



Case for Support 2020

Conserving Land & Restoring River Bottom for Future Generations

Thanks to generous supporters like you, 622 acres of land are now conserved in perpetuity along the Elizabeth River's shores. That's monumental for an urban river where the adjoining land, or "watershed," is largely developed. It means everything for future generations who count on inheriting a clean river with green shores and plentiful wildlife.

The Living River Trust, a non-profit incorporated in 2004 with an original singular mission to clean the bottom of the Elizabeth River, last year not only progressed in that mission but also made significant progress towards a second mission as the first local land trust in south Hampton Roads. Generous members helped us conserve pristine wetlands and forest to open a new waterfront park on the Elizabeth River in Virginia Beach and put in motion the coming conservation of 500 acres of pristine forest and open space adjacent to the Great Dismal Swamp, all the while putting in place a new federal agreement to continue cleaning up the bottomlands of the Elizabeth River. Now we're counting on your support to keep going with both these promising initiatives. What better legacy to leave to our children and grandchildren than land preserved forever along a healthy home river?

Not only will your gift mean healthy waters and wildlife, but your support of our land conservation initiative will also help make south Hampton Roads a more desirable place to live. The Land Trust Alliance reports that:

- Homes sell for 10 to 20 percent more when adjacent to protected open spaces.
- New homebuyers value trails and natural areas above any other amenity.



Achieved: Ferry Point Park

The Eastern Branch of the Elizabeth has been dubbed “the lost branch” by our sister non-profit, the Elizabeth River Project. Though this waterway flows through Norfolk, Chesapeake, and Virginia Beach, there is little public access or parkland, thus little attention and poor to failing scores on the most recent scorecard for the Elizabeth by area scientists.

That’s why one of the Trust’s top priorities in land conservation is conserving land for new public access

to the Eastern Branch. Thanks to our generous supporters, the Trust completed the purchase of nine acres of lush wetlands and forest in the Avalon Woods neighborhood on the Eastern Branch of the Elizabeth River in Virginia Beach. Upon acquisition, the Trust donated a permanent conservation easement to protect the property forever and transferred it to the City of Virginia Beach to become the City’s newest park. In May 2019, an opening ceremony was held with City leaders and the community to recognize the success in creating more

green space in a largely developed area. Future improvements to the park will include a canoe/kayak launch and walking trails, providing the only kayak access to the Eastern Branch’s southern shores in Virginia Beach.

Thanks to supporters like you, this beautiful and rare parcel of open space will be preserved forever in the heart of the resort city. Funding provided by the Trust helped the City of Virginia Beach further its open space, resiliency, and public access goals as well.

Achieved: More Dismal Swamp Lands

At the headwaters of the Elizabeth River lies the Great Dismal Swamp, an area of incredible biodiversity that acts like a sponge to absorb and filter stormwater. Progress and development have encroached into the Swamp, making what’s left of it so important to conserve. Over the last year, the Trust successfully negotiated to purchase

and transfer 500 acres of forest and wetlands to the Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge. This partnership will not only increase the land within the Refuge but ensure a clean water supply to our home river of the Elizabeth. With your help, we will keep expanding protection of the swamp wildlands in 2020.





Awarded: Money Point Shoreline

Despite a busy year conserving land, the Trust continued its original mission of cleaning up contaminated sediment lying on the bottom of the Elizabeth River and was recognized nationally for its work with Elizabeth River Project at Money Point. Once infamous for toxic levels of the wood-preserved creosote and all but abandoned by wildlife, the site now includes 10 acres of marsh and urban forest and the waters surrounding it that are home to 26 species of fish, 110 species of birds, a thriving oyster reef, and

even a family of otters. The American Shore and Beach Preservation Association recognized the success of the project by awarding it the “Best Restored Shore” for 2019, bringing an enormous amount of credibility to the work of the Trust and its status as the only organization in the country with federal approval to receive funding from developers to mitigate impacts to river bottom sediments.

To thrive, the Elizabeth River needs bottomland where crabs, oysters, worms, small fish and more form the

foundation of the food chain. Hot spots throughout the Elizabeth’s bottomland are laced with contamination. Now when development projects impact healthier areas of the river bottom, they can offset the impacts by funding the Trust to clean up the hotspots. Special thanks to our members for core support of the Trust as it worked throughout the year to finalize scientific reports required by the Corps to meet new federal regulations for keeping “the goo” going.



