



Three Decades

of Wetland and Stream
Conservation and Innovation

April 28th, 2026

Karen Johnson and Kelly Ridenhour



VIRGINIA

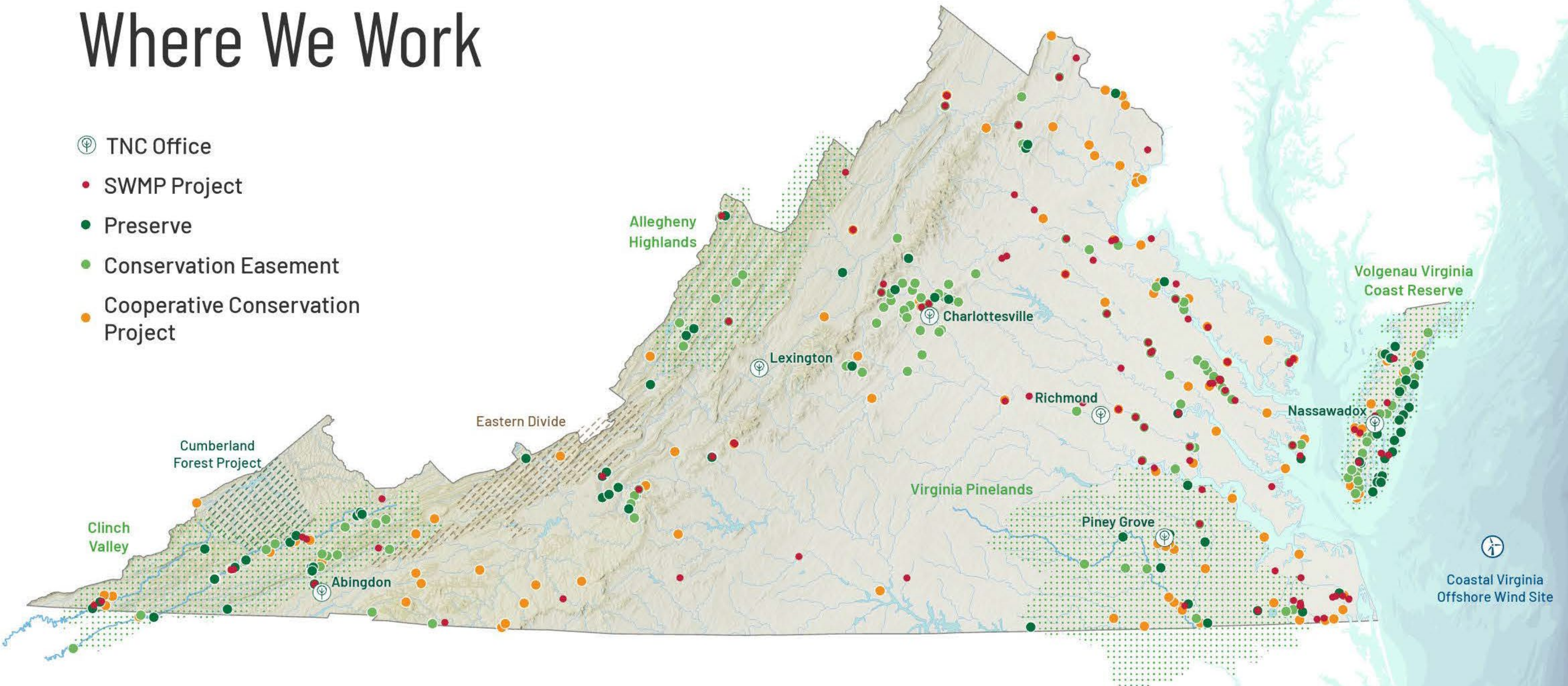
STREAM AND WETLAND
MITIGATION PROGRAM

The Nature
Conservancy 

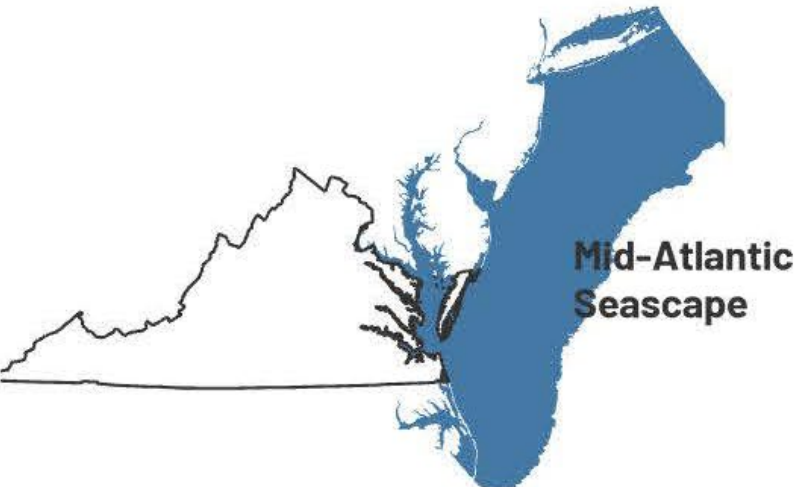
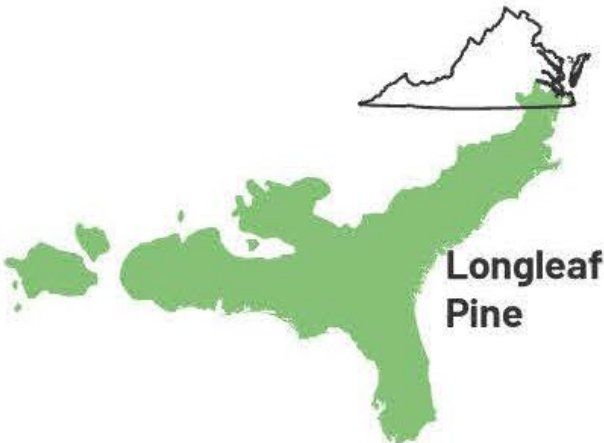
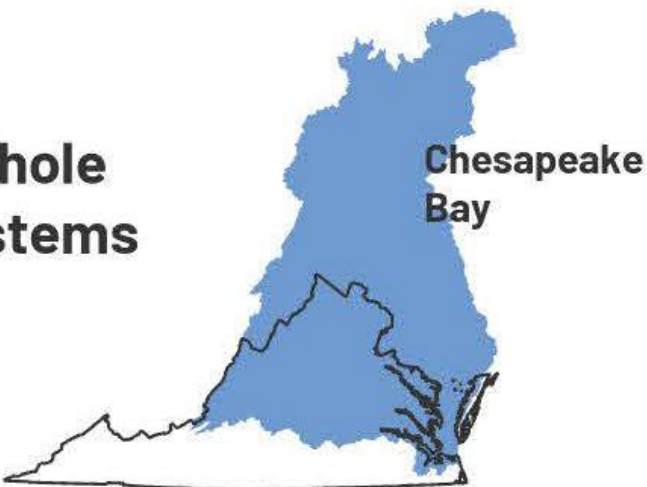
Protecting nature. Preserving life.

Where We Work

- Ⓒ TNC Office
