
Writing the Land: Virginia
Edited by Lis McLoughlin, PhD

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Writing the Land: Virginia

Edited by Lis McLoughlin, PhD
Foreword by Mamie Parker, PhD

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Foreword: A Legacy of Land Stewardship

As a native Arkansan and someone who has dedicated a lifetime to conservation, I am deeply rooted in the landscapes that define us. From those childhood explorations along the banks of Lake Enterprise and Bayou Bartholomew in southern Arkansas to my tenure as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Assistant Director and Northeast Regional Director, I have witnessed the beauty and ecological richness that various landscapes have to offer. During the past decades, as a resident of Virginia, the journey as a board member has been intricately entwined with the conservation efforts of my fellow board members and staff at The Nature Conservancy-Virginia Chapter, Chesapeake Conservancy, and as past chair of the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources, each of which plays a vital role in safeguarding our state's natural heritage.

Reflecting on the vast and varied landscapes that define Virginia, from the rolling hills of the Piedmont to the rugged beauty of the Blue Ridge Mountains, we see the intricate tapestry of life that these lands support. The very essence of Virginia's identity is intertwined with its natural heritage, a heritage that has been shaped and safeguarded by dedicated individuals and organizations committed to conservation and stewardship.

It is with great pleasure and admiration I lend my voice to the Writing the Land series, a visionary project that marries the power of poetry with the imperative of land conservation. Through the artistry of words, this series invites us to explore the deep connections between humanity and the natural world, fostering a profound sense of reverence and responsibility for the landscapes that sustain us.

In Virginia, where the legacy of land stewardship runs deep, the work of organizations such as those highlighted in this book — The Nature Conservancy, Chesapeake Conservancy, and the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources is nothing short of remarkable. From the tidal marshes of the Eastern Shore to the verdant forests of the Appalachian Plateau, these organizations are at the forefront of efforts to preserve and protect our precious natural heritage for future generations.

