



ALLIANCE

FOR THE SHENANDOAH VALLEY

*Conserving our Land, Water,
and Way of Life*



2021-2022 ANNUAL REPORT



“Our people ARE our programs”

I heard this phrase often during the early conversations between the organizations that merged to form the Alliance. At the time, it was spoken in slight jest as we talked about the existing programs that would find a new home in what is now Alliance for the Shenandoah Valley.

But the phrase has stuck with me—because it’s true. Our people are what makes the Alliance effective and impactful. It’s not only the on-the-ground expertise of our county coordinators and board members following local land use issues in our six counties. Nor is it only the strong ties to conservation partners across the region and state.

It’s also YOU. By supporting our work toward a Shenandoah Valley where the way of life is sustained by rural landscapes, clean streams and rivers, and thriving communities, you are an integral part of our success.

As you read through this review of our last 12 months, you’ll hear from some of our people—donors, board members, partners and staff—and see for yourself the dedication and passion for the Valley that intersect at the Alliance. We are deeply grateful to count you among the people who make our work possible, and I hope you are inspired to continue supporting this work together.

KATE WOFFORD, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



VISION

A Shenandoah Valley where our way of life is sustained by rural landscapes, clean streams and rivers, and thriving communities.

MISSION

Alliance for the Shenandoah Valley advocates, educates, and connects people to conserve the natural resources, cultural heritage, and rural character of our region.



David Miller, Operations Manager

“When community members think about the Alliance, they think about its mission and programs. We are that, but the reality is that nonprofits like the Alliance are also small businesses and employers.

I’m excited to have the chance to apply my experience as a small business owner for 20+ years in Harrisonburg to a mission that’s meaningful to me personally.”

(cover) Photo by Kevin Tate. (above) Photo by Striebig Photography and Design, LLC.

shenandoahalliance.org

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Christine Andreae
WARREN
COUNTY



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Lisa Anne Hawkins
ROCKINGHAM
COUNTY



Joe Lehnen
SHENANDOAH
COUNTY



Carolyn F. Long
SHENANDOAH
COUNTY



Robert Whitescarver
AUGUSTA
COUNTY

WELCOME NEW DIRECTORS

I joined the Alliance board because...



Christine Hartman, Warren County

"I care deeply about the preservation of natural spaces for their own sake, but also as essential to the social and emotional well-being of individuals and communities. My participation with the Alliance is an opportunity to commit to the values of my social work profession on a level that will hopefully reach well into the future."

Eddie Bumbaugh, Augusta County

"As a lifelong resident, I love the scenic beauty, natural resources, and rich culture of the Shenandoah Valley. I joined the board believing the mission of the Alliance and my personal values and priorities are a good match and deserving of my involvement and support."



Brent Trumbo, Rockingham County

"When I was a Rockingham County Planning Commissioner and Supervisor, the Alliance provided valuable input at many of our hearings. This input helped us make the best possible decisions. Additionally, I worked with the Alliance at Shenandoah Rail Trail meetings and I'm very excited about the possibilities this project brings. Lastly, I'm concerned about the declining water quality in the North Fork of the Shenandoah, and therefore appreciate the Alliance's clean water objective."

ALLIANCE STAFF

Meet our staff through their own words on pages throughout the report.

Maya Alexander

Community Engagement Manager page 4

Chris Anderson

Page & Warren County Coordinator page 8

Erin Burch

Director of Communications & Development page 5

Richard Hendley

Conservation Field Assistant
Shenandoah Valley Conservation Collaborative page 7

David Miller

Operations Manager opposite

Kim Sandum

Rockingham County Coordinator
and Transportation Lead page 9

Nancy Sorrells

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Kevin Tate

Project Manager
Shenandoah Valley Conservation Collaborative page 7

Kate Wofford

Executive Director opposite

Kim Woodwell

Program Director
and Shenandoah County Coordinator page 4



ALLIANCE

FOR THE SHENANDOAH VALLEY

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STRATEGIC GOALS

Promote land use and transportation policies that respect the Valley's natural and cultural resources and communities.

Mobilize citizens on regional issues of importance.

Foster land and water conservation through projects and programs that ensure clean and plentiful water, protected farm and forest land and preserved cultural resources.

Support economic development that is in keeping with the Valley's unique character and resources.