- SWMP Project
- Preserve
- Conservation Easement
- Cooperative Conservation Project



Whole Systems



But first, what is a legal wetland?

Join at menti.com | use code **3175 8754**

Mentimeter

KR

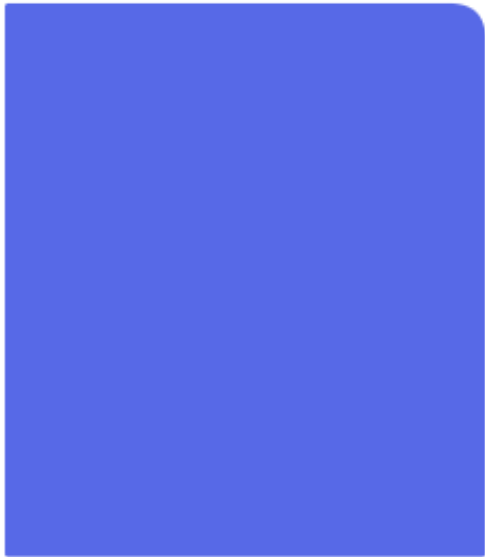
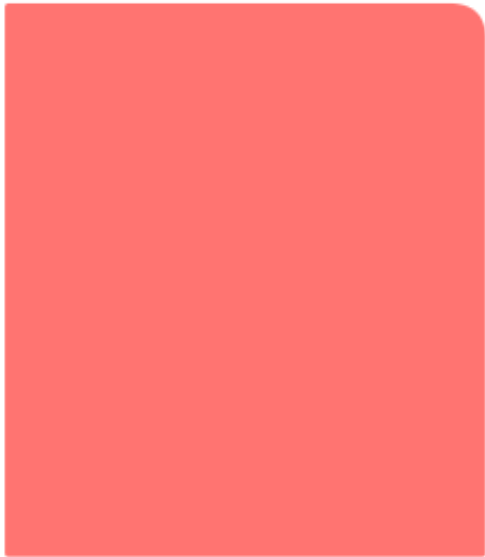
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VAULT Quiz

Select which slide to add

[Edit on Mentimeter.com](#)

Where do you want to see restoration?

