiking trails with interpretive signs about the natural and cultural history of Crow's Nest.

# Shenandoah Valley and Northern Piedmont



	PAGE		PAGE
1 Claytor Nature Study Center .....	58	10 Threlkeld and Hazel River Farms .....	68
2 Naked Mountain Natural Area Preserve .....	60	11 Cool Lawn Farms .....	70
3 Ingleside Land, LLC .....	61	12 Bull Run Natural Area Preserve .....	72
4 Skylark .....	62	13 Cleremont Farm .....	73
5 Greenwood-Afton Rural Historic District .....	63	14 Wise Property .....	74
6 Redlands and Surrounding Properties .....	64	15 Feedstone Hunt Club .....	75
7 Rivanna Tail .....	65	16 Overall Wildlife Corridor .....	76
8 Holy Cross Abbey .....	66	17 Wagon Wheel Ranch .....	78
9 Middle River Farm .....	67		



# A Place to Learn Science and Stewardship

## Claytor Nature Study Center

Owned by Lynchburg College  
470 protected acres  
Bedford County  
House District 23  
Senate District 23

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Outdoor Education,  
Scenic Views, Water Quality, Plant and  
Wildlife Habitat

When the late A. Boyd Claytor donated his land at the base of

the Peaks of Otter to Lynchburg College, he made it a place where college students can learn directly from nature, where schoolchildren can explore the outdoors, where local residents can walk along the rushing Big Otter River or hike to beautiful mountain views, where the college can host retreats and events, and where the public can come to take in the wonder of the stars at a dark sky observatory.



ALL PHOTOS COURTESY LYNCHBURG COLLEGE

The 470-acre property is particularly valuable as a place to explore nature because it encompasses so much diversity, says Dr. Greg Eaton, the director of the Claytor Nature Study Center. "In the grand scheme of things, it's a pretty small property," he says, "but in that small area we have really incredible habitat diversity. We have several aquatic systems: wetlands, ponds, and river. We have upland and lowland woods. We have some open pasture. We have warm season prairie grass fields. We have a number of endangered plants. We have gardens that are really beautiful and some built structures that are historic



and also very beautiful. ...We are right at the base of the Blue Ridge Mountains, so we straddle some of the physiographic provinces in Virginia, the Piedmont and the Blue Ridge, so that creates some additional diversity in geology and soils and vegetation."

The nature study center, located in Bedford County about 40 minutes west of Lynchburg College, has allowed the school to significantly expand its academic offerings, particularly in biology, environmental science, and environmental studies. Dr. Eaton adds, "We also have a very robust K through 12 environmental education program and the center is used as a field trip destination for regional elementary, middle and high schools." Although the center is on private property, it is often open to the general public for hikes, tours, walks in

the gardens, and viewings at the astronomical observatory.

Facilities at the center include a plantation house called Cloverlea that dates from 1790, the Belk Astronomical Observatory which benefits from the mostly dark skies in this rural setting, and a 7,700 square-foot research facility, which includes seminar, laboratory, classroom, conference, and retreat space.

When Mr. Claytor donated the land to the college, he made a condition that it be preserved as open space. Accordingly, the college donated an easement on the property to the **Virginia Outdoors Foundation**. This easement protects substantial resources, including views of the Blue Ridge along Route 43, a Virginia Scenic Byway. It also protects water quality along 2.2 miles of the Big Otter River.



Dr. Eaton says, "I think that one of the really wonderful things about this property is that we can accommodate people... The ability to show people how they can interact with the environment in positive ways and be creative rather than destructive is, I think, a really important mission to have these days."





# Where Shooting Stars Bloom

## Naked Mountain Natural Area Preserve

Owned by Marcia Maybee Bell  
278 protected acres  
Nelson County  
House District 59  
Senate District 25

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Plant and Wildlife Habitat,  
Scenic Views, Water Quality



One spring, the owners of this 2,000 foot mountain in Nelson

County were drawn to some striking violet blossoms on plants growing in natural openings on the otherwise heavily forested mountainside. When they learned the flowers were shooting-stars (*Dodecatheon meadia*) which is uncommon east of the Blue Ridge, they invited biologists from the Virginia Natural Heritage Program to take a closer look at the property. The shooting star habitat proved to be a complex of globally rare barrens and woodland habitats.

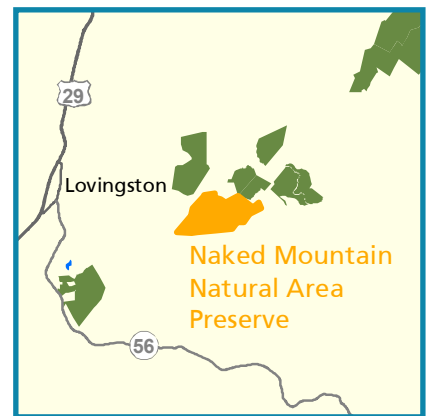


ALL PHOTOS BY GARY P. FLEMING

Recognizing the need to protect this special habitat, the landowners acted swiftly to donate a conservation easement on the land to the **Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation** and dedicated 278 acres as the Naked Mountain Natural Area Preserve.

Landowner Marcia Maybee Bell writes about her discoveries on the mountain:

"Wildflowers grabbed my attention after I stumbled upon acres of bloodroot blooming in the early spring just above the layer of brown leaf duff. I was smitten. To learn more, I attended The Wintergreen Nature Foundation's



spring wildflower symposium and was launched on another passionate hobby. I made several discoveries and was able to eventually share them with professional botanists... One of the most amazing discoveries was thousands of pink Shooting Stars (*Dodecatheon meadia*) blooming in a series of low elevation outcrop barrens on the southeastern face of Naked Mountain. Chris Ludwig with the Virginia Natural Heritage Program also identified a few examples of the very rare Torrey's Mountain Mint (*Pycnanthemum torrei*) in the barrens complex."



# Keeping the Land in Farming



Charles, Linda, Jennifer, and “Beau” Leech. PHOTO BY JASON MCGARVEY

**T**he Leech family has been farming in Rockbridge County since the late 1700s, and the tradition still runs strong in their family. Four members of the family hold degrees in dairy science from Virginia Tech—Charles and Linda Leech and their children Charles “Beau” Leech and Jennifer Leech—and all four of them live on the two family farms near Lexington.

The first of these farms has passed down through their family for centuries, but they bought the second one just six years ago. When the original owners started to think about selling their farm, they approached the Leech family, who had been renting the land. The owners wanted the land to stay in farming and were considering putting a conservation easement on it. Eventually the two families came to an agreement: the Leeches would purchase 165 acres of that farm, and then put an easement on it, using income from conservation incentives to offset the cost.

Shortly after they bought the farm, milk prices crashed. “Then we were like, oh, no, how are we going to make our payments?” Leech says. “Well, that’s when

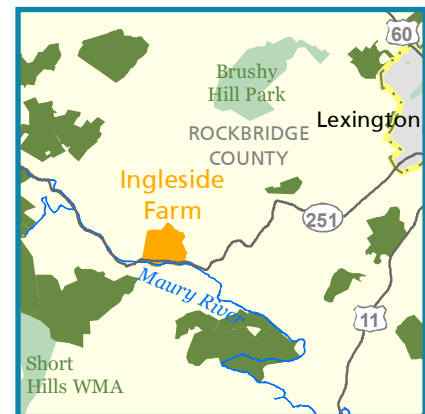
the easement really came into play.” They had been discussing conservation options with staff from the **Virginia Outdoors Foundation**, who suggested that their land could be a good candidate for a Federal Farm and Ranch Protection Program grant. They applied and got the funding. “That really helped us to purchase this farm, because we couldn’t rely on our income from the dairy business at that point,” Leech says.

The easement preserves high-quality farmland, with 80% of the land identified as farm soils of statewide importance. It protects water quality in a native trout stream that flows into the Maury River. And it protects scenic views along Collierstown Road, a house that dates from 1830, and a 19th century cabin.

## Ingleside Land, LLC

Owned by the Leech family  
165 protected acres  
Rockbridge County  
House District 24  
Senate District 25

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Productive Farmland,  
Water Quality, Historic Preservation,  
Scenic Views



The Leeches grow crops on about half of the rolling, open land, and raise baby calves and young cows on the other portion. These activities contribute to the overall dairy operation, which employs the four family members, as well as two other full-time and four part-time staff. They also lease the trout stream to a man who guides fly fishing trips.

Leech doesn’t think that anyone should enter lightly into a permanent easement, but it has worked for their family. “For us, the decision to put an easement on the farm was a family decision,” she says. “The four of us sat down and discussed what it meant in the future, and our plans... were to continue farming. So we felt that the easement was a good fit.”

# Preservation Along the Blue Ridge Parkway

## Skylark

Owned by Craig Colberg  
365 protected acres  
Nelson County  
House Districts 20, 24  
Senate Districts 24, 25

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Tourism and Recreation,  
National Parkway Buffer, Scenic Views,  
Plant and Wildlife Habitat, Working  
Forests, Water Quality



PHOTO COURTESY OF SKYLARK

Little has changed about the Blue Ridge Parkway since Craig Colberg first visited it in the 1950s. “My parents drove me on Skyline Drive and the Blue Ridge Parkway when I was just probably 10 years old, and I’ve never forgotten it,” he says. “The beauty of the overlooks, the stonework, how well the road follows the contour of the mountains, the lower speed limit of the parkway, the lack of urgency. It’s a different pace of travel up there.”

As a father himself, Colberg has enjoyed the parkway’s charm with his wife and four sons, from their home in Charlottesville. At one point, he noticed a small Christmas tree farm along the parkway at Milepost 25 in Nelson County. The property shared about a mile of frontage on the road and sat amidst sweeping views of the surrounding valleys. “I told my wife it was the most beautiful property I had ever seen,” he recalls. In 2009, he learned that the 365-acre farm was for sale. His interest was piqued.

The seller was Lexington-based Washington and Lee University, which owned the farm since it was donated to the school in 1977. For decades, they operated Skylark Farm, as it was called, as a retreat and conference center. In recent years, however, the school couldn’t justify the cost of maintaining the property. It

put Skylark Farm on the market with an asking price of \$4.5 million.

When the National Park Service learned that the property was for sale, it became concerned. The parkway is one of the most-visited units in the National Park System, with an estimated 16 million visitors annually. “Most of our visitors come to enjoy the scenic views, and Skylark Farm sits among some of the most beautiful views,” says Blue Ridge Parkway Superintendent Phil Francis. “We were concerned that the property could be developed and could be an intrusion into those views.”

Meanwhile, Colberg explored his options. He learned about the state and federal tax incentive programs for protecting land through conservation easements. An investment manager with



a keen sense for finances, he realized that he could purchase Skylark Farm, place a protective easement on it, and recover a significant portion of his costs through the tax incentives.

After talking with representatives from the **Virginia Outdoors Foundation**, Colberg bought Skylark Farm in 2010 and donated an easement on it, which was finalized in December 2011. The easement protects the views along the parkway by permanently restricting the number, size, and siting of structures. Today, this property consists of both open fields and forests. Abundant native

# Historic Countryside Among the Blue Ridge Mountains



grasses support quail, pheasant, and other birds while well-shaded streams provide cold water for native brook trout, in the watershed of the Tye River.

Colberg renamed the property Skylark Nature Preserve and Lodge. He continues to grow and sell Christmas trees, and rent the lodge for events and retreats, as Washington and Lee did, and he also offers hunting trips.

"This is really a win-win program," Colberg adds. "There is public good to it that's a tremendous win. There is a private good to it from my family's point of view because it helps us afford the property. And there is a wonderful sense of knowing that this property is going to be the same for a very long time."

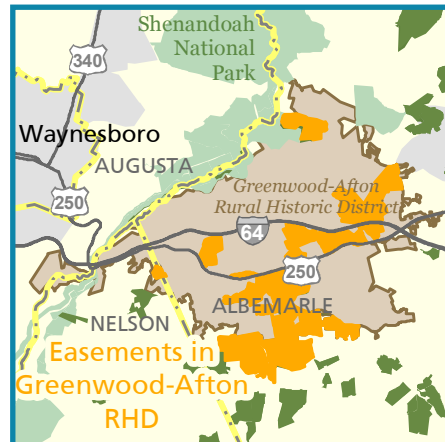


PHOTO BY DAVID ANHOLD

The Greenwood-Afton Rural Historic District is located in north-western Albemarle County, as well as parts of Nelson County and Augusta County, encompassing some 16,300 acres of Virginia's Piedmont countryside. Interspersed throughout this rural landscape are large farms, historic villages, and crossroads communities.

Panoramic vistas from hilltops and Blue Ridge mountainsides testify to the area's well-preserved rural landscape, which has long attracted travelers and tourists, as well as those who choose to settle here.

Conservation easements contribute significantly to the preservation of this area's unique character. Currently, over 16,000 acres of land within the district are permanently protected with conservation easements, including many historically significant farms and homes. These include such landmarks as Blue Ridge Farm,



## Greenwood-Afton Rural Historic District

16,270 protected acres  
Albemarle, Nelson, and Augusta Counties  
House Districts 20, 25  
Senate District 25

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Historic Preservation, Scenic Views, Productive Farmland, Plant and Wildlife Habitat, Water Quality

Tiverton, Mirador, Seven Oaks, Wavertree Hall Farm, and Ramsay Farm. The collection of historic estates in this district demonstrates one of the best examples of the American Country House Movement nationwide, stemming partly from the Country House Movement in England. Wealthy elites from Richmond and Washington, D.C. were attracted to the area for its cooler summer temperatures and railroad access. From the 1880s to 1930s, these residents constructed lavish estates, showcased for their grand architecture as well as hosting social events. This growing collection of permanently protected properties is an excellent example of how voluntary, private land conservation can add up to preserve historically important landscapes throughout Virginia. Land trusts holding easements in the district include **The Piedmont Environmental Council** and **Virginia Outdoors Foundation**.

The District was added to the Virginia Landmarks Register in December 2010 and to the National Register of Historic Places in 2011, thanks to a volunteer committee of Greenwood area residents who worked hard to see the historic significance of their community formally recognized.



# A Thousand Acres of Jefferson Country

## Redlands and Surrounding Properties

Owned by Bob and Carol Carter, Ned Carter, Andrew Carter, John Carter  
Approximately 1,000 protected acres  
Albemarle County  
House District 58  
Senate District 25

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Historic Preservation,  
Scenic Views, Water Quality, Productive  
Farmland, Plant and Wildlife Habitat

In 2009, members of the Carter family acted together to protect nearly 1,000 acres of land in Albemarle County, about seven miles from Monticello, that has been in their family since 1730. In the eighteenth century, the Carters' ancestors were neighbors to the Jeffersons, and their 1792 home, Redlands, suggests a Jeffersonian influence.

The house was built by Martin Thacker, who built Monticello, and its plan resembles Thomas Jefferson's unbuilt design for the Virginia governor's mansion. Redlands is listed on the Virginia Historic Landmarks Register, where it is noted as "one of the Commonwealth's most important Federal period landmarks."

From the front porch of the stately brick house, you can see over pastoral, hilly countryside to the Blue Ridge. Dr. Bob Carter, who owns Redlands with his wife Carol, says, "Except for Route 20, you could be seeing what was there two hundred years ago. That this still exists is amazing."

The Carters wanted to protect their land's historic character, open scenery, and natural resources. It was also important to them to make sure that the property can serve as a productive asset for their



PHOTO BY REX LINVILLE

three children and coming generations, rather than a liability they might not be able to keep up. The property, which is now a mix of woodlands, pastures, hayfields and vineyards, will continue to be used for agriculture. Virginia's tax incentives also helped to make giving up development rights a reasonable financial decision for the family.

For decades, the family had the goal of protecting their land. Finally, in 2009, Bob's cousin Ned Carter spearheaded a coordinated effort to protect four adjacent parcels of family land totaling almost one thousand acres. **The Piedmont Environmental Council** assisted the Carters and initially held the easements until they were transferred to the **Virginia Outdoors Foundation** the following year.

The Carter's four properties connect



with other conservation lands to form a block of 2,700 protected acres on either side of Rt. 20, a Virginia Scenic Byway. Their land also includes about four miles of frontage on the Hardware River and its tributaries. Riparian buffers along the waterways will help to protect water quality and stream health. The Carter properties are located within the Southern Albemarle Rural Historic District, approximately 20% of which is now protected by conservation easements.

# Nature Trails Circling Charlottesville

PHOTO BY JOCELYN DALE



## Rivanna Trail Network and Meadow Creek Park

Public land - local  
50+ protected acres  
City of Charlottesville  
House Districts 25, 57, 58  
Senate District 17, 25

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Tourism and Recreation, Public Water Access, Bike and Pedestrian Network, Urban Green Space, Water Quality

The City of Charlottesville is stitching together a patchwork of new public lands that provides permanent access to a network of nearly 20 miles of nature trails running along stream and river corridors, circling the entire city.

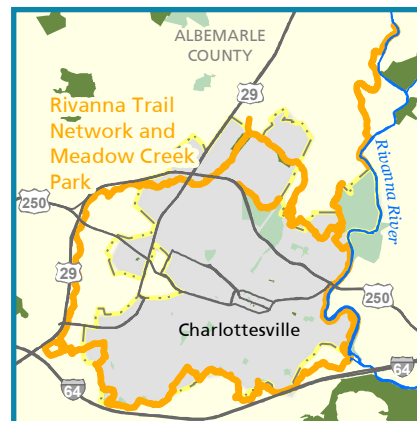
The Rivanna Trail Network was spearheaded, starting in 1992, by a group of volunteers who had a vision for walking trails that would follow waterways to form a loop around the city. The trails would run along the Rivanna River and two of its tributaries—Meadow Creek and Moore's Creek. Working from loosely negotiated agreements with landowners, volunteers cleared narrow, dirt trails through the thick forests. Eventually, a tradition emerged of Saturday afternoon volunteer work parties, which continues as neighbors get together once a month to clear away downed branches and unruly growth.

The volunteer efforts, led by the **Rivanna Trails Foundation**, have succeeded in establishing the trail network as a cherished outdoor resource for Charlottesville residents. Long distance runners train on the hilly, wooded paths. Families walk their dogs. Groups of children play by the streams, close to home. The UVa. cross country team holds practice. A kindergarten teacher leads his students on weekly

romps. The local Boys and Girls Club takes urban kids out, giving them the chance to discover nature in their own backyards.

But without formal, permanent permission from landowners, access to the trails could disappear whenever a parcel changes ownership or landowners change their minds. At several points, access has been interrupted and the long routes through the forests come to a stop.

The **City of Charlottesville** has been picking up where volunteer efforts leave off, by securing permanent easements and purchasing key parcels of land. The City now holds 30 public access easements for the trail network. The City has also incorporated the Rivanna Trail and other proposed trails into its Comprehensive Plan for the city. In places, the City is also adding paved, multi-use trails alongside the rustic paths. By opening up safe, appealing routes for cyclists, these trails add to an alternative transportation network throughout the city.



The city's collection of small, strategic acquisitions are also expanding local parks. Five parcels acquired over 11 years are now taking shape as a 42-acre park on the banks of Meadow Creek. Plans for the new Meadow Creek Park include trails along the river for over a mile, a disc golf course, a playground, and a multi-use playing field. A collection of other small purchased or donated tracts, ranging in size from half an acre to over six acres, will expand several neighborhood parks, including Forest Hills Park, Northeast Park, and potentially Riverview Park. The new public lands also secure key access points to trails and links between trails and sidewalks.

# A Place to Find Peace

## Holy Cross Abbey

Owned by the Community of Cistercians  
204 protected acres  
Clarke County  
House District 33  
Senate District 27

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Historic Preservation,  
Spiritual Retreat, Productive Farmland,  
Water Quality, Scenic Views.

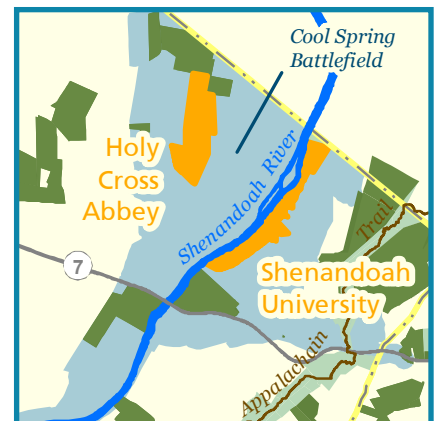
The monks at Holy Cross Abbey, in Berryville, follow a tradition that's over a thousand years old. Initiated by St. Benedict, the tradition calls for *ora et labora*, or “prayer and work”. The monks pray and work, largely in silence, in this pastoral setting on the Shenandoah River, a place of wide farm fields and shady riverbanks, with nearby Blue Ridge forming the eastern horizon.

“The monks think of the tools they work with as part of the prayer process, and by extension, the monastery is a sacred place to them,” says Edward Leonard, who serves as Chief Sustainability Officer for the monastery. “It’s an extension of that prayer and work... Also, in order to have that peace and serenity that allows you to be introspective, it’s important to have a place where you can be insulated from some outside influences.”

The serenity of the monastery grounds can help seekers of all walks to find their own sense of communion and peace. One element of the monks’ work is to host visitors and to operate a guest house where men and women can stay on retreats. The monastery website offers this invitation: “All of good will are welcome at Holy Cross Abbey, those of whatever faith, those seeking faith, those not blessed with faith. You will

find beauty of many kinds, and you will find peace.”

A century and a half ago, these fields were not a place of peace—not in 1864, when Confederate and Union forces battled on both sides of the Shenandoah River, exchanging deadly fire over low stone walls and across the flowing water. On that day, the Confederates routed the Union troops, driving them to retreat across a ford in the river. Now part of this historic ground, called Cool Spring Battlefield, is protected. In 2009, the monastery protected 205 acres through the sale of development rights to the **Clarke County Easement Authority**, a local Purchase of Development Rights program. In 2013, **Civil War Trust** purchased a tract of approximately 200 acres across the river from the monastery, protected the land, and transferred it to Shenandoah University.