Advancing: First Full-time Hire

After a long search for the ideal candidate, the Trust is proud to have hired its first, full-time administrator, John Harbin. John is a native of Hampton Roads and has worked in a variety of capacities in the environmental field, including consulting, government, and other non-profit organizations. He has a

Master of Urban and Environmental Planning from the University of Virginia and a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Policy from Virginia Tech. With his leadership, the Trust is going to see substantial growth in 2020 for our sediment remediation and land conservation efforts.

A New Chapter for Land Conservation in 2020

Despite the Trust's significant accomplishments to date, we're just getting started. A new chapter of high achievement in 2020 is only made possible through your generous support. The Trust is aggressively pursuing its mission of land conservation and fulfilling its role as Hampton Roads' only local land trust. More traditionally a pursuit in rural areas of the country, land conservation has a greater beneficial impact on the environment and people in urban areas, where so little open space remains. In fact, Diana Bailey, a Trust Board member, terms land "the most endangered species" on the Elizabeth River, since only about 10 percent of our watershed is undeveloped.

With your help in 2020, the Living River Trust will pursue long-term conservation of over 20 different sites throughout Hampton Roads identified as key to restoring habitat, enhancing water quality, relieving flooding, and helping adapt to rising sea levels. Your support in our coming fiscal year can help secure our growing list of promising lands and initiatives under pursuit now. Here are just a few examples:



1) Add an additional 115 acres to the Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge. With your help, the Trust will purchase an additional 115 acres for protection by the Refuge forever. Agreements have been reached with all parties involved; funding is the only remaining piece to completing this deal. Your support is urgently needed to save the last remnants of a richly diverse swamp that once stretched for a million acres across two states. Protect swamplands that support rare plants and songbirds, provide a source of freshwater for the brackish Elizabeth River, and serve as a critical regional sponge for floods and stormwater.



2) Pioneer the protection of a three acre residential waterfront peninsula on the Elizabeth's Western Branch in Portsmouth. This is pioneer work to resolve roadblocks for the forever protection of small urban parcels like this one. On a recent site visit, dolphins nosed past the green wetlands and towering trees of a homesite with an historic cemetery. Here, the tax benefits of land protection are less than for vast lands protected in the country, but the environmental benefits can be greater because open space is so limited. Help the Trust create simple templates that enable landowners like this one to afford lasting legal protection of their green waterfront.



3) Adapt to rising sea levels by conversion of frequently flooded residential areas to healthy wetlands. Both the cities of Chesapeake and Norfolk have asked for the help of the Living River Trust to address the long-term future of waterfront home sites that already experience repetitive flooding and are facing an existential threat due to rising sea levels. Your generous donation for 2020 will make it possible for the Trust to pursue innovative, win-win solutions in both cities to allow residential sites to convert to open space and wetlands when the homes become uninhabitable due to flooding. With your help, the Trust will focus on transferring five lots purchased by the City of Chesapeake with federal FEMA funding in one of the city's lowest lying waterfront neighborhoods to the Trust for restoration. In Norfolk, your support will allow the Trust to pioneer the implementation of the City's Resiliency Quotient for new development by conserving land in the City's most vulnerable areas to flooding and sea level rise.

4) Develop innovative corridor plans for the Eastern and Southern Branches. These two branches of the Elizabeth are the most developed and include some of the highest priority sites for conservation. With your support, the Trust will develop plan for conserving and connecting these sites to form a green corridor of conserved land to support wildlife, especially those that migrate through the area such as the American Black Duck.

5) Pursue protection of "big trees of Virginia." Tree experts known as the "Big Tree Hunters" have helped us identify those rare lands around the Elizabeth River watershed with remaining virgin timber and specimen trees worthy of protection. These are a priority for long-term protection, with your continued support of the Living River Trust for 2020.

Keep the “Goo” Going, 2020



School children and legislators know our long-time slogan for restoring a healthy river bottom as the foundation for a healthy Elizabeth River: “the Goo Must Go!” With your support in the coming year, the Living River Trust will take the next steps to clean the Elizabeth’s bottomlands.

