



# VIRGINIA ENVIRONMENTAL ASSEMBLY

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OCTOBER 11-12, 2019  
RICHMOND, VA



# Welcome!

The Virginia Environmental Assembly brings together conservation leaders from across the Commonwealth to discuss our Common Agenda to protect Virginia's natural resources. This annual conference is hosted by Virginia Conservation Network, the partnership of more than 100 Virginia environmental organizations.

Each year, this conference is hosted in a different region of the state to highlight Virginia's distinct natural resources. This year we are excited to bring the conference to Richmond for the first time in nearly a decade as we celebrate our 50th Anniversary.

The weekend will feature the work of local, state, and national organizations' efforts to address climate change, advance environmental justice, clean up the Chesapeake Bay, expand outdoor recreation opportunities, and more.

VCN is a facilitator of strategic action, a resource for Network Partners statewide, and a constant conservation presence in Virginia's Capitol. Playing a unique role in Virginia's conservation community, VCN helps the community speak with one coordinated voice. The organization and its staff focus on strengthening the conservation community as a whole and winning environmental victories that benefit all Virginians.

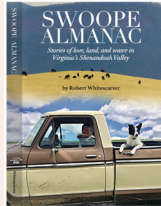
VCN's Network Partners work on a wide range of issues from stream restoration, to transportation reform, to renewable energy advancement, to promoting sustainable community growth, and more. Given the diverse work of our Partners, VCN organizes its programs into four main categories: Healthy Rivers, Clean Energy and Climate, Land Conservation, and Land Use and Transportation.





# EVENT SPONSORS

Virginia Conservation Network strives to make the Environmental Assembly accessible to all who wish to attend by keeping registration prices low. To achieve this, the organization relies on the generous support from event sponsors. A special thank you goes to our event sponsors: National Wildlife Federation, The Swoope Almanac, and Bolt Mobility.



Additional thanks to the following organizations:

Bamboo Ink

Mertz Gilmore Foundation

Natural Organic Process Enterprises

Virginia Union University and the Living and Learning Center

## EVENT LOCATION

**Virginia Environmental Assembly**

**Friday, October 11 – Saturday, October 12, 2019**

Virginia Union University Living and Learning Center,  
1830 Bath Street, Richmond, VA 23220

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

**General Assembly Preview | December 7, 2019 | held locally across the state**

In preparation for the General Assembly session, VCN and its Network Partners convene for a preview of what's in store for conservation. Volunteers, board members, and the staff of Network Partners discuss priority conservation topics and our approach to advancing policy in the legislative session.

**Conservation Lobby Day | January 28, 2020 | Richmond, VA**

VCN organizes Conservation Lobby Day to ensure a strong conservation voice is heard early in the legislative session. Volunteer advocates are invited to join professional staff of our Network Partners as we meet with state legislators and encourage them to support environmental policy advancements.



# SCHEDULE

••• Friday, October 11, 2019 •••

VCN Annual Meeting open to Network Partners  
Virginia Union University Living and Learning Center

**8:30 – 9 a.m. | Sign-in and Breakfast** *Lobby and Ballroom B*

**9 – 9:10 a.m. | Welcome — Rev. Dr. Faith Harris , Virginia Union University** *Ballroom B*

**9:10 – 9:20 a.m. | Annual Meeting — Mary Rafferty, Virginia Conservation Network** *Ballroom B*

**9:20 – 10 a.m. | Election Update** *Ballroom B*

Representatives from the Sierra Club Virginia Chapter, Clean Virginia, and Virginia League of Conservation Voters preview the upcoming Virginia state elections.

- Corinna Beall — Legislative and Political Director, Sierra Club Virginia Chapter
- Lizzie Hylton — Political Director, Clean Virginia,
- Mike Town — Executive Director, Virginia League of Conservation Voters

*Please note, VCN is a 501c3 organization and this panel will not encourage the support or opposition of any candidates.*

**10 – 10:30 a.m. | Board Vote** *Ballroom B*

**10:30 a.m. – Noon | Embedding Equity Into Organizational Policies, Practices, and Culture (Part 1)** *Ballroom A*

Network Partners are invited to participate in the Friday workshop, Embedding Equity Into Organizational Policies, Practices, and Culture, led by Angela Park, founder of Mission Critical, an organization dedicated to making social justice and equity hallmarks of advocacy and policy making.

