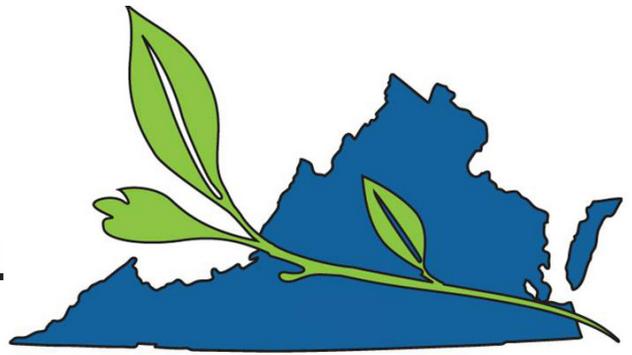


# 2020 Governor's Environmental Excellence Awards



The Governor's Environmental Excellence Awards recognize successful and innovative efforts that improve Virginia's environment. The annual awards program is run as a partnership between the Department of Environmental Quality and the Department of Conservation and Recreation.

SPONSORED BY

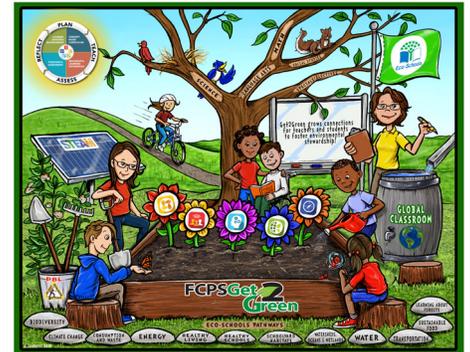


## Fairfax County Public Schools Get2Green

**SUSTAINABILITY PROGRAM** **GOLD**

In 2014, Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) launched Get2Green. The district's goal was to be a model environmental steward, which means investing in green infrastructure and resources, utilizing interdisciplinary environmental curriculum and fostering community partnerships. As the largest public school system in Virginia and the 11th largest school district in the nation, FCPS knew its efforts would reach many. FCPS could foster a lifetime of environmental stewardship in its 188,000 students. Get2Green serves as a tool to encourage, support and monitor sustainability across all departments. The resulting program is resilient and interconnected. Departments involved work together while having individual focuses. For example, Transportation Services focuses

on emissions reductions, sustainable practices and performance measures. Food and Nutrition Services focuses on sustainable foods programs, recycling programs, eliminating polystyrene and energy conservation. Working together, FCPS has prevented the release of over 145,000 metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub> through energy conservation initiatives and saved the school division over \$31 million in energy costs. Get2Green has also conserved 90 million gallons of water and increased recycling by 15,000 tons. FCPS works to conserve energy, plant gardens, reduce waste and more. These projects teach students environmental stewardship through hands-on learning and equip students to be future leaders in addressing environmental challenges.



## City of Hopewell Hopewell Riverwalk

**IMPLEMENTATION OF THE VIRGINIA OUTDOORS PLAN** **GOLD**

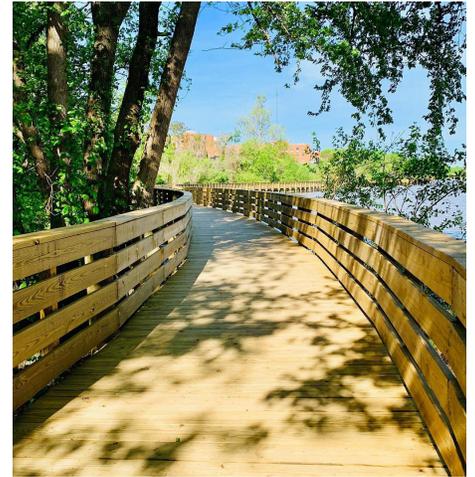
The Hopewell Riverwalk is an out-and-back wooden boardwalk that originates at City Park in downtown Hopewell. Following the shoreline of the Appomattox River westward, the Riverwalk connects

City Park to the Hopewell City Marina. The 1,736-foot boardwalk trail features two overlook areas and a 100-foot fishing pier. The Riverwalk offers stunning views of the confluence of the James and Appomattox



