



Smithsonian
National Zoological Park
Conservation Biology Institute



Piedmont
Environmental
Council



American Farmland Trust
SAVING THE LAND THAT SUSTAINS US



QUAIL
FOREVER



ALLIANCE
FOR THE SHENANDOAH VALLEY



SHENANDOAH VALLEY
CONSERVANCY

Conservation Speed-Dating Workshops

An attractive new outreach strategy that is accelerating conservation on private lands

Kevin Tate, Alliance for the Shenandoah Valley
October Greenfield, The Piedmont Environmental Council
Justin Proctor, Smithsonian's Virginia Working Landscapes



Alliance for the Shenandoah Valley informs and engages people to protect the natural resources, cultural heritages, and rural character of our region.

Our work:

- Land use and transportation
- Conservation and agriculture
- Clean water
- Strong communities
- Regional issues
- Advocacy

Where we work:

- Augusta
- Rockingham
- Shenandoah
- Page
- Warren
- Frederick



Shenandoah Valley Conservation Collaborative:



Kevin Tate
Director of Conservation
ktate@shenandoahalliance.org



Piedmont
Environmental
Council

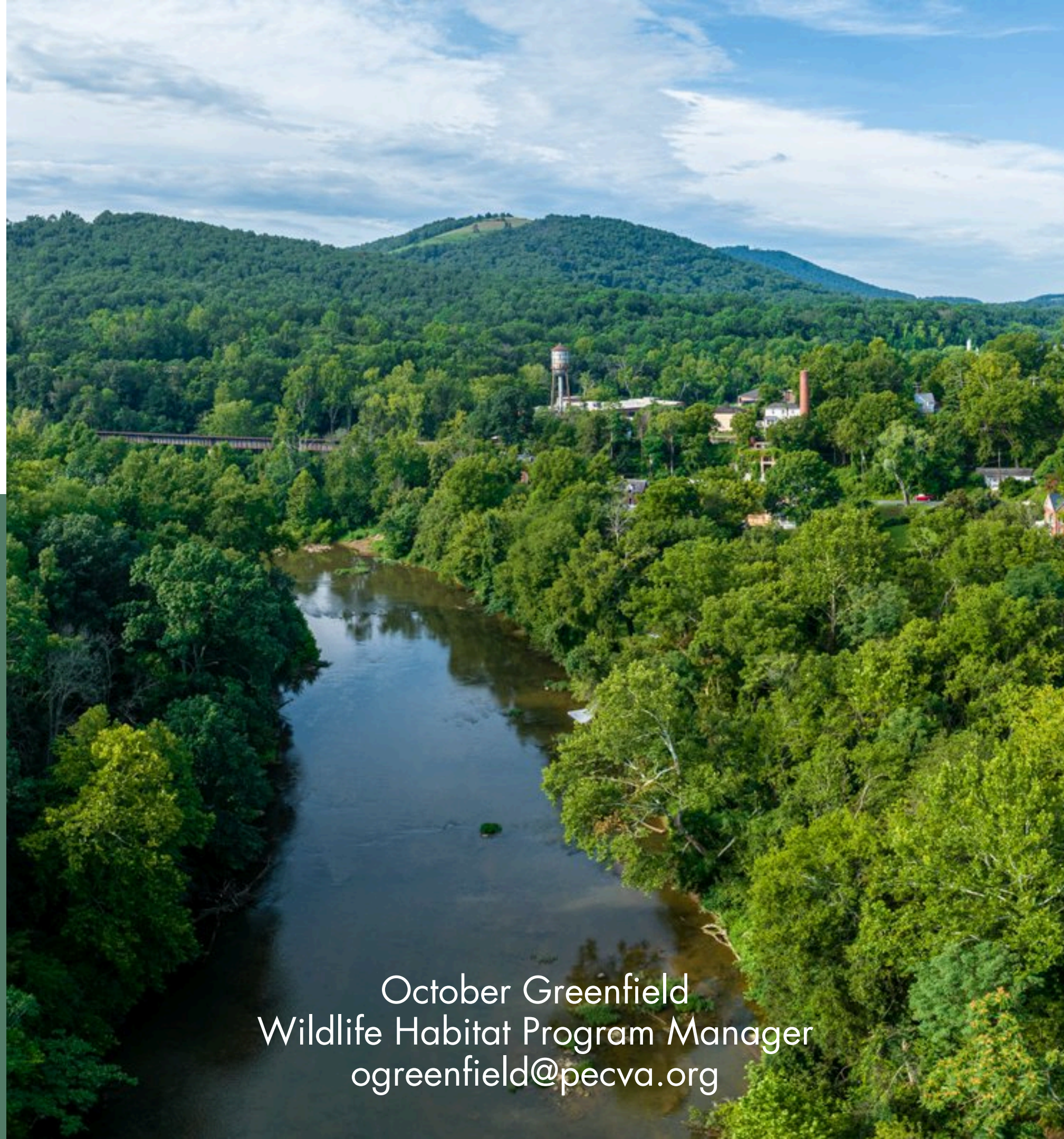
Protect and restore the lands and waters of the Virginia Piedmont, while building stronger, more sustainable communities.