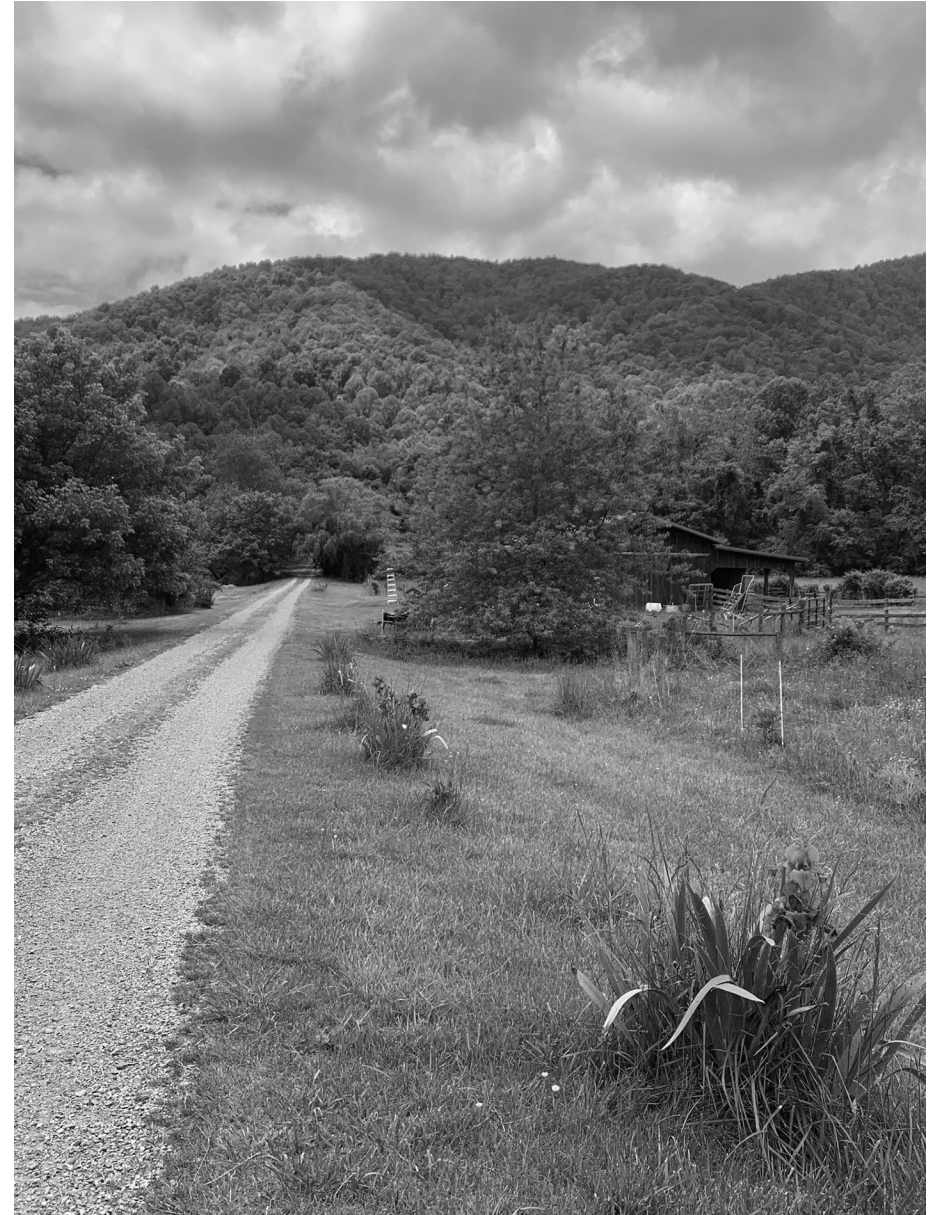


Photo of Algoma Springs Farm by poet Marjorie Gowdy: Moving westward from the ocean, the ancient paths of Virginia start at the Atlantic, weave through sandy Tidewater and red-clay Piedmont, move to the gentle Blue Ridge, cross plateaus of the New River, and end in the rough-hewn Allegheny Mountains.

What sets *Writing the Land* apart is its ability to transcend the boundaries of traditional conservation narratives, inviting us to experience the beauty and complexity of the land through the lens of poetry. In each chapter of this anthology, poets and land conservation organizations come together to weave a rich tapestry of words and images, offering readers a deeply immersive journey into the heart of Virginia's landscapes.

Through poetry, we are reminded that the land is not just a collection of resources to be exploited, but a living, breathing entity that sustains all life on Earth. In the words of the poets featured in this anthology, we find echoes of our own experiences, hopes, and dreams, reflecting the timeless bond between humanity and the natural world.

Land trust organizations have always been forward-thinking, planning long-term projects to protect and conserve land for future generations. As we look to the future, it is incumbent upon us to invest more time and resources in refining the process of integrating Black and Brown communities into the tapestry of biodiversity conservation. This means fostering inclusive spaces, amplifying marginalized voices, and dismantling systemic barriers that have historically hindered equitable access and participation.

In joining the chorus of voices celebrating the *Writing the Land* series, we necessarily acknowledge that our conservation efforts must extend beyond the preservation of ecosystems to encompass the richness of human experiences and perspectives. Land trust organizations, while historically focused on safeguarding biodiversity, must also recognize that human diversity is equally vital to the resilience and sustainability of our landscapes.

As a pioneer within the conservation sector, I understand the imperative for land trust organizations to embark on a journey of introspection and action. While collaboration and technological innovation should be pillars of our strategic planning, we must also strive for more equitable partnerships with underrepresented organizations and individuals. This does not entail mission creep but rather integration—integrating diverse voices, experiences, and perspectives into the very fabric of our conservation efforts.

I am deeply grateful to the organizers of *Writing the Land* for their vision and dedication to preserving Virginia's natural heritage through the power of poetry. May this anthology serve as a testament to the enduring beauty of our landscapes and a rallying cry for all of our conservation cohorts who cherish and protect them.

