2018 Governor's Environmental Excellence Awards Ceremony

Governor's Environmental Excellence Awards

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State Parks • Soil & Water Conservation • Natural Heritage
Chesapeake Bay Local Assistance • Land Conservation
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Gold Medal Recipients

Big Stone Gap
The Greenbelt Trail
Virginia Outdoors Plan — Gold Medal

The Greenbelt Trail is a paved three-mile long trail located along the North and South forks of the Powell River that offers access to the historical and recreational features of the Town of Big Stone Gap. The trail serves the community as a means for enhancing tourism, encouraging alternative modes of transportation, providing an outlet to outdoor recreation and is a major stepping stone for the Town's long-term goal of creating a walkable community. The community is able to have direct access to the waterways of Powell River and regional water access for non-motorized boating and fishing is available via the John Fox Jr. House. Those in the surrounding neighborhoods are provided the opportunity to exercise in a natural setting.

The trail serves as a natural buffer for watershed management and protection of sensitive lands near the Powell River. The Town actively enforces ordinances for the protection of plant and wildlife and for prohibition of litter. Land adjacent to the streams are preserved and used as buffers. Trees within the park are both protected from deforestation and actively monitored for health purposes. Multiple species of mussels and crayfish are listed on both state and federal registers as endangered species or species of concern within the Powell River. Any development located near waterways is required to submit a Joint Permit Application for work to ensure the species of concern habitats are protected.

Other localities will benefit from the Greenbelt Trail due

to a planned interconnection with the Southern Terminus of the Powell River Greenbelt Trail in Appalachia. This planned expansion will provide walking and biking access to the Appalachia Greenbelt Trail and the Town of Appalachia itself. Not only will this provide an alternative way to commute between towns, but it will increase tourist activity and provide connection to a larger community for the whole area.

Middle Peninsula Chesapeake Bay Public Access Authority

Coastal Land Giving Access Public Program

Environmental Project — Gold Medal

Since 2003, the Middle Peninsula Chesapeake Public Access Authority (MPCBPAA) has worked to resolve local and regional level policy issues restricting the public's ability to gain access to public waterways of the Middle Peninsula by means of public land acquisition. Though land acquisition grants have diminished over the years, the MPCBPAA has utilized private land donations to acquire new public waterfront land with no cost to the local governments.

In February 2013, following an economic recession, waterfront land owners began to contact the MPCBPAA looking to donate their land to receive the tax benefits of donating their land to a public entity. The Authority found that there were other property owners who were merely interested in donating their land to benefit the general public and improve access to the water. To capitalize on this interest, the MPCBPAA began to promote that the Authority was open to receiving waterfront property. Between 2006 to 2016, a total of 35 separate parcels (over 17 acres) valued at approximately $3.9 million were gifted with limited to no deed encumbrances. As more land donations were offered, it was clear that the process needed to be formalized. In 2015, with funding assistance through the Virginia

Coastal Zone Management Program, the Coastal Land Giving Public Access Program was developed. The program created a process for land acquisition for public use, educating both the public and private sectors on the economic benefits to private land donations and creating an outreach program targeting potential donors.

The program has taken multiple steps to generate community awareness and support for land conservation. In 2015, a partnership with Strategic Communication Consultants was formed to create an online and print media campaign targeting potential donors in areas that have expressed a need for more public water access. Local civic groups, Boards of Supervisors, Town Councils, the Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission and the Virginia Coastal Policy Team have all received presentations promoting the Coastal Land Giving Public Access Program. The MPCBPPA worked with contractors and law firms to develop special reports to focus on the details of donating land. Local newspapers were also contacted to publish articles articulating the purpose and goals of the program, offering information about the tax benefits and how to apply.

University of Virginia

Sustainability Program

Environmental Project — Gold Medal

University of Virginia (UVA) is a community of approximately 26,500 students, almost 17,500 faculty and staff and a total of 525 buildings encompassing 17.5 million square feet. In the last nine years the University has seen unprecedented growth and interest in sustainability by its faculty, students, practitioners and alumni. UVA's Committee on Sustainability, with support from Facilities Management and the Office of Sustainability, developed a plan to outline a framework by which the University's educational, operational and financial resources will be mobilized to achieve significant positive environmental and societal impacts across the local to global scale. The Committee is tasked with providing leadership across grounds both in sustainable operational practices and in leading and driving sustainability related dialogue and action across the University.

