

The Piedmont View

A MEMBERSHIP NEWSLETTER OF THE PIEDMONT ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL

WINTER 2018

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An Eye on Richmond

By Dan Holmes

It's that time of year. While most are consumed with thoughts about gifts for that impossible relative or honing survival skills for holiday parties, I find my mind preoccupied with Richmond and a new General Assembly session.

The 2017 election brought with it new candidates for the House of Representatives, many of whom emphasized the environment as a part of their platform. Most of these individuals were elected following a pledge to refuse money from Dominion. We were excited to see people running (and winning) against corporate influence from the state's largest monopoly. We were also hopeful with the election of a new Governor, one that similarly seemed to embrace conservation and the environment as a major part of their platform. While there have been some signs from our new members of the House that they took their pledge seriously, we remain confused and concerned about where the Administration is heading.

No matter who resides in the

Governor's mansion, we know that disagreements will arise from time to time. But recent actions (or inaction) tied to the pipelines and the announcement of prioritization policies that could undermine useful broad-based conservation tools for the commonwealth, are cause for concern. We are hopeful that continued education and engagement will ultimately lead to superior policies. But, hope alone will not prevent bad ideas from taking hold. With this in mind, we ask you to join us in reaching out to your elected representatives and the administration during the upcoming weeks and months.

Short vs Long

The 2019 session starts on January 9, and it will be gone before you know it. Last year's session, being an even year, was a "long session" at 60 days, and included the introduction of the biennial budget. In the odd years, we have a reduced or "short session" at 45 days. Changes to last year's budget will come in the



The General Assembly meets annually, beginning on the second Wednesday in January. Photo by Marco Sanchez

form of the Governor's "caboose budget." Many interests will seek to achieve their funding priorities by supporting amendments to the caboose budget. This includes PEC and our partners in the conservation community who will focus on the conservation grant programs and water quality initiatives.

Conservation Funding & The Tax Credit

Sometimes it just comes down to money. This is especially true when it comes to the tools we rely on to aid in protecting communities and the environment. Meeting the Commonwealth's commitment on pollution reduc-

tion for the Chesapeake Bay means hitting targets for 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 makes developed areas a part of the solution. In short, Virginia needs major investment in Agricultural Best Management Practices (Ag BMPs) and the Stormwater Local Assistance Fund (SLAF).

Last year's funding for Ag BMPs was roughly a third of what is required to meet the state commitment. Failing to meet the need in one session means shortages

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Common Space for the Greater Good

By Paula Combs

Over 60 percent of Loudoun residents, live in a Homeowners Association-controlled community. How these communities manage their landscapes can have a profound effect on the health of our local ecosystems, wildlife, streams and drinking water sources.

One group that is implementing best land management practices in their neighborhood is the River Creek Confluence Park Committee, which is made up of homeowner volunteers who work in coordination with their HOA. Located just north of Leesburg, River Creek includes over 1,100 homes and borders Goose Creek and the Potomac River.

"Everything will take about three to five years, and we'll build the park out over time," explains Susan Abraham, a conservation

landscape designer and professor for the George Washington University Sustainable Landscape Program.

Confluence Park is 7.5 acres along River Creek, and some of the items installed so far include natural trails, a native meadow, a bioswale with more than 300 forbs and sedges, approximately 60 trees and 40 shrubs in a woodland entrance, and 200 shrubs and trees in a riparian zone.

In the future, the committee plans to create multiple natural playscapes (which will include recycled materials from the community), more riparian buffers, berm plantings and additional trails.

As we walked through the park, we came upon a basketball court that was purposely placed in between the bioswale and native meadow.

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From left to right: Conservation Landscape Designer Susan Abraham, Virginia Master Naturalist Frank McLaughlin and River Creek Confluence Park Committee members Jack McNamee and Harrison Crecraft. Photo by Paula Combs

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Thank you for helping to protect the Piedmont!



Speaking Up for Land Conservation

By Rex Linville

My job with The Piedmont Environmental Council usually has me visiting farms and forests in Albemarle and Greene counties and advising landowners on conservation strategies for their property. But early this November, I found myself on Constitution Avenue in Washington, D.C. offering public comment to the IRS about proposed regulations that would adversely impact land conservation in Virginia. This is the same day a colleague was headed over to the Supreme Court to attend a hearing on uranium mining in Virginia. Needless to say, it was a busy day in Washington for our local land conservation organization.

Virginia has been a national conservation leader for almost 20 years, in large part due to a Land Preservation Tax Credit the General Assembly established in 1999. The Virginia tax credit program was set up to work alongside and in concert with the federal income tax deduction that landowners receive when they protect land through a conservation donation. Unfortunately, Virginia’s conservation tax credit program has gotten caught up in a regulation proposed by the IRS that is designed to stop a scheme in which some states have set up “charitable funds” to help people avoid a new \$10,000 cap on the federal income tax deduction for State and Local Tax payments.

Since this is such an important issue here in Virginia, PEC wanted to make sure we did everything we could to ensure conservation contributions were

excluded from the proposed IRS rule. One of our first stops was to visit with staff for Senators Kaine and Warner to alert them of the problem and ask for their help. We also hired one of the nation’s best conservation tax attorneys to help draft an analysis and response to the proposed regulation. Finally, we reached out to coordinate our activities with land conservation colleagues in states with similar tax credit programs, and we asked the national Land Trust Alliance to weigh in on the issue as well.