Leonard points out that the monastery land holds ancient as well as modern history, including artifacts from Native American inhabitants that date back as far as 9000 BC. The land is also valuable for its prime agricultural soils.

Leonard describes the monastery’s first conservation project as a test run, to see if easements would fit with the monastery’s goals and its mission. The trial run went well, so now the monastery is moving forward on an easement to protect the remaining approximately 1,000 acres of their grounds, which include two miles of frontage on the Shenandoah River.



# Homeplace for a Military Family



PHOTO BY ROSE JENKINS

The conservation easements are part of a larger commitment to sustainability at the monastery. The monks also decided to convert some 200 acres of farmland beside the river to organically managed cropland, in order to set a wide buffer between livestock and the river and to keep agricultural chemicals out of the water. They raise bees to promote pollination. And they maintain a natural cemetery, where people can be buried in biodegradable caskets or a simple shroud, without embalming, with native river stones to mark the graves.

Leonard says, "This is all happening because the monks have been such good stewards of this land. They came here in 1950 and they built the monastery and they've been here ever since and they really do love this place."



PHOTO BY ALLEN WALKER

## Middle River Farm

Owned by the family of Celia Porter Dollarhide

140 protected acres

Madison County

House District 30

Senate District 24

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Working Forests, Water Quality, Scenic Views

Celia Porter Dollarhide and her siblings never quite had a hometown. Their father, Robert Porter, Jr., was a general in the U.S. army and the family moved often. So, when General Porter retired in the 1960s and settled at Middle River Farm in Madison County, the 140 acre tree farm on the banks of the Middle River became the family's home base.

Gen. Porter played an active role in cultivating the land. He planted trees, managed his forests, hybridized rhododendrons and, prior to his death in 2000, initiated a succession plan to perpetuate his woodland legacy. When Gen. Porter passed away in 2000, Celia took over much of the property management.

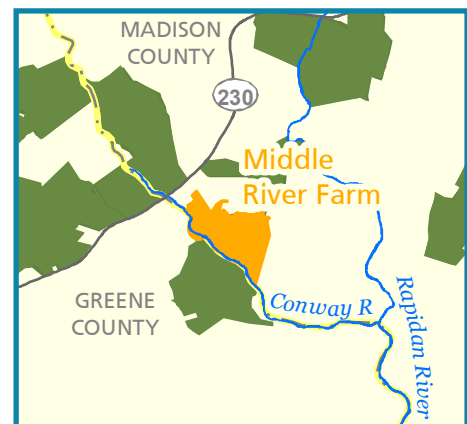
"I believe she wanted to carry out father's vision for the farm, and she fell in love with this area," explains her younger brother, Bob. "With the rapid development in Northern Virginia, where she lived, this region is something special, and was special to her."

Celia became an enthusiastic advocate for rural land conservation and sound forestry in Madison. She partnered with staff from regional organizations, like the **Piedmont Environmental Council** and the **Virginia Department of Forestry** (VDOF), to provide numerous outreach and educational events for local landowners.

For many years, Celia encouraged her family to put the family farm under a conservation easement—but some had reservations. Then Celia was diagnosed with cancer. As

her health declined, her family's perspectives seemed to shift. Conserving the family farm in Celia's lifetime soon became a top priority for everyone involved. "She was the one who really motivated all of it," Bob says. "We all felt a sense of urgency to make this happen."

The family donated a conservation easement on the land to VDOF. This agreement, protecting the land forever, was finalized just days before Celia's death in December of 2012. "Celia stewarded her father's legacy," Mike says, "and now she has planted those seeds with the next generation."



# “For Farmers, It’s a Win-Win.”

## Threlkeld and Hazel River Farms

Owned by the Ingram family  
400 protected acres  
Culpeper County  
House District 18  
Senate District 24, 27

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Productive Farmland,  
Scenic Views, Water Quality

The road to the Threlkeld Farm, in Culpeper County, where Terry Ingram manages an organic dairy, runs through a wide rolling landscape of crop fields and pastures, punctuated by silos. This area is a great place for farming, with over two thirds of the county ranking as farm soils of statewide importance.

Along with his farm and his dad's farm, Ingram rents land from his neighbors, cultivating around a thousand acres altogether. Nourished on grass from the fertile ground, his cows produce 700,000 pounds of milk every year—a figure that he hopes to bring up to a million pounds.

But this same drive offers a picture of farmland at a crossroads—the view over wide fields broken by an incongruous stand of suburban style houses.

Ingram says that his family wanted “to save some farmland, because you see so much of it developed, and it’s obviously never going back to farming.”

Ingram didn’t plan to go into farming after college, but the tradition of farming on both his mother’s side and his father’s side drew him back. He made



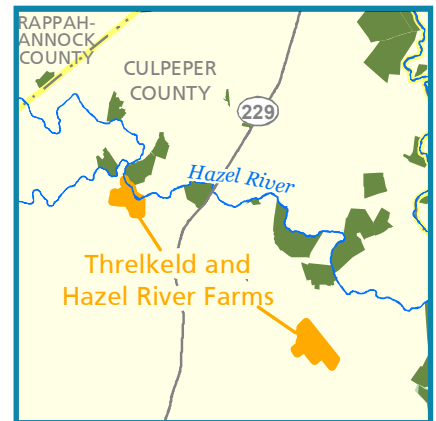
Terry Ingram, PHOTO BY KATHERINE VANCE

the transition to organic management for the challenge of it, he says, and because the market for organic products is strong.

To protect this productive land, he and his parents, Boo and David Ingram, along with other family members, decided to donate conservation easements on two family farms—250-acre Threlkeld Farm and 150-acre Hazel River Farm. Both easements are held by the **Virginia Outdoors Foundation**.

A family friend who is a developer tells them that by conserving their land, they’re throwing away the legacy they could leave for their children—but they see it differently.

True, they gave up development potential forever—but by cashing out and selling, they would lose the farm forever,



and the farm is the legacy they want to pass on.

Ingram, who is married and has a young daughter, says, “Ultimately, what’s going to build wealth in your family is the equity that you’ve got, not the cash, because cash is always fleeting.”

Still, running the farm takes money. They just built a new dairy barn. Ingram bought his herd a few years back. There

are mortgage payments and rent payments. With land as their greatest asset, how could they afford to donate easements that reduce its development potential and therefore its value?

For the Ingrams, the Virginia Land Preservation Tax Credit—a flexible incentive that can be sold for cash to other taxpayers—made conservation an economically viable option.

While conservation incentives can't compete with the money to be made in development, the tax credits allowed the Ingrams to realize meaningful income in exchange for development potential. And they still own the land. "For farmers it's definitely a win-win," Ingram says.

They used some of the income from the tax credits to pay off debt on their land. The money also provided retirement security for Ingram's parents.

Beyond the money, Ingram finds that conserving the land was useful because it solidified his family's commitment to the farms—giving him the confidence to make investments like the new dairy barn. "Whether it stays in the family or not," he says, "it's always going to be a farm."



PHOTO BY ANDREW GRIGSBY

## THE **BIG** PICTURE

### **Agriculture is the #1 industry in Virginia.**

In a single year, agriculture supports more than 300,000 jobs and produces \$52 billion in industry output as well as \$26 billion in value-added products and services. Forestry is also big business, providing over 100,000 jobs and producing over \$17 billion in industry output and \$8.8 billion in value-added products and services.

SOURCE: Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service



Diana Boeke and Amir Abdelmalek, PHOTO BY KATHERINE VANCE



# Saving a Dairy Farm— and Starting an Ice Cream Shop



Ben and Ken Smith, PHOTO BY ROSE JENKINS

**W**hen Ken Smith took over Cool Lawn Farm in Fauquier County from his dad, he had some ideas of his own about how to run it. “I was young and ambitious,” he says. He had lived on dairy farms his whole life, but he didn’t intend to do things the way he’d always seen them done. He set about expanding the farm and introducing what he calls “more progressive” management, using the latest technology.

Today, that technology includes machinery that tracks the cows’ health by analyzing daily milk samples, computerized feeders that adjust for each animal’s nutritional needs, and GPS guided tractors with planters that automatically shut off over any section of a field that’s already been seeded.

And farming keeps getting more high-tech, according to Ken’s son, Ben, who

graduated last year from Virginia Tech with a degree in Agricultural Science. “Things are getting more computerized every day,” he says, “and I see that being the way of the future.”

The farm is also larger than it used to be. What started with 120 head of cattle on 200 acres has grown to almost a thousand head on 2,000 acres, including about 700 acres that the Smiths own and

## Cool Lawn Farm

Owned by Ken Smith  
469 protected acres  
Fauquier County  
House District 88  
Senate District 27

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Productive Farmland,  
Water Quality, Scenic Views

more that they rent from neighbors. But they’re not pursuing growth for growth’s sake, Ken says. Profit margins in the dairy business are a lot slimmer than they used to be, so he has to produce on a larger scale in order to provide a good life for his family. (He and his wife Pam raised four daughters and a son.) He’s seen the vast majority of dairy farms in Fauquier County shut down in his lifetime, so he knows that staying in business means

adapting to change.

Still, there are things Ken doesn't want to see change. He doesn't want to see farmland vanish like it has in parts of northern Virginia, the beautiful open land and productive fields giving way to subdivisions. When his family moved to Fauquier County 43 years ago, he remembers how farmers would drive their herds right down the roads. Then, Fauquier was so remote and agrarian it seemed "like a foreign country".

"I didn't realize the value of that until I started to see it change," he says. "Then you recognize the benefits of being far out."

Ken decided to protect Cool Lawn Farm through the **Fauquier County Purchase of Development Rights** program, which aims to protect working

farms. In 2004 and 2006, Ken sold the development rights on two pieces of land totaling 469 acres, and he may work with the program a third time, he says, to protect more of his land.

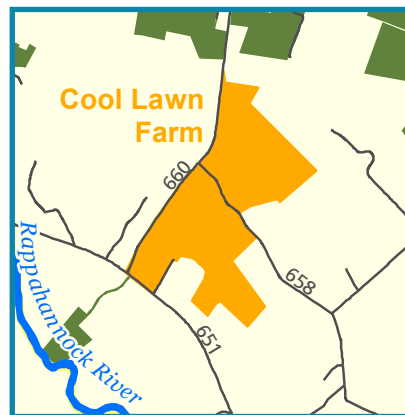
He wanted to preserve both the beauty of the open land, as well as its agricultural potential. Protecting the land will also help to ease the transition to the next generation, he says, when Ben plans to take over. With the options of subdivision and development off the table, the family will have a clear course forward.

Ken used some of the money from selling his development rights to start a new farm-related business—an ice cream shop called Moo Thru, located on Rt. 29 in Remington. Moo Thru uses milk from grass-fed cows that graze in fields just a mile away—and the creamy, fresh flavor has been a huge hit. The readers of *Northern Virginia Magazine* just voted Moo Thru the best ice cream store in Northern Virginia.

Ben says that the ice cream shop was his dad's "twenty-year dream."

Moo Thru gives people in southern Fauquier County a place to get together and enjoy "an atmosphere of camaraderie," Ken says. It also employs up to 30 people at a time, including many local students working their first jobs. That's on top of the dozen or so people who work on the farm.

Any dairy farm is good for the local economy, Ken says, because it employs people and it supports local businesses that sell feed, fuel, and equipment. But, he wanted to go a step further in making his farm an asset to the community. He says, "I just thought that people didn't really appreciate a dairy farm's value to the food chain unless you put a brand name to it, so you can say, 'That's Moo Thru's milk and it came from the farm right up the road'.



#### THE BIG PICTURE

**Every job created in the agriculture and forestry industries in Virginia results in another 1.6 jobs added to the state's economy.**

SOURCE: Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service



PHOTO BY ROSE JENKINS



Haylie Thacker at Moo Thru  
PHOTO BY ROSE JENKINS

# White Cliffs and Green Vistas

## Bull Run Natural Area Preserve

Public land - state  
2,486 protected acres  
Prince William and Fauquier Counties  
House Districts 18, 87  
Senate Districts 27, 28

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Plant and Wildlife Habitat, Tourism and Recreation, Scenic Views, Water Quality, Historic Preservation, Scientific Research



PHOTO BY RYAN WICK

The Bull Run Mountains Natural Area Preserve includes nearly 2,500 acres of wild forests in Virginia's eastern-most mountain range. These low mountains, with a peak elevation around 1,300 feet, are home to a unique biological community where species from the mountains mingle with species from the coast. They are also the closest mountains to Washington, D.C.—only 40 miles from the center of the city and a short trip from Manassas, Gainesville, Haymarket, or Warrenton.

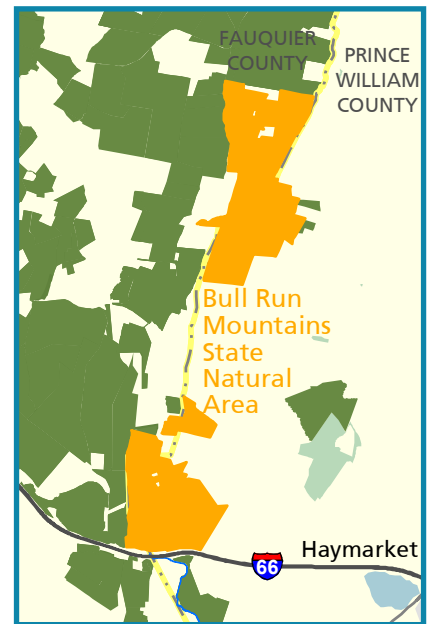
The preserve offers popular hiking trails that lead to the well-known white cliffs—an outcropping of chalk-colored quartzite with a fabulous view across a landscape of forests and open fields that extends all the way to the next range, the Blue Ridge.

Both the Bull Run preserve and the rural vistas that it overlooks were protected through the action of local citizens who became concerned, starting in the 1960s, about sprawling development that was spreading outward from D.C. They saw the Bull Run Mountains as a natural feature that could act as a boundary for sprawl. In the big picture, they envisioned the mountains as part of a “green ring” of protected land that would surround the city.

Conservation-minded citizens bought tracts of land in the Bull Run range, which they consolidated and gave to the

**Virginia Outdoors Foundation (VOF)**, a state agency. Using a combination of donated properties and additional, purchased properties, VOF established the preserve, which extends over nearly 2,500 acres in two separate tracts. The southern section is open to the public for hiking, recreation, and education, while the northern section is reserved for scientific research and environmental protection.

The Bull Run preserve catalyzed a private land conservation movement that grew into an extraordinary success, as numerous landowners donated conservation easements on properties between the Bull Run and the Blue Ridge Mountains, in the history-laced hunt country. That area currently contains the highest density of conservation easements in Virginia, with roughly 80,000 acres of private land protected.



“Locals have landscapes that they care deeply about, so they organize to find ways to preserve them,” says Amanda Scheps, VOF’s Owned Lands Manager. Protecting a local landmark as a state-owned preserve helped to launch a far larger movement, and that model has worked across Virginia, Scheps says. Public lands encourage private conservation because people know that their action will contribute to a larger cause—to conservation at the landscape level.



# From Muddy Water to Clear Streams

PHOTO BY ROSE JENKINS



Cleremont Farm was one of the first farms in Virginia to go into conservation easement, back in 1974, as land-owners in Loudoun and Fauquier responded to the threat of sprawl from DC. When conservation easements were still a novelty, they led the way, giving up development rights in order to preserve a landscape of historic villages, long dry-stack stone walls, and grassy hills beloved by fox-hunters.

The late George Horkan Jr. donated an easement on Cleremont Farm to the **Virginia Outdoors Foundation**, to keep the land from being developed. A generation later, brothers Carl Lindgren and Tony Horkan are taking conservation to the next level—taking proactive measures to restore environmental health on the 1,650 acre farm and in the streams that flow out of it.

Lindgren and Horkan manage a cow-calf operation on the land as well as selective timber harvests from the forests that make up more than half the property. Among their sustainability initiatives, they have installed a full 30 miles of fences to keep livestock out of the farm's streams, wetlands, and hardwood forests. They use wildlife-friendly fences that contain cattle, but leave room for small

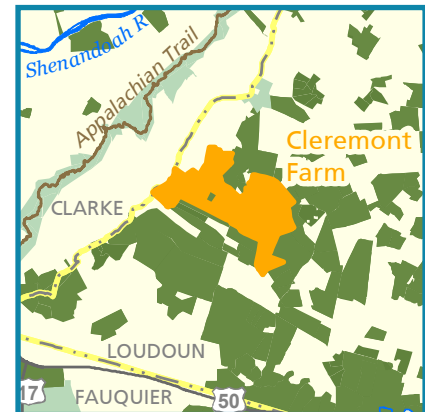
animals to pass below, at a height that deer can leap easily. They have set aside riparian corridors up to 150 feet wide to filter runoff and serve as wildlife habitat. They use rotational grazing to promote healthy pastures, with limited use of pesticides and fertilizer. And they grow pastures that include native grasses and legume species, for both habitat and soil health. They have also amended the terms of their conservation easement to further restrict development of the property.

Horkan says he remembers when the streams used to run brown after a heavy rain. Now the water runs clear. In one spot where a stream pours out of a small pond, he says, "All the cattle used to collect in that one spot. It was disgusting." Now, the cattle drink clean water

## Cleremont Farm

Owned by the Lindgren/Horkan family  
1,650 protected acres  
Loudoun County  
House District 10  
Senate District 27

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Productive Farmland,  
Working Forests, Water Quality, Scenic  
Views, Plant and Wildlife Habitat



from troughs installed in their pastures, and a clear, slender creek flows out of the pond, surrounded by lush green plants and shaded by leafy trees. Their goal is for water that flows into Cleremont Farm to leave cleaner than it entered. The streams on Cleremont Farm eventually flow into Goose Creek, a tributary of the Potomac River.

State and federal cost-share programs have helped the family to take on projects that advance their goals for the farm, which Horkan describes as "sustaining the land that sustains us." Their leadership has been recognized with numerous awards including a Clean Water Farm Award and an Environmental Stewardship Award.

# A Small Farm by the W&OD Trail

## Wise Property

Owned by Phyllis and Joan Wise  
9 protected acres  
Loudoun County  
House District 32  
Senate District 13

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Water Quality,  
Productive Farmland, Scenic Views,  
Urban Green Space

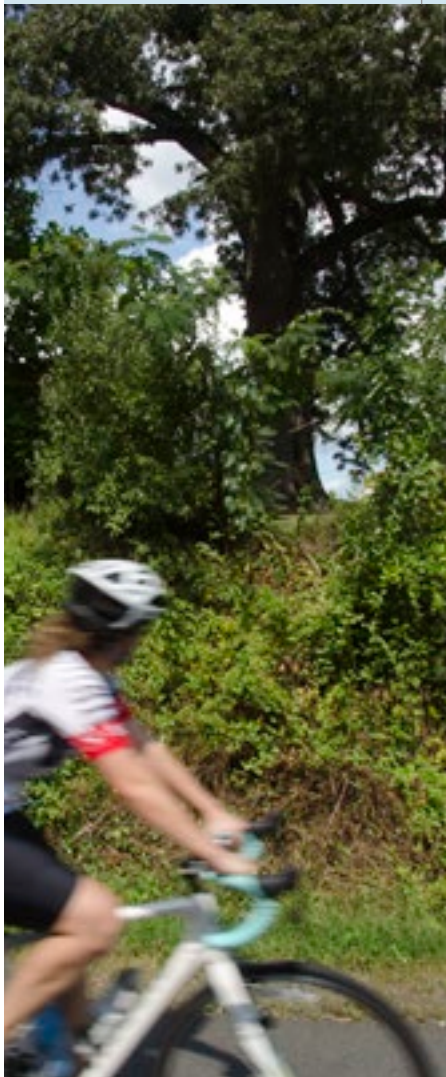


PHOTO BY CARL ZITZMANN

In 1948, Wilma Kraebel moved with her family from Manhattan to northern Virginia to take a job at Georgetown University Hospital. Their new home, way out in the countryside of Loudoun County, was a culture shock after living in New York, but she liked it. A large oak tree on their nine acre plot reminded her of Canada, where she grew up. And it was right on the W&OD railway. The conductor would stop the train at her house, although he wasn't supposed to, and she'd ride it every day to and from Georgetown.

These days, much has changed. The landscape of eastern Loudoun has turned from farmland to suburbia, and trains no longer run on the W&OD line. Instead, the line has found new life as the W&OD Trail, a popular, 45-mile bike trail that runs from Arlington to Purcellville. (See p. 28.)

The land with the grand oak is in Ashburn, around the midpoint of the W&OD Trail, and it's surrounded by development. But on that nine acres is a picturesque small farm with a creek running through it. Three cows graze in a small pasture, among burgeoning vegetable gardens, fruit trees, a flock of chickens, and a long bank of flowers along the trail.

Kraebel's granddaughter, Joan Wise, now owns the land with her mother, Phyllis Wise. Joan says, "The family history there is strong. I grew up in

McLean, and I spent a lot of time with my grandparents. And I'm a conservationist. So, as I started to see development take over Loudoun, my mother and I decided that we wanted to protect this little piece if we could."

In 2003, they placed the land under a conservation easement, which is co-held by the **Potomac Conservancy** and **Loudoun County**. Funding for the easement came through Loudoun County's Purchase of Development Rights Program, which is no longer active.

The easement requires riparian buffers to protect water quality in the stream, which flows into a tributary of the Potomac River. It also prevents development, preserving a scenic property beside a section of the W&OD Trail that is visited about 200,000 times per year. In the long term, Joan would be interested in seeing the land become a local park.

Currently, it is home to a long-term tenant, who tends the small farm, giving some people their only chance to see a farm close-up. Joan says, "People biking by, especially families biking by, like to stop and take a look at the cows. They wander up and they want to ask questions. So he spends time educating them about cows. Especially kids are fascinated."