—*Mamie A. Parker, PhD*
Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources Commissioner,
Board Member of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation and
The Nature Conservancy-Virginia Chapter
Former U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service Assistant Director
and Northeast Regional Director



Photo by poet Zeina Azzam: Stocked Trout Water—Thompson Lake at
G. Richard Thompson Wildlife Management Area

WRITING THE LAND: VIRGINIA TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. RAPPAHANNOCK TRIBE & CHESAPEAKE CONSERVANCY...1	
-Fones Cliffs: Lisa Brighteyes Richardson Deresz & Joseph Wilson Black Feather.....	10
II. CAPITAL REGION LAND CONSERVANCY	17
-Campbell's Bridge Mills: Hollee Freeman	22
-Four Mile Creek Farm: Tara Bray.....	26
-Haskin's Tract: darlene anita scott	30
-Rogers Woods: Joanna Lee	34
III. NORTHERN VIRGINIA CONSERVATION TRUST	41
-Terborgh Terrace Garden: Aaron R.	44
-Crow's Nest Natural Area Preserve: Nicola McGoff.....	47
IV. THE NATURE CONSERVANCY—VIRGINIA.....	57
-Warm Springs Mountain Preserve: Doug Van Gundy	60
-Piney Grove Preserve: J. Indigo Eriksen	64
-Volgenau Virginia Coast Reserve: Chelsea Krieg & Luisa A. Igloria...68	
-Cumberland Forest Project: Tramere Monroe.....	75
-Buck Mountain Creek Conservation Easement: Jonathan Cannon	79
V. VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE RESOURCES	85
-Clinch Mountain Wildlife Management Area: Amy Wright	88
-G. Richard Thompson Wildlife Management Area: Zeina Azzam	93
-Ware Creek Wildlife Management Area: Brian King.....	99
-Princess Anne Wildlife Management Area: Nan Ottenritter.....	102
-Dick Cross Wildlife Management Area: Dorinda Wegener.....	107
VI. BLUE RIDGE, CENTRAL VIRGINIA, AND SOUTHERN VIRGINIA LAND CONSERVANCIES.....	113
-Blue Ridge Land Conservancy, Bethel Road Farm: Liza Field.....	114
-Central Virginia Land Conservancy, Blackwell Farm: Frederick Wilbur	121
-Southern Virginia Land Conservancy, Mulberry Creek Farm: Annie Woodford.....	126

VII. VIRGINIA OUTDOORS FOUNDATION.....	133
-Bull Run Mountains Natural Area Preserve: Wayne David Hubbard	138
-House Mountain Reserve: Chelsea Harlan.....	141
-Blackwater Park: Beth Oast Williams.....	145
-White's Mill: Felicia Mitchell.....	148
-Smith Mountain Cooperative Wildlife Management Area: Les James	151
-Minick Farm: Jim Minick	155
VIII. THE PIEDMONT ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL.....	159
-The Piedmont Memorial Overlook: Sylvia Karman.....	161
-Clark Mountain & Upper Rappahannock-Rapidan Watersheds: William Notter	166
-Fifeville Community Trail & Tonsler Park: Hollee Freeman.....	170
IX. NEW RIVER LAND TRUST.....	179
-Mountain Lake Area: Gyorgyi Voros	181
-Sutphin Farm: Cathryn Hankla	187
-Ingles-Jeffries Farm: Marjorie Gowdy	192
-Brush Mountain Park: Thomas Gardner.....	198
X. FRIENDS OF THE LOWER APPOMATTOX RIVER.....	203
-Appomattox River Trail & Park System: Gwyn R.C. Moses	211
XI. NORTHERN NECK LAND CONSERVANCY	219
-Northern Neck Land Conservancy's Bay View: Kristina Hamlett.....	223
-The Latané Family's Haywood Farm: Jenna Villforth Veazey.....	229
XII. VIRGINIA EASTERN SHORE LAND TRUST	235
-Jacobus Point Farm: Mary Elena Scott.....	237
-HY3 Farm: Forrest Gander.....	241
-Poets' Biographies	246
-Artists' Biographies	253
-About the Editor and Foreword Author	254
-Epilogue: <i>What If We Learn at Last, but the Land Stops Forgiving?</i> by Jim Minick	255