As a result of this advocacy, over 100 conservation organizations from across the nation provided written comment to the IRS about the impact the proposed regulation would have on land conservation in their communities. At the public hearing in Washington this November, there were also speakers from the Land Trust Alliance and the Virginia Outdoors Foundation.

We still don’t know what the IRS will ultimately decide or even when they will finalize the proposed regulations. But for now, I feel confident that we have done everything we could to try to influence the outcome of this decision. I also feel privileged to work for an organization that is uniquely situated to work one on one with landowners at the local level and, at the

same time, tackle regulatory rule making at the national level. Incentives like these matter to landowners who are considering the permanent protection of their land. In order to be effective, we need to work at the local, state and national level to ensure that the right system of incentives and policies is in place to help encourage protection of our natural resources.

Rex Linville is a land conservation field representative with PEC serving Albemarle and Greene counties. Rex has been working with landowners on conservation easements for the past 20 years. He holds a B.S. in Finance from Virginia Tech and an M.S. in Forest Sciences from Colorado State University.



Left to right: Executive Director of Virginia United Land Trusts Ellen Shepard, Virginia United Land Trusts Chair Peggy Stevens, PEC Field Representative Rex Linville, Virginia Outdoors Foundation Chair Eleanor Weston Brown, Land Trust Alliance President of Andrew Bowman, Virginia Outdoors Foundation Executive Director Brett Glymph and Land Trust Alliance Government Relations Director Lori Faeth. Photo Courtesy of Lori Faeth, Land Trust Alliance

Time for Fellowship Applications

It’s time to spread the word that PEC is accepting applications for its 2019 Fellowship Program.

If you know undergraduates or recent graduates interested in learning more about a career in environmental conservation, send them our way!

Twelve lucky students will be selected for the 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 2018 PEC fellows at Powers Farm in Fauquier County, Va. Photo by Danielle Castellano

A variety of activities are offered during the program. Fellows participate in a mock Board of Supervisors meeting about land use issues, Geographic Information Systems (GIS) lessons 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 trip to Richmond to learn about policy issues at the state level.

The first month of the fellowship begins with a combination of classroom discussions, field trips and hands-on activities to give participants a comprehensive understanding of the work that we do. Then, the remaining three weeks include a collaborative practicum that focuses on the fellows’ interests and a particular aspect of our work in the Piedmont.

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 help cover living expenses.

The application deadline is February 26, 2019 for the 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.

VOLUNTEER HIGHLIGHT

Erin McNamara

Here at PEC we greatly appreciate our volunteers. One such person is Erin McNamara, who spent time helping with PEC efforts during her college summer break. Before she went back to school, we sat down with Erin to ask about her time with us.



What was your favorite part about spending time at PEC?

I loved spending time with the staff! Everyone is amazing and made me feel like I belong. I also got to go on some great trips and participate in fun activities I never thought I’d do while at PEC.

What was the most valuable thing you learned while at PEC?

Being at PEC taught me that there’s so much more to environmental protection than just the big issues like climate change. The local environment is just as important, if not more. It’s hard to see that a difference is being made when you’re looking at the big picture, but being at PEC has shown me that, in fact, a difference is being made.

Since volunteering at PEC, has anything changed about the career path you want to take?

I’m a junior at Allegheny College, going for a double major in environmental studies and communication arts, focusing in video production. Before PEC, my career path was very one dimensional, but PEC opened my mind to the possibility of different career paths I could take once I graduate. And now going back to Allegheny for my last two years, I’ll have more knowledge of how an environmental non-profit functions, which I believe is very important to understand.

An Eye on Richmond

Continued from cover

are passed along to the following years, bringing the current funding need to \$100 million. Besides being the most cost-effective method we have to address pollution in the Bay and our local streams, Ag BMPs create a more sustainable agricultural industry and protect fisheries and the water we drink. While more costly, stormwater improvement is an important sector lacking progress. Last year’s investment of \$20 million statewide (less money than we spend to construct a single interchange) is indicative of our unwillingness to get serious about the problem. For this reason, we are supporting an increase to \$50 million for SLAF.

Lastly, we are opposing changes to the Land Preservation Tax Credit (LPTC) and supporting full funding of our conservation grant programs. Since the creation of the LPTC, we have witnessed a more than eight-fold increase in the rate of land protected with conservation easements. While we do not expect a reduction in funding for the tax credit, we have heard of legislative changes that cause some concern (stay tuned), and there is the unresolved issue of the individual claim which was supposed to increase from \$20,000 to \$50,000 three years ago — something we will be pushing for this year. Supplementing the tax credit are our three main grant programs for conserva-

tion — 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 for an increase from last year’s budget (which was less than \$6 million) in this year’s caboose budget (December 18 release). However, we doubt we will see full funding and remain ready to place amendments with legislators.

