



# VIRGINIA LAND CONSERVATION & GREENWAYS CONFERENCE

May 14-16, 2024

Mary Washington University

The Cedric Rucker University Center

## Tuesday, May 14, 2024

**\*Recommended Student Attendance.**

Students are welcome at ALL conference sessions and activities, but the highlighted agenda item is recommended for student attendance.

11:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.	Field Trips
Noon – 5:00 p.m.	Registration Open, University Center Lobby - 1st Floor
5:00 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.	Social Hour, <i>University Center Linden Terrace - 4th Floor</i>
6:30 p.m.	Dinner – Networking or on your own

## Wednesday, May 15, 2024

7:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.	Registration open			
8:00 a.m.	Continental breakfast provided, <i>University Center Lobby - 1st Floor</i>			
8:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.	State Trails Advisory Committee Meeting, <i>Colonnade Room (3<sup>rd</sup> Floor – 315)</i>			
8:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.	Virginia's United Land Trusts Business Meeting, <i>Chandler Ballroom C (1<sup>st</sup> Floor – 104C)</i>			
11:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.	Networking Break, <i>University Center Lobby</i>			
11:30 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.	Keynote, <i>Chandler Ballroom C (1<sup>st</sup> Floor - 104C)</i>			
12:15 p.m. – 1:15 p.m.	Networking Lunch, <i>University Center Dining Hall (4<sup>th</sup> Floor)</i>			
1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.	<b>Trails: Let's Think Linear</b>  <i>Chandler Ballroom A (1<sup>st</sup> Floor – 104A)</i> <b>Session A1</b> Expanding the New River Water Trail  <b>Session A2</b> From What If to What Next: Increasing public water access from the Blue Ridge to the Bay	<b>Let's Get Outside</b>  <i>Chandler Ballroom B (1<sup>st</sup> Floor – 104B)</i> <b>Session B</b> The Economic Impact of Outdoor Recreation in Virginia	<b>The Push &amp; Pull of Climate, Energy and Mitigation</b>  <i>Chandler Ballroom C (1<sup>st</sup> Floor – 104C)</i> <b>Session C</b> Impacts of transmission line routing on existing and potential future conservation	<b>Land Trust Fundamentals</b>  <i>Colonnade Room (3<sup>rd</sup> Floor – 315)</i> <b>Session D</b> Enabling Conservation: A Tour of Virginia's Conservation Easement Act and Open-Space Land Act <b>**1.5 CLE credits.</b>
1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.	<b>Session B2, Student Mentorship, <i>Capital Room (3<sup>rd</sup> Floor – 314)</i></b>			

3:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.	Networking break, <i>refreshments provided</i>			
3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.	<b>Chandler Ballroom A</b> <i>(1<sup>st</sup> Floor – 104A)</i> <b>Session E1</b> Expected and Unexpected Trail Partners for Success  <b>Session E2</b> Committed to Community, Reaching Beyond the Trail	<b>Chandler Ballroom B</b> <i>(1<sup>st</sup> Floor – 104B)</i> <b>Session F1</b> Urban Land Conservation: Opportunities and Challenges  <b>Session F2</b> Local Partnerships: A Park and A School	<b>Chandler Ballroom C</b> <i>(1<sup>st</sup> Floor – 104C)</i> <b>Session G1</b> Environmental Impact Review Process  <b>Session G2</b> Rappahannock Carbon	<b>Colonnade Room</b> <i>(3<sup>rd</sup> Floor – 315)</i> <b>Session H</b> How to Steward one-million acres: What it takes to Go Beyond Monitoring Easements
6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.	Evening reception, The Woolen Mill, 203 Ford Street, Fredericksburg			

