

The Piedmont View

A MEMBERSHIP NEWSLETTER OF THE PIEDMONT ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL

WINTER 2017

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New Legislators, New Building & New Conservation Opportunities

By Dan Holmes

With the elections behind us and the holidays consuming our thoughts, the 2018 Virginia General Assembly may not be at the forefront of everyone's mind. However, the New Year is going to bring many changes, including a new administration, new delegates and a new venue. We also have a new opportunity — reaching out to the incoming administration and many new members with information and a message of support for conservation. As we have for the past 20 years, PEC is partnering with the Virginia Conservation Network to do just that.

The New Legislators

The Virginia House has many new members with as many as 15 seats, formerly held by Republicans, having flipped to Democratic control prior to recounts. For now, Republicans retain narrow margin of 51-49, with three races heading toward a state-funded recount. If one of the contested seats flips, it would result in a 50-50 tie. This would mean major changes with regard to committee structure and power within the General Assembly.

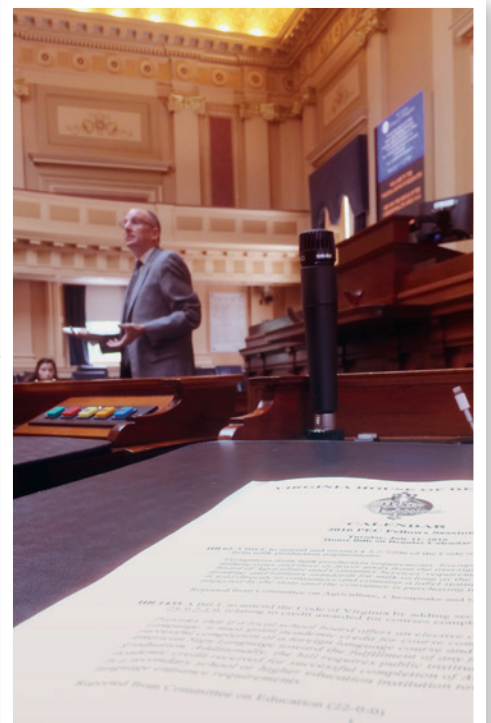
Many of the new delegates have positive positions on the issues we are interested in, and it is encouraging that 13 of the new members took the Anti-Dominion pledge — a refusal to accept funds from the corporation during the election. PEC has four new delegates within PEC's service region, having lost Randy Minchew, Scott Lingamfelter, Tag Greason

and James Lemunyon. Those seats were won by Karrie Delaney (District 67), David Reid (District 32), Wendy Gooditis (District 10), and Elizabeth Guzman (District 31). We are hoping to meet with our legislators, including the new members, as session nears. For a full look at the election results from around the state visit, results.elections.virginia.gov.

The New Building

The General Assembly Building is being demolished to make way for a major construction project, which includes a new building, parking deck and the renovation of the iconic Old City Hall. The Pocahontas Building will be used for the majority of the legislature's needs, and the meeting rooms in the underground annex of the Capitol will be used for committee meetings.

During this construction period, public access may be limited. My advice is if you want



Inside the General Assembly Building in Richmond, Va. Photo by Emily Onufer

to be sure to meet with your legislator during session this year, schedule a meeting and arrive early. This is especially necessary on busy days like the Virginia Conservation Network Lobby Day on January 22.

Continued on page 6

Growing Connections:

The Community Farm at Roundabout Meadows

By Mike Kane

Food brings people together. But healthy food is sometimes hard to come by. Despite Loudoun County's reputation as a wealthy community, a surprising number of children in the county — one in 10 — live in households with limited access to healthy food. The consequences can be stark for these children, as their development, ability to learn and overall health is directly related to the quality of their diet.

"The notion that there are around 10,000 children in Loudoun facing a chronic lack of access to sufficient nutritious food is troubling, both as a parent and as someone that knows the bounty that Loudoun County has to offer," says Chris Miller,

PEC's President. "It left me thinking about what resources we could bring to the table. If we can stretch a little, what can we do to educate local residents and contribute to a solution."

An inspiration for addressing food insecurity in Loudoun came to Chris through his involvement with the Fauquier Education Farm, based on 10 acres outside of Warrenton. The Fauquier Education Farm recruits volunteers to plant, harvest and pack fresh produce for those in need. This past growing season, more than 60,000 pounds of produce were delivered by the farm to food-insecure residents in Fauquier, Culpeper and Rappahannock Counties.

Continued on page 3



PEC's habitat and stewardship specialist, Celia Vuocolo, at our Roundabout Meadows property, where a community farm is being planned. Photo by Marco Sanchez

2017 PEC Photo Contest And the Winners Are...

It was our eighth year doing the photo contest, and we are still just as excited as the first to announce our winners. Thank you to everyone who submitted images and who voted! All submissions help build our visual gallery, and we are truly grateful for your participation. Also, we want to give a big shout out to our guest photographer judges, Ken Garrett and Sunny Reynolds, who helped us select the finalists.