Land Use, Transportation and Energy

Beyond funding, we are aware of at least one bill that will require our attention — proffer reform. Proffers, simply put, are promises made by the developer to a locality to help offset the costs to service a particular development (schools, police, fire and rescue, parks, etc). While not perfect, they are the best tool provided by the state. The homebuilders are finally recognizing their legislative overstep from the 2015 session — a bill that largely made proffers unusable and leading many localities to deny recent proposals (the opposite of their intent). To “correct” this, they have put forward legislation that makes changes around the margins, but it fails to address major flaws with the original bill. We will be

opposing this new bill and asking the state to consider revisiting a past conversation: proffers versus impact fees. Rather than allowing the fox to write the legislation regarding the henhouse, we would ask for a more inclusive process, one that includes all parties: localities, developers, organizations and interested citizens.

On matters related to transportation, we will continue to protect the smart-scale scoring process. We have been alerted to the possibility of new funding mechanisms that would side-step this process, essentially reinserting politics into transportation decision making. Whether it is an interstate or a state route, we can ill afford a return to inefficient and politically driven transportation spending. As well, we will be paying special attention to the promotion of individual projects, like last year’s reintroduction to an eastern bypass of Route 29.

With regard to energy policy, we will remain focused on keeping Dominion in check, promoting energy efficiency and the removal of barriers to rooftop solar. Additionally, we will be supporting our partners in their pursuit of the clean closure of coal ash ponds, as well as policies to address climate change. Perhaps the most promising of which is the push to join the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative. However, the details and planned use of the proceeds will be important. We believe resulting revenue should not be spent solely on coastal resiliency, and should include a major investment in energy efficiency to be effective. We

will also continue ongoing efforts to get the state to take a more active role in developing best practices related to large-scale utility solar siting. Lastly, we will be watching for any remaining issues related to last year’s confusion on the use of mitigation monies. Our legislature should not be looking to mitigation money to offset existing budget shortfalls or conservation responsibilities.

Closing Thoughts

Some of you may have joined us at one of our watch parties for the Virginia Conservation Network’s General Assembly Preview on December 1, or may have attended the event in Richmond. While this is a good primer on what we expect to see, as expressed in the preview, “we do not know what we do not know.” More details on legislation and the budget will be coming fast and furious between drafting this article and the first week of session. For this reason, we ask that you follow our action alerts and updates and consider joining the community at the VCN Lobby Day scheduled for Wednesday, January 30. Visit vcnva.org/learn for more information now and throughout session.

In closing, I want to thank all of our members for your support on our issues and amplifying our voice with the legislature. As well, your donations allow me to continue to be a presence in Richmond and an advocate on your behalf. I wish you the best for the holidays and in the New Year.

Protecting the Goose Creek Watershed

By Mike Kane

PEC was recently awarded a \$15,600 grant from the Virginia Environmental Endowment to further our work identifying and prioritizing opportunities to implement agricultural best management practices (BMPs) and strengthen efforts on land protected by conservation easements in the Goose Creek watershed. “The 385-square-mile Goose Creek watershed in Fauquier and Loudoun counties has one of the largest blocks of privately conserved land in Virginia, with more than 92,689 acres — or 38 percent — of the watershed permanently protected,” says Tracy Lind, PEC field representative. “The grant will help PEC and our partners target where BMPs can be installed on protected lands to accelerate restoration of polluted waterways.” The current grant will build upon efforts from a 2017 grant also awarded to PEC by VEE. Last year’s initiative matched the Virginia Outdoors Foundation’s conservation easement database with information about land enrolled in BMP programs to uncover opportunities for implementing BMPs on conserved land. We reviewed 338 VOF easements in the watershed, identifying and mapping 168 properties that lack riparian buffer provisions or had not been enrolled in programs with local soil and water conservation districts. The new grant will help us work with landowners to install BMPs that will have a big impact on water quality. It will also enable us to analyze the remaining 170 easements in the watershed that are not held by VOF. The analysis will complement ongoing efforts to improve water quality and further land conservation in the Goose Creek watershed. The recently completed Total Maximum Daily Load Implementation Plan for Upper Goose Creek calls for 169 more miles of exclusion fencing with riparian buffers as a



critical practice needed to restore water quality. The John Marshall Soil and Water Conservation District has expanded funding to assist more landowners with installing BMPs in the watershed. “The focus of our Goose Creek initiative is to collaborate with landowners and conservation partners to accelerate the pace of both permanent land protection and the adoption of BMPs in the watershed,” says Tracy.

About Virginia Environmental Endowment

The mission of VEE is to improve the quality of the environment by using its capital, expertise and resources to encourage all sectors to work together to prevent pollution, conserve natural resources, and promote environmental literacy. To date, VEE has made over 1,400 grants totaling \$34 million and leveraging matching funds to achieve more than \$80 million in environmental improvement. The Endowment is based in Richmond and celebrated its 40th anniversary in 2017.

For information on the establishment of the Fund for the Virginia Environmental Endowment, which enables individuals who wish to support the Endowment’s environmental grant-making to make tax deductible contributions to VEE, please visit www.vee.org.

Pop Quiz

How many miles of Appalachian Trail can be found in Shenandoah National Park?