## Thursday, May 16, 2024

7:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.	Registration open			
8:00 a.m.	Continental breakfast provided, <i>University Center Lobby (1st Floor)</i>			
8:30 a.m. – 9:15 a.m.	Keynote, <i>Chandler Ballroom C (1<sup>st</sup> Floor - 104C)</i>			
9:30 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.	<b>Trails: Let's Think Linear</b>  <i>Chandler Ballroom A (1<sup>st</sup> Floor – 104A)</i> <b>Session I</b> The A.T. Experience: How a management doctrine shapes the Nation's conservation landscape	<b>Let's Get Outside</b>  <i>Chandler Ballroom B (1<sup>st</sup> Floor – 104B)</i> <b>Session J</b> Empowerment of Youth of Color in the Outdoors	<b>The Push &amp; Pull of Climate, Energy and Mitigation</b>  <i>Chandler Ballroom C (1<sup>st</sup> Floor – 104C)</i> <b>Session K</b> Land Management through Climate Change	<b>Land Trust Fundamentals</b>  <i>Colonnade Room (3<sup>rd</sup> Floor – 315)</i> <b>Session L</b> Navigating the Tax Maze: Federal Legal Tax Trends with a Virginia Perspective
10:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.	Networking Break, <i>refreshments provided</i>			
11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.	<b>Chandler Ballroom A</b> <i>(1<sup>st</sup> Floor – 104A)</i> <b>Session M1</b> The Fall Line: Building Central Virginia's World-Class Trail  <b>Session M2</b> Prioritizing Tree Health in Trail Design, Construction, and Maintenance	<b>Chandler Ballroom B</b> <i>(1<sup>st</sup> Floor – 104B)</i> <b>Session N1</b> Celebrating 25 Years of VLCF  <b>Session N2</b> The Crow's Nest Collaboration: Bridging Public and Private Sectors for Conservation	<b>Chandler Ballroom C</b> <i>(1<sup>st</sup> Floor – 104C)</i> <b>Session O</b> Mitigation for Solar Impacts	<b>Colonnade Room</b> <i>(3<sup>rd</sup> Floor – 315)</i> <b>Session P</b> Gearing up for Managing Farmland Protection with Federal Funding Projects
12:30 p.m.	Networking Lunch, <i>University Center Dining Hall (4<sup>th</sup> Floor)</i>			

## **Session A1**

### **Expanding the New River Water Trail**

What began as a group of enthusiastic Giles County citizen stewards advocating for improved access to the New River has been cultivated into a 61 mile, multi-stakeholder, formalized Water Trail throughout the New River Valley. This session will explore the initial and ongoing local planning efforts which are crucial to the success of the current regional expansion and implementation. As well as, the benefits of collaborative long-term stewardship with private-public partnerships, governance and its importance.

#### **Speakers:**

- Kathleen Armstrong, New River Valley Regional Commission, Planner and Community Designer
- Cora Gnegy, Giles County, Tourism Director and Economic Development Coordinator
- Nathan L. Hilbert, National Parks Service-Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program, Community Planner

## **Session A2**

### **From What If to What Next: Increasing public water access from the Blue Ridge to the Bay**

Learn the Why, How, and What's Next for the Rappahannock River Blueway Trail – a project that started as a daydream between colleagues and developed into a connected recreational asset for residents, paddlers, and fisherfolk. This case study will showcase the development of a nimble, focused, and sustained conservation partnership for strategic visioning, acquisition/easement funding, execution, and ongoing maintenance/engagement; importance of integration with the Virginia Outdoors Plan; power of public-private partnerships; overcoming red tape.

#### **Speakers:**

- Maggi Blomstrom, Piedmont Environmental Council, Rappahannock-Rapidan Conservation Initiative Coordinator
- Bryan Hofmann, Friends of the Rappahannock, Deputy Director
- Brad Mawyer, Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources, Zone Maintenance Supervisor, Region IV
- Gary Rzepecki, Fauquier County Parks & Recreation, Director

## **Session B**

### **The Economic Impact of Outdoor Recreation in Virginia**

An overview of the economic benefits of outdoor recreation in Virginia, including job creation, tourism revenue, and workforce development. This session highlights localities who are building stronger outdoor communities and partnerships between different outdoor organizations.

#### **Speakers:**

- Maribel Castañeda, Our Virginia Outdoors, Coordinator

## **Session B3**

### **Student Mentorship Session**

Students attending this session will learn about diverse pathways to enter natural, cultural, and scenic conservation professions by direct interactions with current professionals serving as mentors. The session will follow a 'speed dating' format where students will have a short period of time with each mentor to introduce themselves and their interests and to hear about the work of the mentor. Then, after everyone has met, the session will open into a general networking session where students will be able to talk more specifically with professionals with whom they felt a strong fit of interests.