Cultivate an active, educated, and informed public.



CULTIVATE

We cultivate an active, educated, and informed public.

The Valley is rich in culture, heritage, experience, and knowledge, and our work is more successful when folks from many perspectives work together to protect what we all value in this place we call home—the plentiful water, the rich soil and the gorgeous landscapes. Because we know we can't do this work alone, in 2022 we created a new position at the Alliance and welcomed Maya Alexander as our Community Engagement Manager. Maya's work will create more opportunities for people to plug in and get involved in protecting our land, water and the things that make our Valley communities vibrant.



Maya Alexander, Community Engagement Manager

"Whether assisting farmers with best management practices or rallying responses to halt the implementation of a poorly sited truck stop, the Alliance is truly doing the good work on the ground. I'm excited to have joined a team of people who are passionate and intentional about the work they do."

Kim Woodwell, Program Director and Shenandoah County Coordinator

"It has been deeply rewarding to watch the vision of Shenandoah County residents of a prosperous future built upon the treasured agricultural heritage play out on-the-ground. Early this year, an eight-mile section of the North Fork of the Shenandoah River became part of the Virginia Scenic Rivers Program and formally recognized for its natural, scenic, historic, and recreational values that county residents know well and appreciate. Then citizen support urged the county to take an important step forward in preserving its working lands and farm economy in a commitment to fund its voluntary land conservation program, also making it possible for the county to participate in Virginia's matching grant program."



2022 VALLEY TREASURE - LYNN CAMERON

In July, the Alliance presented its second Valley Treasure award, a recognition of community members who work quietly to conserve the land, water and way of life in their corner of the Valley.

If you don't recognize Lynn Cameron's face, you probably recognize her name. She's been a local ambassador for the million-acre George Washington National Forest—sharing her knowledge and appreciation for our extraordinary public lands—for decades.

We were excited to honor Lynn Cameron's work to preserve and protect Shenandoah Mountain with a lecture by Steven David Johnson, a conservation photographer and Professor of Visual and Communication Arts at Eastern Mennonite University. If you missed it, you can catch the presentation recording on our website.

Background photo by Becky Szarzynski. This is the view from a May 5 Field Day, just two miles from a massive proposed truck stop in Mauzy. Very fortunately the Alliance and neighboring community members put the brakes on this ill-advised proposal in August.



SUPPORT

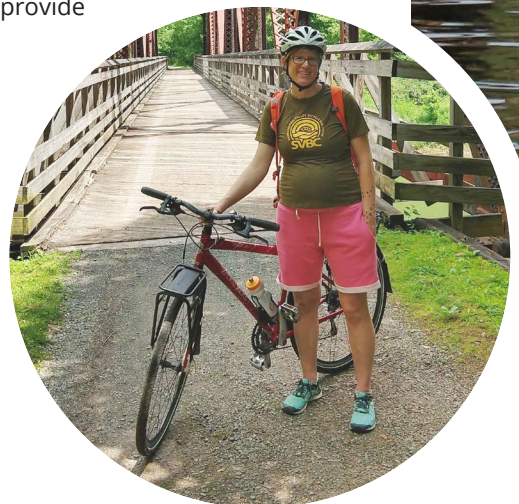
We **support** economic development that is in keeping with the Valley's unique character and resources.

SHENANDOAH RAIL TRAIL

The almost 50-mile Shenandoah Rail Trail, connecting communities from Broadway to Front Royal, is closer to reality than we imagined it would be at this point in time. State and federal leaders have listened to community members, and they are working to secure the corridor from Norfolk Southern. The Alliance has enthusiastically taken on a leadership role in bringing this currently unused asset back to the communities it once served—with new opportunities for main-street entrepreneurship and enhanced quality of life for local residents. The Alliance's Kate Wofford serves on the governance council and Kim Woodwell and Maya Alexander are leading outreach efforts to ensure local communities have opportunities to provide input so that we create the best-fit trail for our region.

Erin Burch, Director of Communications & Development

"This is me on the Greenbrier River Trail, a rail-trail in eastern West Virginia. My extended family would annually gather along the route and ride bikes together for a weekend. In this photo I was several months pregnant with my now four-year-old daughter. She loves to look at this photo, and I tell her about the trail we're working to build here in the Valley. It is my hope that by witnessing the creation of the Shenandoah Rail Trail, she learns that she too can work toward positive change and vibrant communities. I'm so optimistic that we'll be able to invite my family to ride on a Shenandoah Rail Trail in the coming years, this time with Ellie on her own bike."



