

# **Virginia Land Conservation Foundation**

## **May 2023 Grant Manual (FY24 Program Year)**

**\*Please note: grant applications will only be accepted online through our new Grant Management Portal: <https://vadcr.webgrantscloud.com/index.do>.\***

**Adoption Date: May 16, 2023**

**Administered by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation**

## **I. GRANT PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

Since 1999, the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation (Foundation or VLCF), established under Va. Code §§ 10.1-1017 through 10.1-1026, has funded land conservation projects throughout the Commonwealth. The Foundation administers, manages, and holds competitive grant rounds from a special, nonreverting fund in the state treasury known as the Virginia Land Conservation Fund, Va. Code § 10.1-1020 (Fund).

The Foundation administers the Fund for the purpose of providing grants to state agencies, other public bodies, qualifying nonprofits and state-recognized and federally recognized Virginia Indian Tribes. The grant funds can be used for the costs associated with permanently conserving land throughout the Commonwealth, including the purchase of development rights. VLCF grants are awarded only for acquiring interests in property that have not yet been permanently protected. There are five grant categories set out in Va. Code § 10.1-1020 (D): farmland preservation; forestland conservation; historic area preservation; natural area protection; and open spaces and parks.

The Director of the Department of Conservation and Recreation, serving as Administrative Secretary and assisted by an interagency task force, is charged with administering, reviewing, and making recommendations on grant applications to the Secretary of Natural and Historic Resources and the Foundation. Using specific criteria defined in each grant category, grants may be awarded for up to 50 percent of total project costs. The program can pay up to 100 percent of these costs for state agencies and eligible Virginia Indian Tribes, Va. Code § 10.1-1020 (A)(2).

Guiding factors for distribution of VLCF funds are set out in Va. Code §§ 10.1-1020 and 1021.1, which specify that at least one third of the funds shall be used to secure open-space easements to be held or co-held by a public body, and that the Foundation shall seek to achieve a fair distribution of land protected throughout the Commonwealth. Additionally, the state budget customarily specifies that no less than 50 percent of the VLCF funds shall be used for projects that provide public access.

The scoring criteria continue to place emphasis on providing grants to underserved communities and areas that have not previously benefited from VLCF grants. The Foundation strives to provide a fair distribution of public access and recreational opportunities, and to preserve open space, natural landscapes, and working lands across the Commonwealth. Additionally, the scoring criteria give precedence to projects that are within ConserveVirginia, as those lands are identified as conservation priorities by our state agency partners and other collaborators. There are seven different overarching categories within ConserveVirginia: (i) agriculture and forestry, (ii) natural habitat and ecosystem diversity, (iii) floodplains and flooding resilience, (iv) cultural and historic preservation, (v) scenic preservation, (vi) protected landscapes resilience, and (vii) water quality improvement.

### **Important Program Information**

**Note:** We welcome Virginia's state and federally-recognized tribes to apply for VLCF grants. As tribal participation in the VLCF program presents a new paradigm in achieving perpetual land conservation in Virginia, we ask Virginia Indian Tribe applicants to please contact staff to discuss your proposed project and planned means to conserve the land in perpetuity.

- Applications may be submitted by state agencies, localities, public bodies, state-recognized and federally recognized Virginia Indian Tribes and registered (tax-exempt) nonprofit organizations that qualify as a holder under Va. Code § 10.1-1009. Projects must protect land in perpetuity through acquisitions of property in fee simple, or recordation of a conservation easement and an open-space easement, or dedicated under the Open-Space Land Act.
- No application relying on eminent domain shall be considered, as Va. Code § 10.1-1023 prohibits the use of VLCF funds to acquire any property interest through eminent domain.
- Projects must be for a minimum of \$20,000 in total expense or a grant request of no less than \$10,000.
- Applicants must demonstrate that the landowners have been notified and are receptive to the proposed project. Applicants must submit, as part of their application, a signed letter from all of the landowners indicating their willingness to conserve the property.
- The proposed project must be for **specific property** that meets the criteria for one or more of the five grant categories listed below. Applications that are not site-specific will not be considered. Only one application may be submitted for a specific property.
- If the applicant uses the landowner's surname in the name of the project, then they must first obtain the landowner's permission. VLCF will use the project name provided in the application in public reports to the Governor and the General Assembly and press releases.
- A nonprofit organization seeking to hold an easement must provide documentation in their application that they meet the holder requirements in the Virginia Conservation Easement Act, Va. Code §§ 10.1-1009 to 10.1-1017.
- All nonprofit organization projects, whether fee simple or easement, must be protected by an open-space easement in perpetuity that is held or co-held by a public body (e.g., a state agency or local governmental entity), pursuant to Va. Code § 10.1-1020 (A)(2). An acknowledgement letter from the public body stating that it is willing to consider holding the easement or owning the property in fee simple must be included as part of the application.
- Applications for the acquisition of easements on lands currently permanently protected for conservation purposes are not eligible for a VLCF grant unless the project proposes to further protect the property by a more restrictive easement.
- The VLCF program can reimburse up to 50% of the appraised value of the subject property and other eligible due diligence costs for transactions involving localities or qualified nonprofit organizations, or 100% of such costs incurred by state agencies or state-recognized and federally recognized Virginia Indian Tribes, Va. Code § 10.1-1020 (A)(2). See Appendix A for eligible expenses.
- If the required 50% match is not determined at the time of the application, a letter confirming that the match will be met must be included with the application. See example letter in Appendix C.
- Possible sources of match funding include: (i) cash or pass-through dollars from other sources, e.g. grants awarded from sources other than VLCF; (ii) bargain sales, i.e., the monetary value