**Noon – 12:30 p.m. | Lunch** *Lobby and Ballroom A*

**12:30 – 2 p.m. | Embedding Equity Into Organizational Policies, Practices, and Culture (Part 2)** *Ballroom A*

Network Partners are invited to participate in the Friday workshop, Embedding Equity Into Organizational Policies, Practices, and Culture, led by Angela Park, founder of Mission Critical, an organization dedicated to making social justice and equity hallmarks of advocacy and policy making.



**2 p.m. | Depart for Field Trips**

*Participants responsible for transportation to-and-from field trips*

**2:30 – 5 p.m. | Field Trips**

*See below for locations and important information*

### **Capital Trail Bike Tour**

*Questions? Contact Pat at 434-484-0804. Meet at Adventures in RVA (1912 E Main St., Richmond, VA 23223). Paid parking, including EV charging, is available at 15th St. and Cary St. (109 S 15th St., Richmond, VA 23219)*

Join the Virginia Bicycling Federation for a two-hour ride of a portion of the Virginia Capital Trail – a successful public-private partnership between the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) and the Virginia Capital Trail Foundation (VCTF). The 52-mile dedicated multi-use trail connects Richmond and Williamsburg along the beautiful and historic Route 5 corridor. Bike and helmet rental included. Please bring a full water bottle!

### **Maymont Estate Walking and Photography Conservation Tour**

*Questions? Contact Lisa at 804-971-9231. Meet and park at Maymont Nature Center (2100 Shields Lake Dr., Richmond, VA 23220).*

Take in the beauty of Richmond's Maymont Estate on a guided walking or photography tour of the 100-acre Victorian country estate. Recognized by the National Register of Historic Places, Maymont represents a significant example of an American country estate of the Gilded Age. The estate includes the residence, gardens, grounds, and original architectural complex.

### **James River Walking Tour**

*Questions? Contact Lisa at 804-971-9231. Meet at the Manchester Climbing Wall Parking Lot (Semmes Ave. between W. 9th and W 7th St. Look for small, brown Floodwall Parking sign).*

Join Nathan Burrell, Operations and Maintenance Superintendent for the Southern District, James River Park System, on a walking tour of portions of the James River near Downtown Richmond.

### **Richmond Liberty and Slave Trail Walk**

*Questions? Contact Kristie at 724-825-1221. Meet at Main Street Station (1500 E. Broad St., Richmond, VA). Paid parking, including EV charging, is available across the street.*

Join AfroCity Tours/Renewal of Life Trust for a guided walk of the Richmond Liberty and Slave Trails, chronicling history and ecology of Africans in Virginia from colonial to contemporary times.

### **Tree Planting Volunteer Activity**

*Questions? Contact Kyle at 832-724-9053. Meet at the corner of Minefee St. and Gunn St., Richmond, VA 23224. Street parking is available.*

Join the James River Association and GroundworkRVA in planting 32 native street trees along a 0.4 mile stretch of Minefee Street in the Bellemeade Community of Southside Richmond. This project builds upon the ongoing "Walkable Watershed" project for the neighborhood and will be part of a green street that will be installed over the next year. Activities will include installing the trees and mulch. All tools will be provided.

### **James River Whitewater Rafting**

*Questions? Contact Kelsey at 804-385-7580. Meet at Stratford Hills Shopping Center (6780 Forest Hill Ave, Richmond, VA 23225) near Susan's Cleaners. Walk across Hathaway Rd. and proceed down Old Westham. Riverside Outfitters is tucked back on your right across from McDonalds.*

Take in the scenic views of downtown Richmond and the thrill of whitewater rafting with Riverside Outfitters. The trip will put-in by the Reedy Creek section of the James River Park System and blast through to the big water in downtown RVA. The trip finishes up at the 14th St. whitewater takeout at the bottom of historic Shockoe Slip after tackling all the big class III-IV whitewater sections.

**5:30-8 p.m. | 50th Anniversary Conservation Celebration**

*Brewhouse at Hardywood Park Craft Brewery  
2408 Ownby Ln, Richmond, VA 23220*

Virginia Conservation Network is celebrating 50 years of strengthening the conservation community as a whole and winning environmental victories that benefit all Virginians. We hope you join us at Friday's reception at Hardywood Park Craft Brewery in Richmond as we celebrate our network's accomplishments over the past 50 years and raise our glasses to the next 50. Includes one beer/wine ticket, hors d'oeuvres, and will include the musical stylings of VCN Partner Brennan Gilmore's band, Wild Common. Street parking is available on the streets surrounding the brewery.