This year, we introduced a new category called *Recreation*, and we are very pleased with the winning photo, as we are with all of the categories. By public vote, the winners of this year's contest are:



▲ YOUTH WINNER
Canine Winter by Sofhia Pineda Garay



▲ BEAUTIFUL LANDSCAPES & STREETSCAPES WINNER
Christmas Snow at Ben Venue by Joyce Harman



▲ RECREATION WINNER
Canoe by Amie Ware



▲ NATIVE PLANTS AND WILDLIFE WINNER
Final 9 by Theresa Ball

Shenandoah National Park Fee Increase?

The Administration has proposed a fee increase for 17 national parks around the country. Under the proposed rates, the entrance fee at Shenandoah National Park during peak season (June 1 - October 31) would jump from \$25 to \$70 per car. PEC and partners around the region are concerned that rising fees for public land access could make it unaffordable for many people to visit these national treasures. Further, these fee increases would likely result in decreased visitation to national parks and negatively impact neighboring communities' tourism economies — which in many cases depends on a lot of visitors to Shenandoah National Park. **The public comment period has been extended to December 22. Visit <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/proposedpeakseasonfeerates> to submit your thoughts on the proposed fee increase.**

We have filed comments as part of the process and hope that reason will prevail. Stay tuned!



Pop Quiz

Fill in the blank: There are ____ members of the House of Delegates and ____ State Senators.



ANSWER

c) 100, 40

There are 100 members of the House of Delegates and 40 State Senators.

Growing Connections: The Community Farm at Roundabout Meadows

Continued from cover

The impact of the Fauquier Education Farm presented a possible model for PEC to make a difference in Loudoun County. Over the past couple years, we have worked to restore and reinvigorate the productivity of our Roundabout Meadows property, a 141-acre farm at Gilbert’s Corner in Loudoun County. Over this past year, we took a closer look at the feasibility of creating a Roundabout Meadows community farm on part of the land, which would partner with food pantries and other community organizations in Loudoun to increase the availability of fresh produce for those in need. Like the Fauquier Education Farm, this community farm would seek out community service organizations and other volunteers to “get their hands dirty” and help produce food for others.

Key to our assessment was outreach to food pantry operators, such as Loudoun Hunger and other allied non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that already work to address chronic food insecurity among vulnerable populations in the county. We wanted to see if others thought a modest community farm at Roundabout Meadows would make a difference. The answer to that question was a resounding “Yes.”

Currently, food pantries contract with

or receive donations of fresh produce from farms, grocery stores and larger food banks. But, a common theme among these organizations was the need to offer more fresh food to their clients. This recognition has focused the attention of county-wide hunger relief efforts by expanding the availability of wholesome, fresh, locally-produced fruits and vegetables. And this demand for fresh produce remains unmet.

We envision our community farm being sited at the northwest corner of Roundabout Meadows, an area planned in PEC’s five-year management plan for future fruit and vegetable production

The community farm presents an incredible opportunity for local residents to get on the land and see firsthand the connection between land conservation, natural resource stewardship and the food we eat.



A view of PEC’s Roundabout Meadow’s property, where a community farm is being planned. Photo by Paula Combs

because of the quality of the underlying soils. We have been fortunate over the past year to receive guidance from Ellen Polishuk, formerly of Potomac Vegetable Farms, in developing a growing plan and identify infrastructure needs. We plan to employ produce variety trials, cover crop practices and other sustainable farming techniques as demonstration projects.

The first growing season of the community farm is scheduled to begin in spring 2018. We will be starting small, beginning with just a portion of three acres that were cleared this fall for future production. A limited start reflects the need to first secure necessary infrastructure and equipment, and it helps provide time to rejuvenate the productivity of the soils. However, our feasibility study for the community farm envisions scaling up production and public education programming over the

next five years.

It’s exhilarating to think about the possibilities of a community farm operation at Roundabout Meadows. With the property’s high visibility, good access and close proximity to Loudoun’s population centers, the community farm presents an incredible opportunity for local residents to get on the land and see firsthand the connection between land conservation, natural resource stewardship and the food we eat. More importantly, visitors and volunteers can have that experience while in service to those in need.

If you are interested in learning more about the community farm at Roundabout Meadows, please contact Celia Vuocolo, PEC’s wildlife habitat and stewardship specialist, at cvuocolo@pecva.org or 540-347-2334 ext. 7086.

MEET PEC

Peter Krebs

Community Outreach
Coordinator

We welcomed Peter Krebs to the PEC team this past September! Peter is working with Charlottesville and Albemarle communities to plan and implement a network of trails and greenways. Along with the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission, the Charlottesville Area Community Foundation and local governments and groups, Peter is helping to create a better-connected, more prosperous and healthier community, while charting a collaborative path forward.

