Dear VCN Partners and Supporters,

Our conservation movement has grown steadily this year, and we have accomplished so much together.

Thanks to highly coordinated efforts, our Network successfully advanced progress for distributed solar, flood resiliency, public transit, and more. In addition to our policy coordination, as I reflect on the last year, I can’t ignore the growth in engagement we have seen from our Network:

- VCN grew to include over 160 environmental organizations!
- VCN Partners tackled more environmental issues this year than ever before with 45 policy papers published in Our Common Agenda, including five new campaigns.
- A record 250 advocates joined over 100 legislator-constituent meetings at our annual Conservation Lobby Day.
- Our Environmental Advocacy Fellowship program hosted five fellows and saw the largest application pool yet to further develop a diverse pipeline of future environmental leaders.

Our work as a collective inspires me daily. Thank you to those of you who supported VCN and our work this past year. As you read the next few pages, you’ll see that together, we have made real policy gains for our environment while growing our power as a movement. I’m excited to continue this important work with you in 2024 and beyond.

Mary Rafferty
Executive Director
Virginia Conservation Network
A YEAR OF GROWING ENGAGEMENT

BY THE NUMBERS

150 PARTNERS FROM 50 ORGANIZATIONS CAMPED OUT FOR THE ANNUAL MEETING & PARTNER RETREAT

000

7000 VIRGINIANS ENCOURAGED TO VOTE THROUGH ELECTION SEASON

6

FIRST ANNUAL CONSERVATION AWARDS RECOGNIZED SIX VCN CONSERVATION CHAMPIONS

250 ADVOCATES JOINED 100 LEGISLATOR MEETINGS HELD AT CONSERVATION LOBBY DAY

6

RELEASED 6 GENERAL ASSEMBLY 101 VIDEOS TO PREPARE ADVOCATES FOR SESSION

300 ADVOCATES GATHERED OVER 13 REGIONAL WATCH PARTIES FOR THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY PREVIEW

5

5 WEEKS OF OUR COMMON AGENDA EDUCATION SERIES HIGHLIGHTED OUR SHARED GOALS

THE BASICS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

GENERAL ASSEMBLY 101

OUR 2024 COMMON EDUCATION AGENDA SERIES
Our Common Agenda process continued to see record engagement levels:

160 | 78 | 45 | 1

Partners | Authors | Policy Papers | Common Agenda

Our Common Agenda Briefing Book is a collection of policy papers written by, vetted through, and voted on by our 160+ Network Partners. It serves as an educational tool for policymakers and conservation advocates alike to highlight state-level solutions for some our most pressing environmental programs.

As a facilitator for strategic action, VCN coordinates issue-based workgroups and campaign teams to share regular updates, strategize, and coordinate efforts between environmental advocates. Campaigns are organized between 4 main workgroups:

**Climate & Energy**

**Water & Flood Resilience**

**Land Use & Transportation**

**Land & Wildlife Conservation**

In addition, VCN works with partners to convene campaign teams and subgroups of the workgroups that work together to coordinate strategic advocacy.

On average, 36 individuals representing 23 organizations participated in monthly calls and a total of 85 organizations participated in at least one workgroup meeting.

See the highlights of our workgroup’s efforts over the past year in the following pages.
ENERGY WORKGROUP PARTNERS

Appalachian Voices
BlueGreen Alliance
Chesapeake Climate Action Network
Clean Virginia
Climate Action Alliance of the Valley
Climate Cabinet Education
EcoAction Arlington
Generation180

New Virginia Majority
Piedmont Environmental Council
Sierra Club Virginia Chapter
Southern Environmental Law Center
The Nature Conservancy
Virginia Interfaith Power & Light
Virginia League of Conservation Voters
Wild Virginia