The Sustainability Plan builds on existing programs and accomplishments and is organized around three interrelated themes: Engagement, Steward and Discover. Each theme has its own subcommittee to address a specific goal and objectives over the next four years. The success of the program is measured by the breadth of projects implemented by the group, the opportunity provided to students and staff to reduce UVA's environmental footprint and the ability for these projects to meet UVA's sustainability goals. Individual programs supported by the Council greatly reduce the energy, water, waste and greenhouse gas footprints of UVA operations. In 2016, greenhouse emissions decreased from the 2009 baseline by 11.6% percent. The reduction is due to extensive conservation work and energy efficiency in existing buildings, reduced coal consumption on-grounds and a shorter heating season compared to previous years.

Virginia Beach Public Schools

Sustainable Schools Program

Environmental Project — Gold Medal

Virginia Beach Public Schools has educated nearly 69,000 students, 12,000 staff and the general public about lessons and examples of the economic, social and health benefits of conserving resources and protecting the environment. The program aims to develop a sustainable building infrastructure, integrate sustainable practices through the school division and educate the public about the importance of sustainability. By analyzing the way school facilities are built, maintained and operated, Virginia Beach Public Schools has developed programs that have significantly decreased operating costs, reduced greenhouse gas emissions and brought forth a culture of change within the school division.

Implementation of the program has yielded tremendous results. More than 10 thousand tons of refuse from the waste stream was diverted though recycling efforts. The average Energy Star score for the school division rose from an initial score of 38 to the current average of 74. The overall annual total energy use was reduced by 26%, saving approximately $4.5 million per year, during a time when square footage increased 9% and reliance on technology increased. The division has been recognized as a Certified Green School division and an Energy Star Partner of the Year.

The program has ignited a cultural change with students, parents, staff and elected leadership. Although it was started at the grassroots level, the program has been implemented and expanded by executive leadership and the School Board. Students are also involved in the process by providing additional help implementing programs at their respective schools.

Wild Wolf Brewing Company

Every Day is Earth Day

Sustainability Program — Gold Medal

Wild Wolf is a small production brewery and 300 seat restaurant situated on ten acres in Nelson County. The owners have keenly focused on brewery waste and found ways to recycle all packaging, allowing the brewery to be considered a zero waste facility. Wild Wolf is the first brewery in the Commonwealth to package all flagship beers in cans rather than bottles. All of its beer sold inside and outside of the brewery is packaged in a recyclable container and/or reusable vessel, which has also greatly reduced the weight of the shippable product. Pack-tek carriers and cans are used for beer packaging; both are made of 80% or more recycled materials. Cardboard, glass, metal and plastic materials are collected and brought to a recycling facility because there are no recycling pickup options located near the brewery. Wild Wolf provides an incentive for its customers to recycle by offering Wild Wolf Bucks in exchange for clean bottles.

The brewery has published various articles in its weekly newsletter and videos about its green projects such as composting and even using scrap wood as part of enhancing the taste of selected beers. Herbs, edible flowers and mushrooms are all grown on site, eliminating the need to have them delivered. Wild Wolf has added a new composting system, increasing the efficiency and amount of compost, and now composts all of it yeast waste, yard debris and kitchen waste. By using its own compost, Wild Wolf has saved $1,500; an additional $1,500 was saved on waste costs through recycling.

Silver Medal Recipients

Arlington County
Arlington Initiative to Rethink Energy
Environmental Project — Silver Medal

Arlington's Residential Energy Efficiency Programs are sponsored by the Arlington Initiative to Rethink Energy (AIRE) to target energy use in residential, commercial and public buildings within the County. The County aims to reduce per capita greenhouse gas emissions by 75% by 2050. AIRE has developed a wide range of programs to reduce energy consumption in the residential sector, which consumes 70% of Arlington's energy. Programs such as the Green Home Choice certification for new construction and renovations, the Green Choice Kitchen certification system program, home energy rebates and the solar co-op program are aimed to a wide variety of residents, including homeowners and renters in single and multi-family homes. In addition, creative tools and techniques are available to educate and assist residents in reducing energy use at home. Through coordinated programs, community partnerships and creative education methods, residential energy efficiency programs operated by AIRE help homeowners and renters reduce home energy use and lower utility costs to achieve Arlington County's community-wide greenhouse gas emissions targets. Overall greenhouse gas emissions in Arlington have fallen 18% between 2007 and 2016, due in part to a decrease in energy consumption in buildings.

Several communities have used AIRE's energy efficiency programs as a model for their own initiatives. One of the most recent examples is the Energy Lending Library, which was developed in Arlington; similar lending libraries have been set up in Fairfax County, Falls Church City and the City of Alexandria, among others.