ANSWER
d) 105 miles
Source: www.nps.gov



On the Ground in

Albemarle

➤ Strengthening growth management in Albemarle

Award-winning reporter Sean Tubbs joined the team this summer and is working alongside Rex Linville and Peter Krebs to advocate for the creation of a high-quality community with a smart transportation network. We are working to ensure that a new economic development strategy is consistent with Albemarle’s tradition of protecting its natural resources from sprawl development. Our staff has joined forces with citizens in the growth areas such as Pantops and U.S. 29 to create new public space. We are also advocating for better regional cooperation between local governments and the University of Virginia.

In the coming months, we will help shepherd adoption of a biodiversity action plan that will enhance and strengthen wildlife habitat and will add our voice to those calling for stronger requirements for riparian buffers. We are also keeping an eye on potential changes to the county’s rules on cell towers — rules that have so far protected the viewshed from visual clutter.

Clarke

➤ Promoting and celebrating Conservation

PEC’s third annual Sporting Clays for Conservation event was another fun outing that helped support conservation funding. We appreciate our sponsors: Tri-County Feeds, Fashion, Finds, Purdey & Sons and Old Bust Head Brewery. Congratulations to the winners, who managed to overcome the day’s high winds. For women, the winners are: 1) Sandra Guarriello, 2) Sarah Daniels, 3) Jenny Irwin; and for men: 1) Allen Fremyer, 2) Mark Wyatt, 3) Ryan Stokes.

This past spring, Pam Lettie invited artists to collaborate in a celebration of Clarke County with a collection of photos, artwork, and writings in a book she published titled “Clarke’s Great Outdoors.” Copies are still available at Barns of Rose Hill, and they make great holiday gifts! Proceeds will be donated to PEC!

This year also included another round of conservation education for Clarke County’s fourth graders. The effort was in partnership with a group of faithful local non-profits and agencies. Students enjoyed a wide variety of outdoor activities that gave them new perspectives on the importance of preserving habitat.

We also supported the county’s update to the Water Resources Plan, which will help conserve surface and groundwater, as well as keep it cleaner and safer. The plan includes stronger septic protections, additional monitoring and data collection and a well water testing program.

Culpeper

➤ A Finger on the Scale for Solar

Over the last couple of issues, we have provided updates on the latest developments with utility-scale solar projects in Virginia. Given our proximity to demand and the location of certain infrastructure (fiber optic and transmission points for interconnection), our region has seen multiple proposals. The passage of Senate Bill 966, requiring 5,000

megawatts of renewables over the next decade, and the inclusion of those goals in the recently released Virginia Energy Plan increase, makes the prospect of new projects in our region even more of a reality.

Culpeper was one of the first in our region to review multiple proposals and was left without much guidance on how to address the significant siting issues that arise when trying to accommodate a use that requires hundreds of acres. Two proposals, Culpeper North Star and Greenwood Solar, drove the discussion in the county.

Recognizing the absence of best practices and any real guidance from the state, PEC and the American Battlefield Trust joined together in educating the county on siting considerations. A series of conversations led to the county adopting a solar policy, which has acted as a model for other localities. Ultimately, the policy helped the Board judge the proposals and avoid or minimize their impacts.

The first proposal to come before the Board was a 20 MW facility named Culpeper North Solar. The project would have been located on 178 acres between Brandy Station and Stevensburg, but was ultimately rejected due to the project’s impact on agricultural soils, historic resources and neighboring properties. The second, Greenwood Solar located south of Stevensburg and Rt. 3, was approved. The 100 MW project will cover approximately 600 acres in panels. There were concerns about historical resources. However, the lack of designated agricultural prime soils led the Board to approve the proposal. This decision is under legal challenge. The county also amended their policy recently to limit the total amount of acreage that can be used for this purpose.

The interest in utility-scale solar has sparked great interest in developing best practices and policy considerations. We continue to provide a leadership role in this conversation and are pushing the Commonwealth to be more active in assisting localities and directing the industry to better sites. PEC’s stance is that rooftop solar is superior to utility-scale and underutilized industrial and brownfield sites are the best suited locations for utility-scale projects. Our scenic, cultural and historic landscapes do not have to be compromised in the pursuit of renewable energy.

Fauquier

➤ Updated Plans, Remington Walks and Vint Hill’s Future

Fauquier County is updating the Rural Lands Plan and Telecommunication Master Plan sections of their Comprehensive Plan. The Rural Lands Plan provides guidance about growth for 90 percent of the land area in the county. The Telecommunication Master Plan will provide the background for the updated telecommunication zoning ordinance. We are following and providing input on both of these important updates.

The Remington Walks project, completed last year, is still hard at work supporting small projects occurring throughout the town. Residents are building off of the suggestions in the Remington Walks Plan to complete trail connections, build a pocket park in downtown, and enhance the streetscaping and sidewalks on Main Street and Business 15/29.

After a proposal for additional residential development met significant pushback from the community and organizations like ours, the owners of Vint Hill have come back with a much better application. This

new application allows increased non-residential development limited to data center or governmental uses. Traffic impacts will be analyzed as part of the application. Also, proffers will help improve aesthetics, prevent noise impacts and incorporate open space, sidewalks and trails. It will likely be approved before the end of 2018.