Background photo by Chris Anderson. Bridge over the South Fork of the Shenandoah River in Front Royal.



FIVE YEARS OF COLLABORATION FOR CONSERVATION

2017

Alliance legacy groups convene the Shenandoah Valley Conservation Collaborative as a pilot partnership model to combine resources and secure land protection and water quality improvements on shared priority lands.

2018

Alliance legacy groups merge to provide backbone support for initiatives like the Collaborative in addition to existing county-based programs.

2019

Partners are awarded National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) funding to expand the partnership and offer more flexible funding and management practice options to Valley farmers.

FOSTER

We **foster** land and water conservation through projects and programs that ensure clean and plentiful water, protected farm and forest land and preserved cultural resources.



Kathy Holm, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

"Over the past five years, I have been eager to work with the Shenandoah Valley Conservation Collaborative in my role as Area Conservationist. The Collaborative has spearheaded partnerships between many diverse conservation groups in the Shenandoah Valley leveraging our strengths and resulting in more conservation on the ground.

Specifically, our partnership has added a new staff position in the Harrisonburg Field Office to assist with Farm Bill implementation and landowner outreach. We have collaborated to bring the Smith Creek Partnership to a new level, and we have worked together to leverage more acres placed in conservation easements across the Valley. Just this year, the Collaborative secured an NRCS partnership grant that will result in more acres saved from development.

Kevin Tate has been perfect for the role of coordinator. He works well with partners and is organized and thorough. I see how successful the Collaborative has become and I look forward to seeing what innovations and changes this group effort will bring over the next five years."

Hedrick Belin, Potomac Conservancy

"In the face of increasing development pressure and changes to our climate, the Collaborative helps to ensure we have the funding, tools and staff capacity to accelerate the pace of land protection and restoration in the Shenandoah Valley. Whether it is meeting with landowners, securing funding for stream protection or engaging local residents, the Collaborative has strengthened efforts to protect working landscapes and healthy ecosystems for all."

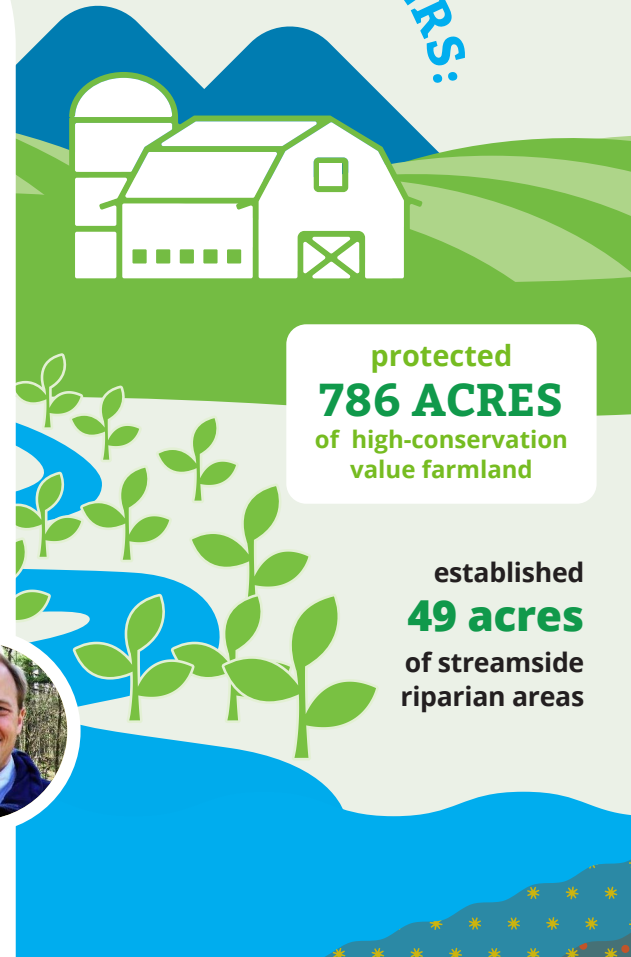


Aaron Lucas, Headwaters Soil and Water Conservation District

"Virginia's agricultural practice cost share budget has increased over the years to the point where the program is now fully funded. However, there are still barriers to participation at the local level, such as supply chain disruption, contractor backlog, and especially inflation. The Headwaters District is very appreciative of the new funding the Collaborative has brought to overcome these issues. It cannot be overstated how important this funding was in getting projects completed that otherwise may have been canceled or severely delayed."