ACHIEVING 100% CLEAN ENERGY
PARTICIPATING IN THE REGIONAL GREENHOUSE GAS INITIATIVE
CUTTING ENERGY BILLS & AIR POLLUTION WITH ENERGY EFFICIENCY
POWERING PROGRESS THROUGH ROOFTOP SOLAR
EXPANDING ACCESS TO COMMUNITY SOLAR
MAXIMIZING OFFSHORE WIND GENERATION
SURGING ENERGY DEMAND FROM DATA CENTERS
MANAGING TECHNOLOGIES UNPROVEN AT SCALE
PREVENTING PIPELINE HARSMS
SHIFTING UTILITIES’ INCENTIVES FOR AFFORDABLE, CLEAN ENERGY
ENSURING ACCESS TO ESSENTIAL SERVICES
CURBING ELECTRIC UTILITIES’ POLITICAL INFLUENCE
ADVANCING ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

VCN’s Energy Workgroup saw several major milestones throughout the year.
• A record number of comments showing an overwhelming 88% supporting Virginia’s participation in RGGI.
• The Coastal Virginia Offshore Wind Project received final approval for the construction and operation of 176 wind turbines.
• Dominion’s community solar program will be expanded and a community solar program will soon be available to Appalachian Power customers!

VCN’s energy workgroup launched new campaigns to address the anticipated surge in energy demand from data center development and energy technologies that are not yet commercially viable at scale. While these campaigns continue to coordinate and build momentum, VCN remains focused on meeting the goals of the Virginia Clean Economy Act to ensure an equitable, clean energy transition.

LILLIAN ANDERSON, CLEAN ENERGY & CLIMATE JUSTICE PROGRAM MANAGER, TOURED OFFSHORE WIND TEST TURBINES

CLEAN ENERGY & CLIMATE JUSTICE

TRANSITIONING TO A CLEAN ENERGY ECONOMY
VCN’s Land Use & Transportation Workgroup met in the spring to discuss top shared priorities for the year.

Land Use & Transportation Workgroup Partners

Alliance for the Shenandoah Valley
Bike Walk RVA
Chesapeake Climate Action Network
Climate Cabinet Education Coalition for Smarter Growth
Community Climate Collaborative
Drive Electric RVA
East Coast Greenway Alliance
Generation180
National Parks Conservation Association
Northern Virginia Families for Safe Streets
Partnership for Smarter Growth

Piedmont Environmental Council
RVA Rapid Transit
RVA YIMBY
Sierra Club Virginia Chapter
Southern Environmental Law Center
The Nature Conservancy
Virginia Bicycling Federation
Virginia Capital Trail Foundation
Virginia Interfaith Power & Light
Virginia League of Conservation Voters
Virginians for High-Speed Rail
Virginia Transit Association

Land Use & Transportation

- Expanding Rail
- Mitigating Data Center Development’s Impact
- Deploying Utility-Scale Solar Responsibly
- Unleashing Sustainable Housing Growth
- Accelerating Transportation Electrification
- Making Buildings Cleaner & Safer
- Transforming Transportation
- Modernizing Public Transit
- Increasing Access to Bicycling
- Saving Pedestrian Lives
- Ensuring Consistent Support for Trails
- Advancing Environmental Justice

Reducing Transportation Emissions

The Land Use & Transportation Workgroup continued pursuing transportation emission reduction goals by supporting stronger public transit, vehicle electrification, community smart growth, and walking and bicycling safety. The workgroup built relationships with the Virginia Department of Transportation through a multi-month workgroup to discuss shared safety goals for vulnerable road users including walkers and bikers. In another highlight for the workgroup, bus riders will soon see more bus stops thanks to the Better Bus Stop Bill which will cut down delays in building out safe and comfortable bus shelters and benches.

The workgroup also pursued new goals this year, including ensuring safe, sustainable, and affordable housing and protecting our natural resources from data center development. Their work included developing a dedicated Data Center Reform Coalition, which will continue this important work into the upcoming year.
In partnership with the Virginia United Land Trusts (VaULT), Virginia Conservation Network helped establish Our Virginia Outdoors, a nonpartisan coalition in Virginia promoting the outdoors. Our Virginia Outdoors Coordinator, Maribel Castañeda is building broad public support for dedicated funding for our parks, public lands, trails, and natural resources.

The VCN land conservation workgroup also continued to focus on reducing tree canopy loss, developing wildlife corridors, and protecting aquatic ecosystems to ensure the health, beauty, and connectivity of our natural resources.

