

Dear Friends,

EC's work has never been more important than it is today. The Piedmont is experiencing extraordinary pressure from development, including the unparalleled magnitude of the data center industry in Virginia. At the same time, the opportunities to accelerate land conservation through leveraging federal, state, and private grant funding are greater than they have ever been in our 50-year history. In late 2022, PEC's Board of Directors adopted a new Strategic Plan to guide us through complex challenges and opportunities regarding conservation, restoration, smart growth and climate solutions while advancing our vision of:



VOLUNTEER TREE PLANTING AT J-TEAM DAIRY.

Photo by Hugh Kenny

"A Virginia Piedmont where people act on a belief that conservation is essential to creating and maintaining vibrant, healthy communities. A region that is characterized by connected natural and cultural landscapes, thriving villages, towns and cities, clean rivers and streams, and working farms and forests. A beautiful place where residents across all walks of life participate in decisions about its future."

During 2023, our efforts centered on the four key focus areas of our strategic plan:

Conserving and restoring the Piedmont's lands and waters. The Virginia Piedmont is one of the greatest conservation success stories in the nation, consisting of more than 446,000 acres of private lands permanently protected with conservation easements and approximately 150,000 acres of federal, state and other publicly

managed conservation lands. Our goal is to protect an additional 100,000 acres with easements by 2030, which would achieve conservation of 30 percent of the Piedmont's lands, concentrated along the Blue Ridge and the rivers and streams that flow to the Chesapeake Bay. We made significant strides toward this goal in 2023, helping permanently protect more than 6,300 acres of private lands while securing and advancing new grant funding for easements on working farms totaling over 3,900 acres.

Creating stronger, more sustainable communities. In each of the nine Piedmont counties we serve, PEC works with local governments to balance growth and development with natural and cultural resource protection. In 2023, PEC's experienced professional staff continued to delve into community development proposals, zoning applications, and comprehensive plan revisions, advocating for conservation, smart growth, improved livability, public access to open space, and increased transparency in the decision-making process.

Shaping and advancing Virginia's clean energy future. Recognizing the threat posed by the explosive growth in

COVER: VIEW FROM RAPPAHANNOCK COUNTY WITH THE BLUE RIDGE IN THE BACKGROUND. Photo by Hugh Kenny

data centers to achieving our clean energy goals, as well as their profound impacts on communities, PEC is at the forefront in educating the public about data center development and advocating for solutions. We have also been expanding partnerships to advance solar development, with a focus on small-scale distributed solar facilities, as part of a broader set of clean energy solutions.

Setting an example through land ownership.

PEC-owned properties showcase our vision, values, and practices to community members and partners, exemplifying our conservation ethic and cultivating an appreciation for nature. Whether we are holding property short-term, such as in Gordonsville, or in perpetuity, such as at our Community Farm at Roundabout Meadows, our aim is to utilize these properties to ignite a stronger conservation ethic in our region.

More than a half century has passed since PEC was founded, and in that time — thanks to the generous support of friends and neighbors like you — we have

made incredible strides in protecting and restoring this region we love. There is still much more work to be done. Thank you for your support, and please help us continue our efforts toward achieving a sustainable and thriving Virginia Piedmont for generations to come.

Sincerely,





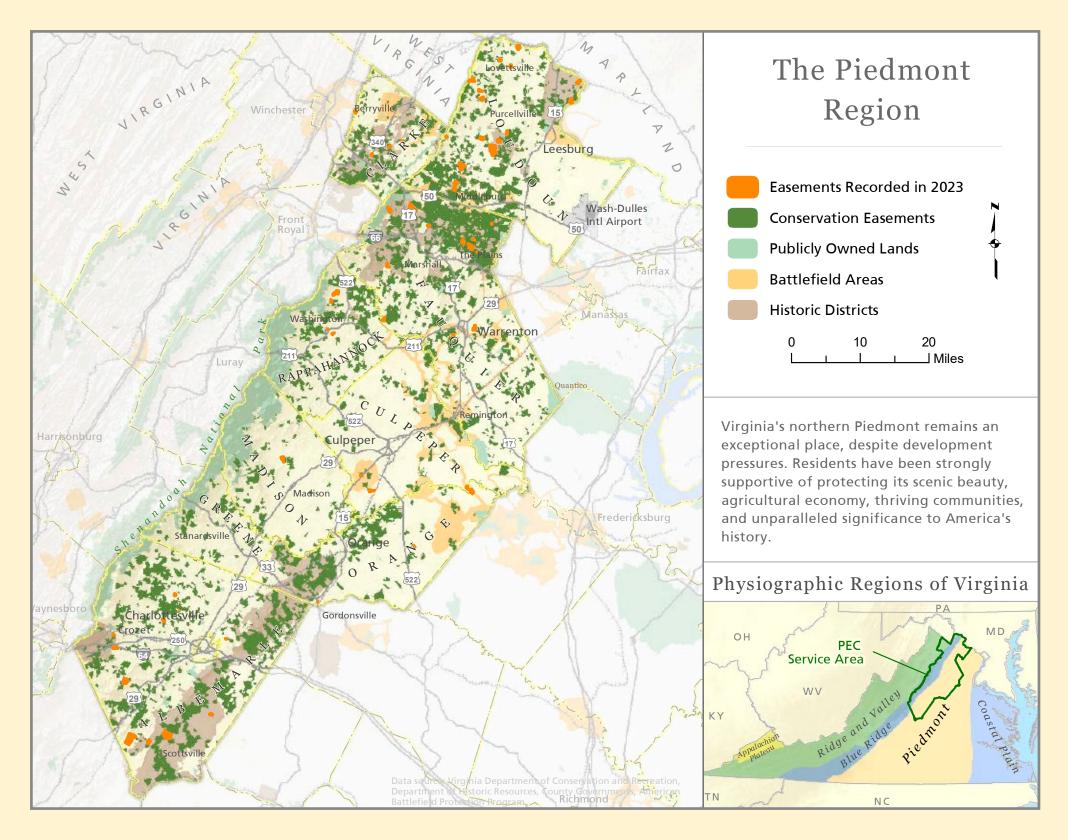
THE RURAL PIEDMONT, SEEN FROM THE PLAINS. Photo by Hugh Kenny