Rivers and allows visitors to immerse themselves in the natural environment of the city's riverfront. The project is one of Hopewell's most significant recreational assets. It has become a valuable tool for promoting healthy lifestyles, environmental stewardship and economic growth in the city. Funding for the project came from Hopewell City Council, the Economic Development Authority, the Virginia General Assembly and donations raised by Friends of the Lower Appomattox River. Additionally, city staff collaborated with HCA John Randolph Medical Center for the project's largest easement across private property. The new development is valued as a \$40 million investment in the city. The Riverwalk will provide housing with direct public access to the Appomattox River,

which is highly valued. The Riverwalk also serves as an outdoor classroom where environmental education regularly takes place. During design and construction, the city directed significant effort towards preserving wetlands and creating a minimally invasive footprint. This included designing the walk at a height that allows for wetland grasses and other foliage to thrive in its footprint. During construction of the project, cleanup activities removed over 50 discarded tires and 100 bags of litter from the shoreline. By design, this low-maintenance attraction will need little upkeep for the next 10-15 years. The city has committed to maintaining the Riverwalk. This new feature is attracting visitors, which is benefiting businesses in downtown Hopewell.



## Neabsco Regional Park Neabsco Creek Boardwalk

### IMPLEMENTATION OF THE VIRGINIA OUTDOORS PLAN **GOLD**

The three-quarter mile-long Neabsco Creek Boardwalk connects several formerly separate park sites. Connecting the sites created the Neabsco Regional Park. Prince William County (PWC) Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism designed this project to highlight Woodbridge's most valuable natural asset, the Potomac waterfront. It connects historic landmarks such as Ripon Lodge and Leesylvania Park. The Neabsco Creek Boardwalk is a key link in the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail, an 800-mile long corridor following the Potomac River. The boardwalk provides a critical trail connection between the Occoquan River and Leesylvania State Park. This includes providing much-needed bicycle and pedestrian connectivity in Eastern PWC. The corridor connects directly to transit stations and facilitates human-powered transportation between Belmont Bay and Woodbridge in the north and the developing community of Potomac Shores

in the south. The boardwalk traverses Neabsco Creek, allowing hikers access to wetlands where the tall grasses and marsh filter pollution from the river and provide a rich habitat for blue herons, wood ducks and red-winged blackbirds, just to name a few of the winged wildlife known to populate the area. The construction technique used was an innovative, environmentally sensitive top-down method that minimized impacts to the wetlands. PWC and others can use this top-down construction method for projects in other sensitive and wet areas. The Neabsco Creek Boardwalk has already begun to catalyze new engagement with the Potomac River and the natural environment in PWC. The project supports the protection of Neabsco Creek's wetlands by providing access, education and volunteer opportunities. Park staff report a 100-fold increase in visitation and program enrollment.



**PRINCE WILLIAM**  
— Parks, Recreation & Tourism



# Harrisonburg-Rockingham Regional Sewer Authority Enhanced Biosolids Reuse and Reduction Project

**ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECT GOLD**

An energy efficiency evaluation conducted at a Harrisonburg-Rockingham Regional Sewer Authority facility recommended that the Authority undertake a biosolids project. The objective of the Enhanced Biosolids Reuse and Reduction (EBRR) Project was to recover excess anaerobic digester gas beyond that used for digester heating. The facility could use the recovered gas to fuel a biosolids dryer. The dryer would provide additional dewatering of Class B biosolids. Prior to the EBRR Project, the North River Wastewater Treatment Facility's dewatered Class B biosolids contained approximately 18 percent solids. The thermal drying increases the percentage of solids and the resulting material meets the EPA definition of Class A Exceptional Quality (EQ) biosolids. In addition to significant cost savings from reduced biosolids hauling, the project is strategically important. The Class A EQ material has superior pathogen reduction. The reduced pathogen levels greatly increase biosolids storage and disposal options including wholesale marketing and distribution. Since there are currently no regulatory drivers for producing Class A biosolids in Virginia,

