

RURAL LANDOWNER MANUAL

A RESOURCE GUIDE FOR THE NORTHERN PIEDMONT



INSIDE

INTRODUCTION 4

YOUR HOME 6

- HISTORIC PRESERVATION 7
- ENERGY AND WATER 8
 - Renewable Energy
 - Groundwater Wells
 - Septic Systems
- OUTDOOR SPACE AND GARDENS 9
 - Lighting
 - Pest Control
 - Gardening
 - The Importance of Native Species

YOUR LAND 12

- COUNTY GOVERNANCE AND GUIDANCE 13
 - County Comprehensive Plans and Policies
 - County Zoning
 - County Planning Commissions and Board of Supervisors
 - Land Taxation
 - Loudoun County Agricultural Districts
- LAND PRESERVATION 15
 - Conservation Easements
 - Local Funding Sources for Conservation Easements
 - PDR Opportunities
- BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES 18
 - Cost-Share Programs
 - Riparian Buffers
 - Grasslands and Mowing
 - Wildlife Corridors
 - Forestry Management
 - Attracting Pollinators
 - Pasture Management
 - Livestock Exclusion from Water
 - Soil Health
 - Deer Management

- ENGAGING IN THE RURAL ECONOMY 21
 - Blue Ridge Cattlemen Association
 - Fauquier County Education Farm
 - Land Leasing Opportunities
 - Loudoun Beekeepers Association
 - Loudoun County Equine Alliance
 - Loudoun Valley Sheep Producers
 - Loudoun Wineries and and Winegrowers Association
 - MARE Center
 - Maryland & Virginia Milk Producers Cooperative Association
 - Nutrient and Wetland Mitigation Credits
 - Virginia Grain Producers Association
- GO LOCAL 23
 - PEC's Buy Fresh, Buy Local Guide

YOUR PIEDMONT COUNTRYSIDE 24

- HISTORIC DISTRICTS 25
 - Fauquier County - Historic Districts
 - Loudoun County – Historic Districts
- RURAL HISTORIC VILLAGES 26
- STATE HERITAGE AREA 26
- OTHER HISTORIC RESOURCES 26
 - Fauquier County
 - Loudoun County
- RURAL ROADS 27
- ADVOCACY 28
- ELECTED OFFICIALS 28
- CONSERVATION AND PRESERVATION ORGANIZATIONS 28
- SPONSORS AND CREDITS 30
- THANK YOU 31

WELCOME TO THE VIRGINIA PIEDMONT COUNTRYSIDE!

The bucolic landscape of western Loudoun and northern Fauquier remains one of the most preserved regions in the Commonwealth, and we are incredibly fortunate to enjoy the same rural way of life that has defined the area for hundreds of years. Our rolling hills, gravel roads, historic villages, mountain ranges, scenic rivers, and stone fences are layers of this extraordinary territory that continues to attract people from all walks of life. The stunning viewsheds, vast history, and vibrant community create an unmatched experience in Virginia, and we hope you, our neighbor, will enjoy the many rewards of living in the Piedmont region.

Our pristine countryside is a shared resource and now as one of its stewards, there are countless opportunities for you to engage in rural culture. Recreational activities abound to satisfy every passion, and walkers, bikers, horse riders, history buffs, environmentalists, brewers, oenophiles, and farmers all find joy living in the Virginia Piedmont. Whether you enjoy floating down Goose Creek, galloping after hounds, touring historic sites, or simply embracing the quiet of your property, we are excited that you have made this special part of the world your home.

Regardless of its size, you have many exciting ways to utilize your property. We have compiled resources to assist landowners with a wide range of economic pursuits and best management practices that protect the environment, native species, and vistas that make up this landscape that connects us. We hope you will find this manual helpful for how you can best manage your home and steward your land.

Our goal is that over time you will expand your horizons beyond the boundaries of your property and engage in the advocacy of preserving our unique corner of the Commonwealth. Many conservation organizations are working to protect the resources that drew all of us to make the Piedmont region our home, and their success depends on community support. It is equally important to become an educated voter to ensure that our elected county officials work with us to protect our incredible landscape, perpetuating our rural culture for future generations.

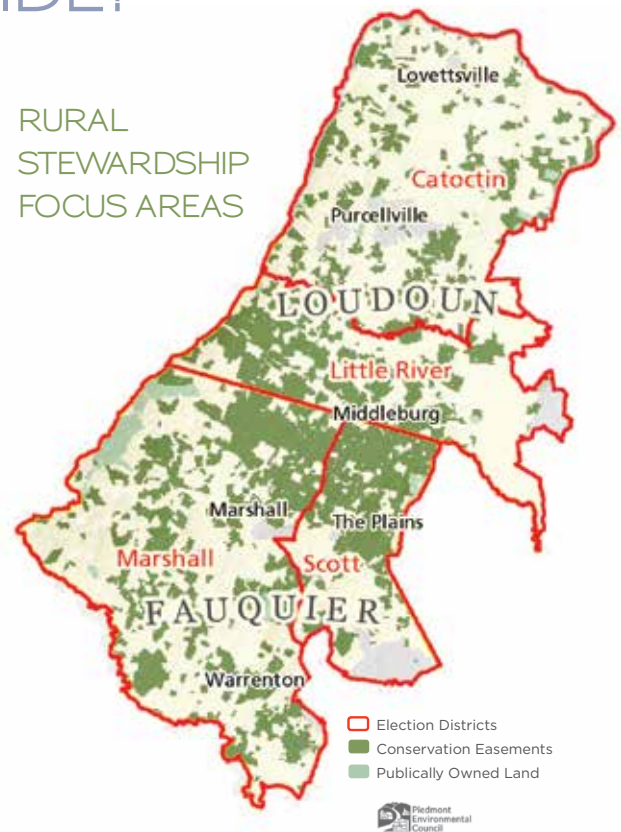
*In the words of local longtime conservation leader,
and author of "Life in the Country", Missy Janes,
"Our collective challenge is to sustain this magic."*

With appreciation and optimism,



C. Dulany Morison
Chair, PFH Conservation Fund

RURAL STEWARDSHIP FOCUS AREAS



MAP: WATSUN RANDOLPH/PIEDMONT ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL



WHAT MAKES THIS PLACE SO EXCEPTIONAL?

The natural landscape of the northern Piedmont region is defined by the Blue Ridge and Bull Run mountains that surround the rolling hills of “hunt country” and the interconnected watersheds of Goose Creek, Potomac, and Rappahannock Rivers, and the Chesapeake Bay. Combined, these provide the lifeblood of our green oasis. Loudoun County was known as the “Breadbasket of the Revolution” and still contains the most valuable prime agricultural soils in Virginia while Fauquier County ranks in the top five counties for statewide agricultural production.

We are linked together by historic byways and gravel roads that criss-cross through dense woods and over perennial streams, connecting our farms, villages, and landmarks. Our nineteenth-century landscape, dotted with residences and agricultural buildings crafted from native fieldstone, is one of the best preserved in the country, allowing us to intimately understand how people worked, lived, and connected since our Nation’s infancy. Heritage tourism, defined as “traveling to experience the places and activities that authentically present the stories and people of the past and present,” accounts for millions in annual revenue each year. (VPHA, *Profiting from Preservation*, <https://www.piedmontheritage.org/profitting>)

The northern Piedmont region’s thriving economy capitalizes on our preserved scenic views and proximity to our Nation’s capital. We have working cattle, sheep, pig, goat, and vegetable farms providing sustainably sourced local food to our communities, farmer’s markets, and restaurants. There are vineyards, breweries, and distilleries producing products that earn recognition across the country. We have outstanding hiking trails, parks, and rivers for public recreation. Most notably, the Piedmont region has one of the oldest and largest equine industries in the United States and is home to the Upperville Colt and Horse Show, the oldest horse show in the country, as well as numerous polo clubs, Olympic three day eventing operations, and the most prestigious fox hunts in the country.

This extraordinary area and the industries that depend on its unique attributes still exist today thanks to the leadership of dedicated conservation advocates and widespread civic engagement that began in the 1950s and led to one of the highest density areas for conservation easements and other protected lands in the United States. Their successes have kept the door open for new residents hoping to make country living an everyday experience. We have dedicated organizations working to protect and maintain every one of these resources, each with their own expertise and specific conservation mission.

Over the last 20 years, the threat of incompatible development has exploded, and these organizations have accordingly increased their collaboration, understanding the power of partnerships in preserving the irreplaceable landscape of our Piedmont Countryside. This manual is a manifestation of our mutual commitment, and we hope it will encourage everyone to embrace the tremendous value of our rural way of life. This region’s survival depends on each of us to nurture and protect our properties, advocate for preservation policies, and support organizations and elected officials who prioritize conserving our magnificent region.



