



2022

CLIMATE CHANGE

THE RATE OF RELATIVE SEA-LEVEL RISE IN COASTAL VIRGINIA, WHICH COMBINES SEA-LEVEL RISE AND LAND SUBSIDENCE, IS AMONG THE HIGHEST IN THE UNITED STATES.

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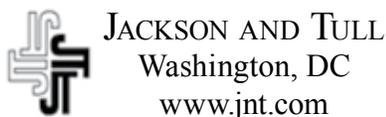
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ECCA | 2022 Table of Contents

Letter from the President and Vice President.....6

New Board Member: Lisa Dickinson Mountcastle
By Marty Taylor 10

The Impact of Climate Change on Virginia’s Coastal Areas and Tidewater Regions
By Hill Wellford 12

What Climate Change Means for Migratory Birds in the Northern Neck and Middle Peninsula
By Hill Wellford, Bill Portlock, Maeve and Joey Coker, and Jeffrey Wright.....20

Protected Lands/Easement Chart 34/35

The Extraordinary Life of Captain Hansford C. Bayton
Adapted by Hill Wellford.....36

The Role of the Rappahannock River in St. Margaret’s School
By Rebecca Meberg.....42

A Day to Remember at Fones Cliffs 414 Years Ago
By Edward Wright Haile 44

Wednesdays were Auction Days at the Tappahannock Livestock Market
By Margaret J. Smith 46

Horse Racing History Starts Here: Breeding and Racing Around the Rappahannock
By Jennifer S. Kelly.....48

Rappahannock Tribe Celebrates Return to Ancestral Land at Fones Cliffs
By John Page Williams.....53

The Historic Homes of Essex County, Virginia: If Walls Could Talk
By Karin Andrews56

Tax Benefits Regarding Conservation Easement Donations
By Todd Hochrein56

Why Become an ECCA Sponsor?66

ECCA Board Financial Report
By Margaret J. Smith 66

ECCA Donors67

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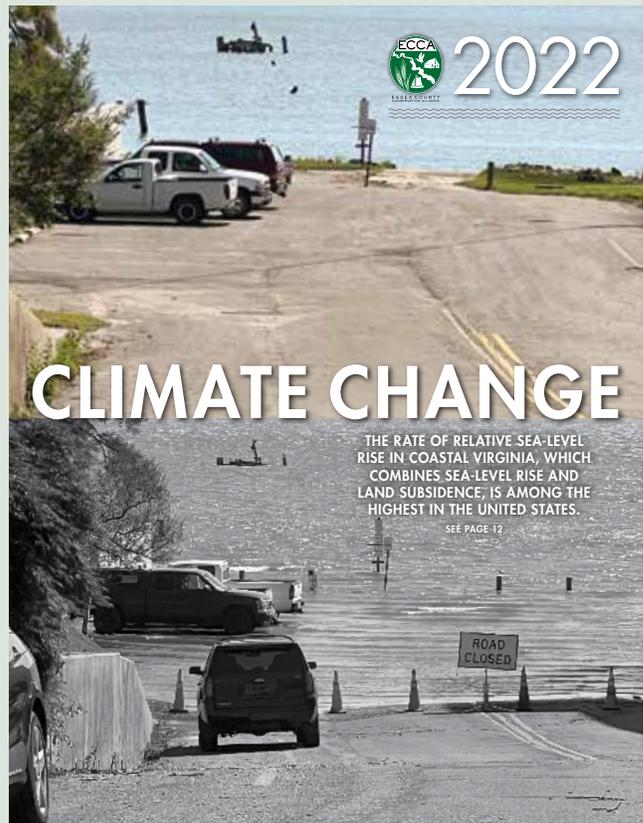
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ON THE COVER

Two views of the same location on Prince Street are pictured on the cover. The top image was photographed by Hill Wellford on July 14, 2022. The image below was taken by George Jennings on May 9, 2022.



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peterbance@sterlingthompson.com

Callie Wall

3006 Eastpoint Parkway
Louisville, Kentucky 40223
Cell: 502.299.0824 | Office: 502.585.3277
calliewall@sterlingthompson.com

ESSEX COUNTY CONSERVATION ALLIANCE

SOUNDING THE “CLIMATE CHANGE” ALERT FOR THE NORTHERN NECK AND MIDDLE PENINSULA

In this edition of the ECCA’s annual magazine, we devote substantial attention to the subject of climate change. We urge our readers to pay close attention to the articles we have published and to the source materials we have referenced. Climate change is a very timely and serious subject with potentially far-reaching environmental consequences.

For over fifty years climate scientists from all over the world have warned that carbon dioxide and methane emissions, called “greenhouse gasses”, released into the earth’s atmosphere from the unrestrained burning and use of fossil fuels would eventually cause our oceans to warm and the earth’s temperature to rise to dangerous levels, leading to extreme weather conditions. Now every nation is paying the price for failing to heed the warnings. This is a primary reason why there is now a global urgency to phase out fossil fuels and replace them with “clean energy” sources. The United States is a leader in this international effort and in 2021 set a goal for federal operations to achieve “net-zero” greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. The Commonwealth of Virginia established the same “net-zero” goal for state operations when it enacted the Virginia Clean Economy Act in 2020. Goals, however, are much easier to set than to accomplish, and all too often they are scuttled for political reasons.

What does this mean for Virginia’s residents and, in particular, what does it mean for the families who live in Essex and the other counties of the Middle Peninsula and the Northern Neck? The ECCA’s message to our readers is straight-forward. We are not scientists and we are certainly not politicians. But we are keen observers of our region’s environment and its natural resources. Agriculture, forestry, fisheries, and tourism are the economic engines of our region, and they are all directly impacted by climate change. As noted in the articles ECCA has published, Virginia’s coastal and tidewater regions have already begun to experience the impact of climate change. Sea-level rise, land subsidence, an increasing number of violent storms, tornados, flooding, and extreme temperatures are all consequences of global warming, which are projected to accelerate if carbon and methane emissions are not substantially reduced.

ECCA has sounded the alert about climate change because we believe the weather conditions it produces could present challenging issues for the tidewater counties of our region. At this point, sea-level rise and periodic flooding appear to be the most immediate concern. We hope you will stay informed and help ECCA monitor the climate issues that most directly affect our region.

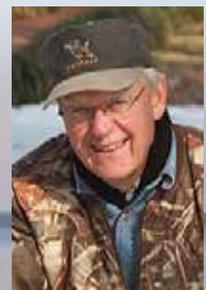
Peter Bance *Hill Wellford*

Peter Bance, President

Hill Wellford, Vice President



Peter Bance

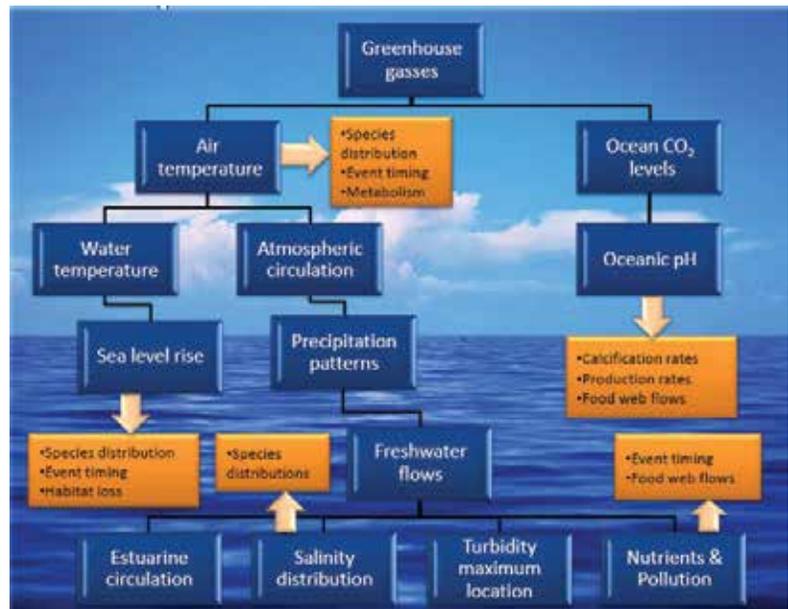


Hill Wellford

VIMS Report Details the Severe Impact of Climate Change on Virginia

Climate change cascades occur when a species or process not directly affected by changes in temperature or precipitation responds to climate change due to a change in a related species or process that is strongly affected by changes in temperature or precipitation. An example would be a change in the mouse population size, which is indirectly related to changes in precipitation. Although precipitation does not appear to directly affect the mouse population size, it does affect mast production by a number of tree species. The mast is a source of food for the mouse population and when more food is available, a larger population can be sustained.

This diagram shows links in abiotic factors that can propagate climate changes. The orange boxes are examples of the types of metabolic and temporal changes that can result from shifts in the abiotic factors. These shifts affect both individual species population dynamics and ecological community make-up and function.



This diagram illustrates ecological connections and how climate changes can resonate through an ecological web.

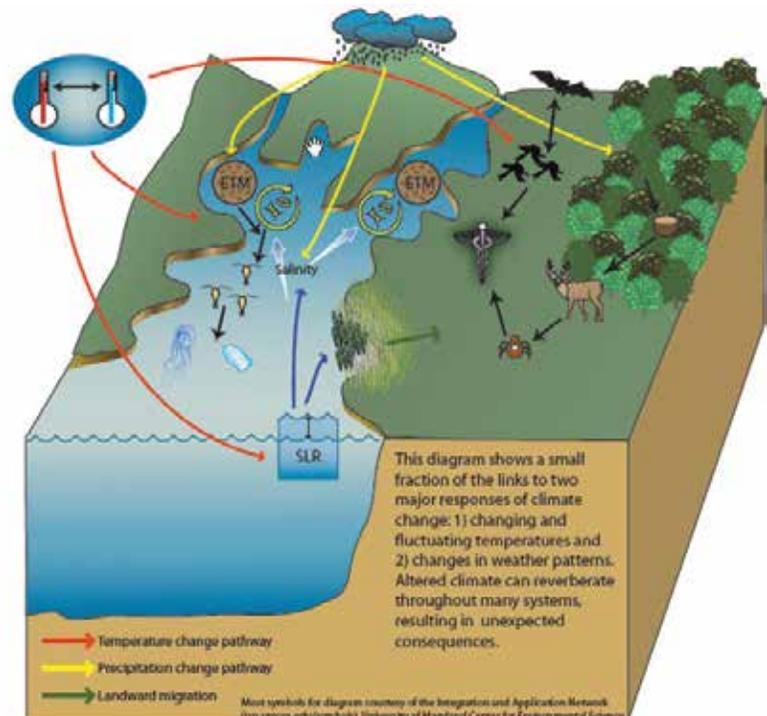
The pathways for the ecological connections include temperature and precipitation changes. The → means 'affects' or 'leads to'.

Temperature Changes Affect:

1. Sea level rise (SLR) → change salinity distribution → Estuarine turbidity maximum (ETM) location → location of phytoplankton bloom → availability of food for zooplankton population → availability of food for jellyfish and ctenophore populations
2. Phytoplankton bloom timing → availability of food for zooplankton population → availability of food for jellyfish and ctenophore populations
3. SLR → marsh location and composition and other landscape features
4. Mosquito populations → human health and safety through disease transmission

Precipitation Changes Affect:

1. Salinity and freshwater flows → ETM location → location of phytoplankton bloom → availability of food for zooplankton population → availability of food for jellyfish and ctenophore populations
2. Tree growth and production → Mast (e.g., acorn) production → food availability for deer population → tick population size → human health and safety through disease transmission
3. Bat population → mosquito population size → human health and safety through disease transmission



Content and graphics reproduced courtesy the Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS).

Climate Change Impacts in Virginia: Climate Cascades. Coastal Change & Coastal Resilience/Data Sources 2009. vims.edu/ccrm/research/climate_change/data_sources/cascades/index.php

Photo used courtesy Hill Wellford.



#TappahannockStrong

ECCA is heartbroken by the devastating fire that has forever changed the landscape of historic Tappahannock.

This catastrophic event has profoundly affected all of us. Most importantly, it has had a dire impact on property owners, local businesses, and residents of Prince Street and the surrounding area. But despite the many challenges ahead, we know our Tappahannock community will join together to determine the best pathway forward to shape our town's future. God bless our Tappahannock-Essex Volunteer Fire Department and all the other responders who heeded the call when disaster struck. Thank you.





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New Board Member:
**Lisa Dickinson
Mountcastle**

By Marty Taylor

The Rappahannock flows through her veins.

That might be said of anyone raised along this pristine river, but for Lisa Dickinson Mountcastle, it rings especially true. Daughter of ardent environmentalists Fielding and Diana Dickinson, she grew up at Wheatland in Upper Essex, where conservation was a way of life long before it became a state-wide crusade.

After marriage in 1988 to Ken Mountcastle, and the birth of their two children, Lisa became active in the Rappahannock River Valley Association, an organization that has morphed into present-day ECCA, headed by her first cousin Peter Bance. In early days, she worked with the senior Hill Wellford. Thirty years later, she joins Hill Jr. on ECCA's board.

Although most of her married life has been spent in Northern Virginia, with vacations in south-east Georgia, she has maintained a presence in local and state-wide conservation efforts. Through friendship with Hylah Boyd, she became interested in Scenic Virginia, a small nonprofit based in Richmond. She now serves as its board chair. Through her marriage, she became active in Ken Mountcastle's family foundation, which has a long relationship with the Southern Environmental Law Center, whose mission is to protect the basic right to

clean air, water, and a livable climate; to preserve natural treasures; and provide a healthy environment for all.

"So many through the years have taken great pains to keep our river unspoiled," Lisa notes. "I want to carry on the tradition of protection while being mindful that all sorts of development may happen. It just has to be managed carefully. The river is important to so many groups of people, from farmers and watermen to the Rappahannock Indian Tribe, and to all those who enjoy its unspoiled beauty."

The Mountcastle children, Kemble and Holt, also are committed environmentalists. Kemble is employed by a New York public relations firm, and Holt is a graduate student at Georgetown University.

Lisa and Ken, now retired from a career in the financial sector, plan to spend most of their time at the house they are building on the river. "It's a style that Diana would not like" Lisa says with a laugh. "It's contemporary with lots of windows and no wood on the exterior, for easy maintenance."

From their new home, she and Ken will keep a watchful eye out to ensure that the peaceful, centuries-old Rappahannock will continue its uninterrupted path to the sea.

Marty Glenn Taylor is a retired educator who lived on Benton Point Road before moving to Richmond three years ago. She is the author of four books: *The River Me*; *From Some Full Heart*; *Place of Rising and Falling Water*; *Benton Point Moments*. The latter is a book of poetry that was illustrated by members of the Tappahannock Artists Guild.





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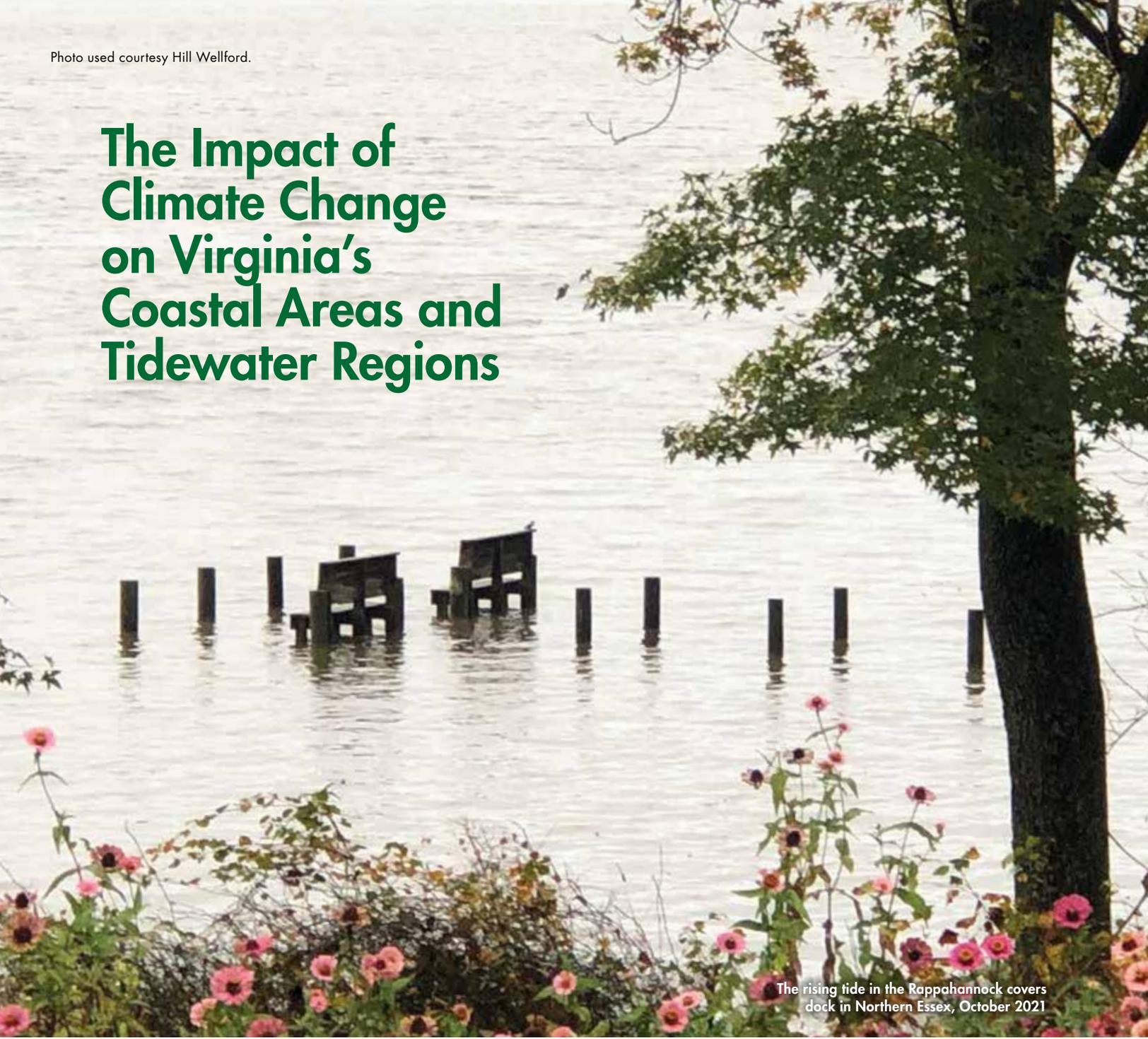
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The Impact of Climate Change on Virginia's Coastal Areas and Tidewater Regions



The rising tide in the Rappahannock covers dock in Northern Essex, October 2021

By Hill Wellford

Any discussion on the impact of climate change requires a threshold understanding of what the term is intended to mean. This article adopts the global definition of the term used by the United Nations:

Climate change refers to a change of climate that is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and that is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods.

This definition makes a clear distinction between climate variations due to natural causes and those caused primarily by human actions (e.g., the burning, processing, and use of carbon fuels that create emissions into our atmosphere of carbon dioxide and methane.)

Historical Discussion of Climate and Weather Conditions

When people gather together for social events or community activities, particularly in rural areas of the United States, it is not unusual for weather conditions to be a topic of discussion. This has always been true in the Chesapeake Bay region of Virginia where agriculture, forestry, fisheries, and tourism are primary contributors to the local economy. Each of these sectors of the economy are greatly influenced by the weather. Hence, weather conditions and weather forecasts are natural topics for discussion. In years past, however, the discussion typically centered on seasonal issues, such as the amount of rainfall the region had experienced, or the lack thereof, or whether a rainstorm might disrupt a community event. Rarely, if ever, was there any discussion about long term weather trends that might affect the entire nation, and certainly not about global weather conditions. The term climate change wasn't part of our regional discussions.

Early Reports of Global Warming

All of that began to change about sixty years ago when environmental scientists published a series of reports asserting that the lower atmosphere of Earth was experiencing an unprecedented rise in temperature due to human activity. The environmental scientists warned that the

burning of fossil fuels (coal, oil, and gas) to produce energy was creating an alarming level of carbon dioxide and methane emissions, which acted like the glass ceiling of a greenhouse to raise the temperature of Earth's lower atmosphere. The scientists explained that these greenhouse gasses collected in the atmosphere and acted like a blanket wrapped around Earth to trap the sun's heat and raise global temperatures. Initially, these reports were greeted

“In 1968... The Stanford report detailed the rising levels of carbon dioxide into Earth's atmosphere due to fossil fuel emissions and warned that the rate of emissions could result in the melting of the Antarctic ice cap, sea level rise, warming of the oceans and Earth's temperature, and produce a significant global climate change.”

with skepticism and not widely distributed beyond the science community. The reports were either disputed as the consequences of natural events or largely ignored by the general public.

