

**Virginia Land Conservation Foundation Board of Trustees Meeting
Friday, February 5, 2021 – 10:00 a.m.**

VIRTUAL MEETING

TIME AND PLACE

The meeting of the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation Board of Trustees took place via Go To Meeting on Friday, February 5, 2021.

VIRGINIA LAND CONSERVATION FOUNDATION BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEMBERS PRESENT

The Honorable Matthew Strickler, Secretary of Natural Resources, Chair

Mary-Carson Stiff, Vice Chair

The Honorable Bettina Ring, Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry

Elizabeth Andrews

Andrew C. Jennison

James W. Beamer

Sonya Powell

Glenda C. Booth

Russell Vern Presley, II

Jay C. Ford

Bruce VlK

Kat Imhoff

The Honorable John Paul Woodley, Jr.

Bob Lazaro

VIRGINIA LAND CONSERVATION FOUNDATION BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEMBERS NOT PRESENT

The Honorable David W. Marsden

The Honorable Richard H. Stuart

Dr. James F. Casey

Susan E. Donner

The Honorable Albert C. Pollard, Jr.

STATE AGENCY STAFF PRESENT

Clyde E. Cristman, DCR Director, Executive Secretary

Joshua Saks, Deputy Secretary of Natural Resources

Rochelle Altholz, DCR

Becky Gwynn, DWR

Suzan Bulbulkaya, DCR

Terry Lasher, DOF

Jason Bulluck, DCR

Lisa McGee, DCR

Nathan Burrell, DCR

Kristal McKelvey, DCR

Linda Crowe, DCR

Larry Mikkelson, DCR

Gina DiCicco, DCR

Wendy Musumeci, DHR

Karl Didier, DOF

David Neudeck, DCR

Rob Evans, DCR

Gray O'Dwyer, OAG

Michael Fletcher, DCR

Sharon Partee, DCR

Kimberly Freiburger DCR

Jen Perkins, VDACS

Brian Fuller, DCR

Karri Richardson, DHR

Catherine Shankles, OAG
Tom Smith, DCR

Kellie Seaton, DCR
Jennifer Wampler, DCR

OTHERS PRESENT

Parker Agelasto, Capital Region Land Conservancy
Wendy Austin, Friends of the Lower Appomattox River
Maggi Bloomstrom, Piedmont Environmental Council
Aaron Bumgarner
Tom Gilmore, American Battlefield Trust
Heather Groves, American Battlefield Trust
Charles Jones, Stratford Hall
Andrea Reese, NOVA Parks
Nikki Rovner, The Nature Conservancy
Ellen Shepard, Virginia's United Land Trusts
Mary Ann Saunders, The Living River Trust
Natasha Skelton, Valley Conservation Council

OPENING REMARKS AND CERTIFICATION OF VIRTUAL MEETING

Secretary Strickler called the meeting to order at 10:03 a.m. and gave the following comments:

Good morning, I would like to call this virtual meeting of the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation Board of Trustees to order.

Thank you all for joining us. Again, I need to take the time to go over our virtual meeting rules. Generally, public bodies are prohibited from meeting electronically under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). However, emergency language approved by the Governor and General Assembly in April allows us to move forward with certain restrictions that I will outline below.

Before I review those provisions, please let me take a moment to review how this meeting will work. We want to allow for participation by Board members, staff, and members of the public who wish to comment. However, it is essential that we are able to manage the conversation effectively.

While the meeting will be open for Board comment, due to the challenges associated with an electronic meeting, we want to allow members of the public to be heard. If you would like to make a comment, please do so in the chat box. Sue and Gina will be monitoring the chat box and let us know when someone has submitted a comment. We will address your comments as time allows.

Please be patient with us as we work through this. We understand and appreciate the challenges. Again, I have to read a lengthy introduction for our virtual meeting. This is long, but is required to be read aloud under Chapter 1283 for all electronic meetings:

Chapter 1283 of the 2020 Acts of Assembly, also known as the "Caboose Bill," includes language addressing the ability of public bodies to conduct electronic meetings without the need for a quorum being present in a single physical location ("Electronic Meeting").

This language was submitted as an amendment by the Governor and approved by the General Assembly at their April 22, 2020 reconvened Session. The Governor subsequently signed the Caboose Bill and the Bill was effective as of April 24, 2020.