Following a successful event this past spring, PEC’s Julian Scheer Fauquier Land Conservation Fund has \$90,000 available for land conservation in Fauquier, nearly reaching the \$100,000 goal set by the fund’s advisory committee members. The fund focuses on assisting landowners with the costs associated with donating conservation easements or providing critical matching dollars that leverage funding available through the county’s Purchase of Development Rights Program. A number of local farmers have submitted applications in 2018 to sell an easement to the county through the program, which are now being reviewed.

Greene

➤ Greene at a crossroads

This year, the Greene County Board of Supervisors adopted a new master plan for the Ruckersville community that seeks to transform the junction of U.S. 29 and U.S. 33 into “a community-focused destination with a sense of place.” The document is a checklist to help guide the development of the fastest-growing portion of the county. To ensure it becomes a reality, PEC is part of an advisory group that will oversee the mission of steering development into something that befits the early 21st century. This includes development of a parallel road network for local traffic that will also serve bicyclists and pedestrians. At the same time, Greene has taken steps to implement a water supply plan that could cost as much as \$65 million. We will work to help lower cost by revisiting water demand projections. This year, Greene also adopted an economic development plan and strategy that places a high emphasis on protecting the county’s rural places.

Loudoun

➤ Choosing our future

For over two years, Loudoun County has been engaged in an update to its Comprehensive Plan, which will likely set the course for future land development for many years. The proposed plan update reached a critical juncture this fall when the county’s Planning Commission held a public hearing on November 7.

Since the beginning of the process, PEC has been engaged, working in partnership with our Loudoun County Preservation and Conservation Coalition partners to analyze, communicate and disseminate our findings. On Election Day, we led an outreach campaign to inform residents about the Planning Commission hearing. Volunteers covered 17 polling stations and shared information about the draft Plan, including our major concern that it allows too much growth. The Board of Supervisors will get the draft in 2019. We expect the new plan to be adopted by mid-year. We’re working to ensure it reflects the needs and interests of the public as expressed during the process.

PEC and allied groups have been advocating for the

county to take a more proactive role to encourage land conservation, particularly in the county's AR-1 zoning district. Our staff has offered a variety of options the county could and should pursue, including establishing an easement purchase program to preserve productive farmland and forestland. As a result, the Board of Supervisors is considering a modest proposal to help landowners with the up-front cost of donating conservation easements.

This year, we welcomed additional staff to beef up our Loudoun team. Evan McCarthy jumped in to help Gem Bingol with the Comprehensive Plan and specific development proposals throughout the county. Tracy Lind, who joined PEC last November as a field representative, has been supporting landowners in several easement donations and building interest in restoration in both the Goose Creek and Catoctin Creek watersheds.

Also, expect to see signs of activity at Roundabout Meadows, where Dana Melby has begun work as our new farm manager. Dana is busy with the start-up of our community farming venture, working to establish a source of clean water, deer fencing and an access drive to the northwest corner of our property by Gilbert's Corner. On the east side of Roundabout Meadows, PEC's Celia Vuocolo is working with NOVA Parks and the Fauquier and Loudoun Garden Club to create a walking trail that will interpret the diverse historic and natural resources along the abandoned Old Carolina Road.

Madison

> Trout Stream Restoration Continues

This summer's heavy and frequent rains widened the Robinson River and Cedar Run, where PEC and its partners are working to remove in-stream barriers and restore habitat for trout and other aquatic species. On the Robinson River, high river flows rearranged some of the in-stream step pools that were constructed to restore the riverbed as part of our culvert removal project in 2017. In early fall, during a break in the rain, PEC and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service adjusted the step pools to anchor them into the

new banks of the river. High flows also eroded the crossing on Cedar Run to White Oak Canyon, and the National Park Service was forced to close the crossing. Fortunately, our partner Trout Unlimited was already planning to replace the crossing with a fish-friendly one. By year's end, Trout Unlimited finalized a design for the new crossing and secured funding to replace it in spring of 2019.

Orange

> Two Farms Conserved along the Rapidan River

This year was a good one for land conservation along the Rapidan River! It started out strong with the Woyciks conserving Rose Hill Farm, situated just upstream of the Town of Rapidan, with the Virginia Outdoors Foundation in January. In late July, the Nixon family conserved Glenmary Farm further downstream at the base of Clark Mountain with PEC, Culpeper Soil & Water Conservation District and Natural Resources Conservation Service. We salute the conservation efforts of the two families, which resulted in protecting almost 900 acres of working farmland and two miles of frontage along the Rapidan River. Both properties are within the area of the proposed Rapidan Rural Historic District.

James Madison's Montpelier President Kat Imhoff announced plans to donate conservation easements on nearly 1,000 acres of the property to PEC, providing additional protection to the Madison Barbour Rural Historic District and the Journey Through Hallowed Ground National Scenic Byway.

Orange is also making progress in its review of the Comprehensive Plan. In a recent county alert, we made you aware of the Planning Commission draft and some rather disturbing language, including language that sought to prevent easements in specific areas of the county. While most of this language was removed after citizens weighed in, we believe these sentiments may arise again as the review progresses to the Board.

We also worked with the Gordonsville community to expand its neighborhood park to an entire town block by working with its members to secure

approximately half of the funding needed to acquire an old residential parcel. The town purchased the property in February and is scheduled to demolish the dilapidated structures on the site in November so they can incorporate it into the existing park. The project removes a visual barrier along the access corridor via Linney Street to help connect neighborhoods and enhance the historic character of the Town.