In 1965, however, the warnings of the impact of greenhouse gas emissions gained credibility when a landmark climate report was published by then President Lyndon B. Johnson's Science Advisory Committee (SAC). The SAC report, entitled *Restoring the Quality of our Environment*, confirmed the alarming rise of carbon dioxide and methane in Earth's atmosphere and specifically linked it to the burning of carbon fuels. The SAC report noted that as a result of human activity, greenhouse gas emissions were increasing at the rate of six billion tons per year, which, if not reduced, by the year 2000 would cause “significant changes”

in Earth's climate. To the relief of environmental scientists, a national warning about climate change had finally been clearly sounded. Although the conclusions of the SAC report were presented to the US Congress by President Johnson and were publicized and debated, the SAC report was received with skepticism and did not lead to any definitive action.

In 1968, a report issued by the Stanford Research Institute,

ironically commissioned by the American Petroleum Institute, confirmed the findings of the SAC report and was even more specific. The Stanford report detailed the rising levels of carbon dioxide into Earth's atmosphere due to fossil fuel emissions and warned that the rate of emissions could result in the melting of the Antarctic ice cap, sea level rise, warming of the oceans and Earth's temperature, and produce a significant global climate change. The Stanford report was disputed by the oil industry and not publicly distributed. It would not be until 2016, forty-eight years later, when the report was discovered by the Center for International Environmental Law, that the Stanford report received public distribution.

Over the next thirty years (1965–1995), the climate change warnings of scientists became mired in political battles between envi-

environmentalists and the more powerful energy industry, which downplayed the threat and continued to dispute the causes, effects, and responsibility for fossil fuel emissions. As a result, legislative efforts by environmentalists to reduce and regulate the emissions of CO₂ and methane were successfully blocked. Throughout this period, the growing body of scientific data on the effects of greenhouse gas emissions was characterized by the energy industry, and their political advocates, as unreliable and overstated.

Climate Change Becomes a Global Concern

Fortunately, environmental scientists in the United States and abroad pressed on with their work. By the first half of the 1990s, highly credible international organizations of the world's scientists had been formed, which included the World Meteorological Organization and the Intergovernmental Panel on

ongoing climate changes. By 2015, the world's climate scientists had reached a nearly unanimous consensus that global warming was primarily due to greenhouse gas emissions released into Earth's atmosphere by human actions, most notably the burning and use of fossil fuels, and that immediate global action was needed to address this threat.

International awareness of the global warming threat, and concerns over what could be done to address it, set the stage for the negotiations of an international agreement on climate when the member-countries of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change met in Paris in November of 2015. Following two weeks of negotiations, the parties reached a historic agreement in which all signatory nations agreed to take steps to reduce the emissions of greenhouse gasses. The agreement known as the Paris Agreement, sometimes

President Barack Obama was our nation's president when the United States entered into the Paris Agreement. Unfortunately, President Trump, who followed Obama in office, put the Paris Agreement in jeopardy when, on June 1, 2017, he announced his intention to withdraw the United States from the climate accord on the first withdrawal opportunity. Pursuant to the Paris Agreement's provisions, the first opportunity for the United States to withdraw was November 4, 2020. Although President Trump followed through on his withdrawal threat, his actions had minimal effect because Trump lost his campaign for a second presidential term. President Biden was inaugurated on January 20, 2021. One of Biden's first actions as president was to officially recommit the United States to the Paris Agreement, which he did by an executive order dated February 19, 2021.

The United States is one of 197 countries that have signed the Paris Agreement. The only nations who have not done so are Yemen, Eritrea, and Libya. The Paris Agreement is considered to be the turning point in the commitment of the world's nations to address climate change by a global effort to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Virginia's Response to Climate Change

The Commonwealth of Virginia can never be accused of rushing to embrace change. It is not surprising, therefore, that for many years Virginia took a deliberate and methodical approach to the reports of global warming and the related predictions of climate change. Like so many other states, the economic drivers of Virginia's economy and

The goal of the Paris Agreement is to limit global warming to well below 2 degrees Celsius, and preferably no greater than 1.5 degrees, compared to preindustrial levels.

Climate Change. By sharing their research and reports on greenhouse gas emissions and global warming, climate change could no longer be ignored. At the same time, measurement techniques were improving and monitoring networks were established. The networks included the Global Ocean Observing System, the Integrated Carbon Observation System, and NASA's Earth Observation System. The creation of these networks increased the international scientific community's ability to monitor and record

referenced as the Paris Climate Accord, was adopted on December 12, 2015, and became effective on November 4, 2016. The goal of the Paris Agreement is to limit global warming to well below 2 degrees Celsius, and preferably no greater than 1.5 degrees, compared to preindustrial levels. To realize the goal, the member-nations pledged to implement measures to stop the rise of and reduce greenhouse gas emissions as soon as possible with the objective of achieving a climate-neutral world by midcentury.

the source of jobs for many Virginia voters has traditionally included energy companies and industrial operations that burned fossil fuels. To restructure the sources of energy from fossil fuels to other sources that produce significantly fewer greenhouse gas emissions is a daunting and costly task that will take years to accomplish. While this is undeniable, it is equally clear that Virginia can no longer ignore its need to dramatically reduce its carbon fuel emissions.

In 2007, Virginia appeared to wake up to the reality that global warming posed such a serious threat to Virginia, particularly to its low-lying coastal areas and the tidewater regions of the Chesapeake Bay, that significant action was required to start Virginia on a cleaner energy path. In September of 2007, during Governor Timothy Kaine's administration, the Virginia Energy Plan was adopted, which set a goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 30 percent by the year 2025. Just three months later, in December 2007, Governor Kaine signed an executive order establishing the Governor's Commission on Climate Change. The Commission was charged with the responsibility of developing a Climate Action Plan to assess potential impacts of climate change on the people of the Commonwealth, the state's natural resources, public health facilities, and the industries of agriculture, forestry, tourism, and insurance. The Plan was also charged with identifying specific strategies to prepare for, avoid, and mitigate the projected impacts of climate change.

Following Kaine's term as governor, Virginia's Climate Action Plan was amended and supplemented during the next two gubernatorial administrations

with policies and goals intended to encourage the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, and to improve the state's readiness to respond and adapt to climate change conditions. However, no specific mandates or

“The Virginia Clean Economy Act has been touted by *The Washington Post* as the “most forward-looking” state energy plan in the South. Whether Virginia will continue on the path to clean energy set by the VCEA, however, is unclear.”

timetables for the reduction of fossil fuel emissions were imposed on the companies that were the primary sources of the emissions. That changed in 2020, when Virginia's General Assembly, in which Democrats held the majority seats in both legislative bodies, passed the Virginia Clean Economy Act, and presented it to Governor Ralph Northam for signature.

The Virginia Clean Economy Act (VCEA), which Governor Northam signed on April 11, 2020, is landmark legislation that puts Virginia on an ambitious path to reduce the state's carbon emissions to zero by the year 2050. It does this through mandatory measures that phase out the burning of fossil fuels as a source of electricity and shift the production to clean energy sources, such as offshore wind energy and solar. The VCEA mandates that the state's largest power companies, Dominion Electric and America Electric Power, achieve a complete (100 percent) phase-out of fossil fuel emissions by 2045 and 2050, respectively. To achieve this, Dominion Power and American Electric are required to construct or acquire a generating capacity located in the Commonwealth that uses clean energy renewables. The VCEA also

establishes energy efficiency standards and requires Virginia's Air Pollution Control Board to adopt regulations to ensure that, during the phase-out period, greenhouse gas emissions from electricity generating units in

the Commonwealth are materially reduced. Among its other features are incentives for a broad expansion of distributed electricity generated throughout Virginia using small-scale solar production.

Complementing the VCEA is a second clean energy program, the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI), which Virginia entered into during Governor Northam's administration. The RGGI is a multistate program in which Virginia and ten other states in the Mid-Atlantic and Northeast participate. The RGGI acts to reduce the amount of carbon emissions power companies release by requiring the companies to buy allowances based on each ton of carbon dioxide they emit. The RGGI creates an incentive for the companies to reduce emissions, because a reduction in emissions means an equivalent reduction in the required purchases of allowances. The prices of allowances are determined by an auction, which, in 2021, netted Virginia \$227.6 million that Virginia is authorized to use for flood protection and to help low-income households be more energy efficient.

The Virginia Clean Economy Act has been touted by *The Washington Post* as the “most forward-looking” state energy plan in the South.

Whether Virginia will continue on the path to clean energy set by the VCEA, however, is unclear. When Governor Northam's term as governor ended, he was replaced by Glenn Youngkin, a Republican, whose four-year term began on January 15, 2022. As a candidate for governor, Youngkin had been openly critical of the VCEA and the RGGI. Governor Youngkin has characterized the RGGI as an unfair "carbon tax" on Virginia citizens and businesses that "risks contributing to the increased cost of electricity." He has asked Virginia's new attorney general, Jason Miyares, whether he can use his executive authority to terminate Virginia's participation in the RGGI. However, Governor Youngkin's authority to take such action is questionable. This precise question was answered in the negative by Virginia's former Attorney General, Mark Herring,

in an Official Advisory Opinion that Herring issued on January 11, 2022, just four days before the end of Herring's term as attorney general and the date Youngkin's term as governor began. Herring's opinion recites the fact that the RGGI is a carbon dioxide "cap and trade program to reduce carbon dioxide emissions" that was entered into by Virginia pursuant to the express authority given it under the Clean Energy and Community Flood Preparations Act, which was passed by Virginia's legislature and became law in 2020. After reciting sections of Virginia's Constitution that limit the governor's executive authority, Herring's Advisory Opinion states: *"In my opinion, the Governor may not repeal or eliminate, through an executive order or other action, the enacted statutes and regulations pertaining to the Commonwealth's participation*

in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative and/or a market-based trading program like the Regional Greenhouse Gas initiative, or do away with the requirement that electricity producers hold carbon dioxide allowances that equal the amount of their carbon dioxide emissions."

It is clear that politics and the political strength of the electric power industry in Virginia may, in the days ahead, continue to greatly influence Virginia's commitment to the phase-out of greenhouse gas emissions contemplated by Virginia's Clean Economy Act. An even greater influence, however, which may compel adherence to the VCEA phase-out path, could be how rapidly the disruptive impact of climate change will be felt by the voters of Virginia. In many regions of Virginia, the impact of climate change is already a *present* concern, as communities

Four Takeaways From the NOAA "2022 Sea Level Rise Technical Report"

1

The Next 30 Years of Sea Level Rise

Sea level along the U.S. coastline is projected to rise, on average, 10 - 12 inches (0.25 - 0.30 meters) in the next 30 years (2020 - 2050), which will be as much as the rise measured over the last 100 years (1920 - 2020). Sea level rise will vary regionally along U.S. coasts because of changes in both land and ocean height.

2

More Damaging Flooding Projected

Sea level rise will create a profound shift in coastal flooding over the next 30 years by causing tide and storm surge heights to increase and reach further inland. By 2050, "moderate" (typically damaging) flooding is expected to occur, on average, more than 10 times as often as it does today, and can be intensified by local factors.

3

Emissions Matter

Current and future emissions matter. About 2 feet (0.6 meters) of sea level rise along the U.S. coastline is increasingly likely between 2020 and 2100 because of emissions to date. Failing to curb future emissions could cause an additional 1.5 - 5 feet (0.5 - 1.5 meters) of rise for a total of 3.5 - 7 feet (1.1 - 2.1 meters) by the end of this century.

4

Continual Tracking

Continuously tracking how and why sea level is changing is an important part of informing plans for adaptation. Our ability to monitor and understand the individual factors that contribute to sea level rise allows us to track sea level changes in a way that has never before been possible (e.g., using satellites to track global ocean levels and ice sheet thickness). Ongoing and expanded monitoring will be critical as sea levels continue to rise.



Tidal waters from Mount Landing Creek swamp the south-bound lane of Highway 17, May 2022.

struggle to deal with violent storms, high winds, flooding, and significant swings in temperature.

The impact of climate change is particularly acute in Virginia's coastal areas and the low-lying tidewater regions of the Chesapeake Bay where sea-level rise, land subsidence, and saltwater intrusion have already become a significant concern.

A report issued in June 2021, by the Virginia Academy of Science, Engineering and Medicine (VASEM) entitled *The Impact of Climate Change on Virginia's Coastal Areas*, which was commissioned by Virginia's General Assembly in 2020, underscores the severity of the threat Virginia is facing. This report should be required reading for all elected members of state government and all agency heads, and should be widely distributed to the local governing bodies of the counties most affected. The report describes the impact of climate change in clear and unambiguous terms:

The most obvious immediate consequence of climate change for coastal Virginians is sea-level rise, fueled by melting ice sheets and glaciers, and by thermal expansion of water, compounded in Virginia by land subsidence and the slowing of the Gulf Stream. The rate of relative sea-level rise in coastal Virginia, which combines sea-level rise and land subsidence, is among the highest in the United States.

The additional energy trapped by greenhouse gasses manifests itself in more frequent and intense weather events characterized by extreme rainfall and extreme winds. Between 1980 and 2020, Virginia was affected by 17 tropical cyclones, 30 severe storms, and 15 winter storms that each caused more than a billion dollars in damage across the United States.

The third consequence of a warmer atmosphere is increased variability in seasonal temperatures. Both maximum and minimum winter temperatures, especially in coastal regions, were higher in the period between 1986 and 2015 compared to a baseline average established between 1895 and 2000. This increased variability can have important consequences for agriculture and growing seasons, civil infrastructure lifespans, and human health, particularly for physically vulnerable populations and those who work in outside occupations such as landscaping and construction.

Summary and Conclusion

There can no longer be any excuse for ignoring the existence of climate change or for delaying the actions necessary to mitigate its impact. The catastrophic effects of failing to aggressively phase out greenhouse gas emissions are now clearly understood and articulated in the climate plans of all the leading nations of the world. The United States has set a national goal to achieve 100 percent carbon pollution-free electricity by 2035. Although significant progress has been made by the United States, and by Virginia, to shift from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources to generate electricity, as of 2021, 79 percent of our nation's energy consumption was still from fossil fuels. And on a global basis, energy-related carbon dioxide emissions were actually higher in 2021 than they were in 2020, with the United States ranked second only to China as the highest world contributor to global greenhouse gas emissions.

It is essential that the United States take a leadership role in the battle to combat global warming. That cannot be achieved unless there is a coordinated national commitment by the states of our nation to rapidly phase out greenhouse gas emissions. Virginia took a major step in this direction in 2020 when it enacted the Virginia Clean Energy Act, but at this point it is unclear whether the Commonwealth's General Assembly has the political resolve to stay the course on the clean energy path it adopted.

All Virginians need to understand the urgency to address the causes and impact of climate change. It is not a future event with consequences that will only be felt by future generations. There are present-day consequences, which include sea-level rise, severe storms, high winds, flooding, inundation of septic systems, land subsidence, and wide variations in seasonal temperatures. These are conditions that directly impact the lives, health,

and economic welfare of the families who live and work in Virginia's coastal and tidewater regions.

As detailed in the VASEM's report, the current economic impact, *already experienced* by the heavily populated localities in the coastal regions, such as Virginia Beach, Norfolk, and Hampton, has been enormous. These localities have had to spend millions of dollars on costly infrastructure projects to try to address the effects of sea-level rise and recurrent flooding. In Virginia's rural, less populated, coastal and tidewater regions, such as the Eastern Shore, the Northern Neck, and the Middle Peninsula, the present-day impact is no less acute, but these localities have less ability to adapt or to fund costly mitigation projects.

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Tundra Swans



Black Duck



Evening Grosbeak



Red-wing Blackbird



Eastern Meadowlark



Scarlet Tanager



Black-bellied Whistling Duck



Mississippi Kite

What Climate Change Means for Migratory Birds in the Northern Neck and Middle Peninsula

By Hill Wellford, Bill Portlock, Maeve and Joey Coker, and Jeffrey Wright

In 2021, a landmark report describing the impact of climate change on Virginia’s coastal regions was published by the Virginia Academy of Science, Engineering, and Medicine (VASEM). The VASEM report, which was commissioned by Virginia’s General Assembly, stated that climate change is already having a costly and disruptive effect on localities in the state’s coastal and low-lying tidewater areas, and warned that its impact would likely accelerate as global warming increased.

The report emphasized that climate change is the result of global warming due primarily to “human activities, such as burning fossil fuels and deforestation”, the consequences of which are: rising sea levels, more intense and frequent storms, higher winds, warmer and more variable temperatures, recurrent flooding, saltwater intrusion into drinking water, land subsidence, inundation of septic systems, and threats to public health.

The publication of the VASEM report sent shock waves through much of Virginia. It was a disturbing revelation to many who until then had questioned whether global warming was even a real concern or just scientific theory. Following the release of the VASEM report, however, many news articles were written that discussed its findings. Invariably, the focus of the articles dealt with the impact of climate change on the citizens of the localities where sea-level rise posed the greatest threat. An illustrative article, published by the Virginia Mercury in March 2021, discussed the tension created when resiliency measures proposed by localities to deal with rising sea level conflicted with the Chesapeake Bay Act. That article pointed out that in some low-lying tidewater counties sea level has already risen to the point where the 100-foot shoreline buffer of the Bay Act, known as the Resource Protection Area, is encroaching into the Resource Management area where homes have been built and septic systems already

exist. The economic consequences to homeowners and to the counties in these low-lying tidewater areas are just beginning to be felt. It is, of course, understandable that “human impact” is the primary subject of the vast majority of articles and reports on climate change.

We need to be mindful, however, that climate change will significantly impact *all species of life* in the Earth’s ecosystems, not just human life. The scope of this article, however, is very limited. Here, we address the climate change impact on migratory birds that annually visit Virginia’s Northern Neck and Middle Peninsula.

This is not a scientific article. It consists of two parts. The first part, which is a necessary prelude to the second part, draws on published articles describing the extraordinary journey of migratory birds that migrate to our region of Virginia to winter or breed each year. In the first part, we comment on the climate change impact to habitat and food sources on the migration routes that are so critical to the survival of migrating birds. The second part of this article centers on the *field observations* of local naturalists who have contributed to the content of this article. Their observations address habitat loss, changes in seasonal arrival and departure times, range dispersal, variation in species population, and sightings of birds that are not usually seen in the Northern Neck and Middle Peninsula.

on a non-stop flight to their arctic breeding grounds. The obstacles Red Knots have to overcome on their migration journey are particularly severe, but not unlike the obstacles other migratory birds who spend time in Virginia must face on their migration routes. The length of the migration routes obviously make the travel more dangerous, but the risks of storms, heavy winds, and the destruction of stop-over habitats is something all migrating birds must endure.

Since 2020, Tidewater Virginia has been hit with a large number of tropical storms, severe thunderstorms, and high winds that directly impact migratory bird habitat. These storms often arise with little warning and may hit during the peak of the seasonal migration periods. An example is the storm that produced heavy rain, wind damage and tornado warnings in Essex and Richmond County in the last week of March 2022. The frequency with which violent storms are hitting our region is not lost on the residents of our tidewater area. Thunderstorms, high winds, extreme tides and wide variations in temperature have been weekly occurrences throughout the spring of 2022. Volatile weather conditions obviously impact the area residents who live in this region, but the impact can be much greater on migratory birds.

For many years, the global population of birds has been declining. The Cornell Lab of Ornithology has estimated that in just the last 50 years the loss is approximately 2.9 billion birds. Habitat loss and habitat degradation, primarily due to human activity, are cited as the largest causes of bird decline. The Cornell Lab has estimated that as many as one billion birds have been lost to deforestation and another 720 million lost to destruction of grasslands.

In recent years, it has become more apparent that *climate change due to global warming* is directly linked to the large decline in migratory birds. Audubon's 2019 Climate Report warns that two-thirds of North America's birds could be at risk of extinction if we do not cut carbon emission to a net-zero by 2050. Audubon classifies 63 species as "high vulnerability" and 68 more as "moderate vulnerability." Many of the species on both lists are regular migrants to our tidewater region. The following are just a few of the Virginia migrants listed as highly vulnerable: Scarlet Tanager, Eastern Towhee, White-throated Sparrow, Field Sparrow, Wood Thrush, Hermit Thrush, Brown Thrasher, Red-headed Woodpecker, Evening Grosbeak, Bobolink, Dark-eyed Junco, Winter Wren, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Yellow-throated Warbler, Pine Warbler, and Ruby-crowned Kinglet. The "moderate" vulnerability category includes most of the waterfowl that migrate to our tidewater marshes, such as the Black Duck, Mallard,

Gadwall, Ring-necked Duck, Wigeon, and Canada Goose, as well as a variety of shore birds, and a number of other migratory birds, primarily insect eaters, that are usually observed in the fields and forests.

To assess the full impact of climate change on migrating birds, we need to understand that birds have timed their migration in the spring to be in sync with plant growth and insect hatches that serve as their requisite food sources. Native plants produce seeds that birds eat and blossoms that attract insects. Insects are a critical source of food, both for adult birds and the babies they raise. Warmer temperatures due to climate change can cause plants to jump-start their spring growth and cause early hatches of insects. This results in what ornithologists call "early spring" which can produce a seasonal mismatch for migrating birds. If they arrive at their breeding destinations after the peak insect hatch, it puts stress on the birds' ability to nest and raise healthy offspring. Early springs, or "false springs", as they are sometimes called, when followed by sudden cold snaps and freezing conditions can be disastrous for migrating birds.