the EBRR Project had to be cost-neutral. The cost savings generated by reducing the volume of biosolids hauled and the revenue received from co-digestion of imported poultry-processing waste had to cover project operations. Two critical factors helped reach this requirement. By increasing the co-digestion of local poultry-processing sludge, the digester biogas production increased. This increase in biogas production allowed for drying of the biosolids without supplemental fossil fuels. Adding spiral heat exchangers for waste-heat recovery from the biogas dryer system allowed the generation of additional energy. This energy heated the anaerobic digester system. The EBRR Project secured \$12.74 million in financing through the Virginia Clean Water Revolving Loan Fund in 2017. Since the EBRR Project completion in 2019, the biosolids dryer system has proven to be sustainable on the biogas produced by anaerobic co-digestion and the dryer's waste-heat recovery system. The resulting biosolids are greater than 90 percent solids and have non-detectable levels of pathogenic organisms.



## The Piedmont Environmental Council Stewardship, Restoration and Public Engagement at Roundabout Meadows

**LAND CONSERVATION GOLD**

The Piedmont Environmental Council (PEC) and partners have worked over the past 20 years to preserve 326-acres at the intersection of US Routes 15 and 50 in Loudoun County, known as Gilberts Corner. Due to Loudoun County's size, diversity and political complexity, there is a strong need to

increase community awareness and support for rural preservation. In 2013, PEC accepted the donation of a 141-acre working livestock farm located at Gilberts Corner, now called Roundabout Meadows, as a conservation easement. The Roundabout Meadows property has approximately 2,000 linear feet of road



frontage along Route 15, which is part of the Journey Through Hallowed Ground National Scenic Byway listed under ConserveVirginia's Scenic Preservation category. At the time of the acquisition, the pastures were heavily degraded. Cattle had free access to Howsers Branch, the stream that transects the property. PEC has since established a grazing plan and sustainable vegetable operation, installed 2-miles of streamside fencing, protected a sensitive wetland area and installed a walking trail. PEC launched the Roundabout Meadows Community Farm in 2018. During its first growing season, the farm donated 5,000 pounds of fruits and vegetables to local

food banks. The streamside fencing has reduced E.coli levels from 10 times above EPA accepted levels prior to installation to the EPA standard after installation. As a tributary to Goose Creek, a state designated Scenic River and an important public drinking water supply source, the water quality of Howsers Branch has impacts beyond the property. In addition to these improvements, PEC has turned Roundabout Meadows into a hub of community engagement and education. In 2019, PEC hosted 50 programs, tours and volunteer days covering a range of topics from water quality to sustainable agricultural practices.



## Virginia Clean Cities Clean Fuels Advancement in Virginia

### ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECT **GOLD**

The mission of Virginia Clean Cities (VCC) is to advance air quality improvement, economic opportunity and energy security. VCC's Clean Fuels Advancement in Virginia program meets the organization's goals by promoting clean fuel education, vehicles and infrastructure. Since 2015, VCC has been the driving force behind a reduction in emissions of over 700,000 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> and a reduction in demand of gasoline and diesel fuel by over 128 million gallons. To achieve these results, VCC connects with fleets, biofuel producers and station operators. By hosting almost 200 events, VCC has reached almost 440,000 Virginians. VCC has facilitated fleet expansion in liquefied petroleum gas, electric vehicles and an ethanol fuel blend of 85 percent ethanol fuel and 15 percent gasoline called E85. Of the over 25,000 alternative fuel vehicles tracked by VCC, about 60 percent are

E85 vehicles. As part of the Mid-Atlantic Biofuel Infrastructure Partnership run by VCC, Virginia and Maryland collaborated on a program to install biofuel pumps at 40 fueling stations. VCC worked to increase clean fuel stations, including biodiesel, compressed natural gas, E85, liquefied petroleum gas, liquefied natural gas and electric fueling options. In Virginia, the number of stations expanded from 531 in 2015 to 889 in 2019. VCC worked to install a statewide set of early stage DC fast chargers (DCFC). Prior to 2015, there were no DCFCs outside of Northern Virginia. By September of 2015, VCC worked with partners to install 25 DCFCs across the state from Blacksburg to Virginia Beach and in-between. For every dollar in program funds VCC spent, VCC programs have a \$172 impact on the economy. Over five years, the economic impact of VCC's programs has totaled \$258 million.