BY THE NUMBERS:



protected
786 ACRES
of high-conservation
value farmland

established
49 acres
of streamside
riparian areas

OUR WATERWAYS ARE
CLEANER
BECAUSE OF THIS WORK



SHENANDOAH VALLEY CONSERVATION COLLABORATIVE



2020

The Collaborative creates the Shenandoah Valley Fund to assist landowners with the administration costs of protecting their land with a conservation easement.



Kevin Tate joins the Alliance team as the Collaborative's first full-time dedicated coordinator.



Alliance creates a staff position housed in the NRCS office. Richard Hendley is our Conservation Field Assistant.

2021

New funding makes state and federal programs accessible to more farmers.

First pasture walk series creates an opportunity for farmer-to-farmer education.

Valley farmers invited to participate in programs for new carbon and clean water markets.

2022

New partnership funding accelerates installation and maintenance of agricultural practices to improve water quality in the Smith Creek Watershed, a national showcase watershed in Virginia.

A \$4.5 million Regional Conservation Partnership Program grant award boosts efforts to promote conservation easements on working family farms.

Second pasture walk series increases farmer-to-farmer education.

**implemented
best management practices on
332 acres of farmland**

**demonstrated on-farm
best management practices to
294 landowners
and farmers**

**educated 650 landowners
on conservation practices and
opportunities available to them**



Taylor Evans, Valley Conservation Council

"As a member of the Collaborative, I can honestly say its work is integral to the long-term preservation of the Shenandoah Valley that sits at the core of the Collaborative's mission. Participation in the Collaborative has fostered incredible partnerships with other organizations working to preserve the Valley so that instead of five staff members speaking to the value of land preservation, we are part of a network of many organizations and individuals all working to connect with landowners, increase conservation outcomes, and preserve the quality of life that the Shenandoah Valley is famous for. Collaborative support allowed us to increase our stewardship capacity to put us on track to close a projected 16 easements in 2022, nearly half of which were supported by Collaborative funding, representing a total of more than 2500 acres."



Megen Dalton, Shenandoah Valley Soil and Water Conservation District

"Implementing conservation can be challenging. The Collaborative has partnered with a number of conservation stakeholders to support the common goal of implementing conservation across the Shenandoah Valley. Their coordination of pasture walks, field days and other outreach events has exposed landowners to environmentally-friendly farming practices and conservation programs and has offered opportunities for interactions with conservation agency staff. Through continued partnership, we hope SVCC's supportive staff and ability to leverage funding for on-farm best management practices will prove effective in accomplishing lofty local conservation goals."

2,303,400 lbs
LESS sediment
per year

15,221 lbs
LESS nitrogen
per year

3,299 lbs
LESS phosphorous
per year

Header photo by Becky Szarzynski. Collaborative partners hosted and presented at the "Take Action 4 Soil Life Field Day" in Mauzy. Participants learned about production practices to build soil health, increase yields, and protect clean water.



MOBILIZE

We mobilize citizens on regional issues of importance.

SOLAR IN THE VALLEY LANDSCAPE

Without revisions to planning language to address the influx of new utility-scale solar proposals, many of our localities would have been vulnerable to poorly sited projects with insufficient water and soil protection, requirements for screening and pollinator habitat, or protection of natural and cultural resources. The Alliance has worked in all six of our counties to assist with ordinance and comprehensive plan revisions to address utility scale solar, and this year can finally add Page County to the list of localities that have strong planning language in place.

AG & SOLAR WORKSHOPS

The Alliance and Virginia Cooperative Extension co-hosted a spring 2022 series of workshops for farmers about options available to incorporate solar into their agricultural operations. One of the presenters was Phil Liskey, an Augusta County farmer and Farm Choice store owner, who has incorporated solar into both his farm and store business models. After the workshops, the Alliance’s Nancy Sorrells visited his farm and saw first-hand one way that cattle and on-farm solar panels can coexist.