What makes a wetland?

1	1	1	0
			
Hydrology - it needs water!	Hydric Soils - it needs wetland soils!	Hydrophytic Vegetation: - it needs water loving vegetation!	Aquatic animals - it needs water-loving animals!

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1 of 1 responded

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MITIGATION HOW IT WORKS

Federal and state laws protect waters of the US and the Commonwealth

Impacts to waters (wetlands and streams) are regulated and must be permitted

Compensatory mitigation offsets the impacts to our lands and waters from development.

TNC is NOT a regulatory agency

**Avoid
Impacts**

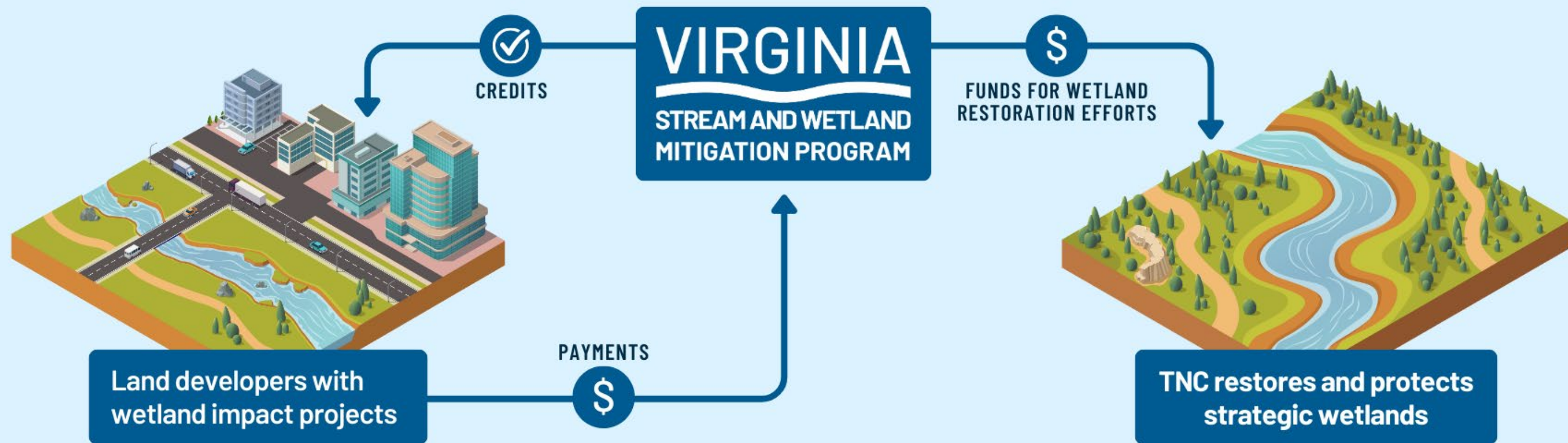


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**Minimize
Impacts**

**Compensate
for Impacts**

MITIGATION NOW WORKS



Mitigation bank

In-lieu fee programs

Permittee responsible

ILF – funds and mitigation requirements from multiple projects pooled together and used to implement larger, significant projects.

AGENCY INVOLVEMENT



US Army Corps
of Engineers



Local land trusts
Landowners
Federal agencies
Local government

VIRGINIA
STREAM AND WETLAND
MITIGATION PROGRAM



MITIGATION STRATEGIES

- 01 Mitigation helps protect our lands and waters from the impacts of development.
- 02 Mitigation accounts for one of the largest funding sources for conservation in the U.S.
- 03 As a leader in mitigation, TNC is uniquely positioned to work with partners to strengthen mitigation policies and programs to improve conservation outcomes.