“It’s inspiring to work on something that I am passionate about and that will make a real difference in people’s lives. It’s even better to do so with colleagues who are accustomed to working at a high level and in a well-respected organization that brings resources — and a following — of its own,” says Peter. “There is very palpable momentum for this project and so many exciting discussions. There is a real sense that this is what the community needs and that it will get done.”

Peter received his Master’s Degree in Urban and Environmental Planning from the University of Virginia School of Architecture in May, 2017. He is interested in the intersection between creativity, health and wellness and community engagement.

Prior to graduate school, he worked at New York Road Runners (which organizes the New York City Marathon), the Academy for Educational Development and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. A graduate from the College of William and Mary in 1993, Peter has exhibited art and photography internationally and is a lifelong recreational runner. You can contact Peter at pkrebs@pecva.org or (540) 347-2334 ext. 7065



Photo by Bri West

MEET PEC

Tracy Lind

Clarke, Fauquier & Loudoun
Field Representative

This past November, we welcomed Tracy Lind to PEC. As a field representative, Tracy works with landowners, community groups and partner organizations on conservation and natural resource restoration in Clarke, Fauquier and Loudoun Counties. Her focus in the Goose Creek watershed is thanks to support from the Virginia Environmental Endowment, Nimick Forbesway Foundation and Chichester duPont Foundation.

Tracy’s career began with Lower Shore Land Trust, where she worked with conservation easement landowners, facilitated outreach events and coordinated volunteers. She then interned as a backcountry ranger with the National Park Service in Wrangell-St. Elias National Park, Alaska. Tracy moved to Virginia to work with Potomac Conservancy, where she continued to help landowners protect their private lands and educated the community about conservation.

Prior to PEC, Tracy served as acting director for Cacapon and Lost Rivers Land Trust and completed their application for Land Trust Alliance re-accreditation.

Her appreciation for the Piedmont region area is rooted from her visits to its public lands, such as Sky Meadows State Park, and enjoyment of its rural culture. She is looking forward to helping protect the beautiful character of our region.

Tracy received her Bachelors in Environmental Studies from Salisbury University and is currently pursuing her Masters in Natural Resource Management at Virginia Tech. Tracy can be reached at (540) 347-2334 ext. 7066 or tlind@pecva.org.



Photo by Paula Combs



On the Ground in

Albemarle

➤ Albemarle continues evaluation

As mentioned in previous On the Ground updates, Albemarle County has been looking into renovation options for its court facilities at Court Square, including potential cooperation with the city on upgrading shared facilities and services. However, late last year, the county suspended discussions with the city and began pushing to move the county courts to a site on Route 29 North. They're hoping a move would spark redevelopment of an under-performing commercial center, but the county's consultant advised relocation is a more costly prospect. We fear a board majority will favor the move and call for a vote as early as December 18. We will circulate information about any hearing, and we encourage county residents to tell the board to keep the county courts at Court Square. Ultimately, we believe moving the courthouse is shortsighted, an inefficient use of funds and robs historic and economic value from the downtown core.

➤ Greenways Project

Our Charlottesville - Albemarle Greenways Project kicked off in November. Approximately 175 people shared an evening of fellowship and inspiration. The evening's keynote speaker, Chuck Flink, of Greenways Inc, gave a tailored presentation about how urban areas benefit from a comprehensive greenway system, provided examples of successful approaches and highlighted strategies for avoiding common pitfalls. After that, Max Hepp-Buchanan of Bike Walk RVA presented an example of a process that is getting results in Chesterfield County.

Soon after, we teamed up with the Charlottesville Area Community Foundation and Cypherways for an evening of facilitated discussion — with a beat. Spoken-word artists Bernard Hankins, Cullen “Fellowman” Wade and Envy rapped a freestyle improv to get the creative juices flowing and generate ideas and enthusiasm for greenways. “The warm-up got me thinking of issues in an entirely new way,” said one attendee.

➤ Taller, more visible cell towers?

Albemarle's tower policy encourages cell towers, provided they are short and less visible. For almost two decades, most new towers have been hard to spot — treetop monopoles hidden by trees and even cell arrays on transmission line towers. However, in the past few years PEC has noticed a slight, yet troubling, shift toward taller, wider and more-visible towers that require a Special Use Permit — and they are getting approved. It might be time for the community to remind county officials that the policy's intent is for these visible towers to be the exception, not the rule.

Clarke

➤ Pollinator “facilities” expanded

In a second year of planting at the VDOT Park and Ride Facility on Route 50, the Monarch way station was doubled in size. Filled with host and nectar plants essential to the full life cycle of Monarch butterflies and other pollinator species, the field has been observed to be humming with pollinators utilizing the “facilities.” This project was directed and managed by VDOT staff with support from Master Gardeners, Master Naturalists, Blandy Experimental Farm, Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy, PEC and concerned residents in the county.