The Caboose Bill allows public bodies to hold Electronic Meetings when the Governor has declared a state of emergency pursuant to § 44-146.17 if:

“(i) the nature of the declared emergency makes it impracticable or unsafe for the public body or governing board to assemble in a single location;

(ii) the purpose of the meeting is to discuss or transact the business statutorily required or necessary to continue operations of the public body...and the discharge of its lawful purposes, duties, and responsibilities...” § 4-0.01(g).

The Caboose Bill also has language regarding recordings and transcriptions of Electronic Meetings. Please be advised that this meeting is being recorded. This recording will be available to the public through the DCR website. The comments in the chat room will also be preserved as a public record. Official minutes of this meeting will be drafted and posted in accordance with regular procedures.

The Caboose Bill does not allow the Board to hold an Electronic Meeting to discuss or transact business for *any purpose*. Rather, they may do so as long as the agenda items that the public body plans to take up are: (a) statutorily required or (b) necessary to continue operations and discharge lawful purposes, duties and responsibilities.

It is the Board’s responsibility to determine whether “the nature of the declared emergency makes it impracticable or unsafe for the public body or governing board to assemble in a single location.”

At the conclusion of my remarks, I will ask for a motion for the board to make this determination. If that motion fails, this electronic meeting will end at that point.

The Caboose Bill requires compliance with the provisions of § 2.2-3708.2. Therefore, in accordance with § 2.2-3708.2.D.2, public bodies must include a telephone number that may be used to notify the public body of any interruption in the telephonic or video broadcast of the meeting.

In the event that a disruption occurs, participants should contact Mr. Fletcher by phone or text at 804-317-8934.

Additionally, if there is an interruption in the broadcast, the meeting must be suspended until public access is restored.

Those provisions of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act not addressed by the Caboose Bill remain in effect.

Before we continue with the business portion of the meeting, I will ask Mr. Fletcher to call the roll for Board members and anticipated staff. Other participants will be recorded through the chat window. If you are participating by phone and your name is not called, please call or text Mr. Fletcher at 804-317-8934.

In addition, if at any time you lose connection and are unable to reconnect, please contact Mr. Fletcher at the same number.

I will now turn to Mr. Fletcher for the calling of the roll:

ROLL CALL

PRESENT

The Honorable Matthew Strickler, Secretary of Natural Resources, Chair

Mary-Carson Stiff, Vice Chair

The Honorable Bettina Ring, Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry

Elizabeth Andrews

James W. Beamer

Glenda C .Booth

Jay C. Ford

Kat Imhoff

Bob Lazaro

Andrew C. Jennison

Sonya Powell

Russell Vern Presley, II

Bruce Vlk

The Honorable John Paul Woodley, Jr.

ABSENT

Dr. James F. Casey

Susan E. Donner

The Honorable David W. Marsden

The Honorable Albert C. Pollard, Jr.

The Honorable Richard H. Stuart

With fourteen (14) members of the Board participating, a quorum was established.

Secretary Strickler continued:

I will now present a recommended motion, and wait for a board member to request the motion:

BOARD ACTION

Ms. Booth moved, and Mr. Lazaro seconded the following motion:

The Virginia Land Conservation Foundation Board of Trustees certifies that the nature of the declared COVID-19 emergency makes it impracticable or unsafe for the Board to assemble in a single location and further that the agenda items to be taken up at this meeting are necessary to continue operations and discharge lawful purposes, duties, and responsibilities of the Board.

ROLL CALL VOTE

AYE Strickler, Stiff, Ring, Ford, Vlck, Imhoff, Booth, Presley, Lazaro, Woodley, Andrews, Beamer, Jennison, Powell

NAY None

Secretary Strickler continued:

I want to explain further how we will handle participation by board members, staff, and the public. Everyone, except the individual presenting materials for an agenda item, will be muted. Once the presentation is completed, the board members, and only board members, will be unmuted for discussion. Staff will assist me with ensuring board members are recognized when they have questions or comments. As needed, staff will be unmuted to address questions or concerns. Members of the public will be able to ask questions and provide input by utilizing the chat box function only. As time allows, we will respond to those questions and comments in the chat function.

We will now proceed with the business of the Board as outlined in the agenda.

Secretary Strickler noted that this was Crossover Day in the General Assembly and that Senators Marsden and Stuart were otherwise occupied.

