



Shenandoah Valley in Late Afternoon, Augusta County, Virginia By Ben Greenberg Photography



Celebrating the 2023 Bridge Builder Michael Lipford

and

Honoring Russ Baxter
for his service in the protection of
Virginia's natural resources

Featuring remarks from
Virginia Congresswoman Abigail Spanberger



October 26, 2023
Dover Hall Estate & Vineyard
Manakin-Sabot, Virginia

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 ** = denotes Emeritus Board member
 as of 10.2023

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Eastern Shore National Wildlife Refuge Wetlands, Virginia by Ben Greenberg Photography

PAST BRIDGE BUILDERS

..... **2022**

Ann Jennings, former Virginia Secretary of Natural and Historic Resources
Joe Maroon, Executive Director of the Virginia Environmental Endowment
David Paylor, Director of the Department of Environmental Quality, Retired
Ann Swanson, Executive Director of the Chesapeake Bay Commission, Retired

..... **2021**

Virginia Natural Resources Leadership Institute Contribution

..... **2020**

The Honorable Gerald L. Baliles

..... **2019**

The Honorable David Bulova

..... **2018**

The Honorable W. Tayloe Murphy, Jr.

..... **2017**

The Honorable Kirk Cox, Virginia House of Delegates

..... **2016**

The Honorable Emmett W. Hanger, Jr., Senate of Virginia

..... **2015**

The Honorable Tim Kaine, United States Senate

..... **2014**

Dr. Charles W. Steger, President Emeritus, Virginia Tech

..... **2013**

Gerald P. McCarthy, former Executive Director of Virginia
Environmental Endowment

..... **2012**

The Honorable A. Donald McEachin, Senate of Virginia and
The Honorable John C. Watkins, Senate of Virginia

..... **2011**

The Honorable William J. Howell, Speaker of the Virginia House of Delegates

..... **2008**

The Honorable John Warner, retired, United States Senate

..... **2007**

Eva Teig Hardy, Dominion Resources



We are proud to support
VIRGINIA*forever*
as a sponsor of the
2023 Bridge Builder Celebration.

Congratulations to this year's honorees
Michael Lipford and Russ Baxter.

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PROGRAM

6:50 PM **WELCOME**

Peggy Sanner, Chair, VIRGINIA*forever*
Phil Abraham, Vice Chair, VIRGINIA*forever* and Director and General Counsel The Vectre Corporation representing The Virginia Association for Commercial Real Estate

7:00 PM **DINNER**

7:30 PM **OPENING REMARKS & INTRODUCTIONS**

Peggy Sanner, Chair, VIRGINIA*forever*
Kendall Tyree, Chair of the VIRGINIA*forever* Bridge Builder Committee, and Executive Director of the Virginia Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts

HONORING RUSS BAXTER

Peggy Sanner, Chair, VIRGINIA*forever*
David Paylor, VIRGINIA*forever* Board Member and 2022 Bridge Builder

7:45 PM **INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUEST
CONGRESSWOMAN ABIGAIL SPANBERGER**

Chrissy Cogbill Noonan, VIRGINIA*forever* Board Member and Associate at ReedSmith, LLP

7:50 PM **REMARKS BY CONGRESSWOMAN ABIGAIL
SPANBERGER**

8:10 PM **PRESENTATION OF BRIDGE BUILDER AWARD
MICHAEL LIPFORD, 2023**

Peggy Sanner, Chair, VIRGINIA*forever*
Nikki Rovner, VIRGINIA*forever* Board Member and Associate State Director, The Nature Conservancy
Parker Agelasto, VIRGINIA*forever* Board Member and Executive Director, Capital Region Land Conservancy

8:30 PM **CLOSING REMARKS**

A LETTER FROM OUR CHAIR

Greetings and thank you all for joining us tonight. It's wonderful to see everyone this evening and we are truly grateful for the continued support we receive from Virginia's leading businesses, environmental organizations, and outdoor enthusiasts as we join with our elected officials for our annual gathering: The 2023 Bridge Builder Celebration.



As VIRGINIAforever's signature event, the Bridge Builder Celebration honors individuals who have made significant contributions toward protecting Virginia's natural resources. This year we recognize and honor Michael Lipford, a dedicated champion of land conservation in the Commonwealth. As a founding member of VIRGINIAforever and a 36-year veteran of The Nature Conservancy, his dedication to protecting ad valuable lands in the Commonwealth has had a profound impact.

We will also take some time this evening to honor and recognize the late Russ Baxter, former Deputy Secretary of Natural Resources, for his work in protecting, preserving, and advocating for Virginia's natural resources, especially the Chesapeake Bay for many, many years. We are grateful to have his wife, Sharon, and sons, Ian and William, with us this evening.

Although individually our views may differ on various issues, we share a common commitment to our natural resources and are wholly united in the belief that funding to protect our land and water should be one of the highest priorities of our state government, and that the way to get there is working together with one voice.

I want to thank our Board, our speakers, our sponsors, and our guests. I hope you enjoy this evening's program. It is a privilege to celebrate with you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Peggy Sanner', with a long, sweeping underline.