# “Wild Mountain Land Forever”

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY



## Feedstone Hunt Club

Owned by Feedstone Hunt Club  
Approx. 1,100 protected acres  
Rockingham County  
House District 26  
Senate District 26

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Plant and Wildlife Habitat,  
Tourism and Recreation, Water Quality,  
Scenic Views



In the late 1940s, a group of hunters bought a 1,100 acre tract of forest land from the federal government. The land was surrounded by George Washington National Forest, in the mountains of western Rockingham County. To pay for the purchase, they sold shares, forming the Feedstone Hunt Club in 1949. Members of the club have the privilege of hunting on private land surrounded by the national forest and staying in rustic hunting lodges.

James Mason's father was one of the original members of the Feedstone Hunt Club, and Mason joined as a kid, over 50 years ago. Since he started out, they see fewer deer—deer don't seem to favor the mountaintops these days, he says—but they see far more bear, as well as plenty of turkey, grouse, and squirrels. More has changed than the wildlife in the last 50 years. Property values have

shot up, the surrounding population has grown, and the land is more of a target for development. The older members of the club, in particular, were interested in finding a conservation solution, to keep these woods the way they are—a wild, remote, and special place.

After years of discussion, they decided to work with the **Virginia Department**

**of Forestry** to put a conservation easement on the land. They completed the donated easement in 2009. The income from conservation tax credits helped to make conservation a sensible decision for them, Mason says. The club never had a lot of money, so this income is helpful in running their operations and maintaining the lodges.

The easement protects a large tract of habitat within the national forest, including a number of rare plants and animals. It also preserves pristine mountain headwaters in the watershed that supplies Harrisonburg and Rockingham County. Mason says, "We wanted to leave it as it is—wild mountain land forever—so the kids' kids can have it."

Shenandoah Valley and  
Northern Piedmont



# Connecting Two Vast Forests



There is a point in the Shenandoah Valley where two vast forests almost touch. At Overall, Virginia, between Front Royal and Luray, only the meandering south fork of the Shenandoah River and about a mile of mostly wooded land separates George Washington National Forest's Massanutten Mountain and Shenandoah National Park.

That's a pretty doable jaunt for a bear, and local residents have frequently seen black bears swimming the Shenandoah River, making their way between the two big blocks of forest. Open passage between these habitats promotes a healthier population, expanding the bears' range so they can forage more successfully and find mates with greater genetic diversity.

In the isthmus of private property between the two public lands, local residents have worked together to protect over 1,700 acres, creating a protected corridor for wildlife. But it wasn't the bears that first got their attention. It was a road.

In the late 1990s, VDOT was considering making some changes to Rt. 340, a

two-lane country road that links Front Royal and Luray. Options on the table included widening the road to four lanes, constructing huge bridges more than 80 feet across, and relocating the road along a number of potential routes, including one that cut through property owned by Fred and Christine Andreae.

The Andreaes were up in arms. They had moved to the area from D.C. some twenty years earlier, transplanting their careers as a writer and an architect, and they felt deeply attached to their mostly wooded acres on the edge of Shenandoah National Park. They started organizing their neighbors, some of whom had roots in the area that went back far longer than their own.

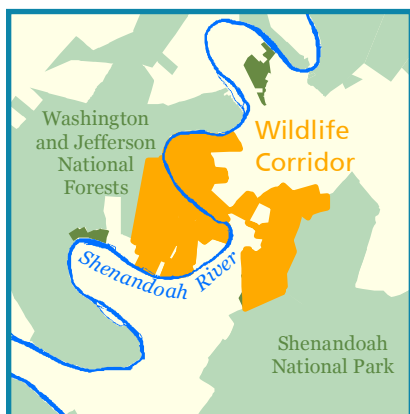
The Shenandoah River flowing through protected land in Overall  
PHOTO BY ROSE JENKINS

## Overall Wildlife Corridor

Multiple private owners  
Approx. 1,700 protected acres  
Warren and Page Counties  
House District 15  
Senate District 26

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Plant and Wildlife Habitat, Scenic Views, Water Quality, National Park Buffer, National Forest Buffer, Productive Farmland, Working Forests, Historic Preservation

Tom Lockhart, for example, owns a 300 acre farm on the Shenandoah River that has been in his family for seven generations. His great-grandfather, known to the family as Pap, put the farm back together after it was divided among five heirs, but Pap's efforts nearly came undone when "a series of mysterious catastrophes occurred on our farm," as Lockhart wrote in a history of their family land. These troubles, including arson, poisoning of livestock, and slaughtering of horses, were apparently wrought by



someone attempting to force the sale of the land, and they were so severe that Pap's insurance company sent a letter politely declining to cover their property any further. Despite these hardships, Pap and his wife Big managed to keep making mortgage payments and hold on to the farm.

Like Lockhart, Jim Guy also owns a farm on the Shenandoah that has been in his family since the late 1700s. These deep-rooted families felt strong ties to

their land, but it took the activism of the newcomer Andreaes to alert them to potential threats.

Meanwhile, an environmental consultant named John Rice was already crusading to protect that corridor for the benefit of wildlife. He felt so strongly about the potential of Overall as a link between the two forests that he and a partner purchased a large tract of land in the area in order to conserve it.

The neighbors organized a citizens advocacy group called Scenic 340, and, over years of strenuous work, they steered VDOT toward a more moderate agenda of "context-sensitive" improvements. But the road crisis called people's attention to the need for action to preserve the land they loved. Nine landowners, later joined by others, worked together to protect a collection of properties that substantially bridges the gap between the national forest and the park. All of the easements were donated to the **Virginia Outdoors Foundation**.

"My own dream of what we might be able to accomplish, we've actually done better than that," Rice says. "It's definitely a success story."

Christine Andreae recalls how land-owners from old families, like Guy and Lockhart, were essential to starting conversations with other long-established families. Meanwhile, Guy says, "The come-heres were just so, so, so important to this whole thing—more than any of us." This rare praise of come-heres by been-heres can be attributed to what he describes as a common vision: "wanting to preserve and protect."

Jim Guy, Fred Andreae, Christine Andreae, and Tom Lockhart. PHOTO BY ROSE JENKINS



## THE BIG PICTURE

Through photosynthesis, forests absorb CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere and store it in trees, vegetation, and soil

**Tree growth in Virginia's forests offsets about 20% of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in the state.**

SOURCE: Virginia Department of Forestry



PHOTO BY RYAN WICK



# “For the Love of the Land”



PHOTO BY SAM SNAPP

Wayne Snapp, a ninth-generation resident of Frederick County, says that, at 80 miles away, Washington D.C. is “80 miles too close.” The city is close enough to put development pressure on the countryside south of Winchester where his family has lived and farmed since 1750.

Snapp says he hates to see good farmland get carved into house lots. Where do people expect their food to come from if we build over the ground where it grows?

And his farm, Wagon Wheel Ranch, is exceptionally beautiful ground. Its hills curve dramatically—vibrant green in the summer, pristine white in a winter snow—with backdrops of the mountains to both east and west. They were good sledding hills, Snapp recalls, when he and his brother were boys. Although he grows crops on other farms that he rents, he keeps his own hills in pasture because the slopes are too steep for plowing. He manages the pastures to keep up a good

sod that will hold water and prevent erosion, while producing rich grass to support his herd of Angus cattle.

Cedar Creek borders the farm on two sides, turning a sharp corner to make an L shape. To keep the water running clear, Snapp has fenced his livestock away from the creek, as well as from several springs and seasonal streams.

At one point that their father wouldn’t let them know about when they were boys, the ground drops away suddenly, in a rocky cliff looking down over the tops of tall trees. Since little development has taken place in their area, as yet, this viewpoint reveals a striking landscape—the creek in its tree-filled gorge, big green

## Wagon Wheel Ranch

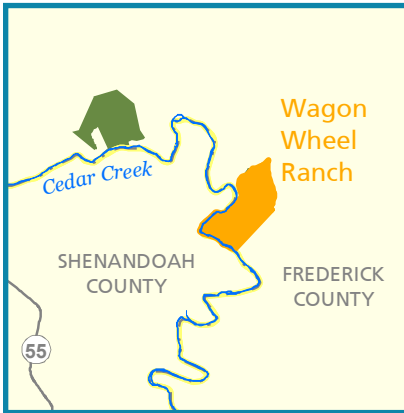
Owned by the Snapp family  
241 protected acres  
Frederick County  
House District 29  
Senate District 27

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Productive Farmland,  
Water Quality, Scenic Views, Plant and  
Wildlife Habitat

hills, and the mountains beyond.

While proximity to D.C. poses a threat to farmland, it also creates opportunities for farm businesses. In addition to Snapp’s cattle operation, his wife Sam Snapp runs an equestrian business on the land, offering riding lessons and trail rides. Many of their customers come from D.C. or Northern Virginia, and they’re happy to drive across the mountain to ride horses for a few hours in such a beautiful area.





Sometimes they make a day of it in the Shenandoah Valley, visiting a farmer's market, or the river or caverns, perhaps getting dinner or spending the night in a B&B. Sometimes, after the stars come out and Wayne and Sam are ready to call it a day, their trail riders will linger around a campfire, reluctant to leave—because the stars are a marvel that they never see at home.

Protecting this landscape not only preserves the farmland people rely on for their food; it preserves opportunities

for residents of greater D.C. to enjoy the countryside, near home.

In 2008, the Snapps protected their 141 acres at Wagon Wheel Ranch, by granting a conservation easement as a bargain sale to the **Potomac Conservancy**. The conservancy purchased the easement using funds from local and federal programs: the **Frederick County Conservation Easement Authority** and the Federal Farm and Ranch Protection Program. A year later, Wayne's mother, Betty, protected an adjacent 90 acres with an easement that is co-held by Frederick County, the Potomac Conservancy, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Snapp says he protected his farm "for the love of the land."

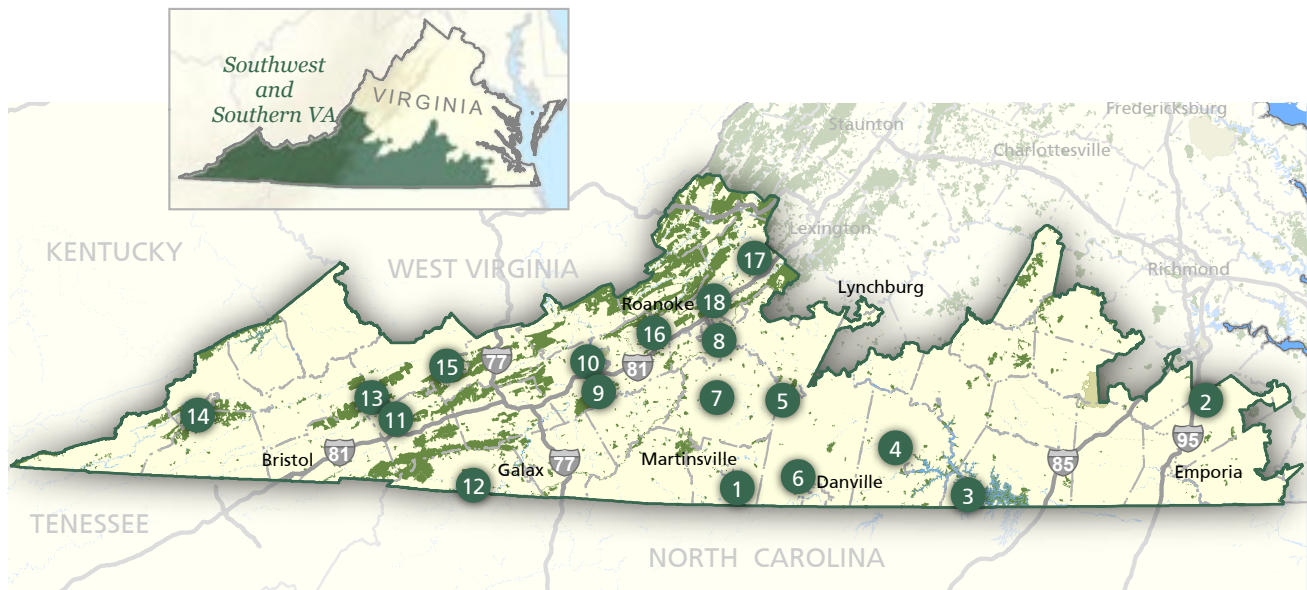
Part of that comes from "being the ninth generation," he says. Such a long-running connection encourages him to think about a legacy that goes beyond one lifetime. He says, "It goes back to my dad, who always said, 'Take care of what's given to you and pass it on.' We don't have any children of our own, but it's a way of passing back to future generations to enjoy."



Wayne Snapp,  
PHOTO BY ROSE JENKINS



# Southwest and Southern Virginia



	PAGE		PAGE
1 Richard P. Gravely, Jr. Nature Preserve .....	82	10 Ingles Farm .....	92
2 Cactus Hill .....	84	11 Valley View Farms .....	94
3 Beaver Pond Farm .....	85	12 Osborne Property .....	96
4 Sugar Shack .....	86	13 Stuart Land and Cattle Company LLC Property .....	97
5 Smith Mountain .....	88	14 Omega Cave .....	98
6 Hill View Farm .....	89	15 Moore Property .....	100
7 Grassy Hill Preserve .....	90	16 McDonald's Mill .....	101
8 Mill Mountain Park .....	91	17 Ox Bow Farm .....	102
9 Ingles Ferry Farm .....	92	18 Carvins Cove Natural Reserve .....	103



# New Trails for a New Economy

## Richard P. Gravely, Jr. Nature Preserve

Public land - local  
75 protected acres  
Henry County  
House District 14  
Senate District 20

**PUBLIC BENEFITS:** Tourism and Recreation, Public Water Access, Historic Preservation, Plant and Wildlife Habitat, Water Quality, Scenic Views

A new nature preserve on a bluff overlooking the Smith River near Martinsville offers people opportunities to explore beautiful woodland trails, discover local history, and strengthen a growing tourism industry.

This 75-acre property, now known as the Richard P. Gravely Nature Preserve, was once part of Burgess Plantation, one of the largest plantations in the area. Later, it was a prosperous tobacco farm. Although the plantation house was burned down during a yellow fever epidemic, for fear of contagion, an old cabin, two tobacco barns, and the Burgess family cemetery still exist on the property. A slave cemetery from the plantation was recently discovered nearby.

In addition, the property features some of the highest ground in the area, with outstanding views of the Smith River. What once was farmland has grown into mature forests, which offer abundant spring wildflowers, including trillium, bloodroot, and showy orchis. Thick stands of rhododendron and laurel grow by the river and, along one trail, they create a tunnel of blossoms. Otters, wild turkey, deer, kingfishers, warblers, box turtles, salamanders, trout and other



wildlife all find habitat here, in the woods and the river.

"It's not just a historic site and it's not just a nature preserve. It's both of them," says Brian Williams, Program Manager with the **Dan River Basin Association**, which helped to turn this land into a public nature preserve.

The preserve is named for Richard Gravely, a local business leader, respected archaeologist, and naturalist, who saw how remarkable the land was, purchased, and later protected it. Gravely bequeathed the property to the Virginia Museum of Natural History, with the condition that it must be preserved as "a wildlife habitat and nature conservancy". In accordance with his wishes, the museum placed a conservation easement on the property, which is held by the **Virginia Outdoors Foundation**. Eventually, the museum listed the property for sale, and the Dan River Basin Association saw the opportunity to



create a public park.

The conservation group partnered with Henry County, which purchased the land, and the Harvest Foundation, which provided funds for improvements, including site clean-up, a parking area, walking trails, and interpretive signs. The preserve opened in 2008.

This preserve was the one of the first partnerships between the Dan River Basin Association, Henry County, and the City of Martinsville. Since then, they have worked together many times, to create a total of

20 miles of new trails and ten new river access points. Increasingly, those amenities are making this area a destination for tourism and recreation, Williams says.

The annual Smith River Fest saw record attendance in 2013. And lots of other outdoor events are taking place in Henry County these days, including marathons, 5K runs, river races, and mud races. People also come to the area simply to go fishing, paddling, or hiking, or to relax and enjoy the country.

"We have a lot of resources up here," Williams says, "People think we're just downtrodden because of the death of the furniture and the textile industries. We've been working to show them that economic development can come in more ways than just factory jobs." When people come for outdoor activities, they bring revenues for local hotels, inns, B&Bs, campgrounds, restaurants, gas stations, shops, and vendors. Williams says, "The trails attract people and jobs and businesses. Businesses want that quality of life."



ALL PHOTOS BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

## THE BIG PICTURE

### Visitors come to Virginia to explore historic landscapes, take in beautiful scenery, and play outdoors.

Our wealth of natural and cultural assets has made the travel industry the fifth largest private employer in Virginia. Domestic travel alone supports 210,000 jobs in Virginia—7% of total private industry employment. 45% of all overnight trips to Virginia include some component of outdoor recreation.

SOURCES: Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service, Piedmont Environmental Council



Protected land visible from Monticello  
PHOTO BY DOREEN JENKINS

# As Old as Artifacts Get— and Older Still

## Cactus Hill

Owned by Forest Investment  
Associates, LP  
10 protected acres  
Sussex County  
House District 75  
Senate District 18

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Scientific Research

Crews were digging sand for road construction at a quarry in Sussex

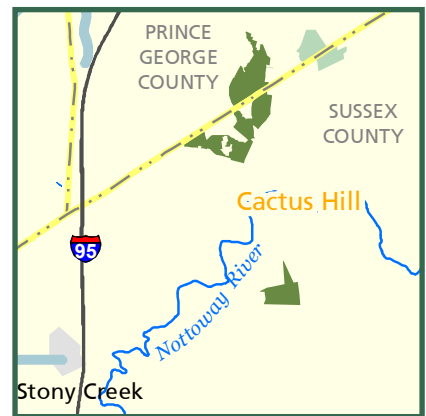
County, near the Nottoway River, when they found chipped stone points turning up in the fill. Amateur archaeologist examined the points, and then alerted experts about the find, which was pretty exciting from an archaeological perspective. The points turned out to be stone tools dating to the Clovis period, which goes back 12,500 years. That was thought to be the earliest that humans had occupied North America—as old as artifacts get on this continent. What nobody expected was to dig deeper and find older ones.

Below the Clovis points—long, skillfully-crafted points made from a glasslike rock—researchers found deeper layers of stone tools that were completely different—triangular points made of quartzite. Generally, deeper artifacts are older artifacts, and various dating techniques confirmed that the triangular points were substantially older than any artifacts yet discovered in North America. They were about 17,000 years old.

“It was one of those catalysts that jolted the archaeological community and got us thinking about all kinds of theories that we’d taken for granted,” says Mike

Barber, Virginia’s State Archaeologist.

Before the discoveries at Cactus Hill, from the 1970s through the 1990s, the prevailing theory was that humans had crossed into North America during the Ice Age, arriving in Alaska by way of the Bering Land Bridge and spreading outward from there. If people had occupied the east coast of North America 17,000 years ago, they arrived while impassable glaciers still blocked the Rocky Mountains. “Now we have to think about people entering North America using boats,” Barber says. Since the discoveries at Cactus Hill and subsequent sites, new theories



have proliferated, proposing that the first humans in North America arrived from Asia, Polynesia, Africa, Europe, even Australia.

The 10 acre Cactus Hill site is owned by International Paper Corporation, which, in 2002, placed the land under an easement held by the **Virginia Department of Historic Resources**, to prevent any disturbance of the layers of artifacts that have upended archaeology.



VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HISTORIC RESOURCES



# Along a 3,000-Mile Bike Trail



Allen Turnbull

**Y**ears ago, when Allen Turnbull was the director of Bike Virginia, part of his job was to help set the route of the East Coast Greenway—a developing 3,000-mile cycling trail that runs from Key West to Canada, connecting the major cities of the eastern seaboard.

Allen was working on the northern section through Virginia. But he knew that the southern section through Virginia could come close to the farm that he and his wife, Mary, own in Mecklenburg County.

"I was really surprised and pleased when I saw it," Allen said. "It went right through the farm!" Their land, just south of Bugg's Island Lake (or Kerr Reservoir), near the North Carolina border, lies on either side of Shiney Rock Road, which was selected for the cycling route. Allen says, "What I was urging others to do, to donate easements for the East Coast Greenway, or for the Potomac Heritage Trail, or just to make trails part of our lives because I think they're so wonderful—here, lo and behold, we had a chance to do that ourselves."

The 155-acre property, called Beaver Pond Farm, has come down through Mary's family for centuries, probably since the 1700s. She grew up there, among fields of tobacco and corn, and later inherited

the land from her aunt. Today, about three quarters of the property is in forests, comprised of pine and mixed hardwoods, and the rest is open, mainly in hayfields.

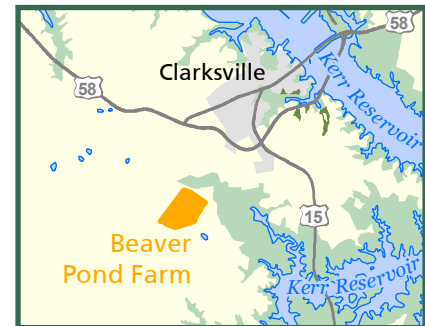
Mary and Allen live in Williamsburg, but since they recently retired from careers as a teacher and librarian (in her case) and a psychology professor (in his), they're able to spend more time at the farm—getting their hands dirty, as Allen says. Their projects include gardening native plants, learning to identify wildflowers, biking on country roads, and getting back into water-skiing on the nearby lake. They've built about four miles of trails through their woods, for mountain-biking and walking, on their own or with friends. And in 2013, they donated a conservation easement on the land to the **Virginia Department of Forestry**.

The easement supports numerous conservation goals, including preservation of forest land, water quality, and scenic views. Of the Turnbulls' 100-plus acres of forests, timber is harvested from

## Beaver Pond Farm

Owned by Allen and Mary Turnbull  
155 protected acres  
Mecklenburg County  
House District 61  
Senate District 15

**PUBLIC BENEFITS:** Working Forests,  
Productive Farmland, Water Quality,  
Scenic Views, Tourism and Recreation



about 25 acres, in accordance with a forest management plan that Allen and Mary developed with the Department of Forestry. Indian Branch runs through the property before joining Beaver Pond Creek, which flows into Bugg's Island Lake which, along with Lake Gaston, is a major water source for Virginia Beach and other communities. The road and cycling route runs through their land for about six tenths of a mile, and the easement allows for the construction of a separate bike trail, alongside the road.