PHOTO: SETH YOUNG/LAND TRUST OF VIRGINIA

YOUR HOME

We will introduce the joys and quirks that come with rural living by starting with your home and the immediate landscape that surrounds it. As a resident of the northern Piedmont region, there are many important considerations to note as you begin to build your relationship with your new space. Whether your home be young or old, stucco or fieldstone, large or small, this section will share information on some of the most significant aspects of maintenance and renovation.

We encourage you to explore ways to care for your property from the mindset that your land is a contributing piece of the northern Piedmont landscape and a shared resource. Making choices that are better for the environment and our native wildlife are important aspects of rural culture as we interact with them on a daily basis. It is essential to choose high quality materials for longevity that will reduce waste, recycle when possible, and adopt a less-is-more attitude to diminish your impact on the landscape. One of the glories of rural living is the outdoor experience and we encourage you to spend just as much thought on your outdoor space as you do inside. We are blessed with four distinct seasons in this part of the Commonwealth, each with their own beauty to enjoy, and it is just as customary to be invited to an outdoor “Winter Solstice” party as it is a July 4th BBQ.

When building a new house, carefully planning your building placement can ensure maximum enjoyment of your design. Nestling your house along a tree line or within a natural depression—as opposed to on top of a hill—can dramatically reduce your energy consumption, reduce erosion, and protect you from unpleasant wind. Selecting building materials and styles already prevalent across the northern Piedmont region is a wonderful nod to the traditions of this area that makes it the special place you have chosen to call home.

We are fortunate to live in a place with a supportive community, where neighbors are often welcome to walk or ride across adjoining properties, bountiful gardens are shared with friends, and road blockages from storm damage are cleared by working together without waiting for VDOT. We hope you will consider these northern Piedmont values and that these resources will assist you with designing your own unique space.





PHOTO: DULANY MORISON

Opposite page: Box Hill, Loudoun County; above: Stoke, Loudoun County; lower right: The Hollow, Fauquier County.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Many of the homes that dot our landscape are historic and tell the story of past generations. The craftsmanship and materials often surpass the quality used today and it is the most environmentally friendly choice to use and love a home that is already standing. The best organization for researching the history of your home and how it can be best maintained is the **Virginia Department of Historic Resources (VDHR)**, a federally mandated State Historic Preservation Office that oversees the laws related to the preservation of cultural resources. The staff has a wide spectrum of knowledge including archaeology, anthropology, and conservation. We also recommend Fauquier County's publication *Maintaining Your Historic House* for a broad overview of considerations. (<https://www.fauquiercounty.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/152/63593309523%205470000>)

Contact our regional VDHR office:

Northern Region Preservation Office
<https://www.dhr.virginia.gov>
 5357 Main Street
 PO Box 519
 Stephens City, VA 22655
 (540) 868-7033

If you are interested in pursuing an application to place your property on a historic register or would like

advice on a historic renovation the **Virginia Piedmont Heritage Area Association** will guide you to the right professionals:

Virginia Piedmont Heritage Area
<https://www.piedmontheritage.org>
 1461 Atoka Road
 Marshall, VA 20115
 (540) 687-6681
info@piedmontheritage.com



PHOTO: LAND TRUST OF VIRGINIA

ENERGY AND WATER

■ RENEWABLE ENERGY

Over the past decade, solar energy has become increasingly popular for homeowners across the northern Piedmont region. The benefits are multifold: power production, energy security, cost savings, local employment opportunities, and emissions reductions.

As a resident within Fauquier and Loudoun counties, you can participate in Solarize Piedmont, a seasonal cooperative program with **Local Energy Alliance Program (LEAP)**, the **Piedmont Environmental Council**, and participating municipal governments. Your property will be assessed by satellite to determine if it is suitable for a solar array.

Most systems are installed on roofs to reduce maintenance and avoid the negative impacts ground-mounted options have on wildlife, prime soils, and viewsheds. You will then be connected with a vetted installer who will create a draft proposal following a site visit and it may take up to four

months before you have a functional system in place. Once your system is up and running, you use electricity as it is generated and sell back any surplus electricity to the utility.

Through “net energy metering,” you get a one-to-one, kilowatt hour-for-kilowatt hour credit on your bill for every unit of electricity produced and put back on the electric grid. The electric utility will never pay you for the solar energy, they just credit your account. The credits are good for 12 months, making a sunny summer helpful with saving you money in the winter.

■ GROUNDWATER WELLS

It is easy to take for granted that our homes have safe, reliable drinking water. According to the **Virginia Department of Health**, it is the homeowner’s responsibility to test the water for the following:

- ◆ Annually for bacteria, nitrates/nitrites, and any other contaminants of local concern.
- ◆ More frequently than once a year if there is a change in the taste, odor, or appearance of the well

water, or if a problem occurs such as a broken well cap or a new contamination source appears.

- ◆ If family members or houseguests have recurrent incidents of gastrointestinal illness.
- ◆ If an infant is living in the home.
- ◆ If you wish to monitor the efficiency and performance of home water treatment equipment.

Well water testing is available through the Virginia Household Water Quality Program, organized by **Virginia Cooperative Extension**. Contact your nearest Extension office for the next testing date, kits, and cost:

Virginia Cooperative Extension – Fauquier Office
<https://www.fauquier.ext.vt.edu/>
24 Pelham Street
Warrenton, VA 20186
(540) 341-7950

Virginia Cooperative Extension – Loudoun Office
<https://www.loudoun.ext.vt.edu/>
750 Miller Drive Southeast, Suite F3
Leesburg, VA 20175
(703) 777-0373

■ SEPTIC SYSTEMS

Owning a home with a septic system is an added layer of rural homeownership. The average lifespan of a system is 30-40 years, but it can last longer with proper care and maintenance, including having your tank pumped every three to five years. According to the **Virginia Department of Health**, important rules to follow to ensure the longevity of your septic system include:

- ◆ Consider what you put into your toilet and sink and the impact it may have on your system. Many common household items can



PHOTO: HUGH KENNY, PIEDMONT ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL

A solar panel installation in Warrenton, Fauquier County.



PHOTO COURTESY OF VIRGINIA TOURISM CORP., RACHEL DBUSK

either clog your system or kill the microbes that treat the wastewater.

- ◆ The less water you use, the less your septic system has to work. Stagger the use of appliances, use high efficiency plumbing fixtures, and repair any leaks in your home.
- ◆ Learn where your septic system is located and keep your car and anything heavier than your lawnmower off your septic tank and drain field. Eliminate or limit the use of garbage disposals. This will significantly reduce the amount of fats, grease, and solids that enter your septic system and could clog your drain field. Plant trees away from the drain field since tree roots can clog the field and cause the system to fail. Keep excess water from irrigation, significant rainfall, or drains off the drain field.

OUTDOOR SPACE AND GARDENS

■ LIGHTING

Both the Fauquier and Loudoun County Zoning Ordinances include language to limit light pollution for several reasons. Part of the joy of rural living is the night sky and ability to see the stars clearly. Excess lighting also has a negative impact on nocturnal wildlife, including disrupting their reproductive, feeding, and migratory habits. According to **Dark Sky**, the leading organization combating light pollution worldwide, best outdoor lighting practices are:

- ◆ All lighting should have a clear purpose: Consider if a light is really needed and what area it will impact.
- ◆ Carefully aim lighting so that it points downward and does not spill beyond its targeted area.

- ◆ Use the lowest level of light required.
- ◆ Use motion detectors or timers to ensure light is only available when needed.
- ◆ Limit the amount of shorter wavelength (blue-violet) light and use warmer colors when possible.

■ PEST CONTROL

Living in a rural setting means you will have encounters with wildlife, both good and bad, on a regular basis. Take precautions to ensure larger animals like raccoons, foxes, opossums, coyotes, and bears don't have access to household trash or pet food, and they will generally keep their distance. For smaller pests, Integrated Pest Management (IPM) practices are recommended to reduce overall pesticide use and provide practical, cost-effective solutions that protect people, animals, and the environment.

Raised garden beds at Stoke, Loudoun County.



PHOTO: DULANY MORISON

Major components of any IPM program include pest identification, population monitoring and damage assessment, determination of when management action is needed, and prevention. The goal is not always to eliminate, but to reduce levels to an acceptable range. For specific advice and further information, reach out to your **Virginia Cooperative Extension Office**.