RAPPAHANNOCK TRIBE AND CHESAPEAKE CONSERVANCY



The Rappahannock Tribe's mission is to preserve tribal culture and educate the public about tribal history. The Tribe acts as a government center providing programs and services to this very rural, under served, economically disadvantaged population in King and Queen, Caroline, King William and Essex counties. The Rappahannocks have focused on cultural education, higher education, medical care, housing and economic development through our nonprofit and Tribal government.. For more information or to donate visit www.rappahannocktribe.org

The Chesapeake Conservancy's mission is to conserve and restore the natural and cultural resources of the Chesapeake Bay watershed for the enjoyment, education and inspiration of this and future generations. For more information or to donate visit www.chesapeakeconservancy.org

-Fones Cliffs

-Poets: Lisa Brighteyes Richardson Deresz
and Joseph Wilson Black Feather

Land

by Lisa Brighteyes Richardson Deresz

Land

Dirt

Living, breathing, thriving

Our ancestors sustained, our ancestors cultivated,
our ancestors defended, our ancestors learned.

We were shaped by the land and the land was shaped by us.

Artifacts, fossils, dwellings, food, sustaining life,
absorbing us at the end of our lives.

Generations, living, breathing, thriving.

Returning home.

To live

To breathe

To thrive

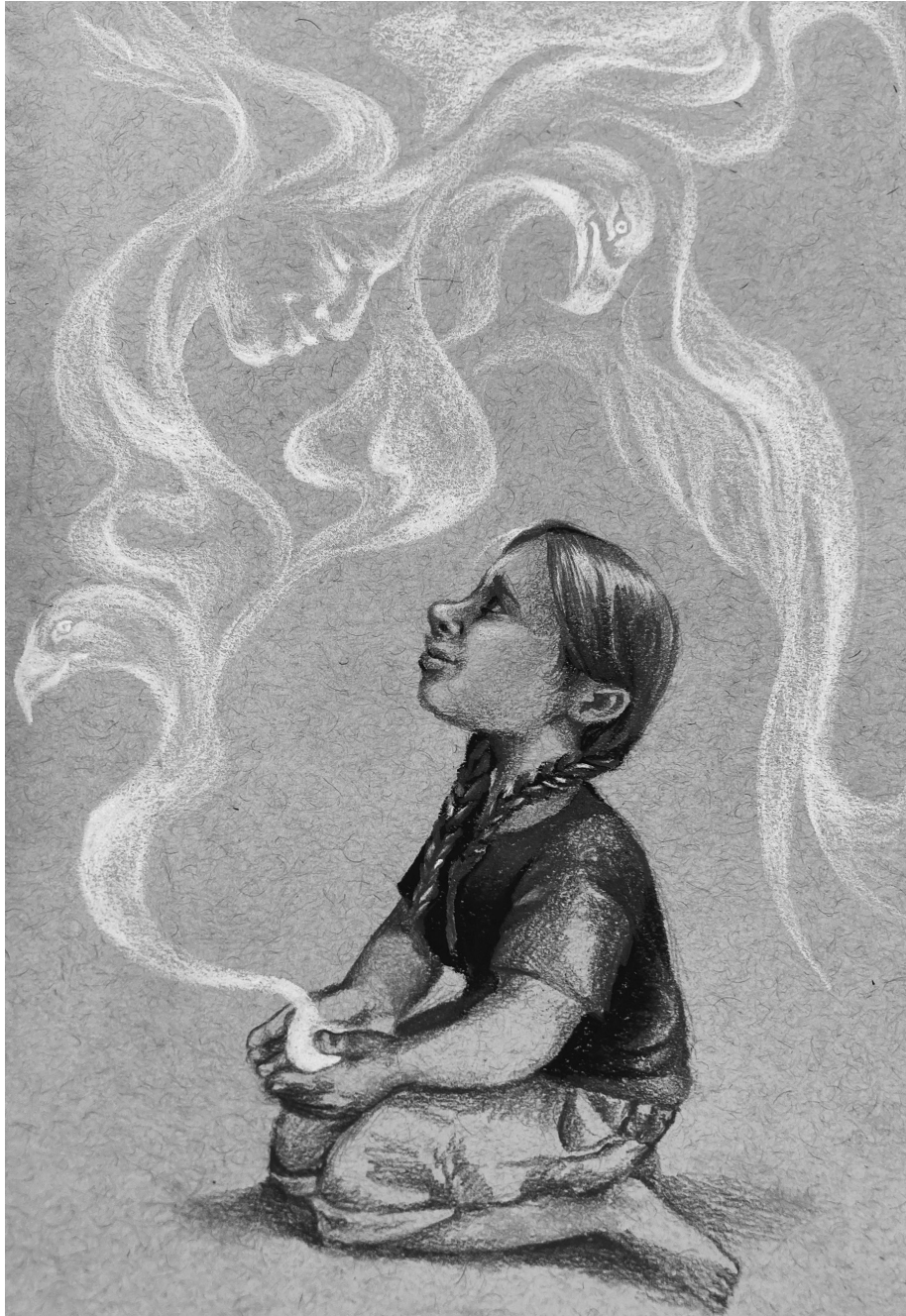
Together.

