

**Virginia Land Conservation Foundation Board of Trustees**  
**May 16, 2023**  
**East Reading Room, Patrick Henry Building, Richmond, Virginia**

**TIME AND PLACE**

The meeting of the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation Board of Trustees took place at 10:00 a.m. on Tuesday, May 16, 2023, in the East Reading Room of the Patrick Henry Building in Richmond, Virginia.

**VIRGINIA LAND CONSERVATION FOUNDATION BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEMBERS PRESENT**

The Honorable Travis Voyles, Secretary of Natural and Historic Resources, Chairman

The Honorable Matthew Lohr, Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry

The Honorable Richard H. Stuart

Mary-Carson Stiff, Vice Chair

Elizabeth Andrews

Glenda C. Booth

Leslie Cockburn

Jay Ford

Andrew C. Jennison

Samantha Vargas Poppe

Sonya Powell

Lisa Kestner Quigley

Bruce VlK

Woodie Walker

Krystina E. White

Matthew S. Wells, DCR Director, *ex officio*

**VIRGINIA LAND CONSERVATION FOUNDATION BOARD MEMBERS NOT PRESENT**

The Honorable David W. Marsden

Dr. James F. Casey

Susan E. Donner

Kat Imhoff

**STATE AGENCY STAFF PRESENT**

Suzan Bulbulkaya, DCR	Derrick Bolen, DCR
Jason Bulluck, DCR	Linda Crowe, DCR
Gina DiCicco, DCR	Karl Didier, DOF
Laura Ellis, DCR	Emi Endo, DCR
Rob Evans, DCR	Michael R. Fletcher, DCR
Brian Fuller, DCR	Becky Gwynn, DWR
Dan Hannon, DCR	Charles Marston, DCR
Kristal McKelvey, DCR	Larry Mikkelson, DCR
Karri Richardson, DHR	Frank Stovall, DCR
Emily White, VOF	

**OTHERS PRESENT**

Parker Agelasto, Capital Region Land Conservancy

Mary Elfner, The 500 Year Forest Foundation

Andrea Reese

Nikki Rovner, TNC

Ellen Shepard, VaULT

## **ESTABLISHMENT OF A QUORUM**

With fifteen members of the Board present, a quorum was established.

## **CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS**

Secretary Voyles called the meeting to order and asked for introductions.

Secretary Voyles reported that in the recent General Assembly Session, Senator Marsden introduced legislation to expand the VLCF Board membership by one by the appointment of a Virginia Tribal member. That legislation goes into effect on July 1. An appointment is anticipated shortly thereafter.

Secretary Voyles advised that, at this meeting, the Board will launch the FY24 grant round. The biennial budget that was adopted last year appropriated \$16 million for the grant program in FY24, as it did for FY23. Since the legislature has not yet adopted an amended budget for FY24, the plan is to move ahead on the basis of this \$16 million appropriation. This amount may change when the budget is finalized. If that is the case, the available amount of grand funding will be amended at the next meeting to reflect the final budget.

## **APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM NOVEMBER 14, 2022, MEETING**

### **BOARD ACTION**

Senator Stuart moved that the minutes of the November 14, 2022, meeting of the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation Board of Trustees be approved as submitted. Ms. Stiff seconded and the motion carried.

### **VIRGINIA LAND CONSERVATION FUND FINANCIAL UPDATE** – *Laura Ellis, Deputy Director for Administration and Finance, DCR*

Ms. Ellis gave the financial update.



## Fund Statement

**VIRGINIA LAND CONSERVATION FOUNDATION**  
Fund Statement  
As of April 30, 2023

<b>OBLIGATED FUND BALANCE - June 30, 2021</b>	<b>\$12,397,851</b>
<b>INCOME</b>	
FY21 Stewardship Funds	\$1,865,802
FY22 Stewardship Funds	\$2,124,371
FY22 Appropriation Chapter 552	\$10,000,000
FY23 Appropriation Chapter 2	\$16,000,000
FY22 Interest	\$44,883
FY23 Interest*	\$325,800
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>\$30,360,856</b>
<b>DISBURSEMENTS</b>	
FY22 Stewardship Fund Disbursements	\$1,865,802
FY23 Stewardship Fund Disbursements*	\$2,124,371
FY22 Grant Payments	\$3,419,700
FY23 Grant Payments*	\$3,849,898
FY22 Open Space Preservation (VOF) Payments	\$2,500,000
FY23 Open Space Preservation (VOF) Payments*	\$4,000,000
FY22 Administrative Expenses	\$175,264
FY23 Administrative Expenses*	\$59,276
<b>TOTAL DISBURSEMENT</b>	<b>\$18,054,801</b>
<small>* Changes since last report</small>	
<b>OBLIGATED FUND BALANCE - April 30, 2023</b>	<b>\$24,703,901</b>

