



Hog Island © Hal Brindley

Our Mission

The mission of The Nature Conservancy is to preserve the plants, animals and natural communities that represent the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive.

Where We Work

The Conservancy works in all 50 states and 28 countries around the globe, including Canada, Mexico, Australia and countries throughout the Asia Pacific region, the Caribbean and Latin America. In Virginia, the Conservancy has protected more than 220,000 acres of land in the Clinch Valley, Roanoke Headwaters, Virginia Coast Reserve, Piedmont, Allegheny Highlands, Green Sea and Southern Rivers.

Our Origins

The Conservancy emerged from a professional association of ecologists seeking to turn their knowledge of nature into positive action for conservation. Incorporated as a nonprofit organization in 1951, the Conservancy completed its first land acquisition with a modest 60-acre purchase in New York. For the past four decades, The Nature Conservancy in Virginia has been the state's leading private conservation nonprofit.

Setting Priorities

The Conservancy protects places where plant and animal species can survive for generations to come. We employ a scientific, systematic approach to identify places large enough in scale and rich enough in plant and animal species to ensure long-term conservation. Priorities are set within ecoregions—large areas with similar geology, soils, climate and vegetation. Seven ecoregions overlap Virginia: the Chesapeake Bay Lowlands, Piedmont, Northern Piedmont, Mid-Atlantic Coastal Plain, Central Appalachian Forest, Southern Blue Ridge and Cumberlands and Southern Ridge & Valley.

How We Work

We use a range of conservation methods tailored to local needs. We buy land. We help willing landowners manage their properties. We collaborate with like-minded organizations. We facilitate public-private partnerships. We achieve lasting conservation by encouraging ecologically sound legislative action, working with public agencies on conservation planning and using voluntary land preservation tools. Employing these approaches, we preserve the diversity of life on Earth for future generations.

The Urgency

Development surges in Virginia, especially in pristine, once-remote areas. The need for action is urgent. Since 1992, nearly 400,000 acres of forests have vanished. Half of the Chesapeake Bay's forested shorelines, most of its wetlands, nearly 70 percent of its underwater grasses and more than 98 percent of its oyster population has disappeared—primarily in the last century.

To learn more about our work in Virginia, visit us on the web at: nature.org/virginia

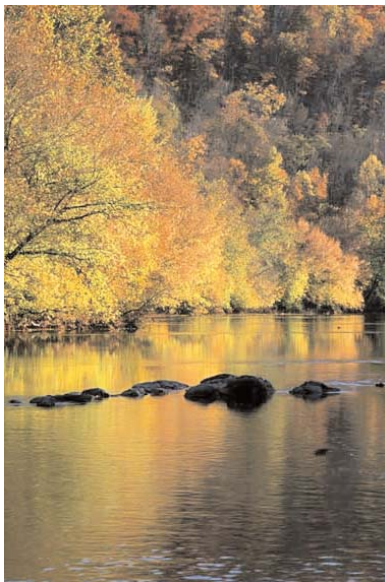


Virginia Coast Reserve ©Hal Brindley

The Clinch Valley

The Clinch Valley, which covers 2,200 square miles, has the “highest concentration of imperiled species on the mainland U.S.,” according to *Precious Heritage: The Status of Biodiversity in the United States*. In the past 10 years, the Conservancy and its partners have protected habitat sustaining about 70 percent of the region’s 32 endangered species. Our success results from focusing on the Clinch River system, which contains more at-risk fish and mussel species than any other river in the U.S.

The Clinch Valley’s lands and waters-vital to local economies-are threatened by abandoned coal mine lands, non-sustainable farming and forestry practices and toxic chemical spills. The Conservancy has joined with hundreds of local partners to prevent spills, improve farming, restore abandoned coal mine lands, upgrade sewage treatment plants and create a network of sustainable river communities.



Clinch Valley ©Byron Jorjorian

The Virginia Coast Reserve

For more than 30 years, the Conservancy has been preserving the East Coast’s last expanse of coastal wilderness-the Virginia Coast Reserve. An extraordinary example of a naturally functioning coastal environment, the unsullied area looks much the way it must have hundreds of years ago: a narrow finger of land interlaced by tidal creeks and surrounded by bays, marshes and barrier islands.

Here, migratory shorebirds, waterfowl and wading birds thrive in marshes and mudflats. The marshes also act as nurseries for fish and shellfish. On the mainland, the shoreline forests near the Shore’s southern tip provides one of the most important staging areas on the East Coast for neotropical songbirds and raptors during fall migration. Productive farms and forests buffer the adjoining coastline wilderness. The Conservancy is using innovative tools and science to protect the Eastern Shore, while building partnerships with public agencies and local communities. The Conservancy has protected more than 40,000 acres on the Eastern Shore.

The Piedmont

The Conservancy’s initial land acquisitions in the state were in the Piedmont many years ago, including sites in the Potomac Gorge and Wildcat Mountain Natural Area in Fauquier County, the group’s first preserve in Virginia.

