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## VOF Allocates \$1.5M for Public Access Projects



VOF recently allocated more than \$1.5 million from its Open Space Lands Preservation Trust Fund to help fund 11 conservation projects that would use open-space easements to increase public access for outdoor recreation and education.

The projects are located in 11 jurisdictions, including three—the cities of Richmond, Charlottesville and Alexandria—where VOF currently does not hold any easements.

“We believe it is vital to provide communities and families with more opportunities to connect with nature,” says VOF Board Chair Stephanie Ridder. “This was a priority of the Commonwealth when VOF was established in 1966, and it remains a priority today.”

A request for proposals in December resulted in more than 25 inquiries and submissions for this grant round. The 11 finalists requested a total of \$4,329,285 for the \$1.5 million available. Staff recommended full funding for five projects and reduced funding for the remaining six.

### MURRAY-DICK-FAWCETT HOUSE

City of Alexandria, \$350,000

The Murray-Dick-Fawcett House is an 18th-century home and garden recognized as one of the oldest and most authentic pre-Revolutionary War buildings remaining in the city within the Alexandria Historic District. The City of Alexandria proposes to purchase the property and manage it as a public museum and garden dedicated to the life and times of residents during the 18th and 19th centuries.



From left: Murray-Dick-Fawcett House owner Joseph C. Reeder, VOF Deputy Director Leslie Grayson, VOF Assistant Director of Easements Kristin Jones, and Office of Historic Alexandria Director Lance Mallamo.

### CHARLEY CLOSE PROPERTY

City of Charlottesville, \$50,000

This 2.8-acre parcel would be a key link in an existing trail network that connects Hartmann's Mill, Jordan Park and several communities. The trail completion would provide year-round access to open space and further goals of the city's Comprehensive Plan for water quality, open space, transportation (walkable and bikeable communities) and economic development.

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## Bull Run Mountains Update

As part of ongoing property management and maintenance efforts, VOF closed public access to the Bull Run Mountains Natural Area Preserve in Fauquier and Prince William counties for the winter season. We used the closure as an opportunity to improve the preserve's wayfinding and interpretive signs, conduct deer management activities, and address erosion on trails. The need for more active management of the preserve has increased in recent years as the number of visitors has grown. Managed access ensures that recreational use of the property does not impair the preserve's sensitive ecological resources. VOF will re-open the preserve this spring. For the latest updates, visit [bullrunmountains.org](http://bullrunmountains.org).

## BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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(540) 347-7727

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468 Main St., Suite 400-B  
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### Central Region

1010 Harris St., Suite 4  
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(434) 293-3423

### Shenandoah Valley Region

103 East Beverley St., Suite B  
Staunton, VA 24401  
(540) 886-2460

### Southeast Region

600 East Main St., Suite 402  
Richmond, VA 23219  
(804) 314-9557

### Southwest Region

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### Tidewater Region

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Tappahannock, VA 22560  
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# The Atlantic Coast Pipeline

## Letter from the Board Chair

I recently sent a letter to all VOF easement owners regarding a significant challenge that our foundation faces: the proposed Atlantic Coast Pipeline (ACP). Although many of you have probably received and read my letter by now, I would like to reiterate the main points here for the benefit of anyone who did not receive it.

Our involvement with the proposed pipeline began in 2014. Our message to Dominion (a lead partner in the ACP project) and the state and federal regulatory agencies that oversee such projects was clear: *Do everything possible to avoid VOF easements*. The initial route did just that. Unfortunately, in 2016, concerns raised by the U.S. Forest Service forced the route to be revised, and it now is proposed to pass through 10 VOF easements in four counties—Augusta, Bath, Highland and Nelson.

We informed both ACP and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), which decides pipeline route siting, that the pipeline would be inconsistent with the easements' conservation purposes. Because the pipeline is a public works projects, Dominion has applied for "conversion of open space" under section 1704 of the Virginia Open-Space Land Act. This process provides a path for public works projects to move forward without the use of eminent domain, while protecting the public's investment in the conservation values being affected.