Mary says it was important to them to protect the environment, as well as the serenity of a landscape that they and others enjoy. She also wanted to be a good steward for her family's land. She says, "It gives us a good feeling because this is land that's been in my family, and the fact that we've been able to continue that legacy is very important to us."

# A Sweet Spot for Wildlife

## Sugar Shack

Owned by the Edmunds family  
1,023 protected acres  
Halifax County  
House District 60  
Senate District 20

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Working Forest,  
Productive Farmland, Plant and  
Wildlife Habitat, Water Quality, Historic  
Preservation

Delegate James Edmunds has two main goals for Sugar Shack, a tree farm on over a thousand acres on the edge of Bannister Lake in Halifax County—to bring in income and to provide habitat for wildlife. About two thirds of the farm is in planted loblolly pines, which could amount to what he calls a “habitat desert.” If you plant nothing but loblollies and let them grow tall, they form a uniform canopy that crowds out any understory. In this kind of monoculture forest, few animals can survive. But, that all changes if you open up the pine woods so that understory plants can flourish, Edmunds says.

He cultivates habitat in his woods by thinning the trees, burning the understory, eradicating sweetgums (which crowd out other plants) and cutting the stands more frequently. He also manages his crop fields at Sugar Shack to support wildlife, by breaking up wide fields into smaller plots, separated by rows of shrubs. These hedgerows give animals a chance to escape from predators, by moving quickly from the open fields to cover. Edmunds also planted them with species that produce abundant seeds and berries for food.

As a result, Sugar Shack is full of wildlife, including turkeys, deer, rabbits, squirrels,

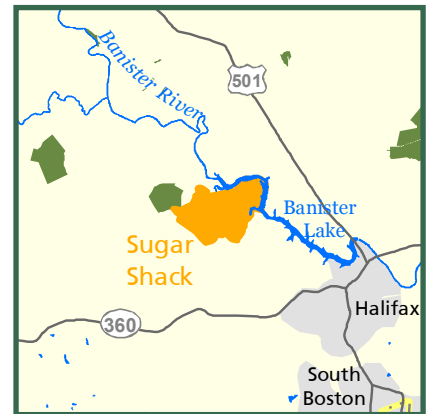


Del. James Edmunds. PHOTO BY ROSE JENKINS

bobwhite quail, eagles, and songbirds.

Edmunds enjoys hunting and many of his friends also benefit from Sugar Shack’s bountiful hunting grounds. Edmunds says he also values the solitude of the forest—a restorative break from the stresses of the outside world, particularly political life. Since 2010, Edmunds has represented the 60th district in the Virginia House of Delegates.

Sugar Shack, one of several family farms that Edmunds works, has been in their family for over two hundred years. He protected the land in 2001 by donating



an easement on it to the **Virginia Outdoors Foundation**. He says, “I loved the farm. I just loved it, still do of course. And it’s all along Bannister Lake and I didn’t want to ever see it divided and lose the wildlife value that it has.”

The farm adjoins the Bannister River as it flows into Bannister Lake, a source of public water for the Town of Halifax. Edmunds maintains wooded buffers along the waterways, which prevents sedimentation, and his extensive forests both store water and filter runoff. “The

water that runs off of Sugar Shack runs clear,” he says.

Edmunds didn't know how the farm came to be called Sugar Shack, until a few years back when he talked with a woman from a sharecropper family that used to live there, when the land was in tobacco. She made a visit to see their old home, a sturdy cabin that still stands in the woods—a cabin that, back in the day, either was or wasn't a good place to seek out sweetness, depending on who you asked. Her father had four daughters, she said, and their home drew young men. Her father would drive them off, declaring, “This ain't no sugar shack!”



Historic sharecroppers' cabin at Sugar Shack. PHOTO BY ROSE JENKINS

## THE BIG PICTURE

### **The population of bobwhite quail—a beloved species for hunters, naturalists, and rural residents—has declined severely, due to a loss of habitat.**

In the last 50 years, the number of bobwhites in Virginia has plunged by 80%. But concerned landowners are using state cost-share programs to restore lost habitat, with some success. In nine Virginia counties, quail populations have stabilized, and in eight counties, they are on the rise.

SOURCE: Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries



Bobwhite Quail, PHOTO BY STEVE MASLOWSKI



# Backdrop for Smith Mountain Lake



## Smith Mountain

Private land with public access  
4,995 protected acres  
Bedford and Pittsylvania Counties  
House Districts 22, 16  
Senate Districts 15, 19

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Tourism and Recreation,  
Public Water Access, Water Quality,  
Plant and Wildlife Habitat, Scenic Views

Smith Mountain is a long ridge that forms the eastern edge of Smith Mountain Lake, on either side of the dam—offering a green, wooded backdrop for the many visitors who come out to fish, boat, swim, or enjoy the shoreline at Virginia's most popular lake.

Thanks to a conservation easement donated by Appalachian Power, a subsidiary of American Electric Power (AEP), the majority of the mountain is now protected forever, providing scenic views, wildlife habitat, and recreational opportunities.

In 2009, the electric company donated a conservation easement on nearly 5,000 acres of the mountain, in Bedford and

Pittsylvania Counties, to the **Virginia Outdoors Foundation (VOF)** and the **Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF)**.

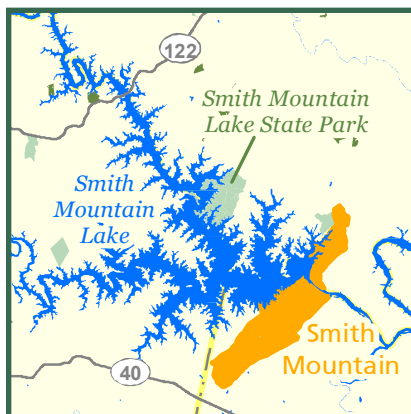
Because of its size and proximity to Smith Mountain Lake State Park, the mountain is perhaps the mostly highly visible and recognizable landmark in the area. "The scenic benefit to the public of preserving this mountain is enormous," said Josh Gibson, the lead easement specialist on the project for VOF. "It's a dominating feature on the landscape, visible from several surrounding counties and public right of ways and almost every part of Smith Mountain Lake."

This vast property is almost entirely forested and contains more than 10 miles of shoreline. It is open to the public for recreational activities, including fishing, camping, hiking, and hunting, and the easement provides for continued public access, managed by VDGIF. The mountain is also home to two rare vertebrate

species and a rare ecological community identified by the state, and is adjacent to the 288-acre Bourassa State Forest. Just over 4,000 acres of this property lie in Pittsylvania County and just under 1,000 acres lie in Bedford County.

The land is part of the property acquired to construct the Smith Mountain Hydroelectric Pumped Storage project in the 1950s. The project can generate 636 megawatts of electricity.

"This easement is good for the Commonwealth, Appalachian Power customers, and for generations of Virginians who admire Smith Mountain underfoot or from afar," said Dana Waldo, Appalachian



ALL PHOTOS COURTESY VIRGINIA OUTDOORS FOUNDATION

# New Crops on a 100-Year-Old Farm

Power president and COO. "We worked closely with the Virginia Outdoors Foundation and state officials to craft an agreement that ensures that Appalachian Power can continue to operate and maintain critical electrical equipment while at the same time permanently protecting one of Virginia's most scenic treasures."

From this point forward, VOF will serve as steward of the easement to ensure that the property's conservation values remain protected. VDGIF will continue to manage recreational activities.

"We've had a long-standing, highly successful partnership with AEP providing access for hunters, anglers, boaters, and other outdoor enthusiasts and look forward to partnering with VOF," said VDGIF Executive Director Bob Duncan. "It's a true pleasure to establish this conservation easement, thereby ensuring that future generations will enjoy this unique wildlife area."



VIRGINIA OUTDOORS FOUNDATION

**H**ill View Farm, in Pittsylvania County, has been in Bob Pollok's family for well over a century. "I was raised on this farm," he says, "and it's been in my family for over 100 years." The family made a living from tobacco up until around the time he went to college, but he says, "I don't think we ever really liked tobacco that much." So starting with his parents' generation, they started moving toward other crops.

Today, under the management of Bob and his wife Billie, Hill View Farm is primarily a seed operation, producing seed for wheat, barley, oats, and soybeans. He says, "We just found out that we could get a little bit more for it if we did that. It takes a whole lot higher skill of management though. We decided, with a small farm, that being diversified might help us." The Polloks sell seed to local farmers as well as wholesale markets. In addition, they raise beef cattle, straw, hay, alfalfa, millet, and corn.

Their farming practices are a lot easier on the soil than the old tobacco fields. Whereas tobacco wears out the soil, the Polloks take care to conserve it. They use no-till methods, so that there is always a cover crop on the land, and practically no erosion. They practice crop rotation to control weeds and replenish nutrients. In addition, they have fenced cattle away from the streams, springs, and ponds on the 252-acre

## Hill View Farm

Owned by Bob and Billie Pollok  
252 protected acres  
Pittsylvania County  
House District 16  
Senate District 15

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Productive Farmland,  
Water Quality, Scenic Views



farm, in order to protect water quality, and they set parts of the land aside as habitat for wildlife. Their stewardship efforts have earned them Clean Water Farm and Cooperator of the Year awards from their local soil and water conservation district.

In 2010, the Polloks donated a conservation easement to the **Virginia Outdoors Foundation**. Bob Pollok, who is in his late 70s, says he wanted to preserve Hill View Farm as farmland even after he's done farming it. "We saw housing developments going up all around us and seed farms being cut up completely, and we just didn't want that to happen to our farm that has been in operation for generations," he says. "With the easement, we are doing the best we can to preserve it as a working farm."

# Natural Beauty and Walking Trails in Rocky Mount

## Grassy Hill Preserve

Public land - state  
1,539 protected acres  
Franklin County  
House District 9  
Senate Districts 19 and 20

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Tourism and Recreation,  
Scenic Views, Plant and Wildlife Habitat,  
Water Quality

In the Town of Rocky Mount, a family's gift created a nature preserve where people can enjoy natural beauty and miles of walking trails—and a new gift will expand this local treasure.

The Grassy Hill Natural Area Preserve was first established in 1999 when Dr. Alice Lee Melchor donated over 500 acres of family land and her brother, Judge Charles Carter Lee, sold the adjoining tract to the state at a bargain price. Now, over six miles of hiking trails meander amid the preserve's rocky outcrops and thick forests. In June 2006, Dr. Melchor donated a 147-acre tract of land just across the road from the Grassy Hill Natural Area Preserve to **Blue Ridge Land Conservancy**. This land will be transferred to the **Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation**, which will be expected to add it to the existing 1,392-acre preserve.

The name Grassy Hill recalls a time when meadows grew across the hilltop, probably maintained by fire. Over the last century, those grasslands have transformed into densely wooded slopes that support rare plants including Menge's



VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND RECREATION

fame flower, Carolina thistle and a federally-endangered coneflower.

When the land was preserved, Dr. Melchor says, her family was delighted that "Grassy Hill will remain in its extraordinarily beautiful natural state." Her parents, Dr. Henry Lee and Dr. Elizabeth Saunders Lee, both physicians, purchased the Grassy Hill property over a 25-year period. Her father "had a long love affair" with his native Franklin County, Dr. Melchor says. "He never had to fret about where he would go on vacation, he would just come here."





# Roanoke's Most Popular Park



## Mill Mountain Park

Public land - local  
500+ Protected Acres  
City of Roanoke  
House Districts 11 and 17  
Senate District 21

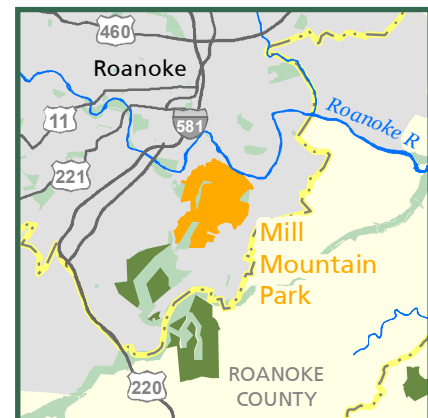
PUBLIC BENEFITS: Tourism and Recreation,  
Urban Green Space, Scenic Views, Plant  
and Wildlife Habitat, Water Quality

**M**ill Mountain Park, the most visited park in the **City of Roanoke**, is permanently protected from development, thanks to a conservation easement that the City donated to **Blue Ridge Land Conservancy** and the **Virginia Outdoors Foundation** in 2010.

The easement includes all but the developed area at the very top of the mountain, protecting more than 500 acres of forest land, recreational trails, wildlife habitat, and views from across the Roanoke Valley. This popular park offers opportunities for picnicking, hiking, mountain biking, birdwatching, and sightseeing, including panoramic views from Roanoke's iconic illuminated star.

"This is a great win for conservation," said Roger Holnback, former Executive Director of the Blue Ridge Land Conservancy. "Cities across the country are selling parkland and public open spaces to generate revenue. While they realize a short-term gain, they lose in the long run because they're lowering the quality of life for their residents and depriving future generations of places to recreate. Gems like Mill Mountain will only be more rare and essential in the future."

Blue Ridge Land Conservancy led a 14-year effort to secure the permanent protection of the park. The conservation easement protects the park's open land and natural environment, while allowing for limited, appropriate development of park structures and continued development of the park's popular trail and greenway system.



ALL PHOTOS COURTESY BLUE RIDGE LAND CONSERVANCY

# Home of Pioneer Heroine Mary Draper Ingles



Ingles Farm. PHOTOS BY ROSE JENKINS

## Ingles Farm

Owned by the family of  
Lewis "Bud" Ingles Jeffries  
150 protected acres  
City of Radford  
House District 12  
Senate District 38

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Historic Preservation,  
Water Quality, Productive Farmland,  
Plant and Wildlife Habitat

## Ingles Ferry Farm

Owned by the family of the late  
Roberta Ingles Steele  
313 protected acres  
Pulaski County  
House District 7  
Senate District 38

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Historic Preservation,  
Water Quality, Productive Farmland,  
Plant and Wildlife Habitat

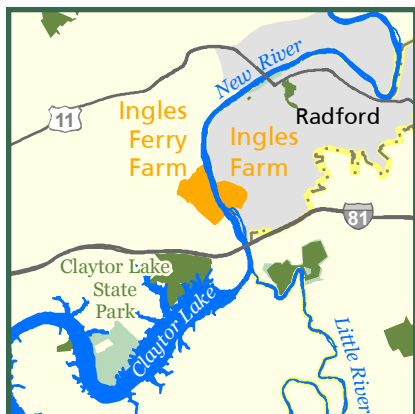
In 1755, during the French and Indian War, a band of Shawnee warriors attacked an English settlement on the western frontier, near present-day Blacksburg. They killed several people and took others captive, including a young woman named Mary Draper Ingles, and her two sons, a four-year-old and a two-year-old.

The Shawnee, who were allied with the French, marched their captives 400 miles into what is now Ohio. There, they decided to adopt Mary's two young sons, but not Mary. The mother and children were separated and Mary was taken to Big Bone Lick, in present-day Kentucky, where she was forced to work as a slave, making salt. Far from home, separated by a huge expanse of rough mountain country, she decided to escape, or die trying. She had seen how her captors followed the rivers. She would follow them back.

Mary and another woman, known only as "the old Dutch woman," broke free and made a harrowing journey along the Ohio, Kanawha, and New Rivers, foraging for wild food and hiding from

Indians. Neither could swim, so they had to find fordable river crossings. In one case, this meant walking 25 miles upstream to a rapid, then 25 miles back. The women parted when the older woman, crazed with hunger, attacked Mary. Mary made her way on alone, until she reached the valley of the New River, near her home, exhausted and starving. She had walked for six weeks, for over 600 miles. Mary was reunited with her husband, William, and eventually they settled at a farm on the banks of the New River, where the Ingles family has lived ever since.

In recent years, two branches of the family have protected properties on both sides of the New River that were owned by Mary and William Ingles and



their descendants.

Lewis “Bud” Ingles Jeffries says, “We wanted to preserve this farm because I feel like this is something that money can’t buy. Somebody could come in here and buy this and pay fifty times what it’s worth, but they start at day one. They don’t buy heritage. . . . I’m a direct line for seven generations.”

His family owns Ingles Farm, where William and Mary built their home- stead and eventually raised four more children. Bud and his son, John Jeffries, have painstakingly reconstructed their log home, based on archaeological evidence and historical sources. The log cabin is surrounded by split rail fences and heritage breed livestock. The farm- house is also historic, first built by William and Mary’s youngest son, John Ingles, in 1789.

Across the river is Ingles Ferry Farm, which John Ingles owned. Earlier, William had established a ferry between the two farms, one of several profitable enter- prises that he managed. The ferry was a vital link along a corridor that has been a major transportation route for many centuries—first a Native American route called the Warrior’s Path, later the Great Wagon Road, later a rail line, and today I-81, which runs nearby. The ferry, which operated up until the 1940s, moved

travelers across the river at a point where it is far too wide and strong to ford. Two stoneworks also stand on either side of the river, one on Ingles Farm and one on Ingles Ferry Farm—the remains of a bridge that was burned during the Civil War.

Travelers needed services, and the Ingles provided a store, tavern, and black- smith shop to accommodate them. The tavern, a sturdy, sizable log building that dates from 1772, stands intact on Ingles Ferry Farm.

The Jeffries family donated an easement on Ingles Farm to the **Virginia Outdoors Foundation** in 2002, incentivized by Virginia Land Conservation Tax Credits and estate planning benefits. The push to protect Ingles Ferry Farm was led by the late Roberta Ingles Steele and completed by her heirs in 2009. They worked with the New River Land Trust, which obtained funding from the Virginia Land Conservation Fund for a portion of

the easement’s value. The family donated the remainder of the easement, which is co-held by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources and the Virginia Outdoors Foundation. Among other resources, the easements protect over 450 acres of working farm land, more than a mile of frontage on the New River, and Native American archaeological sites along the riverbanks.

When Ingles Ferry Farm was protected, Mary Ingles Barbour, a co-owner and a descendant of Mary Draper Ingles, said, “While the story of Mary Draper Ingles is well known, her bravery and ability to endure incredible hardships were characteristics shared by many of the early settlers and explorers of this region. I hope that this easement will help preserve the legacy of all those who settled this region of Virginia and those who crossed the ferry to continue westward to settle and explore what was then uncharted wilderness.”



Two farms in the Ingles family, on both sides of the New River, are protected.  
PHOTOS BY ROSE JENKINS



# A Farmer in Real Life—and On TV

## Valley View Farms

Owned by Tom Buchanan  
1,100 protected acres  
Smyth County  
House District 6  
Senate District 28

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Productive Farmland,  
Water Quality, Scenic Views

It was Tom Buchanan's wife who saw that he had a personality fit for TV—outspoken and big-hearted, with a salty sense of humor. She convinced the lifelong cattle farmer to make a video with their seriously outdated Camcorder and send it in for a chance to compete in *Survivor: Africa* in 2002. Tom's last line on the video, before he walked off with a herd of goats trailing after him, was "Come on, goats! Lets go to *Survivor*, cause I'm a star is what I are."

That's how the man widely known as Big Tom found himself, at the age of 57, on the first plane trip of his life, on his way to a wilderness area in Kenya. There, he would struggle, along with his reality-show "tribe," to secure food, water, fire, and shelter, while defeating the opposing tribe in challenges. When a tribe lost a challenge, it had to vote to cast out one of its members.

Tom says he tried to hold himself above the treachery that others deployed to stay in the game. "Even on *Survivor*, I never changed," he says. He held his own against younger and more athletic competitors using practical skills, like a superior ability to start a fire with flint, and a strategy of making himself

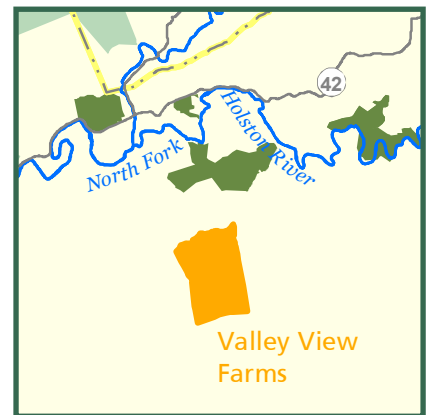


Tom Buchanan, PHOTO BY ROSE JENKINS

indispensable. He asks: Would you vote somebody off if they were keeping your fire alive, day in and day out? In one of his more famous moments, he helped to signal a supply plane by stripping nearly nude and wiggling a feather that was tucked between his butt cheeks. All of these survival skills got Big Tom as far as the final four.

The income from the show and the ensuing celebrity were a windfall that allowed Tom, back in Virginia, to expand his farm. Once again, he says, it was his wife Sandy's idea.

These days, Tom farms over 2,000 acres in the rugged hills of the Rich Valley in Smyth County, but he emphasizes that none of this land came his way for



free. He grew up on a 1,100-acre cattle farm, but when his grandparents died, his family decided to sell the land. Tom decided that he would be the buyer.

Later, with the help of his *Survivor* earnings, he acquired an additional 600 acres that they call "The Homeplace." Tom's great-great-grandfather lived and farmed there, but it was sold out of the family. When it came back on the market, Sandy pointed out: How often do you have the chance to buy back a piece of family

land? So the Buchanans extended themselves financially and bought the farm.

Their third property came their way when a friend, who was retiring, determined that Tom should buy his farm. Tom said he couldn't afford it, but his friend wanted the farm to go to Tom because he knew that Tom wouldn't sell it off for houses. He set up flexible financing, including a provision to delay payment when cattle prices were low. So, Tom and a partner bought the land.

Together the farms are called Valley View Farms and they are home to four generations of Tom's family: his father, himself, his son, and his grandchildren. The land is stunning, extending from wooded ridgetops, down steep valleys, to hilly pastures that look out toward blue mountains.