The ancestors and I.



(above) Samuel Richardson Deresz participating in a tree planting event.

(opposite) Aerial view of Pissacoack looking upriver by Bill Portlock



Artwork by Devon Borkowski

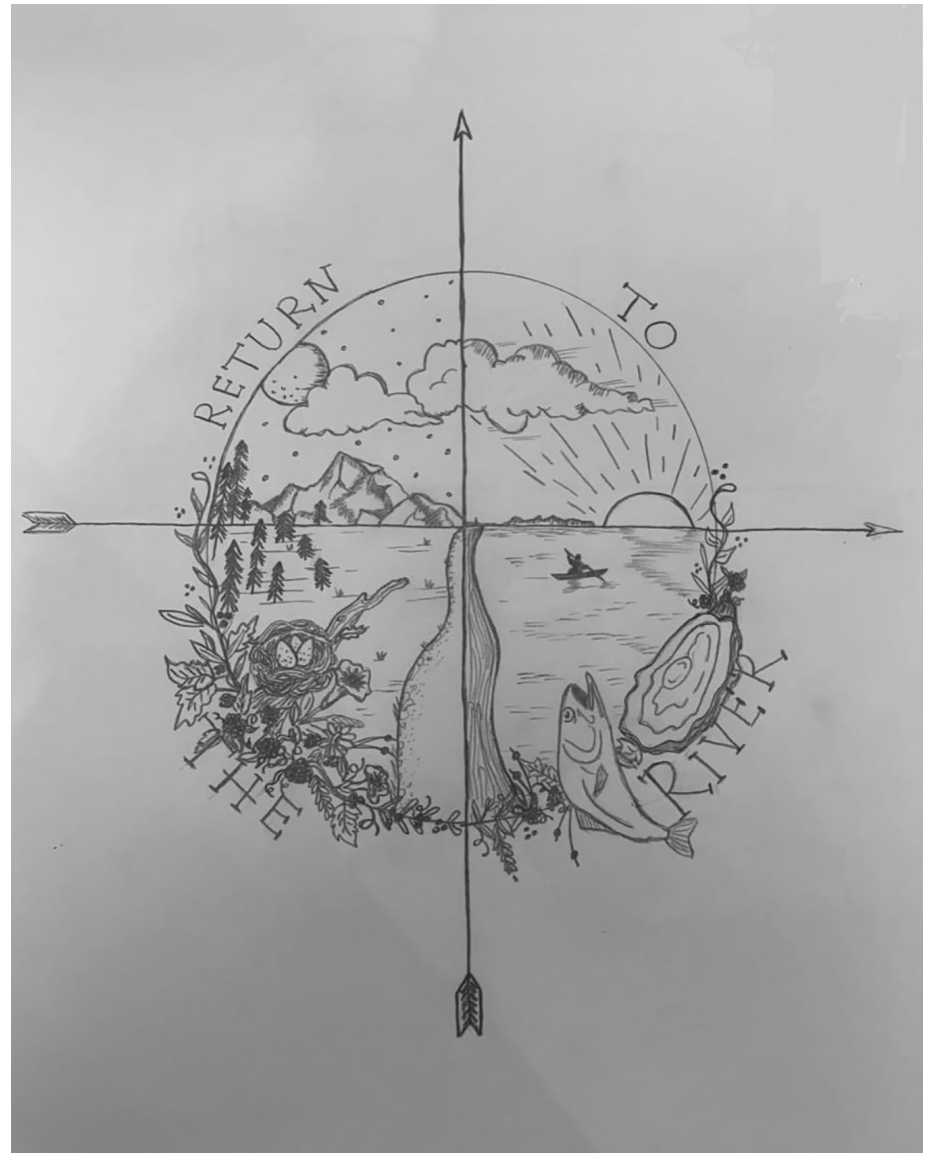


Illustration by Ashlee Harless

CAPITAL REGION LAND CONSERVANCY



The mission of the Capital Region Land Conservancy (CRLC) is to conserve and protect the natural and historic land and water resources of Virginia's Capital Region for the benefit of current and future generations.

-Campbell's Bridge Mills

-Poet: Hollee Freeman

-Four Mile Creek Farm

-Poet: Tara Bray

-Haskin's Tract

-Poet: darlene anita scott

-Rogers Woods

-Poet: Joanna Lee

-Artist: Michael Lipford unless otherwise noted

About Capital Region Land Conservancy

Founded in 2005, Capital Region Land Conservancy is the only local land trust serving Richmond, Virginia and the surrounding counties, also known as the “Capital Region.”

To date, CRLC has protected over 14,000 acres of land and facilitated protection of 20% of the total conserved land in our service area – the fastest growing area in Virginia. We are nationally accredited by the Land Trust Accreditation Commission, a program of the Land Trust Alliance, and our work has been recognized twice with Governor’s Environmental Excellence Awards.

We work in both urban and rural settings, balancing approaches for equitable access to parks and greenspaces along with conserving large tracts of farmland, forestland, natural habitat, and sites of historic and cultural significance.