➤ Successful nature education

The 10th Annual Clarke Conservation Fair for

Clarke County 4th graders was once again a great success. We coordinated and facilitated the event, which brings local non-profits and agencies out to give students an outdoor experience in nature education.

➤ Sporting Clays for Conservation

This past fall, we held our “Sporting Clays” event to support conservation in Clarke, and it was a success! The top three scoring male shooters: Jake Dunning, Mike O'Bannon, and Steve Kirstein and John Moring tied for third. The top three scoring female shooters: Arianna Dunning, and Sandra Guarriello and Mary Catlett tied for second.

Culpeper

➤ Solar Farms

With the adoption of a public process for solar farms by Culpeper County (a special use permit), we are starting to see the first proposals roll in. We are also hearing from multiple landowners who say they are in discussions with project developers. If done right, solar farms can provide a boost to renewable energy goals and serve local energy needs. But, as is the case with any large-scale energy project (many solar farms cover hundreds of acres), in the wrong location, they can have detrimental impacts. We will be weighing in on these proposals on a case-by-case basis to ensure they provide the benefits of renewable energy without negatively impacting agricultural soils, scenic and historic resources or detracting from other stated goals of the county.

➤ Farmer-Chef event

Also in Culpeper, we hosted a networking event where farmers and chefs had the opportunity to meet and network, this past November. Guests heard from speaker French Price, a Virginia Cooperative Extension representative of Market Maker, a national network that connect farmers and fishermen with food retailers, grocery stores, processors, caterers, chefs and consumers. Buyers from restaurants, retail stores, public and private schools and even wholesale purchasers attended the event. It was a wonderful opportunity for local growers to talk up the variety of products our region offers and make connections that can help support the economic vitality of their farm.

Fauquier

➤ Buckland Bypass

2017 has been a year of successes in Fauquier County! At the end of 2016, Prince William County initiated another study of Buckland Bypass. Prince William Conservation Alliance and PEC worked together to inform and engage residents of both Fauquier and Prince William this year. In direct response to the outpouring of opposition to a bypass, the Prince William County Supervisor, who initiated the study, has stated she does not plan to move forward with any bypass option.

➤ Dealerships in Marshall

Fauquier County adopted the Marshall code after several years of work, but not without significant controversy about the prospect of auto dealerships in Marshall. In August, an applicant proposed a large auto dealership at the corner of East Main Street and Old Stockyard Road. It was not consistent with the comprehensive plan, and it would have had a chilling effect on efforts to improve the gateways into Marshall and reinvigorate Main Street. After strong opposition, the dealership

pulled their application. However, the Supervisors then considered adding auto dealerships into the Marshall code as an allowable use, albeit with a special exception. Again, the community came out in force and made it clear they did not want to have auto dealerships in the gateways of Marshall. The Supervisors voted to adopt the Marshall code without that addition.

➤ Remington Walks

Our Remington Walks project, which created a clear vision for improving pedestrian safety, recreational opportunities and trail connections in the Town, was completed in August. As part of the project, we did landscaping around the entrance to the Rappahannock Station Battlefield Park and worked with the county to move forward with the design and construction plan to be completed by fall of 2018.

➤ Planting for pollinators

We spearheaded a number of native planting projects in Fauquier, with a focus on creating habitat for pollinators. The largest project took place at our headquarters in Warrenton, where we planted roughly 60 species of native trees, shrubs, grasses and flowers. We also enrolled in Soil and Water Conservation District's cost-share program, VCAP, to help offset some of the project's cost. This past spring, we also oversaw the installation of a small pollinator meadow and adjacent riparian planting at the Orlean Volunteer Fire Department and a pollinator garden at the site of the new Warrenton Dog Park along the Warrenton Branch Greenway.

Greene

➤ Mountain Heritage Program

We hosted our sixth annual Mountain Heritage Celebration on April 15 at the Cecil Mission near Stanardsville. One of more than 30 missions established by the Episcopal Church in Virginia's Blue Ridge Mountain communities, the Cecil Mission served hundreds of people in its heyday. Local families brought poster displays, family photos and other memorabilia to share with visitors, amidst the sound of live bluegrass music.

➤ Memorial dedication

On October 29, over 200 people gathered in Stanardsville for the dedication of a memorial to the families that were displaced from the mountains in Greene County for the creation of Shenandoah National Park. The memorial, an effort by the Blue Ridge Heritage Project, was the fifth one to be dedicated in the eight counties where land was taken for the Park's creation. The memorial site will be part of a larger revitalization project to establish a town market and performance pavilion in downtown Stanardsville.

➤ Brook trout initiatives

We are working with local landowners along Entry Run to investigate potential fish passage improvement projects. Additionally, we gave a presentation at the Greene County Library on October 10 about our Eastern brook trout initiative and other conservation threats of this iconic species.

