



PRESS RELEASE

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VIRGINIAforever Unveils *Natural Resources Investment Plan* for 2025—2028

Recommendations call for more than \$3 billion in funding over four years for the protection of Virginia’s land and water resources.

Richmond, VA (October 26, 2023) – Today, VIRGINIAforever released its third comprehensive plan for investing in the Commonwealth’s land and water resources. As a unique, diverse coalition of businesses, environmental organizations, and outdoor enthusiasts—and as the only statewide organization with a primary focus on increasing funding for natural resources protection—VIRGINIAforever published its state funding recommendations for years 2025-2028 for legislators and decision-makers to use as a guide for making critical investments in land conservation and water quality improvements.

In recent months, VIRGINIAforever leaders have carefully reviewed recent and current natural resource funding levels, as well as receiving input from key leaders of natural resources agencies and other experts to understand the Commonwealth’s existing and future funding needs.

Peggy Sanner, Chair of VIRGINIAforever, stated, “This Natural Resources Investment Plan is a great demonstration of the valuable work VIRGINIAforever does. As legislators consider appropriations decisions for the next two biennial budgets, the first of which will be adopted in early 2024, we believe these recommendations can serve as a blueprint for the future, building on recent successes, particularly in the area of Chesapeake Bay restoration and the conservation of Virginia’s diverse and beloved landscapes.”

Ellen Shepard with Virginia's United Land Trusts and VIRGINIAforever General Board Member said, “VIRGINIAforever’s coalition of environmental groups and businesses working together to support increased natural resource funding speaks to the incredible role the Commonwealth’s land and water have, both for the economy and for every all Virginians. We hope this plan will

serve as a useful tool for the General Assembly as they adopt the upcoming budget in 2024, and there is recognition of the significant return on investment these funding priorities can allow.”

Members of Virginia’s General Assembly have welcomed and support VIRGINIA*forever*’s efforts to educate lawmakers and raise awareness related to the state’s natural resources funding needs.

“I commend VIRGINIA*forever*’s commitment to protecting Virginia’s natural resources,” said Senator Emmett Hanger. “Their expertise and collaborative approach in developing these funding recommendations helps us better understand the true funding needs of our natural resource agencies and programs.”

David Bulova, member of the Virginia House of Delegates, echoed Hanger’s sentiments, saying “VIRGINIA*forever*’s unique approach and longstanding reputation as a go-to source on natural resources funding provides legislators, and particularly appropriators, a useful guide in developing budget priorities. The Commonwealth’s recent strides in pollution reduction in the Chesapeake Bay and the continued success of our land conservation programs are thanks in large part to their advocacy.”

You can review the full plan here: www.virginiaforever.org/fiveyearplan

Highlights from the VIRGINIA*forever* Natural Resources Investment Plan 2025-2028:

Enabling Land Conservation and Public Access

- \$200 million for land conservation grant programs
- \$360 million for the Land Preservation Tax Credit
- \$550 million for state parks, other public lands, and trails
- **A total of \$1.13 billion over four years**

Ensuring Water Quality in the Bay, Its Tributaries, and Other Waterways

- \$988 million for wastewater treatment plan upgrades
- \$200 million for stormwater projects
- \$894.2 million for the Agricultural Cost-Share program
- **A total of \$2.082 billion over four years**

Resiliency Programs

- \$400 million for resiliency efforts

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