Tom wanted to keep it that way. He says he wants his grandchildren to be able to skinny-dip in the creeks and hunt in the woods, to ride horses and get their

feet in cow pies. "We wanna go fishing, we'll go fishing," Tom says. "And these kids wanna catch crawdads out of the creek, they will. Our creeks are spring water. I want you to be able to walk right up there and go in the spring and get you a drink of water without drinking the damn chlorine."

Tom started protecting the land that he loves by donating a conservation easement on his 1,100 acre farm to the **Virginia Outdoors Foundation**, in 2010. He's currently in the process of donating a second easement, on the 600 acre homeplace. This legacy will outlast Tom's *Survivor* fame. He says, "When I'm dead and gone, someone will say, 'You know Big Tom, he had a vision.' And you can drive anywhere else and there may be a Walmart parking lot, but it won't be here."

Tom sees himself preserving a way of life as much as green pastures and clean creeks. He says, "We've still got time for

people. We still know our neighbors. We are still country, and I want to keep it that way."

Tom finds the Virginia Land Preservation Tax Credit a strong incentive for protecting land, because it can be exchanged for cash, which allows him to keep investing in his farm. "Hopefully my tax credits is going to... help pay for this farm that I couldn't afford."

This summer, a new TV show starring Tom and the rest of the Buchanan clan, called *Family Beef*, debuted on The National Geographic Channel. Two pilot episodes that aired in August feature scenes from farm life, complete with bawdy banter between Tom and his son Bo and various perspectives on the merits of eating fried chitlins, freshly cut from young bulls. Tom sees the new show as a way to show people the value of country living, as well as the hard work that goes into it. "I was my real self on *Survivor*," Tom says, "but this is my real life."



PHOTO BY ROSE JENKINS

# Buster Osborne's Legacy

## Osborne Property

Owned by Osborne family  
540 protected acres  
Grayson County  
House District 5  
Senate District 40

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Water Quality, Scenic Views, Productive Farmland, Plant and Wildlife Habitat

Buster Osborne was over 90 years old when a dramatic change was proposed for the farm beside his own, along the New River, in Grayson County. The Virginia Department of Corrections had proposed a 1,000-bed prison on this land beside the river—a fortress of vast walls and razor wire in a landscape of small cattle farms, along the banks of wild river that is Grayson County's premier tourist attraction, a destination for fishing and paddling.

The proposed prison site was adjacent to farms protected by conservation easements, which aimed to preserve the region's natural beauty and rural character. But the prison would undermine those efforts, requiring a new \$10 million bridge across the river, and costly new water and transportation infrastructure, as well as the massive footprint and harsh visual impact of the institution itself.

The prison also required a right-of-way across the land that Osborne's family had farmed for generations, which he was not about to grant. Strong protests from the local community succeeded

in getting the prison located to a more suitable location that wouldn't spoil the beauty of the New River and the surrounding landscape.

Then Osborne took action to protect this land for the long term. He took out a loan to buy the 170-acre farm next door that had been slated for a prison. Working with the **New River Land Trust**, **National Committee for the New River**, and **Virginia Outdoors Foundation**, he then granted a conservation easement on that land as well as his surrounding farm. Together, he permanently protected 540 acres with more than two miles of frontage along



PHOTO BY FRED FIRST



the New River from future adverse development. Federal tax deductions and Virginia land preservation tax credits helped Osborne to pay off the loan for the property he purchased. When he passed away two years later, Osborne left a legacy in a landscape his family had tended for generations, that will benefit generations to come.



# Balancing Forestry and Stewardship on Nearly 10,000 Acres



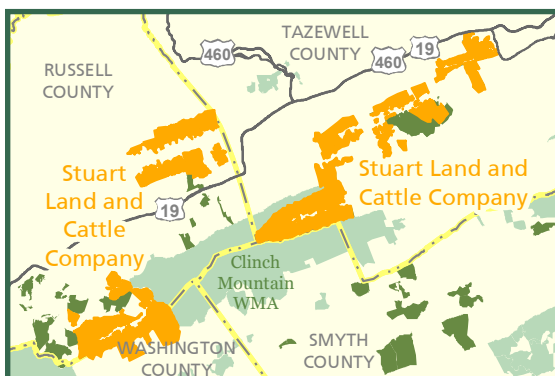
In southwest Virginia, nearly 10,000 acres of forest land are protected by conservation easements that balance sustainable timber harvests with stewardship of natural resources. This historic property is also the oldest continuously operated cattle ranch in the United States, dating back to 1774.

The land, in Russell, Washington, and Tazewell Counties, is owned by the Stuart family, which has long been intertwined with Virginia's political history. The family claims in its lineage a Governor; a member of the House of Delegates;

a State Senator; and the storied Civil War general J. E. B. Stuart, whose horses reportedly came from this farm.

In 2002 and 2004, **The Nature Conservancy** acquired conservation easements

on the property from the Stuart Land and Cattle Company, LLC, that ensure it will be maintained as a working forest, providing both ecological and economic benefits. The easements give The Nature Conservancy the right to sustainably manage the timber in exchange for an annual payment to the owners.



## Stuart Land and Cattle Company LLC Property

Owned by the Stuart family  
9,819 protected acres  
Russell, Washington, and Tazewell Counties  
House Districts 3, 4, and 5  
Senate Districts 38 and 40

**PUBLIC BENEFITS:** Working Forests, Plant and Wildlife Habitat, Water Quality, Historic Preservation

The Nature Conservancy is also taking special care to protect water quality and forest health in a priority conservation area. These measures help to protect several rare species, including two aquatic animals, the fine-rayed pigtoe and blotchside darter, and a native plant, glade spurge.

# Epic Passages Beneath the Ground

## Omega Cave

Owned by Cave Conservancy  
of the Virginias  
170 protected acres  
Wise County  
House District 1  
Senate District 40

**PUBLIC BENEFITS:** Water Quality, Scientific  
Research, Plant and Wildlife Habitat,  
National Forest Buffer, Scenic Views

**O**n a mountain in Wise County, in the forest, a strong wind blows from the ground. This blast of air flows from the opening of a cave that drops over 100 feet down in a vertical shaft. This entrance, called Blowing Cave, was reported by the mid-20th Century, but it wasn't until 1996 that cave explorers first dug through a blockage at the bottom of the pit. They told a few others about their discovery, including Mike Ficco, a caver and geologist. "We picked up from there and the cave obviously continued beyond," Ficco says.

Since then, he and other cavers have been making their way through passageways that twist underground for 29 miles (discovered so far) to a depth of over 1,200 feet—making this the longest and deepest cave in Virginia. The cave, called Omega, features tunnels that would compress your chest as you wiggle through them and others that you could



Mike Ficco in Omega Cave. PHOTO COURTESY CAVE CONSERVANCY OF THE VIRGINIAS

drive a truck through. It features canyons and waterfalls, vertical drops as high as 230 feet, and one of the longest continuous underground streams in Virginia. "Omega is a cave where everyone who has been in it is awed by it," Ficco says.

Once they found out about the cave, Ficco and others moved to protect it. He and a few partners bought the land with the cave entrance, with the goal of getting a conservation organization to take over the property, which adjoins



Jefferson National Forest. They eventually transferred the 170 acre property to the **Cave Conservancy of the Virginias**, of which Ficco has since become Chair of the Board. To ensure its permanent protection, the Cave Conservancy donated a conservation easement on the land, which is held by the **Virginia Outdoors Foundation**.

"We were concerned that the property could be developed," Ficco says. "We

were also concerned about the potential impact of logging on the cave and, of course, the water that flows into the cave. And also, once we realized that the cave was as significant as it is, that from a caver's perspective it's such a spectacular natural feature, we wanted to try to preserve future access to the cave."

The Cave Conservancy manages access to Omega, allowing technically skilled cavers to pursue exploration and research, although the cave is not open for recreation at this time. Because Omega is so extensive, research teams spend as long as a week camping underground as they map its tunnels and document its geology and biology. The cave's inhabitants include bats, salamanders, packrats, mice, and turtles near the entrance and, further in, smaller invertebrate creatures, including several species that have rarely been documented before.

Above ground, the property is densely

forested, along a steep ridge that features high cliffs and a number of smaller caves. Sinkholes and streams carry water from the surface to flow into the cave system. This area's porous bedrock, called karst, is full of holes and channels carved by water, which allow surface water—as well as any contaminants—to flow easily into groundwater. The area is part of a long band of karst that extends through Virginia from northeast to southwest, parallel to the Appalachian Mountains.

Ficco says, "Karst provides a more direct route to the water table when compared to a non-karst environment where the soil provides a buffer and a filtration system... So if you do have runoff from a surface disturbance like logging or road-building, or something more severe such as a fuel spill, it makes those areas much more vulnerable." So, even people who would not care to step into a 29-mile cave can benefit from the conservation of these epic passageways and the streams that flow through them.

## THE BIG PICTURE

Parts of at least 29 counties in Virginia are based on karst—a kind of bedrock formed from limestone or other rock that dissolves easily in water, forming caves, sinkholes, and underground stream passages. These features provide direct routes for surface runoff to enter aquifers, with no filtration.

**In karst areas, land conservation and careful land use are essential in order to keep pollution from erosion, livestock, chemicals, and other sources from entering groundwater.**

SOURCE: Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation





# Valley in the High Country



PHOTO BY ROSE JENKINS

Bill Moore's father's line of work was transportation construction, and often he would fly to the site of a project. As he piloted a small plane over southwest Virginia, an extraordinary valley stood out to him.

From above, the valley, called Burke's Garden, looks volcanic—like a mountain that blew its top, leaving a high basin encircled by a ridge. In fact, the valley resulted when caverns in the limestone bedrock collapsed and the mountaintop subsided, leaving a highland valley in place of a peak.

Burke's Garden is the highest valley in Virginia, with an elevation of approximately 3,000 feet at the valley floor. It gained its name after an eighteenth century surveyor, James Burke, threw out some potato peelings while camping there. Later teams of explorers discovered potato plants flourishing on the site—an accidental garden that bore witness to the fertility of the soil.

Mr. Moore went on to purchase a large parcel in Burke's Garden which spans from the valley floor to the mountain rim at over 4,000 feet elevation. The family has since protected the bulk of this land—4,329 acres that include springs, streams, sinkholes, cave entrances, pastures, forests, and rare plant communities. At the ridgeline, the property

adjoins a designated wilderness area within Jefferson National Forest. The Appalachian Trail also traces a ridge along the border of the property.

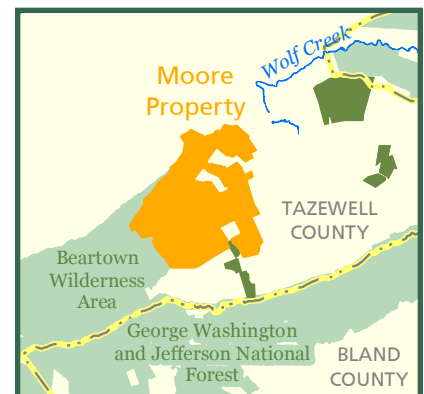
To protect this exceptional piece of land, the family had to strike a balance between a strong conservation ethic and savvy financial planning. Bill's brother, John, who is now deceased, was an avid conservationist and argued for protecting the land. Bill agreed that the land was special, and with his business background, he was interested in the financial pros and cons of preserving their property.

Ultimately, the family decided that a conservation easement would help them meet both their conservation and financial goals. In 2006 they donated an easement to the **Virginia Outdoors Foundation**. The sale of Virginia Land Preservation Tax Credits brought in income that offset the loss of property values. But, more importantly, Bill says, conservation offered a solution to an estate planning problem. By lowering the value of the property, they reduced

## Moore Property

Owned by the Moore family  
4,329 protected acres  
Tazewell County  
House District 3  
Senate District 38

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Appalachian Trail Buffer, National Forest Wilderness Area Buffer, Plant and Wildlife Habitat, Water Quality, Productive Farmland, Scenic Views



the burden of estate taxes, making it possible to keep the land in their family.

Since then, an additional four property owners in Burke's Garden have moved to protect their land, helping to preserve this extraordinary high-country landscape.

# Mill Site Steeped in Local History

PHOTO BY DAVID PERRY



When McDonald's Mill was a center of business activity in the Catawba Valley, big wagons pulled by eight horses would haul 300-pound barrels of flour, as well as beef, hams, chickens and cheese to a Lynchburg market, and return with many supplies. The mill, which dates from 1861, was also a community center. During the Civil War, a neighborhood dinner honoring young men leaving for military service was held on the mill's second floor.

The standing mill building is one of at least three mills that five generations of the McDonald family operated at this site, in Montgomery County, from the 1790s into the 20th century. In addition, a log fort with a limestone foundation once stood nearby. When the fort fell apart, the stone was taken for a home in Christiansburg.

When Ned Yost's family first came across this property, in the early 1950s, the mill building stood unused, along with a two story log cabin, and an abandoned general store building. Ned's parents, who were looking for a country place, bought the property in 1952, and he spent part of that summer camping on the land. Later he introduced his fiancée, now Janet Yost, to the land. It would become an important location for their

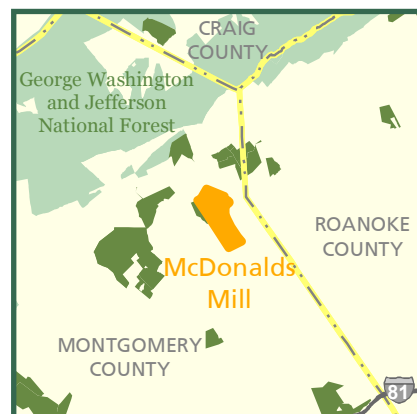
family—a vacation and holiday destination where their children got to visit their grandparents. On each visit, Ned says, he always looked forward to his first view of the familiar valley—from Luster's Gate on the west or Catawba in the east.

Now Ned and Janet have donated a conservation easement to preserve this mostly forested 289-acre property, which offers significant benefits for water quality and scenic views, as well as historic preservation. The land sits in a narrow stream valley that flows into the North Fork of the Roanoke River, a major source of drinking water for the Roanoke Valley. The property is located within the North Fork Natural Historic District and the mill is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. In addition, the Catawba Valley Road, which

## McDonald's Mill

Owned by Ned and Janet Yost  
289 protected acres  
Montgomery County  
House District 8  
Senate District 21

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Historic Preservation,  
Scenic Views, Water Quality, Plant and  
Wildlife Habitat



bisects the property, is part of the Route 76 Transamerica Bicentennial Bikeway. The easement is co-held by **Virginia Outdoors Foundation** and **Blue Ridge Land Conservancy**.

Ned says their purpose is "to promote and preserve the multiuse character of the North Fork National Historic District, with its mix of forests, agriculture and historic sites, while preserving the property for our family's continued enjoyment." He hopes this example "will encourage others to take similar action to add their support to preserve the beauty of the valley which surrounds us."

# A Pioneer of Best Farming Practices

## Ox Bow Farm

Owned by John Seibel  
558 protected acres  
Botetourt County  
House District 19  
Senate District 23

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Productive Farmland,  
Water Quality, Scenic Views



John Seibel  
PHOTO COURTESY JAMES RIVER ASSOCIATION

As it flows out of the Blue Ridge Mountains, through Botetourt County, the James River curves in an elaborate loop around John Seibel's farm, nearly circling it. The river's shape gives the farm its name: Ox Bow Farm. Here, on pasture land surrounded by the river, with views of the nearby mountains, John has taken the lead in developing and promoting best practices for conservation-friendly farming.

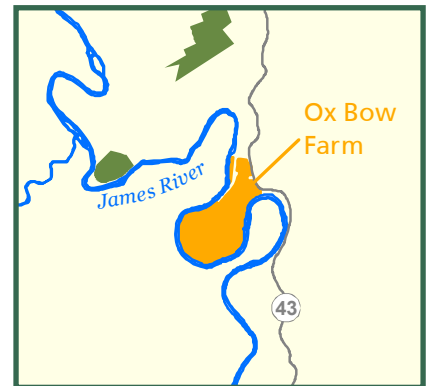
A cattle farmer, John uses rotational grazing to allow his soils to replenish. He has planted both warm and cool season grasses, which provide a range of wildlife habitat and provide for year round pasture rotation. And he has set aside buffers along waterways to reduce runoff and erosion.

Because of these efforts, Ox Bow Farm was named the Conservation Farm of the Year in 2004 by the Mountain Castles Soil and Water Conservation District (MCSWCD). John also served as an officer with the district for 15 years. When he retired as director in 2012, the district gave him a special award. They noted: "John was a pioneer of intensive rotational grazing systems for beef cattle that he managed on Ox Bow Farm... We are grateful to John and his wife Hallie

for their years of dedication to MCSWCD, agriculture in our area, and the community as a whole. The Seibels are true stewards of the land."

The Seibels also demonstrated their conservation ethic by donating an easement on the 558-acre farm to the **Virginia Outdoors Foundation** in 2006. The easement protects nearly four miles of frontage along the James River, along a section that is designated as a Virginia Scenic River. The property contains piers and anchorings from the historic Kanawa Canal, which was used up until the 1850s. The farm is in the drainage area of two known caves and is located in an area that supports endangered plant species.

John is also a welcoming host to high



school students and teachers in a "floating classroom" that makes its way down the river each summer, led by the James River Association. This conservation organization leads paddling trips from the headwaters of the James to its confluence with the Chesapeake Bay, highlighting natural, cultural, and historic features along the way. The paddling students and teachers stop at Ox Bow Farm, where John gives them a tour of his carefully tended farm. Since more than a third of Virginians get their drinking water from the river that curls around Ox Bow Farm, John's leadership promoting good stewardship goes a long way.



# Clean Water for the Roanoke Valley



PHOTO BY DAVID REEP

The conservation of over 11,000 forested acres surrounding the Carvins Cove Reservoir in Botetourt and Roanoke Counties safeguards a major source of drinking water, as well as a public recreation area, extensive wildlife habitat, and a famous view from the Appalachian National Scenic Trail.

The City of Roanoke protected most of the Carvins Cove Natural Reserve through the donation of two conservation easements, in 2008 and 2009, to the **Virginia Outdoors Foundation** and the **Blue Ridge Land Conservancy**.

The protection of extensive forests surrounding the reservoir will go far to provide clean, plentiful water for municipalities in the Roanoke Valley, preventing the need for increasingly expensive water treatment. The reservoir is the largest source of public drinking water for the City of Roanoke, Roanoke County, and the Town of Vinton.

Carvins Cove Natural Reserve is also the second-largest municipal park in the

nation, a major destination for hikers, mountain bikers, and equestrians. The property borders 14 miles of the Appalachian Trail. The vista from McAfee's Knob, which overlooks the conserved property, is one of the most frequently visited and photographed panoramas along the classic, cross-country trail.

The property is a haven for wildlife, including several rare biological communities. Roger Holnback, former Executive Director of Blue Ridge Land Conservancy, says, "This easement helps make certain the water supply for our community will be protected forever, and it will prevent unwise development of the Cove that could damage the watershed."

## Carvins Cove Natural Reserve

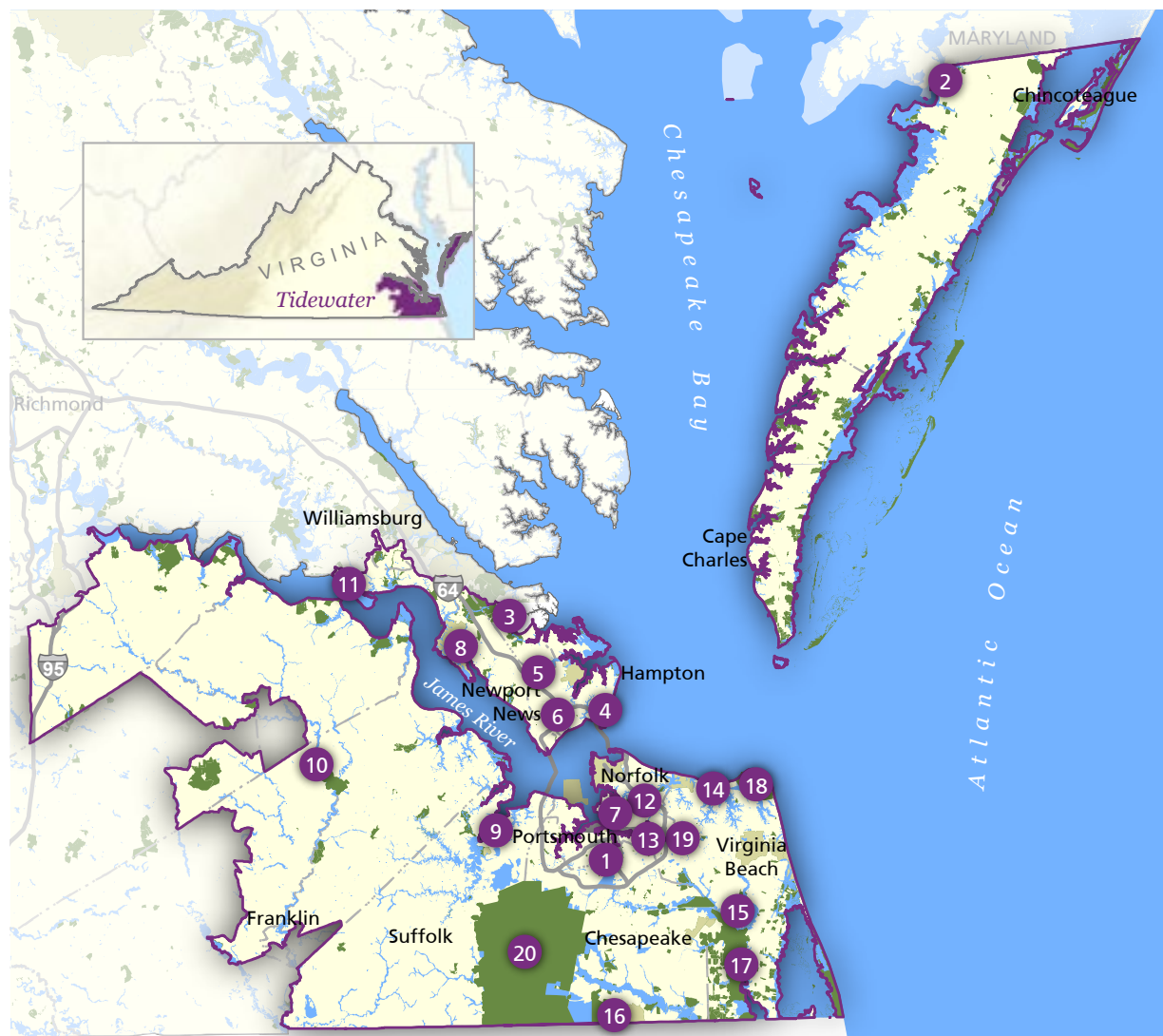
Public land - local  
11,363 protected acres  
Botetourt and Roanoke Counties  
House District 8, 19  
Senate District 21 and 23

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Water Quality, Tourism and Recreation, Scenic Views, Appalachian Trail Buffer, Plant and Wildlife Habitat





# Tidewater



	PAGE		PAGE
1 Paradise Creek Nature Park .....	106	11 Anniversary Park .....	117
2 Fletcher Farm .....	108	12 Elizabeth River Trail .....	118
3 Curtis Farm .....	109	13 Grandy Village Learning Center .....	119
4 Buckroe Beach and Buckroe Bayfront Park ....	110	14 Pleasure House Point .....	120
5 Sandy Bottom Nature Park .....	111	15 Dawley Farms .....	121
6 Aberdeen Gardens Historic Museum .....	112	16 Cavalier Wildlife Management Area .....	122
7 Attucks Theatre .....	113	17 North Landing River Preserve .....	123
8 Balthrope Marsh Wildlife Management Area .....	114	18 First Landing State Park .....	124
9 Eagle Point .....	115	19 Pleasant Hall .....	125
10 Blackwater Sandhills .....	116	20 Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge .....	126



# Paradise Restored

## Paradise Creek Nature Park

Public land - local  
40 protected acres  
City of Portsmouth  
House District 80  
Senate District 18

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Tourism and Recreation,  
Urban Green Space, Water Quality, Plant  
and Wildlife Habitat, Public Water Access

The Elizabeth River flows through a heavily developed landscape in a major port city, lined by industrial plants and military facilities. For decades, the river and landfills along its banks were dumping grounds for industrial chemicals, wastewater treatment sludge, military ordnance, discarded pesticides, and other toxic wastes.