ACP's proposal would not extinguish the easements. Restrictions on subdivision, building, mining and other provisions contained in the deeds would continue to be enforced. As proposed, the developers would be confined to a 50-foot right-of-way and would not be permitted to build above-ground structures.

The 1704 process is not a guaranteed path for any developer. Dominion must demonstrate public need, and must also provide substitute land that exceeds the conservation values of the affected easements. The company presented its case to the VOF board on February 9. We deferred a decision, feeling that we need more time to carefully review all public comments and absorb all of the information presented on the project.

We have gone through this process many times, and I have full confidence in the ability of our staff and board to protect the public's interests. We are also working closely with the landowners directly impacted by the pipeline to ensure that we can maximize protection for their land. Every action is driven by a desire to be transparent, accountable and responsive.

We are concerned about rumors that VOF, by even considering Dominion's 1704 applications, is somehow betraying the trust that landowners have placed in it. VOF was established by the Commonwealth to protect the public's interests, and we take our commitment to the public very seriously. The Open-Space Land Act is the strongest in the nation, but FERC has the ultimate authority to determine the necessity and siting of interstate pipelines. VOF's own power is limited. However, we pledge to use the power that we do have to get the best possible outcome for the Commonwealth.

We will continue to strive for transparency and accountability throughout the process, and encourage you to check our website periodically or call our communications office at (804) 314-9557 for the latest updates. You may also send comments to our Executive Office using the address at left or via email to [comments@vofonline.org](mailto:comments@vofonline.org).

Thank you for your continued support of our work to protect Virginia's open spaces for future generations.

Stephanie Ridder, Board Chair  
(540) 347-7727  
[sridder@vofonline.org](mailto:sridder@vofonline.org)

## HELP KEEP OUR RECORDS UP TO DATE

Please notify us if you have a new mailing address, email, or phone number. Send your new info to [bcabibbo@vofonline.org](mailto:bcabibbo@vofonline.org) or call (540) 347-7727.



## VOF Reaches 800,000-acre Milestone



Red Hill Farm, Amherst County

The Virginia Outdoors Foundation capped off its 50th anniversary celebration in 2016 by surpassing the 800,000-acre mark in its portfolio of protected land.

VOF protected about 21,000 new acres of farmland, forestland and other open space across 39 localities in 2016. Its portfolio of more than 4,000 easements and four open-space reserves covers an area larger than the state of Rhode Island.

VOF's largest easement in 2016 was on a 1,631-acre, sixth-generation family farm in Amherst County that is the site of Red Hill Farm, listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Augusta County saw the highest number of new easements—nine, protecting 1,425 new acres of mostly farmland.

Since VOF was established by the Virginia legislature in 1966, it has protected open space at a rate of nearly two acres every hour, making it not only the largest land conservation organization in Virginia but also one of the largest in the nation.

VOF easements help to protect, among other things, 350,000 acres of prime farm soils, 325,000 acres of the state's best forestland, 4,000 miles of streams and rivers, and 350 miles along designated scenic roads, rivers, and hiking and biking trails. The foundation is responsible for protecting approximately one third of all the land conserved in the six-state Chesapeake Bay watershed since 2000. These protections support the goals of the Virginia Outdoors Plan, which guides conservation priorities in the state.

## BY THE NUMBERS

Below are the top 25 counties for VOF-protected open space. To see a complete list of all localities and the VOF easement acreage in each, visit [virginiaoutdoorsfoundation.org/stats/](http://virginiaoutdoorsfoundation.org/stats/)

COUNTY	ACREAGE
Fauquier	71,287
Albemarle	69,832
Rockbridge	39,681
Orange	33,303
Rappahannock	30,844
Bath	26,836
Loudoun	25,051
Augusta	22,145
Essex	21,712
Amelia	18,900
Halifax	17,591
Botetourt	16,368
Clarke	15,258
Smyth	13,579
Madison	13,535
Montgomery	13,082
Fluvanna	13,053
Nelson	12,397
Wythe	11,575
Highland	11,536
Culpeper	10,797
Campbell	10,783
King William	10,571
Bedford	10,530
Caroline	9,174

## Septic system repair and replacement funding available for Culpeper District

The Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District, covering Culpeper, Greene, Madison, Orange and Rappahannock counties, has received a two-year grant to reimburse residents 50% or more of the expense of pumping, maintaining, repairing or replacing on-lot septic systems. This grant is focused on reducing any existing or potential impacts on local ground and surface water quality. The program is voluntary and assistance from the SWCD is free of charge. Further information is available from the SWCD at (540) 825-8591 or (540) 948-7531.

