



## 2017 General Assembly Update

**March 15, 2017**

The General Assembly adjourned, as scheduled, on February 25, 2017; the legislature returns for one day on April 5 to act on the Governor's proposed amendments and vetoes to both general legislation and the budget.

For perspective, a reminder of VIRGINIAforever's successes over the last two years:

- 2015: \$20.7 M for land conservation, water quality, agriculture BMPs
- 2016: \$201 M for land conservation water quality, agriculture BMPs – *an especially successful year, given a major bond issue (note: bond issue was aimed at State Parks' infrastructure, not land acquisition or water quality improvements)*

In 2017, the Governor and General Assembly had a \$1.5 B budget shortfall to close, so VIRGINIAforever's expectations for funding increases were tempered, especially as the Governor proposed significant cuts to balance the budget, including cuts to VIRGINIAforever priorities.

- 2017: a mixed bag, simplified as follows:
  - \$16 M for Ag BMPs (some existing money, some money transferred from one account to another)
  - \$1 M for Battlefield Preservation Fund in FY2018 (but also a \$208,000 cut in the fund for FY17)
  - Requirements to study funding needs for Resource Management Plans as well as ways to stabilize future funding for agriculture BMPs
  - Language clarifying previous land acquisition restrictions for Natural Area Preserves
  - No additional money for Stormwater Local Assistance Fund
  - No additional money for the Virginia Land Conservation Fund – indeed, a cut in FY2018, though the Fund's \$4.5 M balance for next year remains health compared to recent years
  - No additional money for the Farmland Preservation Fund – indeed, the Governor's proposed cut to this Fund was upheld in the budget

What's next? To prepare for a 2018 rebound, VIRGINIAforever will continue monitoring the State's revenues, meeting with key legislators, and preparing our case for the 2018 General Assembly session.

**To learn more about VIRGINIAforever and our legislative priorities, please visit [www.virginiaforever.org](http://www.virginiaforever.org) or follow us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/ourlandourwater](https://www.facebook.com/ourlandourwater).**