David Aldrich Chair. Board of Directors

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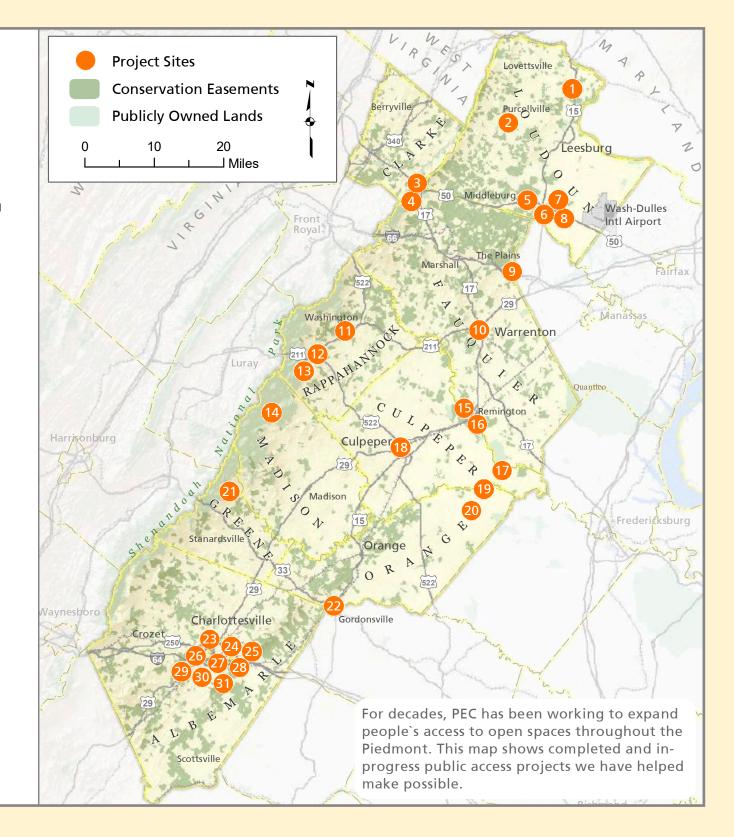
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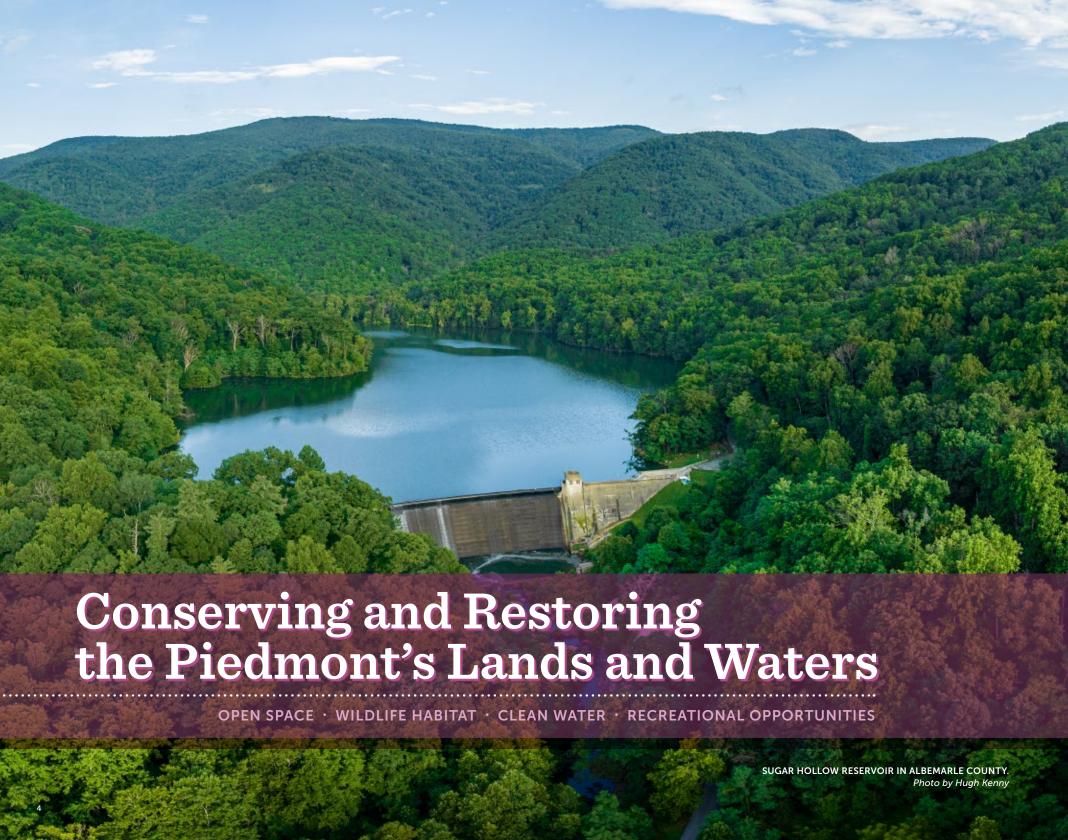
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Facilitating Public Access

- 1 JK Black Oak Sanctuary
- 2 Chapman-DeMary Trail
- 3 Piedmont Memorial Overlook
- 4 Ambassador Whitehouse Trail & Appalachian Trail realignment
- 5 Aldie Assemblage
- 6 Gilberts Corner / Roundabout Meadows
- 7 Gilberts Corner Regional Park
- 8 Old Carolina Road Trail
- 9 Bull Run Mountains (various acquisitions)
- 10 Warrenton Greenway extension
- 11 Rappahannock County Park improvements
- 12 Sperryville Trail Network
- 13 Property donation to Shenandoah National Park
- 14 White Oak Canyon bridge replacement
- 15 Future Rappahannock Station Park
- 16 Rappahannock River Access in Remington
- 17 Rappahannock River Access in Rogers Ford
- 18 Rockwater Yowell Meadow Connector Trail
- 19 Germanna Siegen Forest
- 20 Mine Run
- 21 Entry Run
- 22 Gordonsville Park expansion
- 23 City Yard Rail Trail
- 24 Fifeville Community Trail
- 25 Pedestrian Bridge on Rivanna Trail (Woolen Mills)
- 26 Heyward Community Forest
- 27 Southwood / Biscuit Run Connector
- 28 Monticello Connector
- 29 Fifth Street Hub
- 30 Moore's Creek Greenway
- 31 Biscuit Run Trail





A cause worthwhile: **establishing a legacy in Madison County**

arolyn Smith's Madison County property has been on quite the journey since her parents first purchased the former cattle operation in 1965. Her donation of a 129-acre conservation easement in late 2023 came on the heels of decades of successful land stewardship begun by her parents and aided by a community of partners who helped restore and repair the land for wildlife habitat, pollinators and native plants.

But back in 1965, Carolyn's parents' focus their first year in Madison was just to ramble over the acreage and get to know it. They found beautiful, native ephemerals in bloom, but lots of erosion and ravines from the cattle that used to graze their fields. So, they began the process of rejuvenation by turning

to their Madison County Virginia Cooperative Extension agent and a local forester for help.

"Because my parents loved nature and loved to be out of doors, they had a sense that they could improve the land," Carolyn says. "Their appreciation of the beauty of the natural world and the interconnectedness of life [led them to] understand that what they did on the land and with the land would have impacts on a ton of other species."

In the five decades between Carolyn's first float on their ponds and 2016, when her parents passed away and she moved full time to the property, the landscape was transformed. The tens of thousands of tree seedlings she'd helped plant as a child had matured into forest,

and native plantings filled the land.

Friends of the Rappahannock's Deputy Director, Bryan Hofmann first introduced Carolyn to the Piedmont Environmental Council during a tree-planting event on her property, knowing PEC could assist with the conservation easement that she, and her parents before her, had been thinking about for years.

PEC's Maggi Blomstrom worked with Carolyn to develop and complete the easement, which includes significant protections of Pass Run. But this isn't the end for caring for the land, as Carolyn sees the land as a "living entity." For example, she enthusiastically described the recent conversion of two former hayfields to native grass and wildflower meadows.



CAROLYN SMITH ON HER MADISON COUNTY PROPERTY.
Photo by Hugh Kenny

"For the rest of my life however long it's going to be, my mission and my purpose is to give as much to the land as I can to restore its natural balance," Carolyn says. "I feel like it's such a worthwhile cause to dedicate it to."