Loudoun

➤ The Future of Loudoun

“Envision Loudoun” is the public process to update the county's comprehensive plan. It has consisted

of two parts — public input meetings and the stakeholder committee (formed by the Board of Supervisors). We are represented on the stakeholder committee to work with county staff to guide the comprehensive plan update. Throughout the planning process, we have been actively encouraging public awareness and participation in the meetings. There have been two rounds of public input over the last year, and the third will happen in early 2018.

➤ Data center proposal

We are concerned about a data center proposal for development on the banks of Goose Creek, which would be upstream from the reservoir and in the transition policy area. The land is currently planned and zoned for low density (1 unit per 10 acres) residential. The proposal is strongly opposed by the public, and runs counter to what citizens have been calling for in the transition policy area as part of Envision Loudoun. The Board will vote on December 5 to determine the fate of the site. We oppose the location, the conversion and the precedent this rezoning would set.

PEC has laid the groundwork for a new community farm at Roundabout Meadows. To read about this project, see the cover page.

Madison

➤ Robinson River thrives

In April, PEC staff removed a culvert that was impeding fish passage on a significant section of the Robinson River. We worked closely with Karl and Teresa Beier to reconnect over five miles of habitat for native Eastern brook trout. The project also restored in-stream habitat upstream and the natural stream channel. Fish monitoring before and after the project implementation demonstrated that brook trout were moving through the former barrier by September — in fact, monitoring revealed that the restored stream bed is a now a hot spot for them!

➤ Headwater Stream Initiative

Further downstream, two native tree plantings are planned for next spring with landowners who own extensive frontage along the the Robinson River

near Oak Park. The project is organized through our Headwaters Stream Initiative. Read more about the success of this program in the Rappahannock section of On the Ground.

➤ Jack’s Shop and James City

Our work continues on the documentation of two often-overlooked Civil War battlefields, Jack’s Shop and James City. We were awarded a grant from the American Battlefield Protection Program in 2016 to shed light on the history of these engagements. Earlier this year, Rivanna Archaeological Services was selected as the consultant to carry out the research and mapping component of the project. We expect the project to wrap up next spring with a final community meeting to share the results of the study.

Orange

➤ New historic district

The Rapidan River Clark Mountain Rural Historic District was determined eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) this past fall. Earlier this year, we hired Data Investigations, LLC to prepare a preliminary information form to determine the eligibility of this area for the NRHP. The proposed district includes a vast swath of land along the Rapidan River in Orange County, with portions extending into Madison and Culpeper Counties. The area has significant Native American settlements along the Rapidan River, historic plantations, early African-American settlements, Civil War resources related to Clark Mountain and the Battle of Morton’s Ford, and historic resources from the prehistoric period through the 1960s.

If funding and support allow, we plan to move forward with preparing a full nomination to have the district listed in the NRHP, which will require detailed documentation and site visits to all eligible properties.

➤ Neighborhood park

With support from local members, PEC staff worked with the Town of Gordonsville to begin the process of refurbishing Verling Park. Over the summer, the Town held three community meetings to gain input from citizens on what the neighborhood park project would include. In the fall, we worked

with Land Planning and Design Associates and Charlottesville Aquatics to draft a park design that will hopefully be finalized over the winter. This park project holds the prospect of improving recreational access for Gordonsville area residents and visitors alike, including underserved populations. Neighborhood parks are a high priority among residents of this region and called for in the Virginia Outdoors Plan — the state’s comprehensive plan for land conservation, outdoor recreation and open space.

Rappahannock

➤ Headwater Stream Initiative

In 2017, PEC partnered with Friends of the Rappahannock, Virginia Department of Forestry, John Marshall Soil and Water District and dozens of private landowners to plant seven acres with 1,786 native trees and shrubs, with the help of 221 volunteers from our Madison, Orange, Rappahannock and Fauquier communities, including many local schools. This good work resulted in over a mile of stream restoration, significantly reducing nitrogen, phosphorus, sediment and bacteria from entering local waterways.

➤ Sprucepine Branch

We are restoring habitat and water quality for local streams by removing culverts and low-water crossings that can be roadblocks to stream health. In September, we celebrated the completion of the Sprucepine Branch restoration project, near Huntly. We were recently awarded a \$108,000 grant with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation’s Small Watershed Grant Program for the Chesapeake Bay for trout stream restoration to remove three culverts at Bolton Branch in 2018.

➤ Thorton River pollinator garden

In October, we worked with RappFLOW and Hill House Nursery to install a pollinator garden, with 14 species of native plants, near the walking trail along the Thorton River in Sperryville. This project is a collaboration between PEC and the Endangered Species Coalition to raise awareness about the plight of the rusty-patched bumble bee, a federally endangered species.