Many migratory birds, such as Virginia Rails, Soras, Marsh Wrens, Bitterns, and Red-wing Blackbirds, nest in Virginia's tidal marshes and wetland areas where they feed on the marsh plant seeds, tubers, and crustaceans that can be found there. For these birds, sea level rise, storm surge, and land subsidence threaten to substantially alter or even destroy the habitat they depend upon. The tidal marshes in the Northern Neck and Middle Peninsula are already showing the effects of climate change as the edges of the marshes are receding and marsh ponds have begun to form.

Another consequence of climate change, which is likely to become more evident in the near future, is that some species of birds appear to be adjusting their migratory range by expanding the northern edges of their migratory routes. This makes sense because birds are opportunistic creatures. They will ultimately relocate to areas where the habitat and food source are more accommodating. Two key features of a bird's habitat are plants and insects. There is evidence that both plants and insects have begun to shift their presence in a northerly direction. We can expect birds to follow.

Field Observations

The second part of this article describes the field observations of local naturalists who, for the past twenty-four months, have spent many hours observing, recording, and photographing migratory birds in the Northern Neck and Middle Peninsula. The birds selected for discussion include a few migratory species rarely seen in our region of tidewater Virginia, and certain other species regularly observed that are representative of the sharp decline in our region's migratory birds.

Tundra Swans



Tundra Swans. Photo by Hill Wellford.

Tundra Swans, or “Whistling Swans” as they are sometimes called, are among the most beautiful and graceful migratory birds that winter in Virginia. Snowy-white in color and with a wingspan of up to 80 inches, Tundra Swans seem to fly almost effortlessly, even though they typically weigh between 15 to 20 pounds. They have a black bill, black feet, and a distinguishing yellow mark below the inside corner of the eye. A young Tundra Swan that has grown almost to the size of the adult has a gray head and neck, whereas the head and neck of the adult is white. The global population of Tundra Swans is estimated to be 300,000, with roughly 200,000 migrating to the East Coast and West Coast of United States each year. The other 100,000 migrate to Europe and Asia and are called Eurasian Swan. Our East Coast Tundra Swan number approximately 110,000, and during their winter migration settle in the coastal regions of Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina.

The Tundra Swans observed in the Northern Neck and Middle Peninsula follow a migration route of over 3000 miles from their breeding grounds in Northern Alaska or Canada to the Rappahannock or its tributaries. They feed on underwater flora, eel grass, widgeon grass, tubers, roots of marsh plants, and shellfish. In recent years, they have also been observed feeding on the shoots of winter wheat planted in agricultural fields. For several years prior to 2020, the number of Tundra that wintered between Tappahannock and Port Royal was estimated to be approximately 500 birds. In 2021-2022, the highest number observed was 248. In 2022, another change observed was that the swans departed Virginia for their migration north at the end of February, approximately two weeks earlier than usual.

Audubon has developed a climate modeling system that projects how global warming will impart “climate suitability” for bird species in 30-year intervals, 2020, 2050, and 2080. Audubon's model projects a 61 percent loss of the Tundra Swans' current winter range by 2080. The arctic summer range is also projected to contract, which raises questions of how Tundra Swans will be able to adapt to changing climate conditions that will invariably affect the habitat they depend upon throughout their migration range. At this point, it is not clear whether the decline in the number of Tundra observed on the Rappahannock and their early migration north from our region in 2022 were related to climate change.

Black Duck

The population of the American Black Duck, once considered to be one of Eastern North America's most abundant dabbling ducks, is in trouble. A report by the North America Breeding Bird Survey in 2015 showed a



Black Duck. Photo by Hill Wellford.

84 percent decline in Black Ducks between 1966 to 2014. At one time, over 200,000 Black Ducks wintered in the Chesapeake region. Today that number is estimated to be less than 50,000, far short of the 100,000-goal set for the Chesapeake Bay watershed in the North American Waterfowl Management Plan. The Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (VDWR) classifies the Black Duck as a “Species of Greatest Conservation Need.” The Black Duck is a hearty species that has been referred to by biologists as the “gold standard” of eastern waterfowl. It is a rugged duck, admired and respected by long-time duck hunters, that thrives on the edges of tidal rivers, and in marshes and forested swamps, not in man-made ponds. Its diet includes the seeds of wetland plants, roots, berries and crustaceans. The feathers on the Black Duck’s body are dark or dusky brown, with a violet-blue (almost purple) wing patch and white feathers under the wing. The male’s bill is a mustard color whereas the female’s bill is a darker olive shade.

Based on the banding data collected by waterfowl biologists, the vast majority of the Black Ducks that winter in the Chesapeake Bay region migrate from Canada over routes approximating 1000 miles. Black Ducks generally return to the rivers and marshes where they fed and roosted in the previous year. In February 2014, a Black Duck captured, banded, and released by VDWR in the Beverley Marsh of the Rappahannock was a female that had been banded at the end of the prior hunting season in southwest Quebec, Canada. In March 2017, another post-season banding effort by VDWR in the Beverley marsh resulted in 31 Black Ducks being captured, banded and released. Included in the ducks captured in this banding exercise was a female Black Duck that had originally been banded on August 23, 2014, in La Croche, Quebec. Each year, a small percentage of Black Ducks stay in Virginia to breed and raise their young. In 2020, the number of pairs observed to be nesting in our coastal region was 1,545, but in 2021, the number of nesting pairs observed was only 152.

The mid-Atlantic region, which includes the Chesapeake Bay watershed, supports the largest concentration of Eastern North America’s wintering Black Duck population. Waterfowl biologists have warned that preservation of the habitat in the Chesapeake Bay watershed is critical to the long-term sustainability of the Black Duck species. Regrettably, the impact of climate change on Virginia’s tidewater areas is likely to accelerate the destruction of the marshes and wetlands that until now have helped to sustain Black Ducks.

Evening Grosbeak

The Evening Grosbeak is a nomadic irruptive migrant that is rarely seen in Virginia. Iruptive species are birds that usually migrate for reasons of food supply, rather than a hormonal change. Often, the migration is a short distance, but at times, for reasons unknown, they may migrate south in large numbers. Their destination, time of migration, and length of stay is unpredictable. Classic irruptive species include Evening Grosbeaks, Snowy Owls, Red-breasted Nuthatches, Winter Finches, and others. Many irruptive species, including Evening Grosbeaks, breed during the summer months in the northern boreal forests of Canada and Alaska where there are deciduous trees and conifers. When the winter weather becomes too frigid in their northern habitat, they migrate long distances to find food in states with more temperate climates where they may be seen at feeder stations. In the 1970s, 80s, and 90s, irruptive migrations of Evening Grosbeaks to Virginia were documented. Then they ceased appearing, only to begin reappearing in Virginia and other southeastern states twenty years later.

The species has been monitored nationally by individuals involved in Project FeederWatch, a citizen-science project, organized by Cornell University to collect data in 1987. Data collected between 1998 and 2006 revealed



Evening Grosbeak.
Photo by Hill Wellford.

a 50% decline in Evening Grosbeaks’ population. Furthermore, at home-feeder stations, the mean flock size of Evening Grosbeaks declined by 27%. Overall, research has documented a population decline of 92% since 1970, the steepest decline of all land birds in the

continental United States and Canada. Despite documentation, the reasons for the population decline in unclear. Habitat loss and forest composition change are suspect, which include, among other things, tar sands exploitation resulting in huge loss of suitable breeding areas.

On December 5, 2020, a flock of Evening Grosbeaks arrived at a farm in Chance, Virginia and remained there, eating sunflowers at feeders, until May 8, 2021. Flock numbers reached a high count of 42 birds on January 26, 2021, but averaged 20-30 birds on any given day. To stay and feed at the same location for a 5-month period is unusual behavior, even for Evening Grosbeaks.

Red-winged Blackbird

The Red-wing Blackbird is one of North America's most well-known birds. The red-patch on the wings of the male species, in contrast to its black feathers, leaves no doubt as to its identity. It is a protected species under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, but may be "taken" legally under an existing Depredation Order if they are the source of significant agricultural damage. Although still considered to be an abundant species, there is no question that its population is in steep decline. The North American Breeding Bird Survey estimated a 28% cumulative decline between 1966 and 2019, and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology has placed the loss at 50% since 1972. Today the population is estimated to be between 150 to 180 million birds, but the numbers are still dropping. Habitat loss (marshes, wetlands, and grasslands), due to climate changes, is thought to be the primary cause. The American Bird Conservancy cites early springs causing phenology disruption for plants and pollinators, and sea-level rise which threatens to inundate marshes as significant factors in the decline.

The saltwater and freshwater marshes along the Rappahannock support a variety of plants such as cordgrass, cattails, wild rice, and switchgrass, which for many years have provided classic nesting and roosting habitat for Red-wing Blackbirds. However, many of the marshes in the upper and lower stretches of the Rappahannock are now beginning to show the effects of climate change. Storm surges and sea-level rise have eroded the outer edges of the marshes, and in their interior land has subsided resulting in tidal ponds that are too wet to support the growth of the tall marsh grasses used by Red-wing Blackbirds and other marsh birds to support their nests. The destructive effects of climate change on

Red-wing Blackbird. Photo by Bill Portlock.



the marsh habitat of Red-wing Blackbirds is projected to significantly increase as global warming accelerates.

Although sometimes considered pests by farmers because they eat grain, Red-wing Blackbirds help farmers because they play an important role in controlling insects that threaten crop yields, such as corn borers. They not only consume a wide range of insects, but also feed them to their young during the spring and summer nesting seasons. Global warming is projected to increase insect populations, while substantially decreasing the population of many birds, such as Red-wing Blackbirds, that feed upon them. We know from research reports of ornithologists that the population of Red-wing Blackbirds has declined by over 90 million in the last 50 years. This should be a wake-up call as to the ecological importance of bird species in our environment.

Eastern Meadowlark

In recent years, local bird counts have rarely included sightings of the Eastern Meadowlark. From 1966 to 2015, populations fell 3% a year with an overall decline of 89%, according to the North American Breeding Bird Survey. Ornithologists agree that the Meadowlark's status of "steep decline" is due to an increasing loss of the *essential grassland habitat* it needs for sustainability. More than 95% of the Meadowlark's distribution is on private lands, according to the State of Birds 2022 Report, where grassland acreage has been lost due to development or converted cropland, or for some other use. Unless owners of farms, pastures, and meadows dedicate areas of their properties for grassland habitat, the decline will continue.

Eastern Meadowlarks are ground-nesting birds. In this respect, they are similar to Bobwhite Quail and Woodcock. The nest Meadowlarks build consists of woven grasses placed in shallow depressions of grasslands where the grasses are high enough to conceal the nest. The grasslands host invertebrates, including ants, grasshoppers, grubs, caterpillars, and other insects that serve as a food source for adult Meadowlarks and their chicks.

The Eastern Meadowlark is most often observed in hayfields, pastures and agricultural fields. Fallow fields provide ideal habitat for the Meadowlark. About six acres are needed to establish the Meadowlark's territory. Harvesting hayfields, overgrazing, use of certain pesticides and mowing grasslands can be devastating for Meadowlarks and their young, if done during the nesting season. Climate change significantly adds to the challenges Meadowlarks face. Spring heat waves may endanger young birds in the nest. Early springs and wide variations in temperature may alter the seasonal cycle of insects and plant life that Meadowlarks are dependent upon. As global warming increases, many migratory birds adjust their range to move northward. Ornithologists are concerned, however, that grassland species, such as the Eastern Meadowlark, may be unable to do this because the grasslands that sustain them are not as plentiful in the northern end of their current range. Audubon's climate modeling projections forecast that 37% of the Meadowlark's southern range will be lost as a result of global warming.

Eastern Meadowlark. Photo by Tom Crockett.



Scarlet Tanager



Scarlet Tanager. Photo by Bill Portlock.

The Scarlet Tanager is a memorable bird by any standard. It travels mostly at night over a migration route of 5000 miles or more from South America to the Rappahannock River Valley. In South America, it can be found in forests of deciduous trees and conifers. In Virginia, we may see it in the spring as it darts between the tops of a variety of our tall leafy trees, including ash, oak, hickory, beech, gum and pines. An insectivore, it is sometime called a protector of hardwoods because its diet includes a wide range of insects that damage hardwoods, such as wood borers, gypsy moths, bark beetles, and tent caterpillars. The male Scarlet Tanager is stunningly beautiful, with black wings, tail and eyes that contrast with its dark red feathers. It is an interior forest species. Mature and old growth forests are its preferred habitat. In fragmented forests, cowbirds are a threat to Scarlet Tanagers because they lay eggs in the Tanagers' nests which has resulted in Tanagers raising aggressive cowbird chicks that out-compete baby Tanagers for food.

The North American Breeding Bird Survey reflects a 14% decline in the Scarlet Tanager's population over the last 50 years. In its projections for 2050, Audubon's 2019 Climate Report lists the Scarlet Tanager among the species that are highly vulnerable to the global warming consequences of climate change. The Tanager's habitat, in both summer and winter, and at stopovers on its long migration route, are areas of vulnerability. As with other long-distance migratory birds, early (false) springs and high temperatures caused by global warming may cause

the Scarlet Tanager's arrival at its migration destination to be out of sync with the presence of the insect food source the Tanager requires for itself and for the chicks it raises. More frequent tropical storms, heavy winds, rains and flooding are all consequences of climate change that create obstacles for the Scarlet Tanager during its long migration journey.

Black-bellied Whistling Duck

The Black-bellied Whistling Duck is a large, long-necked duck known for its pink legs and bill, coupled with a black belly, a chestnut breast and neck, and bold white wing stripes. They frequent shallow freshwater lakes, ponds and marshes where they feed on seeds of grasses, smartweed, and other wetland plants. Historically, their range concentrated in northern South America and north through Mexico to the edge of southeastern Texas. In the 1990s through 2007, evidence began to emerge suggesting a northerly expansion of the Black-bellied Whistling Duck's range into the southeastern United States. Sporadic sightings were recorded in Florida, Georgia and South Carolina, along with a few confirmed reports of breeding. As the sightings increased, a coordinated 6-state banding project was adopted in 2014 by state biologists in Texas, Louisiana, Florida, Mississippi, Georgia, and South Carolina to try to confirm the range expansion of the Black-bellied Whistling Duck. The banding project resulted in 41 band recoveries documenting the presence of the species in the 6-state area, and in Virginia.



Black-bellied Whistling Duck. Photo by Hill Wellford.

Sightings in Virginia include a 2016 sighting in Virginia Beach, a 2019 sighting in Abington, and a 2021 sighting in Essex County, Virginia. The Essex County sighting was made of 4 Black-bellied Whistling Ducks swimming in a pond a few miles north of Tappahannock. This sighting was made on June 3, 2021, by three area residents and was photographed and subsequently documented in an eBird report. The Essex sighting was one of 13 sightings of Black-bellied Whistling Ducks in Virginia in 2021. So far in 2022, a flock has been reported in Gloucester County, and nationwide the species has been reported dozens of times from areas as far as Arkansas to Minnesota and east all the way to Maine and Nova Scotia.

Black-bellied Whistling Ducks are tree-nesting ducks. They nest in cavities where you might expect to find a Wood Duck, or even in Wood Duck nest boxes if the opening is large enough to accommodate them. With the expansion of their range, which ornithologists at Audubon have speculated is linked to climate change, it is unclear the potential impact Black-bellied Whistling Ducks will have on Wood Duck populations.

Mississippi Kite



Mississippi Kite, Photo by Rob Bielawski

Mississippi Kites are slender raptors, with narrow and pointed wings. Adults are overall gray with contrasting paler heads and breasts and more charcoal-colored wings, with a tail and wingtips almost black. Juveniles are mottled brown with banded tails and streaky breasts. Traditionally, their historical breeding range included

the Gulf Coast states, northeast into South Carolina and in the west, north Texas into Kansas and along the Mississippi River into Illinois. The range distribution of Mississippi Kites has been steadily increasing since the late 1980s. At that time, only 8 records existed for the entire state of Virginia, and those records were only flyovers between May and June. When the Virginia Gold Book was published in 2007, Mississippi Kites had not been confirmed breeding north of Virginia. In the last 15 years, the species has abruptly shifted its breeding distribution. There are now confirmed breeding reports in Ohio, Wisconsin, several New England states, and even Winnipeg, Canada.

In Virginia alone, breeding has been confirmed in 15 counties, mostly along the I-95 corridor and east, according to the 2nd Virginia Breeding Bird Atlas. On the Middle Peninsula, there are confirmed nesting reports in Gloucester County. The new breeding records in the Mississippi River Valley are thought to be a recolonization of the species' historic range, but records along the east coast may be due to climate changes that are producing more favorable breeding conditions that resemble southern climates.

Black-necked Stilt



Black-necked Stilt. Photo by Bill Portlock.

One of the most easily identifiable shorebirds, Black-necked Stilts are relatively large birds with bright red legs, a thin black bill, black back, and white throat and belly. The Black-necked Stilt is frequently seen in Atlantic coastal areas, including Virginia, but is

an infrequent visitor to the inland tidal areas of the Rappahannock. An increase in coastal storms, causing extended periods of onshore wind events and high tide flooding of the coastal marshes, has blown these shore birds inland where they have been observed feeding in wetland areas of our region. As volatile weather conditions accelerate, a predicted consequence of climate change, observations of migratory birds that are rare visitors to the Northern Neck and Middle Peninsula are almost certain to increase. The Black-necked Stilt has in years past been observed in Northumberland County, and in 2021 was observed in Essex County. This year, it has been sighted in Gloucester County. The Essex County observation was photographed and recorded on April 21, 2021, as the Black-necked Stilt foraged for food in a wetland section of an agricultural field.

Anhinga

Anhingas are large waterbirds characteristically known for their behavior of sunning themselves with wings outstretched. With long, slender necks and long tails, males are almost completely black, and females and immatures are black-bodied with tan necks and heads. Because of their long necks, they are sometimes referred to as the “snakebird.” They occur in aquatic habitats in areas with trees and shrubs bordering the edges of water. Anhingas feed primarily on fish. Historically, this species ranged from northern South America, north into coastal Mexico, and within the United States north through Texas into Arkansas and Louisiana. They are year-round residents along the Gulf Coast and Florida, and summer residents along the coast into South Carolina. Recently, however, their range is expanding northward rapidly. Before the late 1800s, this species did not occur in North Carolina, but by the 1950s were established breeders in that state. Before 2007, Anhingas were rarely observed in Virginia. By 2010, the sightings in Virginia had significantly increased and today breeding has been confirmed in 8 counties, based on surveys by the Center for Conservation Biology. The northernmost record of the species breeding in the United States has been confirmed this year, thanks to the efforts of David Chewning, a Caroline County resident. The presence of Anhingas nesting in Caroline County was photographed and recorded in the spring of 2022. Anhingas have been sighted further north of Virginia, but with no confirmation of breeding.

Audubon's Climate Model shows a “dramatic” northward shift in the Anhinga's summer range. Anhingas

are more dependent on ambient temperature to regulate their body temperatures because they have low metabolic rates. Warmer temperatures due to climate change appear to be enabling Anhingas to expand their breeding range in a northerly direction.



Anhinga. Photo by Bill Portlock.

Osprey

Osprey numbers were severely depleted before the 1972 U.S. ban on organochlorine pesticides, in particular DDT. Along Virginia's Coastal Plain, Ospreys have rebounded. As natural nesting sites have diminished due to shoreline development, man-made nesting platforms and other structures have helped the population.

Going forward, the impact of climate change, particularly temperature increases and the adequacy of fish stock, are a growing concern. Ospreys are unable to dive more than three feet below the water's surface, thus they gravitate toward shallow fishing grounds in our river and bays. They need accessible surface fish within a few miles of their nests. Live freshwater and saltwater fish are their primary diet. Osprey must be able to see fish below the surface in order to catch them. Abundant fish species in clean water, 6 to 13 inches long and weighing less than two-thirds of a pound, is key. Nutritionally, the menhaden, often called the most important fish in the sea, is an ideal food source for Osprey. Today, in Virginia, fewer menhaden and more Blue Catfish have changed the diet of Osprey. It is not known how this affects the nest mortality of young Osprey.