*Virginia Cooperative Extension –
Fauquier Office*

<https://www.fauquier.ext.vt.edu>
24 Pelham Street
Warrenton, VA 20186
(540) 341-7950

*Virginia Cooperative Extension –
Loudoun Office*

<https://www.loudoun.ext.vt.edu>
750 Miller Drive Southeast, Suite F3
Leesburg, VA 20175
(703) 777-0373

■ GARDENING

The best way to enjoy your property is to create an outdoor space that reflects your style and use. Gardening is a broad

term and whether you have a passion for growing food or flowers, want low or high maintenance plants, your local **Master Gardeners Association** can be an excellent resource. Master Gardeners are trained volunteer educators through Virginia Tech and their local Virginia Extension Office. They provide a variety of services including Help Desk support, lawn care guidance, facilitate the Audubon at Home Wildlife Sanctuary program, host educational clinics, and maintain demonstration gardens for homeowners to gather ideas. Their mission is to help members of the public achieve their gardening goals. You might discover your new passion and become a Master Gardener yourself!

*Master Gardeners of Fauquier and
Rappahannock Counties*

<https://www.mgfrc.org>
(540) 341-7950
tohlwile@vt.edu

Loudoun Master Gardeners

<https://loudouncountymastergardeners.org>
(703) 771-5150
loudounmg@vt.edu

For more experienced gardeners looking to deepen their skills, the **Oak Spring Garden Foundation** offers courses, workshops, and fellowships. Hosted at the former property of Paul and Rachel “Bunny” Mellon, they have a mission to support and inspire fresh thinking and bold action on the history and future of plants, including the art and culture of plants, gardens and landscapes.

Oak Spring Garden Foundation

<https://www.osgf.org>
1776 Loughborough Ln
Upperville, VA 20184
(540) 592-3159

■ IMPORTANCE OF NATIVE SPECIES

As you consider plants for your gardens and assess what existing plants to keep or remove around your property, knowing and understanding how these plants interact with the environment is critical. Native plants, defined as plants that have evolved to occur naturally in a particular region, provide food and habitat for wildlife,

are easier to maintain, and don't invade the landscape, escaping to where they can be destructive. There are two wonderful groups to reach out to for advice on removing non-native invasive plants and promoting native species on your property. Both offer free, on-site visits for customized advice.

The **Clifton Institute's** mission is to inspire a deeper understanding and appreciation of nature, to study the ecology of our region, to restore habitat, and to conserve native biodiversity.

The Clifton Institute
<https://www.cliftoninstitute.org/>
6712 Blantyre Road
Warrenton, VA 20187
(540) 341-3651
info@cliftoninstitute.org

Blue Ridge PRISM works to reduce the impact of invasive plants on the ecosystems of the northern Blue Ridge Mountains and surrounding

areas through regional and statewide advocacy, landowner support, implementing control measures, and public education.

Blue Ridge PRISM
<https://www.blueridgeprism.org>
PO Box 119
White Hall, VA 22987
(434) 218-9139
info@blueridgeprism.org

The **Virginia Master Naturalist Program** is another important resource to explore how to support native species. It is a statewide corps of volunteers providing education, outreach, and services dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas within their communities.

VMN Banshee Reeks Chapter
<http://www.vmnbansheereeks.org>
PO Box 1102
Leesburg, VA 20177
vmnbansheereeks@gmail.com



PHOTO: HUGH KENNY/ PIEDMONT ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL



PHOTO: LEAH CHALDARES/GOOSE CREEK ASSOCIATION



The Larson Garden outside PEC's Headquarters in Warrenton, Fauquier County.

PHOTO: HUGH KENNY/ PIEDMONT ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL

YOUR LAND

Land stewardship involves everything from pursuing a conservation easement to permanently preserve the open space integrity of your property, to implementing best management practices to protect the environmental resources on your land. You can make a positive impact on every element of your property, and it is important to know this work does not have to be all completed at once. It will change over the years and depend on the season. Part of rural life is dedicating energy to ongoing maintenance, and making choices that hopefully reduce that workload over time, and for the betterment of wildlife and their habitat needs. You can establish a plan to improve the health of your property that is implemented in stages, over months or years, depending on what best suits your needs.

Economizing your property can produce primary or supportive income, and there are many viable options that are suitable for the northern Piedmont region. You could explore leasing your land to an established farm professional who needs additional space for his or her livestock or crop production, or you could take the reins yourself to establish your own agricultural business. There are countless opportunities, ranging from small scale horticulture and beekeeping, to elaborate equestrian or livestock enterprises. Whether you are keen on a boutique operation or large-scale production, we have plenty of experts to help get you started.

Your land provides the canvas to make your mark on the northern Piedmont landscape, allowing you to enjoy the rewards of living in our beautiful countryside and play a role in preserving this sacred resource. Each decision has an impact on our environment and we hope you will see the value in ensuring that future generations have the same opportunity. There are many factors to consider, and it will take time to establish your plan and bring it to fruition, but we hope our collection of established resources below will help streamline and support your vision.

There are several layers to managing your land and it is important to create your own custom plan that addresses two driving forces of rural living: stewardship and economy. Your county's comprehensive plan and zoning policies will help provide the framework for developing your strategy as they have specific restrictions and allowances depending on the location of your property. You may also be part of certain designated districts which could influence your decisions, and in this section, we will tell you how to access this important information.

Corn harvest, Fauquier County.



COUNTY GOVERNANCE AND GUIDANCE

■ COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLANS AND POLICIES

Virginia Code states that, “every governing body shall adopt a comprehensive plan for the territory under its jurisdiction.” The plan is to be general in nature, but include a transportation plan, recommendations for the general development of the territory, and an affordable housing component. It may also include designations for various land uses, public facilities, areas of historical significance, and urban development areas. The purpose of this document, which is amended periodically, is to create a guide for development within the respective county over the next twenty years to maintain their underlying vision and goals.

Fauquier County’s Comprehensive Plan (<https://www.fauquiercounty.gov/government/departments-a-g/community-development/comprehensive-plan>) is available online or through the County’s Planning Office. Questions about the plan and how it pertains to your property should be directed to:

Fauquier County Planning Office
(540) 422-8210
admin@fauquiercounty.gov

Loudoun County’s Comprehensive Plan (<https://www.loudoun.gov/4957/Loudoun-County-Comprehensive-Plan>) is available online or through the County’s Planning Office. Questions about the plan and how it pertains to your property should be directed to:



PHOTO: DULANY MORISON

Loudoun County Planning & Zoning
(703) 777-0246
dpz@loudoun.gov

■ COUNTY ZONING

County Zoning is regulated by its respective Zoning Ordinance. The Ordinance is intended to promote the health, safety and general welfare of the public and to implement the adopted Comprehensive Plan. The Ordinance is administered by the County’s Zoning staff and is subject to periodic revisions upon action by the Board of Supervisors.

Zoning approval is required before any new structure is built on a property, including agricultural buildings. Zoning approval is also required before grading or other land disturbing on your property and before a new use is added or a change in use occurs.

The **Fauquier County Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map** (<https://www.fauquiercounty.gov/government/departments-a-g/community-development/zoning>) are available for review online. Specific questions should be directed to:

Fauquier County Zoning Office
(540) 422-8220
admin@fauquiercounty.gov

The Loudoun County Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map

(<https://www.loudoun.gov/5719/Zoning-Districts-Map>) are available for review online. Specific questions should be directed to:

Loudoun County Planning & Zoning
(703) 777-0246
dpz@loudoun.gov

■ COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSIONS AND BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

A county’s Planning Commission will consist of appointed members who are charged with advising the Board of Supervisors on all matters related to the growth and development of the county. Each commissioner represents a magisterial district and their responsibilities can include providing recommendations for special permits, rezoning, comprehensive plan amendments, changes to the zoning ordinance, and other land development issues.

Fauquier County Planning Commission
<https://www.fauquiercounty.gov/government/boards-committees/planning-commission>
(540) 422-8210

Loudoun County Planning Commission
<https://onboard.loudoun.gov/board/3524>
(703) 771-5490

A county's Board of Supervisors is elected by the residents and serve, by law, as the governing body of the County. The Board sets goals and objectives; establishes priorities for County programs and services; establishes County legislative and administrative policies through the adoption of ordinances and resolutions; appoints the County Administrator and members of various boards and commissions; adopts the annual budget; appropriates funds; and sets tax rates. Each Supervisor represents a magisterial district just like the Planning Commissioners.

Fauquier County Board of Supervisors
<https://www.fauquiercounty.gov/government/board-of-supervisors>
(540) 422-8020
bos@fauquiercounty.gov

Loudoun County Board of Supervisors
<https://www.loudoun.gov/86/Board-of-Supervisors>
(703) 777-0204
bos@loudoun.gov

■ LAND TAXATION

In 1971, the General Assembly enacted a law permitting localities to adopt a program of special assessment for agricultural, horticultural, forest and open space lands. The program provides for the deferral of real estate taxes when a property meets qualifying standards for agricultural, horticultural, forestry or open spaces uses. Assessed values under the program are generally less than those estimated at fair market value. The requirements of this program will differ depending on your county.