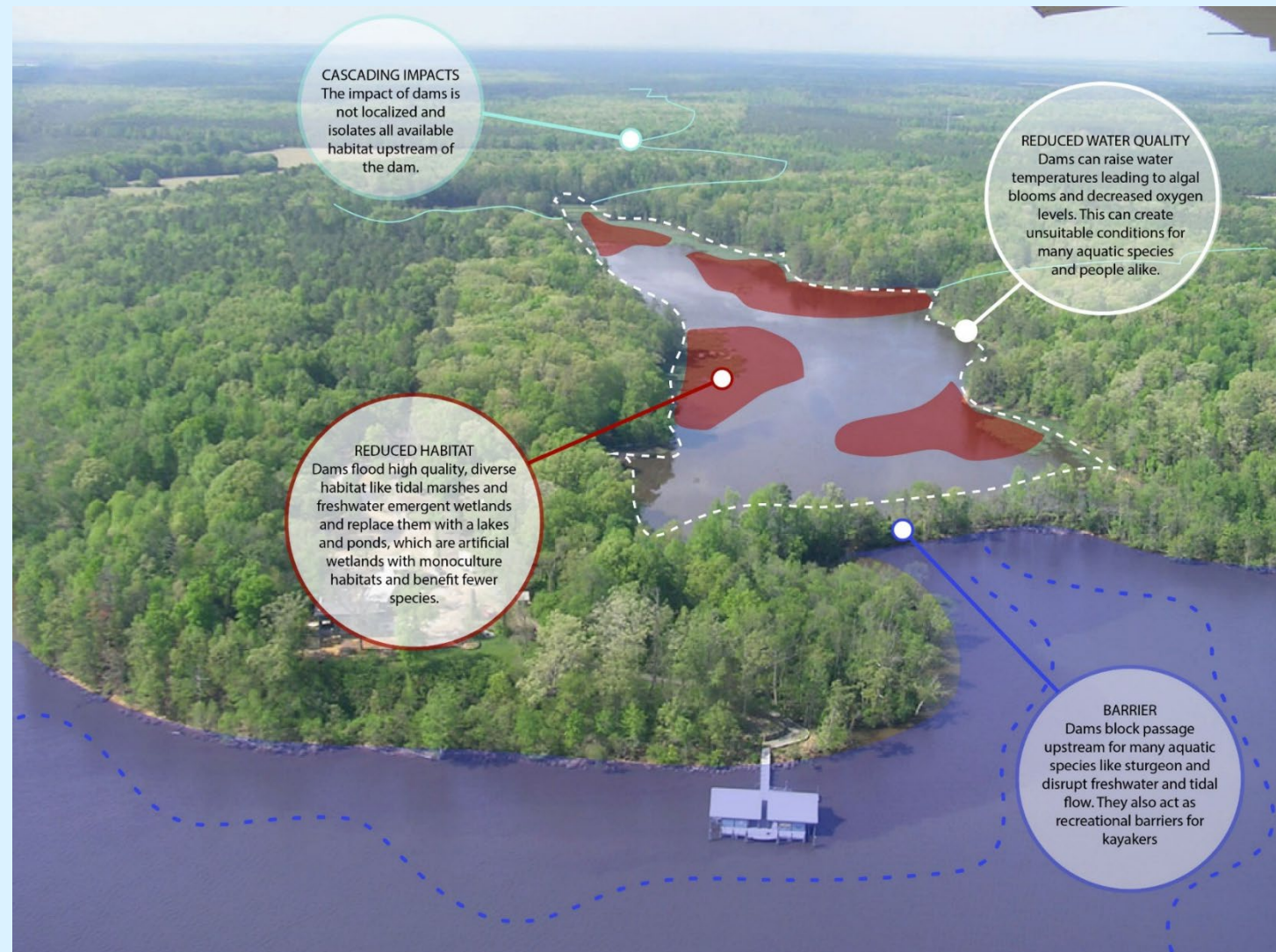
In Resilient Places

Integrated RCN

- Both Terrestrial and Freshwater RCN
- Terrestrial Only RCN
- Freshwater Only RCN
- Great Lakes
- Additional Resilient tidal complex

Map labels include: Potomac River, Shenandoah River, Rappahannock River, York River, Upper James River, Middle James River, Roanoke River, New River, Tennessee River, Big Sandy River, Lower James River, Chesapeake Bay, Atlantic Ocean, and numerous counties and cities.

Focus on Restoration



SWMP works to bring back wetland conditions. In addition to land protection, it is a source of funding for restoration.

What needs restoration?



2006 4 25

30 YEARS OF CONSERVATION



1995

Established Virginia's first aquatic restoration program, focused on wetland resources. Named Wetlands Restoration Trust Fund.



2003

Began offsetting stream resources, renamed Virginia Aquatic Restoration Trust Fund.



2009

First Compensation Planning Framework (CPF) is developed, providing a structured approach to selecting mitigation projects.



2010

Surpassed 100 approved projects.



2011

SWMP's first official Program Instrument is approved, incorporating the 2009 CPF.