The river was, for the most part, a dead zone, and the fish that did live there had high rates of cancer. Many people thought the Elizabeth River—the waterway along which the million residents of Portsmouth, Norfolk, Chesapeake, and Virginia Beach make their home—was beyond hope.

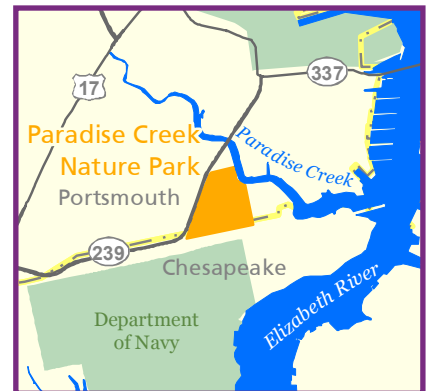
But some local activists refused to give up on the river. Since the mid-1990s, the Elizabeth River Project has been spearheading efforts to clean it up. For years, they have advocated for the removal of sediments from the river bottom—some of the most contaminated sediments in the world—and several large sediment cleanup projects are now completed or underway. The group promotes a watershed action plan that includes working with industry partners to reduce point



Dan O'Neal at Paradise Creek Nature Park  
PHOTO BY STEVE EARLEY, VIRGINIAN PILOT

source pollution, outreach to homeowners to prevent polluted runoff from yards and driveways, and restoration of wetlands and wooded areas that serve as natural filters. The group has helped to plant native trees and shrubs and restore wetlands at thousands of sites along the river.

"The river is getting better all the time," says Marjorie Mayfield Jackson, executive director of the Elizabeth River Project. Otters have come back. Oyster populations are increasing. Eagles soar above new habitats. And 27 kinds of fish have been identified in restored wetlands. The Elizabeth River is still struggling, but the Elizabeth River Project has set the goal of making it clean enough for people to safely swim and fish in by 2020.



The organization wanted to increase public engagement in the ongoing river cleanup, Jackson says, by giving people a place to enjoy the natural environment as it recovers around them. So, they set out to create a new park on 40 acres along Paradise Creek, a tributary of the South Branch of the Elizabeth River. The organization raised \$3 million to purchase the land, including a grant from the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation, in 2005.

At the time, the property consisted of trees smothering under vines and a bare field where a wetland had been filled in. Together, the **Elizabeth River Project**, the **City of Portsmouth**, the **Virginia Port Authority**, corporate partners, and crews of volunteer gave the land a new life. They recreated 11 acres of tidal wetlands, opening a curving channel of water through newly planted greenery. They removed phragmites, an invasive reed, and planted over 10,000 native trees, shrubs, and grasses. They cut vines out of the trees and created two

miles of trails.

The Paradise Creek Nature Park opened to the public in the summer of 2013, as a city park, the third largest park in the City of Portsmouth. When complete, the park will offer river access for canoeists and kayakers. It serves as a field trip destination for many schoolchildren in the city. And it gives local residents a place to enjoy family time outdoors, to get in shape on the trails, or to watch the songbirds and waterfowl as nature returns to the urban environment.



PHOTO BY NATHANIEL LACY

## THE BIG PICTURE

### **At a time when more than a third of children and adolescents in the U.S. are overweight, more opportunities for active, outdoor play can make a difference.**

Studies also show that time in nature reduces symptoms of attention-deficit disorder and helps children to cope with stressful life events. Outdoor education experiences correlate with increases in children's self-esteem, problem-solving skills, creativity, and motivation to learn.

SOURCE: "Leave No Child Inside" by Richard Louv, *Orion Magazine*, 2007.



# Land That Can Surprise and Inspire

## Fletcher Farm

Owned by Cameron and Adele McIntyre  
90 protected acres  
Accomack County  
House District 100  
Senate District 6

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Water Quality, Storm Resilience, Plant and Wildlife Habitat, Productive Farmland, Scenic Views

Cameron McIntyre came to Virginia's Eastern Shore from Beaufort, South Carolina, which he remembers as beautiful while he was growing up. But now, he says, each person has their 1-2 acres and every creek has 100 docks. He wanted to help preserve the natural beauty of the Eastern Shore because, he says, "Some areas deserve to be protected."

In 1997, Cameron and his wife Adele bought their own piece of this special landscape—a 90-acre working farm near New Church, which is bordered by Bullbagger Creek. This land gives them and their two sons, Miles and Caleb, a chance to encounter nature every day. The family builds nature trails using only snips and hand saws, work the boys enjoy so much they ask to do it again and again. Cameron hunts with his sons, making their meals from what they bag. Adele shows them how to raise vegetables in the garden. The boys build forts, climb trees, play in the marsh and the ponds, plant trees, ride their bikes, and keep nature journals. They can identify plants like millet, cattail, bulrush, and foxtail.

Even Cameron, a knowledgeable naturalist, keeps learning from the land. When an out-of-state friend told him there

Cameron, Adele, Caleb, and Miles Fletcher  
PHOTO BY HALI PLOURDE-ROGERS

were salamanders on the Eastern Shore, Cameron was doubtful. Shortly after, the family went camping on their property, and little Miles found two salamanders. "There are new surprises all the time and all kinds of things that I don't even know about," Cameron says. Because their land is protected, it will continue to offer people opportunities to learn from its surprises.

The farm is also Cameron's muse. A decoy carver and landscape painter, he has made around 300 paintings of the farm. "The land inspires me constantly," he says. "Even if I have painted a tree 10 times, it looks different each day and each season... I could paint here forever."

He offers this quote from Andy Warhol: "I think having land and not ruining it is the most beautiful art that anybody could



ever want to own."

In 2006, the McIntyres decided to donate a conservation easement on their farm to **Virginia's Eastern Shore Land Trust**. The easement protects their land forever, so that it can never be developed or subdivided. Instead, it will remain a working farm, as well as a place to hunt and fish. For Cameron, donating the easement brought peace of mind. He says, "When I walk out on the farm amidst the ducks and geese, I think, 'I've done my part.'"



# Buffer for York County's Water Supply

PHOTO BY CAREN SCHUMACHER



A conservation easement on a 75-acre working farm in York County preserves a piece of rural character near Newport News, adjacent to an outdoor recreation area and a major water supply resource.

One of the last remaining farms in York County, Curtis Farm is used for equine activities, including boarding, pasturing and riding of horses. The property is about one-third wooded and two-thirds open land, including pastures and hayfields.

Curtis Farm lines both banks of the Poquoson River for approximately half a mile just before the river enters Harwood's Mill Reservoir, one of the main drinking water supply sources for York County. The farm is located directly across the road from the park surrounding the reservoir, where people go to fish, hike, or ride on single-track mountain biking trails.

The owner, Carrie Wray Curtis, donated a conservation easement on the land to the **Williamsburg Land Conservancy**

in 2009. This land has been in her family since 1886, and she is pleased to be able to keep this piece of her heritage intact for future generations. The property provides scenic views to the public, adding to the open, natural landscape created by the Harwood's Mill Reservoir Park.

As the easement holder, the Williamsburg Land Conservancy has agreed to act as the steward of the property and ensure that the protections in the easement are upheld over time. "Once we accept an easement, our work has just begun," said Caren Schumacher, executive director of the conservancy. "The Curtis property is a beautiful piece of land, and we are so pleased that we were chosen to hold the easement and steward the Curtis Farm."

## Curtis Farm

Owned by Carrie Wray Curtis  
75 protected acres  
York County  
House District 93  
Senate District 2

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Productive Farmland,  
Water Quality, Public Land Buffer,  
Scenic Views



# A Public Beach in the City

## Buckroe Beach and Buckroe Bayfront Park

Public land - local  
29 protected acres  
City of Hampton  
House District 91  
Senate District 2

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Tourism and Recreation,  
Urban Green Space, Public Beach Access

**B**uckroe Bayfront Park, in Hampton, offers the perfect locale for festivals, picnics, and family events—a green, open park near the city center that fronts on the Chesapeake Bay. The adjacent shoreline is also a popular destination, especially on hot summer days. Then, the sandy beach fills with people relaxing in the sun and children jumping over lines of surf as the Bay laps the shore.

A few years ago, some of the **City of Hampton**'s leaders decided that they should try to protect the park and the beach, preserving a recreational treasure in the heart of the city. "Some of the property in question had been considered for development in the past," says Molly Ward, who was then Mayor of Hampton. "By the Council agreeing to put it in conservation easement, we ensured that it would be left for the citizens to enjoy."

The idea started when Mayor George Wallace (then Vice Mayor) attended a conservation easement dedication in Richmond. He came back inspired to protect the park and beach in Hampton. Although, at just under 29 acres, this property is smaller than the **Virginia**

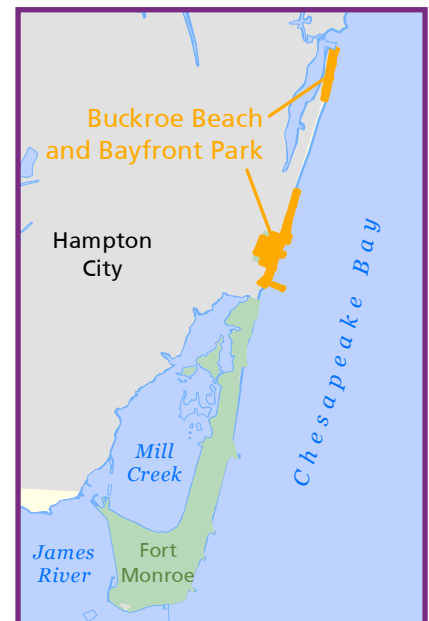


CITY OF HAMPTON

**Outdoors Foundation** will usually consider, the agency agreed that it offers exceptional public benefit, and accepted a conservation easement on the land in 2011.

The protected property includes the park, with its green space, picnic area, gazebo, and playground and over 2,000 feet of beachfront.

Ward says that protecting the park exemplifies "the idea that there is definitely a place in our urban environments for great urban parks. It is a park in that type of tradition. And I think it shows a commitment to the citizens that the council recognized that this place was special and deserved to remain green and open and accessible."



# From Mine Pits to Nature Park



PHOTO BY STEPHEN LAFAVE

The site of Hampton's premiere park was once an abandoned sand mine, gouged by pits where sand was dug out for highway construction. The forests and meadows where Kecoughtan Indians used to hunt game and gather berries, the fertile ground where settlers later farmed and cut timber, had become a battered, untended woods used for trash dumping, homeless camps, illegal hunting, and partying. The holes from the sand mines, called borrow pits, filled in with rain. People carved crude roads through the woods to access swimming holes or to dump garbage. Soils compacted and wildlife populations declined.

But some people saw potential in the abused landscape—for a resurgence of habitat around the lakes that the mine pits became and a park that would welcome people for recreation and nature studies. The **City of Hampton** developed a plan for a nature park and presented it to the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), which owned the abandoned mine site. In 1990, VDOT donated its 250 acre holding to the City. The City went on to acquire almost 200

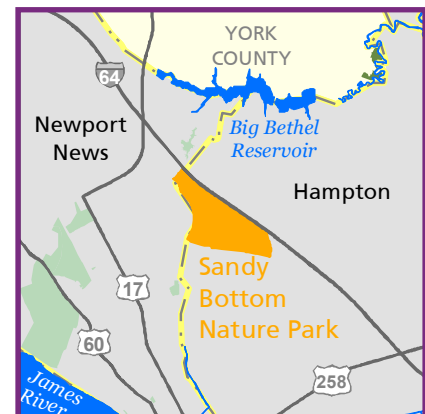
additional acres from private landowners, to create Sandy Bottom Nature Park. The park opened to the public in 1996.

In 2006, as the park celebrated its tenth anniversary, VDOT completed a wetlands mitigation project, expanding wetland habitat in the park. Since the new wetlands were created, more migratory birds have been using the park as a stopover. The park is also home to a wide range of wildlife, from the common white-tailed deer to the threatened

## Sandy Bottom Nature Park

Public land - local  
456 protected acres  
City of Hampton  
House District 95  
Senate District 2

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Tourism and Recreation, Urban Green Space, Public Water Access, Plant and Wildlife Habitat, Water Quality, Storm Resilience



Mabee's salamander and the endangered canebrake rattlesnake.

Today, human uses and wildlife habitat are maintained in balance. The park offers numerous amenities for visitors, including a 10,000-foot nature study center, a campground, picnic areas, outdoor classrooms, observation platforms, a fishing pier, and a boat rental. It also offers twelve miles of trails for walking and biking through forests, wetlands, open meadows, and the edge of the lakes. But access to some natural areas may be limited at times when wildlife are mating or raising their young. And one of the park's four sections, the Wildlife Core Area, is not accessible to human visitors but maintained as a safe haven for animals.



# Built by Blacks for Blacks

## Aberdeen Gardens Historic Museum

Owned by the Aberdeen Gardens  
Historical and Civic Association  
Historic building protected  
City of Hampton  
House District 92  
Senate District 2

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Historic Preservation

The Aberdeen Gardens neighborhood in the City of Hampton was

built during the Great Depression to provide housing for African-American shipyard workers and their families. Described as “a neighborhood built by blacks for blacks,” it emphasized self-sufficiency—as African Americans, as a neighborhood, and as individuals.

The project was sponsored by the historically-black Hampton Institute, now Hampton University, which secured federal funding through the Resettlement Administration, making Aberdeen Gardens the only black community in Virginia funded by that program. The street layout was designed by the black architect Hillyard R. Robertson and the houses were designed by another black architect, Charles Duke.

The neighborhood was set up to include all necessary services, including stores and a school. Professional services could be found within the community, including resident doctors and lawyers. The streets were laid out to include a green-belt for farming, and each of the 158 brick homes came with a large garden plot and a chicken coop, so families could grow their own food.



VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HISTORIC RESOURCES

“It was all self-sufficient,” says Claude Vann III, the president of the Aberdeen Gardens Historical and Civic Association. Vann’s grandfather, a shipyard worker, was one of the original residents. Vann was raised in an Air Force family and spent his own career in the U.S. Army, but once he retired he came back to Hampton, where his family has roots.

Vann observes that many notable people came out of Aberdeen Gardens, including a U.S. Secretary of Energy, a U.S. ambassador, judges, civil rights leaders, prominent military officers, professional athletes, and elected officials. He describes the neighborhood, which is still predominantly African-American, as a tight-knit community that plays an active role in the life of the city. “It has continued to be a heartbeat of the City of Hampton,” he says.



The neighborhood is listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places. To educate people about its history, the Aberdeen Gardens Historical and Civil Association maintains one of the original houses as a museum, featuring items from the homes of original families. This property, the Aberdeen Gardens Historical Museum, was protected in 1999 by a historic preservation easement held by the **Virginia Department of Historic Resources**, which was funded by a grant from the General Assembly.

# Apollo Theatre of the South

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HISTORIC RESOURCES



A theater that showcases African-American entrepreneurship, architecture, and music has been preserved as a historic landmark in downtown Norfolk—and re-opened as a venue with an active role in the cultural life of the city.

The Crispus Attucks Theatre, which first opened in 1919, was envisioned by a group of black businessmen from Norfolk and Portsmouth, called the Twin Cities Amusement Corporation, who saw potential for a theatre to become a regional hub for entertainment and commerce. Located on Church Street, one of Norfolk's oldest thoroughfares, the building was designed by the well-known African-American architect Harvey Johnson. It was financed and constructed entirely by African-Americans. The theater was named for Crispus Attucks, the African-American man who may have been the first person killed in the Revolutionary War. Known as the "Apollo Theatre of the South," the Attucks showcased a host of legendary performers including Duke Ellington and Nat King Cole.

The Attucks also served as a platform for

promoting social and political reform. For African-American schools in Norfolk, it hosted everything from commencement ceremonies to poetry readings. Even church services were held within its doors.

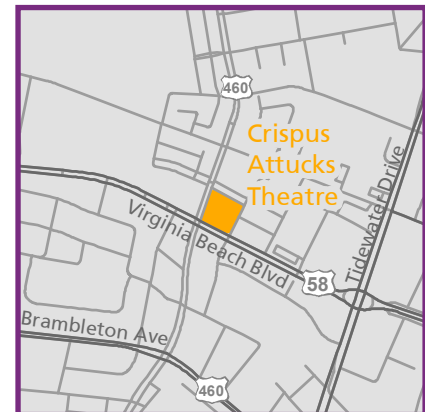
After a 34-year run, the theatre closed in 1953. The building was recognized for its historic significance, with a listing on the Virginia Landmarks Register in 1981 and the National Register of Historic Places in 1982. Then, in the 1990s, efforts to revive the Attucks Theatre began. The Crispus Attucks Cultural Center organized in 1990 and raised money for over a decade to rehabilitate the structure.

A series of grants from the General Assembly helped to support the restoration, with the condition that the building must be placed under a historic preservation easement. The easement,

## Attucks Theatre

Owned by SevenVenues  
and City of Norfolk  
Historic building protected  
City of Norfolk  
House District 89  
Senate District 5

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Historic Preservation



which was recorded in 1999 and is held by the **Virginia Department of Historic Resources**, protects the exterior of the property as well as the interior, including its ornamental plasterwork, moldings, murals, box and balcony fronts, and cornices. Additional funding came from federal Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits and a federal Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act grant.

In 2001, the Crispus Attucks Cultural Center along with the City of Norfolk and Norfolk Redevelopment and Housing Authority held a groundbreaking ceremony at the theatre. The Attucks re-opened its doors in 2004, and now hosts a variety of concerts, summer camps and community events.

# Secluded Marsh in Newport News

## THE BIG PICTURE

**A one-acre wetland can hold about a million gallons of water,** and during hurricanes or other powerful storms, they soak up flood waters and storm surges, reducing property damage and loss of life. The trees and vegetation in wetlands also absorb some of the force of incoming water.

SOURCE: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency



PHOTO BY PATRICIA TEMPLES

In the heart of Newport News, there is a 72 acre nature preserve—little known except by the water birds and other animals that thrive in its reedy, watery expanse. The preserve also harbors a few in-the-know local birders who paddle out to the marsh to see bald eagles, ospreys, clapper rails, marsh wrens, red-winged blackbirds, egrets, herons, and other wild birds. Other wildlife species at the marsh include river otter and muskrat.

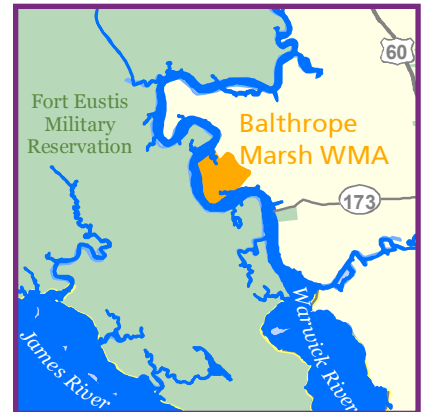
This mostly undisturbed wetland comprises the Balthrope Marsh Wildlife Management Area, owned by the **Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries**. The preserve supports the restoration of the Chesapeake Bay as an ecological treasure, providing habitat and wetlands that filter runoff from the surrounding urban landscape.

The marsh was once part of Warwick River Farm, owned by Sylvanus and Mildred Moyer. But, the city decided to rezone their land for residential development, so the Moyers let go of the farm, selling off their livestock and moving

## Balthrope Marsh Wildlife Management Area

Public land - state  
72 protected acres  
House District 94  
Senate District 1  
City of Newport News

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Plant and Wildlife Habitat, Water Quality, Storm Resilience, Urban Green Space, Tourism and Recreation



inland. But they were able to preserve a portion of their property as open, natural land, by donating the marsh to the state for a wildlife management area, in 1992.