Mortality of Osprey during its long migration route between South America and Virginia is also a growing

concern because of the challenges posed by climate change. It has been estimated that an Osprey may log more than 150,000 migration miles during its lifetime traveling to and from Virginia. Temperature rise and increased severity of spring storms are projected to adversely impact Ospreys not only during their migration journey, but also during the nesting period. The Osprey's nest is typically a shallow structure, not anchored to a platform, with direct exposure to the sun, rain, and high winds. It can be a death sentence for young Osprey if a severe storm destroys the nest in the two-month period before the Osprey chicks are able to fly. Osprey, like all raptors in a water environment, build their nests from assorted sticks and branches and other materials they gather from the shore. Discarded bailing twines and plastic fishing lines attached to nesting materials have been found to entangle and kill young Osprey. While the adult Ospreys are fierce protectors of their young, predators such as Great Horned Owls, Crows and Eagles pose another threat to young Osprey in the nest. Even though they are able to fly after two months, young Osprey typically do not leave the nest until they are four months old. During this period, they depend on their adult parents for food and protection. When an Osprey nest is built on the top of a land-based structure, raccoons present the greatest threat to the young Osprey.



Osprey. Photo by Tig Tillinghast.

Prothonotary Warbler



Prothonotary Warbler. Photo by Bill Portlock.

The Prothonotary Warbler is in serious decline. It has lost 40% of its global population since the 1960s. And in Louisiana where one fourth of its global population breeds, the population loss over the same period is even greater, up to 50%. Loss of habitat is the primary factor. In its winter grounds in Central and South America, much of the habitat that for many years has sustained this magnificent bird has been deforested. Audubon has described the loss of forested habitat to be massive in a key region of Colombia where 90% of the Prothonotary Warblers winter. Deforestation has also wiped out thousands of acres in the southern United States. As we reflect on the decline in the population of the Prothonotary Warbler, let's not fail to understand what a unique and remarkable species this little bird really is.

The Prothonotary Warbler is a tiny jewel of a bird, typically weighing just “half an ounce.” It is a bright golden warbler, conspicuous for its color and song, which migrates to the United States from Mexico or South America. A study conducted by ornithologists in Baton Rouge in 2013-2014, utilizing a tracker, showed that a Prothonotary Warbler, nicknamed GeoDad, migrated from Louisiana south to northwest Colombia for the winter and then returned to Louisiana 8 months later. This little bird (GeoDad) traveled a minimum of 5000 miles, through seven countries, and made three significant nonstop water crossings, twice over the Gulf of Mexico and once over the Caribbean Sea. It clearly has a lot of grit.

The Prothonotary Warbler is a cavity nesting bird, often called “swamp warbler” or “swamp canary” in the south because forested wetlands and mangroves are its preferred habitat. This beautiful bird is very particular about its habitat, preferring 250 to 300 acres of forest in close proximity to water. The decline in its population has been continuing, more or less unabated, for the past several years. The 2016 State of America's Birds watch-list has warned that Prothonotary Warblers “*are most at risk of extinction without significant conservation actions to reverse declines and reduce threats.*” Because the Prothonotary Warbler is a habitat specialist, it will be directly affected by the impact of climate change on the forested wetlands it relies on. Sea-level rise, more frequent tropical storms, temperature increases, and alterations in the timing of insect hatches, particularly at nesting times, will greatly stress the Prothonotary Warblers' population. Canada has placed the Prothonotary Warbler on its “endangered” list, and Audubon has described its status as precarious. We need to do what we can to help preserve the habitat that is so crucial to its survival.

Laughing Gull



Laughing Gull. Photo by Bill Portlock.

The Laughing Gull is a familiar gull around the Chesapeake Bay and its tidal rivers. Its black head, while body and slate gray (black) mantel are distinctive, as is its unmistakable laughing-like call. This classic summer gull is in decline due to sea-level rise in its breeding areas. Virtually all Laughing Gulls in Virginia nest in salt

marshes of the seaside Eastern Shore and Chesapeake Bay. They winter in Central and South America as well as the Caribbean. Pairs build grass nests on the ground in marshes just above the high tide mark. As sea levels rise, the nests become vulnerable to inundation. While these gulls are adaptable and rebuild their nests at higher level, they cannot keep up with an ever-increasing sea-level rise.

According to the Center for Conservation Biology, 85% of suitable marsh habitat for breeding has been lost on the Delmarva Peninsula due to sea-level rise. Laughing Gull numbers were stable for decades but recent significant storm events repeatedly washed-out nests and young and appear to have “pushed the breeding population beyond the tipping point.” Surveys conducted by the Center revealed that the population declined from 44,953 breeding pairs to 24,160 in ten years and dropped further to 16,653 by 2018. “In one of the most dramatic responses to sea-level rise to date, Laughing Gulls within a historic stronghold along the Lower Delmarva Peninsula have collapsed in less than a decade,” according to Dr. Bryan Watts, the Director of the Center. Current evidence is showing Laughing Gulls are moving from their historic but unusable nesting sites to new sites in Hampton Roads, the Chincoteague causeway marshes, and Wreck Island.

Herring Gull

The Herring Gull is one of the most common gulls along the East Coast of the United States. It was first reported breeding in Virginia in 1948 on Cobb Island as it expanded its range Southward along the Atlantic Coast from New England. It is considered a permanent resident along the coast now and a common summer resident to the Chesapeake Bay and its Virginia rivers. Following a steep decline in the late 1800s due to plume and egg collecting practices, Herring Gull numbers grew ten-fold until the 1960s, then leveled off, only to decline again as the pesticide DDT affected the Gull’s reproductive ability. Habitat change and sea-level rise are now believed to be the chief causes of its current population decline. A survey in 1993 of the Eastern Shore, Chesapeake Bay’s islands, and the Hampton Roads region found 35 Herring Gull colonies with 8801 breeding pairs; a later 2003 survey reported 38 colonies with 4521 pairs, a decline of 49% in breeding pairs in just 10 years.

Throughout North America, Herring Gull populations declined by over 3.5% per year between 1966 and 2015, resulting in a cumulative decline of 83%, according to the North American Breeding Bird Survey.

Herring Gull. Photo by Bill Portlock.



The North American Waterbird Conservation Plan estimates a continental population of over 246,000 breeding birds. The Herring Gull is not on the **2016 State of North America’s Birds Watch List**, but the **2014 State of the Birds Report** listed it as a Common Bird in Steep Decline.

Painted Bunting

The male Painted Bunting is by all accounts one of North America’s most beautiful birds. Adorned with a blue head, green wings, and red underside, it appears to have come straight from a tropical forest. The female isn’t as showy but is still striking with a beautiful olive green plumage that serves as camouflage when nesting. There are two distinct breeding populations, a western population that includes Oklahoma, Texas and Mexico, and the eastern population that extends from Florida northward, through coastal North Carolina, and up to the southeast corner of Virginia’s coastal area. The painted Bunting’s eastern population showed a steady decline for the past 50 years, but now appears to be stabilizing, and there is evidence that Painted Buntings are expanding their range northward. Before 2007, they were considered a rare visitor to the extreme southeast corner of Virginia, but now can be expected to overwinter there annually in small numbers. There has been a male overwintering in Middlesex County for the last two winters at the same location, and late this winter there was a report of another Painted Bunting in Gloucester County. Spring sightings have also started to become

more frequent in Virginia, with several reports in the mountains and one at a feeder in Northumberland County. There has also been a confirmed report of breeding (the first state record) at the extreme southern tip of the Eastern Shore of Virginia. This is the northern most report of breeding of the species to date.

In North Carolina, breeding has been confirmed in the southern stretch of the Outer Banks, and a report of probable breeding north all the way up to Rodanthe. Although the sudden increase in population and expansion of range is not fully understood, there is strong speculation that it's due to the creation of abundant suitable habitat created from landfalling hurricanes. While the northerly expansion of the Painted Bunting's range is encouraging, it is somewhat offset by the cautionary forecasts by Audubon and the Climate Adaptation Explorer which express concern that the species' preferred habitat along the coastal regions of the Atlantic, which is narrow in scope and restrictive, will be stressed as the impact of climate change accelerates. Habitat destruction and saltwater encroachment are among the factors mentioned that will stress the species eastern population. The Climate Adaptation Explorer currently describes the Painted Bunting's conservation status as a "Species of Greatest Conservation Need," and Audubon has cautioned that climate change will make it "challenging" for the species to establish a new path of suitable habitat.

For the eastern population of the Painted Bunting to successfully expand the northern end of its range, it may have to move inland to areas where the consequences of climate change may not be so severe. Perhaps the recent sightings in Virginia are evidence that this is already taking place.



Painted Bunting Male. Photo by Rob Bielawski.



Painted Bunting Female. Photo by Rob Bielawski.



This article reflects the collective input of Hill Wellford, Bill Portlock, Maeve Coker, Joey Coker, and Jeffrey Wright about the impact of global warming on migratory birds. The descriptions of the migratory birds in the Field Observations section of this article were written by: Hill Wellford (Tundra Swan, Black Duck), Bill Portlock (Evening Grosbeak, Red-winged Blackbird, Laughing Gull, Herring Gull), Maeve Coker and Joey Coker (Anhinga, Black-bellied Whistling Duck, Mississippi Kite, Black-necked Stilt, Painted Bunting), and Jeffrey Wright (Eastern Meadowlark, Osprey, Scarlet Tanager, Prothonotary Warbler). The impact of global warming on migratory birds is a subject of growing concern among ornithologists worldwide.



Jeff Wright



Bill Portlock



Maeve and Joey
Coker



Hill Wellford

Jeff Wright and his wife, Kathy, have a home in Northumberland County where they spend most of their quality time with their two Basset Hounds, Nicole and Henrietta, and their Dachshund, Liza. Jeff spent 28 years in military service, retiring from the Army with the rank of Colonel, and 18 years in the information and technology industry. Jeff is the President of the Board of Directors of the Old Growth Forest Network, a Certified Virginia Master Naturalist, President of the Friends of Dragon Run and a volunteer for The Nature Conservancy at preserves in Virginia. Jeff is the compiler for a series of bird counts as well as butterfly counts on Virginia's Northern Neck and Middle Peninsula. He is a believer in the importance of advocacy in protecting the natural world and that the environment is part of the nation's national security dialogue, and a priority global challenge.

Bill Portlock is a naturalist, environmental educator, conservation photographer, and birder. Throughout his 40-year career with the Chesapeake Bay Foundation and the Virginia State Parks he has worked with schoolteachers, students of all ages, and the public to make Virginia's natural history and ecology understandable, meaningful, and accessible. Portlock initiated and compiles the George Washington's Birthplace Christmas Bird Count (National Audubon Society), the Sharps Virginia Breeding Bird Survey (US Geologic Survey), and continues to write, photograph, and lead numerous bird and wetlands-related surveys in his retirement. He lives in Sparta in Caroline County with wife Nancy and dog Callie. Portlock has been widely recognized for his environmental and educational work. Awards include the Virginia Museum of Natural History's Thomas Jefferson Medal for outstanding contributions to Natural Science in the Commonwealth of Virginia; the Roger Tory Peterson Institute of Natural History's National Hornbeck Award for a lifetime of outstanding work in natural history education; and the Garden Club of Virginia's Elizabeth Cabell Dugdale Award for Meritorious Achievement in Conservation.

Maeve and Joey Coker have been Essex County residents for the past 5 years. They live in Dunnsville, Virginia, with their beagle and constant companion, Gypsy. Maeve and Joey earned their Bachelor's in Wildlife Biology and Biology, respectively. Avid local naturalists of the Middle Peninsula and Northern Neck, they spend their free time birding, searching for native plants, and learning all they can about the natural wonders of the area. They also are avid native plant gardeners and enjoy searching for and photographing native bees and other pollinators.

Hill Wellford is the VP of ECCA. He and his wife, Alice, and their Flat Coated Retriever, Rosalee, spend most of their time at their farm in Essex County where they maintain wildlife meadows and butterfly habitats.

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Virginia Counties with the Highest Percentage of Acres in Easement

County	Acres under Easement	Total Acres	% in Easement
Clarke	26,326.25	113,036.62	23.29
Fauquier	95,743.79	449,699.00	21.29
Albemarle	94,398.25	462,469.68	20.41

Non Tidal Counties

County	Acres under Easement	Total Acres	% in Easement
Fauquier	95,743.79	449,699.00	21.29
Albemarle	94,398.25	462,469.68	20.41
Rappahannock	32,705.03	170,604.53	19.17
Orange	35,181.93	204,425.72	17.21
Greene	10,095.18	97,920.00	10.31
Madison	15,898.66	204,937.78	7.76
Culpeper	19,987.45	238,692.00	8.37
Warren	9,429.67	139,514.66	6.76
Stafford	5,316.12	177,280.00	3.00
Page	4,098.27	193,306.00	2.12
Rockingham	7,518.05	543,360.00	1.38

Tidal Counties

County	Acres under Easement	Total Acres	% in Easement
Essex	31,172.60	165,120.00	18.88
King and Queen	25,790.28	202,406.08	12.74
King George	8,022.35	115,199.82	6.96
Richmond	7,218.27	122,534.21	5.89
Westmoreland	11,559.40	146,674.97	7.88
Northumberland	7,498.27	123,071.81	6.09
Lancaster	3,472.75	85,208.47	4.08
Middlesex	4,208.60	83,391.87	5.05
City of Fredericksburg	254.80	6,711.00	3.80
Spotsylvania	6,630.43	263,180.83	2.52

Essex data supplied by Thomas Blackwell, Commissioner of Revenue for Essex County. Remaining data supplied in 2022 by the Virginia Department of Conservation & Recreation.

THE EXTRAORDINARY LIFE OF CAPTAIN HANSFORD C. BAYTON

A Steamship Captain on the Rappahannock in the Post-Civil War Steamboat Era

Adapted by Hill Wellford for ECCA from "Steam-Driven: How Steamboats Shaped the Future of the Northern Neck" by Shelly Ford

The 1870s to the mid-1930s was the golden age of steamboats in the Chesapeake Bay region. It was a period of change when steamboats of all sizes plied the waters of the Rappahannock and Potomac delivering cargo, produce, passengers, and mail to wharves established at deep water locations.

This article describes the extraordinary life of Hansford C. Bayton, a native of Essex County, who rose to prominence as a steamer captain on the Rappahannock during the turbulent post-Civil War era. It is the story of an African American entrepreneur who succeeded in the risky business of steamboat ownership, notwithstanding the racial prejudices he would have to overcome. Hansford Bayton's life story is remarkable not only for what he accomplished but also for how he responded to the obstacles and adversity he faced on so many occasions.

At a time when few black entrepreneurs were successful, Hansford C. Bayton defied the odds. He became co-owner and captain of four excursion and mail delivery boats that sailed the Rappahannock in the late 1800's and early 1900's. This included two steamboats, a steam yacht, and a gasoline powered yacht. Bayton would acquire wealth as well as the respect of both whites and blacks before seeing his business destroyed. His life story illuminates a time in American history when the progress of newly freed men was stymied by the rise of Jim Crow laws and the Ku Klux Klan.

Hansford Bayton's Early Years

Hansford Bayton was born on October 10, 1863, in Essex County, eighteen months before the end of the Civil War. His mother was Julia Holmes, a house slave. His biological father was a native American Indian. Two years later, Hansford's mother married Arthur Bayton, a black cabinetmaker and farmer, who owned property on Duke Street in Tappahannock. Hansford Bayton attended school in Tappahannock. As a child, he visited the docks where he watched the large steamers make their way toward the Tappahannock Wharf. By 1881, Bayton had decided to be a waterman, and by 1890 he had become a well-known fish and oyster dealer.

A Family Man and Civic Leader

In August, 1886, Hansford Bayton married Virginia Banks and established their residence in Tappahannock.

Hansford and Virginia (or "Vergie", the name she was called by her family and friends) came from families with deep roots in the Tidewater region and both were active in their church, Berean Baptist, where Hansford served as a Sunday School teacher. Vergie recognized her husband's desire for a successful business career and would be his pillar of strength in the years to come. Hansford and Vergie would have eight children. Two would die in childhood.

In an era when blacks had few opportunities to establish successful careers and gain prominence in civic life, Hansford Bayton was a notable exception. By 1891, he had established a reputation for competence and courtesy that served him well in his relationships with residents of the Essex County community. In that year, Bayton was selected by the Essex County Electoral Board to serve as an election judge for the Tappahannock precinct, a position he would hold for six years. The following year, Bayton was elected to serve as a member of the Tappahannock Town Council, a position he held for five years until he resigned his position in 1897 in order to devote full time to his business career on the river.



Hansford C. Bayton served on the Tappahannock Town Council from 1892-97.



Hansford Bayton, with his wife, Julia,
their son, Johnie, and daughter, Julia.



The Steamboat Era Museum in Irvington offers an interactive exhibit based on *Against the Tide: The Turbulent Times of a Black Entrepreneur*, a book about the life and times Captain Hansford C. Bayton. Photo used courtesy The Local Scoop magazine.

Captain Bayton Sets His Sail on the Rappahannock

In 1895, Bayton obtained his pilot's license and became co-owner of a small steamship called the *Owen Dillard*. The *Owen Dillard* was a propeller-driven, coal burning steamer, which was 39 feet long and 10.7 feet in width. The construction of this relatively small steamer had been financed by Walter Dillard, his white partner, who served with Bayton as a member of the Tappahannock Town Council. The business plan for the *Owen Dillard* was to use it as a passenger and freight vessel between Layton's Landing and Fredericksburg. When the first year the *Owen Dillard* operated produced so little business that it was not profitable, Walter Dillard offered to sell his share to Bayton. Hansford Bayton accepted the offer because he saw another potential use for the steamer as a mail and freight delivery vessel from the mouth of the Rappahannock to Fredericksburg. Bayton also knew that residents in the Northern Neck near the mouth of the Rappahannock were frustrated about the slow delivery of mail and newspapers from the other side of the river. He reasoned that the *Owen Dillard* could fix that if its business plan was revised to make timely delivery of mail and packages between localities on opposite sides of the lower Rappahannock.

Bayton made his pitch to the counties of Lancaster and Middlesex: create a steamship mail route to pick up mail in Middlesex and make deliveries to wharves around Lancaster. He applied to the Postmaster and was

awarded a contract for the new route in 1896. Captain Hansford Bayton was on his way. This was the start of a mail service round trip route from White Stone to Urbanna, and all wharves in between, that would last for 14 years, and become known as "Bayton's Route."

The White Stone to Urbanna route, with morning and afternoon stops at Irvington, Weems, and Millenbeck, was initially a round trip route of 16 miles. In 1897, the route was expanded with the addition of Merry Point which added approximately 12 miles to the route. The *Virginia Citizen* in May, 1897, specified that it make this trip six days a week (except Sunday), departing White Stone at 7:00 am, with stops at Irvington, Weems, Millenbeck, and Merry Point, before arriving at Urbanna at 11:30 am, and then leaving Urbanna at 2:00 pm, with afternoon stops at the same locations on its return trip to White Stone, where it was scheduled to arrive at 6:00 pm.

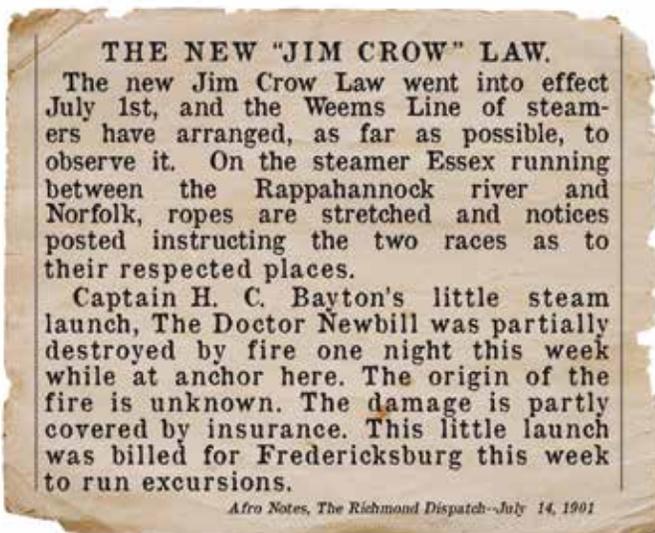
Building on Success

With the White Stone to Urbanna contract for mail service in hand, Bayton seized upon this opportunity to establish a record of outstanding performance and dependability. To better serve the citizens on his route, Bayton made the decision to relocate his family to White Stone where they moved into a rental home. By 1900, Bayton had achieved a well-earned reputation of

competence and reliability. As the *Virginia Citizen* reported on March 2, 1900: "The steamer *Owen Dillard* ... comes here regularly and on time, regardless of the wind and tide. Her Captain is a brave commander and the people of the Northern Neck will never suffer for mail as long as he is at the wheel."

In March 1901, Hansford Bayton made the decision to expand his steamers by acquiring a steam powered yacht which he named the *Dr. Newbill*, after a prominent physician and friend in Irvington who was one of his business benefactors. This little yacht was chartered as an excursion vessel. In mid-June 1901, a group of young white men from Irvington chartered the *Dr. Newbill* yacht for an early morning trip to Fredericksburg. Hansford Bayton was the Captain of the boat. An article in the *Virginia Citizen* dated June 21, 1901, described the festive nature of this excursion and concluded with this quote from one of the passengers: "A more delightful trip and a nicer little yacht and Captain could not be had and we're determined to try it again."