**REQUEST TO SPEND INTEREST FROM VIRGINIA LAND CONSERVATION FUND, PURSUANT TO § 10.1-1020** – *Suzan Bulbulkaya, Land Conservation Manager, DCR*

Ms. Bulbulkaya presented the request for approval for DCR to spend \$200,000 of interest earned for administrative purposes in FY24.

Ms. Bulbulkaya noted that the Code of Virginia § 10.1-1020 provides that up to \$250,000 per year of the interest generated by the Fund may be used for the Foundation’s administrative expenses.

Unspent interest as of June 30, 2022	\$179, 195
Interest Earned during current year	\$159,868
VLCF Administrative Expenses for FY23	(\$40,000)
Budgeted Natural Heritage Expenses for FY23	(\$100,000)
Available interest that can be spent as of March 31, 2023	\$199,063

After presenting the data in the above table, Ms. Bulbulkaya shared that another interest payment for the third quarter of the fiscal year had been received for \$165,000, bringing the available balance to \$365,000. Another interest payment is also expected at the end of the fiscal year. Ms. Bulbulkaya provided a draft motion to authorize the use of \$200,000 of the funds for FY24.

Senator Stuart asked how the money would be spent.

Ms. Bulbulkaya replied that about \$40,000 would be spent on staffing the grant program. She noted that with the increased grant funds, the workload increased significantly. She noted that the additional help would be a wage position if a Full Time Employee (FTE) could not be authorized.

Director Wells noted that there was a proposed budget amendment to increase the MEL (Maximum Employment Level).

Senator Stuart commented that he would prefer to see the authorized funds used for public property and for the use of the public. He suggested that this amount for staff should be part of the budget.

**BOARD ACTION**

Ms. Cockburn moved that the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation Board of Trustees approve the request from the Department of Conservation and Recreation to expend up to \$200,000 in FY 2024 for use consistent with the legislative authority on the use of interest generated by the Fund, *Code of Virginia* §10.1-1020.G.

Secretary Lohr seconded, and the motion carried with the following vote:

AYE:

Secretary Travis Voyles  
Mary-Carson Stiff  
Jay Ford  
Glenda Booth  
Krystina White  
Leslie Cockburn  
Sonya Powell

Secretary Matthew Lohr  
Woodie Walker  
Bruce Vlk  
Samantha Poppe  
Elizabeth Andrews  
Andrew Jennison

NAY:

Senator Richard Stuart

The motion carried.

**REVIEW OF GRANT PROJECTS THAT HAVE CLOSED SINCE NOVEMBER 2022** - *Larry Mikkelson, Land Conservation Specialist, DCR*

Mr. Mikkelson reported that the following eight projects have closed since the November 2022 meeting.

**1. Department of Wildlife Resources – Eastern Shore Forest Conservation Initiative (FY2020; FY2021)**

The Virginia Dept. of Wildlife Resources received two grants totaling \$714,162, to assist in acquiring multiple parcels totaling more than 7,900 acres of forestland in Accomack and Northampton counties. These fee-simple acquisitions expand existing Wildlife Management Areas, support coastal resiliency, provide new public lands for wildlife-related recreation, and improve habitat for migratory birds and species of greatest conservation need in an area of hemispheric importance. The Delmarva Peninsula 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 the Chesapeake Bay; this project could double the food resources available to migrating birds in this region. Virginia’s Eastern Shore continues to be a destination for outdoor recreation, and the addition of this acreage to the public land portfolio will substantially expand opportunities for wildlife viewing, hunting, fishing, hiking, and more. Project partners include the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, The Nature Conservancy, Ducks Unlimited and The Conservation Fund.

