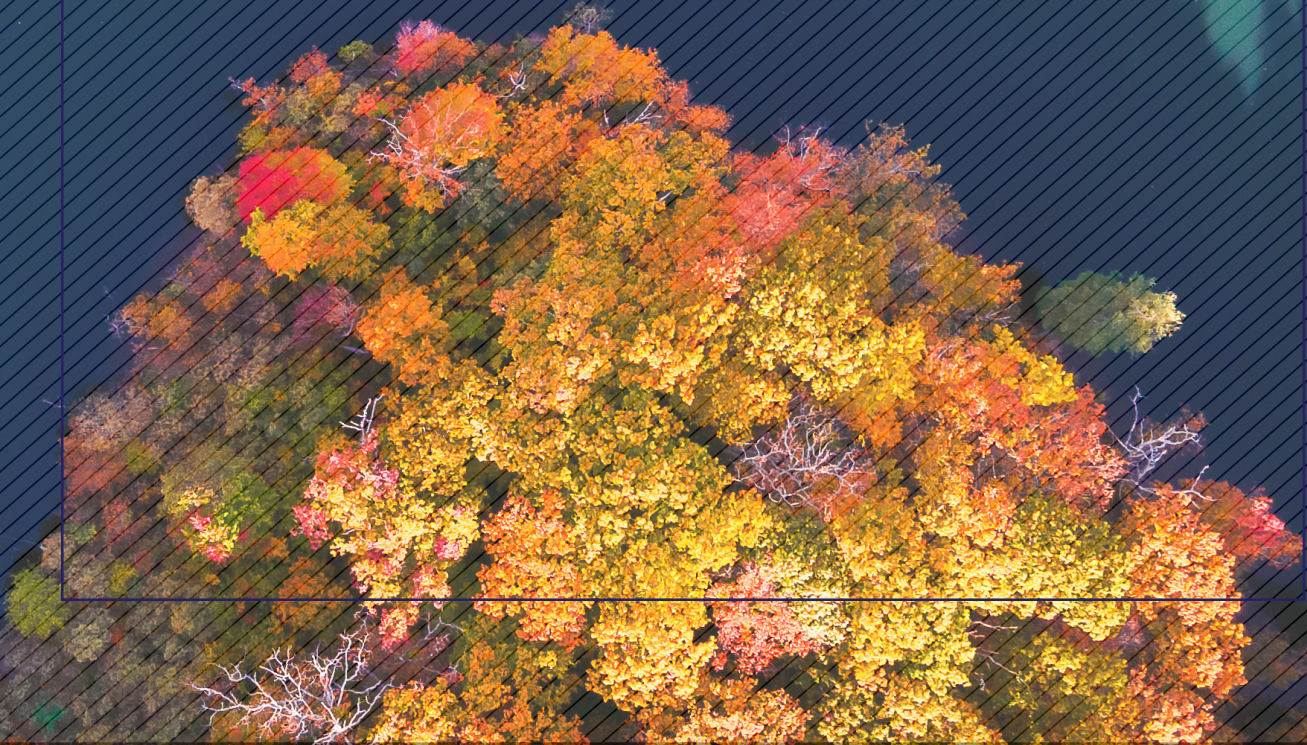


ANNUAL REPORT



VIRGINIA CONSERVATION NETWORK

Spring 2023 - Winter 2024





PARTNERS DEVELOPED SHARED POLICY GOALS AT THE LAND USE & TRANSPORTATION WORKGROUP MEETING

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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



7000
7000 VIRGINIANS ENCOURAGED TO VOTE THROUGH ELECTION SEASON

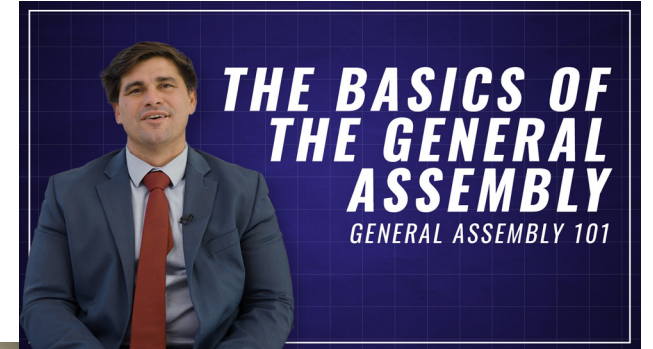


6
FIRST ANNUAL CONSERVATION AWARDS RECOGNIZED SIX VCN CONSERVATION CHAMPIONS



250
250 ADVOCATES JOINED 100 LEGISLATOR MEETINGS HELD AT CONSERVATION LOBBY DAY

6
RELEASED 6 GENERAL ASSEMBLY 101 VIDEOS TO PREPARE ADVOCATES FOR SESSION



300
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



OUR COMMON AGENDA

CRAFTING OUR SHARED POLICY PRIORITIES

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 of our most pressing environmental programs.



WORKGROUPS & CAMPAIGNS

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.

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



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

CLEAN ENERGY & CLIMATE JUSTICE

- 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 HARMS
- SHIFTING UTILITIES' INCENTIVES FOR AFFORDABLE, CLEAN ENERGY
- ENSURING ACCESS TO ESSENTIAL SERVICES
- CURBING ELECTRIC UTILITIES' POLITICAL INFLUENCE
- ADVANCING ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

TRANSITIONING TO A CLEAN ENERGY ECONOMY

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.