***Street parking is very limited. Carpooling, ridesharing, or public transportation is strongly encouraged.***



# ••• Saturday, October 12, 2019 •••

Virginia Union University Living and Learning Center

8 – 8:45 a.m. | Sign-in

Lobby

8:45 – 9 a.m. | Welcome and Light Breakfast and Coffee

Lobby and Ballroom A

9 – 10:15 a.m. | Featured Morning Panel

Ballroom A

## Highlighting Innovative Conservation Efforts in RVA

As our host city this year, we'll explore exciting conservation initiatives happening right here in our Capital City. The Mayor of Richmond, Levar M. Stoney, will moderate a discussion on solar schools, cutting-edge research on the impacts of climate change on urban centers, and how the River City connects over 2 million people a year to nature through the James River park system.

- The Hon. Levar M. Stoney, Mayor of the City of Richmond (Moderator)
- The Hon. Liz Doerr, Richmond City School Board, 1st District
- Dr. Jeremy Hoffman, Chief Scientist, Science Museum of Virginia
- Nathan Burrell, Operations and Maintenance Superintendent for the Southern District, James River Park System

10:25 – 11:40 a.m. | Session Block 1

## Curbing Plastics and Marine Debris in Virginia's Waters (Panel)

Ballroom A

The Commonwealth boasts renowned natural aquatic wonders such as the Shenandoah and Clinch Rivers, the bountiful Chesapeake Bay, and our beautiful beaches. However, plastic pollution - from single-use grocery bags to balloons - line our rivers and streams, threatening our wildlife habitat while creating an unsightly mess. During this session, panelists - including representatives from the Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center and the Oceans Foundation - will look at the full cycle of plastic pollution, the impact it's having on our environment, and current efforts underway in Virginia to curb this avoidable litter.

- Jen Cole, Executive Director, Clean Fairfax Council (Moderator)
- Mark Swingle, Chief of Research and Conservation, The Virginia Aquarium & Marine Science Center
- Jason Donofrio, External Relations Officer, The Ocean Foundation
- William Rinehart, Founder and Director, Blue Uprising PAC

## Tackling Virginia's Largest Source of Carbon: Transportation (Panel)

Ballroom B

While Virginia has focused on cutting carbon pollution from our power sector, we have done little to address transportation emissions. Virginia needs a multi-prong approach to reduce vehicle miles traveled and fast-track adoption of zero-emissions vehicles, including buses. The panel will discuss how Virginia is starting to move forward on transforming our transportation sector.

- Trip Pollard, Senior Attorney, Southern Environmental Law Center (Moderator)
- Chris Bast, Chief Deputy, Virginia Department of Environmental Quality
- Andy Shenkman, Director of Operations, Bolt Mobility
- Marcy Bauer, Director of Program Operations, EVgo
- Ross Catrow, Executive Director, Rapid Transit

## Toxic Floodwaters and Resilient Communities (Presentation/Discussion)

Conference Room

Just days after the James River surged over its banks, the Department of Health issued warnings about sewage contamination. This threat of contaminated floodwaters will only increase due to the growing intensity of river flooding, hurricanes, and sea level rise. Socially and economically disadvantaged Virginians are also likely to bear a greater burden risk of exposure and harm from these climate-driven chemical disasters. Virginia has recently taken laudable steps on addressing toxic hazards, including the recently passed coal ash disposal bill. Significant gaps remain, however, and the Commonwealth needs a broad adaptation strategy to reform its control of hazardous chemicals that prioritizes the needs of its most socially-vulnerable populations. Recent extreme weather events such as Hurricane Florence in North Carolina serve as a warning: We need to seriously tackle toxic chemical hazards and social inequities in order to prevent substantial harm to human health and communities. David Flores and Noah Sachs will discuss the findings from their report: Toxic Floodwaters: The Threat of Climate-Driven Chemical Disaster in Virginia's James River Watershed and lead a discussion about climate-driven environmental pollution, its social equity implications, and priorities for further research and policymaking.