Fauquier County's Land Use Requirements and Application are available online (<https://www.fauquiercounty.gov/government/departments-a-g/commissioner-of-the-revenue/real-estate/land-use>). Questions about the program can be answered by the Office of the Commissioner of the Revenue at (540) 422-8160.



Loudoun County's Land Use Requirements and Application are available online (<https://www.loudoun.gov/652/Land-Use-Assessment-Program>). Questions about the program can be answered by a staff member in the Exemptions & Deferrals Divisions by calling (703) 737-8557 or emailing landuse@loudoun.gov.

■ LOUDOUN COUNTY AGRICULTURAL DISTRICTS

Loudoun County (Fauquier County does not) administers an **Agricultural and Forestal District (AFD) Program** to conserve, protect, and encourage the development and improvement of agricultural and forestal lands. AFD's are rural conservation zones reserved for the production of agricultural products, timber and the maintenance of open space land as an important economic and environmental resource. Districts are voluntary and are initiated by a landowner or group of landowners as a mutual undertaking with the local government. By establishing a District, property owners agree not to convert their farm, forestland and other open space lands to more intense

Greenhouses at the JK Community Farm in Purcellville, Loudoun County.





PHOTO: TRAVIS SHAW, VIRGINIA PIEDMONT HERITAGE AREA ASSOCIATION

commercial, industrial or residential uses for a term of four to ten years. In return, the County and Commonwealth agree not to take actions or make infrastructure investments that will place increased pressure on landowners to convert land in the district to more intense land uses during the term of the District.

The benefits to the participant include lower taxes. There are twenty-one AFDs located throughout Loudoun County that include 41,000 acres. Maps of these districts (<https://www.loudoun.gov/2987/Current-Loudoun-County-AFDs>), and their respective ordinances are available on the Loudoun County website. Criteria and applications for creating a new AFD are available online. Once an application has been submitted, it is reviewed by the Agricultural District Committee, Planning Commission, and Board of Supervisors. If you are interested in starting a new district, there is a requirement of a 200-acre core parcel or contiguous parcels. There are no acreage requirements to join an existing district if you are within one mile of the core. Questions about the program should be directed to:

*Loudoun County Planning & Zoning
(703) 777-0246
dpz@loudoun.gov*

LAND PRESERVATION

■ CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

A conservation easement is a voluntary private legal agreement between a landowner and an easement holder that protects land and its conservation values by limiting future development on the property. Together the landowner and the holder craft the legal easement document so that it protects the significant natural and cultural attributes of the land. The landowner still owns their property, but the conservation easement is a permanent legal document that gets recorded with the property's deed and travels with the property even when the property changes ownership.

Conservation easements are a strategy for protection and provide the opportunity for improvement of water quality, preservation of cultural and historic sites, protection of our plant

and animal communities, sustaining working landscapes and natural areas, and enhancing our quality of life.

In Virginia, there are several financial incentives to pursuing an easement. Landowners who donate a conservation easement may be eligible for a Land Preservation Tax Credit (LPTC) equal to 40% of the value of their donation. These tax credits can be used to directly pay the landowner's Virginia income tax liability, and as a result, each \$1 of credit is actually worth \$1 to the landowner. Landowners may also sell their state tax credits using a tax broker who specializes in LPTC. Each of the land trusts below will be able to provide you with a list of these brokers. On average, tax credits can be sold for a net profit of about 80-85 cents on the dollar.

Conservation easement donors also may be eligible for a federal income tax deduction. This deduction would be equal to the value of their easement donation, minus the value of any state income tax credits, such as the LPTC, received in exchange for the donation. In Fauquier and Loudoun County, properties in a conservation easement also qualify for their respective Land Use Assessment Programs and therefore have lower property taxes.

There are several easement holders that work in the northern Piedmont Region and we encourage you to research each one and speak with their staff members to see who would be the best fit for you. This relationship will continue well past the easement drafting and recordation and so it is important you choose the group that will help you best reach and support your conservation goals.

Listed on the following page are a few of the most active holders in our region. For a complete listing of federal, state, and non-profit programs in Virginia, visit **Virginia Department**



PHOTO BY BARRY FREEMAN, VIRGINIA PIEDMONT HERITAGE AREA ASSOCIATION

of Conservation and Recreation's
website:
<https://dcr.virginia.gov/land-conservation/landcon-organizations>

Land Trust of Virginia
<https://www.landtrustva.org/>
119 The Plains Road
Suite 200
Middleburg, VA 20117
(540) 687-8441
info@landtrustva.org

Northern Virginia Conservation Trust
<https://www.nvct.org/>
4022-A Hummer Road
Annandale, VA 22003
(703) 345-5093
info@nvct.org

Old Dominion Land Conservancy
<https://www.odlc.us/>
621 West Main Street
Purcellville, VA 20132
(540) 338-0077
info@odlc.us

Piedmont Environmental Council
<https://www.pecva.org/>
45 Horner Street
Warrenton, VA 20186
(540) 347-2334
pec@pecva.org

Virginia Outdoors Foundation
(Fauquier/Loudoun new easement staff
person, Laura Thurman)
<https://www.vof.org/>
39 Garrett St., Suite 200
Warrenton, VA 20186
(844) 863-9800 ext. 450
lthurman@vof.org

■ LOCAL FUNDING SOURCES FOR CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

Easement holders charge a variety of fees for their services and there are costs you will incur from working with your attorney, appraiser, and possibly surveyor. Depending on the complexity of the easement, the financial burden can be significant. Luckily there are numerous programs available to help offset your costs to permanently protect your land.

◆ *The Bondi Family Land Conservation and Battlefield Preservation Fund.*

This fund is available to landowners within the Unison Battlefield Study Area who are considering protecting their land with a permanent conservation easement. The fund

is designated to assist landowners with transaction costs, including stewardship, legal, and surveyor fees. For more information, please contact VPHA at info@piedmontheritage.org or by calling (540) 687-6681.

◆ **Deborah Whittier Fitts Battlefield Stewardship Fund.** Land Trust of Virginia's Deborah Whittier Fitts Battlefield Stewardship Fund is available to landowners whose property has documented Civil War battlefield events to offset expenses associated with putting their land into easement. For more information, contact LTV at info@landtrustva.org or call (540) 687-8441.

◆ **Malcolm Baldwin Farmers Fund.** Land Trust of Virginia's Malcolm Baldwin Farmers Fund is available to landowners who have an active agricultural operation to offset expenses associated with putting their land into easement. For more information, contact LTV at info@landtrustva.org or call (540) 687-8441.

◆ **Loudoun County Conservation Easement Assistance Program** provides financial assistance to Loudoun County landowners by reimbursing up to \$25,000 in qualifying expenses including attorney's fees, land appraisal and survey fees, processing and document fees, and stewardship costs. County landowners work with a qualified land trust in placing their property under a conservation easement and the land trust submits an application to the assistance program on the landowner's behalf. There are landowner and property requirements to apply. Email conservationeasements@loudoun.gov or call (703) 771-5778 for more information.

◆ **The Piedmont Environmental Council** supports several conservation funds in Fauquier and Loudoun counties, including the Catoctin Creek Conservation Fund, James M. Rowley Goose Creek Land Conservation Fund, and Julian Scheer Fauquier Land Conservation Fund. All funds are dedicated to protecting land with important natural, historic, scenic, and



PHOTO: LEAH CHALDARES/GCA

agricultural resources, and have the ability to assist landowners with some conservation easement costs. For more information about Fund policies and project selection, please email pec@pecva.org or call (540) 347-2334.

◆ **PFH Conservation Fund (PFHCF).** The PFHCF is available to landowners within the northern Piedmont region who are considering protecting their land with a permanent conservation easement. The fund is designated to assist landowners with transaction costs, including stewardship, legal, and surveyor fees. For more information, please contact PFHCF at office@pfhconservationfund.org or by calling (571) 246-5029.

■ PDR OPPORTUNITIES

The **Fauquier County Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) Program** allows landowners to enter into agreements to sell the development potential of qualifying property to the County while maintaining the right to continue to own and use the property. The purpose of the PDR Program is to protect farmland and retain the agricultural industry's critical mass, in particular, farm parcels that are economically viable operations. Requirements include that your property must be in excess of 50



Orange County Hounds.

PHOTO: DULANY MORISON

acres (can be a combination of multiple, contiguous parcels), must currently be zoned Rural Agricultural (RA) or Rural Conservation (RC), and must not currently be under conservation easement or pending consideration for conservation easement or otherwise restricted from development.

Questions about the program should be directed to the **Fauquier County Agricultural Development Department** by calling (540) 422-8280.

As of 2023, Loudoun County is considering the adoption of a similar PDR Program in compliance with their Comprehensive Plan.

BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Best Management Practices (BMPs) are defined as practices or methods that are the most effective in preventing or reducing the amount of pollution generated by nonpoint sources. Examples of nonpoint source pollution can include excess fertilizers, herbicides and insecticides from agricultural lands or residences, sediment from erosion, bacteria or nutrients from livestock, pet waste and faulty septic systems. **Life in the Country**, a publication by local conservationist Missy Janes, is an amazing resource for further information about the importance of BMPs and resources to help you install them. Copies of it can be requested from Piedmont Environmental Council's headquarters in Warrenton.

■ COST-SHARE PROGRAMS

There are many conservation programs through federal, state and local agencies that provide cost-share programs or tax credits for landowners

who would like assistance in designing and installing BMPs, including fencing for livestock exclusion, tree planting, and more. Your local Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) acts as a clearing house for these programs and they will assist in the creation of your property's overall conservation plan.

John Marshall Soil & Water Conservation District (Fauquier)
<https://www.fauquiercounty.gov/government/departments-h-z/john-marshall-soil-water-conservation-district>
98 Alexandria Pike, Suite 33
Warrenton, VA 20186
(540) 422-8490
johnmarshall.swcd@vaswcd.org

Loudoun Soil & Water Conservation District
<http://www.loudounsoilandwater.com/>
30 Catoctin Circle, SE, Suite 218
Leesburg, VA 20175
(571) 918-4530
suzie.brown@lswcd.org

■ RIPARIAN BUFFERS

Riparian Buffers are the areas of grass, shrubs, and trees along the banks of rivers and streams. In addition to creating wildlife habitat, they are critical to filter nutrients, sediments, and other pollutants to protect our water quality. Riparian buffers also prevent erosion by slowing the speed of water running off the land, allowing it to seep into the





PHOTO: LAND TRUST OF VIRGINIA

groundwater supply and controlling storm surges. **Virginia Department of Forestry's Riparian Buffer Implementation Plan** (https://dof.virginia.gov/wp-content/uploads/RFB-Imp-Plan-2006-2010_pub.pdf) is an in-depth resource to understand the best practices for conserving these small, but critical elements of your property's waterways. Your county SWCD can provide seedling trees and shrubs free of charge for riparian buffer plantings.

The **Piedmont Environmental Council's Potomac Planting Program** provides free technical assistance, project design, materials, and labor for the planting of native trees and shrubs in riparian zones on properties in the Potomac River watershed in Clarke, Loudoun and Fauquier counties.

The **Goose Creek Association's "Goose Creek Challenge"** program with SWCD staff works with you and your land to design and plant riparian buffers along the Goose Creek and its tributaries free of cost. This program is unique as it involves local volunteers and school groups and involves educational components for all ages.

■ GRASSLANDS AND MOWING

Virginia Working Landscapes, a program of the Smithsonian Conserva-

tion Biology Institute in Front Royal, Va, has conducted research surrounding Virginia's grasslands and the native wildlife that depend on this ecosystem for survival. Their research has concluded that to allow nesting ground birds time to reproduce, it is critical that field mowing or haying be delayed until July of each year, among other practices. VWL recruits landowners each year to be a part of their surveys to track population numbers of native plants and animals. VWL has partnered with the Piedmont Environmental Council and collectively coordinate the **Virginia Grassland Bird Initiative**. This initiative offers financial incentives for farmers willing to adopt these practices. Contact VWL or PEC to partici-



PHOTO: LEAH CHALDARES, GOOSE CREEK ASSOCIATION

pate in their multitude of educational opportunities to learn more about how to manage your property to best serve our native wildlife.

Piedmont Environmental Council
<https://www.pecva.org/>
45 Horner Street
Warrenton, VA 20186
(540) 347-2334
pec@pecva.org

Virginia Working Landscapes
<https://www.vaworkinglandscapes.org>
1500 Remount Road, MRC 5537
Front Royal, Virginia 22630
(540) 635-0035
SCBIVWL@si.edu

■ WILDLIFE CORRIDORS

Habitat needs for Virginia's wildlife go beyond our property boundaries and it is critical that they have interconnected corridors to hunt, forage, avoid predators, and find mates. For example, while a covey of bobwhite quail may only require 15-20 acres of quality habitat, a permanent, sustainable quail population (multiple coveys) typically requires at least 2000 acres. Creating areas of heavy, native vegetation along roadways, riparian areas, and property boundaries, while limiting fencing, will ensure wildlife populations can navigate the divisions humans create across the landscape. Virginia was one of the first states to enact a *Wildlife Corridor Action Plan* (<https://www.dwr.virginia.gov/wildlife/corridors/>), that you can explore with the **Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources**.

Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources
<https://www.dwr.virginia.gov/>
(804) 367-1000



■ ATTRACTING POLLINATORS

Pollinator populations have been in decline due to habitat and forage loss. Roughly 80 percent of the world’s plant species depend on wildlife assisted pollination and it is important landowners plant native species that are beneficial to pollinators. An easy way to do this is to install a meadow area where you currently mow. The **Virginia Native Plant Society** has reference lists for regional natives including their wildlife value to ensure you are incorporating a variety that will best serve our pollinators.

Virginia Native Plant Society
<https://www.vnps.org/>
400 Blandy Farm Lane, Unit 2
Boyce, Virginia 22620
(540) 837-1600
vnps.org@gmail.com

■ FORESTRY MANAGEMENT

Maintaining healthy forest is critical for wildlife habitat and provides numerous environmental benefits including cleaner air and cooler temperatures. The **Virginia Department of Forestry** helps landowners protect their forest lands against pests, nonnative species, and pathogens. A forester is available to visit your property and make recommendations based on scientific data. VDOF also operates two seedling nurseries where you can order seedlings to reforest areas of your land, suited perfectly to our Virginia climate, to be shipped to your home at a very reasonable cost. Explore their offerings at:

Virginia Department of Forestry – Warrenton Office
<https://www.dof.virginia.gov/>
675 Frost Avenue
Warrenton, VA. 20186
(540) 347-6358

Virginia Department of Forestry – Fairfax Office (serves Loudoun County)
<https://www.dof.virginia.gov/>
12055 Government Center Pkwy #904
Fairfax, VA 22035
(703) 324-1489

■ PASTURE MANAGEMENT

For your pastures to remain healthy, nutritious, and able to sustain animal grazing, you will need regular maintenance. A general rule is two acres of pasture per horse and one acre per cow to allow for enough forage and exercise. Pastures need regular rest and so organizing a rotational grazing schedule will ensure you don’t allow overgrazing which creates weeds and erosion. Regularly dragging your fields to break up manure reduces the parasite load and will help fertilize the soil. The **Virginia Forage and Grasslands Council** provides educational resources regarding forage production, grazing management, and grassland resource conservation.

Virginia Forage and Grassland Council
<https://www.vaforges.org/>
info@vaforges.org



Pigs enjoying a meal at PEC’s Community Farm.

PHOTO: HUGH KENNY, PIEDMONT ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL



LTV easement donor Kathy Wilt with her Holstein steer, Chase.

PHOTO: NATALIE BURNS, LAND TRUST OF VIRGINIA

■ LIVESTOCK EXCLUSION FROM WATER

While it may seem to be a quick and free solution to allow livestock to access water on your property's ponds or streams, the reality is that the costs on your herd health, water quality, and animal safety far outweigh the benefits. The **Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation's** publication *Streamside Livestock Exclusion: A Tool for Increasing Farm Income and Improving Water Quality* (<https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/soil-and-water/document/streamsideexcl.pdf>) outlines benefits to keeping livestock out of our waterways and how to best limit their access.

■ SOIL HEALTH

Sustainable, productive agriculture is only possible with proper maintenance of your soil. Practices that reduce erosion, maximize water infiltration, and improve on the nutrient cycle include cover crops, crop rotation, and no-till methods. The **Virginia Soil Health Coalition** (<https://www.virginiasoilhealth.org/>) offers mentoring, training, a podcast and other education resources to maximize the resiliency of your soil.

■ DEER MANAGEMENT

White-tailed Deer are prevalent in the Piedmont countryside and can be a severe nuisance. The **Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources Deer Management Plan** (<https://dwr.virginia.gov/wildlife/deer/management-plan/>) outlines ways to reduce deer-vehicle collisions and deer damage to agricultural and residential properties. Explore ways you can manage their population on your land.



PHOTO: TIFFANY DILLION KEEN PHOTOGRAPHY

ENGAGING IN THE RURAL ECONOMY

There are a number of ways to appropriately economize your land, with opportunities for every property size. As you prepare for your entrepreneurial debut, there are a number of questions you have to ask yourself. Do you intend to do the labor yourself? Or are you interested in leasing the land to an established professional? Will you depend on your income, or will it be supporting revenue, or hobby? Is your preferred enterprise compatible with your neighbors, local community, and zoning? Your local Extension Office will have numerous resources to assist in getting you started, as well as the following specialized groups.

