

Virginia Land Conservation Foundation
FY2021 Grant Applications Recommended for Funding

February 5, 2021

FARMLANDS PRESERVATION CATEGORY

1. Piedmont Environmental Council – **Farmland Protection along the Blue Ridge Turnpike**

Piedmont Environmental Council (PEC) seeks to protect the 451-acre M & W Farm in Madison and Orange Counties, which has a prominent view shed identified in the Journey Through Hallowed Ground Corridor Management Plan. Current farming operations include producing beef cattle and mowing hay. M & W Farm encompasses high-quality farmland with 43% of the property (193 acres) having prime and statewide significant soils, and 66% (298 acres) of conservation priorities identified in ConserveVirginia, intersecting the Agriculture and Forestry, Cultural and Historic Preservation, Scenic Preservation, and Water Quality Improvement categories. About 74 acres of the property are located in the Madison-Barbour Rural Historic District south of Montpelier. The project will protect over 2.3 miles of perennial and intermittent watercourses in the Rapidan River watershed. Approximately 1.1 miles of buffers are located within the Natural Heritage designated Rapidan River-Blue, Cedar, Barbour Runs Stream Conservation Unit, where the federally threatened Yellow Lance mussel is known to occur. The project will leverage VLCF funds with matching federal Agricultural Land Easement funds and PEC will co-hold the conservation easement with the local Soil and Water Conservation District.

Total Project Cost: \$1,600,000. **Match:** NRCS-ALE, Volgenau Foundation, PEC, and landowner donation. **VLCF Grant Request:** \$315,000. **Recommended amount:** \$315,000.

2. Piedmont Environmental Council – **Farmland Protection along the Robinson River**

The Piedmont Environmental Council (PEC) seeks to protect the 592-acre Goodall Family Farm, a Century Farm with over two miles of frontage along the Robinson River. The large working farm encompasses high-quality farmland with 56% (332 acres) of prime and statewide significant soils and 24% (143 acres) of conservation priorities identified in ConserveVirginia in the Water Quality Improvement category. The farm borders 4.5 miles of perennial and intermittent watercourses. The Goodall family began acquiring the farm in 1906, with early farm operations including cultivating small grains and corn and raising dairy cows, pigs and chickens. Today, farming operations include producing beef cattle and mowing hay. In 2019 Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) awarded the Goodalls its forestry award for their outstanding forest management and reforestation efforts. PEC seeks to use VLCF funds to leverage matching federal Agricultural Land Easement funds. PEC and the local SWCD will co-hold the conservation easement.

Total Project Cost: \$2,110,000. **Match:** NRCS ACEP-ALE, Volgenau Foundation, PEC, and landowner donation. **VLCF Grant Request:** \$392,500. **Recommended amount:** \$106,875

FOREST PRESERVATION CATEGORY

1. Department of Wildlife Resources – **Eastern Shore Forest Conservation Initiative**

The Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) is requesting \$500,000 to help acquire, conserve and improve ±8,654 acres of forestland located in Accomack and Northampton counties through its Eastern Shore Forest Conservation initiative. These properties intersect several ConserveVirginia categories: Agriculture and Forestry, Floodplains and Flooding Resilience, Natural Habitat and Ecosystem Diversity, and Protected Landscapes Resilience. This project would expand existing Wildlife Management Areas, facilitate natural marsh migration, support coastal resiliency, provide new public lands for wildlife-related recreation, and, most importantly, improve habitat for migratory birds and species of greatest conservation need in an area of hemispheric importance. The Delmarva Peninsula, including Accomack and Northampton counties, supports 7-10 million birds in fall migration annually. The lack of sufficient food and shelter in the Virginia portion creates an energy deficit for birds attempting to cross Chesapeake Bay and continue southward migration. The DWR and partners estimate that improvement of the forest quality on the subject property could double the food resources available to migratory birds in this region. The addition of this acreage to the public land portfolio substantially expands opportunities for wildlife viewing, hunting, fishing, hiking, outdoor recreation, and more. The parcels are industrial timber lands that were sold to The Conservation Fund (TCF) in 1999. Project partners include the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, The Nature Conservancy, Ducks Unlimited, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the Wildlife Foundation of Virginia, and TCF. A FY20 VLCF grant of \$292,287 was awarded to DWR for this project in 2019.