## STEWARDSHIP CORNER

### Public utilities on VOF easements

*Answers to common questions from landowners about their easements.*

*Spreading across 1,200 square miles in 107 localities, VOF easements are often in the path of new or expanding infrastructure projects such as electric, gas, water and sewer lines. As a state agency, VOF must balance the Commonwealth's needs for protected open space and its needs for infrastructure. VOF receives many questions from landowners and utility companies on this topic. Here are some of the most common.*

#### **What should I do if I receive notice of a new or expanded utility project that would cross my property in VOF easement?**

You should collect detailed information from the utility company about the project and contact VOF stewardship staff. Typically, infrastructure can be expanded within an existing right-of-way; however, VOF staff will need to analyze the situation prior to making a final determination. The siting of new large-scale infrastructure projects on VOF easements is typically inconsistent with the easements' conservation values and may require a conversion/diversion of open-space land.

#### **How does state law address large-scale public infrastructure projects on open-space easements?**

VOF easements held under the Virginia Open-Space Land Act are not subject to condemnation under state law. Rather, Virginia Code §10.1-1704 provides an alternative process called conversion/diversion to accommodate public need while protecting the conservation values of open space. This process allows for essential public works projects to occur on protected open space even if they are inconsistent with the conservation values of the easement. The conservation values must remain protected through substitute land that exceeds the value of the affected easements. The statute requires the applicant to demonstrate public need and compatibility with the locality's comprehensive plan. The applications are submitted to the VOF board, which bases its decision on rigorous staff analysis and input from stakeholders.

#### **Does VOF consider indirect impacts caused to my property by utilities located outside of the easement boundary?**

VOF's legal authority only applies to the acreage within the boundary of an open-space easement. However, when VOF learns about nearby utility projects that may have indirect impacts to the easement, staff will analyze the situation and determine whether VOF may want to formally or

informally suggest ways to minimize those impacts. Our ability to analyze indirect impacts is often limited by workload and expertise. VOF's policy states that "the siting of utility transmission lines, transportation improvements and other infrastructure projects on or near VOF easements should take into consideration the protection of scenic and cultural resources and decrease the fragmentation of existing natural and landscape features; VOF encourages the co-location or paralleling of transmission lines and linear infrastructure to reduce the impact on visual character of the landscape, new access road construction and fragmentation effects of the right-of-way."

#### **Can I donate a VOF open-space easement on my land to block a newly proposed utility or road?**

No. Our guidelines state, "When considering acceptance of an easement, VOF weighs whether an easement on a property may interfere with an anticipated or planned public works project. VOF considers the extent to which planning for the public works project has been finalized and the practicality and availability of other options for construction of the public works project. VOF could either insert provisions in the deed of easement to forestall a conflict between a public works project and protection of the conservation values of the property or decide not to accept the easement. Where an existing road or railroad or utility expansion is in an existing plan, that expansion should not be blocked and will be accommodated by the terms of the easement."

#### **What should I do if my neighbor would like a utility line to cross my land to serve his or her property?**

A utility line may cross your easement to serve an adjacent property depending upon your deed language and VOF's staff analysis. There is an application process for both access or utility easements. The application fee starts at \$1,000. This process does not apply to utility or access easements that serve permitted buildings or activities on the easement property.

#### **Who should I call to find out what underground utilities might be on my property?**

Visit [va811.com](http://va811.com) or call (800) 552-7001. Virginia 811, also called Virginia Miss Utility, was set up to be a one-stop shop for excavators, contractors, property owners, and those planning any kind of excavation or demolition.



PTF PROJECTS continued from page 1

### **HANSBROUGH'S RIDGE** Culpeper County, \$250,000

The Civil War Trust (CWT) proposes placing a conservation easement on this property that it owns, which is notable for the presence of intact archaeological sites and features related to the 1863-1864 Union Army winter encampment. The grant will enable CWT to facilitate access to the property and construct amenities such as interpretive trails and signage.