Rappahannock

> Community-wide Conservation Success!

PEC has engaged with community partners in Rappahannock County to promote conservation projects for the local Recreation Center and Park in Washington. The Rappahannock County Recreational Facilities Authority, RappFLOW, Rappahannock Landscaping, Boy Scout Troop #36, Virginia Department of Forestry, Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, Rappahannock League for Environmental Protection, Old Rag Master Naturalists and Virginia Working Landscapes recently celebrated on October 27 the first "Community Conservation Day," where new opportunities for native plant landscaping, forest management, wildlife habitat and dark skies were promoted.

Following a recommendation from the advisory committee to PEC's Krebsner Fund for Rappahannock County Conservation, PEC and the Piedmont Foundation made up to \$50,000 available to landowners seeking to implement agricultural best management practices through the Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District. Under existing Virginia Best Management Practice programs, landowners may be reimbursed up to 80 percent of the cost of adopting practices that protect water quality and improve soil health, like fencing to exclude livestock from streams or establish rotational grazing regimes. Now, through the financial aid of the Krebsner Fund, landowners enrolled with District cost-share programs can receive up to 100 percent of their project's reimbursable costs through the Soil and Water District.

Why I Give



"I support PEC because it has its ear to the ground where we live. They are savvy about issues that impact our lives and explore all options to protect our way of life. In Loudoun, we are lucky to have Gem Bingol as our field officer. She is an indefatigable defender of our environment and natural resources in Loudoun County."

— Natalie Pien

"Saving farmland and the environment are important to me. That's why I support Piedmont Environmental Council. They get it and make a wonderful difference in Virginia."

— Linda "Boo" Ingram



"We give to PEC because they share our values of environmental protection and conservation of resources. We're impressed with the way they thoroughly research local land use issues and strategically and effectively act to make a difference!"

— Julie and Ike Broaddus

"I choose to support PEC because I'm an outdoorsman and all hunters and fishermen are true conservationists. As a resident of Madison County, we are lucky to have the Shenandoah National Park in our backyard. I find the work that PEC does to be science-based and action oriented. I appreciate that PEC makes positive things happen as opposed to just talking about the issues."

— Paul Abugattas



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 P.O. Box 460, Warrenton VA, 20188 or call Danielle Castellano at **540-347-2334 ext. 7001**. Consider a gift of stock. Please go to our website at www.pecva.org for instructions. Thank you and Happy Holidays!

The Year’s Winning Photos

It was another spectacular year for PEC’s Photo Contest! We’re happy the public decides who the winners are, because it would have been too difficult for us to choose. Thank you to everyone who submitted images and who voted!

Entries to our photo contest help us build a gallery that enables PEC to tell the visual stories of the Virginia Piedmont. We are thankful for your participation and also for so many talented photographers in our region!

We also want to give a big shout out and thank you to our guest judge, local photographer Ken Garrett, who helped us select the finalists.

By public vote, the winners of this year’s contest are:

BEAUTIFUL LANDSCAPES & STREETSCAPES WINNER
▼ *Rappahannock Lightning* by David McCrabb



NATIVE PLANTS AND WILDLIFE WINNER
▼ *Birds of a Feather* by Susan Tucker



OUTDOOR RECREATION WINNER
▼ *Cross-Country Thrills* by Phyllis Dawson



YOUTH WINNER
▼ *Gray Catbird* by Conor Farrell



Common Space for the Greater Good

Continued from cover

“We wanted to make sure these efforts were an integrated amenity for the community versus just leftover space. People can now go to a dynamic spot and it really serves the diversity of populations here. And I think over time it’s going to do so much more. We have kids skipping through here now and asking questions,” said Susan.

Frank McLaughlin, a Virginia Master Naturalist who is assisting with the River Creek efforts, said he began monitoring bat activity after the installation of the native meadow and other plantings. “When I do the monitoring, I aim toward the center of the field by the basketball court, and I record for an hour.

“There are no lights around the basketball court, but one night there were high-school-aged kids playing basketball anyways. When they decided to walk home, they walked by me and asked about my setup and the bat movement on my iPad screen, and I filled them in on what I was doing. I thought that

was great!”
Walking up to the native meadow, a diversity of birds fluttered through and around the brush.
“I always say the first year of the growth is in its infancy. It’s a toddler falling down a lot. But next year it will be an adolescent and it will start to shoot up. Then the third year, it really starts to reveal the character of the meadow, and then we’ll do a burn,” said Susan.

The committee formed in 2015, but according to River Creek resident and volunteer Jack McNamee, things didn’t really kick off until they attended an HOA forum, “Common Space for the Greater Good,” hosted by The Piedmont Environmental Council in 2016.

“The event was helpful in three ways. One was the presentations; second was being able to listen to what other HOAs were doing; and third was it attracted people who we don’t normally run into. For instance, I ended up talking to the Fairfax watershed guy and the Loudoun



The River Creek Confluence Park Committee planted 60 trees and 40 shrubs in this woodland entrance. The committee also installed a bioswale, native meadow, natural trails and 200 shrubs and trees in a riparian zone. Photo by Paula Combs

sediment and erosion person,” said Jack. “The ability to meet other people and also other HOAs was helpful. I got involved with the Belmont HOA, and they helped us and we helped them on some other ideas.”