2019

SWMP achieves major conservation impact:

- Offset 337 acres of impacts to non-tidal and tidal wetlands.
- Restored 214,000 linear feet of streams.
- Established 100+ mitigation sites in Virginia's most ecologically significant areas.

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2019



SWMP updates its Program Instrument, integrating more advanced conservation strategies and updated spatial prioritization data.

2025



Celebrating 30 years of conservation success.

OUR CONSERVATION IMPACT In Virginia

150+ Conservation projects
pursued statewide



22,000 Acres including 10,000
acres of parks and other public land



21 Miles
of streams restored



\$90M+ Invested
in Virginia's conservation efforts



1500 Acres
of wetlands and buffers restored



Habitats of **200+** rare and
at-risk species protected

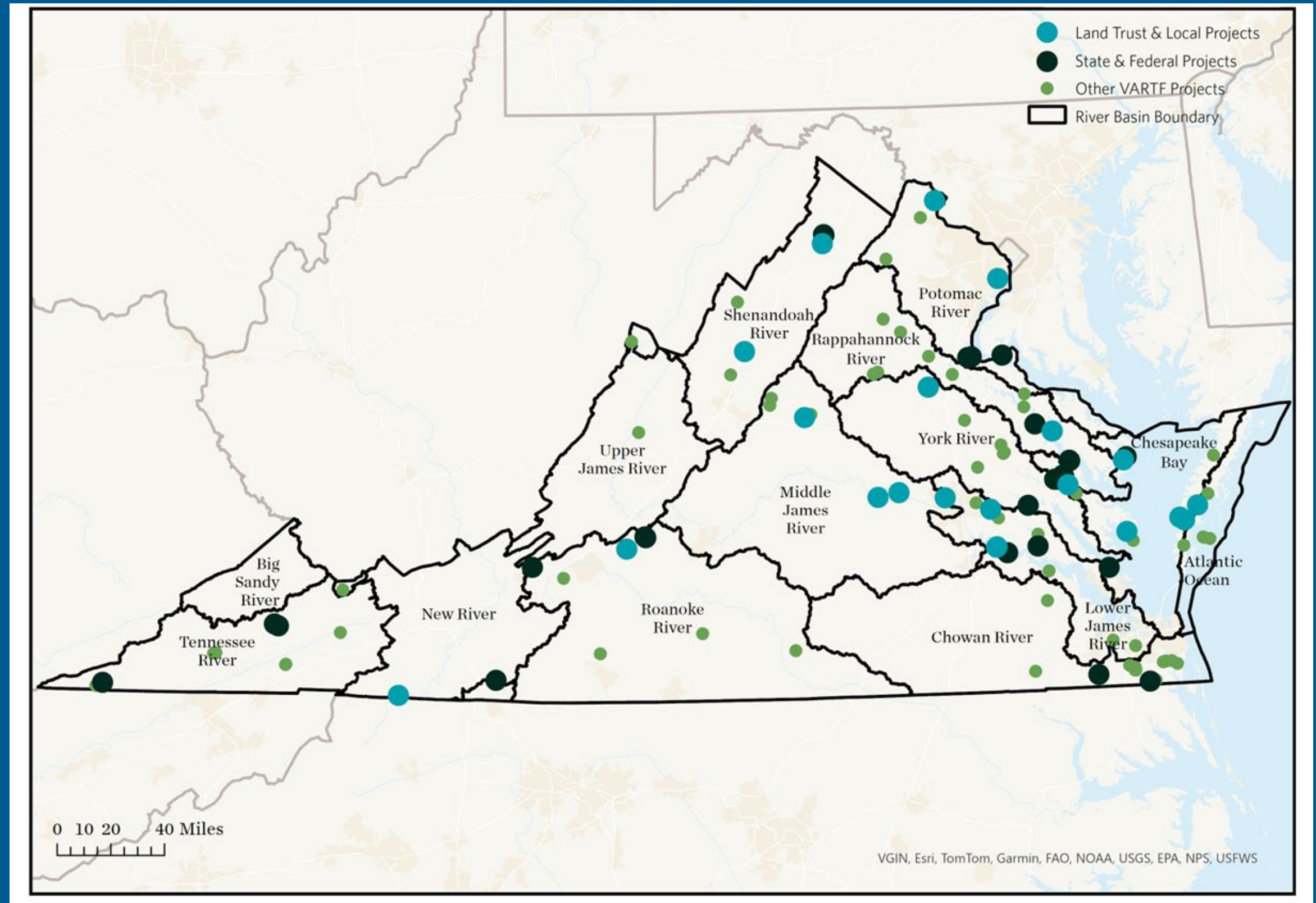


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STREAM AND WETLAND MITIGATION PROGRAM