### **HAZEL HOLLOW TRACT** Pulaski County, \$142,500

Pulaski County plans to acquire this tract along the New River for a public park and extend the planned bicycling/walking trail from a nearby former school site, through a property owned by VOF called Smith Farm, and along the river onto the property. The property also creates an opportunity to link trails on the north side of the river via a pedestrian bridge on four piers and connect with the City of Radford's Bisset Park and trails to nearby Wildwood Park, which is also under VOF easement.

### **EASTERN BRANCH RESTORATION PARK** City of Virginia Beach, \$55,000

This site is made up of wetlands and forest along the Eastern Branch of the Elizabeth River and across the water from Carlanne Park in an otherwise intensely developed area. The project would protect the wetlands and riparian areas, provide a hiking trail along the water, and provide a kayak/canoe launch area for access to the Elizabeth River. The Living River Restoration Trust will work with the city to improve the site and manage access.

### **RICHMOND OUTDOOR CLASSROOM** City of Richmond, \$150,000

This project involves developing up to 4.8 acres of city-owned land as an outdoor classroom serving all of the city's public schools. A portion of the site would be utilized as a neighborhood connector with public trails.

### **CARVINS COVE CONNECTOR** Roanoke County, \$70,000

The goal of this project is to connect the Roanoke Valley Greenway network to the 12,463-acre Carvins Cove Natural Reserve, which is under easement with VOF and the Blue Ridge Land Conservancy. The project would provide an opportunity for

users to bicycle, walk or ride horses to Carvins Cove.

### **HOTTEL-KELLER MEMORIAL, INC.** Shenandoah County, \$200,000

This 391-acre historic property next to the George Washington National Forest is owned by Hottel-Keller Memorial, Inc., a volunteer organization dedicated to the preservation of the historical and cultural heritage of early Germanic immigrants into the Shenandoah Valley. The grant will enable the organization to improve and expand public access to the farm and buildings and create hiking or birding trails.

### **FOUR WINDS** Caroline County, \$80,000

The Trust for Public Land is working with the property owner and VOF to purchase a conservation easement on 306 acres of wetlands and forestland situated on Skinkers Neck, the first big bend in the Rappahannock east of Fredericksburg. The grant will facilitate providing public shoreline access to the Rappahannock River.




Proposed Richmond outdoor classroom site

### **MALVERN HILL FARM** Henrico and Charles City counties, \$100,000

The Capital Region Land Conservancy seeks to acquire this historically significant 878-acre property southeast of Richmond. A portion of the property is within the National Park Service acquisition boundaries and would become part of the Malvern Hill Battlefield interpretive area. The remaining portions of the property are anticipated for public use and would include a public access area with trails and a canoe/kayak launch into Turkey Island Creek.

### **BELMEAD ON THE JAMES** Powhatan County, \$100,000

Belmead on the James, just west of Richmond, is an historic 2,265-acre property with 2.8 miles of frontage on the James River. The nonprofit Belmead on the James, Inc. (BOJI) is working to acquire the property with the intention of preserving it and making it accessible to the public. A partnership with Powhatan State Park and Powhatan County is expected to provide river access accommodating paddlers between the state park and Belmead. 

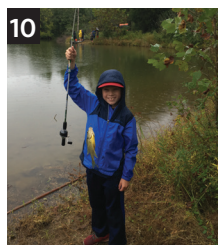


# 50th Anniversary in Photos

As part of our 50th anniversary celebration in 2016, VOF held several events around the state to share our successes with hundreds of landowners and other partners. We'd like to thank everyone who attended and supported the events, and especially the hosts: The Montpelier Foundation, New River Trail State Park, Shenandoah River State Park, Coggins Point Farm, Four Locust Farm, and Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve.