Only three weeks later, the *Dr. Newbill* yacht was again in the news when it was partially destroyed by a fire of unknown origin while lying at anchor at night. Unfortunately, this would not be the only steamer owned by Hansford Bayton that in the days ahead would be mysteriously destroyed by a fire of unknown origin. The *Richmond Dispatch* juxtaposed its article on the burning of the *Dr. Newbill* yacht with an article on the effective date of the "New Jim Crow Law" and its enforcement on steamers running between the Rappahannock and Norfolk.



Hansford Bayton was not a person to be easily intimidated or dissuaded from pursuing his personal and business goals. By 1901, Bayton had experienced such financial success that he could afford to purchase a large farm and home overlooking the Rappahannock near White Stone. The property he purchased for his new residence was Lawson Bay Farm, a 169-acre tract with a large two-story home overlooking an expanse of the Rappahannock. Soon thereafter, Bayton also constructed rental cottages near the shoreline of the farm as a resort for black families in the Chesapeake Bay region which he named White Stone Beach.

As his business continued to increase, Bayton realized that the business model for the *Owen Dillard* was strained to capacity. To address this, Bayton took another bold step: In 1905, he commissioned the construction of a second steamer, much larger than the *Owen Dillard*. Once again, he obtained financial assistance for this venture from white citizens, including the Irvington physician, Dr. W. J. Newbill. The new steamer was 78 feet long and 18.2 feet in width.

Since the little yacht bearing the name *Dr. Newbill* had been the victim of a fire, Bayton gave his new steamer a similar name. It was christened the *Dr. W. J. Newbill* at her launch on October 14, 1905, by Ethel Newbill from Essex County, the niece of Dr. W. J. Newbill.

Bayton's Success in Business Proves Risky

From the day of its launch, the new *Dr. W. J. Newbill* was a tremendous success. It filled a need for shipment by water of mail, packages, and freight, and for passenger excursions. Through 1906, the new steamer was in high-demand. While the *Dr. W. J. Newbill* increased Bayton's revenue, it also increased his risk because the *Dr. W. J. Newbill* was more expensive to operate and required a crew of six in addition to Bayton and his brother, James, who served as the *Dr. W. J. Newbill's* chief engineer. Moreover, Bayton had borrowed money to help finance the *Dr. W. J. Newbill's* construction and by 1907 was still making loan payments.

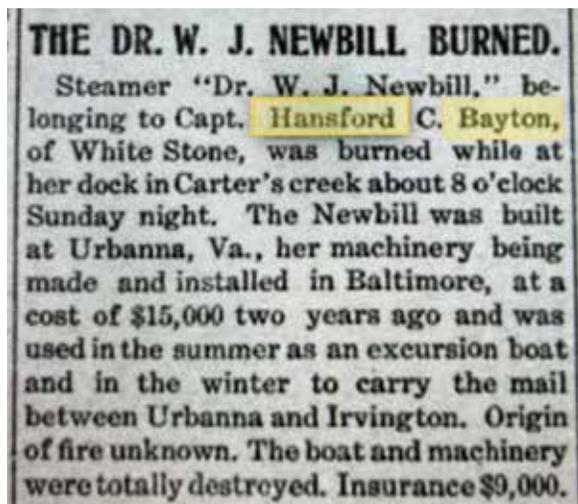
A further unquantified risk of which Bayton was keenly aware manifested itself in the ever-present racial tension of the times. This was a period of overt discrimination and segregation, it was a period of high visibility by the Ku Klux Klan, and it was the period when Jim Crow laws were rigorously enforced in Virginia. In an attempt to avoid racial incidents, Bayton took steps to inform prospective passengers on the *Dr. W. J. Newbill*

that the vessel would operate in strict compliance with the Jim Crow laws of Virginia.

While Bayton sought to diminish racial tension, he could not conceal the fact that his success as a black entrepreneur stood in sharp contrast to the economic plight of most of the black and white residents in the tidewater region where the Bayton family lived. This was more than enough to create envy and resentment among blacks and whites alike. Between navigating the Jim Crow laws and balancing the demands of delivering mail and running passenger excursions, Bayton found maintaining his success to be very challenging.

Disaster Strikes Bayton's Steamboats

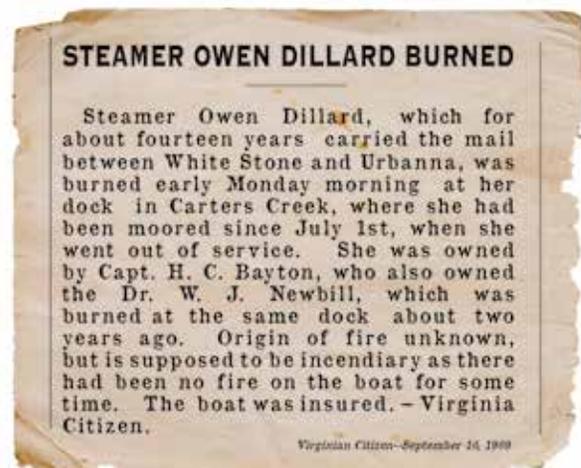
In 1907, the *Dr. W. J. Newbill* was used primarily for passenger excursions in the summer and on mail service routes in the winter. The *Owen Dillard* was used for the mail service routes throughout the year. On November 10, 1907, the *Dr. W. J. Newbill* inexplicably caught fire at approximately 8:00 pm while moored at her wharf in Carters Creek with 37 passengers aboard. Bayton managed to get everyone off safely before the boat burned to the waterline. The boat and its machinery were totally destroyed. According to the news account published by the *Virginia Citizen* on November 15, 1907, the origin of the fire was unknown.



Following the destruction of the *Dr. W. J. Newbill*, Bayton took the only course available to him which was to maximize the use of his remaining steamer, the *Owen Dillard*. However, the *Owen Dillard's* size limited its ability to produce the level of income Bayton needed to adequately address his financial circumstances. Bayton received more bad news in February 1909 when he learned

that the mail contract he had held for 14 years to deliver mail from White Stone to Urbana had been awarded to a competitor who had underbid him for the service.

Bayton then turned his attention to trying to find other contracts that would put the *Owen Dillard*, his only remaining steamer, to profitable use. Any hope for this was lost, however, in the early morning hours of September 6, 1909, when the *Owen Dillard* was destroyed by fire as it was moored at its dock in Carters Creek. A news article on the burning of the *Owen Dillard* in the *Virginia Citizen*, dated September 10, 1909, noted that Captain H.C. Bayton had "also owned the *Dr. W. J. Newbill*, which was burned at the same dock." The *Virginia Citizen* described the burning of the *Owen Dillard* as "Origin of fire unknown, but is supposed to be incendiary" since the *Owen Dillard* had not been in service for over two months.



As with the fires that had destroyed Bayton's other steamers, the cause of the fire that destroyed the *Owen Dillard* on September 6, 1909, was never determined, and no person was ever held accountable. With the destruction of the *Owen Dillard*, Bayton's steamer business had literally gone up in flames.

Fighting Back

The years 1910 to 1917 were very difficult for Hansford Bayton and his family. In the winter of 1910, in order to reduce the debt he was facing, Bayton was compelled to sell 87 acres of Lawson Bay Farm. Throughout this period, Hansford Bayton continued to look for ways to generate income but was unable to significantly reduce the debt that burdened him. Bayton's financial situation was so dire during this period that in February 1915, he made the difficult decision to sell

Lawson Bay Farm and moved into a rental home a short distance away.

Although greatly discouraged, Hansford Bayton never gave up. In April of 1917, Bayton's efforts to reestablish his career on the water appeared to be finally rewarded when his application to deliver the mail on a new Rappahannock service route was granted by the Postal Service. The new route stretched for 20.5 miles and ran from Morattico to Tappahannock and back, with stops at Sharps, Bowlers Wharf, Wares Wharf and Wellfords Wharf.

Bayton was once again back in business on the Rappahannock. To service this route, Bayton purchased a deadrise style boat built in Urbanna that was powered by an 18 hp gasoline engine. This single engine boat was named the *Grace*. Once again, tragedy struck when the *Grace* was partially damaged by fire in 1921. When this occurred, Bayton chartered another boat to continue the mail service while the *Grace* was repaired. He wrote to assure the Second Assistant Post Master General that he would not fail in his duty to deliver the mail: "... the mail is going forward every day and I am doing all I can to keep my record of 27 years in the services of your department up to the standard ..."

During the ensuing years between 1922 to 1925, Hansford Bayton's health began to seriously deteriorate and he became dependent upon his two sons to help him perform his mail service route. Bayton's last letter, undated but written sometime in the spring of 1925, to the Assistant Postmaster General, from the Retreat Hospital in Richmond, Virginia, described his health condition:

"I am sorry to inform you that after twenty-eight (28) years of hard service and labor carrying the mail I find myself flat on my back in this Hospital having lost my left eye taken out last Sunday. My wife writes me that my boys are carrying the mail performing the duty between Morattico to Tappahannock. ... Please continue my check to White Stone, Lancaster Co., Virginia so that my wife may be able to meet my expenses. Your prompt attention will oblige.

*Yours very truly,
Hansford C. Bayton"*

Hansford Bayton's Final Days

Bayton's health continued to decline, and by the end of 1925 it had become clear that he would not be able to return to work and had no means to satisfy his creditors. In January 1926, the *Grace* was seized, taken from her wharf, and put up for sale to help settle Bayton's debts. With Bayton in increasingly poor health, Hansford and

Vergie moved to Baltimore to live with their daughter, Julia. It was there that Bayton died, on July 27, 1927. He was 63.

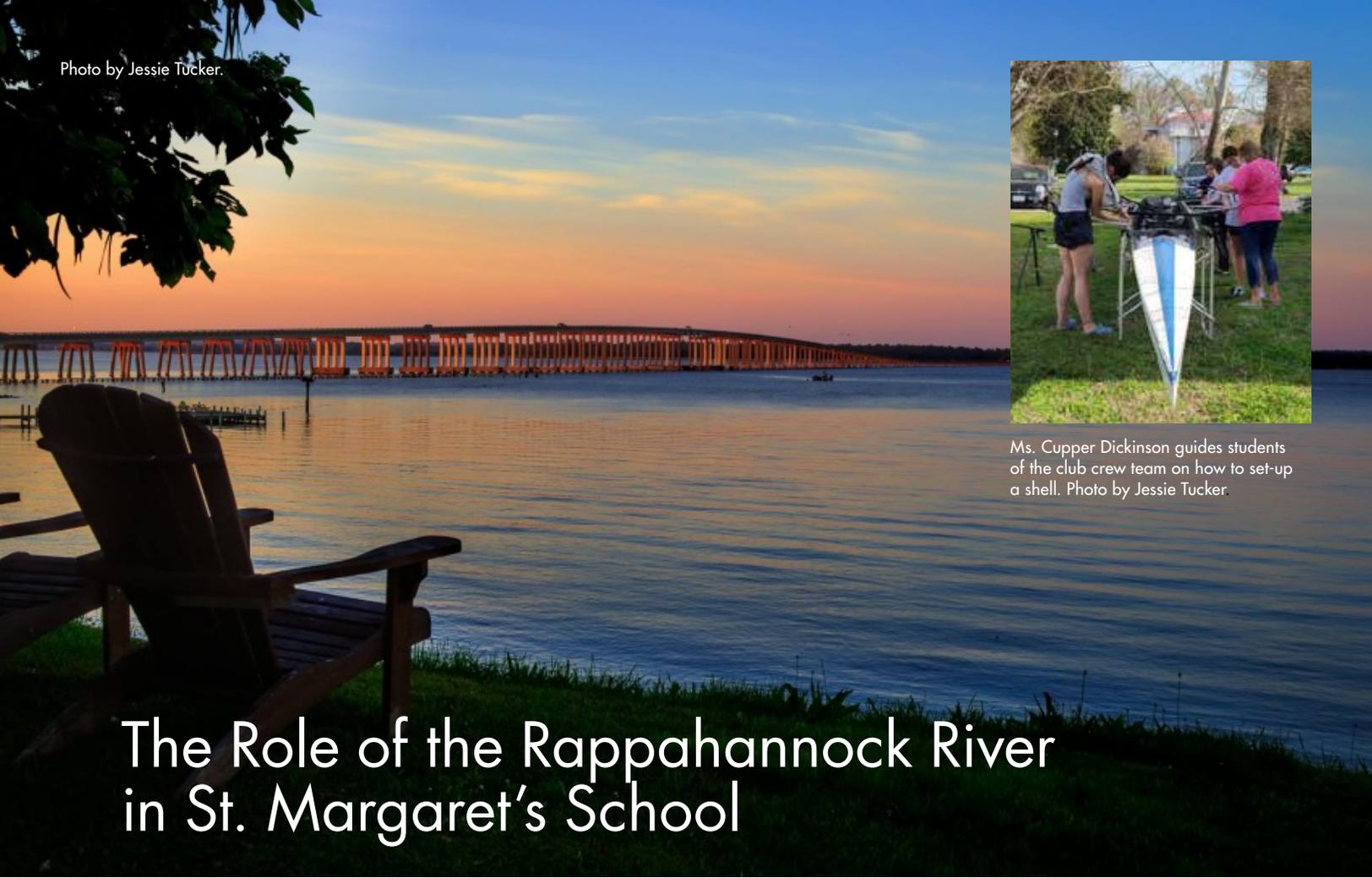
Hansford Bayton's wish was to be buried in Tappahannock, the site of his childhood and the place where he launched his career as a steamer captain. In keeping with Bayton's request, his coffin was transported by steamer for his long journey home. As the steamer entered the mouth of the Rappahannock and proceeded north to the wharf at Tappahannock, it carried Bayton by the shorelines and wharves most familiar to him during his 30-year career at the helm of his steamers.

Captain Bayton was laid to rest in the Bayton family plot in Tappahannock surrounded by a large assembly of family and friends. On August 11, 1927, the *Rappahannock Record* in Kilmarnock, published this final tribute to Hansford Bayton:

"News of the death of Captain H.C. Bayton caused grief among his friends here. We remember him as Captain of the steamers Owen Dillard and W. J. Newbill which carried the mail between Irvington and Urbanna. His courtesy and politeness won for him many friends among the white people some of whom financed the building of the steamer W. J. Newbill. At one time he was considered wealthy, but the destruction of his steamers by fire swept away his fortune. For several years his health has been failing and his departure was expected. His wife and children have our prayers in their bereavement. We trust to meet him beyond the river."

This article was adapted for publication by the Essex County Conservation Alliance from "Steam-Driven: How Steamboats Shaped the Future of the Northern Neck" written by Shelly Ford, a beautifully illustrated book covering the Steamboat Era, the story of the steamer *Potomac* and the history and restoration of the *Potomac Pilothouse*. The hard-covered book is filled with full color photographs, newspaper articles and personal recollections of the era. Published by the Steamboat Era Museum, in Irvington, Virginia, the book was made possible by River Counties Community Foundation and Chesapeake Bank. This article also draws heavily on J.H. Sullivan's book: "Against the Tide, the Turbulent Times of a Black Entrepreneur." In "Against the Tide," Julie H. Sullivan tells the amazing story of her great-grandfather, Hansford C. Bayton, a native of Essex County, who rose to prominence as a steamer captain in the post-Civil War Reconstruction Period, notwithstanding the racial prejudice and the Jim Crow laws he would struggle to overcome. Finally, this article draws on additional information from an article by William J. Bray, Jr., *Ebony Entrepreneur*: Captain Hansford C. Bayton.

For information about the Steamboat Museum in Irvington, Virginia or to purchase "Steam-Driven: How Steamboats Shaped the Future of the Northern Neck", or for updates on "Against the Tide" which is being republished, visit: SteamboatEraMuseum.org.



Ms. Cupper Dickinson guides students of the club crew team on how to set-up a shell. Photo by Jessie Tucker.

The Role of the Rappahannock River in St. Margaret's School

By Rebecca Meberg

If you were to ask any of the students at Saint Margaret's School in Tappahannock what their favorite aspect of the campus is, I can almost guarantee you that they would say, "Being on the river." Whether students are walking around campus or in classrooms, they can see the Rappahannock River glistening in the background. The river has always held St. Margaret's together. It mirrors the school's mission of "Belong, Believe, Become" as it grows from a small stream in the headwaters to eventually flowing into the Chesapeake Bay.

The ongoing threats from increasing salinity levels and sea-level rise spurred by climate change jeopardize the balance of the river's ecosystem. By building appreciation of the river through a STREAM-focused education, St. Margaret's School encourages girls to advocate for change in policies to protect the river, as well as the environmental crises in the world today. Our new head of school, Mr. Colley Bell, is spearheading efforts to incorporate this stewardship and appreciation into the curriculum.

To truly understand the importance of the Rappahannock River, one must begin to appreciate its beauty and its ability to spark deep connections and memories. One way that St. Margaret's builds this love for the water is by offering a variety

The author, Rebecca Meberg, graduated from St. Margaret's School in 2022.



of water activities. From being able to participate in crew to joining club sailing or taking a kayak out, there are always ways to get out on the river. As a graduating senior at St. Margaret's, I can attest to the fact that kayaking and paddle boarding along the Rappahannock can truly bring about a sense of serenity that not many other places can provide. The opportunities on the river are not solely offered as physical activities, either. There is always a tubing opportunity at least twice a week when it is warm out. This time on the water not only fosters friendship and laughter but also builds deep bonds

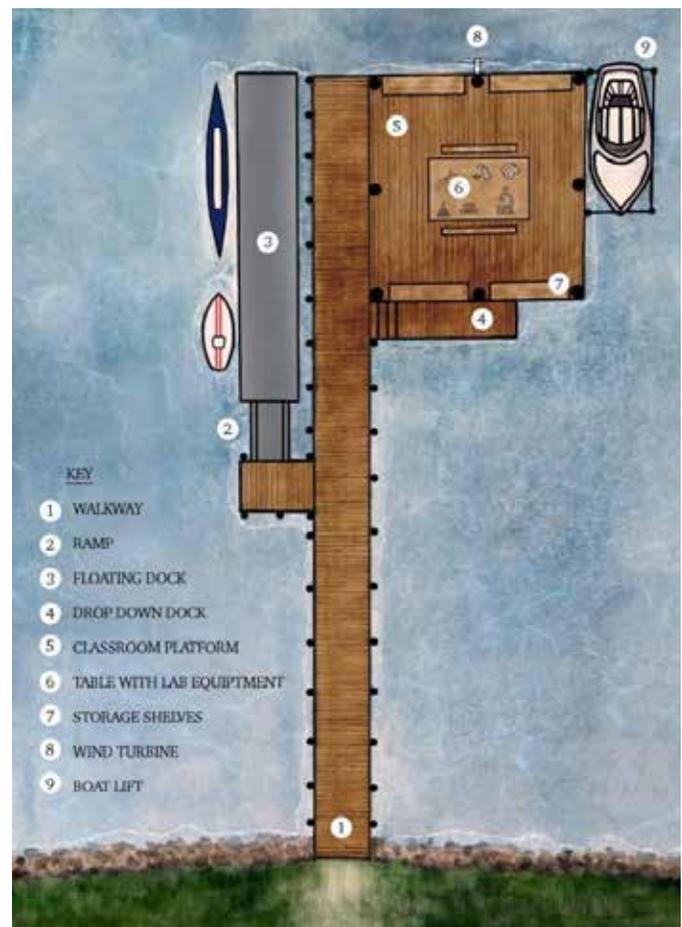
and appreciation in students for the Rappahannock. Many of the boarding students that attend St. Margaret's come from land-locked states or countries that are far from any rivers, so offering quality time on the Rappahannock encourages a stronger attachment to the environment. To develop environmental stewardship, St. Margaret's offers dedicated days to give back to the community and ecosystem throughout the year. In addition, Green Team, the student-led environmental club, hosts a variety of conservation events throughout the year, including challenges to limit food waste, and recycling competitions. These opportunities help teach students the importance of conservation so that future generations can continue memory making on the river.

St. Margaret's assists students by integrating the love for the river into its classes. With the development of a new outdoor classroom, taking place this summer, St. Margaret's plans on offering a space in which classes of all types can be taught literally on the water. For example, English classes can use the outdoor classroom as a way for students to be inspired by the strength and beauty of the Rappahannock as they write. For science classes, the outdoor classroom will serve as a way for students to learn more about renewable energy sources through the wind turbine attached to the dock. The classroom will be equipped with tanks in which river water is directly pumped in and out, offering biology and ecology classes a chance to observe native wildlife more easily. The new space is also set with a new boat lift, making it even easier for teachers to take classes out on the boat for more interactive learning. When students are not out on the water, they will be taking a variety

of STREAM-inspired courses. Next year, classes will be offered in the fields of engineering, environmental science, river studies, biology, chemistry, and physics. This range of classes allows students to explore different topics while showing the myriad ways they can use their love for the river to help protect it. Even for the students who are not as interested in STREAM fields, the English and History Departments continue to incorporate the river into the curriculum. Students who love the river and have a knack for writing are encouraged to use their talents to illustrate the importance of protecting ecosystems. The shared love for the river is expressed in a variety of ways in the community. The education offered at St. Margaret's provides girls with the necessary background and skills in order to support them as they follow their passions and share their love for the river and nature with their world.