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VCN'S WATER WORKGROUP PARTNERS MET TO DEVELOP THEIR YEAR-ROUND PRIORITIES.

WATER WORKGROUP PARTNERS

Appalachian Voices
Chesapeake Bay Foundation
Chesapeake Legal Alliance
Clean Fairfax Council
Clean Virginia Waterways
Environmental Defense Fund
Friends of Buckingham
Friends of the Rappahannock
James River Association
Environment Virginia
Lynnhaven River NOW
National Parks Conservation Association
Nature Forward

Piedmont Environmental Council
Potomac Riverkeeper Network
Rockbridge Conservation
Shenandoah Riverkeeper
Southern Environmental Law Center
Virginia Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts
Virginia League of Conservation Voters
Waterkeepers Chesapeake
Wetlands Watch
Wild Virginia

CLEAN WATER & FLOOD RESILIENCE

PREVENTING POLLUTED STORMWATER RUNOFF
WORKING WITH FARMERS TO PROTECT OUR WATERWAYS
MEETING WASTEWATER UPGRADE OBLIGATIONS
ENFORCING WATER QUALITY STANDARDS
REDUCING PLASTICS, LITTER, & MARINE DEBRIS
STOPPING FALSE SOLUTIONS & PLASTICS-TO-FUELS
STOPPING PFAS POLLUTION AT ITS SOURCE
PREVENTING HARMs FROM METALS MINING
ADVANCING EQUITABLE STATEWIDE FLOOD PLANNING
SAFEGUARDING VIRGINIA’S WETLANDS
SUPPORTING VIRGINIA’S EDUCATION WORKFORCE
ADVANCING ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

VCN Water Workgroup Partners celebrated another historic year of clean water funding thanks to bipartisan support for programs that protect our streams, rivers, and the Bay. VCN convened partners throughout the year to discuss the importance of continuing this work beyond the 2025 Chesapeake Bay Goals.

Thanks to the work of the VCN resilience campaign team, over $372.5M has been dedicated to resilience planning through the Community Flood Preparedness Fund so far and a new Office of Commonwealth Resilience was established which will oversee the equitable distribution of flood protection funding.

The water workgroup also took on toxic pollution this year, banning toxic pavement sealants and the use of cyanide in mineral mining while also setting up new processes within DEQ to manage PFAS also known as “forever chemicals”.

RESTORING THE HEALTH & QUALITY OF OUR WATER
IN MEMORY

It is with heavy hearts that we reflect on the passing of those who have contributed to the conservation movement and impacted our organization in immeasurable ways. Their legacy will continue to inspire us in our mission to protect and preserve the natural world.

RUSSELL (RUSS) BAXTER
VCN mourns the loss of former Executive Director, Russ Baxter. His career was devoted to natural resources policy, which included serving in the Governor’s Cabinet under his long-time mentor and friend, W. Tayloe Murphy, Jr., and later as Deputy Secretary. A 1997 board memo outlined his idea to create a shared environmental policy brief for legislators. While it looks a little different today, his legacy continues 25 years later through Our Common Agenda Briefing Book.

DR. ERWIN BOHMFAK
The Wildlife Center of Virginia family has sustained a major loss with the death of Board Chairman Emeritus, Dr. Erwin Bohmfalk, who passed away at age 99. Erwin helped establish the Center’s African Safari Program to show hundreds of people the incredible beauty and wildlife diversity of Southern Africa.

DR. BETH MCGEE
The Chesapeake Bay Foundation lost their Director of Science and Agricultural Policy, Dr. Beth McGee, earlier this year. Since joining CBF in 2003, Beth played a crucial role in Bay restoration efforts. Our team had the honor of working with her through the Choose Clean Water Coalition – the Bay has lost a true conservation giant.

You can honor late conservationists in our Annual Report by contacting us at media@vcnva.org

HOSTING OUR FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM – TWICE!

For the first time, VCN hosted two rounds of Environmental Advocacy Fellows! Tytus & Caroline joined the VCN team during the summer to help educate new and returning legislators about our environmental priorities. Anjel, Victoria, and Katherine joined us in the fall to develop an Environmental Glossary to aid the record amount of new legislators in office and a General Assembly 101 video series to teach advocates how the General Assembly works and how to be an effective advocate.