Today, the marsh supports a healthy wildlife habitat dominated by two species of native wetland plants—salt-marsh cordgrass (*spartina alterniflora*) and needlerush (*juncus roemarianus*). It is located on the Warwick River, near Fort Eustis, just upstream from the Denbigh Boat Ramp—a near secret natural haven in the city, accessible by boat for fishing and bird-watching.



# Eagle Habitat on a River Trail Through Suffolk

PHOTO BY CAREN SCHUMACHER



A 128-acre tract of protected marshland and farmland extends wildlife habitat into the City of Suffolk, so people can enjoy a vital natural environment and healthy waterways within the urban landscape. Eagle Point, owned by George and Phyllis Cornell, is located on the Nansemond River near its confluence with the Lower James River, with Bennett Creek as its eastern boundary.

Comprised of wetlands, springs, streams, and a nursery-stock tree farm, the property lies just a few miles north of both the Nansemond National Wildlife Refuge and the Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge. It borders a section of the Nansemond River that forms a popular stretch of the James River Heritage Trail, traveled by the public on a regular basis. True to its name, Eagle Point is home to birds including bald eagles, peregrine falcons, and piping plovers.

Dr. George Cornell's parents moved to Eagle Point in 1946, when he was eight years old, and he spent his childhood exploring the rivers, groves, and farmland surrounding his home. After living in Charlottesville for a time, Dr. Cornell

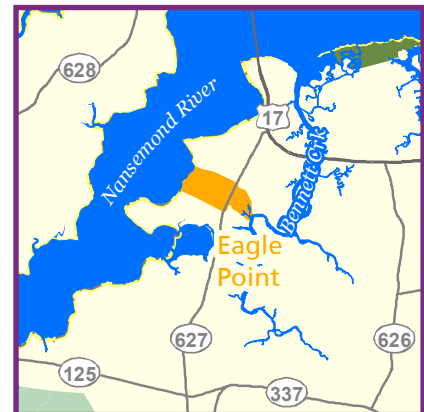
returned to Eagle Point to care for his aging parents. He was also drawn back by a love of the land that he shared with his parents. "The land was in their DNA," he said. The land became deeply a part of him as well. Developers frequently approached the Cornells about their property, with proposals to build as many as 400 homes on the land. Instead, the Cornells decided to conserve the land, donating an easement to the **Williamsburg Land Conservancy** in 2009. "You can see how you can become attached to a place in seventy years," Dr. Cornell said of their decision.

Eagle Point has over 3,000 feet of frontage on the Nansemond River and Bennett Creek. Protecting the land helps

## Eagle Point

Owned by George and Phyllis Cornell  
128 protected acres  
City of Suffolk  
House District 76  
Senate District 3

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Plant and Wildlife  
Habitat, Water Quality, Storm Resilience,  
Productive Farmland, Urban Green  
Space, Scenic Views



to improve water quality in these waterways, as well as the James River and the Chesapeake Bay. The preserved wetlands also help to absorb the impact of coastal storms. In addition, Bennetts Pasture Road runs through the property, which offers a refreshing view of scenic, open space. The two waterways bordering the property flow into a portion of the James River that has been nominated for designation as a Virginia Scenic River.

# Thousand Year Old Cypress Trees

## Blackwater Sandhills

Public land - local  
2,348 protected acres  
Isle of Wight County  
House District 64  
Senate District 18

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Plant and Wildlife Habitat, Tourism and Recreation, Public Water Access, Working Forest, Water Quality, Scenic Views

Have you ever seen an old-growth cypress swamp? There's a place in Tidewater where huge trees rise from swollen, mossy bases into the forest canopy, their high leaves reflecting green on the dark surface of the swamp. At the foot of the trees, wooden stalagmites called "knees" poke up through the black water. Some of these trees are over 1,000 years old, interspersed with younger generations of bald cypress, black gum, and tupelo.

This kind of forest is a rare sight in the U.S. today—but in Isle of Wight County, a new nature preserve protects an extraordinary tract of old-growth trees, buffered from development by working forests.

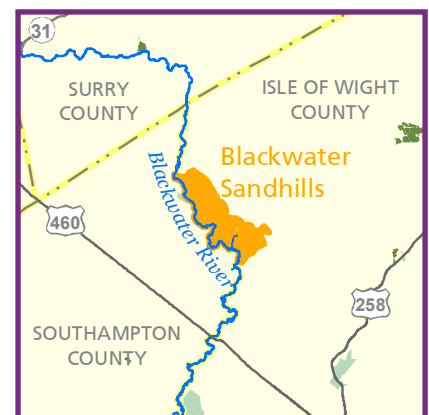
The land became available in 2006 when International Paper decided to sell off much of its vast forest holdings, including this property. **The Nature Conservancy** took the initiative to protect the property, and helped to secure a grant from the U.S. Forest Service to enable **Isle of Wight County** to purchase the land. The costs of the purchase were defrayed when two state agencies—the **Department of Forestry**



PHOTO BY LARRY MIKKELSON

and the **Department of Conservation and Recreation**—purchased a conservation easement on the property in 2012, ensuring its permanent protection.

An 815-acre parcel within the 2,348-acre property has been designated by the state as the Blackwater Sandhills Natural Area Preserve. This preserve includes 500 acres of bottomlands where old-growth tupelo and bald cypress trees grow, as well as over 300 acres of sandhills and upland forests which will be reforested in longleaf pine, once common in this area. The preserve also includes 5.5 miles of frontage on the Blackwater River, just across from The Nature Conservancy's



Blackwater River Preserve. The remaining 1,500 acres have been protected as working forest land, off-limits for development. Isle of Wight County plans to open the site for recreational uses including hiking, paddling, and horse-back riding.



# 200+ Acres Next to Jamestown Settlement

JAMES CITY COUNTY



Over 200 acres next to Jamestown Settlement has been permanently protected and opened to the public as a local park. Christened Anniversary Park, this land was center stage for the celebration of the 400th anniversary of the founding of Jamestown, the first permanent English settlement in the Americas. The land also includes a portion of the Revolutionary War Green Spring battlefield.

The new park, along the James River and Powhatan Creek in James City County, creates a buffer of open land next to the historic Jamestown Settlement, a major tourist destination. The park is also the site of stream and shoreline restoration projects, and it offers public access to the James River.

In 2006, The Trust for Public Land coordinated the \$12.45 million purchase of the land, formerly the site of the James City Campground and Yacht Basin. Numerous

funding sources contributed to the project, including James City County, the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation, the National Oceanic and Atmosphere Foundation, and Dominion Resources.

"There is no greater legacy that we can leave for future generations than the land we protect today," said Will Rogers, president of **The Trust for Public Land**. "America's past, present, and future all come together on this land and we are proud to protect this iconic property."

## Anniversary Park

Public land - local  
202 protected acres  
James City County  
House District 93  
Senate District 3

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Historic Preservation,  
Tourism and Recreation, Public Water  
Access, Water Quality





# Connecting Neighborhoods and Celebrating the Soul of Norfolk

## Elizabeth River Trail

Public land - local  
10 miles of trail corridor  
City of Norfolk  
House Districts 79, 80, 89  
Senate Districts 5, 6

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Tourism and Recreation,  
Bike and Pedestrian Network, Urban  
Green Space, Scenic Views

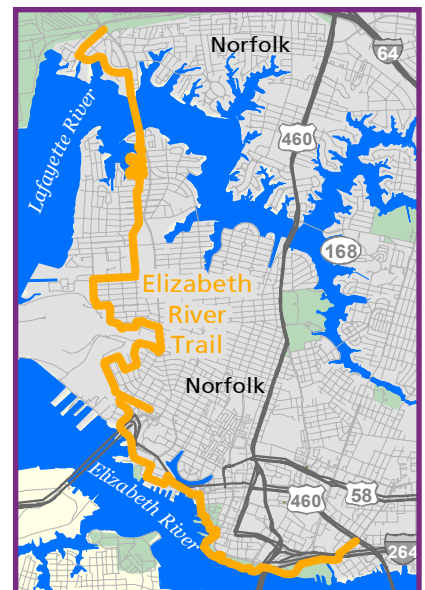
The Elizabeth River Trail in Norfolk started out simply as an effort to open up a way to walk from one neighborhood to another. Residents of the West Ghent neighborhood lived only half a mile from the beautiful Elizabeth River and less than two miles from destinations like the Waterside Marketplace, Town Point Festival Park, and the downtown business district. But they were cut off by a major road with heavy traffic, a marine industrial facility, and an active railroad.

A trip by car required navigating through heavy traffic, then searching for parking. That could take half an hour or more. Their neighborhood was so close... and yet so far away.

When some citizens raised the idea of turning an unused rail line into a connector trail, it sparked hopes for an easier commute. For several years, neighborhood residents, rail owners, and **City of Norfolk** staff worked together to turn the overgrown and unsightly rail line into a new bicycle and pedestrian trail. A series of federal Transportation Enhancement grants, through the Virginia Department of Transportation, funded the design and construction of a 10-foot wide, paved, and landscaped facility. As the trail evolved, a group of citizens also succeeded in establishing Plum Point Park along the trail, which includes a



PHOTO BY ADAMO IMAGE



Museum of Art, and the Hermitage Museum. It links to the city's light rail transit system (Virginia's first light rail) as well as a pedestrian ferry to downtown Portsmouth. A number of short detours reach attractions such as the Virginia Zoo, MacArthur Memorial, Scope Arena, and Chrysler Hall. A walk or ride down the Elizabeth River Trail is a trip through the history, culture, and the very soul of the City of Norfolk.

waterfront overlook and restored tidal wetland. The park further enhanced the aesthetics of the trail, making it appealing for both commuting and recreating.

Once the initial trail was complete, it became the city's most heavily used bike and pedestrian path. So, it made sense to extend it. The city developed a long-range plan, which it has implemented over the past ten years, creating a series of on- and off-road routes that now extend for ten miles alongside the Elizabeth River.

Now, people can take the trail to destinations that include Norfolk State University, Old Dominion University, Tidewater Community College, the Downtown Business District, Harbor Park baseball stadium, Waterside Marketplace, Town Point Festival Park, the Freemason and Ghent historic districts, the Chrysler

# Green Outdoor Classrooms— on Land and Sea

NORFOLK REDEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING AUTHORITY



## Grandy Village Learning Center and the Learning Barge

Public River Access  
City of Norfolk  
House District 90  
Senate District 5

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Outdoor Education, Plant and Wildlife Habitat, Water Quality, Storm Resilience, Urban Green Space, Public Water Access

A wetlands reclamation project near the center of Norfolk brought back habitat for creatures like ospreys, otters, and mummichog fish. It also created a place for the city's public school students to learn about nature first-hand.

The **City of Norfolk** built the Grandy Village Learning Center in 2010 on a tract at the edge of the Elizabeth River, where dry ground was converted back to wetlands and overgrown vegetation was replaced with native plants, to attract wildlife. The 15,000 square-foot facility on the site—which earned LEED Gold certification for green building—is home to various community resources including the Norfolk Housing and Redevelopment Authority, a Head Start program, and the Norfolk Public Schools pre-school program and science labs. The science labs continue outdoors, where oyster-shell paths wind through the reclaimed wetlands and a pier extends over the Elizabeth River. At the end of the pier, the Learning Barge operated by the **Elizabeth River Project** is sometimes docked, so that students have access not only to outdoor classrooms, but to a floating classroom.

On land and on the water, these facilities give Norfolk schoolchildren direct experience with cutting edge environmental

restoration and sustainability initiatives.

The Learning Center was the first building in Norfolk to attain LEED Gold certification, featuring local and recycled construction materials, natural light, solar and geothermal heating, state-of-the-art insulation, double-glazed low-E windows, and water-efficient landscaping and plumbing features. The facility is 30-40% more energy efficient than standard buildings. It is also located near light rail and it provides reserved parking for fuel-efficient vehicles. In addition to public school activities, the center hosts programs for people of all ages, city-wide. The facility also includes an access point intended for the city parks department to operate a kayak launch. Last year, approximately 1,400 students came to the Learning Center, for outdoor lessons tailored to meet a range of curriculum goals.

Hands-on education continues on the Learning Barge—a floating classroom complete with on-board wetlands full of



oysters, grasses, crabs, and worms. The 120-foot by 32-foot steel barge is made of recycled materials, powered entirely by the sun and the wind, and features rainwater collection, water filtration, and composting toilets. The barge docks at various points along the Elizabeth River, with a mission to teach kids how to help make this urban river safe for swimming and fishing by 2020.

When the Learning Barge docked at the Learning Center this year, Marjorie Mayfield Jackson, the executive director of The Elizabeth River Project, said, "We love the synergy of being able to show our visitors what it means to be green by land as well as by sea."

# Public Shore Access for Recreation and Education



PHOTO BY JOHN HENLEY

**P**leasure House Point offers 118 acres of maritime forest, river frontage, wetlands, beach, and marsh islands overlooking Lynnhaven Bay, close to the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay—an ideal place for people to explore and enjoy the outdoors.

The property had been the top open space priority for the **City of Virginia Beach** for over a decade, as several neighborhood and civic organizations pressed for its conservation. But it was owned by developers and slated for over a thousand houses.

Then a chance arose to protect it. Due to the downturn in the real estate market, the property came under the control of Wells Fargo Bank. **The Trust for Public Land** seized the opportunity, acquired the property from the bank, and conveyed the majority of the land to the city.

As a local natural area, this land will provide public access to the shoreline for recreation including fishing, non-motorized boating, walking, playing, and wildlife watching. In addition, a 10-acre portion of the property was conveyed to the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, which will establish an environmental

education center and provide outdoor field programs for local school children and adults.

The site includes a mile of frontage on Pleasure House Creek and the Lynnhaven River and rare maritime forests, as well as tidal and nontidal wetlands. These habitats support a variety of important species, and filter water flowing into the Chesapeake Bay. The site also presents opportunities for habitat enhancement, including wetlands restoration and oyster reef construction.

Funding sources for the land acquisition included the City of Virginia Beach, Virginia Land Conservation Foundation, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Virginia Clean Water Revolving Loan Fund, and the Dominion Foundation. The **Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries** holds a conservation easement on a portion of the land.

## Pleasure House Point

Part public land - local; part owned by the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, with public access

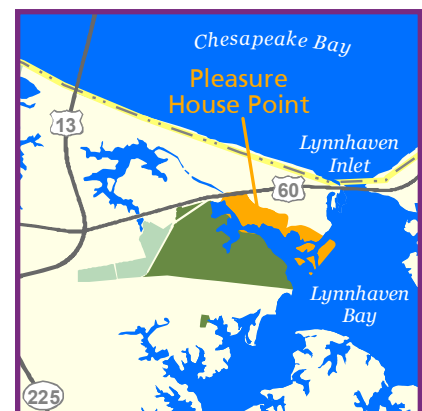
118 protected acres

City of Virginia Beach

House District 83

Senate District 7

**PUBLIC BENEFITS:** Tourism and Recreation, Public Water Access, Outdoor Education, Water Quality, Plant and Wildlife Habitat, Storm Resilience





# Productive Farms in Virginia Beach

PHOTO BY JENNY MCPHERSON



**T**he City of Virginia Beach spans urban, suburban, and rural communities. Within a short drive from the ocean, you can find fields of crops swaying in the breeze. These farms contribute to the third largest industry in the City—agriculture.

In 1995, Virginia Beach became the first locality in Virginia to establish a purchase of development rights (PDR) program, in order to preserve the agricultural industry and rural heritage of southern Virginia Beach. The PDR program is a voluntary program that allows landowners to capitalize on the development potential of their farmland while they maintain ownership.

One of the first landowners to use the program was the Dawley family, who farm five parcels along the winding West Neck Road. The farms are located just south of the boundary that the City has set for extending water and sewer services. Preserving rural land outside of the planned service area supports the City's goals for fiscal responsibility, allowing it to make more cost-effective investments in infrastructure.

The Dawleys decided that they wanted to preserve their land as farmland for future generations. So, in 1997, they completed an easement on over 540

acres, selling their development rights to the **City of Virginia Beach**.

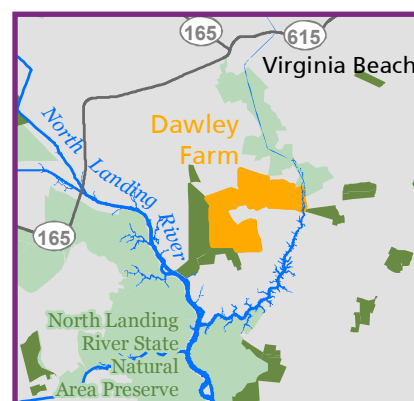
Much of this land has been in their family for generations. The first of the parcels was obtained at auction on the steps of the Princess Anne County courthouse during the Great Depression—100 acres sold to George S. Dawley for \$1,200 in 1931. He purchased another parcel of more than 200 acres, in 1944. After George Dawley's death in 1969, his sons William (Marvin) and Alvah purchased the rest of their family's current acreage.

Marvin and Alvah farmed the land together as Dawley Brothers Farm, raising corn, wheat, soybeans, sweet potatoes, white potatoes, and green beans. Following Marvin's death in 1987, the family formed a corporation, Dawley Farms, LLC, to manage the farms. Marvin's son Arnold worked for the USDA Farm Service Agency and also ran the farms, along with his Uncle Alvah. Their farm operation consisted of row crops as well as a farrow-to-finish hog operation, with

## Dawley Farms

Owned by the Dawley family  
540 protected acres  
City of Virginia Beach  
House District 84  
Senate District 8

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Productive Farmland,  
Working Forests, Scenic Views, Water  
Quality



supplemental income from timbering.

Arnold and Alvah were respected members of the agricultural community, who were both honored as "Man of the Year in Agriculture," in 1991 and 1996 respectively. Upon his retirement, Arnold returned to the farm full-time, with help from his sons Jason and Danny. After Alvah passed away in 2008, Arnold and Jason kept up the family tradition. They raise cattle rather than hogs, while row crops remain their main source of income.

On a recent harvesting day, you could find Jason with his wife and two young girls riding in the combine picking corn—continuing a long tradition of making a living off the land, which the Virginia Beach PDR program is helping to sustain.

# Wildlife Corridor to the Great Dismal Swamp

## Cavalier Wildlife Management Area

Public land - state  
3,805 protected acres  
City of Chesapeake  
House District 81  
Senate District 14

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Plant and Wildlife Habitat,  
Tourism and Recreation, Water Quality,  
Scenic Views, Storm Resilience

Just two and a half miles east of the Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge, this tract was originally part of the swamp, but it was ditched and drained more than 200 years ago. Located on the outer coastal plain of south-east Virginia, in the City of Chesapeake, this property now includes roughly 500 acres of mature forested wetlands on its eastern side. The rest is comprised of young regenerating hardwood stands, areas of planted pine, and wide stretches dominated by cane.

Prior to its conservation in 2005, the property faced a range of threats, including development, habitat fragmentation, hydrologic alteration, fire suppression, incompatible forestry practices, and road construction, all of which could hobble its biological diversity and ecological function.

Instead, it is now permanently protected, contributing toward a wildlife corridor to link the Great Dismal Swamp with protected lands to the east. This corridor benefits black bears, canebrake rattlesnakes, many kinds of songbirds, and numerous other species of concern. The property includes a variety of important



VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF GAME AND INLAND FISHERIES



habitats, including the rare Atlantic white cedar swamp; canebrake; riverine and basin swamp forest; and mesic mixed hardwood forest. Its conservation also protects water quality in the Northwest River and the drinking water supply for the City of Chesapeake. The area is open to the public for activities including seasonal hunting of deer, bear, turkey, and small game.

In 2005, **The Nature Conservancy** assisted the **Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries** in acquiring the tract, using funds from the Virginia Aquatic Resources Trust Fund and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

# Unique Marshes Teeming with Wildlife



PHOTO BY BRYAN JORJORIAN

**T**he North Landing River preserve is one of the largest expanses of undisturbed freshwater marshes along the eastern seaboard. Influenced primarily by wind tides as opposed to lunar tides, this unusual wetlands system is home to an exceptional diversity of plants and wildlife, including many species that are rare in Virginia.

Visitors to the preserve may see least bitterns, great herons and other waterfowl flying overhead. Hollow trees provide a comfortable den for raccoons, opossums and squirrels. Muskrats and otters build lodges hidden among the grasses. Deer retreat to nearby forests to bed down for the day. During the summer, the marshes explode with color: pink rose mallow, orange lanceolate milkweed, white arrowhead, violet blue pickerelweed, and other brilliant wildflowers.

As fall advances, migratory songbirds move through the area on their journey south. Some birds, including ducks,

geese, and swans, stay all winter, feeding on fruits, berries or marsh grasses. The yellow-rumped warbler arrives about the time wax myrtle berries begin to ripen and remains until spring.

The preserve includes five kinds of rare wetlands communities, most notably the pocosin community, characterized by tangled shrubs and vines with a scattered pine overstory—a type of wetland that is fast disappearing from the southeastern United States. The preserve provides habitat for rare and endangered wildlife, including the Dismal Swamp shrew and canebrake rattlesnake, and for 32 species of rare plants. One unusual

## North Landing River Preserve

Part public land - state; part owned by The Nature Conservancy, with public access

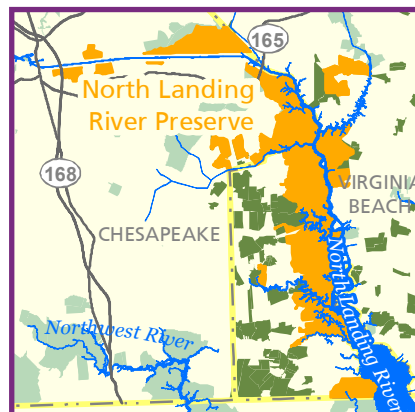
11,040 protected acres

City of Virginia Beach

House Districts 21, 78, 81

Senate Districts 14, 8

**PUBLIC BENEFITS:** Plant and Wildlife Habitat, Water Quality, Storm Resilience, Tourism and Recreation, Public Water Access



plant at the preserve is sawgrass—a kind of sedge with sawlike bristles on its leaves, which is abundant in the Everglades and reaches its northernmost limit in southeastern Virginia.