Secretary Ring reported that Karl Didier has joined the Department of Forestry as the new Land Conservation Manager.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM DECEMBER 10, 2020

BOARD ACTION

Mr. Lazaro moved and Ms. Imhoff seconded that the minutes of the December 10, 2020 meeting of the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation Board of Trustees be approved as submitted by staff.

ROLL CALL VOTE

AYE Strickler, Stiff, Ring, Ford, Vlck, Imhoff, Booth, Lazaro, Woodley, Andrews, Beamer, Jennison, Powell

NAY None

ABSTAIN: Presley

The motion carried and the minutes were approved.

FY21 Grant Round I

RECENTLY COMPLETED VLCF GRANT PROJECTS - Larry Mikkelson, Land Conservation Specialist, DCR

Mr. Mikkelson provided an update regarding recently completed projects.

Since the VLCF Board meeting on September 22, 2020, the following four VLCF grants have been successfully completed. The fifth grant listed was withdrawn.

Northern Virginia Conservation Trust – Long Lane (FY2018)

This grant helped to fund the purchase of a conservation easement on an active 75-acre family farm that raises pastured livestock and is located in western Loudoun County. Additional funding was provided by the Natural Resources Conservation Service Agricultural Land Easement program. The easement is co-held by the Northern Virginia Conservation Trust and Loudoun County. Protection of the property enhances water quality with approximately 1,500 linear feet of permanent vegetated riparian buffers that exclude livestock along an intermittent stream. Additionally, 91 acres of prime and statewide important agricultural soils are protected, and will remain available for agricultural use in perpetuity.

Grant Award: \$187,695. Payment Amount: \$187,695. Match: \$502,305.

Meadowview Biological Research Station – Game Lake Refuge at Joseph Pines Preserve (FY2018)

A grant to the Meadowview Biological Research Station helped to fund the acquisition of a 196-acre addition to the Joseph Pines Preserve in Sussex County, for a combined 428 acres permanently protected at the preserve. The property lies between the preserve and the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources Game Refuge Lake. An existing Virginia Department of Forestry open-space easement has been amended to include protection of the additional acreage. This project now protects with permanent vegetated buffers nearly 10,000 feet of perennial and intermittent streams that flow into Game Refuge Lake. Additionally, this project significantly contributes to the longleaf pine restoration efforts in Virginia through the Virginia Longleaf Pine Cooperators Group, and its goal to re-establish longleaf pine across its native range in Virginia.

Grant Award: \$175,000. Payment Amount: \$175,000. Match: \$235,000.

Department of Conservation and Recreation – Pedlar Hills Natural Area Preserve Addition (FY2018)

DCR's Natural Heritage Program utilized a VLCF grant to add two acres along the South Fork Roanoke River adjacent to Pedlar Hills Natural Area Preserve in Montgomery County. Although small, the subject property is within a mapped Conservation Site, which has the highest possible biodiversity ranking in Virginia and supports long-term resiliency of the already protected and highly significant lands on the preserve. The tract lies immediately downslope from a significant mapped occurrence of a

globally rare habitat and a population of a federally endangered plant, and will extend resource protection to the banks of the South Fork Roanoke River.

Grant Award: \$53,500. Payment Amount: \$53,500. Match: \$4,525.

Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority (NOVA Parks) – Pohick Bay Regional Park Inholding Acquisition (FY2020)

NOVA Parks was able to utilize a VLCF grant along with other non-state funding sources to acquire three acres of land adjacent to the Potomac River in southern Fairfax County that is part of a regionally significant conservation corridor and within the Scenic Preservation layer of ConserveVirginia. The land acquired was the last privately-owned inholding within the existing 1,007-acre regional park that is protected under the Land and Water Conservation Fund. The property is comprised of mature forest habitat and has 250 linear feet of Potomac River shoreline with a forested riparian buffer. It is within a Chesapeake Bay Resource Protection Area and the Potomac River floodplain. Proposed park uses include hiking, picnicking, fishing, boating, equestrian trails, and natural and cultural resource interpretation.

Grant Award: \$322,500. Payment Amount: \$322,500. Match: \$977,500.

The grant for \$500,000 to the Capital Region Land Conservancy was withdrawn.

UPDATE TO THE FY21 GRANT ROUND 1 EXPENDITURE PLAN - Suzan Bulbulkaya, Land Conservation Manager, DCR

Ms. Bulbulkaya presented the expenditure plan for Grant Round 1.