OUR SECOND RACIAL EQUITY COHORT GRADUATES

32 graduates representing 25 environmental organizations joined Ebony Walden, a leader on equity, inclusion, and justice in organizations, for our 2nd racial equity shared learning cohort. Graduates explored and addressed racial equity issues inherent to our environmental community in this 10-month program. Looking forward, Ebony Walden will return to host a 4-part training series for Partners while VCN staff re-focus on internal DEIJ efforts in a staff cohort.

SPOTLIGHTING BLACK LEADERS IN THE ENVIRONMENTAL FIELD

We partnered with BlackOak Collective to host Virginia’s 3rd annual Black In Green: a virtual conservation career panel! Young Black professionals launching careers within Virginia’s environmental movement joined the career panel to gain career advice and insights from experienced Black environmental leaders.

CAROLINE BUTTEMERE  TYTUS SUCHOTINUNT  ANJEL IRIAGHOMO  VICTORIA JENKINS  KATHERINE HEWES
Bald Eagle

Tiger Swallowtail Butterfly
Allegheheny-Bridge Alliance
Appalachian Voices
Audubon Society of Northern Virginia
Bike Norfolk
BlueGreen Alliance
Blue Ridge PRISM
Capital Region Land Conservancy
Capital Trees
Center for Progressive Reform
Chesapeake Climate Action Network
Clean Fairfax Council
Clean Virginia Watersways
Coalition for Smarter Growth
Concerned Citizens of Charles City County
East Coast Greenway Alliance
Edith J Carrier Arboretum at JMU
Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions
Friends of the Lower Appomattox River
Friends of the North Fork of the Shenandoah River
Keep Virginia Beautiful
Loudon Wildlife Conservancy
Nature Forward
New River Land Trust
Oceana
Preservation Virginia
Prince William Conservation Alliance
Rockfish Valley Foundation
RVA Rapid Transit
Scenic Virginia
Shenandoah Valley Bicycle Coalition
Sierra Club - Fall of the James
Southern Appalachian Mountain Stewards
SouthWings
Spotwood Garden Club
Trust for Public Land
Tuckahoe Garden Club of Westhampton
Unitarian Universalist Church of Roanoke
UVA Law School, Environmental & Regulatory Law Clinic
Virginia Association for Biological Farming
Virginia Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts
Virginia Capitol Trail Foundation
Virginia Clinicians for Climate Action
Virginia Living Museum
Virginia Native Plant Society
Virginia Organizing
Virginia Urban Forest Council
(TREES Virginia)
Virginia's United Land Trusts
Virginiians for High Speed Rail
Waterkeepers Chesapeake
Wild Virginia
Wildlands Network

Dogwood
Albermarle Garden Club
Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay
Ashe County Garden Club
Ashland Garden Club
Ashland Garden Club of New Market
Ashland Garden Club of Roanoke
Back Bay Foundation
Bike Walk RVA
Black Family Land Trust
Blue Ridge Garden Club
Boxwood Garden Club
Bus Riders of Roanoke Advocacy Group
Climate Action Alliance of the Shenandoah Valley
Conservation Park of Virginia, Inc
Drive Electric RVA
EcoAction Arlington
Elders for Climate Action
Friends of Accotink Creek
Friends of Buckingham
Friends of Dyke Marsh
Friends of the Dahlgren Railroad
Friends of the James River Park
Friends of the Rivers of Virginia
Garden Club of the Middle Peninsula
Garden Club of Norfolk
Garden Club of the Northern Neck
Goose Creek Association
Groundwork RVA
Hands Across the Lake
Henrico Conservation Action Network
Hunting Creek Garden Club
Leesburg Garden Club
Loudon Climate Project
Mattaponi & Pamunkey Rivers Association
Mill Mountain Garden Club
Nelson County Garden Club
New River Valley Bicycle Association
Northern Virginia Families for Safe Streets
Partnership for Smarter Growth
Rail Solution
Rappahannock League for Environmental Protection
Rappahannock Valley Garden Club
Richmond Audubon Society
Riverbend Conservancy
RVA YIMBY
Sierra Club – Blue Ridge
Sierra Club – Chesapeake Bay
Sierra Club – Great Falls
Sierra Club – New River Valley
Sierra Club – Piedmont Group
Sierra Club – Potomac Region Outings
Sierra Club – Potomac River
Sierra Club – Rappahannock
Sierra Club – Roanoke
Sierra Club – Shenandoah
Sierra Club – York River
Southside ReLeaf
Surfrider Foundation – Virginia Chapter
The Clinic Coalition
The Wildlife Society – Virginia Chapter
Tree Fredericksburg
Virginia Association for Environmental Educators
Virginia Bicycling Federation
Virginia Council of Trout Unlimited
Virginia Green Travel Alliance
Virginia Society of Ornithology
Virginia Transit Association
Virginia Wilderness Committee
Washington Area Bicyclist Association
Williamsburg Garden Club
Winchester-Clarke Garden Club
YMBVs of Northern Virginia
York River Stewards