**Grant Awards:** FY20 \$292,287; FY21 \$421,875. **Payment amount:** \$714,162. **Match:** \$7,442,830: Several DWR funding sources, Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration funds, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, National Coastal Wetlands Conservation, and the North American Wetlands Conservation Act grants. [**Grant closed:** May 2023]

## 2. Capital Region Land Conservancy – Dock Street (FY2020)

Capital Region Land Conservancy (CRLC) received a \$500,000 VLCF grant to acquire and conserve 4.33 acres of property along Dock Street and the James River. In partnership with The Conservation Fund and the City of Richmond, the property is now owned by the city and conserved under a jointly- held conservation easement with CRLC and DCR. The site was the only remaining privately owned parcel along the north bank of the tidal James River in the city. The project allows for extension of the Virginia Capital Trail and expands city-owned parkland by incorporating the property into the city's James River Park System.

**Grant Award:** \$500,000. **Payment amount:** \$500,000. **Match:** \$3,783,745 CRLC, VOF, LWCF. **[Project closed:** May 2023]

## 3. Department of Forestry – Three Creek Capron (FY2021 Round II; FY2023)

The Virginia Dept. of Forestry received a FY21 Round II grant award of \$200,000 to acquire an open-space easement over Three Creek – Capron, a 376-acre forested tract in Southampton County. A second grant was awarded in FY23 for \$36,054, to assist with covering the project's due diligence costs. The easement prohibits subdivision of the property, permanently protects riparian forest habitat along 1.8 miles of stream frontage on Three Creek, a tributary of the Nottoway River, and ensures continued use of upland acreage for commercial timber management. The tract is comprised of roughly 300 acres of forested wetlands and 75 acres of upland pine forest. The project protects an Ecological Core and is in the Forestry layer of ConserveVirginia.

**Grant Awards:** FY21R2 \$200,000; FY23 \$36,054. **Payment amount:** \$236,054. **Match:** \$209,275 Landowner donation. **[Project closed:** March 2023]

## 4. Department of Forestry – Round Hill Swamp at Doles Farm (FY2021 Round II)

VLCF contributed \$225,000 in a FY21 Round II grant to the Virginia Dept. of Forestry to acquire an open-space easement over a 707-acre farm in Southampton County. The easement permanently protects forest habitat and ensures continued use of the upland acreage for agriculture and forest management. Round Hill includes over 500 acres of forestland and 150 acres of prime farmland. The property also includes 137 acres of blackwater swamp containing Cypress-Tupelo forests. The easement requires 100-foot-wide riparian buffers along 3.2 miles of streams to protect habitat and water sources that drain directly into the Blackwater River at the Antioch Pines Natural Area Preserve. This project intersects the Agriculture, Natural Habitat and Ecosystem Diversity, Floodplains and Flooding Resilience, and Water Quality Improvement layers of ConserveVirginia.

**Grant Award:** \$225,000. **Payment amount:** \$225,000. **Match:** \$1,342,555 Landowner donation. **[Project closed:** November 2022]

## 5. Belmead on the James, Inc. – Drexel-Morrell Center (FY2021 Round II)

With the assistance of a FY2021 Round II VLCF grant for \$228,450, the Drexel-Morrell Center purchased and conserved the 56-acre Rosemont property in Powhatan County. The center donated an open-space easement to the Board of Historic Resources, which ensures protection of the historic 1890's home listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places, an original woodframe barn, 40 acres of woodlands, 16 acres of open space, and perennial streams that bisect the property. Partners for the project include, among others, the Capital Region Land Conservancy, Atlantic Heritage, Colonial Farm Credit, and NAACP. The project creates and preserves a safe-space museum for common stories, history, and cultural inter-enrichment, providing a protected learning place of

preserved natural life and of beauty. Conserving this property, within the Cultural & Historic Preservation layer of ConserveVirginia, shares a crucially important story of African American life impacted by the Drexel and Morrell schools in rural Virginia.

