

Completed (and Withdrawn) VLCF Grants

June 10, 2021

The following two VLCF grants have successfully closed since the February 5, 2021 VLCF Board meeting. One FY21 grant, reported herein, was not accepted by the grantee and has been withdrawn.

1. Department of Forestry – Jack Mountain Tracts Easement (FY2018)

This VLCF grant funded the partial purchase of an open-space easement that now protects 1,658 acres, of which 1,600 acres are forested, in Highland County. The property includes the upper slopes and four miles of summit along Jack Mountain, the 12th highest peak in Virginia and the 3rd highest in Highland County. A majority of the forestland is considered high forest conservation value by VDOF. The property contains eight significant natural heritage resources confirmed by DCR-Natural Heritage including two G2/S1 element occurrences, which are now protected by the VDOF easement. The property is in the Natural Habitat & Ecosystem Diversity Category of ConserveVirginia. Additionally, the site supports stands of red spruce (*Picea rubens*), considered a diminished tree species in Virginia by the State Forester. The property lies in the very upper reaches of the James River watershed, and collectively contains more than 31,000 feet of intermittent streams that flow directly into the Bullpasture River. The easement also requires permanent riparian buffers on all of the watercourses.

Grant Award: \$225,000. **Payment Amount:** \$225,000. **Match:** \$1,433,000.

2. Virginia Outdoors Foundation – McThenia (FY2020)

The Virginia Outdoors Foundation purchased an easement on 39 acres in the City of Lexington that now allows public access along an existing trail to the Maury River. The property fronts the Maury for more than 5,700 feet and has a natural ‘beach’ area at the foot of the trail. Across the river from the property is the Chessie Trail, a heavily used public trail linking Lexington to the Buena Vista area. Bluffs along the river, and located on the property, are visible from State Route 631, which is part of U.S. Bike Route 76. The river at this location is a designated Blueway and provides habitat for several endangered mollusk species. The property lies within the Lexington Barrens and Bluffs conservation site due to the limestone cliffs, sinkholes and barrens, and also contains areas where a rare plant, the ThreeFlower Melic Grass (*Melica nitens*), has been found. The property contains several sinkholes that serve to capture most of the surface-water runoff in the upland portion of the property and falls within the Water Quality Improvement Category of ConserveVirginia.

Grant Award: \$180,000. **Payment Amount:** \$180,000. **Match:** \$0.

3. Culpeper County – Rappahannock River Park (FY2021) (WITHDRAWN)

Culpeper County, together with the Piedmont Environmental Council and other partners, was seeking to acquire and conserve Rappahannock River Park with VLCF funding. The property consists of 46.53 acres and would provide public access to: the river with an existing non-motorized boat launch; a park with an existing primitive campground with 47-sites and associated infrastructure; nature trails; a stocked fishing pond; and picnic areas. The property intersects four layers of ConserveVirginia: Natural Habitat and Ecosystem Diversity, Floodplains and Flooding Resilience, Cultural and Historic Preservation, and Scenic Preservation. Currently, public access

to the upper Rappahannock River is limited with only one established boat launch at Kelly's Ford in Culpeper and the nearest downstream launch at Motts Landing in Spotsylvania, nearly 32 miles apart. This project is ideally located halfway between those two sites and would add to a network of public boating access sites that are quickly developing into an established water trail – including three sites upstream in Fauquier County that are slated for spring 2021. This project aligns with the 2018 Virginia Outdoors Plan's featured regional project that aims to "Implement the Upper Rappahannock River Water Trail and provide water access along the other regional rivers and tributaries." This rural property is mostly forested and borders the Rappahannock River for 650 feet. The historic and cultural significance is documented starting in the 1600s through the Civil War, and contains historic features such as Skinker's Ford, with the historic roadbed still evident today.

Grant Award: \$210,000. **Payment Amount:** \$0. **Match:** Cash provided by County and by Piedmont Environmental Council, and other grants. **Note:** This project was withdrawn by the grant recipient after the County's governing body did not accept the grant award stating that the project was no longer viable due to objections from adjoining landowners and others within the community. These funds will be requested to be re-allotted to the Open Spaces and Parks category for the FY21 Grant Round II.

Summary of Open VLCF Grants

There are currently 15 open grants from the FY20 VLCF grant round. They are all moving forward and are expected to close by the end of 2021.

There are currently 11 open grants from the FY21 VLCF grant round. Most are just beginning to initiate the acquisition process as the grants were issued in February.