#### **Organizers/Moderators:**

- Devin Schwers, University of Mary Washington Senior
- Kim Woodwell, Alliance for the Shenandoah Valley, Program Director

#### **Mentors:**

- Participating professionals have diverse backgrounds and a wealth of experience in federal, state, and local agencies and governments, as well as nonprofits

## Session C

### **Impacts of transmission line routing on existing and potential future conservation**

As the digital age continues to flourish with incredible amounts of information available at the click of a button and data intensive machine learning programs becoming widely available, the infrastructure to make it all possible is resulting in major land use changes from huge data centers and energy infrastructure expansions. While growth within the major data center hub of northern Virginia continues at a fast pace, communities throughout Virginia are now starting to see more proposals for data centers. Land trusts will likely see growing impacts from the energy infrastructure required to serve the increasing power demands from the industry across the entire state, including new and expanded transmission lines, substations, and generation. This will be a panel discussion that will cover trends in data center development, forecast for energy demand in Virginia, and land use impacts and externalities of data center development. All of these uses have the potential to impact conservation lands in a variety of ways, from impacting existing conservation lands to direct takings through eminent domain or conversion/diversion. The session will include recommendations for proactive actions land trusts can take to participate in the planning and regulatory process as well as prepare for potential takings/conversion negotiations.

#### **Speakers:**

- Chris Miller, Piedmont Environmental Council, President
- Julie Bolthouse, Piedmont Environmental Council, Director of Land Use

## Session D

### **Enabling Conservation: A Tour of Virginia's Conservation Easement Act and Open-Space Land Act**

Whether you are a landowner, a staff or board member of an easement holder, or a private-sector practitioner, if you work in land conservation in Virginia you need to be familiar with the Conservation Easement Act and the Open-Space Land Act. This session will provide a guided tour of the two basic enabling acts for conservation in Virginia and practical pointers for understanding the legislation via a combination of lecture and panel discussion formats.

#### **Speakers:**

- Kerry Hutcherson, Rudy, Coyner & Associates, PLLC
- Parker Agelasto, Capital Region Land Conservancy, Executive Director
- Martha Little, Virginia Outdoors Foundation, Deputy Director
- Alison Teetor, Clarke County Conservation Easement Authority

## Session E1

### **Expected and Unexpected Trail Partners for Success**

Just like there are all sorts of trails: long-distance destination trails, in-town connectors, green and blue trails, there are all sorts of partnerships needed to get these projects completed. This session will highlight the expected and unexpected partnerships that build successful trails, including local government, community groups and businesses. Presenters will demonstrate how building these relationships creates more successful trails, they will provide strategies and lessons learned on finding and creating productive relationships.

#### **Speakers:**

- Kim Woodwell, Alliance for the Shenandoah Valley, Project Director
- Maya Alexander, Alliance for the Shenandoah Valley, Community Engagement Manager
- Ursula Lemanski, National Park Service, River, Trails and Conservation Assistance
- Hali Plourde-Rogers, Virginia Eastern Shore Land Trust, Executive Director

## Session E2

**Committed to Community, Reaching Beyond the Trail**, Gaining unique community partners has been instrumental to the Elizabeth River Trail's success and growth. This session will look beyond outdoor recreation at attracting new trail users through relationship building with community partners in arts, conservation, historical preservation, geocaching, mental

health awareness, and serving vulnerable and under-resourced populations. Turning the trail from stationary to vibrant venue and cultivating partner led trail programs that serve diverse audiences and break down barriers to outdoor access.

**Speakers:**

- Kindra Greene, Elizabeth River Trail, Executive Director

**Session F1**

**Urban Land Conservation: Opportunities and Challenges**

Land trusts working in urban settings face unique challenges. From denser and more complex land uses, to larger and more diverse constituencies, wins cannot be measured in acres alone. Hear from land trusts actively engaging in some of Virginia's rapidly changing urban landscapes on topics such as funding, conservation planning, and partnerships for affordability, climate and food security. Presenters will engage the audience to share their own tools and lessons unique to these settings.

**Speakers:**

- Parker Agelasto, Capital Region Land Conservancy, Executive Director
- Matt Gerhart, Northern Virginia Conservation Trust, Conservation Director
- Peter Krebs, Piedmont Environmental Council, Albemarle and Charlottesville Community Advocacy Manager

**Session F2**

**Local Partnerships: A Park and A School**

Perrymont Park was an underutilized, vacant piece of land directly adjacent to Perrymont Elementary School. Implementing the Master Plan for improvements involved the school and the public, with funding by grants from Virginia Outdoors (VOF) and DCR's Recreational Trails Program. The outcome is the development of an ADA-accessible 1/4-mile walking path, nature trail, outdoor classroom, picnic area, preserved mature trees, and a revitalized wetland that helps treat stormwater for a cleaner, healthier watershed.