Our Work

Conserving and Restoring the Piedmont's
Lands and Waters

Creating Stronger, More Sustainable
Communities

Shaping and Advancing Virginia's Transition
to a Clean Energy Future



October Greenfield
Wildlife Habitat Program Manager
ogreenfield@pecva.org

The Virginia Grassland Bird Initiative

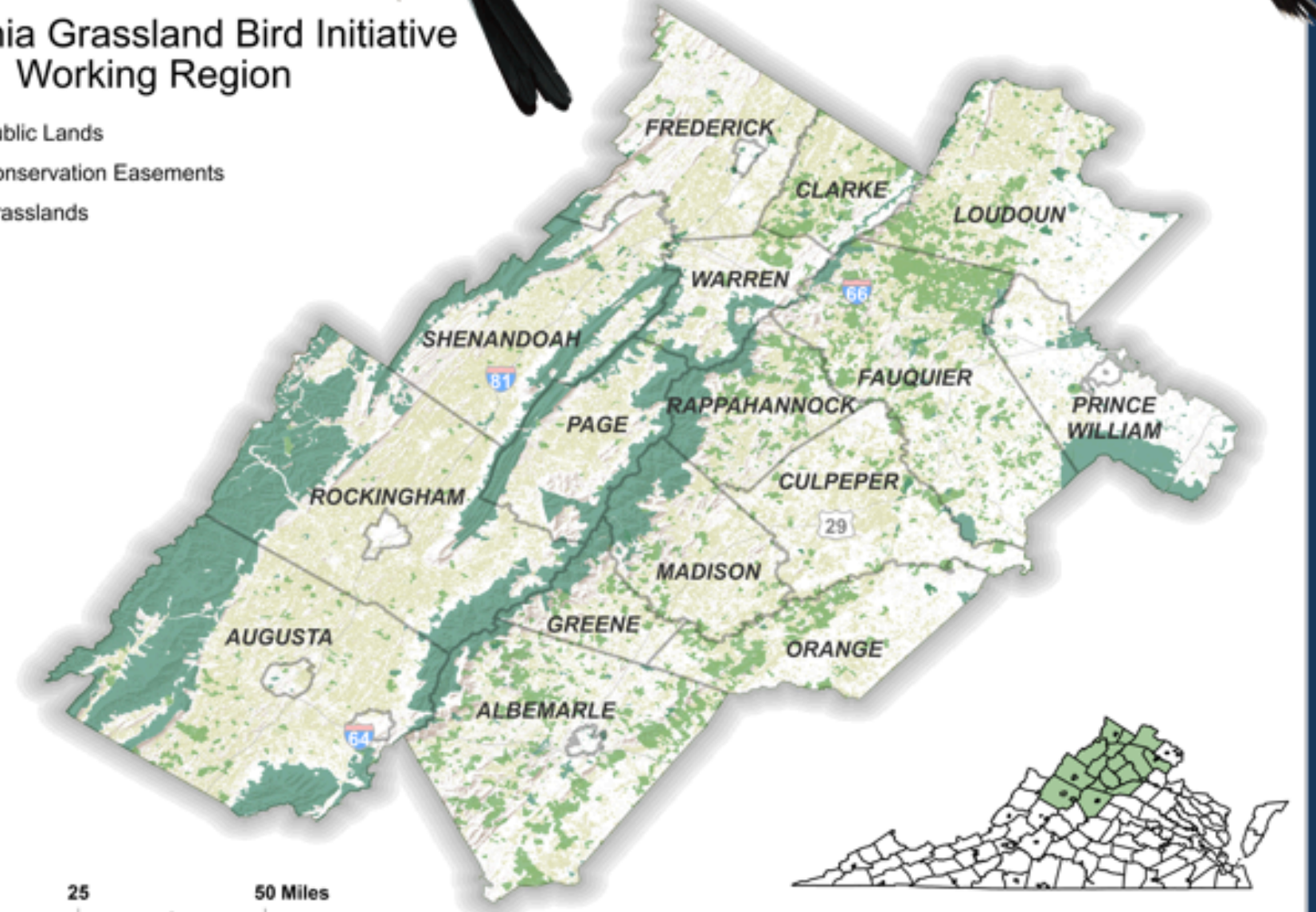
Supporting bird-friendly practices on working lands