**Grant Award:** \$228,450. **Payment amount:** \$228,450. **Match:** \$247,025 VOF Preservation Trust Fund and landowner donation. [**Project closed:** February 2023]

#### 6. Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation – **Edwards Tract at Port Republic Battlefield (FY2021 Round II; FY2022; FY2023)**

Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation (SVBF) received three VLCF grants totaling \$360,287 to acquire and protect the 107-acre Edwards property in Rockingham County, with a historic preservation and open-space easement held by the Board of Historic Resources. This property is part of the “The Coaling,” because of the role this commanding landscape feature played during the Battle of Port Republic during the Civil War. Control of this high ground determined not only the victor in the Battle of Port Republic, but also the fate of the 1862 Valley campaign. Prior to closing this grant, nine acres of The Coaling were owned by SVBF but the majority of the site was still unprotected. This project preserves the remaining undeveloped land and will be open as parkland with trails and historic interpretive markers. The property intersects the Natural Habitat & Ecosystem Diversity and the Water Quality Improvement categories of ConserveVirginia.

**Grant Awards:** FY21 R2 \$29,550; FY22 \$158,679; FY23 \$172,058. **Payment amount:** \$360,287. **Match:** \$1,289,404 Virginia Battlefield Preservation Fund, American Battlefield Protection Program, and SVBF. [**Project closed:** April 2023]

#### 7. Virginia Outdoors Foundation – **Thomas Neck Family Farm (FY2022)**

A VLCF grant for \$879,750, awarded in Fiscal Year 2022 to the Virginia Outdoors Foundation, assisted in the acquisition of an open-space easement over an 840-acre working farm in Essex County. The property has been farmed by the same family for more than 50 years, presently in accordance with a nutrient management plan for crops including wheat, soybeans, and corn. The VOF easement assures the land remains available for agricultural production while providing natural habitat for wildlife and protecting water quality within the Chesapeake Bay watershed and flood and coastal resiliency, protecting the property’s conservation values in perpetuity. One-hundred-foot-wide forested buffers along 17,500 feet of frontage on Occupacia Creek will benefit wildlife habitat and water quality in perpetuity. The farm is located within: the Rappahannock River Audubon Important Bird Area; the federal boundary of the Rappahannock River National Wildlife Refuge; and the Agricultural & Forestry, Cultural & Historic Preservation, Floodplains & Flooding Resilience, and Water Quality Improvement layers of ConserveVirginia.

**Grant Award:** \$879,750. **Payment amount:** \$879,750. **Match:** \$2,509,029 Landowner donation. [**Project closed:** April 2023]

#### 8. Town of Colonial Beach – **Eleanor Park Conservation Easement (FY2022)**

The Town of Colonial Beach has permanently conserved a 1.8-acre waterfront property adjacent to the Potomac River. With the help of a Virginia Land Conservation Foundation FY22 grant for \$387,416, this last undeveloped and publicly owned waterfront greenspace in town is now forever available as a public recreation resource. Eleanor Park is also home to several large, native, mature hardwood trees, which provide a sanctuary for osprey, eagles, and other wildlife. This property is a unique space for people to enjoy outdoor recreation and wildlife observation adjacent to the Potomac River. The town plans to

implement a variety of public uses including picnic areas, walking paths to enjoy the out-of-doors, and kayaking, swimming, and fishing along the river. The property falls within the Cultural & Historic Preservation, Scenic Preservation, and Water Quality Improvement layers of ConserveVirginia.

**Grant Award:** \$387,416. **Payment amount:** \$387,416. **Match:** \$719,434 Landowner donation. **[Project closed:** January 2023]

Ms. Andrews asked about the plan for the Dock Street Property opening and the public access.

Mr. Agelasto responded that the property had just changed hands the preceding Friday. There has not been a public announcement. The property will be made open to the public. There are no plans for any structures on City land.

Mr. Mikkelson noted that the five following projects were withdrawn.

1. Piedmont Environmental Council – **Farmland Conservation at the Crossroads of Old Fredericksburg Road (FY2020)**

This project aimed to permanently protect the 348-acre Madden Farm, located in the Chancellorsville Battlefield Study Area in eastern Culpeper County, with an NRCS Agricultural Land Easement co-held by PEC and Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District.

**Grant Award:** \$300,000. **Note:** This project is no longer viable because the landowner changed their mind and decided to lease the property for commercial solar development.

2. Department of Conservation and Recreation – **Pickett’s Harbor Natural Area Preserve – Lake Allure Woods (FY2021 Round II)**

DCR’s Natural Heritage Division sought to purchase a 44-acre open-space easement to protect high ecological value, mature maritime forests that adjoin Pickett’s Harbor Natural Area Preserve and the largest natural lake known on the Eastern Shore.