City of Alexandria and Arlington County

Four Mile Run Tidal Wetland and
Living Shoreline Restoration Project
Environmental Project — Silver Medal

In 2000, the City of Alexandria, Arlington County and the Northern Virginia Regional Commission (NRVC) began to explore the Four Mile Run stream's water quality and recreational potential. A feasibility study for the entire Four Mile Run watershed was conducted to improve the watershed's ecology. The project integrates flood protection, environmental restoration, community aesthetics, community access and connectivity, recreation and education.

Completed in 2016, the Four Mile Run Tidal Wetland project in Alexandria plays a prominent role in regional efforts to protect the Potomac River and Chesapeake Bay by restoring two acres of diverse wetland habitat and natural cycles that support wildlife and improve water quality by removing phosphorus, nitrogen and sediment. The Arlington Living Shoreline Restoration project, completed in 2017, involved naturalization of five acres of the stream bank by replacing stone that was used to harden the stream banks with native meadow plants. The project has created extensive new wildlife habitat along the stream to support birds, insects, fish and other animals in the watershed. The amount of pollution removed as a result of the project includes 43 pounds per year of phosphorus, 247 pounds per year of nitrogen, and 18,800 pounds per year of sediments.

Goochland County

Tucker Park at Maidens Crossing

Sustainability Program — Silver Medal

Located on the border of Goochland and Powhatan Counties, Tucker Park is comprised of 36 acres of land with 1,200 feet of riverfront and consists of several amenities including a non-motorized boat launch, playground, "Natural Walkabout" Outdoor classroom and over 1.3 miles of multi-use trails. The project was a combined effort from a variety of groups: the Friends of Goochland Parks, Dominion Virginia Power, Goochland County, the CarMax Cares Foundation and many community volunteers. The park is maintained using best management practices, a routine mowing schedule and bi-weekly inspection of its trails and amenities. Park facilities have retained the 100-foot riparian buffer along the James River and the permeable parking lot reduces stormwater runoff. Park staff is constantly looking for ways to enhance the buffer area; in 2016, volunteers with the James River Association planted approximately 50 seedlings in tree tubes to supplement the riparian buffer.

Henrico County

Energy Management Program

Sustainability Program — Silver Medal

Henrico County made a commitment to energy efficiency and sustainability with the creation of its Energy Management program and the hiring of its first Energy Manager in 2003. The primary purpose of the program is to identify and implement energy efficiency projects for county facilities, to reduce both resource use and associated costs. The Energy Management Program has been a partnership between government, schools and

utilities, with leadership from each of these arenas participating in the development of the program and receiving annual reporting on the program's efforts and successes.

The Energy Manager also supports green building design and construction practices for new construction and major renovation projects. Completed projects include energy use benchmarking, energy audits, HVAC and lighting system upgrades, participation in demand response programs, building commissioning, traffic and street light upgrades, building automation systems and construction of a 4-megawatt methane gas to electricity generator at the Henrico landfill. The Energy Management program also strives to improve education and foster a culture of sustainability in the county. Thousands of residents have received energy efficiency education through the public Energy Fairs every year for the past 15 years.

Town of Kilmarnock

Sediment Reduction & Stream Restoration Project

Environmental Project — Silver Medal

The Town of Kilmarnock, located in Lancaster County, covers approximately 2,200 acres and has a population of around 1,500. Many areas within the town were developed prior to consideration of stormwater runoff and its effects on water quality. Stormwater management practices are required for new development and redevelopment, and the Town aims to take further action in protecting and enhancing its water quality.

In 2013, a watershed assessment funded by the National Fish &andWildlife Foundation was completed. Priority was given to three specific headwater stream reaches of the Corrotoman River watershed, a tributary of the Rappahannock River and

Chesapeake Bay. A plan of action was created to restore these areas using a non-traditional stormwater conveyance method not normally seen in the region. Crucial funding for implementation was awarded through grants from the National Fish and Wildlife Fund, the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality's Stormwater Local Assistance Fund and the Virginia Conservation Assistance Program. The project was completed during the summer of 2017, successfully reducing stream erosion and sedimentation in the watershed. The restoration sites are actively used as outdoor classrooms for environmental educators. Lancaster County Middle School participates with the project adjacent to their school as an outdoor lab for science classes.

Bronze Medal Recipients

Town of Culpeper
Lake Pelham Adventures
Virginia Outdoors Program — Bronze Medal

Lake Pelham Adventures is a public/private partnership providing a new municipal park on the shore of the Town of Culpeper's 255 acre municipal lake, Lake Pelham. The park provides access to the lake and Mountain Run, which was previously accessible only to those who owned their own watercraft and had access to a difficult-to-find boat ramp on the lake. The Town partnered with The Ole Country Store & Bakery to secure a park easement on their property as well as entering into an operational agreement with the store to provide a self-sustaining boat rental program. In addition to providing public access to water, the project promotes increasing recreational opportunities and economic development through increased tourism and visitation to Culpeper.