FUNDING CATEGORIES	FY21 Budget Bill Chapter 1289, Item 374 A.1.	FY20 Remainder	TOTAL
I. VOF Open-Space Lands Preservation Trust Fund (25% per § 10.1-1020 C.)	\$1,125,000		\$1,125,000
II. Grant Program			
(i) Farmland and Forest Preservation	\$843,750		\$843,750
(ii) Historic Area Preservation	\$843,750	\$31,250	\$875,000
(iii) Natural Area Protection	\$843,750		\$843,750
(iv) Open Space and Parks	\$843,750		\$843,750
TOTAL	\$4,500,000	\$31,250	\$4,531,250

Ms. Bulbulkaya noted that due to current budget uncertainties, staff was assuming a budget of \$4,500,000 for FY21 as appropriated in FY20. In addition, the plan shows that for the current grant round, \$31,250 in the Historic Area Preservation category remained unallocated and is available to be added to the next grant round.

BOARD ACTION

Ms. Imhoff moved that the Virginia Land Conservation Board of Trustees approve the reallocation of unspent funds to the FY21 grant round as presented by staff. Mr. Lazaro seconded and the roll call vote was as follows:

REVISED: 2/16/2021 2:47 PM

AYE Strickler, Stiff, Ring, Ford, Vlck, Imhoff, Booth, Presley, Lazaro, Woodley, Andrews, Beamer, Jennison, Powell

NAY None

VLCF FY21 GRANT ROUND 1 OVERVIEW - *Suzan Bulbulkaya*

Ms. Bulbulkaya presented the following over view of FY21 Grant Round 1.

- The FY21 Budget first appropriated \$4.5M for the FY21 VLCF grant round
 - As required in Code, 25% goes to VOF's Preservation Trust Fund: \$1,125,000
 - \$3,375,000 balance for grants
 - Plus \$31,250 in Historic Category from FY20
 - \$3,406,250 total funding available for FY21 Grant Round I
 - The FY21 grant round was open from Sept. 22 through Nov. 30, 2020
- Announcements were emailed to localities, land trusts, conservation organizations and agencies
- Virtual grant workshop was held on Oct. 9th and posted on our website
- Our Interagency Task Force met twice in December for scoring

--

- A total of 30 applications were received:
 - 3 in Farmland and 4 in Forest Preservation
 - 7 in Historic Areas
 - 1 in Natural Areas
 - 15 in Open Space & Parks
- Total amount of funding requested: \$10.5 M, with total project costs exceeding \$55.0 M
- If all projects could be funded, they would protect a total of 15,876 acres

--

- 12 Projects are recommended for funding:
 - 2 in Farmland and 1 in Forest Preservation
 - 3 in Historic Areas
 - 1 in Natural Areas
 - 5 in Open Space & Parks
- The total acreage of the recommended projects: 12,261
- Of the recommended projects, 92% are located within ConserveVirginia

--

Other VLCF Grant requirements:

- Budget requires at least 50% of grant funds be used for projects that provide public access; and
- Code requires at least one third of grant funds to be used for projects that secure easements to be held or co-held by a public body.

The recommended projects:

- 10 of the recommended projects (88% of FY21 funding) will provide public access.

- 7 of the recommended projects (41% of FY21 funding) will have open-space easements.

PRESENTATION OF RECOMMENDED GRANT ROUND 1 APPLICATIONS FOR AUTHORIZATION

Secretary Strickler called on the members of the Interagency Task Force to present recommendations in their respective categories.

Farmland Preservation: *Jen Perkins, Coordinator, Office of Farmland Preservation, Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services*

Ms. Perkins presented the following recommendations:

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 VLFC 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. VLFC Grant Request: \$315,000. Recommended amount: \$315,000.

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 VLFC 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. VLFC Grant Request: \$392,500. Recommended amount: \$106,875

Ms. Stiff raised a procedural question regarding the awarding of two grants to the same entity. She asked if there was an obligation to see the funds distributed to other organizations.

Director Cristman responded that while, unusual, there is no prohibition for awarding the top to grants to the same organization. He noted that the balance of the grant recommendations provided funding to numerous organizations as well as state agencies.

Forestland Preservation: *Terrence Lasher, Assistant State Forester, Department of Forestry*

Mr. Lasher presented the following project:

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.