6,315 Acres Protected in 2023

County	Acres protected in 2023* by Conservation Easements	Total Acres* protected by Conservation Easements
Albemarle	2,065	113,370
Clarke	154	27,756
Culpeper	106	21,536
Fauquier	1,065	111,626
Greene	0	10,787
Loudoun	2,286	70,152
Madison	126	16,491
Orange	223	40,426
Rappahannock	289	33,951
PEC Region	6,315	446,096
	4.4	

* Numbers are rounded

2023 Highlights

- ▶ For the past several years, PEC has been developing a landscape-scale forestland conservation project in Albemarle County by working with multiple landowners adjacent to Shenandoah National Park. In 2023, that project was awarded grant funds through the federal Forest Legacy Program, which will help us permanently protect more than 4,300 acres adjacent to the park.
- With additional funding in 2023, we expanded the Virginia Grassland Bird Initiative to 16 counties in the Virginia Piedmont, Blue Ridge and Shenandoah Valley. Led by PEC and Smithsonian's Virginia Working Landscapes, this program pays farmers for delayed haying and rotational grazing practices that help protect nesting grassland birds and improve landscape resiliency. In 2023, 19 farmers formally enrolled 940 acres in the program, and another 10 farmers enrolled 700 acres without incentives.

JUSTIN PROCTOR OF VIRGINIA WORKING LANDSCAPES
AND OCTOBER GREENFIELD OF PEC CO-LEAD THE VIRGINIA
GRASSLAND BIRD INITIATIVE. Photo by Hugh Kenny





SITE OF THE FUTURE CULPEPER BATTLEFIELDS STATE PARK Photo by Hugh Kenny

- PEC's Krebser Fund for Rappahannock County Conservation awarded two grants for key programs improving land management and water quality in Rappahannock County. The Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District received \$50,000 for its financial incentive program supporting Rappahannock farmers who participate in stream exclusion practices. The Krebser Fund also awarded \$25,000 to Friends of the Rappahannock for riparian tree planting projects.
- In 2023, PEC closed seven conservation easements encompassing 482 total acres. These properties will be stewarded in perpetuity through annual monitoring performed by PEC staff.

- With support from The Volgenau Foundation and other donors, PEC's Rappahannock-Rapidan Conservation Initiative expanded land protection in the upper Rappahannock watershed by more than 1,900 acres, including farmland and other critical
- In Greene County, through a partnership with American Farmland Trust (AFT), PEC is **helping a young** farmer acquire farmland through an innovative conservation easement **project**. Thanks to support from The Volgenau Foundation and grants from the federal Agricultural Land Easement program and Virginia Land Conservation Foundation, PEC has secured funds to purchase an easement on 229 acres of the Long Acre Farm. The farmer, Dustin Watson, is purchasing the property through a loan from AFT, which he will repay with the funds from the purchased easement.

As part of the Virginia Conservation Network, PEC successfully advocated for the Virginia General Assembly to increase funding for conservation in the state budget. The bipartisan wins included \$5.5 million for the Culpeper Battlefields State Park and \$286 million toward improving best management practices on farms with the goal of reducing runoff into local waterways.

PEC accelerated conservation
of prime farmlands by leveraging
funding available through the
Agricultural Land Easement (ALE)
program administered by the U.S.
Department of Agriculture. During
the past four years, we have secured
\$7.1 million in state and federal
funding to advance nine ALE projects
totaling 3,912 acres. Located in the
upper Rappahannock watershed—an
important farming hub at risk from
non-agricultural development—these
projects contribute significantly to
our larger conservation goals.

ANNE AND DRU CRAWLEY PROTECTED THEIR 63-ACRE PROPERTY IN WESTERN FAUQUIER WITH A CONSERVATION EASEMENT IN 2023. Photo by Hugh Kenny



Farmers join forces with PEC and partners to **improve water quality**

or decades, PEC has been collaborating with farmers and numerous partners to improve the health of local streams. These tributary streams flow into the Potomac, Rappahannock, ant York rivers, providing drinking water for millions of downstream residents, and are part of the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

Trees, shrubs and other plantings along stream banks, called riparian buffers, are key to improving water quality and the health of stream and Bay ecosystems, because they capture and absorb polluting nutrients before they enter the waterways. PEC's Plantings for the Piedmont program provides free technical assistance, trees and labor for restoring riparian buffers to private landowners in eight counties in the Potomac, Rappahannock, and York watersheds.

In 2023, with support from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and Virginia Environmental Endowment, Plantings for the Piedmont resulted in more than 12,000 newly-planted stream-side trees and restoration of 43 acres of riparian buffers. Just as importantly, the program helped foster collaborative efforts with public agencies, nonprofit organizations and other partners to accelerate agricultural water quality improvements.

J-Team Dairy farm in Orange is owned and operated by the Elgin family, which has been farming in the Piedmont area for more than a century. In April, PEC's Maggi Blomstrom and Linnea Stewart led 30 volunteers who planted trees along Potato Run at J-Team Dairy. Farm owners Molly Elgin McWilliams and Russell McWilliams joined in the planting, along with their two-year-old daughter, Halle. "I feel like it's important for farmers to be good stewards of the land because we are the solution," says Molly. "We need to be good stewards of the land because we're the ones where it starts."

The riparian buffer planting was part of a larger collaborative effort to assist farmers in increasing their operations' profits as well as preventing soil loss and reducing nutrients entering local streams. Additional practices such as updated manure pits and new animal walkways will not only reduce pollution but also improve comfort for the 220 cows in the Elgins' farm operation. The J-Team Dairy project was led by the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay with support from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District, Maryland & Virginia Milk Producers Cooperative Association, Friends of the Rappahannock and PEC.

MOLLY ELGIN MCWILLIAMS AND HER DAUGHTER HALLE PLANTING
A TREE AT THEIR J-TEAM DAIRY FARM. Photo by Hugh Kenny





The power of partnerships in Rappahannock

ithin Rappahannock
County's extraordinary
landscape of farms, forests,
streams and historic villages, a network
of community groups is working to
expand and improve public access to
its lands and waters. PEC is supporting
these community-led projects so that
local residents are empowered to lead
while equipped with our extensive
knowledge about available technical
assistance and funding opportunities.

In the village of Sperryville, residents



and visitors now enjoy the Sperryville Trail Network, a 1.5-mile trail that threads along the Thornton River and connects Main Street with the village's River District, as well as many other destinations. The trail—which is entirely on private land—got its start in 2019 thanks to the Sperryville Community Alliance, an all-volunteer nonprofit made up of village residents and business owners who promote activities to enhance the safety, inclusiveness and vitality of Sperryville.

Meanwhile, near the Town of Washington, a group of local residents has been working for years to improve Rappahannock County Park, the only local public park in the county. The

BONNIE BEERS, GEORGE GARDNER AND TORNEY VAN ACKER WITH PEC'S LAURA O'BRIEN AT RAPPAHANNOCK COUNTY PARK. Rappahannock County Recreational Facilities Authority (RCRFA), a volunteer local advisory council, has been developing plans and putting in hundreds of hours of on-the-ground work to improve public access, remove invasive species and restore native wildlife habitat.