Why I Give



Photo by John Moring

“The natural resources and stunning beauty of our Piedmont are a source of renewal and inspiration for me. PEC provides an opportunity for learning, experiencing, and helping to preserve this place, and, creating ways for others to share in this wonderful landscape. I can’t help but support the work of PEC and it’s an honor to do so”

– Bonnie Mattingly

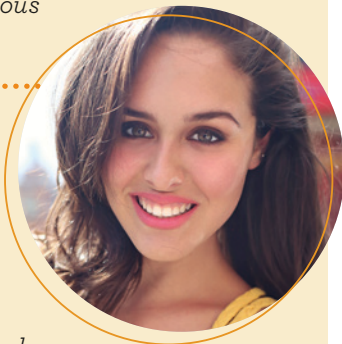
“This beautiful place (the Piedmont) is where I grew up, and is now the place I’m raising my precious son. It is for him, past, and future generations, that I give to PEC.”

– Jonathan Castellano



“The Piedmont Environmental Council is a longstanding champion of preservation in the Virginia countryside and every dollar contributed helps fuel their mission of conservation. As we face increasing development pressure throughout the Piedmont, their efforts are critical to protecting our precious open space.” – Eleanor Morison

“I give because I care deeply for the environment, and think it’s important to protect this beautiful, wonderful state! I also full heartedly believe in PEC’s mission, especially fostering rural economies, in addition to their important environmental work. This year, I was head of the Junior Planning Committee for the PEC ball, and had the privilege of engaging with the younger community in Middleburg and getting them involved. Together, we donated \$1,000!” – Alexandra Wolf



PEC wouldn’t be able to carry out the holistic mix of conservation, planning and advocacy that we are known for without supporters like you. Make a secure, tax-deductible donation online at pecva.org/donate. You can also send a check made payable to PEC to PO Box 460, Warrenton VA, 20188 or call Danielle Castellano at **540-347-2334 ext. 7001**. **Now is the perfect time to make a gift of stock.** Please go to our website at www.pecva.org for instructions. Thank you and Happy Holidays!

New Legislators

Continued from cover

New Opportunity

This session brings with it a new opportunity for making conservation funding and smart growth a priority for the incoming Administration and our new delegates.

On Conservation

Last year’s attempt to reduce the Land Preservation Tax Credit, HB1470 was defeated early in session. This was in large part due to the overwhelming show of support for the program. We are hopeful that the resounding defeat of the legislation will prevent any attempt to gut the program this year. But, we remain on guard for changes coming through a broader discussion of tax reform or budget negotiations.

The 2018 session will bring with it a new biennial budget, the last filed under current Governor McAuliffe. We are hopeful the Governor will provide full funding for the three main grant programs for conservation — the Farmland Preservation Fund, Virginia Land Conservation Foundation and the Virginia Battlefield Preservation Fund. These grants should, according to Virginia Code, receive \$20 million per year. We have some hope the Governor will provide, as he did in 2016, full funding with his final budget.

On Agricultural Best Management Practices

The calls for a clean Chesapeake Bay have not slowed. With our commitments on pollution reductions coming just around the corner (2025), a lot remains to be done to achieve this end. The good news is these reductions can be met in a way that strengthens our agricultural industry and provide for local water quality benefits — through our investment in Agricultural Best Management Practices (Ag BMPs).

Last year’s needs for Ag BMP funding was estimated at \$80 million plus, with a mere \$16 million being provided. When we fail to meet the need in one session, our shortages are passed along to the following years. What’s needed this year? We are seeking a return to fiscal year 2017 funding levels of \$62 million, with hopes for a cleaner bay and improved local water quality. This critical funding not only helps to protect the water we drink, but also helps ensure a sustainable agricultural industry, a vital part of the Commonwealth’s economy.

On Local Authority

PEC often remarks that ‘quality of life’ is affected most directly by decisions made at the local level. This is one of the main reasons we promote strong local land use plans and we act to defend the tools of local governments. Every year, we make you aware of legislation that undermines local authority. And this year will be no different. While we have heard rumors



The Virginia State Capitol Building in Richmond, Va.

of potential legislative efforts, nothing concrete has arisen at this time. As is the case every year, we are sure to see a few bills that warrant our attention, and we will make you aware of those as they are introduced.

Eye on Richmond

We have always focused on preserving the necessary tools and funding related to conservation and smart growth. This year’s session is no different. With a new Administration, new legislators and a rejection of Dominion’s dollars by new and old

members alike, we are cautiously optimistic that the outcomes of the upcoming session will be largely positive. With the support of our members and those of the conservation community, I have no doubt we can make it so.

Be sure you are reading our email alerts during session (pecva.org/signup) or following us on Facebook You can also stay informed through updates from the Virginia Conservation Network. Learn more at vcnva.org. Don’t hesitate to weigh in with your elected officials!

Accepting Fellowship Applications for 2018

Do you know an undergraduate or recent graduate interested in learning more about a career in environmental conservation? If so, let them know the Piedmont Environmental Council is taking applications for its 2018 Fellowship Program.