With regard to the migratory bird portion of the presentation, Mr. Ford asked if the board was funding only acquisitions or funding the work necessary for the restoration of the habitat.

Mr. Lasher noted that the VLCF grant would fund the land acquisition and that the funding for improvements to the habitat would be through forest management activities.

Ms. Gwynn from the Department of Forestry commented that the long-term plan for each parcel would be to harvest the industrial pine and to replace that with more native vegetation conducive to the needs of migratory birds.

Director Cristman advised that the funds provided through the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation could only be used for fee simple acquisitions or easements. As part of the grant award, recipients submit a land management plan.

Historic Areas Preservation: *Wendy Musumeci, Easement Program Coordinator, Department of Historic Resources*

Ms. Musumeci presented the recommendations in the Historic Areas Preservation category.

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.

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.

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 Area Protection: *Jason Bulluck, Director, Virginia Natural Heritage Program, DCR*

Mr. Bulluck presented the following recommendation in the Natural Area Protection category:

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 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. 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 Spaces and Parks: *Kristal McKelvey, Recreation Grants Manager, Planning and Recreation Resources Division, DCR*

Ms. McKelvey presented the recommendations in the Open Spaces and Parks category.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

BOARD DISCUSSION AND APPROVAL OF GRANT AWARDS

Secretary Strickler opened the floor for comment regarding the grant awards.

Ms. Booth spoke in favor of the River Farms application. She noted that this is a historic property that might otherwise be slated for development. This was one of George Washington’s original five properties.

There were no further Board comments regarding the recommendations.

Secretary Strickler called for public comment regarding the recommendations.

Mary Ann Saunders with The Living River Trust gave the following written comments:

Good morning or afternoon Secretary Stickler, Secretary Ring, Director Cristman and Board Members.

I very much appreciate the opportunity to address the Board today.

My name is Mary Ann Saunders and I am an officer of the Board of the Living River Trust, an urban land trust based in Hampton Roads Virginia, on behalf of the proposed Newton Neck nature preserve/park to be located in City of Chesapeake.

Recently retired after 30 years in City Mgmt. in City of Chesapeake—focused on State and Federal relations, Transportation and the Environment, as well as public safety.

LRT was created in 2004....collecting millions of dollars from dredging State bottom lands---that by law is restricted to remediation of legacy contamination along Elizabeth River. We have two organizational programs, sediment mitigation and land conservation.

After learning our submitted project wasn't recommended by DCR staff for funding, we thought it would be worthwhile to speak today as we intend to apply again for funding in round 2.

Joining LRT has allowed me to once again engage with Chesapeake officials and our wonderful citizens---for delivery to the public of a unique riverfront park in an urban, fully developed part of the city. The City and LRT are working together on this undertaking.

The City of Chesapeake is working for a city wide 10 minute Walk Goal that encourages placing high quality recreation amenities. This parcel also will link a nearby Oak Grove lake park through several neighborhoods to shores of the Elizabeth River's southern branch. Newton Neck is a 90-acre oasis, located with 5,000 feet of shoreline the Elizabeth River's Southern Branch (Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway)

Functioning as a majestic green buffer between heavy industries such as a massive construction and demolition debris landfill and quiet residential neighborhoods. Over the past decades the property has been the subject of countless rezonings unsuccessful, due to vociferous citizen outcry. Our residents want more parkland and we want to partner with entities, like the City, to transform their hopes into reality. If not used as park, the property owners may well pursue development by-right or another re-zoning

We are an urban land trust working to conserve land in intensely developed areas that experience high flood risks due to sea level rise. These unique challenges are not always reflected in typical land conservation funding opportunities and grant criteria.

I appreciate the opportunity to listen and learn about the VLCF grant process so we will be better positioned to apply for support of the Newton Neck Park in this year's round 2 and other conservation projects in the future. Very much appreciate meeting with staff at the site and to get suggestions as how to improve our application.

Secretary Strickler called for motions to approve the recommended grant awards. He noted that due to Board member conflict the approval of the grants in the Farmland Preservation category would need to be taken as a separate motion.