Pittsylvania County
Park Project
Virginia Outdoors Plan — Bronze Medal

Utilizing existing middle school campuses, the Pittsylvania County Parks and Recreation Department built the first parks in the County's 250-year history. The parks include a variety of community resources such as picnic shelters, restrooms, paved

walking tracks, playgrounds and athletic fields to promote outdoor recreation. Funding was obtained through the county's budget along with an extensive year-long fundraising campaign. Many volunteers and students completing service projects helped with the project. Community support and awareness was generated through the county's large youth sports program and the multiple sports events held at the middle school campuses. The parks received the Virginia Treasures state designation, a regional health award and a Virginia Recreation and Park Society state award for Best New Facility at the 2017 Virginia Recreation and Park Society conference.

City of Staunton Parks and Recreation

NatureRidge Natural Playground

Virginia Outdoors Program — Bronze Medal

The City of Staunton Parks and Recreation developed a natural playground, which encourages children to explore the natural elements surrounding the park and interact in creative ways. The playground, NatureRidge, serves ages 2-12 and is the first municipal natural playground in the region. The playground is an excellent example of a successful public/private partnership, as the community, including individuals, civic groups and local businesses, covered all building costs. This project provides motivation for families and residents to connect with the natural landscapes and engage in active or passive activities. Families visiting the park for play can enjoy spending time outdoors while interacting with other park goers or other recreational activities, such as swimming, hiking and picnicking.

Virginia Tech College of Natural Resources and Environment

Sustainability Boot Camp

Sustainability Program — Bronze Medal

The Sustainability Boot Camp ten-day intensive training is designed to connect classroom learning to the workplace in an innovative "pre-onboarding" approach to deal with the complex natural resource issues facing the planet. The training program differentiates itself from other sustainability training programs by letting employers drive the content, teaching sustainability as an interdisciplinary lens for problem-solving, mimicking a workplace and connecting students to professionals in their fields and partner organizations to create talent pipelines for employment. The interdisciplinary approach allows for program participants to utilize sustainable practices and environmental conscious thinking in different job sectors and industries even at the entry-level positions. In the past four boot camp trainings, the program has received over 290 applications spanning 75 different majors from almost every undergraduate department on campus.

Honorable Mentions

Lynchburg Parks and Recreation
Please Do Hug the Trees Campaign
Virginia Outdoors Plan Implementation — Honorable Mention

The mission of Lynchburg's "Please Do Hug the Trees" park project is to contribute to a healthy, active community, providing stewardship and management of parklands, trails and civic facilities, and to create opportunities for all people to participate in a rich variety of recreational opportunities. The program had seven components: Junior Naturalist, Community and Teaching Gardens, Million Pollinator Challenge, Parks for Monarchs, Nature Equity, Citizen Stewards and the Guinness World Record Book Tree Hug Challenge. Each program was successfully organized and implemented to encourage citizens to return for other classes and events.

City of Roanoke Parks and Recreation
Carvins Cove Trail & Kayak Launch at the Bridges
Virginia Outdoors Plan Implementation — Honorable Mention

Carvins Cove is considered one of the largest municipal parks in the nation, with more than 45 miles of trails and a 630 acre reservoir for mountain biking, hiking, horseback riding, fishing and boating. Since 2013, several new trails have been added to Carvins Cove in order to expand the park user experience. These trails were added to the network of trails at Carvins Cove--Bennett Springs Loop, Rattlin' Run, Lakeside, OG, Royalty, Tinker Creek Greenway Trail and First Deck. The trail network also serves as a forested watershed for the Western Virginia Water

Authority. Developing the watershed as a park with trails will encourage citizens to become trail users, learn about the importance of a forested watershed and protect it in its pristine state.

Virginia Tech Dining Services
Reusable To-Go Services
Sustainability Program — Honorable Mention

Virginia Tech has built a reputation for outstanding, award winning dining, having been recognized by national organizations several times. Since 2013, Virginia Tech has offered reusable to-go containers for students to use when ordering meals on campus. The program has recently gone through improvements to increase accessibility; four return stations were installed and have been integrated with the Virginia Tech campus ID system to simplify the return process. In addition to reducing landfill waste, the program has resulted in a significant cost savings to Virginia Tech Dining Services.

Thank You Judges!

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