VGN'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.





OUR VIRGINIA OUTDOOR'S STEERING COMMITTEE HELD A MEETING AT VCN'S ANNUAL MEETING & PARTNER RETREAT

CONSERVATION WORKGROUP PARTNERS

Alliance for the Shenandoah Valley
 American Battlefield Trust
 American Farmland Trust
 Appalachian Trail Conservancy
 Blue Ridge PRISM
 Capital Region Land Conservancy
 Chesapeake Bay Foundation
 East Coast Greenway Alliance
 Friends of the James River Park
 National Parks Conservation Association
 Nature Forward
 Northern Virginia Conservation Trust
 The Nature Conservancy

Piedmont Environmental Council
 Preservation Virginia
 Scenic Virginia
 Shenandoah Valley Bicycle Coalition
 Trust for Public Land
 Valley Conservation Council
 Virginia Association for Parks
 Virginia Capital Trail Foundation
 Virginia League of Conservation Voters
 Virginia Trails Alliance
 Virginia's United Land Trusts
 Wildlands Network
 Wild Virginia

LAND & WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

- INVESTING IN VIRGINIA'S HERITAGE & FUTURE
- PRESERVING FARMLAND
- PROTECTING HISTORIC & CULTURAL RESOURCES
- INVESTING IN CONSERVATION & OUTDOOR RECREATION
- STRENGTHENING PARK FUNDING
- ASSESSING TREE CANOPY LOSS
- CONNECTING WILDLIFE HABITATS
- ENSURING SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES
- ADVANCING ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

PROTECTING OUR NATURAL RESOURCES

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.



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

Welcome to the 2023 Water Workgroup In-person Meeting

Underpinning for today's event generously provided by:



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

RESTORING THE HEALTH & QUALITY OF OUR WATER

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".



COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, & JUSTICE



CAROLINE BUTTEMERE



TYTUS SUCHOTNUNT



ANJEL IRIAGHOMO



VICTORIA JENKINS



KATHERINE HEWES

HOSTING OUR FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM – TWICE!

For the first time, VCN hosted two rounds of Environmental Advocacy Fellows! Tytus & Caroline joined the 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.

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 BOHMFALK

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.



BRENT BLACKWELDER

Brent Francis Blackwelder, a bold environmental leader for four decades, died on November 23, 2023 following a fall and having battled dementia and Parkinson's disease. He was a founder and chair of several environmental organizations and a major supporter of VCN's work to ban uranium mining.



WILLIAM "BILL" LIMPERT

Bill Limpert passed away on February 5th, 2024 from blood cancer. The conservation community will never forget Bill's heroic advocacy and effort in stopping the construction of the Atlantic Coast Pipeline from his own backyard.



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.



VGN NETWORK PARTNERS

BALD EAGLE



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
 Valley Conservation Council
 Virginia Aquarium and Marine Science
 Center Foundation
 Virginia Interfaith Power & Light
 Wetlands Watch

TIGER SWALLOWTAIL BUTTERFLY

Allegheny-Blue Ridge 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 Waterways
 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
 Spotswood 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 Capital 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
 Virginians for High Speed Rail
 Waterkeepers Chesapeake
 Wild Virginia
 Wildlands Network

DOGWOOD

Albemarle Garden Club
 Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay
 Ashland Garden Club
 Back Bay Restoration 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 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 Heritage Trail
 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
 Rivanna Conservation Alliance
 Rockbridge Conservation
 RVA Rapid Transit
 RVA YIMBY
 Shenandoah Green
 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 Clinch 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
 YIMBYs of Northern Virginia
 York River Stewards

ABOUT VCN

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 Wofford

NEW BOARD MEMBERS

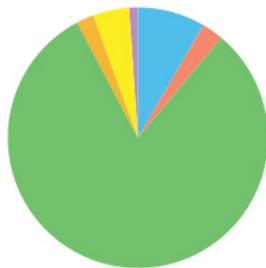


Jeremy Hoffman (pictured left) and Wes Gobar were voted onto VCN's Board of Directors at the Annual Meeting & Partner Retreat in September.

FINANCIALS

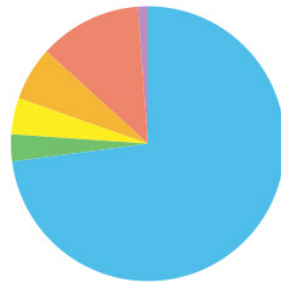
2023 INCOME

- Partnership Dues
- Individual Donations
- Foundation Grants
- Event Income
- Partner Projects
- Other Revenue



2023 EXPENSES

- Personnel
- Travel
- Events
- Partner Projects
- Office, Web, & Technology
- Financial Administration



VCN STAFF



MARY RAFFERTY
 Executive Director



BRITTNEY BEAZLEY
 Operations Manager



ANDREANA J. LIN
 Events & Outreach Associate



PAT CALVERT
 Program Director – Clean Water & Land Conservation



NICOLE VAUGHAN
 Director of Communications



WYATT GORDON
 Senior Policy Manager – Land Use & Transportation

NEW STAFF SPOTLIGHT



LILLIAN ANDERSON
 Policy Manager – Clean Energy & Climate Justice

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 TREJO-ANGELES
 Communications & Trainings Associate

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.



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