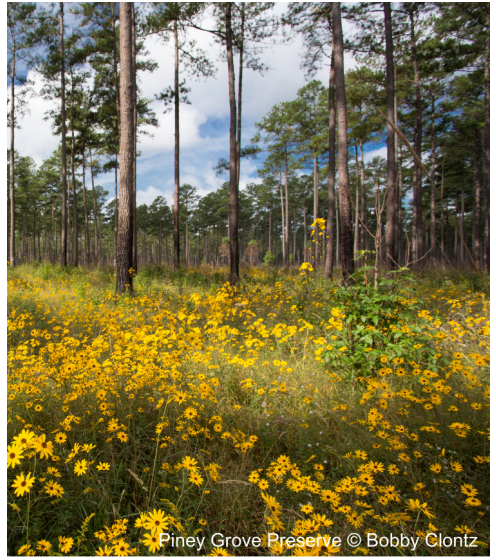
Peggy Sanner, Chair, VIRGINIAforever



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Piney Grove Preserve © Bobby Clontz

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BUILDER CELEBRATION**

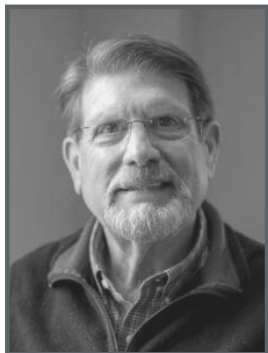
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2023 BRIDGE BUILDER

MICHAEL LIPFORD



Michael Lipford marked his retirement from The Nature Conservancy (TNC) in December 2022 after 36 years, of which he served 25 years as the Executive Director of the Virginia Chapter and more recently as the Southern U.S. Regional Director. Lipford began his career in 1986 when he started the Virginia Natural Heritage Program for The Nature Conservancy. After developing a successful statewide program, he helped transfer the program into state government, creating the Virginia Department of Conservation & Recreation's Division of Natural Heritage and served as its first director.

Among Lipford's other accomplishments are the acquisition of the 1,095-acre Cumberland Marsh Natural Area Preserve in New Kent County. His leadership in partnership collaborations resulted in the establishment of the Agricultural Reserve Program in Virginia Beach, passage of the Virginia Land Preservation Tax Credit for conservation easements, and creation of the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation, the Commonwealth's primary funding vehicle for land protection. His efforts to purchase the 2,000-acre Piney Grove Preserve in Sussex County prevented the extirpation from Virginia of the threatened red-cockaded woodpecker.

As the Director of Conservation Partnerships at the Capital Region Land Conservancy, Lipford provides high-level assistance to the Executive Director and cultivates partnerships to advance CRLC's mission. His current role allows him to focus on the conservation of local lands in his home region.

He holds a Bachelor of Science in Biology from Virginia Tech and a Masters of Science in Biology from James Madison University, with a focus on river and forest ecology.

A native of southeast Virginia, he has always had a passion for the outdoors, and enjoys gardening, bee keeping, birding, and hunting. He and his wife, Janet, have restored an historic home in Henrico County where they raised their three grown daughters.



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Great Blue Heron on a Misty James River, Richmond, Virginia by Ben Greenberg Photography

HONORING RUSS BAXTER

A beloved friend and colleague who dedicated his life to the preservation of the Chesapeake Bay, Russ Baxter sadly lost his battle with cancer in July 2023, nine days after celebrating his 67th birthday.

Throughout his remarkable career, which spanned more than three decades, Baxter made significant contributions to environmental conservation in Virginia. His career was characterized by his dedication, policy knowledge, and the respect he earned within and beyond Virginia's borders. Baxter's deep love for his work in public service was evident to all who knew him.

As a key partner in the Chesapeake Bay Program restoration partnership, Baxter represented Virginia with expertise, consistency, and insight. He was known for advocating for Virginia's interests while fostering collaboration and accountability within the partnership.

When remembering Baxter, his friends and colleagues cherished his sense of humor, quick wit, and ever-present chuckle. He was a genuine, funny, caring individual, and his presence radiated the innate goodness of a human being.

Baxter's legacy will undoubtedly leave a lasting impact on the lives of Virginians and all who call the Chesapeake Bay basin home. His friends and colleagues expressed their gratitude for having had the privilege of knowing and working with him, and they envisioned him cycling joyfully across the heavens in eternal peace.

AECOM

Bringing communities closer

We are proud to sponsor Virginia Forever's 2023 Bridge Builder Celebration and congratulate Michael Lipford on his efforts to continue to support and protect Virginia's water and land.

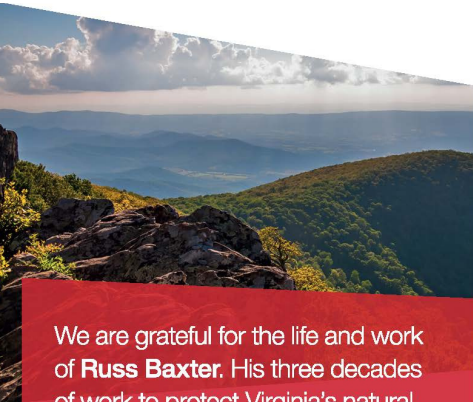


VIRGINIAforever was established in late 2006 as an independent 501(c)4 non-profit organization after growing out of a special campaign launched by The Nature Conservancy. As a unique coalition of concerned businesses, environmental organizations and outdoor enthusiasts advocates for increased funding to restore and protect the lands and waterways of the Commonwealth.

Gateway Plaza
800 East Canal Street
Richmond, VA 23219
info@virginiaforever.org
www.virginiaforever.org
f@ourlandourwater

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A landscape photograph showing a rocky mountain peak in the foreground, with a dense forest of green trees covering the slopes. In the background, there are rolling hills and a body of water under a blue sky with scattered white clouds.

We are grateful for the life and work of **Russ Baxter**. His three decades of work to protect Virginia's natural resources will benefit Virginians for generations to come.

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