CRLC uses a cooperative approach that strives to balance natural resource protection with economic growth by promoting voluntary land protection and strategic land acquisition consistent with local comprehensive plans, as well as state and federal initiatives. We educate landowners about voluntary land protection tools, facilitate the process of donating conservation easements, and hold conservation easements in perpetuity. We are also a central partner having worked with local governments to establish public access to over 2,000 acres and continue to serve as a facilitator of future public lands.

CRLC is managed by a board of directors, an advisory board, and a current staff of six. CRLC is proud to be a well-respected, dependable, and responsive organization dedicated to the communities we serve.

Strategic Plan Summary 2024-2027

CRLC’s mission is to conserve the natural and historic resources of Virginia’s Richmond region for the benefit of people and nature.

CRLC envisions a future where conservation of a regional network of healthy lands and waters results in thriving local communities and equitable access to nature for all.

We value:

- Integrity, Trust, and Excellence
- Collaboration and Partnership
- Permanent Land Conservation and Stewardship
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
- Conservation Impact and Sense of Place

We will strive to accelerate land conservation to permanently conserve land in the region from 6% to 10% by 2030, representing approximately 65,000 new acres of forestland, farmland and open spaces while also significantly increasing equitable access to public lands in urbanized areas of the region we serve.

CRLC was created in 2005 to serve the Counties of Charles City, Chesterfield, Goochland, Hanover, Henrico, New Kent, and Powhatan as well as the Town of Ashland and the City of Richmond.