Total Project Cost: \$10,942,750. **Match:** Several DWR funding sources, NFWF Acres for America, NCWC Conservation Grant, National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant, NAWCA, TNC, DU, and The Wildlife Foundation of Virginia. **VLCF Grant Request:** \$500,000.

Recommended amount: \$421,875.

HISTORIC RESOURCES CATEGORY

1. Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation – **Brill**

Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation (SVBF) requests a VLCF grant to acquire the 72-acre Brill property in Warren County, which intersects the Cultural and Historic Preservation, Protected Landscapes Resilience, and Water Quality Improvement categories of ConserveVirginia. The property is entirely within the core area of the Cedar Creek Battlefield, the boundary of the Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park, and The Shenandoah Valley Battlefields National Historic District. The center of Confederate General Joseph Kershaw's early morning attack that began the Battle of Cedar Creek on October 19, 1864, was centered on the Brill property. Currently the property is surrounded by 472 previously conserved acres. Conservation of this property would create a 544-acre preserve with trail access across the entire property, linking an existing trail to parts of the battlefield not currently accessible.

Total Project Cost: \$1,423,614. **Match:** Virginia Battlefield Preservation Fund, landowner donation and SVBF. **VLCF Grant Request:** \$411,807. **Recommended amount:** \$411,807.

2. Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation – **Stoner-Keller**

Grant funds are sought by Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation (SVBF) to place an easement over the 120-acre Stoner-Keller property in Shenandoah County, which is entirely within the core of the Fisher's Hill Battlefield and the study area of the Cedar Creek Battlefield. This project intersects with ConserveVirginia in the Cultural and Historic Preservation and Water Quality Improvement layers. Fishers Hill, including land that is part of this project, was used as a Confederate defensive position multiple times throughout the Civil War. The Stoner-Keller property will connect with 383 acres of neighboring conserved land. The easement will allow for a trail to connect these lands and further enhance the visitor experience.

Total Project Cost: \$684,340. **Match:** Virginia Battlefield Preservation Fund and ABPP. **VLCF Grant Request:** \$242,170. **Recommended amount:** \$242,170.

3. American Battlefield Trust – **James Jackson Tract at the Wilderness Battlefield**

The American Battlefield Trust seeks to preserve the 36.17-acre James Jackson Tract, located in Orange County, via a fee acquisition and with an open-space easement to be held by the Virginia Board of Historic Resources. The tract is located entirely in the Core Area of the Wilderness Battlefield and partially in the Study Areas of the Mine Run and Chancellorsville Battlefields. The property intersects ConserveVirginia in the Cultural and Historic Preservation and Water Quality Improvement categories. In addition to its historic significance, the James Jackson Tract includes 19 acres of woodlands, 573 feet of an intermittent stream, and is in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. Preservation by the Trust would prevent residential development and thwart efforts to consolidate surrounding parcels for a significant residential subdivision or utility-scale solar facility. Preservation would also protect the view sheds of nearby preserved tracts, including portions of the Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park, and improve the recreational and educational experiences of visitors.

Total Project Cost: \$650,150. **Match:** ABT and ABPP. **VLCF Grant Request:** \$275,000. **Recommended amount:** \$221,023.