The North Landing preserve is protected through both public and private conservation programs. A state Natural Area Preserve managed by the **Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation** spans 3,441 acres. This state-owned land adjoins a 7,599 acre, publicly accessible preserve owned by **The Nature Conservancy**.



# The Shore Where the Settlers Landed

## First Landing State Park

2,888 protected acres  
City of Virginia Beach  
House District 82  
Senate District 8

**PUBLIC BENEFITS:** Historic Preservation, Tourism and Recreation, Public Water Access, Urban Green Space, Military Base Buffer, Plant and Wildlife Habitat, Water Quality

In the darkness before dawn on an April morning in 1607, three small ships—the Susan Constant, the Godspeed, and the Discovery—approached the shore of the New World. They had departed England four months earlier, carrying immigrants who meant to establish a lasting English settlement, commissioned by the Virginia Company of London. They landed at a beach at the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay.

On this shore, the newcomers held the first free election among European settlers in the Americas, to choose the president of their council, and they set out to find a place for their settlement. After exploring the nearby waterways, they chose a swampy peninsula 40 miles inland on the James River, which was not inhabited by the native Indian tribes, to establish Jamestown. This settlement, after its first harrowing years, which only 61 of the 500 settlers survived, would become the first English foothold in the New World.

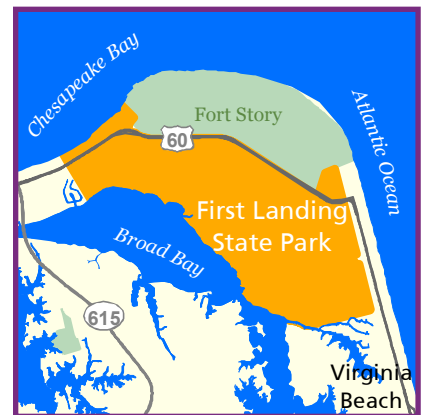
Today, the shore where the English ships landed is preserved as First Landing State Park—nearly 3,000 acres of seashore, cypress swamps, and maritime forests in the midst of urban Virginia Beach. Over the centuries, its waters have been



PHOTO BY JIM LOWE

traversed by Native American canoes, by pirate ships, and by Union and Confederate patrol boats and blockade-runners. Legend has it that the fearsome English pirate Blackbeard once hid there in bays accessed only by narrow channels.

The park, originally called Seashore State Park, was one of the first Virginia state parks, and it was the first planned park in the Virginia state park system, designed in consultation with the National Park Service. It was built starting in 1933 by an all African-American regiment of the Civilian Conservation Corps. The park, which is owned by the **Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation**, began with over a thousand acres of donated land, which was enlarged by subsequent acquisitions and an adjustment of the border with the



adjacent military base. The park continues to buffer the Joint Expeditionary Base East, a training ground for the U.S. Navy and Army amphibious operations.

First Landing State Park offers 1.5 miles of public beachfront, 20 miles of trails, a boat launch, cabins, campgrounds, picnic areas, and bicycle rentals. With over one million visitors each year, it is the most popular state park in Virginia.

# The Crown Jewel of Kempsville

PHOTO BY VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HISTORIC RESOURCES



Pleasant Hall, a brick, Georgian house that stands near a major intersection in Kempsville, in Virginia Beach, was standing there back when Kempsville was the county seat of Princess Anne County and America was not yet a nation. Thought to date from 1769, Pleasant Hall is the only building in Kempsville that predates the American Revolution.

During the Revolution, the house was owned by a prominent merchant and fervent Royalist named George Logan, who made it available to the royal governor, Lord Dunmore, as his headquarters during the Battle of Great Bridge. When the British won the battle, Logan threw a Victory Ball for the governor at his home. Logan's fortunes turned when the revolutionaries won the war, and he fled with Lord Dunmore and his troops back to England.

In 1782, after the British defeat at Yorktown but before the peace settlement of 1783, Kempsville was designated as the county seat of Princess Anne County. The second owner of Pleasant Hall, a patriot named Peter Singleton, donated land beside the house for the county

courthouse, which opened in 1787.

But by 1822, the county seat was relocated further south, and the commerce from people in the area on county business also moved away from Kempsville. The former courthouse was converted to a church building and later abandoned and torn down. Kempsville faded to a quiet backwater that, as late as the 1950s, lacked so much as a stop sign at its most prominent intersection.

Through these quiet decades, Kempsville remained a historic community, with numerous buildings from the 18th and early 19th century still intact, into the 1960s. Booming suburban development dismantled much of that legacy—but, now, efforts are underway to preserve what remains of Kempsville's

## Pleasant Hall

Owned by Kempsville Baptist Church  
Historic building protected  
City of Virginia Beach  
House District 85  
Senate District 7

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Historic Preservation



historic character. In accordance with its Master Plan for Historic Kempsville, the City of Virginia Beach is designing transportation improvements and new development in order to preserve historic structures and neighborhoods. New pathways and historic markers will invite people to explore the legacy of the past.

At the center of this push for preservation is the stately Pleasant Hall, which is now owned by the Kempsville Baptist Church and protected by an easement granted to the **Virginia Department of Historic Resources** in 1973. Elizabeth McBride, the chairperson of the Historical Committee of Pleasant Hall, says, "It's the crown jewel of Kempsville."

# A Wild Swamp Returns



PHOTO BY BYRON JORJIAN

For centuries, the Great Dismal Swamp was known as a treacherous place of unhealthy vapors, thick vegetation, boggy ground, and unknown beasts. The swamp teemed with snakes and biting insects, and it was rumored to be inhabited by lions.

A surveyor, in 1732, called it a “vast body of mire and nastiness... very unwholesome for inhabitants.” So, most people left the swamp alone. And so, the swamp was able to flourish as a rich habitat for wildlife and for people who didn’t want to be found.

In times of slavery, many runaways fled into the vast wilderness of swampland on the Virginia-North Carolina border. For some, the swamp was one stop on the Underground Railroad, as they made their way north. For others, the swamp became a permanent home, offering rugged freedom in a hidden place. Archaeological studies continue

to find evidence of maroon colonies deep within the swamp. Recent research suggests that as many as 50,000 people may have lived in the swamp as maroons (from the French word “marronage,” meaning to flee).

But over the centuries, the swamp lost some of its wildness. Wetlands were drained. Fires were suppressed. The whole swamp was logged at least once. The vast, boggy wilderness that once extended over a million acres was reduced to a fraction of that size.

Starting in the 1970s, conservationists began working to set aside what

## Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge

Public land - national  
112,000+ protected acres  
City of Chesapeake, City of Suffolk  
House Districts 76, 77  
Senate Districts 14, 18

PUBLIC BENEFITS: Plant and Wildlife Habitat, Tourism and Recreation, Public Water Access, Water Quality, Scenic Views, Storm Resilience, Historic Preservation

remained of the Great Dismal Swamp and restore it as a robust wilderness, full of intricate communities and untouched recesses. In 1973, the the Union Camp Corporation, a timber company, donated over 49,000 acres to **The Nature Conservancy**—returning a huge tract of land



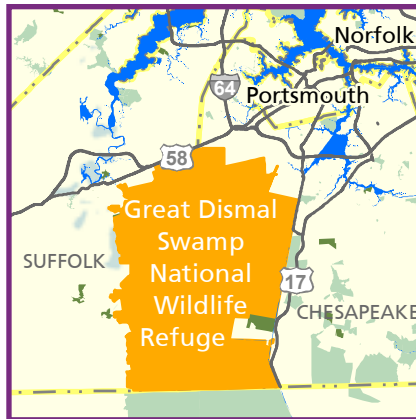
from industry to nature.

The Nature Conservancy conveyed this land to the federal government, which combined it with additional land to create the Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge in 1974.

Today, the refuge encompasses over 112,000 acres, the largest intact remnant of the original swamp. The refuge, comprised of seasonally flooded wetland forests and the 3,100-acre Lake Drummond, is actively managed to promote wildlife habitat and biological diversity.

Wilderness is on the rebound. Today, the refuge supports more than 200 bird species, including 96 that nest on or near the refuge. Notable bird species include wood ducks, barred owls, pileated woodpeckers, and several kinds of warblers that are especially abundant in the refuge. In wintertime, huge flocks of blackbirds and robins migrate there. In warmer weather, 96 kinds of butterflies can be found flitting over the swampland. Mammal inhabitants include white-tailed deer, black bears, bobcats, otters, minks, beavers, grey fox, red fox, groundhogs, flying squirrels, and southern bog lemmings. The preserve supports an exceptional array of over 100 rare plants, animals, and natural communities, and it contains one of the last remaining stands of Atlantic white cedar.

The Great Dismal Swamp has been recognized for both its ecological and historical importance, with designations as a National Natural Landmark, an Underground Railroad Network to Freedom site, and both a Virginia and a Globally Important Bird Area. The refuge, which is located within a two hour drive of 1.6 million people, is open to the public for hiking, boating, wildlife observation, hunting, and fishing—offering access to a once forbidding and still mysterious wild landscape.



## THE BIG PICTURE

### **In Virginia in 2011, about 3.3 million people, including both residents and tourists, took part in wildlife-related activities,**

including hunting, fishing, and wildlife watching. They spend about a total of about \$3.5 billion on their hobbies. For example, in one year, birders spent \$9.7 million while visiting the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge.

SOURCES: U.S. Census, National Trails Training Partnership



PHOTO BY CHRIS ANDERSON

# Stories by House District

	PAGE		PAGE		PAGE
1	Omega Cave .....	98			
2	Widewater State Park .....	55			
3	Stuart Land and Cattle Company .....	97			
	Moore Property .....	100			
4	Stuart Land and Cattle Company .....	97			
5	Stuart Land and Cattle Company .....	97			
5	Osborne Property .....	96			
6	Valley View Farms .....	94			
7	Ingles Ferry Farm .....	92			
8	McDonald's Mill .....	101			
	Carvins Cove Natural Reserve .....	103			
9	Grassy Hill Natural Preserve .....	90			
10	Cleremont Farm .....	73			
	Washington & Old Dominion Railroad Regional Park .....	28			
11	Mill Mountain Park .....	91			
12	Ingles Farm .....	92			
	Mill Mountain Park .....	91			
13	Village of Buckland .....	50			
14	Richard P. Gravely, Jr. Nature Preserve .....	82			
15	Overall Wildlife Corridor .....	76			
16	Hill View Farm .....	89			
	Smith Mountain .....	88			
17	Mill Mountain Park .....	91			
18	Threlkeld Farm and Hazel River Farms .....	68			
	Bull Run Natural Area Preserve .....	72			
19	Ox Bow Farm .....	102			
	Carvins Cove Natural Reserve .....	103			
20	Greenwood-Afton Rural Historic District .....	63			
	Skylark .....	62			
21	North Landing River Preserve .....	123			
22	Smith Mountain .....	88			
23	Claytor Nature Study Center .....	58			
24	Ingleside Land, LLC .....	61			
	Skylark .....	62			
25	Rivanna Trail Network and Meadow Creek Park .....	65			
	Greenwood-Afton Rural Historic District .....	63			
26	Feedstone Hunt Club .....	75			
27	Gregory's Pond .....	16			
28	Crow's Nest Natural Area Preserve .....	56			
29	Wagon Wheel Ranch .....	78			
30	Middle River Farm .....	67			
31	Merrimac Farm Wildlife Management Area .....	53			
	Still Waters Farm .....	52			
32	Wise Property .....	74			
	Washington & Old Dominion Railroad Regional Park .....	28			
33	Holy Cross Abbey .....	66			
	Washington & Old Dominion Railroad Regional Park .....	28			
34	Eagle Property .....	39			
	Washington & Old Dominion Railroad Regional Park .....	28			
	Gerry Conolly Cross County Trail .....	38			
35	Ox Hill Battlefield .....	41			
	Washington & Old Dominion Railroad Regional Park .....	28			
	Gerry Conolly Cross County Trail .....	38			
36	Washington & Old Dominion Railroad Regional Park .....	28			
	Gerry Conolly Cross County Trail .....	38			
37	Piney Branch Stream Valley Park .....	42			
	Sully Woodlands .....	30			
	Gerry Conolly Cross County Trail .....	38			
38	Green Springs Gardens .....	44			
39	Oak Hill .....	37			
	Gerry Conolly Cross County Trail .....	38			
40	Gray and Smith Tracts at Manassas Battlefield .....	47			
	Sully Woodlands .....	30			
	Piney Branch Stream Valley Park .....	42			
41	Gerry Conolly Cross County Trail .....	38			
42	Old Colchester Park and Preserve .....	48			
	Gerry Conolly Cross County Trail .....	38			
43	Huntley Meadows Park .....	32			
44	Little Hunting Creek .....	49			
	Huntley Meadows .....	32			
45	Franklin and Armfield Slave Office (Freedom House) .....	40			
46	Battery Heights .....	33			
47	Clarendon School .....	34			
	Washington & Old Dominion Railroad Regional Park .....	28			
48	Eight Oaks .....	36			
49	Long Branch Stream Corridor .....	43			
	Washington & Old Dominion Railroad Regional Park .....	28			
50	Liberia .....	46			
51	Merrimac Farm Wildlife Management Area .....	53			
52	Waller Property .....	54			
53	Lily Ruckstuhl Neighborhood Park .....	35			
	Washington & Old Dominion Railroad Regional Park .....	28			
54	Slaughter Pen Farm .....	20			
55	Mattaponi Wildlife Management Area .....	21			
56	Brookview Farm .....	24			
	Woodside .....	19			
57	Rivanna Trail Network and Meadow Creek Park .....	65			
58	Redlands .....	64			
	Rivanna Trail Network and Meadow Creek Park .....	65			
59	Naked Mountain Natural Area Preserve .....	60			
60	Sugar Shack .....	86			
61	Beaver Pond Farm .....	85			
62	Atkins Acres Community Park .....	13			
	Fort Gregg .....	12			
63	Breakthrough Battlefield .....	11			
64	Blackwater Sandhills .....	116			
65	Belmead .....	26			
66	Forest at Woodland Pond .....	17			
67	Ellanor C. Lawrence Park .....	31			
	Sully Woodlands .....	30			
68	James River Park System .....	14			
69	James River Park System .....	14			
70	Fort Harrison .....	12			
71	Tobacco Row .....	15			
	James River Park System .....	14			
72	Woodside .....	19			
73	Fairfield .....	18			
74	Shirley Plantation .....	10			
75	Cactus Hill .....	84			
76	Eagle Point .....	115			
	Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge .....	126			
77	Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge .....	126			
78	North Landing River Preserve .....	123			
79	Elizabeth River Trail .....	118			
80	Paradise Creek Nature Park .....	106			
	Elizabeth River Trail .....	118			
81	Cavalier Wildlife Management Area .....	122			
	North Landing River Preserve .....	123			
82	First Landing State Park .....	124			
83	Pleasure House Point .....	120			
84	Dawley Farms .....	121			
85	Pleasant Hall .....	125			
86	Sully Woodlands .....	30			
	Washington & Old Dominion Railroad Regional Park .....	28			
87	Bull Run Natural Area Preserve .....	72			
	Washington & Old Dominion Railroad Regional Park .....	28			
88	Cool Lawn Farm .....	70			
89	Attucks Theater .....	113			
	Elizabeth River Trail .....	118			
90	Grandy Village Learning Center and the Learning Barge .....	119			
91	Buckroe Beach and Bayfront Park .....	110			
92	Aberdeen Gardens Historic Museum .....	112			
93	Curtis Farm .....	109			
93	Anniversary Park .....	117			
94	Balthrope Marsh Wildlife Management Area .....	114			
95	Sandy Bottom Nature Park .....	111			
96	Taskinas Creek Reserve .....	8			
97	Poplar Springs Farm .....	9			
98	Chelsea Plantation .....	23			
	Werowocomoco .....	6			
99	Gascony Farm .....	22			
100	Fletcher Farm .....	108			

# Stories by Senate District

	PAGE
<b>1</b> Balthrope Marsh Wildlife Management Area .....	114
<b>2</b> Buckroe Beach and Bayfront Park .....	110
Aberdeen Gardens Historic Museum .....	112
Curtis Farm .....	109
Sandy Bottom Nature Park .....	111
<b>3</b> Eagle Point .....	115
Anniversary Park .....	117
Taskinas Creek Reserve .....	8
Poplar Springs Farm .....	9
Chelsea Plantation .....	23
Werowocomoco .....	6
<b>4</b> Slaughter Pen Farm .....	20
Mattaponi Wildlife Management Area .....	21
Gascony Farm .....	22
<b>5</b> Elizabeth River Trail .....	118
Attucks Theater .....	113
Grandy Village Learning Center and the Learning Barge .....	119
<b>6</b> Elizabeth River Trail .....	118
Fletcher Farm .....	108
<b>7</b> Pleasure House Point .....	120
Pleasant Hall .....	125
<b>8</b> North Landing River Preserve .....	123
First Landing State Park .....	124
Dawley Farms .....	121
<b>9</b> Fort Harrison and Fort Gregg .....	12
Tobacco Row .....	15
Shirley Plantation .....	10
<b>10</b> Belmead .....	26
James River Park System .....	14
<b>11</b> Gregory's Pond .....	16
Atkins Acres Community Park .....	13
Forest at Woodland Pond .....	17
<b>12</b> Woodside .....	19
Fairfield .....	18
<b>13</b> Wise Property .....	74
Washington & Old Dominion Railroad Regional Park .....	28
Gray and Smith Tracts at Manassas Battlefield .....	47
<b>14</b> North Landing River Preserve .....	123
Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge .....	126
North Landing River Preserve .....	123
Cavalier Wildlife Management Area .....	122
<b>15</b> Hill View Farm .....	89
Smith Mountain .....	88
Beaver Pond Farm .....	85
<b>16</b> Breakthrough Battlefield .....	11
James River Park System .....	14

	PAGE
Tobacco Row .....	15
<b>17</b> Rivanna Trail Network and Meadow Creek Park .....	65
<b>18</b> Cactus Hill .....	84
Blackwater Sandhills .....	116
Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge .....	126
Paradise Creek Nature Park .....	106
<b>19</b> Grassy Hill Preserve .....	90
Smith Mountain .....	88
<b>20</b> Grassy Hill Preserve .....	90
Richard P. Gravely, Jr. Nature Preserve .....	82
Sugar Shack .....	86
<b>21</b> McDonald's Mill .....	101
Carvins Cove Natural Reserve .....	103
Mill Mountain Park .....	91
Carvins Cove Natural Reserve .....	103
<b>22</b> Brookview Farm .....	24
Woodside .....	19
<b>23</b> Carvins Cove Natural Reserve .....	103
Ox Bow Farm .....	102
Claytor Nature Study Center .....	58
<b>24</b> Threlkeld Farm and Hazel River Farms .....	68
Skylark .....	62
Middle River Farm .....	67
<b>25</b> Skylark .....	62
Ingleside Land, LLC .....	61
Greenwood-Afton Rural Historic District .....	63
Rivanna Trail Network and Meadow Creek Park .....	65
Redlands .....	64
Naked Mountain Natural Area Preserve .....	60
<b>26</b> Overall Wildlife Corridor .....	76
Feedstone Hunt Club .....	75
<b>27</b> Cleremont Farm .....	73
Threlkeld Farm and Hazel River Farms .....	68
Wagon Wheel Ranch .....	78
Still Waters Farm .....	52
Holy Cross Abbey .....	66
Bull Run Natural Area Preserve .....	72
Cool Lawn Farm .....	70
<b>28</b> Village of Buckland .....	50
Crow's Nest Natural Area Preserve .....	56
Merrimac Farm Wildlife Management Area .....	53
Bull Run Natural Area Preserve .....	72
<b>29</b> Liberia .....	46
<b>30</b> Washington & Old Dominion Railroad Regional Park .....	28
Huntley Meadows Park .....	32
Little Hunting Creek .....	49

	PAGE
Franklin and Armfield Slave Office (Freedom House) .....	40
Long Branch Stream Corridor .....	43
<b>31</b> Washington & Old Dominion Railroad Regional Park .....	28
Eagle Property .....	39
Gerry Conolly Cross County Trail .....	38
Clarendon School .....	34
<b>32</b> Washington & Old Dominion Railroad Regional Park .....	28
Gerry Conolly Cross County Trail .....	38
Sully Woodlands .....	30
Eight Oaks .....	36
<b>33</b> Washington & Old Dominion Railroad Regional Park .....	28
Sully Woodlands .....	30
<b>34</b> Washington & Old Dominion Railroad Regional Park .....	28
Ox Hill Battlefield .....	41
Gerry Conolly Cross County Trail .....	38
Sully Woodlands .....	30
Ellanor C. Lawrence Park .....	31
<b>35</b> Washington & Old Dominion Railroad Regional Park .....	28
Gerry Conolly Cross County Trail .....	38
Green Springs Gardens .....	44
Lily Ruckstuhl Neighborhood Park .....	35
<b>36</b> Widewater State Park .....	55
Old Colchester Park and Preserve .....	48
Huntley Meadows Park .....	32
Little Hunting Creek .....	49
Waller Property .....	54
<b>37</b> Gerry Conolly Cross County Trail .....	38
Sully Woodlands .....	30
Piney Branch Stream Valley Park .....	42
Oak Hill .....	37
<b>38</b> Stuart Land and Cattle Company LLC Property .....	97
Moore Property .....	100
Valley View Farms .....	94
Ingles Ferry Farm .....	92
Ingles Farm .....	92
<b>39</b> Gerry Conolly Cross County Trail .....	38
Battery Heights .....	33
<b>40</b> Stuart Land and Cattle Company LLC Property .....	97
Osborne Property .....	96
Omega Cave .....	98





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