**Grant Award:** \$142,298. **Note:** This project was withdrawn because the landowner changed her mind and is no longer willing to pursue the project.

3. Campbell County Training School Complex, Inc. – **CCTSC Restoration Project (FY2022)**

The Campbell County Training School Complex includes a Historic Rosenwald School and is located in Rustburg. CCTSC was awarded a VLCF grant to help protect this historic nine-acre property with an easement, held by the Board of Historic Resources.

**Grant Award:** \$138,150. **Note:** This project was withdrawn because the landowners received other funding in the state budget and no longer needed the VLCF funds.

4. Department of Conservation and Recreation – **Dendron Swamp Natural Area Preserve Addition (FY2022)**

DCR’s Natural Heritage Division received VLCF funds to acquire 102 acres in Sussex County adjoining the 636-acre preserve. The property lies within the Dendron Swamp Conservation Site and supports an unprotected portion of an outstanding occurrence of a Bald Cypress – Water Tupelo Brownwater Swamp community.

**Grant Award:** \$300,000. **Note:** This project was withdrawn because the landowner rejected DCR’s purchase offer as too low.

**5. Department of Conservation and Recreation – Mill Creek Springs Natural Area Preserve Expansion (FY2023)**

DCR’s Natural Heritage Division received \$665,140 in funding to support acquisition of a key addition to Mill Creek Springs Natural Area Preserve in Montgomery County. The 318-acre tract would have enhanced DCR’s ability to protect additional natural heritage resources and provided ecological buffers for the existing Preserve.

**Grant Award:** \$665,140; **Note:** This project was withdrawn because the landowner rejected DCR’s purchase offer as too low.

Ms. Poppe asked if there was concern because of the five withdrawn projects.

Secretary Voyles noted that this was typical and that two were withdrawn because the purchase offer was too low.

Mr. Evans noted that DCR is only allowed to pay the appraised value.

Ms. Stiff asked about the types of appraisals and whether they were low compared to the private sector.

Mr. Fuller replied that state appraisals are coordinated through the Department of General Services (DGS). Those are standard appraisals that are contracted out to the private sector.

**DISCUSSION AND APPROVAL OF THE VLCF FY24 GRANT ROUND** – *Suzan Bulbulkaya, Land Conservation Manager, DCR*

*Proposed Grant Fiscal Expenditure Plan*

Ms. Bulbulkaya reviewed the proposed Grant Fiscal Expenditure Plan.

**VIRGINIA LAND CONSERVATION FOUNDATION  
GRANT FUNDING PLAN FOR FY24**

FUNDING CATEGORIES		FY23/24 Budget Bill Chapter 2. Item 375 A.1. (2022)*	Unspent General Funds to be Approved & Reallocated	TOTAL Available for Grant Round
1.	I. VOF Open-Space Land Preservation Trust Fund (25% per § 10.1-1020.C.)	\$4,000,000		
2.	II. Grant Program			
3.	(i) Farmland Preservation	\$2,400,000	\$300,000	\$2,700,000
4.	(ii) Forest Preservation	\$2,400,000	\$0	\$2,400,000
5.	(iii) Historic Area Preservation	\$2,400,000	\$69,075	\$2,469,075
6.	(iv) Natural Area Preservation	\$2,400,000	<del>\$1,782,667</del> \$1,756,314	<del>\$4,182,667</del> \$4,156,314
7.	(v) Open Space and Parks	\$2,400,000	\$0	\$2,400,000
<b>TOTAL</b>		\$16,000,000	\$2,125,389	<del>\$14,151,742</del> \$14,125,389

*Summary of Additional Unspent Grant Funds*



Farmland Preservation	\$300,000	<u>Withdrawn</u> : FY20 Piedmont Environmental Council, Crossroads of Old Fredericksburg Road \$300,000
Forest Preservation	\$0	
Historic Area Preservation	\$69,075	<u>Withdrawn</u> : FY22 Campbell Co. Training School Complex Restoration Project \$69,075.
Natural Area Protection	\$1,782,667 \$1,756,314	<u>Unexpended Remainder</u> : FY20 DCR-DNH Crow's Nest NAP Addtn <del>\$58,513</del> <b>\$45,126</b> ; FY20 DCR-DNH Cypress Bridge Swamp NAP Addtn <del>\$12,966</del> <u>Withdrawn</u> : FY21RII DCR-DNH Pickett's Harbor NAP-Lake Allure Woods <b>\$142,298</b> ; FY22 DCR-DNH Dendron Swamp NAP Addtn <b>\$300,000</b> ; FY23 DCR-DNH Mill Creek Springs NAP Expansion <b>\$665,140</b> <u>Revised Scope</u> : FY21 DCR-DNH, Southside VA Conservation & Recreation Complex <b>\$603,750</b> .
Open Space and Parks	\$0	

\* Pending finalization of the FY24 state budget.