Justin Proctor
Smithsonian's Virginia
Working Landscapes
Coordinator of VGBI
ProctorCJ@si.edu



Virginia Grassland Bird Initiative
Working Region

- Public Lands
- Conservation Easements
- Grasslands



Smithsonian
National Zoological Park
Conservation Biology Institute



**Piedmont
Environmental
Council**



American Farmland Trust



**SHENANDOAH VALLEY
CONSERVANCY**



What Is Conservation Speed-Dating?

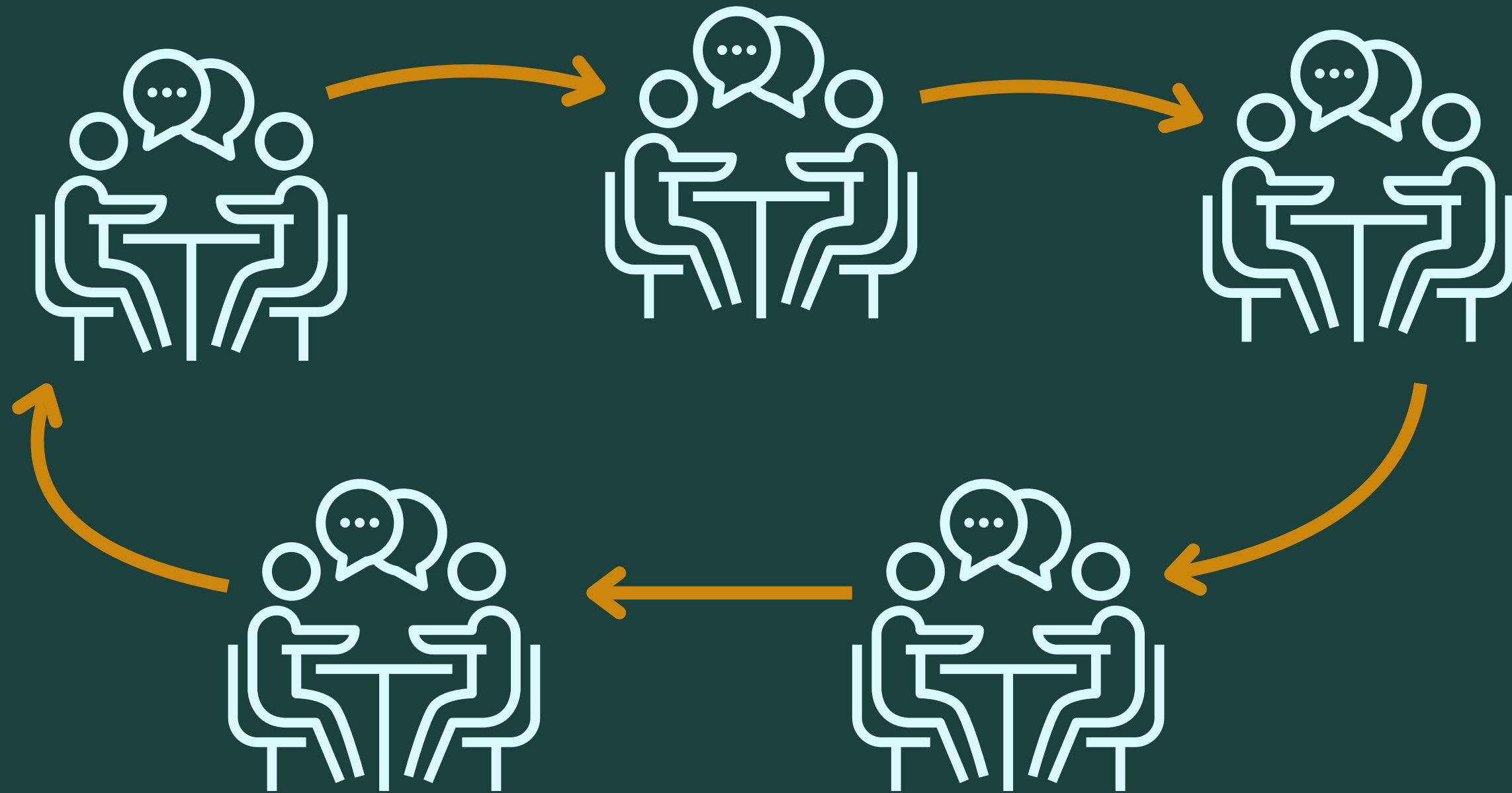
A fun, hands-on workshop model that brings landowners and farmers together with their full suite of local conservation professionals to:

- Spotlight all the free conservation assistance available
- Build relationships and community
- Explore conservation opportunities specific to each landowner and their property
- Catalyze conservation action on working lands

Developed by Partners within the:
Virginia Grassland Bird Initiative
Shenandoah Valley Conservation Collaborative
and Rappahannock River Roundtable

Speed-Dating Concept

TSPs rotate around the room, spending one-on-one time (~7-10 mins) with each participant (~10-15 landowners total) talking through different best management practices and associated cost-share programs that could be implemented on their properties.







Planning Your Workshop

- Identify all local TSPs and partners
- Narrow your focus: by county, watershed, community, neighborhood, etc.
- Different land sizes/types can work!
- Balance numbers
- Choose a time that works for participants and staff
- Consider season
- Enlist local help with invitations!!!
- Plan 2–3 months in advance
- Collect property info early (and share with TSPs beforehand if possible)



Setting the Scene

Choose an inclusive, comfortable space where everyone feels at home:

- Accessible, informal venues like barns or community centers
- Space for 10–15 tables with room to move between
- Food and refreshments foster conversation and connection



Typical Event Flow

- Welcome and introductions (round robin or lightning talks)
- One-on-one conservation “speed dates” (~7–12 minutes each)
- Food & Drinks!
- Wrap-up, social time, and opportunity to network further with TSPs and community members.