BOARD ACTION

Mr. Lazaro moved that the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation Board of Trustees approve the two recommended grants in the Farmland Preservation category as presented by staff. Ms. Stiff seconded and the roll call vote was as follows:

ROLL CALL VOTE

AYE Strickler, Stiff, Ring, Ford, Vlk, Booth, Presley, Lazaro, Woodley, Andrews, Beamer, Jennison, Powell

NAY None

ABSTAIN: Imhoff

BOARD ACTION

Ms. Imhoff moved that the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation Board of Trustees approve the remaining grant recommendations as presented by staff. Mr. Woodley seconded and the roll call vote was as follows.

ROLL CALL VOTE

AYE Strickler, Stiff, Ring, Ford, Vlk, Imhoff, Booth, Presley, Lazaro, Woodley, Andrews, Beamer, Jennison, Powell

NAY None

DISCUSSION AND APPROVAL OF THE VLCF FY21 GRANT ROUND- *Suzan Bulbulkaya*

Proposed Grant Fiscal Expenditure Plan

Ms. Bulbulkaya presented the proposed grant fiscal expenditure plan.

FUNDING CATEGORIES		FY21 Budget Bill Chapter 56, Item 374 A.1.	Unspent Grant Funds to be Approved & Reallocated	TOTAL
1.	III. VOF Open-Space Lands Preservation Trust Fund (25% per § 10.1-1020 C.)	\$1,375,000		\$1,375,000
2.	IV. Grant Program			
3.	(v) Farmland Preservation	\$825,000		\$825,000
4.	(vi) Forest Preservation	\$825,000		\$825,000
5.	(vii) Historic Area Preservation	\$825,000		\$825,000
6.	(viii) Natural Area Protection	\$825,000	\$500,000	\$1,325,000
7.	(ix) Open Space and Parks	\$825,000		\$825,000
TOTAL		\$5,500,000	\$500,000	\$6,000,000
Summary of Additional Unspent Grant Funds				
Natural Area Protection		\$500,000	Withdrawn: FY20 Bluebell Tract	

*Due to budget uncertainties, we assumed a budget of \$4,500,000 for FY21 as appropriated in FY20. Because the final total amount is \$10,000,000, this grant round will award the remaining \$5,500,000 and includes separate Farmland and Forest funding categories as per § 10.1-1020 (D).

Proposed Timeline for Applications and Awards

Ms. Bulbulkaya presented the proposed timeline for applications and awards.

Proposed FY21 PART II VLCF Grant Schedule	
February 5, 2021	VLCF Board meeting to approve grant manual and initiate the grant round request for proposals (RFP).
Week of February 12, 2021	Announce official opening of grant round (update website and send emails).
By End of Feb 2021	Virtual Grant Workshop: orientation and program information for grant applicants. Continued outreach to underserved communities.
Monday, April 5, 2021	Deadline for application submittal.
Weeks of April 19 and May 3, 2021	Interagency taskforce meetings to score projects - usually takes two meetings.
Late May 2021	SNR and Director's review of applications and recommendations of IAT.
Week of June 7, 2021	VLCF Board meeting. Approval of grant awards.
By June 30, 2021	Grant agreements sent to grant recipients. Projects have two years to close.

Proposed Grant Manual and Application

Ms. Bulbulkaya reviewed the proposed Grant Manual. She noted that changes were technical in nature. She noted that a request was added to the cover to address potential updates to ConserveVirginia.

Ms. Imhoff asked if there were a way to migrate the applications to electronic submissions.

Ms. Bulbulkaya responded that electronic submissions such as PDFs would be acceptable to staff and asked if the Board would like to add that option to this grant round.

Director Cristman suggested that as part of the motion to approve a statement be added that the application be amended to allow for electronic submissions, and that the appropriate email address be provided in the manual.

Mr. Ford noted that, while the changes were good, the subcommittee proposed in the fall has not had the opportunity to meet to review the manual.

Secretary Strickler advised that a meeting of the subcommittee would be set up following the General Assembly Session.

BOARD ACTION

Mr. Beamer moved that the proposed grant round and manual be approved as submitted by staff with the inclusion of a provision for electronic submission. Mr. Lazaro seconded and the roll call vote was as follows.

ROLL CALL VOTE

AYE Strickler, Stiff, Ring, Ford, Vlk, Imhoff, Booth, Presley, Lazaro, Woodley, Andrews,
 Beamer, Jennison, Powell

NAY None

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no further public comment.

ADJOURN

There was no further business and the meeting adjourned at 12:08 p.m.