### Item 375 of Chapter 2 of the 2022 Virginia Acts of Assembly Special Session I

A.1. Included in the amounts for Preservation of Open Space Lands is \$16,000,000 the first year and \$16,000,000 the second year from the general fund to be deposited into the Virginia Land Conservation Fund, § 10.1-1020, Code of Virginia. No less than 50 percent of the appropriations remaining after the transfer to the Virginia Outdoors Foundation's Open-Space Lands Preservation Trust fund has been satisfied are to be used for grants for fee simple acquisitions with public access or acquisitions of easements with public access. This appropriation shall be deemed sufficient to meet the provisions of § 2.2- 1509.4, Code of Virginia. **[Grant Funds]**

2. Included in the amounts for Preservation of Open Space Lands is \$1,500,000 the first year and \$1,500,000 the second year from nongeneral funds to be deposited into the Virginia Land Conservation Fund to be distributed by the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation pursuant to the provisions of § 58.1-513, Code of Virginia. **[Stewardship Funds]**

#### *Proposed Timeline for Applications and Awards*

Ms. Bulbulkaya presented the proposed FY24 VLCF Grant Schedule.

Proposed FY24 VLCF Grant Schedule	
May 16, 2023	VCLF Board meeting to approve grant manual and initiate the grant round request for proposals (RFP).
Week of May 16, 2023	Announce official opening of grant round (update website and send emails).
Week of June 5, 2023	Virtual Grant Workshop: orientation and program information for grant applicants. Tentatively set for June 8 from 9:30-11:30 a.m.
Friday, August 18, 2023	Deadline for application submittal. (12 weeks)
Weeks of September 11 and 25, 2023	Interagency taskforce meetings to score projects and finalize recommendations – usually takes two meetings.
Early October 2023	SNR and Director's review of applications and recommendations of IAT.
Mid October 2023	VCLF Board meeting. Approval of grant awards.
By end of November 2023	Grant agreements sent to grant recipients. Projects have two years to close.

Ms. Bulbulkaya noted that the agency is switching to an online application portal. Hard copies of applications will be accepted from applicants who are unable to apply electronically.

Ms. Booth asked about outreach to traditionally underrepresented groups.

Ms. Bulbulkaya responded that they have been working with Virginia Outdoors Foundation and the Department of Historic Resources (DHR) jointly to increase outreach. DHR has expanded outreach with

new grant programs. She also noted that members of the Interagency Task Force (IAT) would report regarding outreach.

Ms. Stiff asked if there would be specific outreach to tribal communities. She offered to assist in reaching the tribal network.

Secretary Voyles noted that he and Secretary Lohr have also met with the tribal communities.

#### *Proposed Grant Manual*

Ms. Bulbulkaya reviewed the proposed changes to the Grant Manual. She noted changes were minor and included updating contact information and the application process. She also advised that DCR would be providing training regarding use of the online portal.

Ms. Booth commented that, at a prior meeting, she had raised the issue of restoring properties to more ecologically sound natural conditions. She noted that in suburban areas there were not a lot of opportunities for conservation but there may be opportunity for restoration.

Secretary Voyles advised that his office and DCR would have conversations regarding the stated purpose of the funds and any additional use that might be appropriate regarding restoration.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT REGARDING GRANT ROUND**

Secretary Voyles called for comment from the public and the Board regarding the grant round.

Ms. Stiff asked if there had been discussion regarding the fact that grants are reimbursable. She asked if there are any provisions to provide funding up front because of hardship.

Ms. Quigley noted that this was particularly important in underserved areas.

Mr. Walker agreed that this could be a limiting factor for an application, particularly if the Board is seeking diversity among applicants.