# Roanoke County Department of Parks, Recreation & Tourism Hinchee Park

LAND CONSERVATION SILVER

Hinchee Park in Roanoke County provides the opportunity for visitors to bike, walk or ride horses from the Hanging Rock Battlefield Trail to the 12,000-acre Carvins Cove Natural Reserve. Adjacent to an existing natural reserve, Hinchee Park creates a 235-acre reserve, including a permanent conservation easement for 200-acres. This project acquired right-of-way interest in land for open space and park purposes, forest preservation, outdoor recreation and conservation. Of the land in the park, 95 percent is rated very high or outstanding for its forest conservation value. Roanoke County has zoned the property as “rural preserve” designating it as a location where valuable and irreplaceable resources exist. To protect

water quality and natural resources, the Roanoke County Department of Parks, Recreation & Tourism established riparian protection zones to allow erosion control, fencing, planting of native trees and other practices. This woodland preserve includes the two-mile Hinchee Trail on a fire road built by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). Many of the culverts still show the rockwork built by the CCC. The project would not have been possible without many significant partners including the Pathfinders for Greenways, the Beirne Carter Foundation, the Virginia Outdoors Foundation, the Virginia Land Conservation Fund and the Hinchee Pace family. In addition, over 200 individual donors were involved in the project.

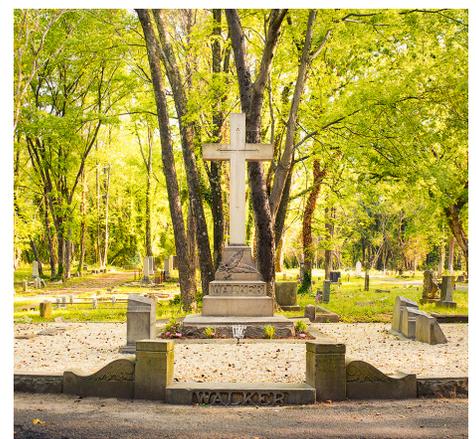


# Virginia Outdoors Foundation & Enrichmond Foundation Preservation & Restoration of Historic Evergreen and East End Cemeteries

LAND CONSERVATION SILVER

In 2016, the Virginia Outdoors Foundation (VOF) allocated \$400,000 from its Open-Space Lands Preservation Trust Fund for the preservation and restoration of Historic Evergreen Cemetery and neighboring East End Cemetery. These two cemeteries are among the largest and most significant historic African-American cemeteries in the nation. VOF and the Enrichmond Foundation (Enrichmond) formed a workgroup in October of 2016 composed of volunteers and community leaders. In the fall of 2017, Enrichmond held its first public engagement workshop on site to solicit input on the history and environment of the cemetery and to strategize

community outreach. A yearlong effort led by Enrichmond to empower the local community to champion the preservation and stewardship of the cemetery followed. One of the primary goals of the easement is cultural and historic preservation, one of the priorities of ConserveVirginia. Other goals for the easement are to protect water resources, protect open space and prohibit activities and uses that do not serve recreation or educational purposes. Efforts are underway to remove invasive vegetation. The partners are reviewing a full stream restoration to stabilize stream banks. All of these practices are designed to balance the natural and cultural resources of the property.



# Church & Dwight Co., Inc. Continuous Sustainability Improvement Program

## SUSTAINABILITY PROGRAM **BRONZE**

Church & Dwight's Continuous Sustainability Improvement Program includes upholding six sustainability pillars: brands, products, packaging, employees and communities, responsible sourcing and environment. The company's Colonial Heights facility primarily focuses on manufacturing and packaging of latex condoms. This facility has excelled in upholding the company's sustainability pillars through raw material reduction, lighting upgrades, product redesign and continuous process improvements. The facility's first initiative was to reduce the amount of ammonia in its wastewater. The facility closely monitored the concentration of ammonia in leach water tanks daily. Since starting

the project in 2016, the facility reduced ammonia consumption by almost 46 percent per production unit, accounting for over 300,000 pounds of ammonia. Another process improvement the facility implemented was running a wash cycle only for full loads. Prior to this change, wash cycles were scheduled based on production time. Through this process change, the facility saved more than \$300,000 and over 180,000 gallons of water. In addition, the facility has worked to reduce energy usage by converting to LED lighting and installing a smaller, more efficient blower. The facility worked to reduce waste by redesigning packaging to increase recyclability.