Over the years, PEC's Krebser Fund for Rappahannock County Conservation has provided funding to RCRFA for trail improvements and management planning, as well as to the Sperryville Community Alliance for trail vision and management plans. PEC has also helped both groups identify other funding sources and prepare grant proposals. With PEC's encouragement, the Alliance and RCFRA have begun collaborating to share information, lessons learned, and support one another's projects and fundraising. In 2023, for example, the County received a grant from the Virginia

Department of Forestry's Community and Urban Forestry program to improve Rappahannock County Park. The successful grant was written with insight from the Sperryville Community Alliance, which had received a DOF Urban Forestry grant in 2022 with PEC support.

A focus of both the Alliance and RCRFA has been to remove invasive vegetation along the Thornton River and Rush River, respectively, and restore native tree canopy. With assistance from PEC, Friends of the Rappahannock and other partners, they have made considerable on-the-ground progress, including native tree planting volunteer events during the fall at the Sperryville Trail and Rappahannock County Park. Drawing on the power of partnerships, their efforts are both restoring natural areas and expanding public access for all to enjoy these open spaces.

2023 Highlights

- ▶ Following the controversial approval of the Amazon data center in Warrenton, PEC continues to monitor site development plan submissions to hold Amazon accountable to the standards set when the special use permit was approved. We also participated actively in Fauquier County's process of developing a **new policy that discourages data center development** outside of service districts, away from existing infrastructure and on properties that are not currently zoned for data center development.
- ▶ PEC is collaborating with the Southwood community in Albemarle County to develop a **new trail connection across Biscuit Run** to Biscuit Run Park. With a grant from the Anne & Gene Worrell Foundation, PEC hired a local engineering firm to help envision a well-designed bridge that connects Southwood residents to both the new park and the area's trail network, which provides access to jobs, schools and shopping centers.



VOLUNTEERS AT A CLEAN-UP NEAR BISCUIT RUN. Photo by Peter Krebs



THE TOWN OF MADISON AND NEARBY FORESTS AND PROTECTED LANDS IN MADISON COUNTY. Photo by Hugh Kenny

- ▶ In Loudoun County, PEC's work on the zoning ordinance rewrite continues as we advocate for the preservation of prime agricultural soils—a vital natural resource being rapidly lost to suburban development—and for more big-picture consideration of data center approvals in the county.
- In Clarke County, PEC worked to ensure that the conservation of valuable rural lands and waterways was taken into consideration as the County rewrote its zoning ordinance in 2023. We also tracked and contributed to the public dialogue around the Carter Hall special use permit application that came before the Planning Commission.
- ▶ Albemarle County has been updating its comprehensive plan, which will have important implications for growth, development, transportation, natural resources, housing and more over the next 20 years. One of PEC's major concerns has been the de-emphasis of

- the rural areas of the county—important to local drinking water supply, wildlife habitat, working farms that provide food security, and landscape resiliency against a changing climate. Thanks to advocacy by PEC and other partners, the plan has retained a Rural Area chapter that recommends adoption of a Rural Area land use plan.
- ▶ PEC worked with local groups to recommend that Greene County create a task force or work group to advise on planning for the rural areas in the County's comprehensive plan. PEC also encouraged Protect Rural Greene to submit a comment letter to the County against a proposal to add cluster subdivisions in the rural areas in the comprehensive plan. Cluster subdivisions, a method of suburban development that aims to preserve greenspace, are not endorsed by PEC in agricultural and conservation zoning districts.
- In Madison County, a committee of

- residents and representatives from the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors continues to work on the comprehensive plan review. PEC has been advocating for meaningful public input opportunities. Additionally, we continue to monitor development proposals, such as for utility-scale solar and event centers, to ensure they are sited in a way that is compatible with the rural landscape.
- In Culpeper County, PEC and the Stevensburg community were able to get the "Commerce and Innovation" designation removed from the future land use map. This designation was meant to encourage data center development, and its removal led to the withdrawal of a data center application for historic Brandy Station. PEC's efforts also led to the removal of the "Rural Transition Area" sited for Brandy Station, a designation that would have led to future growth in the area.

BILL PUGH OF THE COALITION FOR SMARTER GROWTH SPEAKS AT THE WALKABLE PIEDMONT COMMUNITIES FORUM. Photo by Hugh Kenny

- ▶ In March, PEC and the Coalition for Smarter Growth (CSG) organized a forum, "Creating Walkable Piedmont Communities." Held in downtown Culpeper, the event featured local success stories in building more walkable, bike-friendly communities and was attended by local staff, community leaders, and elected leaders throughout the region. CSG subsequently published a resource guide to help local governments find funding to improve active transportation in their communities.
- ▶ First launched in 2006, PEC's biennial Buy Fresh Buy Local guides help consumers find local products and help build relationships between growers, restaurants and institutions. Last year, PEC distributed our 2023-2024 edition of the guides covering the Charlottesville area, Northern Piedmont region and Loudoun County to 310,000+ homes. These guides collectively list 580 local food producers and distributors.



Piedmont Environmental Council · Annual Report · 2023

Navigating the wilderness: striving for transparency in land use decisions

n April 2023, despite overwhelming community opposition, the Orange County Board of Supervisors voted to approve the 2,600-acre Wilderness Crossing proposal. This development represents the largest rezoning in the county's history and could include 5,000 residential units as well as over five million square feet of data center and/ or distribution center space. Because of nondisclosure agreements (NDAs) signed by County officials, fundamental aspects of the development, such as the number of proposed data centers, were not divulged even to the County's Planning Commissioners.

In October, PEC filed a Virginia
Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)
lawsuit against Orange County for
improperly denying public access to
the NDAs and any other documents
pertaining to Wilderness Crossing.
By the end of the year, the lawsuit
concluded without a court hearing
after the County turned over
NDAs signed by 10 local officials,
including four members of the Board
of Supervisors, "for the benefit of
Amazon.com, Inc. and its affiliates,"
and other materials. The improperly

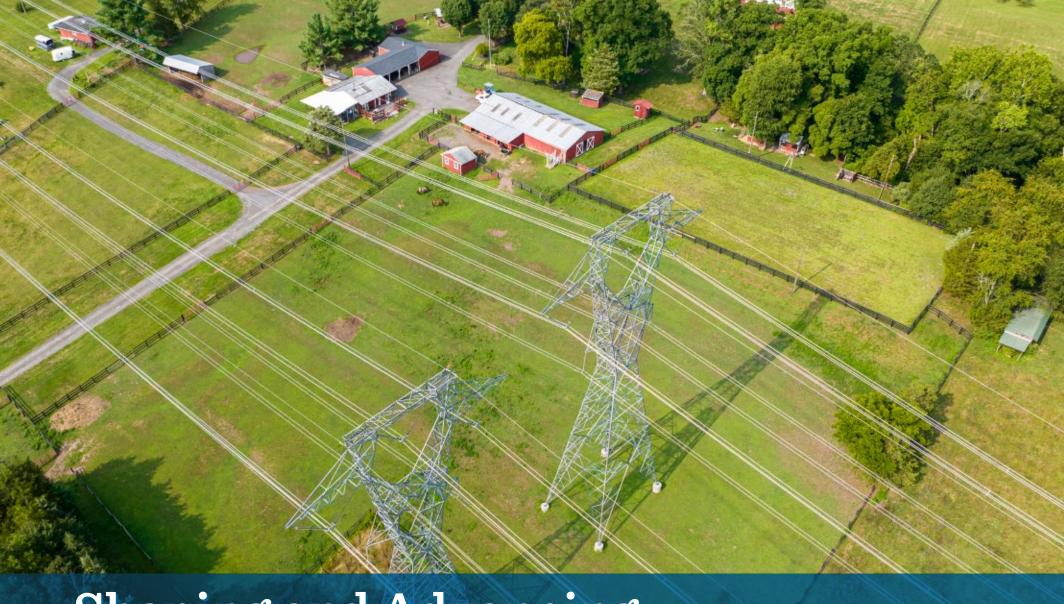
withheld documents confirmed suspicions that Amazon Web Services is the business behind at least one component of the Wilderness Crossing proposal. The documents also indicate that County officials failed to ask any hard questions about the amount of power or water needed to support any proposed data centers.