OUR WORK WITH PARTNER

- Land trusts
- Cities and counties
- Parks departments
- Local interest
- Watershed groups
- Federal agencies
- State agencies



OUR WORK WITH PARTNER

Project Identification

- Local connection
- Existing protected lands
- Landowner support

Land Acquisition

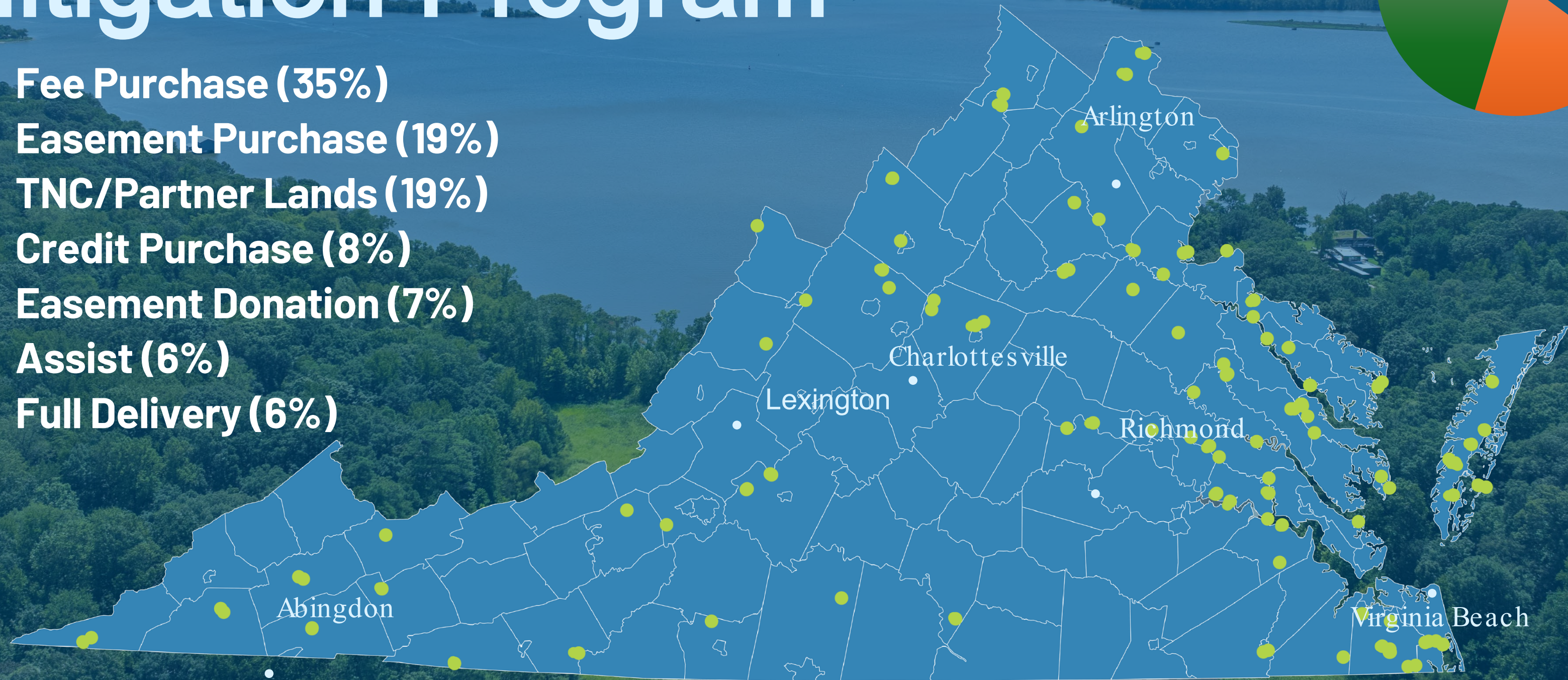
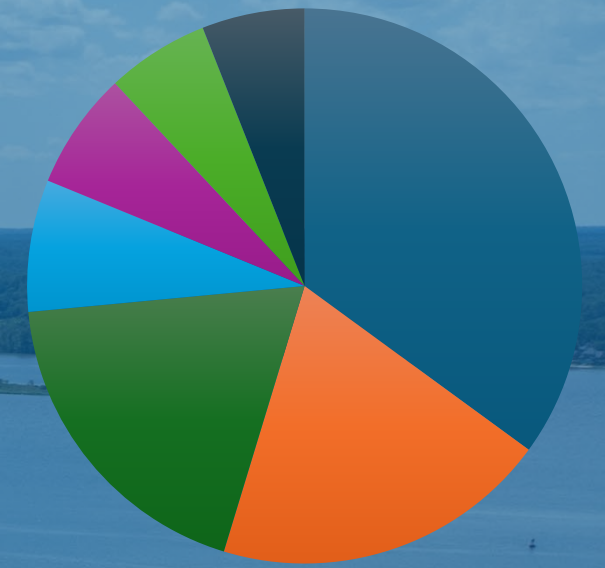
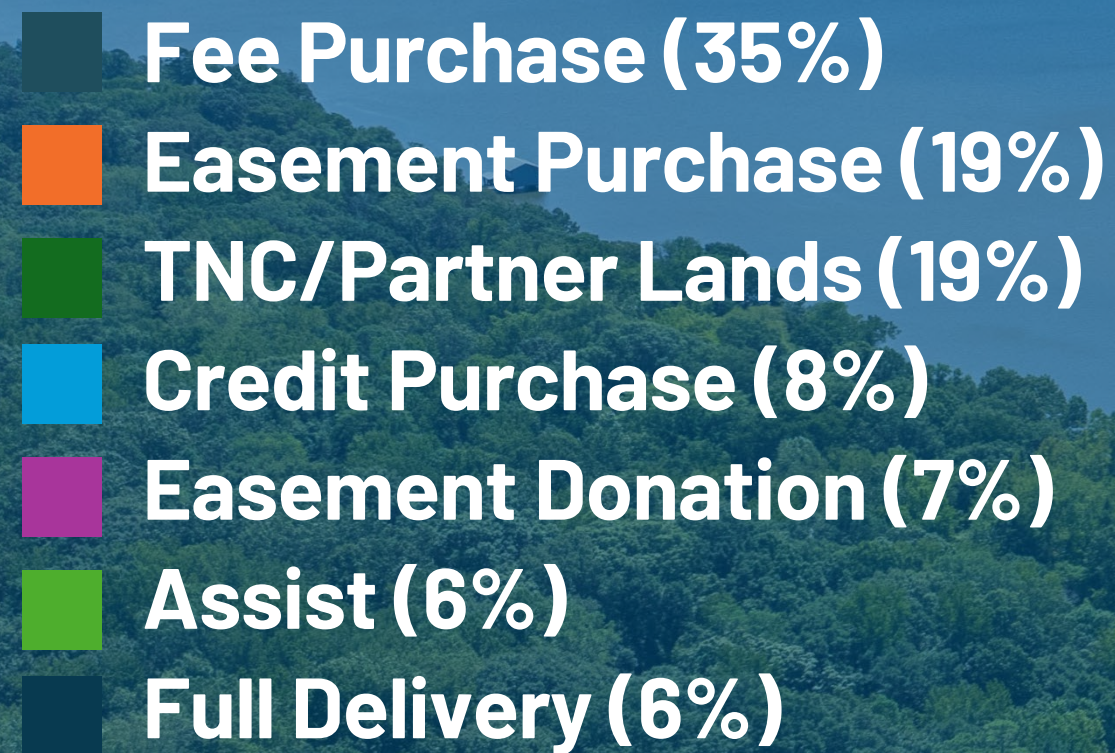
- Landowner – subject to outside CE holder
- Completely funded management expenses