NATURAL AREAS CATEGORY

1. Department of Conservation and Recreation – **Southside Virginia Conservation & Recreation Complex**

The Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) presents its first ever joint State Parks Division and Natural Heritage Division proposed acquisition project: the Southside Virginia Conservation & Recreation Complex in Halifax County near Scottsburg. This project seeks acquisition of highly significant conservation lands intersecting two ConserveVirginia categories: Natural Habitat and Ecosystem Diversity and Protected Landscapes Resilience. When completed, this 7,400 acre, multi-phase transaction will create a protected corridor connecting Kerr Lake, Staunton River State Park, and Difficult Creek Natural Area Preserve. This landscape-scale project would become one of the largest in the Piedmont region (Maryland to Alabama), and one of the largest state-owned conservation lands in Virginia. This project will result in opportunities to restore Piedmont natural habitats at an unprecedented scale, and support the local economy by

meeting growing demands for recreational trails and water access, while remedying the paucity of per-capita spending on parks and recreation in Halifax County, which is approximately 10% of the statewide average. Phase 1 targets acquisition of 2,010 acres adjoining Staunton River State Park, intersecting three mapped conservation sites, including four essential natural heritage resources, four additional heritage resources, as well as cultural resources. Ultimately, DCR intends to acquire the entire property in three phases over the next several years.

Total Project Cost: \$3,440,000. **Match:** \$1,720,000 LWCF pending. **VLCF Grant Request:** \$860,000. **Recommended amount:** \$843,750.

OPEN SPACE AND PARKS CATEGORY

1. Friends of the Lower Appomattox River – **Appomattox River Trail – Critical Petersburg Gap Connection**

Friends of the Lower Appomattox River (FOLAR) is requesting VLCF funding to acquire an eight-acre tract with 0.4 miles (2,112') of riverfront along a state designated Scenic River in Petersburg to complete the Appomattox River Trail. This project will secure a critical gap in the developing 25-mile greenway trail system that spans the Tri-Cities Region, linking neighborhoods, vibrant areas of commerce, and tranquil forested riparian greenspace. The project intersects two layers of ConserveVirginia: Cultural and Historic Preservation and Scenic Preservation. Completing the Appomattox River Trail will support growth of the outdoor recreation industry and increase its beneficial impact on health and wellness in the region. The trail would provide daily access for biking, walking and access to state waters for fishing, bank swimming and an informal rest site for paddlers. Increasing public greenspace and access to recreation and alternative transportation is invaluable in a region that ranks among the lowest in the state for health outcomes and is socially vulnerable. Project partners include FOLAR, the Virginia Outdoors Foundation, The Cameron Foundation and the City of Petersburg.

Total Project Cost: \$57,885. **Match:** Landowner donation (land value). **VLCF Grant Request:** \$28,943. **Recommended amount:** \$28,943.

2. City of Franklin – **Blackwater Conservation Acquisition**

The City of Franklin, in partnership with the Virginia Outdoors Foundation (VOF), requests grant funds to acquire 203 acres of prime river frontage on the state scenic Blackwater River to create a trailhead on the Blue Water Trail that terminates at the River Park in downtown Franklin. This property intersects four layers of ConserveVirginia: Natural Habitat and Ecosystem Diversity, Floodplains and Flooding Resilience, Scenic Preservation, and Water Quality Improvement. It contains old growth hardwood bottomlands and contains forestlands categorized as Forest Conservation Value 4 (50 acres) and 5 (70 acres). The tract sits at the intersection of two Natural Heritage sites, the Blackwater River Main Stem Conservation site, and the Antioch Swamp Stream Conservation unit, as well as within the TNC Chowan Sandridge/Blackwater River Terrestrial Portfolio. This site supports several rare species and significant natural communities including anadromous fish and colonial water birds (Audubon). The City of Franklin in partnership with

VOF has been awarded federal funding for the purchase of this tract to create a new public park with access to the Blackwater River.

Total Project Cost: \$1,268,500. **Match:** USFWS via Ducks Unlimited, Enviva Forest Conservation Fund, and VOF Preservation Trust Fund. **VLCF Grant Request:** \$500,000. **Recommended amount:** \$375,000.