We will increase our service to areas within a one-hour drive time from Richmond not primarily served by another land trust including Cities of Petersburg, Hopewell, Colonial Heights, as well as portions of Amelia, Caroline, Cumberland, Dinwiddie, Fluvanna, King William, Louisa, and Prince George Counties.

We will facilitate and hold conservation easements on, or own, appropriate lands while collaborating with local governments, community partners, and landowners.

Campbell's Bridge Mills

Virginia's complex history as a colony lies in it taking land from indigenous people and subsequent industrialization that exploited human labor. Throughout the 18th Century, features like crib dams, canals, and mills spurred growth through transportation, food production, and commerce.

Located at the falls of the Appomattox River, the Campbell's Bridge Mills site preserves ruins of an era when Petersburg was at the height of the Industrial Revolution plus pays tribute to the Appomattoc Tribe. More than eight different mill sites operated on the property ranging from sawmills, gristmills, and cotton mills including the Ettrick Mill that employed more than 300 workers, mostly women and children, in the 1850s. An 1821 engraving as well as photographs taken in 1865 after the American Civil War document the sites picturesque and historic significance. They also reveal the rock outcrops and towering pine trees that have persevered throughout time.

CRLC purchased the property from Josh Greenwood who had assembled the parcels and islands and stewarded them for 40 years. Working in partnership with Chesterfield County and Friends of the Lower Appomattox River, a future riverfront park and trails at the site will showcase the area's past, the stunning beauty of the river and native habitat, and provide outdoor recreational opportunities. Conservation easements on the property are held by the Virginia Department of Historic Resources and Virginia Outdoors Foundation.

This Moment
by Hollee Freeman

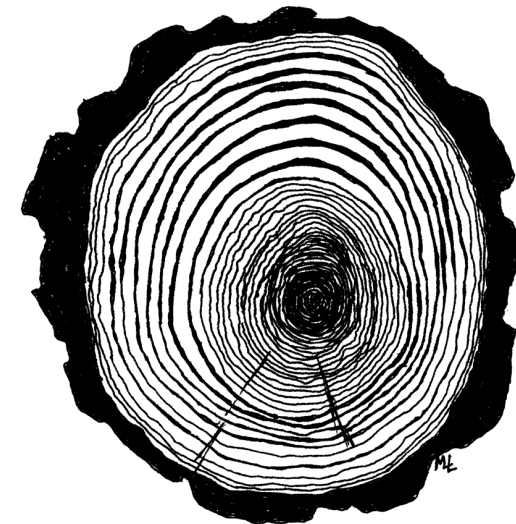
Life suspended in the rings of fallen trees
In the surge of rapids over eroded dams
In the colorful striations of river rocks

The Appomattoc made their lives along the river
Fishing from canoes, baskets made of bark
Songs and drumbeats carried by the breeze

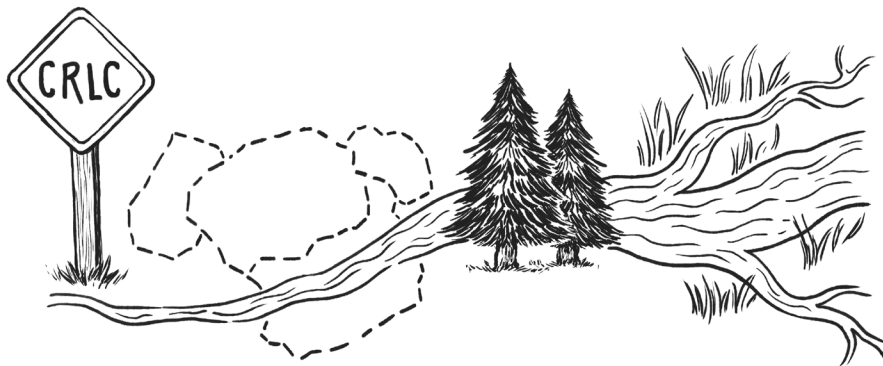
Life can still be felt in the whisper of the wind
Heart open to the lesson of the Loblolly Pines
Soul connecting to the past reaching forward