Cardinal
Alliance for the Shenandoah Valley
Appalachian Citizens’ Law Center
Appalachian Trail Conservancy
Blue Ridge Land Conservancy
CASA
Central Virginia Land Conservancy
Climate Cabinet Education
Community Climate Collaborative
Environment Virginia
Friends of the Rappahannock
Garden Club of Virginia
Generation 180
James River Garden Club
Lynnhaven River NOW
Mothers Out Front
Natural Resources Defense Council
New Virginia Majority
Northern Virginia Conservation Trust
Potomac Conservancy
Powered by Facts
Shenandoah National Park Trust
Southern Virginia Land Conservancy
The Electrification Coalition
The Nature Conservancy in Virginia
Virginia Aquarium and Marine Science Center Foundation
Virginia Interfaith Power & Light
Wetlands Watch
VCN coordinates over 160 environmental nonprofits working in the state of Virginia to build a powerful, diverse, and highly-coordinated conservation movement through four main working groups: Water, Energy, Land & Wildlife Conservation, and Land Use & Transportation.

VCN is a facilitator of strategic action, a resource for Network Partners statewide, and a constant conservation presence in Virginia’s Capitol. Staff focus on strengthening the conservation community as a whole and winning environmental victories that benefit all Virginians.

2024 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Karen Forget
Kendyl Crawford
Chris Miller
Clarence Tong
Pamela Bingham
Jeanette Cadwallender
Karen Campblin
Elizabeth Christeller
Daryl Downing
John Eustis
Wes Gobar
Jeremy Hoffman
Stewart Schwartz
Calandra Waters Lake
Kate Wolfford

NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Jeremy Hoffman (pictured left) and Wes Gobar were voted onto VCN’s Board of Directors at the Annual Meeting & Partner Retreat in September.

FINANCIALS

2023 INCOME
• Partnership Dues
• Individual Donations
• Foundation Grants
• Event Income
• Partner Projects
• Other Revenue

2023 EXPENSES
• Personnel
• Travel
• Events
• Partner Projects
• Office, Web, & Technology
• Financial Administration

2024 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

MARY RAFFERTY
Executive Director

BRITNEY BEAZLEY
Operations Manager

ANDREANA J. LIN
Events & Outreach Associate

NEW STAFF SPOTLIGHT

LILLIAN ANDERSON
Policy Manager – Clean Energy & Climate Justice

JAIME TREJO-ANGELÉS
Communications & Trainings Associate

Prior to joining VCN in the fall of 2023, Lillian worked with National Parks Conservation Association to coordinate clean air policy campaigns in states across the Southeast. She also served as a national park ranger in Acadia National Park and worked seasonally as an environmental educator in national parks and forests around the country.

Jaime launched his career with VCN in January 2024. Prior to this, Jaime interned with a few of VCN’s Network Partners, including the Environmental Defense Fund and the Community Climate Collaborative. Jaime brings experience in leading trainings and events through his roles at the Latinx Leadership Institute and the Hispanic/Latinx Peer Mentoring Program at the University of Virginia.