**Speakers:**

- Susannah B. Smith, City of Lynchburg Parks & Recreation Dept., Parks Project Manager

**Session G1**

**Environmental Impact Review Process**

Development and land use conversion are on the rise in Virginia. Acres of farms and forests are disappearing due to development, infrastructure projects, solar facilities and data centers. The Commonwealth has a process in place to review, address and recommend steps to minimize these impacts or even to mitigate them. Learn about the Commonwealth's Environmental Impact Review process.

**Speakers:**

- Clint Folks, Virginia Department of Forestry, Forestland Conservation Coordinator
- Rene Hypes, Department of Conservation & Recreation - Natural Heritage, Environmental Review Coordinator
- Roger Kirchen, Department of Historic Resources, Director, Review and Compliance Division
- Amy Martin, Department of Wildlife Resources, Program Manager Wildlife Information & Environmental Sciences
- Bettina Rayfield, Department of Environmental Quality, Office of Environmental Impact Review

**Session G2**

**Rappahannock Carbon**

Rappahannock Carbon is a new venture developed by the Rappahannock River Roundtable and powered by First Earth2030, to implement the Healthy Watershed Forest Initiative developed by the Virginia Department of Forestry. The program provides a framework for small forest landowners to access carbon markets or other funding opportunities to protect their forests, like limited harvest conservation easements. This project is the first of its kind in Virginia and features a unique program available to forest landowners in rural and urban communities. Join us to learn about the development of the program, opportunities available, and how we are helping landowners protect forests and water quality in the Rappahannock River Region.

**Speakers:**

- Tee Clarkson, Tee-FirstEarth2030
- Bryan Hofmann, Friends of the Rappahannock, Deputy Director and coordinator for the Rappahannock River Roundtable

**Session H**

**How to Steward one-million acres: What it takes to Go Beyond Monitoring Easements**

This lecture will focus on showcasing the activities and tools, other than easement monitoring, VOF's stewardship staff currently utilize to steward a 4,500 project, one million-acre easement portfolio. The presenters will provide specific examples of the variety of stewardship activities related to, addressing complex landowner questions and proposals, managing property transfers, sales, new owners, and the allocation of development rights, third-party reviews associated with infrastructure development; conversion/diversion (1704) projects, as well as easement violations. In addition to outlining VOF's processes, this talk will highlight the tools VOF has implemented to augment our monitoring program, such as various agency and locality notification systems and aerial monitoring utilizing the Virginia Base Mapping Program.

**Speakers:**

- Brad Baskette, Virginia Outdoors Foundation, Regional Conservation Director
- Harry Hibbitts, Virginia Outdoors Foundation, Regional Conservation Director

**Session I**

**The A.T. Experience: How a management doctrine shapes the Nation's conservation landscape**

The "A.T. Experience" is not just the experience of an individual visitor to the Trail. It's a defined management doctrine that has powered partnerships in the conservation of thousands of acres of public lands in Virginia for 100 years and served as a model for partnerships from Japan, Tibet, Peru, and Jordan where trails are driving the conservation of critical natural, cultural and experiential resources.

**Speakers:**

- Andrew Downs, Appalachian Trail Conservancy, Senior Regional Director

**Session J**

**Empowerment of Youth of Color in the Outdoors**

The Humble Hikes program empowers black youth and connects diverse communities by curating free educational outdoor activities. Participants will learn about the mission, successes and challenges faced in the pursuit of environmental and educational justice for historically excluded youth. The goal is to provide background on racial injustice in the outdoors as well as a guiding path forward for organizations to consider their own role as allies in the continued efforts to diversify the outdoors.

**Speakers:**

- Tasia VanderVegt, The Humble Hustle, Director of Programming
- Xavier Tramaine Duckett, The Humble Hustle

**Session K**

**Land Management through Climate Change**

Invasive plants present a complex set of problems that require a range of actions to mitigate their impacts to land, native plants and animals, and the overall health of our environment. This session will identify specific challenges that invasive plants pose for conservation and explore ways to collaborate and better assist landowners and communities in managing land.