Virginia Cooperative Extension – Fauquier Office
<https://www.fauquier.ext.vt.edu/>
24 Pelham Street
Warrenton, VA 20186
(540) 341-7950

Virginia Cooperative Extension – Loudoun Office
<https://www.loudoun.ext.vt.edu/>
750 Miller Drive Southeast, Suite F3
Leesburg, VA 20175
(703) 777-0373

■ BLUE RIDGE CATTLEMEN ASSOCIATION

Connect with over 100 area cattle producers by contacting founding member Gary Hornbaker:

garyhornbaker321@gmail.com

■ FAUQUIER COUNTY EDUCATION FARM

The Fauquier Education Farm, a 501(c)3 organization, was created in 2010. Fauquier Education Farm (FEF) exists to promote agriculture education through best-method demonstrations, mentoring, and hands-on learning. All food grown on the farm is donated to local food banks.

The Fauquier Education Farm is a learning resource for students, farmers, gardeners and anyone wanting to learn more about how our food is grown. They offer a broad range of activities to showcase how they are planting, maintaining and harvesting fresh wholesome vegetables while also being good stewards to the land.

<https://www.fauquiereducationfarm.org/>
8428 Meetze Road
Warrenton, VA 20186
(540) 336-4338
fauquierfarm@gmail.com

■ LEASING YOUR LAND?

Interested in leasing your property to an equestrian professional or exploring other opportunities to get connected with established local farmers, please reach out to the **Piedmont Fox Hounds Conservation Fund, Orange County Hounds Conservation Foundation, or Masters of Foxhounds Association of North America** (based in Middleburg). These organizations have deep roots in the area and a wealth of information to help guide you based on your vision and property.

<https://pfhconservationfund.org/>
<https://www.ochcf.org/>
<https://www.mfha.com/>

■ LOUDOUN BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

LBA is an active club dedicated to beekeeping. LBA's focus is to introduce, educate, and foster sustainable beekeeping practices for its members committed to managing honey bees in the Loudoun County area.

<https://www.loudounbee.org/>

■ LOUDOUN COUNTY EQUINE ALLIANCE

The mission of the Loudoun County Equine Alliance is to present a unified voice to actively advocate, educate and communicate the goals, initiatives and benefits of the horse industry, in order to advance the interests of all equine disciplines and the entire equestrian related industry.

<https://www.loudounequine.org/information@loudounequine.org>

■ LOUDOUN VALLEY SHEEP PRODUCERS

The LVSPA is a nonprofit organization of sheep producers. LVSPA strives to promote understanding and cooperation in the Loudoun County and Virginia sheep and lamb industries for the common interests of producers and consumers. The association coordinates and arranges meetings, tours, and other activities in an effort to promote goodwill and communication in and for the sheep and wool industry.

<https://www.lvspa.org/lvspatreasurer@gmail.com>

■ LOUDOUN WINERIES AND WINEGROWERS ASSOCIATION

The LWVA enables the success of the Loudoun County wine industry by promoting agriculture, social stewardship and by facilitating marketing, legislation, education, and communications between member wineries, winegrowers and their partners.

<https://www.loudounwine.org/info@loudounwine.org>

■ MARE CENTER

The mission of the MARE Center is to provide the stakeholders of Virginia

and the wider equestrian community with innovative research, translational technologies, and state-of-the-art education through research, teaching, and outreach efforts. The MARE Center has a number of projects, programs, and regular events to connect equine land managers and horse owners with the latest science-based information promoting equine and environmental wellbeing.

<https://arec.vaes.vt.edu/arec/middleburg.html>

5527 Sullivans Mill Road
Middleburg, Virginia
(540) 687-3521

■ MARYLAND & VIRGINIA MILK PRODUCERS COOPERATIVE ASSOCIATION

Maryland & Virginia Milk Producers Cooperative is a community of more than 900 dairy farm families in 11 states passionate about cultivating dairy goodness and bottling fresh Maola brand milk and dairy products. Their farmer-owned cooperative owns five dairy processing plants that process more than three billion pounds of milk annually. Their diverse portfolio of dairy products are then distributed to consumers in the United States and ingredients customers worldwide. Their cooperative is a leader in sustainability, partnering across the supply chain to deliver sustainable solutions to our member farms. They take pride in supporting the educational and nutritional needs of the communities in our milkshed through our MDVA Fund.

Maryland and Virginia Milk Producers Cooperative Association
<https://www.mdvamilk.com/>
(703) 742-6800
info@mdvamilk.com

■ NUTRIENT AND WETLAND MITIGATION CREDITS

There are instances where instituting best management practices and improving conservation values on your property can actually generate income. A nutrient bank is created when a landowner converts non-forested land to forest through tree planting to reduce nutrient loads to waterways. A mitigation bank is a wetland, stream, or other water resource that has been restored or preserved to provide compensation “for the purpose of providing compensation for unavoidable impacts to aquatic resources permitted under state or local wetland regulation.”

Regulators require developers to purchase nutrient credits from sellers located within the same sub-watershed as the proposed development. The **Department of Environmental Quality** maintains a list of approved nutrient credit sellers, which is revised periodically as nutrient credit banks are created, nutrient credits within a bank are sold, and nutrient credit banks are removed for falling short of regulatory requirements. Contact information for DEQ’s Northern Regional Office is (703) 583-3800 or communications@deq.virginia.gov.

■ VIRGINIA GRAIN PRODUCERS ASSOCIATION

The Virginia Grain Producers Association (VGPA) represents Virginia’s corn and small grains producers. VGPA’s strategic plan focuses on Market Infrastructure, Media, Influence and Information Technology. Their association’s resources combined with staff and Board efforts include leadership meetings and travel, five annual events and producer programs implemented to support busy grain

producers and Virginia’s corn and small grains industries.

<http://www.viriniagrains.com/>
(804) 736-6022
info@viriniagrains.com

GO LOCAL

Whether or not you begin an entrepreneurial journey on your own property, you can still support the northern Piedmont Region’s rural economy by supporting local producers. **The Piedmont Environmental Council** produces annual “**Buy Fresh, Buy Local**” guides which include a directory of local farms, retailers, restaurants,

and food businesses to encourage consumers to get to know, and support, their local farmers.

Your region’s Guide is available on their website:
<https://www.buyfreshbuylocal.org/>



PHOTO: HUGH KENNY, PIEDMONT ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL

COMMUNITY FARM AT ROUNDABOUT MEADOWS

Since 2019, the Piedmont Environmental Council (PEC) has been working to provide locally grown fruits and vegetables for Loudoun’s food-insecure population through our work at the Community Farm at Roundabout Meadows. Thanks to full-time staff and an army of volunteers, the Community Farm has donated over 100,000 pounds of produce to area food pantries. There are also several management areas within the 140-acre Roundabout Meadows, which includes the Gilberts Corner Farmers Market and the Old Carolina Road Trail. Be sure to visit PEC’s website to learn about how you can get involved.

<https://www.pecva.org/our-work/working-farms-and-food/roundabout-meadows-community-farm/>



PHOTO: PIEDMONT ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL

YOUR PIEDMONT COUNTRYSIDE

Taking an aerial view of the northern Piedmont region will allow you to appreciate all the characteristics that contribute to the foundation of our way of life. Our historic byways and gravel roads, of which we have the highest concentration in the country, tie us together, connecting small rural villages where locals gather and welcome visitors. They are encompassed into the many unique historic districts that provide another layer of interest and guidance that further define our identity. We are all stewards of this historic landscape, and it is important to support the big picture of preservation beyond the boundaries of your own property.

There are three areas of civic engagement for you to consider, all of which are of equal importance. The first is taking an advocacy role, by supporting your community on active preservation efforts to protect our cherished resources and opposing development proposals that are incompatible with their environs. This could take the form of speaking at a public hearing in favor of saving an historic structure or joining a community movement to oppose a large event center that would bring unwanted noise, traffic, and light pollution to the surrounding landscape.

Similarly, it is also important to vote for committed conservationists in local elections, acknowledging that almost all our major preservation wins have come with bipartisan support. The rhythm of local politics often has very little in common with state and federal politics and it is vital to approach each election with a neutral viewpoint until you learn the positions of the candidates involved.

Finally, there are many local nonprofits who work to protect our special part of the world, each with their own mission and origin, but all with a passionate commitment to work together to preserve the northern Piedmont for future generations. We encourage you to get to know the organizations listed at the end of this section by reading their materials and attending their events. Once you have a grasp of what drives them, please consider supporting the nonprofits that best align with your interests. These organizations are very experienced in conservation issues and know how to make an impact.

Bluemont, Loudoun County.