**(1-2)** The celebration kicked off in May with a party at James Madison's Montpelier, where the keynote was delivered by Speaker of the House of Delegates Bill Howell. **(3)** At the Southside event, Del. Matt Fariss presented a General Assembly resolution commending VOF's work. **(4-5)** VOF staff met landowners from the Shenandoah Valley region at Shenandoah River State Park. **(6-7)** Guests at the Southwest celebration toured the New River Trail and heard from VOF trustee Beth Obenshain. **(8-12)** The main event, the Virginia Outdoors Festival, was held in October at Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve in Loudoun County and featured music, activities for kids, and the announcement of the VOF-protected preserve as a "Virginia Treasure."







# EASEMENT SPOTLIGHT

## Gouldman Pond, Caroline County

The Conservation Fund and the Virginia Outdoors Foundation, together with the Gouldman family of Port Royal, recently protected 395 acres adjacent to the Rappahannock River. While helping to enhance the health of the river, this conservation effort, made possible with funding from the U.S. Department of Defense's Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) program, also furthers the goals of Fort A.P. Hill to preserve key buffer lands near the installation boundary.

Comprised of three separate properties, the Gouldman family lands feature the nearly 70-acre Gouldman Pond, significant surrounding wetlands, and Goldenvale Creek. The Conservation Fund helped place two Virginia open-space easements over the land using funding provided by the REPI program through Fort A.P. Hill's Army Compatible Use Buffer (ACUB) program. The REPI program also provided an endowment that will support the ongoing stewardship of the easements by VOF. The Gouldman family will continue to farm the property, which has 279 acres of prime farming soils, and enjoy the recreational benefits of the pond.

"My family and I have spent many hours in the woods hunting and at the pond fishing," said landowner Tammy Gouldman. "It is important to protect our special place where we have created so many fond memories with family members that are no longer with us and where we continue to enjoy new moments together. We are glad that we can be a participant in all of the positive results that come from a program such as this, which has enabled us to move forward with some family goals that may not have been achievable. We are looking forward to many years of conservation use of the pond and our surrounding farmland."

The location of the Gouldman easements within the priority buffer area for Fort A.P. Hill made their conservation important to the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) as it works to protect the military's ability to train, test, operate and prepare troops and equipment for real-world combat. Fort A.P. Hill is a regional training center, utilized by U.S. Army active and reserve-component units, specializing in training, maneuver and live-fire operations across its 44,000 acres of training lands. Located in Caroline County, one of the fastest growing counties in Virginia, Fort A.P. Hill's ACUB program is focused on promoting compatible land uses, like agriculture, conservation and open space near the installation boundary and high-noise areas.

"The Gouldman easement is of strategic importance to Fort A.P. Hill because it is within the Land Use Planning Zone for




*Photo courtesy of The Conservation Fund*

noise and provides other benefits, such as permanent protection for wetlands and streams which contribute to the Army's and DoD's Chesapeake Bay Restoration efforts," said Lieutenant Colonel Andrew Q. Jordan, Garrison Commander at Fort A.P. Hill. "In addition, it protects the scenic viewshed for the Port Royal Historic District and the National Park Service's Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail, while keeping working family farms in operation and contributing to the local economy."

U.S. Senator Mark Warner commended the project. "The Commonwealth is proud to be home to many of our nation's military installations, including Fort A.P. Hill, which contribute significantly to our national defense and to Virginia's economy. Thanks to the Gouldman family and partners, this project will help maintain Fort A.P. Hill's mission, preserve the region's farming heritage and support the health of the Rappahannock River."

Since its creation in 2006, the ACUB program at Fort A.P. Hill has helped to protect over 11,000 acres in the region surrounding the base.

"This is conservation working for America—finding a practical solution that meets the needs of the landowner, the community and the DoD, while helping to ensure a healthy Rappahannock," said Heather Richards with The Conservation Fund.

"The ACUB program has been a vital part of VOF's success in the Rappahannock River valley over the last decade," added VOF easement manager Estie Thomas, who is based in Tappanahannock. "Because of it, we have been able to protect properties, like the Gouldman family land, that benefit not only Fort A.P. Hill and Chesapeake Bay water quality, but also the viability of our region's farming community." 



SPRING  2017

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VOF easements help to protect approximately 60 miles of designated hiking and biking trails that are open to the public.



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Wildwood Park, Radford