You will help make possible the scientific work needed to finalize and begin implementing plans for addressing elevated levels of PCB contamination along Paradise Creek in Portsmouth, a special focus area for restoration of the Elizabeth River since 2001. Thank you in advance for support the pioneering research and work that involves isolating some of the less contaminated areas of PCBs through soil amendments, which can be less expensive than removing all of the contaminated materials, while achieving the same restoration results.

Healthy Shores, Healthy River – Your Legacy

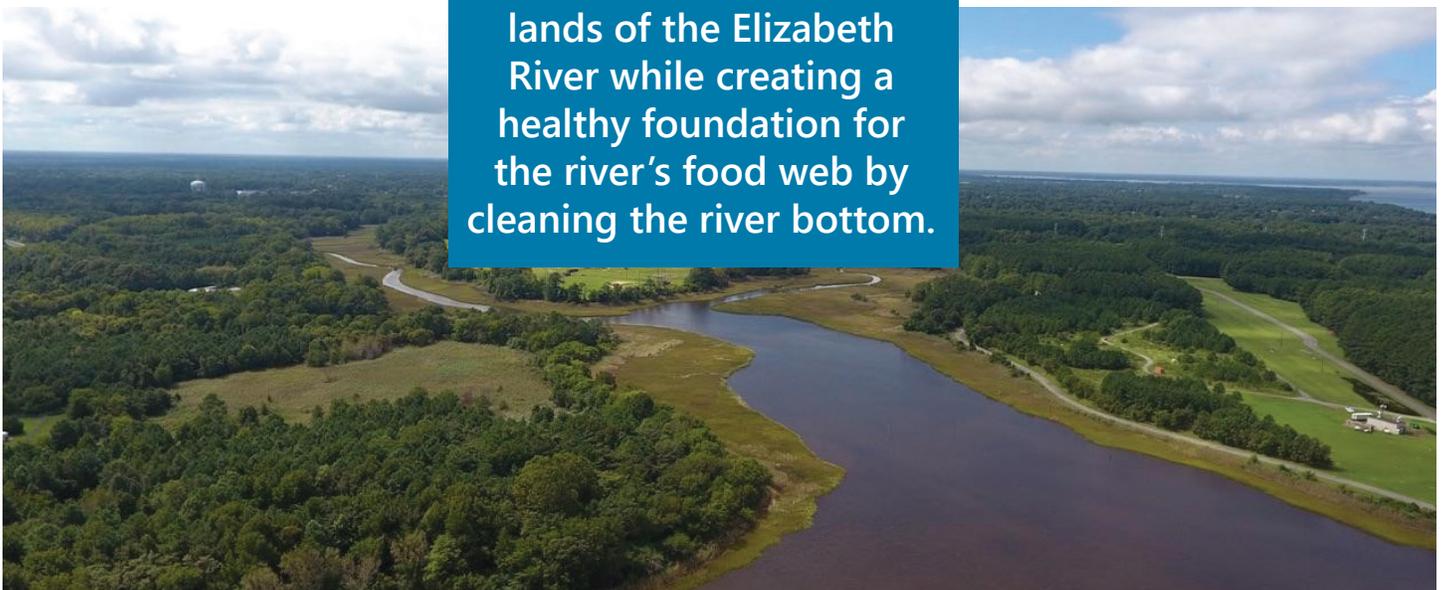
A huge thank you to our Charter Members and donors for this precedent-setting progress in the last year.

Just imagine how far we can get in the coming year with your support of these key initiatives to save the last lands of the Elizabeth River while creating a healthy foundation for the river’s food web by cleaning the river bottom.

We’ll stay in touch with encouraging progress reports and an annual event. Enjoy watching the goo go and precious land and habitat get protected forever, thanks to your generous support of the Living River Trust.

Just imagine how far we can get in the coming year with your support of these continued key initiatives to save the last lands of the Elizabeth River while creating a healthy foundation for the river’s food web by cleaning the river bottom.

More information: Contact John Harbin, Administrator, jharbin@elizabethriver.org, 757-399-7487, LivingRiverTrust.org





Conservation Vision: We see a future where the lands, marshes, beaches, creeks and tributaries of the Elizabeth River are preserved forever; cherished by all as an extraordinary gift.

Sediment Mitigation Vision: We will ensure that healthy Elizabeth River bottom lost to development is offset by clean-up of contaminated river bottom, so that a functioning “benthos” or bottom-dwelling community is restored as the foundation of the river’s food chain.



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