Twelve students will be selected for this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to spend seven weeks in the Virginia Piedmont, while studying with seasoned professionals in land conservation, land use planning, agriculture, habitat and more.

The Fellowship is much more than an internship. For the first four weeks, the program combines classroom discussions, field trips and hands-on activities to give participants a comprehensive understanding of the work that we do. For the final three weeks, the fellows work on a collaborative practicum, focused on their interests as well as a particular aspect of our work in the Piedmont.

Fellows take part in a variety of activities such as a mock board of supervisors meeting that highlights land use decisions, instruction on Geographic Information Systems (GIS) at the state-of-the-art GIS lab at the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute, visiting properties protected by conservation easements, stream monitoring in the Thumb Run watershed to assess water quality, and a visit to Richmond to learn about policy issues at the state level.

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

The application deadline is Tuesday, February 20, 2018 for the 2018 Fellowship Program. For more details and questions, visit our website at pecva.org/fellowship or contact Robin Cross at rcross@pecva.org or (540) 347-2334 ext. 7025.



Fellows from 2016 at PEC’s Piedmont Memorial Overlook property in Paris, Virginia. Photo by Victor Lau

Driving in the Right Direction

By Julie Bolthouse

Finally, after a four-year battle to save the Route 613 Waterloo Bridge over the Rappahannock River, success is in sight. The bridge, which connects Fauquier and Culpeper counties, is a treasured historic resource for local residents and visitors to the region. Following its closure, there was a huge citizen response in support of rehabilitating the structure. Thousands of people have taken action. They have signed a petition, written emails, made phone calls, attended meetings, posted on Facebook and put up yard signs, all in support of saving Waterloo Bridge.

Thanks to the Hitt family’s generous pledge of \$1 million toward the project in early 2017, VDOT indicated it would be possible to move forward without a contribution of funds from either county. However, a resolution of support was still needed, and on November 9, Fauquier held a public hearing to decide whether to adopt a resolution supporting an application for a cost-sharing project with VDOT.

The public hearing had over 100 residents present, the majority of whom wore bright yellow “Save Waterloo Bridge” stickers that we provided to supporters. Representatives from PEC and Scenic Virginia were also present, and we shared our support for the rehabilitation. Many residents spoke, including Russell Hitt, who gave a touching account of his memories going over the bridge with his family as a child.

In the end, the board of supervisors passed a resolution of support. However, it stipulates that an unidentified third-party would pay for any possible overruns associated with the project — this is language VDOT opposed because it is does not give the agency certainty or demonstrate support from the locality. The proposed cost-sharing agreement will now move forward to the Commonwealth Transportation Board, and they will decide to approve it or not by next June.

We hope that the Commonwealth Transportation Board will ultimately decide to approve Waterloo Bridge for funding.



After a public hearing this past November, there may be hope for the rehabilitation of the Waterloo Bridge. Photo by Julie Bolthouse

Out&About

Sprucepine Ribbon Cutting

RAPPAHANNOCK COUNTY, VA • SEPTEMBER 29, 2017



▲ PEC's Claire Catlett cuts the ribbon at the celebration for the completion of the Sprucepine Branch culvert removal project. See the Rappahannock section on page 5 for more details. *Photo by Paula Combs*

Sporting Clays Fundraising Event

KEARNEYSVILLE, WV • OCTOBER 22, 2017



▲ Checking shooting scores. *Photo by Pam Lettie*

Farmer-Chef Networking

CULPEPER, VA • NOVEMBER 6, 2017



▲ Local food producers and buyers connect at PEC's Farmer-Chef networking event. Buyers from restaurants, retail stores, public and private schools and even wholesale purchasers were in attendance. This event allowed local growers to talk up the variety of products our region offers. *Photo by Marco Sanchez*

Greenway Effort

Kickoff Event

CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA • NOVEMBER 8, 2017

Approximately 175 people turned out for the first event in connection with our Charlottesville Ablemarle Greenways project. More detail on pg. 4. *Photo by Marco Sanchez*



Imagination Foundation Cypherways Event

CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA • NOVEMBER 17, 2017



▲ PEC and the Charlottesville Area Community Foundation's Imagination Foundation teamed up with Cyphertank to follow-up the successful Greenway Kickoff event with an evening of facilitated discussion about trails and greenways that included hip hop and freestyle improv. *Photo by Peter Krebs*

PEC Annual Ball

AQUINNAH FARM, MARSHALL, VA • NOVEMBER 4, 2017



▲ From left to right, Malcom Matheson III, Robert Duvall, Luciana Pedraza and Lynn Wiley at the Ball. Duvall recently did a video with PEC — see the President's letter on page 8 for more details. *Photo by Paula Combs*



▲ Guests enjoy the Casino-Royale-themed activities after the Ball's dinner. *Photo by Paula Combs*