Chris Anderson, Page and Warren County Coordinator

“After several years of deliberation, in August, Page County adopted its first solar ordinance that guides small, medium and utility-scale solar development. Working with Page residents to advocate for this ordinance was one of my first undertakings as the Alliance’s Page & Warren County Coordinator, and as a Page County resident myself, I’m so grateful for all the thoughtful community input and careful consideration by elected officials and county staff. Perhaps now, with the protective ordinance in place, we can see more rooftop and community-scale solar projects that are a good fit for Page County.”

Nancy Sorrells, Augusta County Coordinator

“Water quality has been the theme that has flowed through my work in Augusta County this past year. Although solar, both utility scale and direct use for homes and businesses, doesn’t at first glance appear to be a water quality issue, it, too, is intertwined with clean water. I have enjoyed working with government officials to provide input regarding building water protections into solar ordinances and working with individual landowners and solar developers to make sure that water and soil are protected and enhanced during the life of solar projects in Augusta County.”





PROMOTE

We **promote** land use and transportation policies that respect the Valley's natural and cultural resources and communities.

THOUGHTFUL IMPROVEMENTS TO I-81

Beginning fall 2021, design plans were released on the three major I-81 widening projects in our region in Staunton, Harrisonburg, and Strasburg.


After more than a decade of pushing back against destructive mega-widening, we do not readily support plans to add extensive pavement to the interstate. However, these three projects were identified as safety and congestion hotspots in the I-81 Corridor Improvement Study. The Alliance supported that final plan in 2018 because it identified targeted solutions to address specific problems and included extensive community input.

Because pavement solutions like road widening should be a last resort for improving safety, it's important to get it right. To that end, we submitted formal comments on each design so that the projects are sure to address the unique safety and congestion issues through Staunton, Harrisonburg, and Strasburg with minimal impact to natural resources and the character of the small cities and towns.

Kim Sandum, Rockingham County Coordinator and Transportation Lead

"Transportation should serve people, not the other way around. Previous proposals for I-81 were focused on trucks to the detriment of people and communities nearby. The Alliance has worked for many years to protect neighboring communities while advocating for safety improvements on the interstate. Navigating the public input process has been a bit like running a gauntlet, but we helped show the way so that the public's voice could guide the final project development options. Stopping the bad proposals and shaping the good ones could only be done as a team effort. The Alliance is a great team."





"We are pleased to be associated with an organization focused on increasing appreciation of the Shenandoah Valley's extraordinary natural beauty. The Alliance is the premier advocacy resource for citizen concerns about balancing preservation with growth.

The talented staff's work is shaping the next generation of future conservationists, and we are proud to support them."

Bibb and Dolly Frazier
Port Republic, Rockingham County

"I am crazy in love with our Valley and I want to do what I can to help care for our forests, farms and communities. With the Alliance I'm not alone. They sort out the complicated stuff and let me know where to send a letter, or when the public meeting is.

The way I see it: I contribute to Alliance; they contribute to me and our communities; together we are making it happen. What a deal."

Paula of Overall, Warren County

"I'm 'new' to the Valley, living almost 30 years here in Woodstock. I support the Alliance because I think they are pragmatic and they are always careful to be sure their work takes into account local interests. For example, the Mauzy truck stop was not a good idea to the neighbors in that community. The Alliance provided support to help them preserve their unique and special place."

Beth Cardwell
Woodstock, Shenandoah County

As long as there are people like you who care about the Shenandoah Valley, our work will continue.