**Speakers:**

- Rowena Zimmermann, Blue Ridge PRISM, Director of Communications and Outreach
- Natali Walker, Blue Ridge PRISM, Invasive Management Specialist

**Session L**

**Navigating the Tax Maze: Federal Legal Tax Trends with a Virginia Perspective**

This session will identify the IRS trends and the Tax Court's response, discuss why this issue matters for Virginia land conservation organizations, and provide tips to consider for practical application.

**Speakers:**

- Diana Norris, Land Trust Alliance, Conservation Defense Network and Tax Manager

**Session M1**

**The Fall Line: Building Central Virginia's World-Class Trail**

With this presentation, we want to talk about the planning and preparation behind the coming Fall Line, a 43-mile long multi-use path spanning seven regions, which will see three localities breaking ground in the next year. We also want to highlight the Fall Line Vision Plan, a document that was born from the collaboration of regions and the communities' desire for connection and amenity along the trail.

**Speakers:**

- Brantley Tyndall, Sports Backers/Bike Walk RVA

**Session M2**

**Prioritizing Tree Health in Trail Design, Construction, and Maintenance**

In partnership with True Timber Arborists, the James River Park will be developing a BMP which focuses specifically on short- and long-term tree health along both single track and paved corridors. Trees are arguably the most important part of what makes for a quality trail/greenway, yet their health is often ignored during the planning, construction, and maintenance phases. This session will focus on prioritizing tree health during all these phases to ensure that our trees continue to provide public spaces with all their environmental benefits.

**Speakers:**

- Andrew Alli, City of Richmond Parks and Recreation, Trails & Greenways Superintendent, Trails and Greenways Division

**Session N1**

**Celebrating 25 Years of the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation**

Join the team of state agency experts to celebrate conservation of Virginia's special places: farms and forestlands, historic areas, natural areas, and parks and open spaces. The VLCF interagency task force will share highlights of diverse conservation projects from the past 25 years of state funded grant rounds.

**Speakers:** Suzan Bulbulkaya, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, Land Conservation Manager; Representatives of Virginia Outdoors Foundation, Virginia Department of Forestry, Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources and Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

**Session N2**

**The Crow's Nest Collaboration: Bridging Public and Private Sectors for Conservation**

The Crow's Nest peninsula is an ecologically important area with wetlands and old growth forests that support a wide variety of plant and animal species. Due to long term vision and commitment, the land went from plans for an

amusement park to protection for a state natural area preserve over the course of 50 years. Collaboration among stakeholders led to a successful conservation outcome: an over 3,000-acre natural area preserve. Representatives of each partner group will be on hand to describe their roles and answer questions.

**Speakers:**

- Kathy Baker, Stafford County, Department of Planning and Zoning Assistant Director
- Matt Gerhart, Northern Virginia Conservation Trust, Conservation Director
- Michael Lott, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, Northern Regional Supervisor
- Hal Wiggins, Naturalist and local author

**Session O**

**Mitigation for Solar Impacts**

Pursuant to legislation that passed in 2022, the Department of Environmental Quality is revising the Permit By Rule regulation that applies to solar projects that are 150 MW or smaller. The legislation required mitigation for impacts on farm and forest land. A Regulatory Advisory Panel met in 2023 to help craft the proposed regulation, which will require that impacts are mitigated through conservation easements.

**Speakers:**

- Nikki Rovner, The Nature Conservancy, Associate State Director, Moderator
- Judy Dunscomb, The Nature Conservancy, Senior Conservation Scientist
- Terry Lasher, Virginia Department of Forestry, Assistant State Forester
- Martha Little, Virginia Outdoors Foundation, Deputy Director

**Session P**

**Gearing up for Managing Farmland Protection with Federal Funding Projects**

With unprecedented levels of federal funding, many land trusts are exploring these sources to protect large working farms in Virginia. While these transformative funding opportunities have drawn considerable attention, less attention has been focused on the organizational impacts from the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) and Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). Learn how to gear up from the experience of four organizations in Virginia that have successfully tapped into these funding sources.

**Speakers:**

- Jennifer Perkins, American Farmland Trust, Mid-Atlantic Farmland Programs Manager
- Parker Agelasto, Capitol Region Land Conservancy, Executive Director
- Mike Kane, Piedmont Environmental Council, Director of Conservation
- Damian Martin, Land Trust of Virginia, Conservation Associate
- Kevin Tate, Alliance for the Shenandoah Valley, Director of Conservation