Virginia law recognizes the public's right to information about pending land use decisions, as these decisions shape the quality of life in our communities. If Orange County's FOIA violation had been allowed to stand, it would have set a detrimental precedent for communities across Virginia.

PEC remains steadfast in our commitment to transparency in governance. We believe the outcome we achieved in Orange County will resonate across the Commonwealth, reinforcing the imperative nature of FOIA compliance and openness in local government; and compelling public officials to adhere to a balanced and informed democratic process.

AERIAL VIEW OF PROPOSED WILDERNESS CROSSING
DEVELOPMENT SITE. Photo by Hugh Kenny





Shaping and Advancing Virginia's Clean Energy Future

EXPANDED SOLAR OPTIONS · PLANNING FOR ENERGY DEMAND · LOWER ENERGY BILLS

Developing solutions to **better plan for data centers**

irginia is undergoing an unprecedented economic, technological and environmental transformation, all centered on the activities of one industry: data centers. This massive industry is continuing to grow extremely fast, requiring huge amounts of energy and new transmission lines, as well as intensively consuming scarce land and water resources. Without improved planning and policies, this explosive growth of data centers threatens to derail state efforts to meet climate goals, improve air and water

quality, advance land conservation and protect national and state parks.

PEC has been at the forefront in educating residents, community groups, local and state staff and elected leaders about data center growth and associated energy infrastructure, and in developing solutions. Throughout the year, PEC supported community-based efforts throughout the Piedmont to address data center proposals, such as Digital Gateway in Prince William. PEC's Land Use Director, Julie Bolthouse, led educational workshops for nonprofit partners, local planners





A GOOGLE DATA CENTER IN LOUDOUN COUNTY. Photo by Hugh Kenny

and other stakeholders about best practices in planning for data centers.

During the fall, PEC and our community partners held four "Town Hall" meetings in different areas of the Piedmont, attended by more than 1,000 people. At these community meetings, PEC and our partners have shared what we've learned about the potential for new transmission lines proposed in the Piedmont and surrounding areas, and educated residents about the decision making processes behind data center development and energy transmission, and how they can get involved.

In December, PEC, the National Parks Conservation Association and more than 20 community-based, environmental, conservation, historic preservation, and climate advocacy groups launched the Virginia Data Center Reform Coalition. Together, we are urging the

PEC "TOWN HALL" MEETING IN UPPERVILLE.
Photo by Hugh Kenny

state to study the cumulative effects of data center development on the state's electrical grid, water resources, air quality and land conservation efforts, and to institute several common-sense regulatory and rate-making reforms. At the urging of the coalition, Virginia took the first step to launch a formal study in 2024 of the cumulative costs and impacts of data center development on the state's electrical grid, water resources, air quality, and land conservation efforts through the Joint Legislative and Audit Review Commission.

Data centers are a modern reality. Developing effective solutions to regulate them will require a concerted, collaborative effort. Thanks to the determination and resilience of communities and groups throughout the Commonwealth, we made important strides in 2023 to set Virginia on a better course of planning for data centers and energy infrastructure.



MEMBERS OF THE VIRGINIA DATA CENTER REFORM COALITION MEET AT PEC'S HEADQUARTERS IN JULY. Photo by Hugh Kenny

- PEC helped lead a successful campaign to stop a variance proposed by the state Department of Environmental Quality that would have allowed data centers to run polluting diesel generators in violation of state air pollution regulations. Action alerts and other outreach by PEC and partners helped engender hundreds of comments from residents pointing out the potentially disastrous effects of the variance on air quality and public health, and led to the withdrawal of the proposal.
- ▶ In August, PEC's Julie Bolthouse led a webinar sponsored by the Virginia Chapter of the American Planning Association (APA) about best practices when planning for data centers. PEC has also provided educational presentations for community groups in Loudoun, Fauquier, Culpeper, Orange and the Richmond area that are dealing with large-scale data center development proposals. In November, PEC organized and hosted a two-day workshop featuring an expert guest speaker on "Data Center Sustainability and Efficiency."

- In 2023, PEC produced a video outlining the explosive growth of the data center industry and its major challenges in Virginia. The video received over 11,000 views within its first month on YouTube.
- ▶ In November, PEC's Ashish Kapoor spoke with local youth at the Virginia Dominion Energy Envirothon training, a teambased **natural resources**



competition for high school students. Ashish also spoke on a follow-up panel with two of the judges to prepare students for the competition.

- In the fall, PEC sponsored a discussion tailored to local government staff on SolSmart, a nationally certified designation process for solar, with a focus on **community and rooftop solar**. Featuring speakers from the Virginia Department of Energy and Great Plains Institute, the discussion was attended by numerous local government representatives interested in making their community a "SolSmart" community.
- ▶ Following state legislation passed in 2022, PEC is collaborating with environmental groups, farm and forestry officials, solar developers, utilities and local governments to establish better siting and mitigation **standards for utility-scale solar** projects on farm and forest lands.
- ▶ In summer 2023, we again led the **Solarize Piedmont** initiative with the Local Energy

 Alliance Program (LEAP), creating a video and
 blog posts to educate our membership on
 new incentives to install solar, batteries and EV
 chargers. More than 700 households signed up
 for quotes, and 99 households completed solar
 installations through Solarize Piedmont in 2023.

SOLAR PANELS INSTALLED THROUGH SOLARIZE PIEDMONT ON A HOME IN WARRENTON. Photo by Hugh Kenny



Developing new partnerships for solar development

EC has been expanding partnerships to advance solar development across the region. On November 14, for example, 80 participants gathered at Kildee Farms in Culpeper for PEC's workshop on the substantial financial incentives available for solar on agricultural lands. These include the USDA Renewable Energy for America Program (REAP), which pays for up to 50% of a farm's renewable energy or energy efficiency project, as well as federal tax credits and solar renewable energy certificates. Audience members thoroughly enjoyed talks by local farmer Robert Ellis, of Clifton Farms in Rixeyville, and Kevin Powers, owner of Powers Brewery in Midland, about "DIY" and developer-installed solar at their properties and the benefits they provide. Attendees also heard from three local developers of smallscale solar facilities, and many subsequently signed up to get estimates for solar installations.

