The Commonwealth’s working farms and forests, natural areas, parks, rivers, battlefields and other historic sites are critical to our economy, culture and quality of life. In many ways, Virginia is defined by its land and waters.

With such unmatched resources, however, comes the responsibility to conserve and protect these special places for future generations. The Virginia Land Conservation Foundation (VLCF) works to do just that.

In 1999, the General Assembly and the governor established the VLCF to help fund protection of these resources. Funds from the foundation are used to establish permanent conservation easements and to purchase lands for conservation purposes. State agencies, local governments, public bodies and qualified nonprofit groups are eligible to receive matching grants from the foundation.

How Does VLCF Work?

The foundation provides state funding to conserve four categories of special land. Those categories are open spaces and parks, natural areas, historic areas, and farmland and forest preservation. The money comes from the Virginia Land Conservation Fund, which is managed by the foundation. A portion of the fund may be used for matching grants to localities, other public bodies and nonprofit organizations, and for grants to state agencies to purchase land or conservation easements.

The Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation provides administrative support to the foundation’s 19-member board. An interagency workgroup reviews and recommends grant applications to the board.

Board members are appointed by the governor, the Senate and the House of Delegates. Members are appointed from each of Virginia’s 11 congressional districts, ensuring representation from all corners of the state. The Secretary of Natural Resources is the chair of the VLCF and the Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry is also a member.

VLCF Results

Since the fund’s inception in 1999, the assembly has allocated more than $44.5 million to the Virginia Land Conservation Fund, including $9.8 million to the Virginia Outdoors Foundation. These funds leverage additional conservancy dollars from federal, local and private sources. For example, the 2011 grant round of $2.4 million leveraged an additional $16.6 million in matching funds. In other words, each dollar the state invests results in many more dollars worth of land conserved.

VLCF funding has not been steady, however, and has never matched documented demand (more than $96 million in grant requests through 2012, which was $63 million more than what was available).

Through 2012, VLCF grants have been awarded to help protect more than 45,500 acres of Virginia’s most important lands, from farms on the Eastern Shore, to parkland in Chesterfield, to Civil War battlefields in the Shenandoah Valley. Many lands protected through VLCF provide public recreational use and access to significant natural-resource lands.

The VLCF grant program is a critical component of the state’s land protection efforts, along with Land Preservation Tax Credits and the Purchase of Development Rights Program. The map in this brochure shows the location of all VLCF grant awards from 1999 to 2013.

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