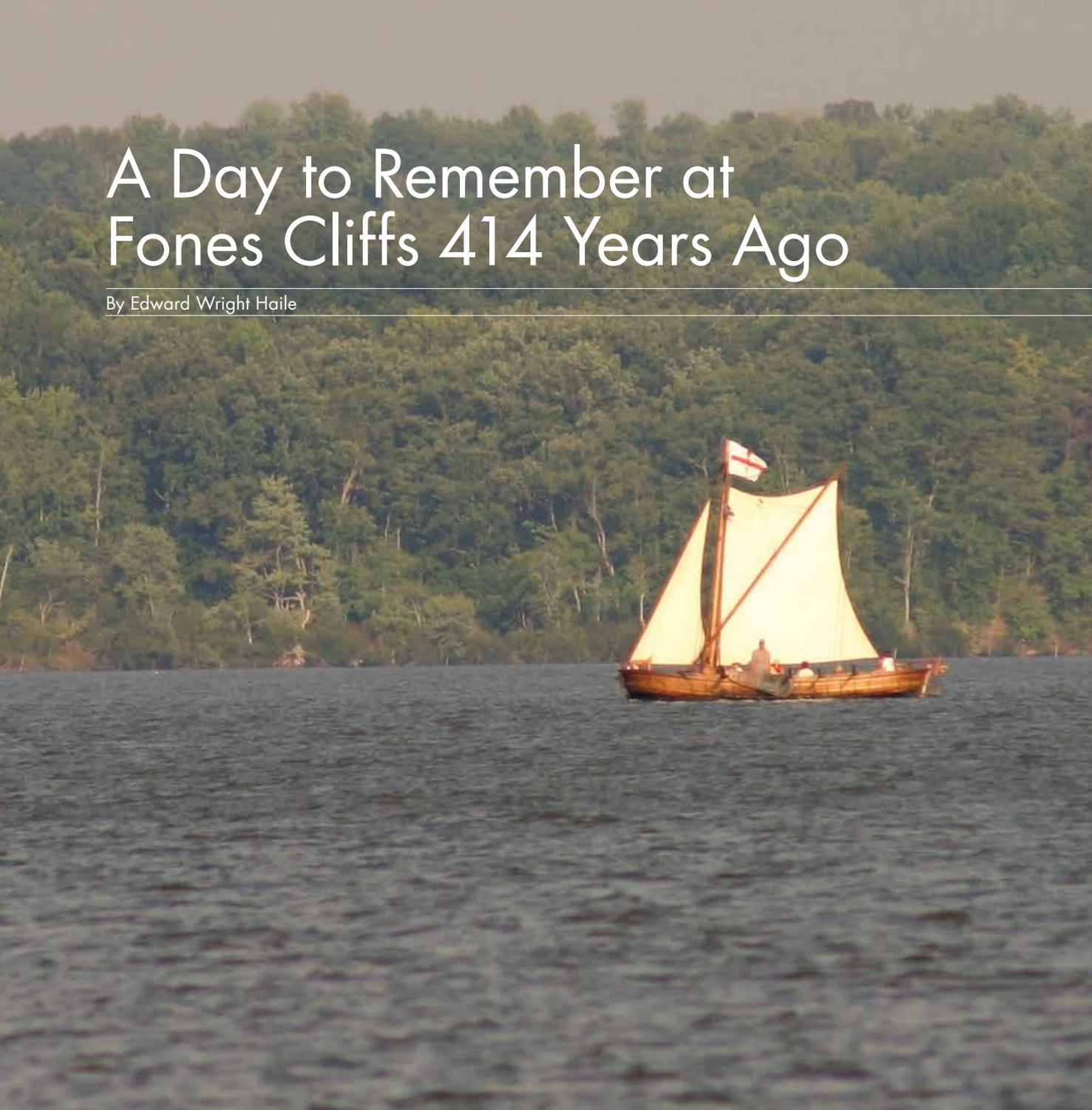
Currently, with climate change, harmful run-off, and a multitude of different environmental crises threatening our precious ecosystems, St. Margaret's provides a vital role in raising future generations not only to respect nature but also to have the tenacity and creativity that it will take to help solve these crises. The lessons and appreciation for the river learned at St. Margaret's encourage students to give back to their own local communities and ecosystems. The Rappahannock River continues to inspire each student at St. Margaret's and will do the same for the next century of students to help make a difference and protect this magnificent ecosystem. With the continued support of its alumnae scattered all over the world, the St. Margaret's community, joined by the local population of Tappahannock, is working hard to protect and conserve this awe-inspiring place we call home.

A diagram of the current plan for the addition of a new outdoor classroom and other amenities at St. Margaret's School.



A Day to Remember at Fones Cliffs 414 Years Ago

By Edward Wright Haile



On August 19, 1608, in his fourth day ascending the Rappahannock from its mouth, Smith and his crew of a dozen, in a thirty-foot shallop, came under Fones Cliffs at the first narrows in the river.

Today the river is 400 yards wide at Carters Wharf. Due to the sea level being seventeen inches lower in Smith's day, that might have been 300 yards. Otherwise, the river was very much the same then as now: marsh on the right bank opposite Fones Cliffs on the Northern Neck side. The shallop was an open boat, although the explorers had seen fit to line its gunwales with wicker shields they had obtained in an opportunistic trade with Indians far to the north at the head of the

Chesapeake Bay. The explorers had just noticed three Rappahannock villages to starboard.

The shields had served them well the day before. The Rappahannock Indians had ambushed the Englishmen at Piscataway Creek the day before, on the eighteenth. Smith's Indian guide Mosco, a Morattico tribesman, at this time feuding with the Rappahannocks, hardly would have had to advise the military captain to be wary of getting too close beneath the beetling 150-foot cliffs,

where a flight of arrows could easily arc over the shields and land aboard. They decided to play safe and hug the marsh. The rest is told in Smith's account, *The General History of Virginia* (p. 62).

As we passed by Pisacack, Matchopick, and Mecuppom, three towns situated upon high white, clay cliffs—the other side all a low plain marsh, and the river there but narrow—thirty or forty of the Rappahannocks had so accommodated themselves with branches as we took them for little bushes growing among the sedge [marsh cordgrass], still seeing their arrows strike the targets and dropped in the river; whereat Mosco fell flat in the boat on his face crying The Rappahannocks!—which presently we espied to be the bushes which at our first volley fell down in the sedge. When we were near half a mile from them they showed themselves, dancing and singing very merrily [*The General History*, p. 62].

The Englishmen, apparently heeding Mosco's advice again, put in and dropped anchor for a friendly reception on the left bank seven miles upstream at the so-called king's house village of Pissaseck, just above modern Leedstown. But in two days, on August 21, crewman Richard Featherstone died of an unexplained cause and was given a burial in the waters of what was then named Featherstone's Bay. He was the sole crew fatality of Smith's summer of 1608 exploration of the Chesapeake and its principal rivers. Was he a casualty of either ambush? We do not know. Also, the location of the bay is difficult. An informed guess is that it is now what has silted into marsh in Moss Neck around nautical mile 82.

Why the enmity of the Rappahannocks? A feud had broken out when the Morattico werowance, or chief-tain, had stolen three women from his Rappahannock counterpart. On the theory that the friend of my enemy is my enemy, the English were taking the brunt of the hostilities. Returning down river, toward the end of the month, Smith was able to mediate peace by arranging a meeting of both parties and awarding one lady to each, first pick going to the Rappahannocks, the second to the Moratticos, and the third to Mosco.

Ed Haile, married to Bess, is a long time resident of Champlain, joined the ECCA at the git-go and for several years served on the Board. His doings with Captain Smith involve the reformatting of his map "Virginia", publication of his Virginia writings in *Jamestown Narratives* (1998), "John Smith in the Chesapeake" (2008) and the so-called "cross project" that he has headed since 2009 at the behest of the Chesapeake Conservancy and the National Geographic Society.



The Cross Project Has a Website

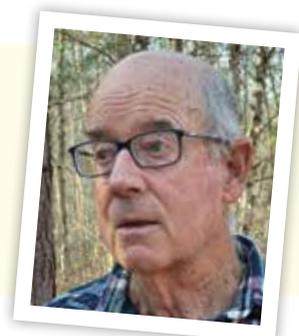
The Cross Project, in which the ECCA's Ed Haile is a participant, is the on-site restoration of Captain John Smith's twenty-four brass crosses around Chesapeake Bay to mark the limits of his exploration in the years 1607–1609. Using granite markers suitably inscribed, the Cross Project has now successfully placed twenty-one in Virginia, Maryland, and Delaware on lands public, private, and institutional, and on one military base, namely beside the Two Jima statue at the entrance to USMC Base Quantico.

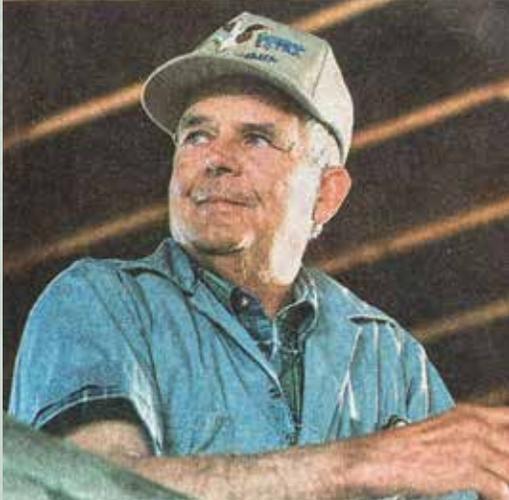
The Cross Project now has a website at www.captainjohnsmith.org, covering all aspects of the project, giving locations, status, visiting procedures, background, and siting criteria.

Two of Smith's crosses were on the Rappahannock, and both are now replaced by granite at Belmont in Falmouth and Fall Hill in Fredericksburg. Another is found nearby on the Dragon Run in the Brown Tract off Byrds Bridge Road.

Additional website pages deal with Smith's publications, his maps, controversies that have dogged him over the centuries, the so-called capture route (which touches Essex), a short biography, his dealings with Indian tribes, his career as an explorer, and a page devoted to the women in his life to whom the unmarried captain was to owe his good fortune at several crucial moments in his life.

The Cross Project, instigated by the National Geographic Society and the National Park Service during the 2007 Jamestown four-hundredth anniversary, has operated under the auspices of the Friends of the Water Trail, later the Chesapeake Conservancy, and is today an independent group of part-time volunteers.





Bobby Hutchinson (pictured left) managed the Tappahannock Livestock Market from the mid-1960s until its dissolution in 1995.

Wednesdays were Auction Days at the Tappahannock Livestock Market

By Margaret J. Smith

In April 1951, the Tappahannock Livestock Market was started by a group of local businessmen who sought to establish a way for farmers around the Northern Neck and Middle Peninsula to exchange their products. The market operated for over forty years before closing in the mid-1990s.

While the Livestock Market building on Airport Road had fallen into disrepair and was razed in early 2022, many memories remain of the weekly sales.

In its heyday, for most of the 1960s and 1970s, auctions were held weekly, on Wednesdays, and crowds of people came to Tappahannock from the surrounding counties to buy all types of livestock and farm products.

Cattle, hogs, chickens, horses, and sheep were sold at auction, as well as eggs and vegetables. Trappers brought

pelts and wild game meat to sell. Everything grown or raised was sold to the highest bidder.

When a seller came to the auction, any items brought for auction were tagged upon arrival. Livestock was taken to a series of gates and wooden holding pens in the rear of the auction building to await sale.

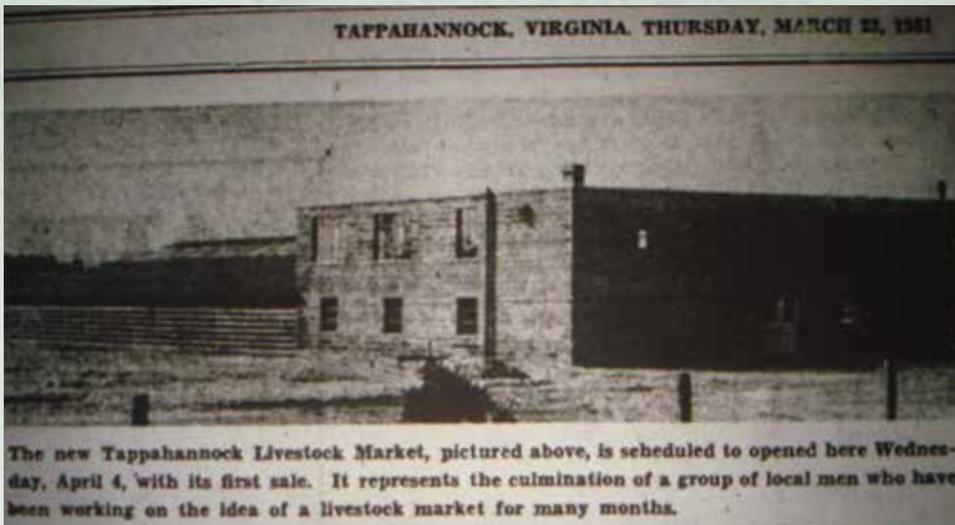
Trice Hayden and Latane Trice served as ring auctioneers. During the auction, workers presented livestock and other goods in the sawdust-covered ring to prospective buyers, who filled the five rows of bleachers encircling the auction stage. The weekly market employed ten to twelve workers, several of whom loaded animals on and off the scale. There was also someone to weigh them, an auctioneer, and several workers in the office.

Upon purchase, livestock was weighed, commissions collected, and payments were settled at the end of the day, which at times could be as late as 9 or 10 p.m. before all the checks were issued. A typical Wednesday auction would move as many as 1,000 hogs, fifty or more veal calves, eighteen to twenty cows, some goats, lambs, and a horse or two from more than twenty local farmers.

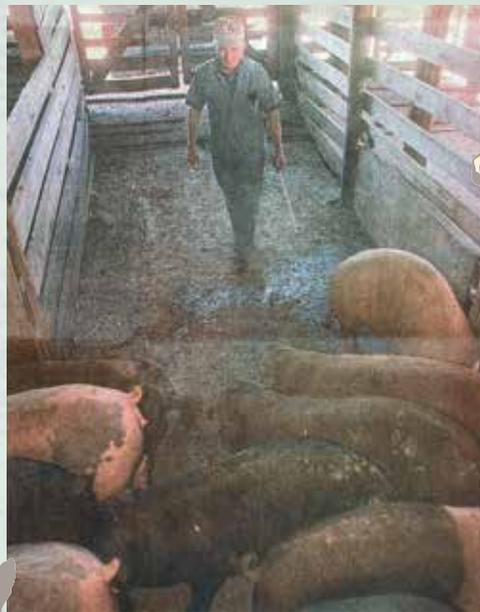
Countless patrons recall fond memories of auction days and describe the place as being “packed,” with every seat in the ring taken.

There was a lunch counter where snacks and drinks were served. Some came just to browse and





SCHEDULE OF COMMISSIONS AND CHARGES	
Cattle	400 lbs + over 150 Per Head
Calves	Sold for 20 th - over 100 Per Head
	Sold Under 20 th 50 Per Head
Hogs	100 lbs + Over 50 Per Head
	Under 100 lbs. 35 Per Head
	Sow + Pigs 150 Per Head
	Boars over 100 lbs 100 Per Head
Sheep	50 Per Head
Goats	25 Per Head
Horses - Mules	300 Per Head
Poultry	5% Of Sale
Farm Products	10% Of Sale
Yardage	1% Of Sale
Minimum Charge	25 Per Sale



A typical Wednesday auction would move as many as 1,000 hogs, fifty or more veal calves, eighteen to twenty cows, some goats, lambs, and a horse or two from more than twenty local farmers.



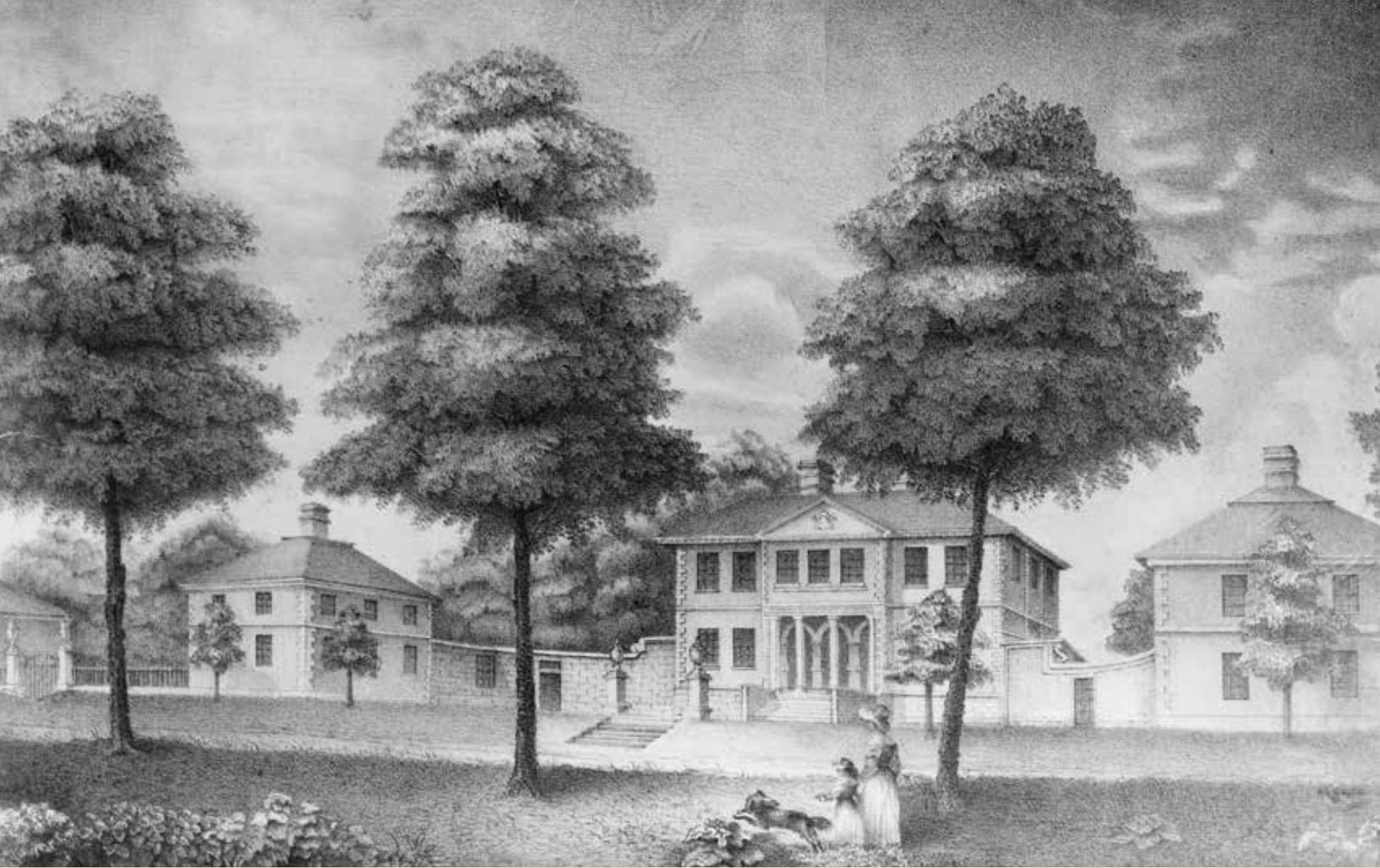
socialize, while others sought a deal on the products they needed for their farms and families.

The livestock market was managed by Bobby Hutchinson from the mid-1960s until its dissolution in 1995. In addition to managing the livestock market, he also raised and sold hogs and young feeder pigs.

According to Bobby's daughter, Susan Hutchinson Johns, Wednesdays were an important day for her family when she was growing up. "Whenever we took a family trip," she says, "we always had to make sure we were home by Wednesday. Auction days simply could not be missed."

Margaret Smith grew up in Warsaw, graduated from the University of Virginia, and is now a wealth advisor and CPA in Richmond. Since her family's farm, located just outside of the Town of Tappahannock, became a part of the Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge in 2001, Margaret has enjoyed volunteering with the NWR and other conservation groups to protect and promote scenic lands and preserve our natural resources. When she is not working, Margaret enjoys spending time with her family, including two small children, on the Rappahannock River.





Pendleton Lithography. *Mount Airy Before the 1840s Fire*. Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, HABS, Reproduction number 80-WAR.V4--42. Accessed 07, July, 2022.

Horse Racing History Starts Here: **Breeding and Racing Around the Rappahannock**

By Jennifer S. Kelly

The story of the United States of America starts with historic locations in the thirteen original colonies that made up the nascent nation. Those earliest settlements at Jamestown and Plymouth brought forth the people and places that created this country, with both Massachusetts and Virginia originating traditions that are uniquely American.