HISTORIC DISTRICTS

Most historic designations are determined by the **National Register of Historic Places** or the **Virginia Department of Historic Resources' Virginia Landmark Register** and are honorific, meaning they provide positive opportunities and potential financial incentives without government regulation. County (or Independent Town) historic districts, on the other hand, require landowners to submit their development plans to an architectural review board for approval. If your property falls within either designation, we encourage you to consider the related history in your projects and seek advice from the historians with consulting experience listed in this manual.

Federal incentives come in the form of grant monies to localities that are designated as a "Certified Local Government" (CLG) as defined by the guidelines of the National Park Service and specific guidance for the State Historic Preservation Office. Localities that are certified can apply for federal grants through the State Historic Preservation Office (VDHR, in Virginia's case), and, if certified, may receive grants from the first 10% of Virginia's federal grant allotment for historic preservation. These grants may be used for preservation planning, survey, and many other preservation planning programs. For more information on historic districts and grant opportunities contact:

Virginia Department of Historic Resources
<https://dhr.virginia.gov/programs/grants-funding-opportunities/>
 2801 Kensington Avenue
 Richmond, VA 23221
 (804) 482-6446

Below is a list of the Historic Districts in Fauquier and Loudoun County, divided by county designation and Virginia Landmarks Register and National Register of Historic Places. We encourage you to research if

your property falls within one of these districts and to familiarize yourself with their defining characteristics which will help you emulate them on your own property:

FAUQUIER COUNTY			
COUNTY HISTORIC DISTRICTS			
Marshall	Town of The Plains	Town of Warrenton	
VIRGINIA LANDMARKS REGISTER (VLR) AND NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES (NRHP) HISTORIC DISTRICTS			
Ashville	Delaplane	Paris	
Atoka	Hume	Rectortown	
Bristersburg	John Marshall's	Remington	
Broad Run	Leeds Manor	Sumerduck	
Burrland	Little River	The Plains	
Calverton	Markham	Unison Battlefield	
Carter's Run	Marshall	Upperville	
Casanova	Midland	Vint Hill Farms	
Catlett	Morgantown	Station	
Cromwell's Run	New Baltimore	Warrenton	
Crooked Run Valley	Orlean		

LOUDOUN COUNTY			
COUNTY HISTORIC DISTRICTS			
Aldie	Oatlands	Town of Purcellville	
Beaverdam Creek	Taylorstown	Waterford	
Bluemon	Town of Leesburg		
Goose Creek	Town of Middleburg		
VIRGINIA LANDMARKS REGISTER (VLR) AND NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES (NRHP) HISTORIC DISTRICTS			
Aldie Mill	Lovettsville	Taylorstown	
Ashburn	Middleburg	Unison	
Bluemon	Oatlands	Unison Battlefield	
Catoctin	Paeonian Springs	Vestals Gap/Lanesville	
Goose Creek	Philomont	Waterford	
Hillsboro	Purcellville	Willisville	
Leesburg	Round Hill		



PHOTO BY VPHA STAFF

Virginia Piedmont Heritage Area Association Headquarters at the Caleb Rector House.

about the historic sites in the Piedmont region. They serve as an information center for local history and can provide comprehensive recommendations based on your interests.

Virginia Piedmont Heritage Area Association
<https://www.piedmontheritage.org/>
 1461 Atoka Road
 Marshall VA 20115
 (540) 687-6681
info@piedmontheritage.org

OTHER HISTORIC RESOURCES

■ FAUQUIER COUNTY

✦ **Afro-American Historical Association.** AAHA serves as an invaluable resource for those researching their own family history or the history of the region. The 4,269 square foot museum on the lower level is home to 1,634 artifacts detailing the rich history of Fauquier County's Black residents.

<https://www.aahafauquier.org>
 4243 Loudoun Ave
 The Plains, VA 20198
 (540) 253-7488
info@ahafauquier.org

RURAL HISTORIC VILLAGES

The small villages of the northern Piedmont have been the focus of rural and agricultural communities for centuries and are often located at important crossroads. They typically include a church, school, mill, post office or general store, and they still represent the core of their local communities. These villages have a rich history and are major contributors to the sense of place that draws residents and visitors alike.

The **Loudoun Historic Village Alliance** (LVHA) provides a strong unified voice to advocate for village quality of life and their historic environs. LVHA focuses on many issues, including traffic concerns, encroaching development, zoning enforcement, water and sewer, and the proposed construction of public buildings.

Loudoun Historic Village Alliance
<https://www.loudounvillages.org/>

STATE HERITAGE AREA

The **Virginia Piedmont Heritage Area** is a state-designated Heritage Area covering five counties, including Fauquier and Loudoun. Their mission is to educate and advocate for the preservation of the extraordinary historical landscape and culture of the Northern Virginia Piedmont and Lower Shenandoah Valley. Their headquarters are at the historic Caleb Rector House in Atoka and they are a wonderful resource for learning more



◆ **Fauquier Heritage Preservation Foundation.** The repository and research arm of The Fauquier Heritage and Preservation Foundation, located within The Gott Library.

<https://www.thegottlibrary.org/>
4110 Winchester Road
Marshall, Virginia 20115
(540) 364-3440

◆ **Fauquier Historical Society.** The Fauquier Historical Society has over 300 members dedicated to preserving Fauquier County's rich history. They maintain a local museum, housed in an 1808 jail in Warrenton beside the Fauquier County Courthouse. They aim to stimulate interest in Fauquier County and Virginia history by preserving the evidence of our past, connecting it to our present and educating the community about its importance to our future.

<https://www.fauquierhistory.org/>
10 Ashby Street
Warrenton, VA 20186
(540) 347-5525
info@fauquierhistory.org

■ LOUDOUN COUNTY

◆ **Loudoun Heritage Farm Museum.** The Museum brings to life the rich farm heritage of Loudoun County

through interactive family-friendly exhibits, special events, lectures, as well as hands-on classes and programs that meet the Standards of Learning for Virginia. The gift shop features Virginia's Finest label products and creative gifts for home and family. The museum is conveniently located off Route 28 and Route 7 in Claude Moore Park in Sterling, Virginia.

<https://www.heritagefarmmuseum.org/>
21668 Heritage Farm Lane
Sterling, VA 20164
(571) 258-3800
hfmuseum@gmail.com

◆ **National Sporting Library and Museum.** Founded in 1954, the National Sporting Library & Museum (NSLM) is located in Middleburg, the heart of Virginia's beautiful hunt country. The inviting, 6-acre campus, world-class research Library, and fine art Museum highlight the rich heritage and tradition of country pursuits. Angling, horsemanship, shooting, steeplechasing, foxhunting, flat racing, polo, coaching, and wildlife are among the subjects one can explore in the institution's general stacks, rare book holdings, archives, and art collection. The NSLM offers a wide variety of educational programs, exhibitions, and family activities throughout the year.



PHOTO: HUGH KENNY, PIEDMONT ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL

<https://www.nationalsporting.org/>
102 The Plains Road
Middleburg, VA 20118
(540) 687-6542
info@nationalsporting.org

◆ **Thomas Balch Library.** The Thomas Balch Library offers reference services including general collection research, manuscripts, archives, and rare book research. The library offers lectures on history and genealogy, classes, and exhibits.

<https://leesburgva.gov/departments/thomas-balch-library>
208 West Market Street
Leesburg, VA 20176
(703) 737-7195

RURAL ROADS

Rural roads are important to our cultural history and can accommodate a wide variety of uses including farm equipment, automobiles, equestrians, pedestrians and bicyclists. These roads are typically narrow, usually tree-lined, bordered by hedgerows and miles of hand-laid fieldstone walls, most often unpaved, and requiring slow travel speeds. Their protection is important to preserve the unique historic character of the rural landscape in the northern Piedmont region.

Beaverdam Creek Historic Roadways District is Loudoun County's Historic Roadway District. It comprises a network of 32 rural roads located in the southwest corner of the County, generally bounded by



PHOTO: GOOSE CREEK ASSOCIATION

Snickersville Turnpike (Route 734) to the north and John Mosby Highway (Route 50) to the south. If your property falls within the district, we encourage you to consider applying through the Loudoun County Department of Planning and Zoning (dpz@loudoun.gov or (703) 777-0246). Loudoun's entire rural road network has been deemed eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places and local historian Jane Covington is working to create other such districts to honor their historic significance.

America's Routes works to document Loudoun County's rural road network as an authentic and unique historic asset, worthy of recognition by state and federal agencies, as well as provide tours for visitors to explore by car, bike, or on foot. View their materials and learn more by visiting <https://www.americasroutes.com/>.

ADVOCACY

The northern Piedmont region attracts interest from many developers and entrepreneurs with proposals that are incompatible with the landscape and rural quality of life. The rural economy is an important engine to our sustainability and culture, but that doesn't mean every proposed enterprise is appropriate. Proposals must be assessed on a case-by-case basis to take into account pertinent variables and how the application would impact the local neighborhood. For example, a large-scale winery and active event center could be intrusive and dangerous in small rural settings while potentially appropriate near major roadways with similar ventures already in place. Similarly, Data Centers are incompatible in historic districts and rural zones and should be restricted to areas with

industrial zoning and existing power infrastructure.