The Conservancy is undertaking a major program in this densely populated plateau that runs from northern Virginia through the middle of the state, between the Blue Ridge Mountains and the coastal plain. The rolling hills, fertile farmland and hardwood forests form an historic landscape that recalls the beginning of the American republic. Today the Piedmont is one of the fastest-growing regions in the nation. Roads divide the landscape. Farms and forests give way to subdivisions. Little by little the rural character of these lands and waters is disappearing.

The Conservancy has started its work within the Rivanna River watershed, home to some of the best remaining hardwood forests in the Piedmont. The Rivanna River hosts high-quality habitat for several mussel species, including the endangered James Spynymussel. The Conservancy has already helped protect nearly 10,000 acres in the Piedmont.

The Allegheny Highlands

The newest of The Nature Conservancy's project areas, the Allegheny Highlands teem with diverse life—from dwarf pines to hardwoods, mountain laurel to blazing wildflowers. In 2002, the Conservancy acquired more than 9,000 acres on and around Warm Springs Mountain adjacent to the historic Homestead resort in the heart of the Allegheny Highlands. The site has been identified as one of the most biologically significant, privately owned forest blocks in the entire ecoregion. It connects with federal and state lands to the east and west, providing a significant roadless wildlife greenway.

The Conservancy works in close partnership with managers of surrounding public lands, most notably the Warm Springs District of George Washington National Forest, which shares a 13-mile boundary with the Conservancy. The effect will be to stitch together critical habitats for wide-ranging animals such as migratory songbirds and raptors, and black bears.

The Chesapeake Rivers

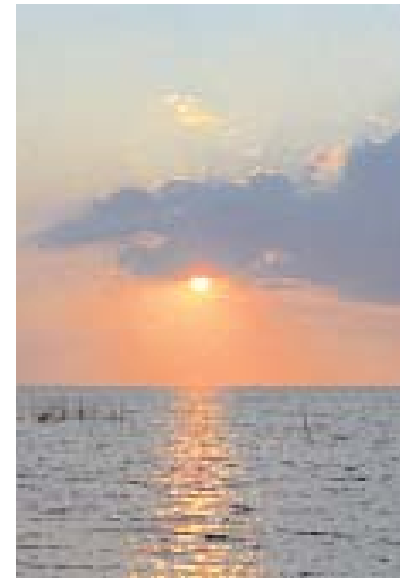
For about 15 years the Conservancy has been working to protect the Chesapeake Rivers four undeveloped, free-flowing river systems—the Rappahannock, Mattaponi and Pamunkey rivers and Dragon Run. They represent some of the most pristine examples of tidal freshwater systems remaining in the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem and along the eastern seaboard. Rare and endangered plant species, high quality freshwater marshes and bottomland hardwoods, and nesting grounds for bald eagles and other waterfowl are found here. The Conservancy works closely with partners to help restore areas of the Chesapeake Bay, including blue crab and American Shad nurseries, native oysters and submerged aquatic vegetation.

About 15 million people rely on this environment. Freshwater withdrawals by surrounding urban populations threaten the region. Working closely with local individuals and groups whose land ethic has sheltered much of this area for 400 years is central to the Conservancy's effort. With more than 5,000 acres in these watersheds already protected, the Conservancy is stepping up its work with public agencies to monitor and study the ecosystem and to create adaptive water withdrawal management strategies.

The Southern Rivers

This area west of the Great Dismal Swamp contains a third of the state's non-tidal wetlands. Here swamps support centuries-old cypress trees and the northernmost example of longleaf pine savannas. This natural community once dominated the southeastern U.S. from Virginia to Texas but is in decline. Only about 1,000 acres of this habitat remain in Virginia. As the longleaf has disappeared, so too has an important species it shelters—the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker.

The Conservancy is building on the successful protection of approximately 20 red-cockaded woodpeckers at its 2,700-acre Piney Grove Preserve. Through various means, including partnerships with timber companies and landowners, the Conservancy helps protect both the pine savanna, the species it sustains, and the livelihoods of those who own the land



Chesapeake Bay ©Mary Porter

The Green Sea

The surveyor William Byrd coined the expression "Green Sea" in 1728 upon encountering a field of windswept cane in the 700,000-acre wetland that runs east from the Great Dismal Swamp to Virginia Beach and south to Albemarle Sound. The area contains the East Coast's largest contiguous forest and supports nearly 100 plant and animal species, ranging from the Atlantic White Cedar to the tiny Dismal Swamp shrew.

The Conservancy first began protecting land here through a gift of some 49,000 acres in the Great Dismal Swamp (since transferred to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) and has been working with individuals and public agencies to expand the protected area. A growing population in the Hampton Roads area imperils the only corridor through which wildlife can migrate from the Great Dismal Swamp to eastern preserves.

For more information, contact David Dadurka, senior media relations manager for The Nature Conservancy in Virginia, at **(301) 897-8570** or **ddadurka@tnc.org**.