At the state level, PEC has been collaborating with partners in the Virginia Conservation Network to lower the barriers that Virginia residents and businesses often confront when trying to install solar projects. For example, developed areas such as parking lots and commercial rooftops have huge potential to harvest energy from the sun. Ahead of the 2024 General Assembly session, with leadership by PEC's Energy and Climate Senior Policy Analyst Ashish Kapoor, PEC helped develop

a proposed pilot program to incentivize distributed solar canopies on parking lots.

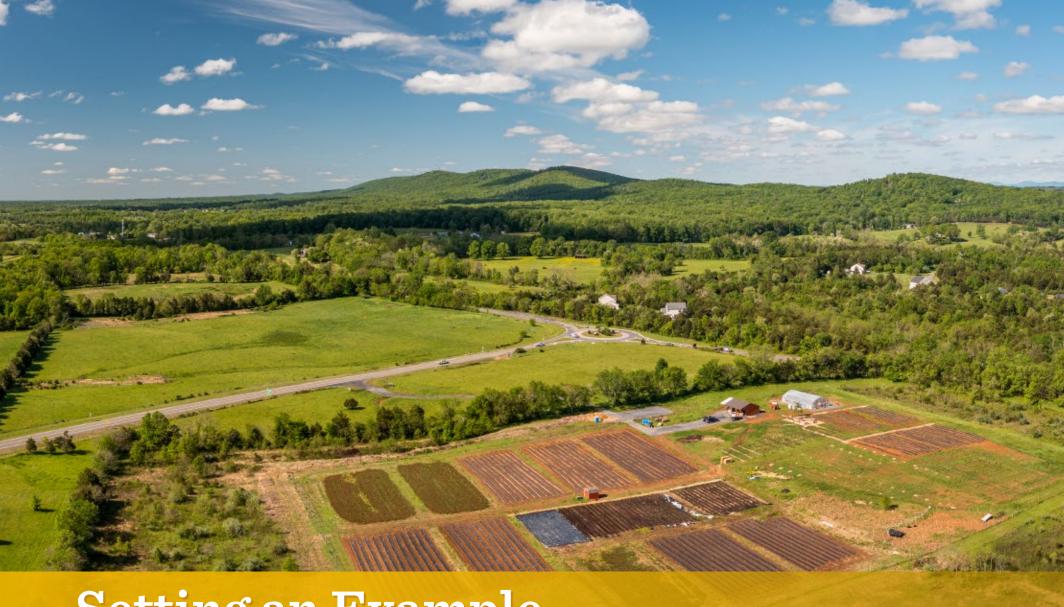
On a national level, PEC is assisting in developing a national consensus position on solar siting as part of a work group within the "Uncommon Dialogue" process announced in December, based on our lead role in solar siting in Virginia and within the land conservation community. Uncommon Dialogue is a convening of industry, environmental and conservation stakeholders to develop a common framework to accelerate renewable energy development that advances holistic conservation and climate resilience goals. One of its objectives is to reduce the pressure on prime farm soils and intact forested areas and develop national and state strategies for mitigation that accelerate natural solutions to climate change.

"In light of climate change, it's never been more important to get a handle on how all the big-picture factors interact with one another," says Ashish. "That includes the climate, community, energy creation, and the transmission to get that energy to its users, whether they be homes, businesses or, increasingly, data centers. How we meet these challenges, while also protecting our land and natural resources for future generations, will ultimately be our legacy."

ASHISH KAPOOR PRESENTING AT A "SOLAR ON THE FARM" WORKSHOP

Photo by Hugh Kenny





Setting an Example Through Land Ownership

FOOD PRODUCTION · LAND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES · PUBLIC ACCESS · COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Creating new connections to parks and trails in Gordonsville

ince 2016, PEC has been working with the Town of Gordonsville to help develop a network of parks and trails in its historic downtown area. In tandem with community outreach activities and successful fundraising efforts, PEC has collaborated with the Town and neighboring landowners to acquire land to allow for the expansion of Gordonsville Park and the development of a downtown trail network.

Located just two blocks off Main Street, Gordonsville (formerly Verling) Park is a seminal place for local residents. It has the only public pool in the county, which, in its heyday, was also one of the only integrated public pools between Fredericksburg and Charlottesville. But the pool and other park facilities have been in need of updating, and there are no sidewalks connecting the park

with the nearby neighborhoods and downtown businesses. A checkerboard of vacant and available properties held an opportunity to expand the park to an entire block and connect it to Firemen's Fairgrounds, which is owned and managed by the Gordonsville Volunteer Fire Company for community events.

Working with the nonprofit Town to Trail, PEC helped raise funds from the Virginia Outdoors Foundation and other donors to purchase two adjacent properties. At the same time, the Town to Trail partnership was convening community meetings where residents developed their vision for a revitalized park. That vision was incorporated in design plans that include an overhaul of the swimming pool area, a new plaza entrance, a circuit of fitness stations, an updated playground and enhanced

stormwater management.

With this strong community support, the Town was poised to find investors to implement the vision. In 2022, the federal Land and Water Conservation

Fund awarded Gordonsville a grant to revitalize the park and connect it with other green spaces in the downtown area.

In 2023, the project arrived at another milestone when PEC officially transferred the two adjacent properties to the Town of Gordonsville, which has recorded deeds of dedication ensuring that the lands remain public open space in perpetuity. The acquisitions enable



GORDONSVILLE PARK (CENTER) AND ADJACENT NEIGHBORHOODS NEAR THE HISTORIC DOWNTOWN. Photo by Marco Sanchez

the town to expand the park's footprint, connect it to Firemen's Fairgrounds, construct a regulation-sized swimming pool, install new park features and better connect the park to surrounding neighborhoods.

"I'm grateful for how the community has come together to expand the park," said Gordonsville Mayor Robert Coiner. "The expanded park footprint flows through the neighborhood and makes it more accessible for all."



▶ Twenty-three years after being purchased by PEC with assistance from local families and foundations, the **Piedmont Memorial Overlook** is a showcase for conservation, habitat restoration and public access to nature. This past year, our Piedmont Memorial Overlook Advisory Committee approved an updated five-year plan for managing the 50-acre property, focusing on five key elements: memorializing conservation leadership, native biodiversity, education and public outreach, public access and preservation of cultural resources. On-the-ground work continues and includes prescribed burns, removal of invasives and the installation of educational signage.

THE PIEDMONT MEMORIAL OVERLOOK. Photo by Chris Miller



In the unincorporated village of Aldie in Loudoun County, a few miles west of Gilberts Corner, sits a 6.42 acre property colloquially known as the Aldie Assemblage. With a remarkable array of natural, historic and cultural resources, the property represents an incredible opportunity for conservation but has long faced development threats. In December, PEC entered into a contract with Loudoun County to purchase the property for \$600,000. Upon acquisition of the property, PEC will take steps to (1) realize the restoration of the property's historic Tavern Building; (2) protect the property's numerous natural and historic features; and (3) create opportunities for public access to the property, the Little River and beyond. This exciting project will take years to come to fruition. We hope you will stay tuned throughout the journey of its completion.