RAPPAHANNOCK COUNTY CONSERVATION SPEED-DATING WORKSHOP



Peter Fairfield
4200 Linstead Farm Lane,
Keezletown Virginia

Technical Service Providers & Conservation Practitioners Serving Rappahannock County

Justin Proctor	ProctorCJ@si.edu	Southampton's Virginia Working Landscapes
Kevin Tate	ktate@shenandoahalliance.org	Shenandoah Valley Conservation Collaborative
Doug Horn	doughorn@vt.edu	Virginia Cooperative Extension
Aaron Lucas	alucas@co.augusta.va.us	Headwaters SWCD
Jack Carlton	jcarlton@co.augusta.va.us	Headwaters SWCD
Teagan O'Brien	teagan.obrien@dot.virginia.gov	Virginia Department of Forestry
Cole Young	cole.young@dot.virginia.gov	Virginia Dept of Forestry
Adam Schellhammer	Adam@valleyconservation.org	Valley Conservation Council
Philip Davis	philip.davis@des.virginia.gov	Department of Environmental Quality
Richard Hendley	richard.hendley@usda.gov	NRCS Virginia
Alan Hawkins	alan.hawkins@va.usda.gov	NRCS
Alison Horn	ahorn@dot.org	Chesapeake Bay Foundation

Notes

The Map Makes It Personal

Each participant receives a large, high resolution map of their property.

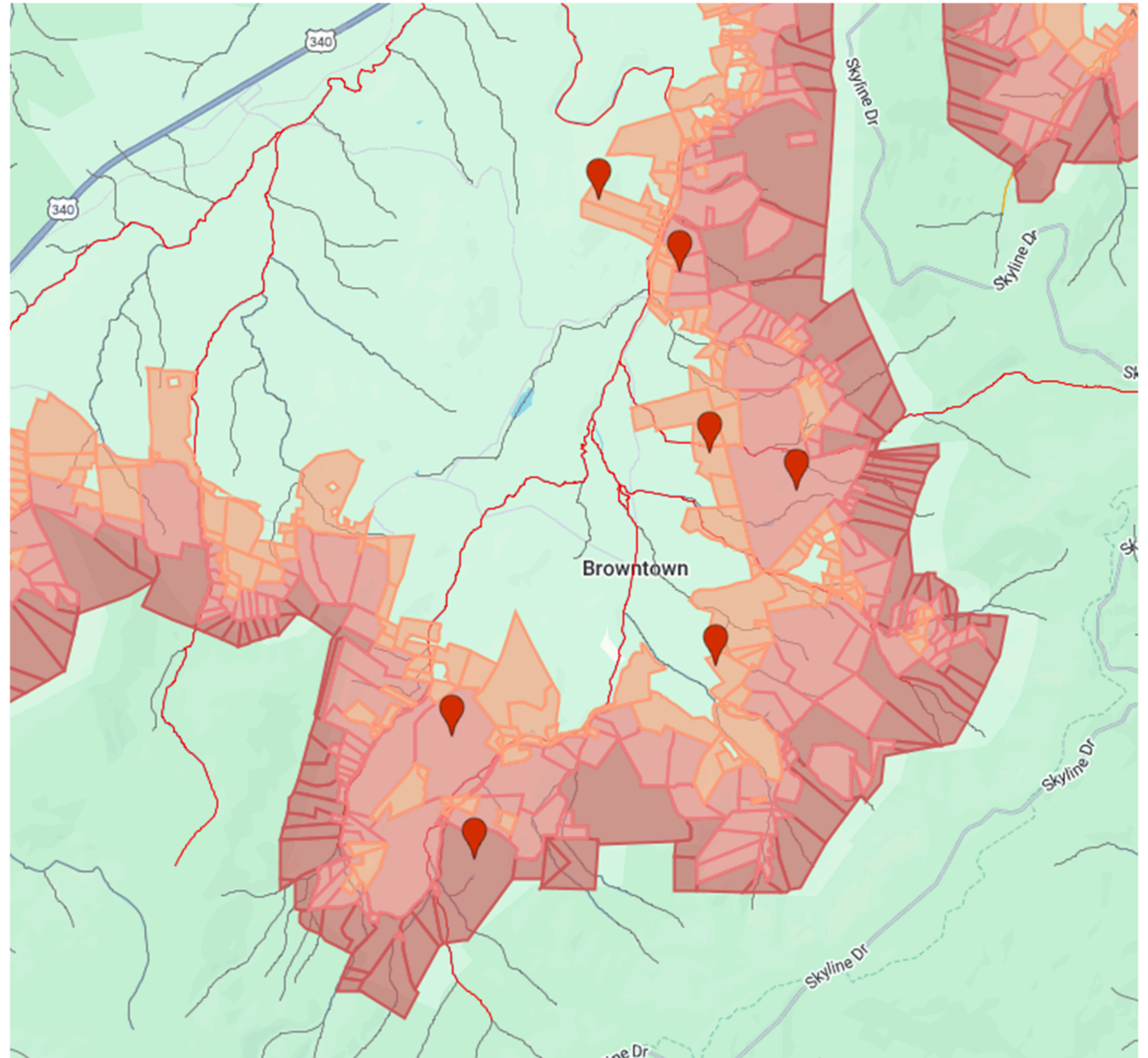
Together, TSPs and landowners:

- Sketch ideas for BMPs and conservation projects
- Visualize where practices could be implemented
- Create a literal "roadmap" for next steps

Extra Map Options

Plot out all participant properties on one map that is featured for them to see upon arrival.

- Attendees start to visualize the “community” that has been invited
- Specific map layers can be featured that help establish connections between the participating landowners and producers (e.g., proximity to public land, shared subwatershed, etc).





Why It Works

- Landowners get quality one-on-one time with their full suite of technical service providers (TSPs)
- Personalized conservation planning tailored to specific property
- Everyone is in one place
- No hiding in the back of the room
- The event format breaks the typical mold for these types of interactions, empowers the landowner, and most importantly, is fun!

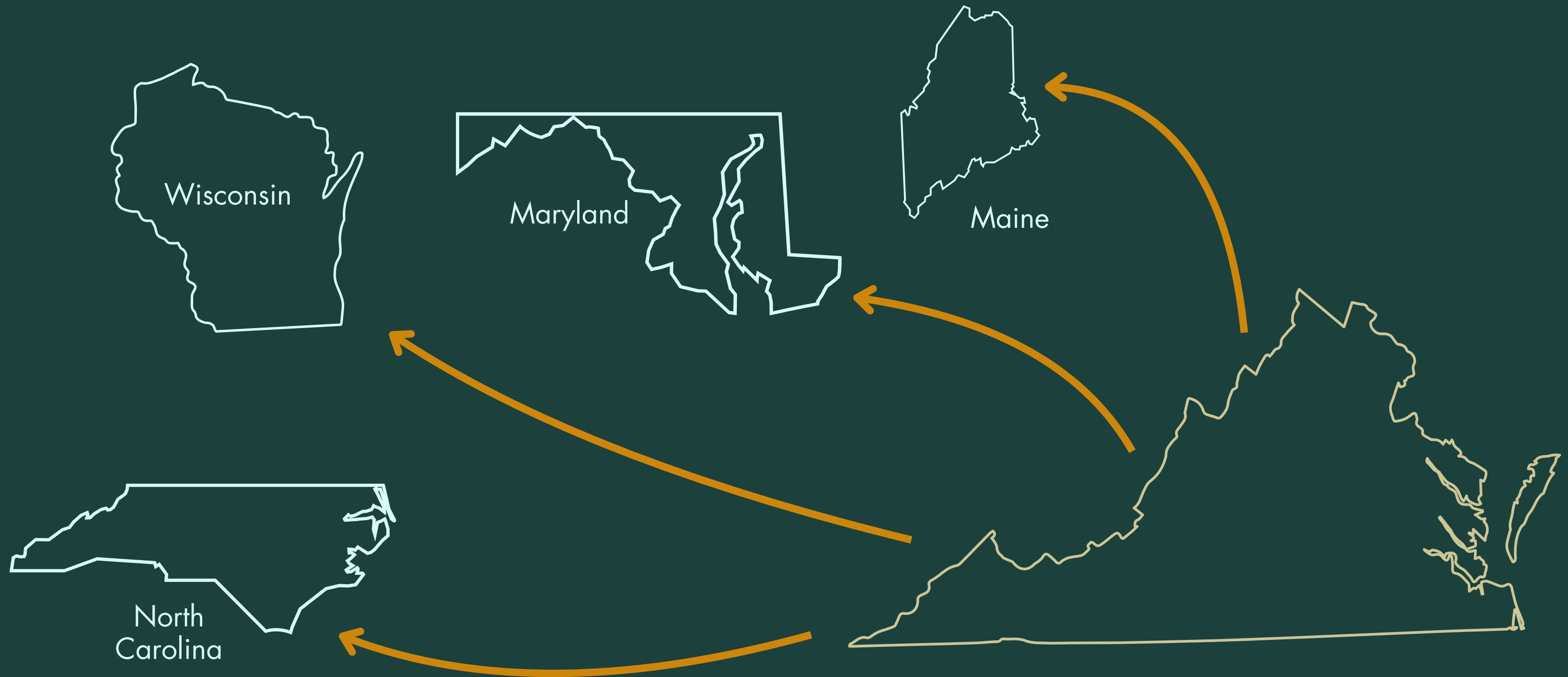
Bonus Features

- Family friendly (landowners don't need to find kid-sitters)
- New TSPs can shadow more seasoned TSPs
- TSPs get an opportunity to spend time with and learn from each other



Beyond Virginia

The Conservation Speed-Dating Workshop model is expanding across regions; connecting conservation teams, farmers, landowners, and funders to accelerate impact.



The Reviews Are In

“Speed dating could not have worked out better. . . great personal conversations with highly engaged staff of NGOs and agencies who **knew what they were talking about because they do it every day.**”

“Thank you for including me in the event this morning. It was a blast. Not only did I learn a lot, but I'll be **embarking on a project with my two sets of neighbors** who were also in attendance.

The only thing that could have made it more fun would be an open bar, but then I wouldn't remember anything that transpired and the environment would inevitably suffer.”



