

**Virginia Land Conservation Foundation Board of Trustees
Subcommittee
June 21, 2016
Richmond, Virginia**

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT

The Honorable Albert C. Pollard, Jr., Subcommittee Chair
R. Brian Ball
Glenda C. Booth

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS NOT PRESENT

Joan Fenton

DCR STAFF PRESENT

Clyde E. Cristman, Director
Suzan Bulbukaya, Land Conservation Analyst
Michael Fletcher, Board and Constituent Services Liaison

OTHERS PRESENT

Nikki Rovner, The Nature Conservancy

PLACE AND TIME

The meeting of the VLCF Subcommittee convened at 11:00 a.m. on Tuesday, June 21, 2016 at the DCR Offices located at 600 E. Main Street, Richmond, Virginia.

ESTABLISHMENT OF A QUORUM

With three (3) members of the subcommittee present, a quorum was established.

COMMITTEE DISCUSSION

Mr. Pollard asked for clarification regarding state agencies and purchase of lands.

- Budget language passed by the 2016 General Assembly precludes Virginia State Parks from purchasing land without prior legislative approval.
- State agencies with statutory authority to purchase land include DCR (State Parks, Natural Heritage), Department of Forestry, Department of Historic Resources, Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, and the Virginia Outdoors Foundation.

The committee reviewed § 10.1-1020 of the *Code of Virginia* which outlines the purpose of the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation.

Mr. Pollard posed the question whether there was a benefit for VLCF acquiring land not acquired by other agencies. He asked if the committee could envision a benefit to the VLCF holding land.

Mr. Cristman noted that state agency land transactions could take years to complete. DCR often works with non-profit land conservation groups when a landowner needs to move forward with the sale of his land faster than the state can process the transaction. Non-profit organizations can close on transactions much faster than public bodies like DCR or VLCF because they do not have to go through all of the different steps and levels of review by other state agencies. The non-profits would then sell the property to DCR when all of the proper channels clear and funding is in place.

Committee consensus was that there is no need for VLCF to be a landholder. The committee agreed to take this to the full Board for discussion of possible legislation to have this language struck from the VLCF statute.

Under § 10.1-1020 F, a portion of grant funds, up to 20 percent, is allowed to be used to develop properties purchased in fee simple, or through the purchase of development rights, for public use. The committee discussed whether the VLCF could award money for the development of properties to help with infrastructure or interpretation. Staff noted that this could be part of the grant request, but that development costs are currently not included in the grant manual. The committee discussed the possibility of the grant application including up to 20% to cover the cost of infrastructure for public use. Consensus was that this should be a discussion for the full board.

Under § 10.1-1021, the committee discussed the powers of the Foundation, including the strategic plan for the Board. Staff advised that the land conservation plan is addressed in the Virginia Outdoors Plan (VOP). The committee requested that staff brief the Board regarding the VOP at the next full Board meeting.

Under § 10.1-1021, the committee discussed developing a needs assessment for future expenditures from the Fund and maintaining an inventory of those properties in which the Commonwealth holds a legal interest. Regarding the inventory and needs assessment, Ms. Bulbulkaya noted that land conservation staff works with the Division of Natural Heritage to maintain the inventory of conserved lands throughout the Commonwealth. She provided a copy of the map combining all VLCF grant award projects with DCR's Development Vulnerability Model, showing the relative risk of conversion from "natural", rural, or other open space lands to urbanized or other built-up land uses. The model provides a way to see where more people live by analyzing urban and metropolitan areas and impervious land cover.

Ms. Bulbulkaya also reviewed a spreadsheet that listed all VLCF grants and provided a vulnerability ranking. The Interagency Task Force considers these rankings when making grant recommendations.

The committee expressed concern that the model shows the lands worthy of conservation but does not address the associated cost. It was suggested that a needs assessment be developed based on projected dollar amounts.

Ms. Booth noted that several people have expressed the view that Northern Virginia jurisdictions may be disadvantaged by the current grant criteria. Ms. Booth is asking the staff and Board to review the current criteria and to examine whether changes can be made that take into consideration factors that could make grant awards more likely or more favorably judged for Northern Virginia jurisdictions.

She also suggested that the criteria should perhaps consider factors like population served, where funds are generated, restoration, biodiversity, natural connectivity and locally rare species.

Mr. Cristman asked that, for the next meeting, staff provide an analysis by congressional district for projects funded and not funded for the past five years.

The committee recommended inclusion of the following items in the agenda for the next full Board meeting:

- Update/overview of the land conservation plan in the VOP with information on how the Board can provide input.
- Section F – discussion of infrastructure. Recommend to delay conversation but be aware of this provision provides the option for minimal funding.
- Look at the needs assessment based on dollars needed vs. land to conserve.
- How Board members can be ambassadors for the program.
- Recommend cleanup bill to address VLCF land owning responsibilities (recommend remove).
- What are the deadlines for introduction of legislation?
- Five-year review of successful and unsuccessful grant applications.

The committee recommended that a subcommittee of the Board review the grant criteria every three years.

The meeting adjourned at 1:30 p.m.