Secretary Voyles asked staff to add this as a discussion item for the next meeting.

#### **BOARD ACTION**

Mr. Ford moved that the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation Board of Trustees approve the FY24 Grant Round and materials as presented by staff.

Senator Stuart seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

#### **OTHER GRANT PROGRAMS**

*Reports from the Interagency Task Force and Other Land Conservation Grant Opportunities*

Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

Ms. Bulbulkaya advised that the VDACS contact, Jen Perkins, was no longer with the agency. However, she provided comments for VDACS before her departure.

- The Farmland Preservation Fund provides dollar-for-dollar matching funds to localities that have Purchase of Development Fund (PDR) programs.
- VDACS opens a grant round annually in the fall. VDACS requires applicant localities to submit a program certification form (to provide proof that their program meets the standards and requirements set out by VDACS) and a financial certification (to show that they have sufficient funds to make a 1:1 match).
- Funds are an appropriation from the General Assembly and have varied from a low of \$100,000 (2011) to a high of \$4.25m – 2008, the first year of the program). In more recent years it has fluctuated between \$250k and \$1m. The past round was \$875k.
- The Farmland Preservation Fund is a reimbursable grant. Localities enter into an Intergovernmental Agreement with VDACS that earmarks the funds for that locality for 2 years.
- When the locality records an easement, they submit a copy of the recorded deed and some other paperwork (title, etc.) to VDACS. VDACS can reimburse 50% of costs associated with the purchase of the easement, surveys, appraisals, recordation fees, and attorney fees.
- Currently there are 7 active programs – Albemarle, Clarke, Stafford, Fauquier, Shenandoah, Virginia Beach, Chesapeake. The program has protected 14,800 acres in 16 localities.

*Virginia Department of Forestry – Karl Didier*

Mr. Didier reported the following:

- Other Land Conservation Grant Opportunities
  - DOF administers the USFS Forest Legacy grants program in VA
    - Supports conservation of working forestlands, both easement and fee simple acquisition
    - Typically, around \$94 million awarded nationally each year, but very competitive (we compete with huge land cons projects out west), so projects in VA usually need to be pretty large scale with multiple partners.
    - \$700 million of New Inflation Reduction Act Funding will be distributed out in the next 5 year, effectively more than doubling the size of the project.
    - New funding streams for
      - Key-stone large landscape projects
      - Strategic small tracts, individual family forest tracts
      - Tribal Partnership Projects – fee simple acquisition
    - Even though DOF competes with other states, VA has been very successful in winning VA funding and using it to leverage other funds. DOF has won FLPO grants for the past seven years totaling nearly 30 million.
    - DOF and partners have or are leveraging FLP funds to complete several VLCF projects, including recently fee simple acquisitions and ongoing easements associated with Charlotte State Forest (aka Roanoke River Working forests)
  - Community Forest and Open Space Program

- Program to support easement and acquisitions held by localities or federally recognized tribes.
  - Administered by USFS, but State Forester has to approve many of these projects.
- DOF runs or supports many other financial assistance programs, tax credit programs and grant programs to, for example:
    - Enhance urban tree canopy and urban forests, including through tree planting.
    - Plant riparian buffers and protect water quality.
    - Prevent or mitigate forest disease and pests, such as the Emerald Ash Borer and Pin Bark Beetle
    - Sustainable manage forests (examples Reforestation of Timberlands) and implement forestry best management practices.
    - Help communities plan for and mitigate threats from wildfire.

*Department of Historic Resources – Karri Richardson*

Ms. Richardson noted that the Department of Historic Resources (DHR) has eight grant programs that serve different constituents, she noted two of those programs:

- The Virginia Black, Indigenous, and People of Color Preservation Fund was funded by the General Assembly in 2022.
  - \$5 million was allocated.
  - DHR is awarding grants starting at \$50,000 and going up to \$1 million. No match is required.
  - DCR received 68 applications.
- The Virginia Battlefield Preservation Funds
  - Has been available for 17 years.
  - \$1.5 million in funding
  - Only 501(c) 3 organizations may apply.
  - Must be within the boundaries of a Virginia battlefield.