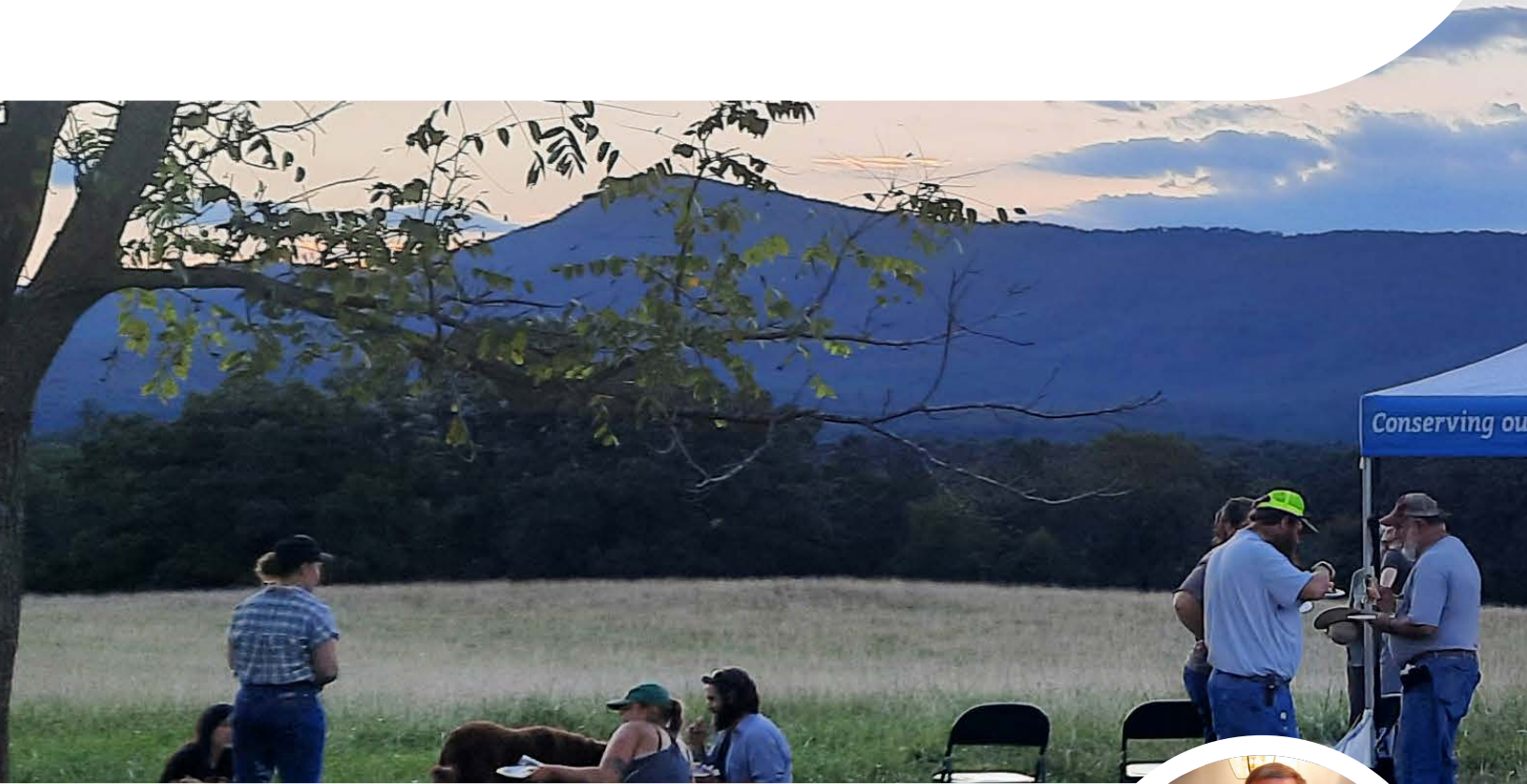
Each year we are humbled and bolstered by the generosity of individuals who care about the Shenandoah Valley and entrust us as one of its caretakers. We have 448 donors, 409 of whom are longtime supporters, giving gifts of every size year after year. The majority of our donors live here in the Valley, and others are connected by family ties or a deep appreciation for the beauty of the land, water, and community in the Valley. We are grateful to also have support from family foundations and grants.

We are honored stewards of every dollar. The return on your investment is delivered in community meetings, in solid long term land-use plans up and down the Valley, in on-the-ground conservation and agricultural practices that keep our streams and rivers healthy, in vibrant rural economies, and in the growing access to outdoor recreation opportunities that enhance our quality of life.





P.O. Box 674
New Market, Virginia 22844



This year, we honored the late John Adamson with our first North Star recognition. The name of this award was inspired by John, who believed that Shenandoah County's Comprehensive Plan and its vision of an agriculturally-based future for the county was the North Star for conservation and land use planning.

To this day at staff meetings and in Alliance board meetings you can hear his words of encouragement and guidance repeated:

***“Through patience, persistence and politeness,
we will achieve our shared conservation vision.”***



***John Adamson
1947-2021***