“We not only learned about programs that will help us achieve our conservation goals for our property, but also significantly adjusted our plans based on the opinions of the experts.

Having the aerial map was key to being able to quickly focus on opportunities and issues. It also gives us a way to map out our game plan, and to measure progress in the years ahead”

How-To Guide

To set others up for success, we have created a free how-to guide that walks you through the structure, offers insights on what works best, includes event checklists, and more!



Download the guide by scanning this code or
visiting VAGrasslandBirds.org/Resources

Publication in progress...

Conservation Speed-Dating Workshops: *An attractive new outreach strategy accelerating conservation on private lands*

C. Justin Proctor*, Smithsonian's National Zoo & Conservation Biology Institute,
Virginia Working Landscapes, Front Royal, VA 22630

October Greenfield, The Piedmont Environmental Council, Warrenton, VA 20186

Lauria McShane, The Piedmont Environmental Council, Warrenton, VA 20186

Cathryn McVicker, Quail Forever, Strasburg, VA 22657

Kevin Tate, Alliance for the Shenandoah Valley, New Market, VA 22844

Graham Diedrich, Department of Political Science, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI 48109; Smithsonian's National Zoo &
Conservation Biology Institute,

Virginia Working Landscapes, Front Royal, VA 22630

Amy Johnson, Smithsonian's National Zoo & Conservation Biology Institute,
Virginia Working Landscapes, Front Royal, VA 22630

*Corresponding author; Email: ProctorCJ@si.edu



Smithsonian
National Zoological Park
Conservation Biology Institute



Piedmont
Environmental
Council



SHENANDOAH VALLEY

Thank You to Our Supporters!



The
Volgenau
Foundation



NFWF



Land Trust Bird Conservation Initiative