Dear Friends,

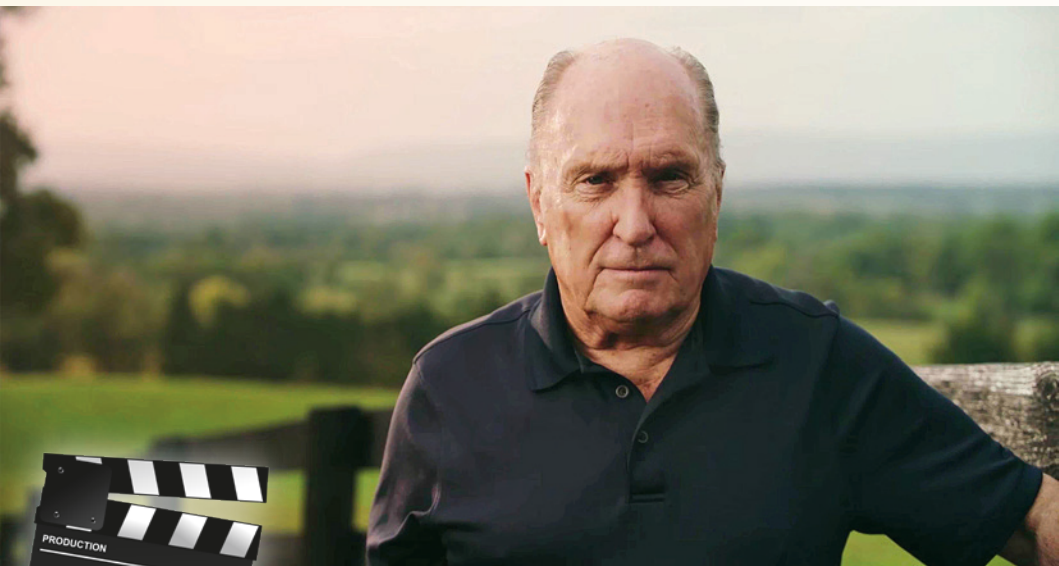
As we near the end of 2017 and contemplate the future, I am increasingly convinced that we, as Americans, as Virginians, and as members of our various communities, need to focus on finding common ground around critical issues of quality of life. This has been a year in which many of our core assumptions about conservation and environmental protection have been challenged and, in some cases, cast aside. Now, more than ever, we need to remember why we all have been working so hard for so long. As you travel through the Piedmont during the holidays, along its scenic roads that wind through fields and forests and

.....
By providing the green infrastructure that is the foundation of our local and state economy, we ensure not only our current quality of life, but quality of life for future generations.
.....

across streams and rivers, think about how we all share the benefits of this incredible place. Ensuring the safety of the water we drink, conserving the farms that grow our food, providing habitat for plants and animals, and saving special places that have shaped our history and provide us with healthy places to hike, ride, and camp are goals shared by an overwhelming majority of the Piedmont region. By providing the green infrastructure that is the foundation of our local and state economy, we ensure not only our current quality of life, but quality of life for future generations.

This fall, we were lucky enough to have a little star-power help spread the word. Academy-award winning actor Robert Duvall donated his time and talent to The Piedmont Environmental Council to help create a video supporting natural resource conservation in Virginia. We are all deeply appreciative of his generosity.

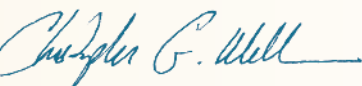
In a 30-second spot released in October, Mr. Duvall describes playing many roles in his lifetime, but he points out his favorite role, saying,



Robert Duvall donated his time and talent to PEC to help create a video supporting natural resource conservation in Virginia. View the video on our website or Facebook.

.....
“Being me in Virginia.” He reminds viewers about the region’s marvelous landscapes, its farms, its waterways, and its region’s historic heritage, and calls on everyone to play a role in its preservation. In the coming weeks, PEC and its partners across the Commonwealth will be launching a campaign to build a broader base of support for conservation. We hope that you will join Mr. Duvall in his message, encouraging your family, friends, neighbors, and elected officials to support conservation in Virginia. If you haven’t seen the video yet, we’ve

posted it on our website and Facebook. We are pleased to partner with the team at Puckett Marketing and its creative leader Bill Puckett to develop the concept. We encourage you to share the video broadly, and let others know how important the support of conservation policies in Virginia is to you and to the future.

Sincerely,

Chris Miller, President



The Piedmont View

A MEMBERSHIP NEWSLETTER OF THE PIEDMONT ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL WINTER 2017



INSIDE
Winners of our 8th Annual Photo Contest, New PEC Team Members, Waterloo Bridge Update, Fellowship Application is Open and more!

Cover photo by Jinx Fox
Banner photo by Kathy Russell

Pop Quiz

.....

Fill in the blank: There are ____ members of the House of Delegates and ____ State Senators.

a) 50, 20
b) 85, 30
c) 100, 40
d) 150, 75

ANSWER ON PAGE 2




Photo by Josh McGhee



Piedmont Environmental Council

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