# Land Trust of Virginia Blue Ridge Conservation Initiative

## LAND CONSERVATION **BRONZE**

The Land Trust of Virginia's (LTV) Blue Ridge Conservation Initiative aims to protect land along Northern Virginia's Blue Ridge. The focus area extends from the northern end of Shenandoah National Park to the Potomac River. The study area examined the largest expanse of unprotected land along the Blue Ridge Mountains. It also included some of the fastest growing localities in the state. To focus its efforts on land with the most conservation value, the LTV undertook a mapping and analysis project to identify areas with high ecological and cultural significance. After mapping 21 separate conservation values in the target area, the mapping analysis identified 286 parcels as having

the highest occurrence of these values. These parcels became the highest priority for protection. Since this initial analysis was completed, LTV has reached out to landowners identified by the study regarding the benefits of protecting their land with a conservation easement. As of 2019, the LTV has recorded one conservation easement in the study area with additional easements underway. LTV has conserved Ashleigh Farm's 98-acres through an easement that limits new construction. Ashleigh Farm is individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is identified as high priority by ConserveVirginia due to significant cultural, historic and scenic resources.



# Prince William County Risk & Wellness Services Division AST Management for Pollution Prevention

**ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECT** **BRONZE**

Prince William County Risk & Wellness Services Division (Risk) oversees the county's self-insurance program and environmental programming. In the past, Risk primarily managed the county's large tanks. The county has over 150 smaller tanks, most of which are 500-gallons or less. Individual departments with support from Risk managed these smaller tanks. Recognizing that even a small tank could pose a large environmental impact, Risk decided to manage all county tanks proactively. The division started by looking for established comprehensive programs, but found none. Over the next 4 years, Risk engaged the county's EMS Council and Executive Management to improve the tank program. Risk developed its own comprehensive program. As part of the program, facility personnel were educated

on how to inspect tanks properly. Risk worked extensively to find and eventually train vendors to provide inspection and repair services. PWC made over \$60,000 worth of repairs to existing tanks and replaced more than a dozen other tanks. Risk established inspection, spill prevention and response programs and policies. In an effort to identify patterns before they become issues, county employees must report all spills and near misses to Risk. The division also created an educational campaign for employees. A rideable contract that specifies the county's high standards was established. The county's reputation for requiring quality work has increased to the point that some vendors opt not to bid on contracts, which the county considers a success.



## Southern Tip Bike & Hike Trail

**IMPLEMENTATION OF THE VIRGINIA OUTDOORS PLAN** **BRONZE**

The Southern Tip Trail is a multi-use, ADA-compliant greenway providing outdoor recreational opportunities to cyclists and pedestrians in Northampton County on Virginia's Eastern Shore. The 4.9-miles of paved trail provide a route through scenic farmlands and maritime forests. The trail takes visitors past the Eastern Shore of Virginia National Wildlife Refuge and Kiptopeke State Park. It provides access to the Eastern Shore's unique coastal ecosystem, while preserving woodlands and wetlands within its roughly 50-foot right-of-way. The Eastern Shore of

Virginia National Wildlife Refuge owns and maintains the trails with the help of volunteers organized by the Nature Conservancy. Local students use the trail for outdoor educational opportunities and as a walking trail for the Healthy Students Program. The trail serves as an economic driver in a rural region with a growing tourism economy. The greenway serves the dual purpose of conserving natural lands vital to the millions of birds that migrate through the peninsula's southern end annually and other native species.



The Nature Conservancy  
Protecting nature. Preserving life.



# Rappahannock Electric Cooperative Green Together

## **SUSTAINABILITY PROGRAM – HONORABLE MENTION**

Rappahannock Electric Cooperative's (REC) Green Together sustainability program reaches across all departments and levels of the company. The employee driven sustainability team has implemented programs for employees and members. REC members can use a

smartphone to access hourly metering data. This program also provides notifications to members when their electricity usage is high to encourage conservation. REC promotes solar power and energy efficiency to its members.