These English settlers imported many interests and diversions to their new lives in the colonies, including the search for the fastest horse. From quarter-mile tracks cut through the frontier to elegant one-mile courses laid out on soft grasses, these colonists established the sport of horse racing in America. The horses they imported defined the sport in their time and now ours, especially in Virginia, the state where the American thoroughbred took its first breaths and created the bloodlines that live on even today.

Around the Rappahannock River lie the flat and lush grounds these pioneering sires and mares trod, where the men and the horses that gave rise to the uniquely American version of the breed left their mark, their names still part of the sport's story three centuries later.

Meet these history makers, the sportsmen and stallions that made the Tidewater area one of the cradles of American horse racing.

Racing in Colonial Virginia

As the Virginia colony prospered and grew, so the demand for diversion grew as well. While the earliest settlers kept their sport to simpler games such as bowling, the arrival of noblemen fleeing Oliver Cromwell and his restrictive regime brought with them the same amusements they enjoyed in England, among which was racing horses. Early on though, the racing was limited to dashes through the streets of towns such as Williamsburg, but when that was outlawed, sportsmen turned to quarter-mile races through cleared land. While New York might have had the space to create the first formal racecourse in 1665, Virginia started racing over those shorter paths, as it took great effort to clear land for agriculture and residences, let alone sport.

By 1750, more than a century after that initial settlement at Jamestown, the quarter-mile paths had become more permanent courses, a mile or longer, where small fields of horses would compete in four-mile heats, often two or three times a day. These longer races were a far cry from those quarter-mile sprints that had characterized earlier eras. With the influx of the upper class into the colonies, only gentlemen, those of noble birth or landed gentry, were allowed to race their horses. Any others were subject to prosecution if they attempted to participate in what was considered proper racing of the era. The more informal shorter races, around which one-day fairs would arise, might have been more popular in the frontier areas, but the same upper classes that had raced in England had brought their sensibilities with them, creating some of the earliest formal racing associations in what would become the United States.

With the arrival of official racing came the need for bred horses to compete. In this era, as the three foundational sires, The Byerley Turk, The Darley Arabian, and The Godolphin Arabian, begat the earliest generations of what we now know as thoroughbreds, the only horses suitable for racing were those bred from the proper stock. One of the first bred horses to arrive in the colonies was Bulle Rock. From the earliest generations of the

breed, Bulle Rock was sired by The Darley Arabian and foaled from a Byerley Turk mare. He raced successfully in England, winning or placing in multiple four-mile heat contests, before being imported to Virginia at age twenty-one. Brought to the Tidewater area by merchant mariner James Patton, the stallion was owned by Samuel Gist of Hanover County.

Bulle Rock was the first of many bred, or thoroughbred, stallions to journey from England to Virginia to provide the needed genetic variations to help create faster and stronger horses for racing in the colonies. Modern thoroughbred breeding practices mean that owners send their mares to the stallions, which remain on their farms for the breeding season, but in the colonial era, owners would send their stallions to a different farm or location each year, giving breeders access to the bloodlines they valued. The limitations of moving horses from place to place made this yearly relocation necessary. This enabled owners to breed more than one mare at a time since the stallion essentially came to them rather than the other way around. The renown of these stallions also led to another unique practice in colonial America.

The expansion of breeding and racing in Virginia was made possible by the regulation of the tobacco inspections, which expanded exports and brought the kind of prosperity to the area that enabled John Tayloe II to build his estate at Mount Airy.

Peytona and Fashion's Great Match by artist Charles Severyn and lithographer Henry R. Robinson, 1845, National Museum of American History, Harry T. Peters America on Stone collection (60.2818), Washington, D.C. <https://americanhistory.si.edu/blog/2012/05/off-to-the-races-in-1845.html>



Naming a thoroughbred in 2022 has specific rules: no more than eighteen characters and no duplicating the names of certain champions. You cannot name a foal Man o' War no matter how much you want to channel that immortal, and for good reason: such regulations prevent the confusion inherent in earlier generations. In the colonial era, horses would often be named for their sires: Morton's Traveller descended from an earlier Traveller and was succeeded by another Traveller, with their owners attaching their names to the horses to distinguish them from each other. Rather than American Pharoah or Secretariat, horses were Tayloe's Childers or Booth's Janus. Such a system of naming might have made sense at the time, helping to define a horse's bloodlines in short, but two centuries removed, modern rules prevent the confusion of reusing names and making the lives of researchers and historians far easier.

The story of America before and after the Revolution is told in the names and deeds of men who brought the ideas and diversions they valued from England to this new world. In the areas touched by the Rappahannock River lie the origins of America's first sport: horse racing. Meet the horses and the people that helped build this verdant land into a nursery for the sport we know today.

The John Tayloes

The quality of the Virginia breeds were such that they were sought by other English colonies by the beginning of the eighteenth century. The expansion of breeding and racing in Virginia was made possible by the regulation of the tobacco inspections, which expanded exports and brought the kind of prosperity to the area that enabled John Tayloe II to build his estate at Mount Airy.

Born into the third generation of the Tayloe family in the colonies, John Tayloe had made his fortune through investments in iron works and his plantations in Virginia and Maryland. In 1747, his son John Tayloe II inherited that fortune and more than 20,000 acres, including Tayloe's Quarter in Richmond County on the Rappahannock River. The next year, the younger Tayloe began construction of Mount Airy, a neo-Palladian home that is one of Virginia's surviving colonial mansions.

At Mount Airy, John Tayloe II continued his father's role as a gentleman planter and added a new pursuit: breeding thoroughbreds. Active in racing in the years preceding the American Revolution, he imported horses such as Childers and Jenny Cameron, which he sent to compete in a famed Maryland versus Virginia race including Benjamin Tasker's mare Selima. The offspring of



John Tayloe II portrait by John Wollaston. Photo by Tayloe Cook.
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foundation sire The Godolphin Arabian, Selima first came to the colonies in the care of Tasker, training at his Belair estate near Collington. Tasker accepted the challenge from William Byrd III, sending Selima to compete against Byrd's prized horse Tryal and John Tayloe II's Childers and Jenny Cameron. The prize was 2,500 pistoles, a rare, exorbitant prize in an era when the purse was often only thirty pistoles. Selima soundly beat her competitors, taking that huge purse with ease. After her racing career was done, a perfect two for two, Selima went on to produce ten foals, six for Tasker and four for Tayloe, who purchased the mare after her Maryland owner's 1760 death.

Among her foals for Tayloe was Spadille, purchased and relocated to North Carolina, where he became a prolific sire of quarter horses. Selima also produced Black Selima, a mare that never raced but brought Tayloe two of his best horses, Calypso and Tayloe's Bellair II. Selima lives on in the pedigrees of not just quarter horses but thoroughbreds as well.

In addition to building a stable and stud of quality at Mount Airy, John Tayloe II imbued a love for breeding and racing in his son, John Tayloe III, who improved on his father's legacy with imports that became part of the bedrock of American racing. As the colonies became a country, the family's political and financial connections allowed them to continue playing a role in the sport, picking up where they left off despite the devastation that the American Revolution had wrought on racing in those transitional years.

John Hoomes

Another of Caroline County's great planters was Colonel John Hoomes. His plantation, Bowling Green, featured a grand home that survives to this day, known as the Old Mansion, on 3,500 acres, where the family raised tobacco, corn, wheat, and barley. As did John Tayloe II and other contemporaries, Hoomes enjoyed breeding and racing thoroughbreds, even cutting a quarter-mile track on the Bowling Green lawn. In post-Revolution Virginia, he organized the Virginia Jockey Club and became a noted importer of both stallions and mares from England, including famed sire Diomed.

Diomed

Bred in England by Captain Richard Vernon, a prolific English breeder, Diomed made history twice in the annals of the sport of kings. Purchased by Sir Charles Bunbury, the colt boasted multiple connections to all three of the thoroughbred's foundation sires, a pedigree that was deep and desirable on two continents. As a three-year-old in 1780, Diomed won the first Epsom Derby, the progenitor to our own series of Derbies, including the Kentucky Derby. In his nineteen starts at age three and four, he won eleven times, finishing second four times and third three times. His later racing seasons were less successful, so he was retired to stud, where he had a few early successful foals but, by 1798, had fallen out of favor. That presented an opportunity for both John Tayloe III and his fellow breeder John Hoomes.

The American Revolution decimated breeding stock in Virginia. Racing had been suspended during the conflict and horses had been commandeered for the war effort, leaving formerly prominent breeders without stock to rebuild. Aside from Tayloe, few returned to breeding and racing, opening opportunities for newcomers such as Hoomes. With Diomed on the outs in England, Sir Charles Bunbury was willing to let the stallion go for any amount, so the Virginians were able to secure Diomed for fifty guineas, or \$250. The first Epsom

Derby winner arrived in June 1798 and immediately made an impression. Hoomes wrote to his friend John Tayloe III, praising Diomed's physique. At almost sixteen hands (sixty-four inches), this was a thoroughbred with stature and staying power that, even at age twenty-one, showed the quality that he would pass to his foals. He would stand at Hoomes's Bowling Green for his first season, with Tayloe sending several mares to the stallion. Then he was sold to Colonel Selden and partner Thomas Goode, who moved Diomed from farm to farm throughout the Roanoke Valley.

Despite his ignominious final years in England, Diomed remains a mainstay in that country's bloodstock. While his male offspring did not go on to become influential sires, his female offspring ensured that his name appears in pedigrees to this day. In America, he had the same kind of impact. He sired excellent racers, including the undefeated Ball's Florizel and Haynie's Maria and Duroc, the sire of American Eclipse, named for the great English horse Eclipse, which put together a similar dynamic career on the racetrack and at stud. Of the colts and fillies he would sire, one would go on to carry the name Diomed into the twenty-first century.

Sir Archy

Bred by John Tayloe III and Captain Archibald Randolph, Sir Archy boasted Diomed as his sire and another English import, the mare Castianira, as his dam. Originally named Robert Burns by Randolph, the colt



Alvan Fisher (American, 1792–1863), *Sir Archy by Diomed out of Castianira*, ca. 1823-25, Oil on canvas, 25¼" H x 35½" W

Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Gift of Mr. T. Kenneth Ellis, 76.33.2. Photo by Travis Fullerton. © Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

was renamed Sir Archy—or Sir Archie—by Tayloe when financial difficulties forced Randolph to sell his portion to Ralph Wormeley IV. Before Sir Archy started his racing career at age three, Tayloe also sold his portion to Wormeley.

He raced twice but was winless in both. Still, the colt had caught the attention of famed trainer William Ransom Johnson, who purchased the colt from Wormeley for \$1,500. He started eight times over two seasons, winning five of those. After his last race in North Carolina, Sir Archy was purchased by the state's governor, General William R. Davie for \$5,000. With no one willing to match their horses with Sir Archy, Davie retired him to stud. In all, the son of Diomed is credited with siring thirty-one champions, his influence extending long past that first generation as crossbreeding with his female offspring and other Diomed mares brought him even more success. Sir Archy cemented Diomed's influence on the American thoroughbred, a bloodline that remains extant in the twenty-first century.

By the time he died at age thirty-one, an exceptionally long life for a thoroughbred, Diomed was back in Hoomes's care at Bowling Green, his legacy secured, thanks to horses such as Sir Archy and generations of thoroughbreds that carry their names in their pedigrees.

The Cradle of Kings

The Tayloe family's Mount Airy in Richmond County boasts a field that was once a racetrack back when the John Tayloes were breeding the earliest generations of the American thoroughbred. There, a metal detector uncovered an unexpected object: a brass horseshoe with cleats, a relic from a bygone era. Lighter than iron, brass might have been one horseman's way

of gaining an advantage over his competition, a lightweight shoe comparable to the aluminum ones worn by racehorses today. It serves as a reminder of the sport's origins at places such as Mount Airy in Virginia's own Tidewater region.



Brass horseshoe from Mount Airy. Photo by Tayloe Emery.

In 2022, the Rappahannock River's influence on the American thoroughbred continues through the lines started by Diomed and Sir Archy and through descendants such as Boston, sire of Lexington, the nineteenth century's most prolific sire. Diomed's name also appears in the pedigrees of twelve of the thirteen Triple Crown winners, with Citation being the only one that is not descended from the legendary sire. From Man o' War to Native Dancer, Secretariat to American Pharoah, this lush area helped birth the sport of kings as we know it.

Virginia's Northern Neck continues to celebrate its heritage as a cradle of the American thoroughbred, where the state's rich heritage inspired the traditions that make the sport uniquely ours and created the bloodlines that owners worldwide value in this century and beyond.

Jennifer S. Kelly is a writer and journalist whose work has appeared in *TwinSpires*, *Paulick Report*, *The BloodHorse*, *America's Best Racing*, and *The Racing Biz*. She is the author of *Sir Barton and the Making of the Triple Crown* (2019) and *The Foxes of Belair: Gallant Fox, Omaha, and the Quest for the Triple Crown* (2023).





Upriver image of northern reach of Pissacoack.
Photo by Jeffrey Allenby, Chesapeake Conservancy.

Rappahannock Tribe Celebrates Return to Ancestral Land at Fones Cliffs

By John Page Williams

On Friday, April 1, several hundred people gathered at Kendale Farm in Essex County to celebrate the return of an iconic, 465-acre ancestral property to Virginia's Rappahannock Tribe. It is the lower end of Fones Cliffs, a spectacular four-mile-long curve of sparkling, 100-foot-high diatomite-sandstone bluffs in Richmond County on the Northern Neck, where Captain John Smith mapped the village of Pissacoack when he visited in August 1608.

The U.S. Department of Interior and the Chesapeake Conservancy consider the Cliffs an especially important cultural and historic site on the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail. Last year, the Commonwealth of Virginia officially designated a large section of the lower Rappahannock, including Fones Cliffs, as a State Scenic River.

Archaeologists have found evidence of Rappahannock settlements along portions of Fones Cliffs dating back at least a thousand years. The Rappahannock property adjoins an upriver parcel of the Cliffs that Capt. Smith appears to have mapped as Matchopeak. That is now part of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge. The Cliffs form the epicenter of extraordinarily rich habitat for wildlife, from Atlantic sturgeon,

river herring, shad, and rockfish (striped bass) to migratory waterfowl and furbearers like river otters and bobcats. The National Audubon Society has described the Fones Cliffs stretch of the Rappahannock as an "Important Bird Area" of "global significance" because the cliffs form a migration, resting, and staging area for countless numbers of migratory bird species. The National Geographic Society's map of "treasured landscapes" of the Chesapeake Bay prominently features Fones Cliffs as the sheltering site for the Mid-Atlantic's largest population of bald eagles, not only for nesting pairs but also for transients from up and down the Eastern Seaboard, including many juvenile birds. The Center for Conservation Biology describes Fones Cliffs as one of the most important sites for eagles on the east coast and a critical concentration area for the iconic



Downriver image of Pissacoack, extending south from Garland Creek marsh.
Photo by Jeffrey Allenby, Chesapeake Conservancy.

birds, which the Rappahannock People consider *Prayer Messengers*.

For several years, waterfowl biologists with the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (VDWR) have used the large freshwater marshes in the Fones stretch of the Rappahannock to capture and band migratory waterfowl as part of a multi-state tracking and monitoring program, which assesses the population of migratory waterfowl species on the Atlantic Flyway. They include tundra swans, American black ducks, blue and green wing teal, pintails, mallards, gadwalls, ring bills, common and hooded mergansers, and large numbers of Canada geese. VDWR, the Virginia Institute of Marine Science, and the Virginia Marine Resources Commission have all recognized that Fones Cliffs and its adjacent wetlands on both sides of the river are critical components of a fragile, integrated tidal-freshwater

ecosystem that hosts rare and threatened plant life in addition to its fish and waterfowl.

The April 1 celebration began with the deep, rich tones of the Rappahannock Tribe's Maskapow Drum Group punctuating the

harmonies of sacred call-and-response singing, an opening prayer from Tribal Emcee Jerry Fortune, and a Welcome from Chief G. Anne Richardson, for whom this day was another crucial step in returning the Cliffs to their Indigenous People. She

Pictured left to right: Richard Remmer, Member of the Angle family, U.S. Secretary of the Interior, Deb Haaland, Dr. Carol Remmer Angle, Chief Anne Richardson, Rappahannock Tribe, and Joel Dunn, President and CEO, Chesapeake Conservancy. Photo by Tami Heilemann, DOI.



thanked “The Ancestors who worked so hard for this restoration but never lived to see it. This is a surreal, wonderful day.”

Joining the celebration were members of the broad partnership that came together to bring the property back into Rappahannock ownership, including the U.S. Secretary of the Interior, Deb Haaland, herself a member of the Pueblo of Laguna tribe of New Mexico. “This historic reacquisition underscores how tribes, private landowners, and other stakeholders all play a central role in this administration’s work to ensure our conservation efforts are locally led and support communities’ health and well-being,” she said. The partners in the acquisition included not only the Rappahannock Tribe and the Department of the Interior, but also nonprofits The Chesapeake Conservancy, The Wilderness Society, Acres for America (a partnership between the Walmart Foundation and the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation), and most importantly, the family of William Dodge Angle, M.D. and Dr. Carol Remmer Angle, whose generous donation ensured adequate funding for the acquisition. The other member of the partnership warranting special recognition is the family of Ben Morris, owners of the property, who initiated discussions with the Rappahannock Tribe and whose generosity and commitment

to conservation led to the Tribe’s reacquisition of its ancestral land.

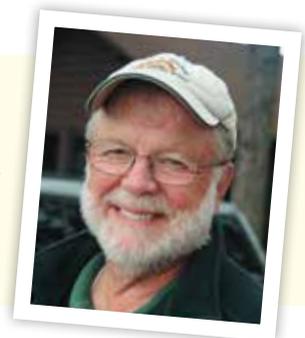
The Rappahannock people have long considered the river as a bridge connecting the land on both sides, not dividing it. In fact, the huge Beverley Marsh, on the Essex side of the river inside of the channel’s curve opposite the Cliffs, offered a breadbasket of natural foods for the villages of Pissacoack, Matchopeak, and Wecuppom, the Cliff community furthest upriver. A 2013 study of the Beverley marsh found exceptional diversity—143 distinct species—combined with great ecological richness. The family that owns the marsh (and who hosted the April celebration) placed it into a conservation easement nearly fifty years ago. It is very much a part of the conserved “String of Pearls” that makes this river such a rich natural resource today.

The Cliffs celebration was the third for federally recognized Virginia Native tribes in just a few months. At the end of December, the Chickahominy Tribe took back ownership of Mamanahunt, a long peninsula in the lower portion of their native river. In March, the Monacan Tribe saved its ancestral capital, Rassawek, at the confluence of the James and Rivanna Rivers from a pumping station for public water. Nevertheless, as Chief Anne Richardson vowed on Friday, “we are not done here yet.” While the two largest sections of Fones Cliffs

south of Carters Wharf are now protected by the Tribe’s ownership and an earlier acquisition by USFWS, the rest of the Cliffs stretching to the north remains mired in a nasty Gordian knot of ownership disputes, litigation, and environmental abuse surrounding Virginia True, a corporation, now in bankruptcy, that proposed a massive development. The partnership celebrated last Friday will remain engaged, along with others including the Essex County Conservation Alliance, Friends of the Rappahannock, and the Chesapeake Bay Foundation who have worked to conserve Fones Cliffs since the 1990s. The Tribe plans to use the Pissacoack property in its Return to the River environmental education program for its young members. In addition, the property will become publically accessible in time, with a replica 16th century village where members of the Tribe will educate visitors in tribal history and lifeways for subsisting in harmony with the land and water.

Stay tuned, and in the meantime, go visit Fones Cliffs from the river. As it happens, VDWR owns and manages Carters Wharf, a public landing right in the middle of the cliffs. Visit at any time. There’s always plenty to see from land, but if you happen to bring along a canoe, kayak, or outboard skiff, so much the better. You’ll experience for yourself what that joyous April celebration was all about.

John Page Williams was raised in Richmond and retired in 2019 from the Chesapeake Bay Foundation after a long career working as a naturalist and field educator on streams, creeks, rivers, and open Bay throughout the Chesapeake watershed in Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania. As he has also done for many years, he continues to review powerboats and write on fishing and environmental issues for *BOATING*, *Chesapeake Bay*, and *Virginia Wildlife* magazines.





The Historic Homes of Essex County, Virginia:

If Walls Could Talk

Story and Photos by Karin Andrews

There is something so special and wonderfully captivating about Essex County. Perhaps it is our people and our intense love of place. Perhaps it is the Rappahannock River as it winds its way past the scenic duck marshes of Upper Essex and Fones Cliffs toward Tappahannock, Lower Essex, and the Chesapeake Bay. Numerous tidal and inland waterways traverse Essex, including Hoskins Creek, Piscataway Creek, Mount Landing Creek, Occupacia Creek, a myriad of minor creeks, and the Great Dragon Run.