Easement Holder

- Local presence
- Completely funded endowment
- Co-hold during initial accreditation phase



Virginia Stream and Wetland Mitigation Program



We work with landowners, Land trusts, Cities and counties, Parks departments, Educational Institutions, Watershed groups, Federal agencies, State agencies

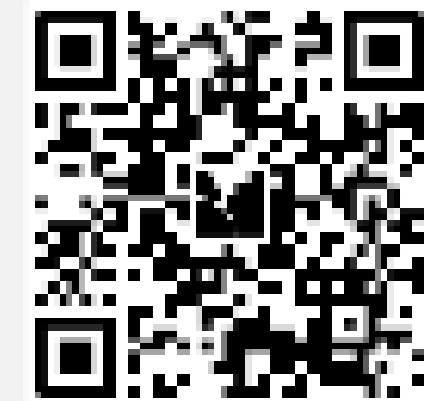
What is next?

Working with Land Trusts at Bay View



Where is restoration needed?

Where do you want to see restoration?



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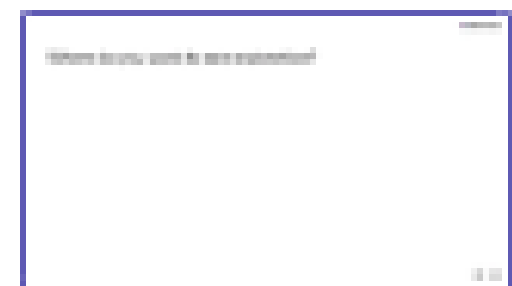


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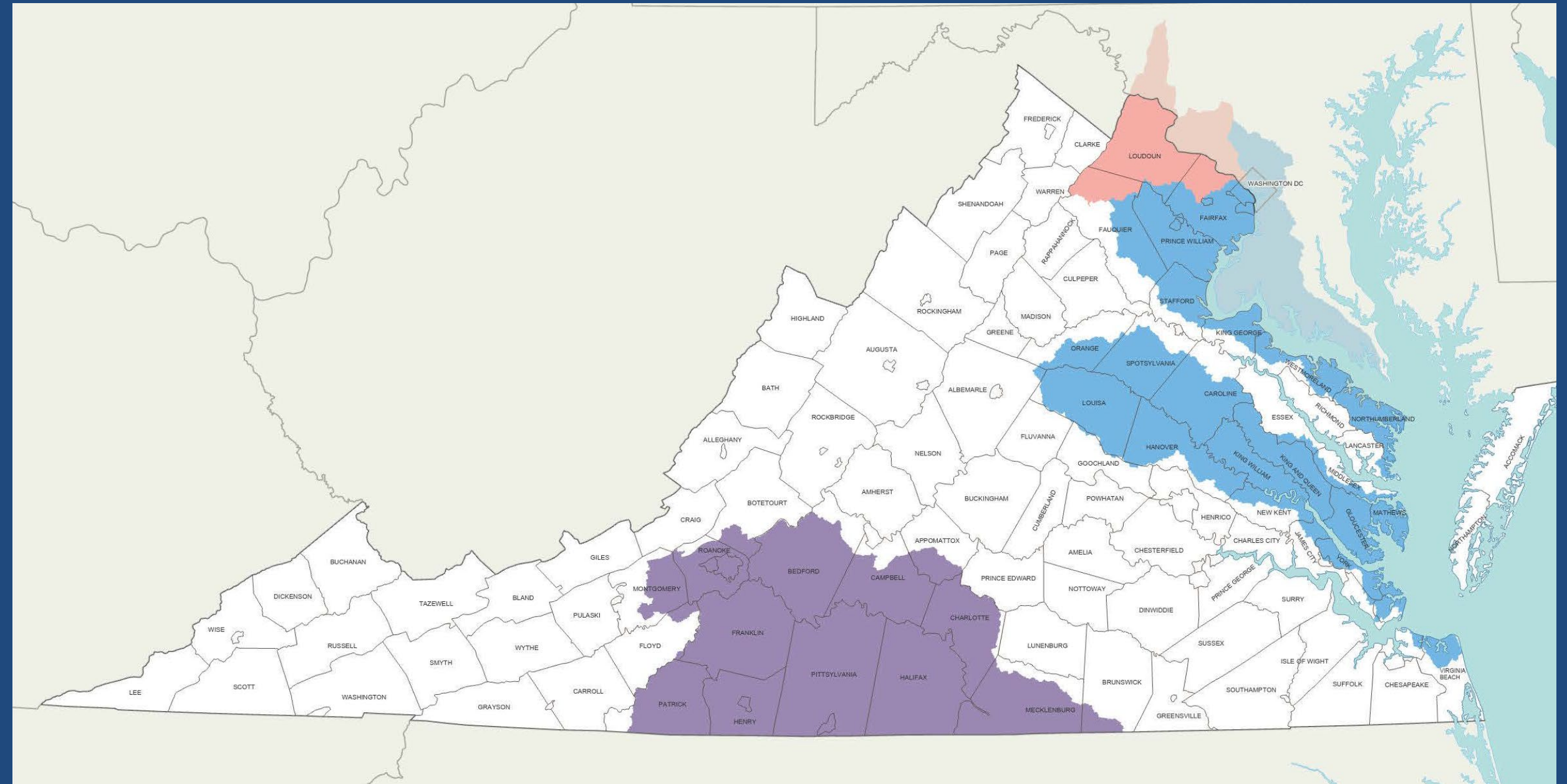
Select which slide to add



Submit a project!



<https://arcg.is/1qmvG43>
Or at nature.org/SWMP



- Wetlands
- Stream
- Both



nature.org/SWMP



QUESTIONS?