ALDIE ASSEMBLAGE AS SEEN FROM ABOVE. Photo by Hugh Kenny





FRESH STRAWBERRIES AT THE GILBERTS CORNER FARMERS MARKET. Photo by Hugh Kenny

The Gilberts Corner Farmers Market, owned by PEC since 2019, enjoyed another successful year providing surrounding residents with access to local food and fiber. In 2023, PEC took over day-to-day management of the popular weekend market with leadership by Jen Wilkins, who has been working to improve operations and attract more locally based farm producers. Additionally, PEC has made strides to evaluate the repair or replacement of the building on site and improvement of accessibility to the property. Throughout 2023, PEC worked with Main Street Architects of Berryville and structural engineers, Painter-Lewis of Winchester, to create a record of the existing structure and architectural details, recommend next steps with the building and evaluate the interior details for potential reuse.

Since acquiring our headquarters office property in Old Town Warrenton in 1993, PEC has transformed the small historic farmhouse, built in 1784, into a sustainable and energy efficient community hub while simultaneously maintaining its historic integrity. In 2018, "The Larson Native Plant Garden" was completed with plants sourced from local nurseries. Today, the garden functions as a demonstration site for creating wildlife habitat in relatively small urban and suburban spaces. In 2023, PEC's headquarters hosted numerous community and partner meetings as well as a holiday party for our members in December.

LAURA BOOTH AND MARY BARTLETT ARE THE STEWARDS OF THE LARSON NATIVE PLANT GARDEN AT PEC'S WARRENTON OFFICE. Photo by Hugh Kenny



Growing Food and Community at Roundabout Meadows

ocated at the intersection of Routes 15 and 50 in southern Loudoun County, the lands at Gilberts Corner act as the gateway to the rural Piedmont and have long been a focal point for PEC's conservation efforts. Eleven years ago, PEC acquired the 141-acre Roundabout Meadows property. In 2019, PEC built on this conservation success by launching the Community Farm at Roundabout Meadows, an eight-acre farm including 3.5 acres of vegetable production and one acre of orchard and berries.

The Community Farm is a place where individuals of all ages can gather to learn and give back to those in need. Throughout most of the year, PEC hosts groups of volunteers who plant, grow, harvest and pack fruits and vegetables, all of which we donate to local food banks in Loudoun and Clarke counties. In 2023, 514 volunteers donated more than 1,000 hours of their time to help us grow and harvest more than 36,000 pounds of fresh food for foodinsecure residents. PEC also leads educational workshops at the Farm about regenerative farming, improving soil health, composting and other topics.

The farm seeks to model best land management practices by balancing vegetable production with systems that build fertility and soil health while mitigating negative environmental impacts. We utilize crop rotation, extensive cover cropping, and low-tillage to reduce the need for off-farm inputs, pesticides, and

Volunteering at the PEC farm has been such a rewarding experience. I have had the opportunity to spend time on a beautiful piece of property and learn more about plants and gardening through hands on experiences. Best of all, when the harvesting is done, I know that my work has contributed to better nutrition and hope for the less fortunate by providing fresh produce to the area food bank."

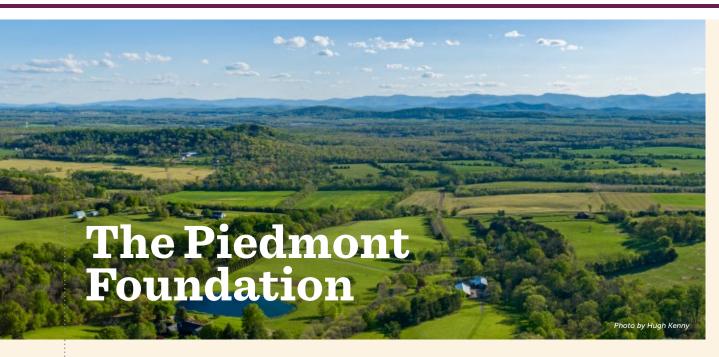
- Mary Peterson, COMMUNITY FARM VOLUNTEER

fungicides. Extensive soil testing allows us to reduce runoff into the nearby stream while maintaining the optimal growing conditions for our vegetables using organic amendments. In 2023, we invested in a new tractor implement to reduce soil compaction and improve overall soil structure in our growing areas.

2023 also saw the launch of the farm's first internship program, which provided an immersive on-the-job experience in the daily operations of the community farm for three college-age students. Working at the farm throughout the summer, the interns were involved in all facets of the farm, including core agricultural functions such as planting, weeding and harvesting as well as helping coordinate volunteers.

COMMUNITY FARM COORDINATOR, TEDDY PITSIOKOS, EDUCATING THE NEXT GENERATION. Photo by Mitchell Pittman





Established to hold and manage special funds in support of PEC, the Piedmont Foundation assures PEC's capacity to respond to key opportunities and challenges as they arise and to fulfill our core mission over the long term. A separate 509(a)3 charitable organization, the Foundation accepts gifts of cash, securities, property and appreciated assets. The Foundation also offers opportunities for tax-advantaged planned gifts, including trusts, bequests and life income plans.

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

- Conservation Stewardship Fund (Board Directed)
- Legal Defense Fund—"Evergreen" (Donor Directed)
- **▶** General Endowment Fund
- Piedmont Memorial Overlook Fund
- ▶ Albemarle County Land Conservation
- Officers Endowment Fund
- ▶ Albemarle General Endowment Fund
- **▶** Backer Endowment Fund
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With much gratitude, PEC presents the names of individuals, families, foundations, businesses and organizations that supported The Piedmont Environmental Council during 2023. Although we do not have the space to honor everyone, we are extremely grateful for the generosity of each of our members. We offer sincere thanks for your ongoing commitment to protecting and promoting the Piedmont region.

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PLAYING IN CEDAR RUN DURING THE 2023 BLUEBELL WALK AT BONNY BROOK FARM. Photo by Hugh Kenny

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ANJANA GHOSH AND SUMIT BHATNAGAR AT PEC'S FARM-TO-TABLE DINNER AT OAKWOOD. Photo by Hugh Kenny



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BIKE TO WORK WEEK IN CHARLOTTESVILLE. Photo by Hugh Kenny



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amed for the avid conservationist and former Piedmont Foundation President Bill Backer, the Legacy Society recognizes donors who have made planned gifts to The Piedmont Environmental Council (PEC) or to The Piedmont Foundation, a charitable organization established to hold



and manage special funds in support of PEC's mission. Planned gift options include making a bequest through a will, codicil, or trust, or recognizing The Piedmont Foundation or PEC as a beneficiary of an IRA or retirement plan. Gifts of property and other assets are also possible. A gift to The Piedmont Foundation can be applied to the General Endowment Fund or one of the county conservation funds. The General Endowment provides annual income to PEC to help offset the operating budget. Gifts to the county conservation funds provide the resources to participate



PIEDMONT MEMORIAL OVERLOOK IN AUGUST. Photo by Hugh Kenny

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ROBERT AND SELINA MCPHERSON GRACIOUSLY HOSTED PEC'S "NEXT-GEN" PARTY IN JUNE. Photo by Marco Sanchez





PEC'S FIRST ANNUAL FELLOWSHIP ALUMNI EVENT AT GREAT MEADOW. Photo by Hugh Kenny

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2023

Annual Meeting

Our 2023 Annual Meeting: Inspiring
Conservation on June 10 saw more than
100 new and familiar faces join us for a
summer day of celebration. Dr. Mamie
Parker, former head of fisheries at the
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, delighted
all with an energizing keynote message
layered with humor and moving anecdotes
of passion, inspiration and excellence in
conservation.