Located in the Millers Tavern Historic District, Woodlawn-Sandy is the earliest historic home in the district, having been built around 1770. Also known as The Circus House, Woodlawn-Sandy was once the winter home of the Johnny Jones Exposition, a traveling train circus.

With that said, I would add that our historic treasures and icons, surrounded by rolling pastoral landscapes, ancient boxwood, towering magnolias, rivers of daffodils, and glorious ancient gardens, are also the essence of what makes Essex County like no other in the region.

I often wonder if the artisans, tradespeople, indentured servants, and enslaved individuals who helped build these architectural treasures and historic icons ever contemplated the importance of their work and the legacy that they would leave behind. Although many of these artisans, designers, and builders are unknown to us by name, we recognize their voice, or signature, in the body of their work. Others, whose work is well documented, have left an architectural record that is unmistakable.

A Case in Point

Having been at a property in King George across the river from Upper Essex several months ago, I could not help but notice the similarities between the classical interior moldings there and those at other properties that I have visited, through the years, in Essex and other counties in the region. I recognized immediately the work of William Buckland, which survives to the present day at Brookes Bank, Elmwood, Blandfield, in various properties on the Northern Neck including Sabine Hall, and of course, at Gunston Hall, the home of George Mason. The similarities were unmistakable. Buckland, originally from Oxford, England, emigrated to Virginia in 1755. He was indentured to George Mason and completed the interiors at Gunston Hall, which are breathtaking and among the finest in the nation. It is documented that he was later working in our region, which explains the many similarities found at numerous properties in Upper Essex, the Northern Neck and beyond. His design voice is still speaking to us. His signature is evident.

Historic Districts and Place Names

In the various historic districts found in Essex County, there are several profoundly similar properties, in each region, all built within years of one another, most likely by the same artisans and builders. Their work speaks for itself. From the great river estates to the colonial manor houses, tidewater vernacular plantation houses, the lovely homes of the federal, antebellum, victorian, and country place eras, Essex County is home to a swoon-worthy plethora of spectacularly diverse historic properties that have stood the test of time with the dignity, elegance, and grace that can only be imparted with age. Their continuance is reassuring. Their place names often roll off the tongue like poetry and make our hearts beat a little bit faster at just the mention of their names. These sacred places are inextricably intertwined with the individuals and families who inhabited and created them, in the prevailing culture of the day. They cannot and should not be judged according to our standards today but for the treasures that they are. These old places inspire us and instill in us a sense of awe at the attention to detail of their period moldings, HL hinges, hand-blown glass windowpanes, Flemish, American, and English bond brickwork, classical design elements, and the breathtaking landscape that they are brilliantly set upon. The fact that these historic treasures are still standing is a testament to the quality of construction used back in the day. They were built to last.

The historic homes of Essex County have been privy to the whispers of war, life-altering events, weddings, funerals, joyous celebrations, intrigue,

“I often wonder if the artisans, tradespeople, indentured servants, and enslaved individuals who helped build these architectural treasures and historic icons ever contemplated the importance of their work and the legacy that they would leave behind.” —Karin Andrews

the birth of children and the profoundest grief. Each one has a story to tell. Although much has changed through the ages, they have borne witness to it all. If only their walls could talk. What stories they could tell.



Cherry Walk, circa 1795



Old Customs House, circa 1750



Woodlawn, circa 1770

Sadly, we have lost some of our great historic treasures such as Kinloch, Bellevue, Bathurst, Monument Place, the Daingerfield House, Mt. Clement, Paynefield, Poplar Springs, the Riverside Hotel, and numerous others to fire, neglect, or destruction. We have many more, however, that remain due to the care and commitment of dedicated stewards in ages past and in the present. There are so many, in fact, that the Essex County Museum and Historical Society published *Essex County Virginia Historic Homes* in 2002, to continue the Green Book tradition that had been established decades before by the Women’s Club of Essex County.

Although many homes have been or are currently in the process of being restored and preserved, there is still much work to do and awareness to create. Fortunately, wonderful treasures such as Rose Hill (Hundley), the Derieux House, Greenfield, Woodville, Holly Springs, Oakalona, Blandfield, Ben Lomond, Aspen Grove, Woodland, Brookes Bank, Elmwood, Fonthill, Linden, Glencairn, Poverty Ridge, Edenetta, Monte Verde, Bowlers, Wheatland, Port Micou, Southland, Enfield, Thornbury, Riverview, Rose Hill (Dunn) Lilly Mount, Beaver’s Hill, Cherry Walk, Shelba, Woodlawn-Sandy, Woodlawn Tribble, Johnville, Greenway Plantation, Little Greenway, Rockland, Woodville, Retreat, the Tribble-Roane House, the Ritchie House, the Old Customs House, Mahockney, Emerson’s Ordinary, Little Egypt, the McCall-Brokenbrough House, Anderton House, and others, too numerous to mention, still remain. They are all important and have much to tell us, including much that we can apply to our own lives today.

The Road Less Traveled

There is great satisfaction to be had with the restoration of a historic structure that has already stood the test of time. It is often the road less traveled, but it is the ultimate in sustainable housing. The historic homes of Essex from every era, whether large or small, are worthy of continuance and preservation. Currently, there are several homes and properties, in various stages of restoration, that I represented this past year in Essex County. They include Cherry Walk (circa 1795), Emerson’s Ordinary (circa 1712), Berry Hill (circa 1850), and Woodlawn (Sandy), (circa 1770). Included in this article (with permission) are also photos of Ben Lomond circa 1730, the Old Customs House circa 1750 and Woodville, which dates to the late 17th century.

Cherry Walk, circa 1795

According to DHR, this beautiful Dutch gambrel tidewater plantation house was built around 1795, by Revolutionary War hero Carter Croxton, who is buried onsite. Anecdotal evidence attributes Cherry Walk (previously Cherry Row) to an earlier build date of 1780.

In the 1980's this home underwent a monumental restoration by its previous owners, who also protected the property in perpetuity. Purchased by new stewards in 2021, both the main house and gardens are being restored and updated under the guidance of the Virginia Department of Historic Resources and the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. Cherry Walk is one of the finest and rarest examples of an actual tidewater plantation-farm complex with many of its original dependencies, including a blacksmith shop, original kitchen, smokehouse, and privy still intact. It is on the national register of historic places with its rural lands protected in perpetuity by a conservation easement.

This property was purchased in the latter part of 2021. Currently undergoing restoration and updating. Built by Revolutionary War hero Carter Croxton who is buried on the property. He declined to have a head stone made as he maintained that that his work in life and Cherry Walk to be his monument. Interiors here are much more primitive than at nearby Woodlawn-Sandy. All original outbuildings remain.



Emerson's Ordinary, circa 1712

This very special property, circa 1710–1712, is of profound significance and importance in the Tappahannock Historic District where it has functioned as an ordinary, tavern and private home. It has seen the founding of a nation, endured numerous wars, and is said to have been a meeting site for members of the Sons of Liberty. The Ordinary, as it is known in these parts, was purchased earlier this year by the owners and proprietors of the Essex Inn, who plan to return it to use as an upscale tavern and restaurant. From the back porch of the Essex Inn (also known as Tribble-Roane House), the Ordinary is the only building that can be seen from that vantage point. It is especially fitting that it is being returned to its original use as an extension of the Inn. None of this could have been possible without the vision of, and stabilization by, its previous owner, George Jennings, who saved this rare and iconic property (along with Jimmy Balderson of Ritchie House fame) for future generations.

Full restoration underway by the owners and proprietors of the Essex Inn. The Ordinary will be returned to use as an upscale Tavern-Restaurant.





Berry Hill, circa 1820

Previously known as Holly Wood, this brick-side-hall-plan home was built on a high hill near present-day Bray’s Fork. Bricks made onsite were laid in Flemish bond and American bond brick over a high English basement with three full living levels and a fourth level that serves as an attic. This intriguing property possesses beautifully carved interior moldings, tall mantels and original heart pine floors, with each room having a different theme. Similar embellishments are found in several other historic properties throughout the region.

James Roy Micou, Jr., who was clerk of the Essex County Court for over fifty years, purchased Berry Hill from the Pilcher family around 1854, renaming it Holly Wood. Craig Hardy, one of the previous owners of Berry Hill, is actively engaged in the field of historic preservation in Kentucky. He noted that Berry Hill, aka Holly Wood faced the thoroughbred horse track, which was at the bottom of the hill at Mt. Clement, instead of the Rappahannock River. Other examples of this orientation include Newmarket in Caroline County, and Old Mansion at Bowling Green, both of which faced the location of the old horse track and not the Mattaponi River. “It is hard to imagine now, but in the early 19th century, Virginia was the hot bed of thoroughbred horse racing. Gold plate winning thoroughbred horses, such as Fearnought and Diomed, were shipped directly from England to Tidewater, Virginia. The Tayloes of Mount Airy, the Bayers of Newmarket and the Hoomes of Old Mansion imported the blood lines that are still in Kentucky Derby winners to this day. The track at Tappahannock was at the heart of it.”

In the spring of 2022, Berry Hill entered a new chapter as its new owners/ stewards, who attended our annual ECCA Meeting, will be undertaking a painstaking restoration, with the assistance of Susan Reed of the renowned Glavé Holmes firm in Richmond.



The new owners of Berry Hill will be undertaking a painstaking restoration with the assistance of the reknowned Glavé Holmes firm in Richmond.

Woodlawn-Sandy's new owner/steward, who has owned numerous historic properties, plans to enjoy a quiet country life here in Essex County while further improving this lovely historic treasure.



Woodlawn (Sandy), circa 1770

Located in the Millers Tavern Historic District, Woodlawn Sandy is the earliest historic home in the district, having been built around 1770. Shelba, Cherry Walk, Adam Spring, Retreat, Woodfarm and Woodlawn-Sandy were built in the Dutch gambrel style along with other homes in the historic district. Originally constructed by members of the Wood family, Woodlawn-Sandy was the home of Captain P. A. Sandy of Civil War fame. Located on the property are memorial grave markers of Captain Sandy, his wife, and daughter.

Also known as The Circus House, Woodlawn-Sandy was once the winter home of the Johnny Jones Exposition, a traveling train circus. The large metal barn, which housed Nellie the Elephant and numerous other circus animals, still remains and awaits restoration. Priscilla, the monkey woman, who was a well-documented celebrity in her day, lived at Woodlawn-Sandy during the 1940s with her husband, the alligator man. It is said that during the holidays the large circus speakers were employed to bring Christmas cheer to the countryside.

Two previous owners have contributed immensely to the stabilization, restoration, and continuance of Woodlawn-Sandy, which is an absolute showplace, rivaling other properties in the region for its beauty and understated elegance. Although none of the original dependencies exist, a new kitchen dependency was built on the site of the original one. A charming and spacious guest cottage was also added to the property from two reclaimed buildings. Thanks to the work of the Johnston and Wyatt families, Woodlawn-Sandy was a fully updated, fully restored property at the time of purchase. Her new owner/steward, who has owned numerous historic properties, plans to enjoy a quiet country life here in Essex County while further improving this lovely historic treasure.





Ben Lomond, circa 1730

BEN LOMOND

Dunnsville, Virginia
Purchased in October 2014.

I represented the Sellers in their offering of this rare and iconic property in lower Essex and was also a caretaker of this great 7800+ sq. ft. manor house with swimming pool and glorious grounds on 40.63 acres. It is still a breathtaking property and has been featured in Virginia Living magazine along with Craig and Zorine Shirley and their family. They have become wonderful friends since their purchase and such wonderful members of our community.



Woodville, late 17th-century



The Old Customs House, circa 1750

THE OLD CUSTOMS HOUSE (ALSO KNOWN AS WHITLOCK'S ORDINARY)

Tappahannock, Virginia

The Old Customs House is one of the most iconic properties in the Tappahannock Historic District with a commanding presence overlooking Tappahannock's Waterfront. In 1766 Thomas Whitlock was the proprietor of a Tavern/Ordinary, here, which catered to the area's Gentry. Imagine the activity and conversations that might have taken place here during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when Tappahannock was a bustling harbor. In 1800, Lawrence Muse purchased this striking and statuesque property from Archibald Ritchie and Thomas Hodgson for the purpose of collecting Customs at the Port of Tappahannock. It was the ideal location and has since been known as The Customs House. It has been occupied by notable citizens and families throughout the centuries and was the home of Allen Douglas Latane', Clerk of the Essex County Court in the 1930's and Editor of the Rappahannock Times during WWII. As with all of the historic homes in Essex County, volumes could be written about this iconic historic treasure, chain of title and the events that transpired here throughout the ages.

The Old Customs House at 109 Prince Street, Tappahannock, Virginia, is currently offered for purchase at \$595,000. Contact Karin Andrews (Listing Agent) for Details.

WOODVILLE

Tappahannock, Virginia

Woodville is one of the oldest homes in Essex County still in-tact. Dating to the late 17th Century, it was built by members of the Wood family of Essex County who built five homes in Essex, all of which still remain. In 1989 a large wing was added, creating an "L". It is beautifully appointed with heart pine floors, beautiful moldings and mantels that were saved from Monument Place before it was razed by the Town of Tappahannock. Thank you to Meredith Tribble and her father, Charlie Tribble, for their invitation to photograph Woodville for inclusion in this article. An entire volume could be written about Woodville and the other homes built by the Wood Family of Essex County, which include: Woodlawn-Sandy, Woodfarm, Woodlawn-Tribble and Shelba.

Karin Andrews is a resident of Essex County, having grown up in Lower Essex, near Montague. With a background as an accomplished Architectural Illustrator, Fine Artist/ Muralist, Photographer, Horsewoman and Writer with over 55 nationally and regionally published articles, Karin possesses a unique and unrivaled skill-set that has enabled her to represent her clients in a manner that is unequalled in the industry. She is married to Essex County native William Forrest Andrews, who is her partner in Life and Real Estate. Together they live in Upper Essex, at Oakland Farm and have two daughters, Caroline and Kristen. Karin is a strong advocate for the ECCA, Historic Preservation and Conservation. She is passionate about old homes and gardens, breathtaking water views, rolling pastoral landscapes and all things Essex. For more information about Karin, please visit her blog site at www.historicwaterfrontandequestrianinva.com.



Tax Benefits Regarding Conservation Easement Donations

By Todd Hochrein

There is money hidden on your farmland. You don't have to harvest crops or cut trees to get it. If you'd like some cash but don't want to sell property or borrow against it, there are some excellent tax benefits that can be gained from placing a conservation easement on your property in Virginia in 2022. While there may be material estate tax savings and some potential property tax savings, the most significant tax benefits are as follows:

1. The state of Virginia will provide a landowner with a Virginia income tax credit equal to 40 percent of the easement value. These credits can be used in place of paying the state of Virginia income tax, or they can be sold for cash.
2. The IRS will allow the landowner an income tax deduction for 60 percent of the easement value. If you're a qualifying farmer (more than half of your gross income is from farming or timbering), you can deduct up to 100 percent of your gross income with the easement gift. If you're not a qualifying farmer, you can deduct up to 50 percent of your gross income with the easement gift. Any deduction you don't use in the first year may be carried forward for up to fifteen years, or until the full deduction has been used up.

Let's create an example. Say you have a 200-acre farm. A conservation easement appraiser reviews your property and determines that the land is currently worth \$5,000 per acre. At the same time, the appraiser determines the value of your property with a conservation easement on it is \$2,500 per acre. With the easement, you gave up \$2,500 per acre x 200 acres, or \$500,000. So, your easement value is \$500,000. Please see the table and narrative below to explain the tax benefits in more detail:

1. The Virginia income tax credit is 40 percent of the easement value, or \$200,000. If you can use the credit yourself, you'll save \$200,000 in payments to the state of Virginia. However, most Virginia taxpayers don't owe very much in state taxes. Fortunately, the Virginia tax credit is fully transferrable. If you sell your credit, you can expect to net 75 to 80 percent after broker and transfer fees. This would be a cash payment to you of approximately \$160,000. This payment may be taxable at the IRS level, depending upon your tax situation and when you sell the credit.
2. The IRS Federal Tax Deduction is 60 percent of the easement value, or \$300,000. If your adjusted gross income is \$100,000 per year and you're a farmer, you can deduct \$100,000 each year for three years (and pay \$0 to Uncle Sam). If you are in the 25 percent tax bracket, this deduction will save you \$25,000 in IRS tax payments each year for the next three years. That's a total savings of \$75,000 in federal tax payments.

Pre-easement per acre value	\$5,000
Post-easement per acre value	<u>\$2,500</u>
Easement value per acre.....	\$2,500
Property acreage.....	<u>200</u>
Easement value.....	\$500,000
Virginia tax credits (40 percent of easement value).....	\$200,000
Payment percentage net of broker and transfer fees	<u>80%</u>
Expected cash payment from tax credit sale*	\$160,000
*this amount may be taxable	
Federal tax deduction (60 percent of easement value).....	\$300,000
Estimated tax rate	<u>25%</u>
Anticipated tax savings over time	\$75,000
Total estimated federal and state tax benefits	<u>\$235,000</u>

Tax planning strategies should be considered prior to placing a conservation easement on your property. For example, if you are selling grain, livestock, or property with a low basis, you may want to do an easement in the same year to help offset the taxable gain. Also, holding the credit

for one year may provide a lower tax rate on the gain from sale. Because everyone's tax situation is different, you should consult with your tax professionals prior to placing an easement on your property.

The transferrable Virginia tax credit has been in place since 2002.

The credit may change or go away completely in future years based on potential legislative action by the General Assembly. The federal deduction is also at risk of changing due to possible legislative action by Congress.

Todd Hochrein founded the Virginia Conservation Credit Exchange, LLC in 2004 to help landowners protect their family farms and property. Since then, Todd has helped over 600 landowners donate conservation easements. Todd has a BS in Business Administration and a MBA from the University of Richmond. When not spending time with his family, Todd enjoys flying, fly fishing, and bike riding.



WHY BECOME A SPONSOR OF THE ESSEX COUNTY CONSERVATION ALLIANCE?

[There are at Least a Dozen Reasons]

- 1) ECCA is dedicated to Essex County's economic and cultural wellbeing.
- 2) ECCA is committed to preserving the rural landscapes and river that define Essex County.
- 3) ECCA promotes policies to preserve farmland and timber interests – Essex County's main economic drivers.
 - 4) ECCA encourages the county's treasured hunting tradition, which depends on its woodlands, open spaces, wetlands and marshes.
- 5) ECCA supports fishing interests that depend on healthy tributaries and a healthy Rappahannock River.
 - 6) ECCA recognizes the Rappahannock River as a major recreational asset and a magnet for tourism to support the county's economy.
- 7) ECCA advocates for a strong county comprehensive plan to encourage growth and development close to the Town of Tappahannock and to preserve the county's rich farming tradition.
 - 8) ECCA is uniquely situated to address serious outside threats to Essex County and the Rappahannock River, including unsustainable development and fracking.
 - 9) ECCA promotes the use of Conservation Easements to benefit landowners and to preserve the county's rural character.
 - 10) ECCA is securing state and national Rural Historic District designations for areas in Essex County that retain historic structures and landscapes.
- 11) ECCA champions the long and rich history of Essex County and the Town of Tappahannock.
- 12) ECCA publishes an annual magazine with excellent articles dedicated to Essex County.

ECCA Board Financial Report

By Margaret J. Smith, Treasurer

On behalf of the Directors, thank you for your continued generosity of the last year. The support of our members allows the ECCA to realize our mission of educating landowners on the options available to them through conservation easements and additional outreach aimed at preserving our natural and historic resources.

18.88% percent of Essex County is now under easement through our collective efforts, more than any other tidal county along the Rappahannock River. In 2021, donors supported the ECCA at their highest levels ever

with more than \$73,000 in individual and corporate donations. Your generous gifts over the past year have allowed our organization to upgrade our computer equipment, support organizations in Essex County including the Tappahannock Main Street Program and continue to fund the programs and publications critical to our mission.

Thank you for your continued support, and we ask you to please remember the ECCA as you contemplate giving through the remainder of the year.

Thank You for Supporting ECCA in 2021

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ESSEX COUNTY
CONSERVATION ALLIANCE

Post Office Box 356, TAPPAHANNOCK, VIRGINIA 22560

The eagle photograph below by Bill Portlock was featured on the program cover of the April 1, 2022, Rappahannock Tribe of Virginia's celebration of the tribe's return to their ancestral homeland on the Rappahannock River. Pictured is the tribe's seal.



CHIEF ANNE RICHARDSON:

"It is difficult to put into words how much it means to our people to walk in the footsteps of our ancestors, who were driven from these very lands nearly 400 years ago. Their spirits remain here, and we will remember and respect them, as we do the eagles, plants, and wildlife that thrive here. We were a river people then and will continue to be river people in the future.

Return to the River is important on two fronts: to provide leadership skills and providing traditional cultural knowledge of the river to tribal youth, and to introduce visitors to our culture and educate them about our history and our future. We want Pissacoack, the name we have restored for this property, to be a welcoming place of learning and inspiration."