These threats take many forms, and it is critical that citizens join their community in advocating to protect their environmental resources, historic landscape, and quality of life. Our county governments depends on civic input, and you can make your voice heard by writing emails or letters to the supervisors, planning commissioners, and other relevant authorities. You can also sign up to speak at public hearings where county and town boards review applications requesting special permission beyond the current zoning allowances.

The Loudoun County Preservation and Conservation Coalition (<https://www.loudouncoalition.org/>) and **Citizens for Fauquier County** (<https://www.citizensforfauquier.org/>) are two excellent resources for staying informed on local issues and potential threats to rural living.

ELECTED OFFICIALS

It is important to make sure you are well informed on the candidates in local elections and that you do not make assumptions based on state or national politics. Local issues are unique to your community and traditional political lines are often crossed or ignored in preservation and conservation. Having elected officials who are responsive to their constituents and who share our values is critical to the future of our countryside as zoning policies and protections can be entirely reversed or rewritten when new representatives are elected.

Fauquier Board of Supervisors
<https://fauquiercounty.gov/government/board-of-supervisors>
10 Hotel Street, Suite 208
Warrenton, VA 20186
(540) 422-8020
bos@fauquiercounty.gov

Loudoun Board of Supervisors
<https://www.loudoun.gov/86/Board-of-Supervisors>
1 Harrison Street, SE, 5th Floor
Leesburg, VA 20175
(703) 777-0204
bos@loudoun.gov

CONSERVATION & PRESERVATION ORGANIZATIONS

We are very fortunate to have multiple capable conservation and preservation organizations working on behalf of our countryside, some of whom have been active for over 50 years.



They are each driven by their own core values, but they work in tandem to support the overall mission of protecting the northern Piedmont region for future generations. Please read through their backgrounds below and seek additional information on their websites. They hold several events throughout the year, affording you the opportunity to get a better understanding of their vision and how they make an impact. Their events also serve to connect you with your neighbors and unite our countryside in the mission to conserve our shared landscape.

◆ **Citizens for Fauquier County.** Citizens for Fauquier County (CFFC) is committed to providing solutions that help balance growth and conservation while preserving the natural, historic and agricultural resources that make Fauquier the unique place it is. CFFC has played a significant role in successfully halting projects that would have led to the rap-



Land Trust of Virginia's annual Sunset in the Field event, highlighting our conserved landscape.

PHOTO: JOHN SCOTT NELSON PHOTOGRAPHY

id population growth and look-a-like residential and commercial development so prevalent in adjacent Loudoun and Prince William Counties. This grass roots 501(c)3 tax-exempt organization has seven hundred members and supporters from all parts of the county and is committed to preserving Fauquier's future for generations to come. To learn more, please visit <https://www.citizensforfauquier.org/>.

◆ **Goose Creek Association.** The Goose Creek Association is a registered, 501(c)3 nonprofit organization with hundreds of members from Loudoun and Fauquier counties who share a determination to protect and preserve the natural resources, historic heritage and rural quality of life found in this beautiful part of Virginia. Founded in 1970 to fight the discharge of sewage effluent into Goose Creek, today GCA's programs include monitoring stream water quality, riparian buffer plantings, and watershed education on best management practices for youths

and landowners. GCA also provides advocacy on proposed developments, legislation, zoning changes and other actions that have potential impacts on the environment and quality of life. GCA works with many conservation and preservation partners to provide a unified voice for conservation and preservation-minded citizens in the area. To learn more, please visit <https://www.goosecreek.org>.

◆ **Land Trust of Virginia.** Founded in 1992, Land Trust of Virginia partners with private landowners who wish to voluntarily protect and preserve their working farmland or natural lands with significant scenic, historic, and ecological value for the benefit of our community using conservation easements. Land Trust of Virginia is a thriving 501(c)3 non-profit organization that relies upon the generous support of their community and landowners to fulfill their mission. They are a trusted conservation partner, recognized and accredited by the Land Trust Alliance



PHOTO BY BARRY FREEMAN, VIRGINIA PIEDMONT HERITAGE AREA ASSOCIATION

RURAL LANDOWNER MANUAL SPONSORS

- Citizens for Fauquier County
- Goose Creek Association
- Land Trust of Virginia
- Loudoun County Preservation and Conservation Coalition
- OCH Conservation Foundation
- PFH Conservation Fund
- Piedmont Environmental Council
- Virginia Piedmont Heritage Area

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PHOTO: HUGH KENNY/PIEDMONT ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL

as a land trust that meets “national standards for protecting natural places and working lands forever.” To learn more, please visit <https://www.landtrustva.org/>.

♦ **OCH Conservation Foundation.** The OCH Conservation Foundation (OCHCF) was founded in 2018 with a mission to enhance diverse wildlife habitats, strengthen critical connections with nature, and preserve Northern Virginia’s unparalleled rural landscape. OCHCF educational events provide for youth and adult participation and include guided trail rides and nature walks within the historic equestrian and fox-hunting countryside. These programs enhance our connections with nature, while emphasizing the importance of protecting open space and wildlife habitats. Experts in native plants, local wildlife, conservation ecology, watershed protection and sustainable agriculture lead OCHCF nature walks on trails maintained by the foundation. For more information about this 501(c)3, visit <https://www.ochcf.org/>.

♦ **PFH Conservation Fund.** PFHCF was founded in 2021 to foster the conservation of Virginia Piedmont’s open spaces and rural landscapes through supporting the sustainability of equestrian and sporting hound activities. PFHCF strives to build awareness and appreciation of the long-term care needed to protect our landscapes and preserve the diverse wildlife habitats that nourish the native plants and animals that share our Virginia countryside. Their commitment to preserving our historic territory drives their educational programming

and citizen engagement throughout the Virginia Piedmont region. For more information about this 501(c)3, visit <https://pfhconservationfund.org/>.

♦ **The Piedmont Environmental Council (PEC).** Since 1972, PEC has proudly promoted and protected the natural resources, rural economy, history, and beauty of the Virginia Piedmont. PEC is a donor supported 501(c)3 non-profit and an accredited land trust. It is a locally grounded organization and empowers people to effect positive change in their communities by conserving land, protecting air and water quality, celebrating historic resources, building smart transportation networks, promoting sustainable energy choices, restoring wildlife habitat, and improving public access to nature. Its primary service area includes Albemarle, Clarke, Culpeper, Fauquier, Greene, Loudoun, Madison, Orange, and Rapahannock. To learn more, please visit <https://www.pecva.org/>.

♦ **Virginia Piedmont Heritage Area.** The Virginia Piedmont Heritage Area’s mission is to educate and advocate for the preservation of the extraordinary historic landscape and culture of the Virginia Piedmont Heritage Area for future generations. The Virginia Piedmont Heritage Area has a diverse and rich history, and their programs include presentations on Native Americans, the Revolutionary War, second son Tidewater Planters, the Early Republic, Quaker and German settlers, the Civil War, enslaved and free African Americans, into the Twentieth Century. To learn more about this 501(c)3, please visit <https://www.piedmontheritage.org/>.

Inside back cover photo: Potomac River as it flows along Loudoun County, by Hugh Kenny, Piedmont Environmental Council; back cover photo: Dulany Morison.

THANK YOU

The northern Piedmont's beautiful countryside and rural culture continue to thrive today thanks to generations of proactive leadership and organized engagement. Our shared landscape can be considered one of the largest private parks in the country and we are extremely grateful for all the conservationists who are responsible for saving this special place. Whether driven by history, environmental activism, scenic beauty, equestrian sports, agriculture, or the rural economy, over the last seven decades our community has established a proud legacy of joining arms to protect the rural quality of life. We take our hats off to the pantheon of preservation heroes whose shoulders we stand on today and we remain committed to carrying their important work forward for future generations.

Every landowner can make a positive impact on our landscape and surrounding community, and we hope you will join us in our mission to leave the resources of our countryside better than we found them. Starting with your property and expanding beyond, our future depends on citizen engagement. We encourage you to embrace life in the country, get to know your neighbors, and take an active role supporting our culture through a field that interests you. We all benefit from working together to each put our own stamp, whatever the size, on the story of this incredible part of Virginia.

Thank you for taking the time to read through our publication and for making the northern Piedmont region your home. Please do not hesitate to reach out to any of our sponsor organizations with questions you may have about the resources listed here or with any other inquiries related to rural living. We look forward to connecting with you in person and stand ready to support your life as we all strive to "sustain the magic" that has drawn us to this treasured landscape.