PEC'S JOHN MCCARTHY WITH DR. MAMIE PARKER. Photo by Hugh Kenny

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WILLIAM WILKINS, FLETCHER SLATER, MATILDA REUTER-ENGLE, PATRICK AND EMILY HOWELL AND CAITLIN SLATER AT PEC'S FARM-TO-TABLE DINNER AT OAKWOOD. Photo by John Scott Nelson



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Please bring any errors or omissions to our attention by contacting nseilheimer@pecva.org.

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2023

PEC Fellowship

PEC's annual eight-week Summer Fellowship Program engaged 12 college students and graduates in classroom discussions, field trips and hands-on activities designed to impart practical knowledge and skills for their careers. In 2023, fellows enjoyed three weeks in Warrenton and five weeks of virtual learning from their homes in Virginia, Maryland, New York and Illinois. PEC also developed a new alumni program serving the 200+ fellows who have participated in the program since its inception in 2007. The 2023 fellows and alumni mingled at our reunion event at Great Meadow in The Plains in July.



Anonymous

2023 Farm-to-Table Dinner and Auction

at Oakwood Farm, Warrenton

aroline Collomb's historic home, Oakwood, was the perfect backdrop to celebrate conservation and our collective impact on the nationally significant Virginia Piedmont landscape. Our 2023 Farm-to-Table Dinner was a wonderful occasion to recognize the efforts of outgoing Board Co-chairs Jean Perin and George Ohrstrom on behalf of PEC, our partners, and the communities we serve, and to thank Jean for her vision and diligence in shaping this annual event over many years.

Thanks to the generous support of these donors, this year's paddle raise in honor of Jean Perin resulted in important funds to support PEC's strategic plan initiatives to protect and restore the lands and waters of the Virginia Piedmont, while building stronger, more sustainable communities.

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GEORGE OHRSTROM. Photo by Hugh Kenny

LEFT: GUESTS MEANDER THE PICTURESQUE GROUNDS AT OAKWOOD AHEAD OF THE FARM-TO-TABLE DINNER, Photo by Hugh Kenny

In Memory

2023 witnessed the passing of several passionate advocates and effective leaders for protecting and restoring the lands and waters of the Virginia Piedmont, and building stronger, more sustainable communities. All will be sorely missed.

Marjorie Principato

Marjorie championed PEC's efforts to protect the Piedmont in so many different and important ways. She played active roles in the collaborative campaigns to stop the massive Disney theme park development, support a smart growth alternative to the proposed increase in the Virginia's sales tax for new highways, and defend the Piedmont from the threat of new and disruptive transmission lines. She was always willing to make her voice heard and to volunteer at or host events for PEC. As a long-time member of PEC's Gala Committee, Marjorie also dedicated herself to raising funds and new friends for PEC.

In addition to her commitment to PEC, Marjorie was an ardent supporter of the performing arts, area art museums, art history, decorative arts, U.S. history and the outdoors. She embraced her passions wholeheartedly. Among her favorite things was to wake up to the sunrise over the Bull Run Mountains, a view she never tired of.





Jack and Ann Snyder

Jack and Ann were major advocates for land conservation in Orange County, protecting their own farm and encouraging their neighbors to protect their land. They were instrumental in the 2009 campaign to conserve more than 700 acres at Montpelier, including helping raise \$2 million to purchase the easement. Jack served on PEC's Board of Directors from 1998 to 2016. Jack and Ann represented the highest ideals of conservation and contributed to the preservation and well-being of their community, the region and the Commonwealth.

In Memory

Jocelyn Arundel Sladen

Jocelyn Sladen was an ardent champion for conservation and an extraordinary educator. She left her mark in global, national and local environmental efforts in myriad ways. She helped found the Virginia Native Plant Society, and was instrumental in the formation of Rachel's Network, an alliance of women environmental leaders named in honor of Rachel Carson. In 1961, along with her father, Russell Arundel, and brother, Arthur Arundel, she donated land on Wildcat Mountain to create the Wildcat Mountain Natural Area. Along with her husband Willliam Sladen, Jocelyn developed the educational programs that evolved into The Clifton Institute.

Sladen also wrote 10 children's books, as well as articles for *National Geographic* and children's magazine *Ranger Rick*. She wrote large portions of the first natural history encyclopedia for young readers. She was gifted with a great sense of communicating with young people about nature and knew how to approach them on the subject and make it exciting and fun for them, as well as educational. She exposed the natural world to younger audiences in a way that had an impact on hundreds and hundreds of children who had the chance to be with her firsthand.





Kim Hosen

Kim Hosen worked tirelessly to protect Prince William County's natural areas. After working at PEC, Kim founded the Prince William Conservation Alliance in 2002 and led the organization for more than 20 years. There, she led efforts resulting in the preservation of Merrimac Farm, a property of over 300 acres that is home to sensitive wetland habitat and is now visited by thousands of people each year. She was a staunch defender of Prince William's Rural Crescent, a land use policy that has preserved open space and natural resources in the County while reducing costs for new infrastructure. Kim also served on the Prince William County Planning Commission for more than a decade, representing the Occoquan District and advocating for smarter growth.

Kim was a passionate environmental educator and highly effective conservation advocate. She embodied the best qualities in an advocate, with her persistence, creativity in identifying solutions and her ability to work with people of vastly different politics and persuasions. She was also a deeply compassionate person with a commitment to teaching the next generation. She loved to conserve, protect and share the beauty of nature.

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Orange County

Jim Collins* Roy Jacobson Pam Jaske Meghan Platt

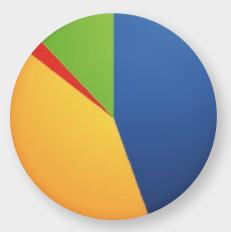
Rappahannock County

David Aldrich* Leslie Cockburn* Helen DuBois* Joe Gale

* Executive Committee member

2023 Financial Report

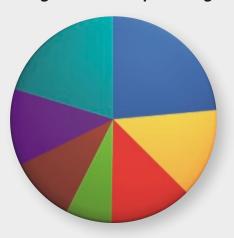
Sources of Organizational Support



Individuals	\$ 2,912,352	44.5%
Foundations, Businesses and Institutions	2,688,325	41.0%
Government	158,746	2.4%
Piedmont Foundation	792,466	12.1%
Total	\$ 6,551,889	100%

The above figures include the activities of the Coalition for Smarter Growth, a division of PEC. They do not include the activities of the Piedmont Foundation. Copies of the consolidated financial statements of PEC and the Piedmont Foundation, and of PEC's IRS form 990, may be found at PEC's website at www.pecva.org/donate. For more information, please contact PEC's accounting office at (540) 347-2334.

Program and Operating Expenditures



Conservation, Stewardship and Habitat	\$ 1,660,652	23.6%
County Issues and Planning	976,096	13.9%
Policy*	899,495	12.8%
Farms and Food	506,288	7.2%
Outreach and Education	723,597	10.3%
Advancement	844,342	12.0%
Administration	1,430,989	20.3%
Total	\$ 7,041,459	100%

^{*} Reflects regional and state-level work on policy related to transportation, energy, air quality, water quality, telecommunications, land conservation and land use





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