Reflection
laughter
love

Preserved for this moment



Since 2005, Capital Region Land Conservancy has protected:



Protected	Easements on	Owens (Fee Simple)	Streams & Riverfronts
13,844 acres	3,554 acres	575 acres	51 miles



PROTECT
THE LAND YOU LOVE

Artwork (above and opposite) by Katie McBride

NORTHERN VIRGINIA CONSERVATION TRUST



NORTHERN
VIRGINIA
CONSERVATION
TRUST

Northern Virginia Conservation Trust is your regional nonprofit land trust. We work daily to preserve Northern Virginia's land, water, and character. Over the last three decades, we have protected nearly 9,000 acres, serving more than three million residents.

Today, our work is more important than ever. Climate change and development pressures threaten our ability to maintain healthy, livable communities. What we do today ensures clean water, vibrant forests, and flourishing wildlife habitat both now and in the future.

The Northern Virginia Conservation Trust will add to and sustain abundant, thriving natural places in our Virginia communities. The Trust conserves land that has natural, historical, and cultural value to our communities.

-Terborgh Terrace Garden

-Poet: Aaron R

-Crow's Nest Natural Area Preserve

-Poet: Nicola McGoff

Northern Virginia Conservation Trust

The Northern Virginia Conservation Trust (NVCT) is a regional land trust serving the over three million residents of northern Virginia. Over its 30 years of work, NVCT has conserved nearly 9,000 acres of land, spanning from dense, urban areas to rural farmland. NVCT's mission is to add to and sustain abundant, thriving natural places in Virginia communities. The Trust conserves land that has natural, historical, and cultural value in the region. Today, the work that NVCT does is more important than ever. Climate change and development pressures threaten our ability to maintain healthy, livable communities. Land conservation ensures clean water, vibrant forests, and flourishing wildlife habitat both now and for future generations to come. Everything that NVCT protects will be safeguarded from development forever.

NVCT has two approaches to land conservation; conservation easements held by the Trust on behalf of private landowners, as well as fee simple properties owned and managed by the Trust. Both forms of conservation protect the land from development in perpetuity, but fee simple properties give NVCT the opportunity to allow and manage public access. NVCT seeks to serve the population of the region as it grows in population and diversity by providing green spaces for all to recreate and enjoy. That in part comes from expanding public access on existing fee simple properties and finding ways to conserve more for this purpose. The Trust continues to expand its conservation efforts, with a focus on particularly vulnerable ecosystems and communities that lack green space and recreation access.



Terborgh Terrace Garden

The Terborgh land was donated to NVCT in early 2023 by the estate of the late Anne Terborgh. Anne and her family lived on this land for decades, where she lovingly tended to her terraced gardens on the property. NVCT is honored to be able to steward this land in her memory and ensure that it is conserved in a more natural state rather than developed into housing, which is the fate of most properties in North Arlington. This small preserve, totaling a third of an acre, is made up of two pieces, a pocket park and a community garden. The flat space adjacent to the road with some magnificent old trees will serve as a community park space and will have benches and a picnic table in the future. Neighbors will be able to enjoy the green space as they see fit, and it will be a site for community events.

Anne Terborgh's terraced gardens have been rehabilitated by NVCT in partnership with Friends of Urban Agriculture (FOUA), an Arlington-based nonprofit that builds and maintains urban gardens. The Terborgh Terrace Garden will be a part of FOUA's Plot Against Hunger program, wherein all produce grown in the garden will be collected by volunteers to donate to local food pantries. This land is a new way for NVCT to explore public access on nature preserves and find an innovative way to use conserved land to serve the community. In addition to preserving green space and tree canopy in a very urban area, the Terborgh Terrace Garden will address food insecurity in Arlington, serving the community in a different manner. The gardens, as well as the pocket park, will give the local community the opportunity to engage in service and stewardship efforts.