This past October, PEC’s Gem Bingol hosted a second forum where Jack was a representative on the Homeowners

Association panel and spoke about River Creek’s efforts. The event drew nearly 100 guests representing 33 HOA communities.
“We look forward to hosting future programs for Loudoun HOAs with new information and ways they can help create a healthier, more resilient future,” said Gem.

Out&About

Albemarle’s Mountain Heritage

MOUNT FAIR, VA • SEPTEMBER 29, 2018



▲ Nearly 350 guests attended the Heritage event throughout the day, which included tours of the Mount Fair property, a speaker series, oral history listening station and family history exhibits. *Photo by Sean Tubbs*

“Clarke’s Great Outdoors” Book Signing and Art Show

THE BARNES OF ROSE HILL • OCTOBER 5, 2018



▲ Pam Lettie invited artists to collaborate in a celebration of Clarke County with a coffee table book, “Clarke’s Great Outdoors,” that she recently published and is donating proceeds to PEC. *Photo by Tracy Lind*

30th Annual Piedmont Ball

ORANGE HILL FARM, MARSHALL, VA • OCTOBER 6, 2018



▲ Left to right: PEC President Chris Miller, PEC Board Co-Chairs George Ohrstrom and Jean Perin and Ball Committee Co-Chair Gertraud Hechl address guests during the Ball, an important annual fundraiser for PEC’s work. *Photo by Cynthia Benitz*

Walk to School Day

CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA • OCTOBER 10, 2018



▲ Left to right: Charlottesville Police Officer Ruth Hill, PEC’s Community Outreach Coordinator Peter Krebs and Charlottesville Police Officer Eric Thomas. *Photo by Sean Tubbs*

Annual Meeting

CASTLE HILL FARM, KESWICK, VA
SATURDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2018



▲ Left to right: PEC Director of State Policy Dan Holmes, Strong Towns Founder Chuck Marohn and PEC President Chris Miller. *Photo by Paula Combs*

Garden Club of Virginia Award Ceremony

THE PARAMOUNT THEATER, CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA
OCTOBER 25, 2018



▲ PEC President Chris Miller accepted the Garden Club of Virginia’s 2018 Elizabeth Cabell Dugdale Award on behalf of PEC for conservation and advocacy work. From left to right: PEC Senior Adviser & Director of Strategic Partnerships John McCarthy, Garden Club member Ingrid Hinckley Lindsay, Garden Club member and PEC Board Co-Chair Jeanie Perin, PEC President Chris Miller, and Garden Club members Margrete Stevens and Kim Nash.

Dear Friends,

When PEC was created in 1972, the underlying motivation for many of the founders was to help the communities where they lived and the landscape they loved respond to massive forces of change. Thank you for continuing that work; we are proud to work with you and on your behalf.

Many of the initial PEC members were part of the forces of change in the region, as leaders in government, industry, education and philanthropy. They represented some of the most engaged, educated and powerful individuals and families not only in Virginia, but in the nation. They were not afraid of the world rapidly changing or afraid of the specific challenges that change represented. They were resilient, creative and adaptive. And most importantly, they believed they could have a role in shaping the outcome.

Specifically, they understood the powerful force of the expansion of the Federal government in the post-WWII/Cold War era into Fairfax, Loudoun and beyond. They predicted that unplanned, sprawling development could transform the Piedmont region. They proposed that civic, business and political leaders in the region could work together to develop long-term land use, transportation and economic development plans

to prepare for potential change, adopt proactive strategies for more sustainable outcomes, and make positive investments in those strategies to start driving change. They hoped to lay the foundations for a multi-generation effort that would preserve the rural way of life, natural resources, history and beauty, along with making the communities of the region better.

Twenty five years ago, this founding generation and the second generation of PEC members were confronted by the Disney's America proposal and the possibility of entertainment-based tourism and sprawl overwhelming the region. Again, the threat of change galvanized a redoubled effort to plan and invest in something better. Over the twenty five years since Disney, families and communities have conserved an additional 300,000 acres of land, encouraged better rural highway design to reduce impact on conservation values, renewed investment in historic towns and historic districts, encouraged a shift to smart growth at the regional scale, fostered new ideas of local, sustainable agriculture, and made substantial innovations in native wildlife habitat and water quality. The air and water is demonstrably cleaner; we have better defined our cultural landscapes; and we have shifted the emphasis of growth to transit-oriented, walkable communities.



A 2018 PEC Photo Contest youth finalist image by Theodore Staengl.


But once again, we are entering a period of great change in the world, at every level, that requires us to redouble our efforts to preserve and protect the Piedmont. Globally, we are confronted by the impacts of climate change and the increasing dislocation and migration it engenders. Nationally, we are not only struggling with those same issues, but also the overwhelming cost of supporting the infrastructure for a nation of 370 million scattered across fifty states. In Virginia, the demographic changes of the last decade will shift the balance of population and, ultimately, political power, to urban and suburban areas, mostly in Northern Virginia. Locally, we are revisiting comprehensive plans, land use policies, etc., with some counties that used to be majority rural residents but are now predominantly

urban and suburban dwellers, especially in Loudoun but also in Fauquier and Albemarle.