- David Flores, Policy Analyst, The Center for Progressive Reform
- Noah M. Sachs, Professor and Director, Merhige Center for Environmental Studies, University of Richmond



**Allyship and Authentic Engagement: Building More Inclusive Coalitions**

All too often, environmental burdens disproportionately impact vulnerable populations, people of color, and low-income communities. While Virginia has started to make some progress on environmental justice, vulnerable populations continue to be at increased risk to the impacts of climate change, fossil fuel production, and the increase of toxics. As conservation advocates, we must learn how to build authentic relationships from the start to help facilitate sustainable change and avoid relying on relationships of convenience. During this session, panelists will share their perspectives on how to best engage diverse communities and create space for new voices and leadership within the conservation community.

- Beth Roach, Founder, Alliance of Native Seedkeepers
- Camilla Simon, Executive Director, Hispanics Enjoying Camping, Hunting, and the Outdoors (HECHO)
- Karen Campblin, Founder, ktcPLAN, LLC.
- Chelsea Barnes, New Economy Program Manager, Appalachian Voices

**1:20 – 2:35 p.m. | Session Block 2****Putting Virginia on a Path to 100% Clean Energy and Zero Carbon (Discussion)***Ballroom A*

Climate change is the defining issue of our time, and addressing it requires swift and decisive action. The need to reduce carbon and emissions and fully deploy renewable energy is one of the core components of climate action. This panel will explore the different policy options available to reach 100% clean energy in the Commonwealth.

- Harrison Wallace, Virginia Director, Chesapeake Climate Action Network (Moderator)
- J.R. Tolbert, Managing Director, Advanced Energy Economy
- Chris Bast, Chief Deputy, Virginia Department of Environmental Quality
- Karen Campblin, Founder, ktcPLAN, LLC.

**Opportunities and Challenges in Achieving Virginia's Final Watershed Implementation Plan (Discussion)***Ballroom B*

Virginians rely on local waterways for clean drinking water, vibrant communities, and strong economies. As Virginia looks to ramp up its efforts to reduce pollution loads and meet our Chesapeake Bay cleanup goals, presenters will discuss the unique challenges and opportunities ahead of us.

- Dr. Joe Wood, Virginia Staff Scientist, Chesapeake Bay Foundation
- Kate Wofford, Executive Director, Alliance for the Shenandoah Valley

**Scientifically Supported Strategic Growth and Thoughtful Expansion (Presentation)***Conference Room*

The Changing Landscapes Initiative (CLI) is a Smithsonian-led initiative working to understand the impacts of land use change in order to protect wildlife and natural resources that sustain human health and well-being. During this presentation, attendees will learn how CLI bridges the gap between scientists and communities by working closely with regional stakeholders to produce relevant, objective science. CLI provides this useful information to local leaders to help prioritize conservation efforts, support strategic zoning and planning policies, and garner support for conservation of natural resources.

- Dr. Iara Lacher, Landscape Ecologist, Changing Landscapes Initiative, Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute
- Carlyle Howard, Communications Coordinator, Changing Landscapes Initiative, Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute

**2:45 – 4 p.m. | Session Block 3****Increasing Access to Trails and Outdoor Recreation (Panel)***Ballroom A*

Virginia's outdoor recreation economy generates \$21.9 billion annually and employs between 197,000 and 230,000 residents. Virginia's trail systems and outdoor recreation opportunities - particularly here in Richmond - are more than just an economic opportunity, they connect people with nature while preserving wildlife habitat and clean water sources. This panel will discuss how Virginia is embracing the outdoor recreation economy and opportunities to connect more people to nature through trails and outdoors spaces.

- Andrew Downs, Central and Southwest Virginia Regional Director, Appalachian Trail Conservancy (Moderator)
- Champe Burnley, President, Virginia Bicycling Federation
- Jennifer Wampler, Trails Coordinator, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation
- Rob Jones, Executive Director, Groundwork RVA

**Understanding Food Justice and Promoting Urban Farming (Panel)***Ballroom B*

Access to healthy food has long been an issue for urban centers. A lack of nearby grocery stores and limited availability of nutritious options creates "food deserts" throughout Virginia. These "food deserts" have a disproportionate impact on low-income families and people of color. This panel will explore the concept of food justice and the ongoing process of using tools like urban gardens to educate and empower communities through their own food systems.

- Victoria "Vicky" Campbell, Community Program Coordinator, City of Richmond
- Dr. Leonard Githinji, Assistant Professor and Extension Specialist, Virginia State University
- Victoria "V" Lynn, Program Coordinator, Richmond Food Justice Alliance





*Virginia Conservation Network is committed to building a powerful, diverse, and highly-coordinated conservation movement focused on protecting our Commonwealth's natural resources.*

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