*Department of Conservation and Recreation, Natural Heritage – Jason Bulluck*

Mr. Bulluck noted that the Division of Natural Heritage does not play a role in administering a grant program other than assisting with the VLCF. He noted that a few other funding sources were leveraged with funding from the VLCF. Those include:

- Funding from NOAA through the Coastal Management Program at the Department of Environmental Quality. This is a long-standing funding source used to establish or add lands to existing Natural Area Preserves in coastal zones.
- Another recent source is through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. These funds are used in support of species recovery plans.
- American Beauty Challenge Grants are a relatively new funding source.

*Department of Conservation and Recreation, Planning and Recreation Resources, Kristal McKelvey*

Ms. McKelvey provided an overview of the Federal Land & Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), American Battlefields Protection Program (ABPP), and Recreational Trails Program (RTP). The 2022 LWCF grant round resulted in six authorized projects. The RTP grant round closed with 25 applications received totaling over \$4 million in requests for trail maintenance funding. Virginia Outdoors Plan 2023 is underway in the writing phase.

*Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources, Becky Gwynn*

Ms. Gwynn noted that DWR is one of the largest state agency landowners in Virginia (second only to VDOT), with 76 wildlife management areas and conservation sites totaling nearly 250,000 acres. DWR has 230+ boating access sites that provide public access to waters across the Commonwealth.

The DWR completes most of its land acquisition projects using federal funds uniquely apportioned to our agency by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The most significant of these is the Federal Aid to Wildlife Restoration, which is funded by excise taxes collected on the sale of firearms, ammunition and archery tackle. DWR also uses funds from the Federal Aid to Sportfish Restoration program for boating access and purchase of lands for hatcheries; these funds are derived from excise taxes collected on the sale of fishing tackle and motorboat fuels. The final fund use is the State Wildlife Grants program, which is funded by a general apportionment from the U.S. Treasury.

DWR also has a significant success rate securing land acquisition funds from nationally competitive grants, including the North American Wetlands Conservation Act program, National Coastal Wetlands Conservation program, and the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation program (specifically, the Recovery Land Acquisition program). In most cases, the DWR uses these funds itself to complete the land acquisition; however, the agency does apply on behalf of partners for certain funds, such as the Recovery Land Acquisition program, when the funds are only available to state fish and wildlife agencies.

In addition to VLCF funds, the DWR leverages non-federal funds from the Virginia Migratory Waterfowl Stamp Fund (in which revenue from the sale of state duck stamps is deposited), Nongame Fund, and DWR's Game Protection Fund.

A good example of how DWR leverages VLCF funding is the recent purchase of 8,600 acres on Virginia's Eastern Shore. That \$13 million project applied \$715,000 of VLCF funding with a \$2 million North American Wetlands Conservation Act grant, a \$2 million National Coastal Wetlands Conservation grant, a \$5 million Federal Aid to Wildlife Restoration grant, and contributions from non-governmental organizations and private citizens.

*Virginia Outdoors Foundation – Emily White*

Ms. White gave the update for the Virginia Outdoors Foundation.

VOF currently has four grant programs running, two statewide and two regional.

Statewide

1. Get Outdoors (GO) Fund-developed during COVID, from VOF operational funds, intended to get people outside. Must serve and underserved community, but underserved is not defined. Community needs look different across the Commonwealth.
2. Preservation Trust Fund-applied in a variety of ways and just recently expanded with a new legislative update taking effect in July of 2023

- a. Easement assistance-offset the cost of donating an easement to VOF through an income eligibility-based program.
  - i. Will be expanded to individuals donating an easement to a non-profit co-held by a locality.
- b. Purchase of easements
- c. Increasing public access (began in 2016) to better serve urban communities and make the outdoors more accessible.

#### Regional

3. Forest CORE Fund-mitigation program funded by Mountain Valley Pipeline, VOF named a mitigation partner and received \$15 million to use in SWVA to offset impacts of forest fragmentation-protect large tracts of ecologically important forest (on hold until pipeline is completed or cancelled)
4. Coastal Resilience and Trees Fund-partnership with Norfolk-based non-profit Wetlands Watch to increase resilience in coastal region and increase urban canopy. Funding for a variety of practices that increase resilience to flooding, sea level rise, and extreme weather events.

Secretary Voyles thanked the members of the Interagency Team for their time and commitment.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was no additional public comment.

#### **ADJOURN**

There was no additional business and the meeting adjourned at 11:54 a.m.