3. Culpeper County – **Rappahannock River Park**

Culpeper County, together with the Piedmont Environmental Council and other partners, is seeking to acquire and conserve Rappahannock River Park with VLCF funding. The property consists of 46.53 acres and will provide public access to: the river with an existing non-motorized boat launch; a park with an existing primitive campground with 47-sites and associated infrastructure; nature trails; a stocked fishing pond; and picnic areas. The property intersects four layers of ConserveVirginia: Natural Habitat and Ecosystem Diversity, Floodplains and Flooding Resilience, Cultural and Historic Preservation, and Scenic Preservation. Currently, public access to the upper Rappahannock River is limited with only one established boat launch at Kelly’s Ford in Culpeper and the nearest downstream launch at Motts Landing in Spotsylvania, nearly 32 miles apart. This project is ideally located halfway between those two sites and will add to a network of public boating access sites that are quickly developing into an established water trail – including three sites upstream in Fauquier County that are slated for spring 2021. This project aligns with the 2018 Virginia Outdoors Plan’s featured regional project that aims to “Implement the Upper Rappahannock River Water Trail and provide water access along the other regional rivers and tributaries.” This rural property is mostly forested and borders the Rappahannock River for 650 feet. The historic and cultural significance is documented starting in the 1600s through the Civil War, and contains historic features such as Skinker’s Ford, with the historic roadbed still evident today.

Total Project Cost: \$789,190. **Match:** Culpeper County, Piedmont Environmental Council, LWCF, and VOF Preservation Trust Fund. **VLCF Grant Request:** \$315,676. **Recommended amount:** \$210,000.

4. Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority – **River Farm**

River Farm is a public garden and event venue consisting of 24 acres on the Potomac River in Fairfax County, threatened by sale. To secure the property for continued public access and resource preservation, NOVA Parks is working with partners including Fairfax County, Fairfax County Park Authority, elected officials, and Northern Virginia Conservation Trust and is seeking VLCF funding support. River Farm holds community significance for gatherings, nature walks, and its history of ownership by George Washington. It offers scenic and water quality conservation values, with more than 1,150 feet of mostly forested shoreline along the Potomac River. It is also in the Scenic Preservation layer of ConserveVirginia. River Farm currently fills a community need for public open space with river access. District 44 is one of the few districts in Fairfax County classified as “moderate social vulnerability.” None of the area meets benchmarks for swimming, boating, or fishing, overall characterized as “moderate” need for aquatic recreation access. NOVA Parks and our partners are in conversation with AHS and are collaborating to secure grants to conserve this critical resource for public use. NOVA Parks envisions a lasting partnership with Fairfax County for ownership and management of River Farm.

Total Project Cost: \$13,065,750. **Match:** Fairfax County, NVCT Save River Farm initiative, LWCF, and VOF Preservation Trust Fund. **VLCF Grant Request:** \$500,000. **Recommended amount:** \$150,000.

5. Virginia Outdoors Foundation – **Camp Kum Ba Yah**

Camp Kum Ba Yah, Inc. (KBY) seeks to purchase and enter into a conservation easement with the Virginia Outdoors Foundation (VOF), on the 44-acre urban forest in Lynchburg, upon which it has facilitated outdoor nature programming for the past 70 years. KBY entered into a Lease and Option Agreement with the current owner in 2018, agreeing to purchase the \$1.1 million property by August, 2021. If KBY is unable to purchase the property, land development poses an imminent threat, and the community would lose a forest and nature education program treasured by generations of citizens. VOF, as the easement holder, will permanently protect the property, providing inclusive outdoor nature education and public recreational opportunities. The mature forest contributes to climate resilience and provides habitat space to wildlife, and its streams and pond contribute to a healthier watershed. Additionally, KBY has a rich civil rights history, encouraging use by diverse populations over its 70-year history. Today, KBY offers scholarships to nearly 50% of campers, fulfilling a core value that no child is denied the gift of camp due to financial need. It continues to expand its year-round programming to school groups, families, and partner organizations. A FY20 VLCF grant of \$201,134 was awarded for this project in 2019.

Total Project Cost: \$1,040,950. **Match:** VOF Preservation Trust Fund and landowner donation. **VLCF Grant Request:** \$324,000. **Recommended amount:** \$79,807.