PEC's role remains, as it was in 1972, to engage, educate and empower citizens and community leaders to evaluate change, develop the proactive strategies and encourage positive investments. We are entering the third generation of supporters, landowners and leadership at PEC. Your involvement and support is crucial to meet the current challenges and continue to improve and sustain the Piedmont.

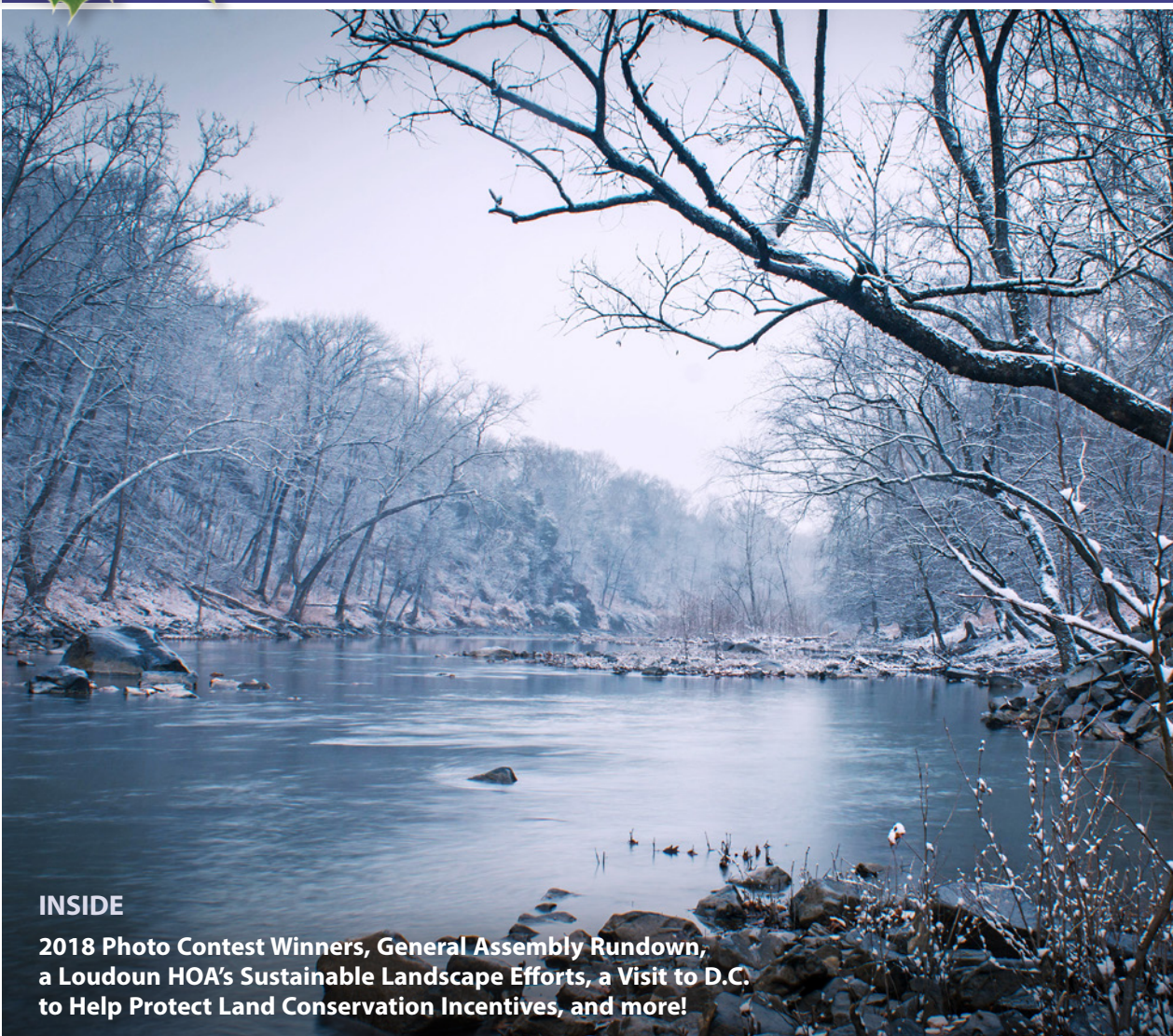
Sincerely,

Chris Miller
Chris Miller, President



The Piedmont View

A MEMBERSHIP NEWSLETTER OF THE PIEDMONT ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL WINTER 2018



INSIDE
2018 Photo Contest Winners, General Assembly Rundown, a Loudoun HOA's Sustainable Landscape Efforts, a Visit to D.C. to Help Protect Land Conservation Incentives, and more!


Cover photo by 2018 Photo Contest Finalist Jennifer Gonzalez
Banner photo by Kathy Russell

Pop Quiz

How many miles of Appalachian Trail can be found in Shenandoah National Park?

- a) 202 miles
- b) 136 miles
- c) 112 miles
- d) 105 miles

ANSWER ON PAGE 3





**Piedmont
Environmental
Council**

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