of the donated portion of the property; or (iii) other conserved property acquired in fee or restricted by an easement within the previous two years, and not acquired with VLCF funds, so long as the match property is also restricted as approved by VLCF.

- When additional property is proposed as match in a grant application, the match property must be in the proximity of or ecologically connected to the property that is the subject of the grant. The match property must also be protected in the same manner as the grant property; information on the match property must be included in the application; all due diligence items are also required for the match property.
- Indirect costs cannot be reimbursed or considered as match. These ineligible costs include, without limitation, staff time, overhead, work provided pro bono, or maintenance/operating costs of lands and facilities.
- VLCF requires certain property protections to further statewide environmental conservation goals, including permanent vegetated riparian buffers on all funded projects with perennial water resources. These protections must be preserved in perpetuity by the deed associated with the project. See Appendix D for all of the required provisions and further information on riparian buffers.
- For projects awarded funding, the requisite public body holder shall include language in the fee-simple deed or in the easement deed that states that the property will be taken under the Open-Space Land Act, Va. Code §§ 10.1-1700 through 10.1-1705, and that the protection is perpetual in nature and not extinguishable except pursuant to the provisions of the Open-Space Land Act.
- Properties acquired in fee or made subject to an easement as a result of a VLCF grant may not be diverted or converted from the approved use for which the grant was made. If a conversion or diversion occurs or, in the case of an easement, an extinguishment of the easement occurs, the VLCF must be reimbursed for the proportionate amount of the then value of the property equal to the proportion of the value of the property on which the grant was based. As a condition of its grant, the VLCF will require that language be included in the deed of acquisition or the deed of easement to such effect.
- If a nonprofit organization is awarded a grant to acquire fee-simple property, it may be sold only if it remains under easement and the VLCF is reimbursed for the proportionate amount of the then fair market value of the property equal to the proportion of the value of the property on which the grant was based. The fair-market value of the property must be supported by a current appraisal. An exception may be granted if the property is transferred to a public agency and the recorded deed of transfer states the agency agrees to hold and manage the property for the purposes for which it was originally acquired.
- All projects awarded VLCF funds must submit the due diligence documents specified in Appendix A.
- Grant payments are made as a reimbursement and cannot exceed the amount expended by the grant recipient.

## **II. APPLYING TO THE GRANT PROGRAM**

Applicants may apply to the program in our Grant Management Portal found here: <https://vadcr.webgrantscloud.com/index.do>. The applicant should read through this entire grant manual to become familiar with program specifics and requirements. Please contact staff with questions as you work through all of the information. We recommend that applicants contact the respective category/agency representative found on pages 6-12 below, prior to submitting their application.

### **Application Information and Deadline**

A complete application includes all of the information and documents required by the Grant Management Portal, and as outlined in this Grant Manual. The complete application must be submitted to the Department of Conservation and Recreation by **no later than 4 p.m. on Friday, August 18, 2023.**

#### **Questions?**

- General application inquiries:
  - Larry Mikkelson at (804) 337-0046, [larry.mikkelson@dcr.virginia.gov](mailto:larry.mikkelson@dcr.virginia.gov)
  - Suzan Bulbulkaya at (804) 371-5218, [suzan.bulbulkaya@dcr.virginia.gov](mailto:suzan.bulbulkaya@dcr.virginia.gov)
- Category-specific inquiries: See contact information listed under each category below
- WebGrants Management Portal, ConserveVirginia, GIS, or mapping questions:
  - Gina DiCicco at (804) 837-1819, [gina.dicicco@dcr.virginia.gov](mailto:gina.dicicco@dcr.virginia.gov)

### **Application Categories and Additional Scoring Criteria**

1. Farmlands and Forest Preservation
2. Historic Area Preservation
3. Natural Area Preservation
4. Open Spaces and Parks
5. Additional Scoring Criteria

Applicants must select one primary category for their project. A secondary category may also be chosen to increase the possibility of receiving funds, but is not required. Multiple applications for the same project within the same grant round will not be accepted.

**NOTE:** The applicant is advised to review the program requirements below carefully as they prepare their application and to determine the best category for their project. See Appendix B for the scoring sheets for each category and the Additional Criteria for all categories. To get a sense for how your project will score, you may want to score your application using the scoring sheet for your chosen category **and** the Additional Criteria. **Make sure your application addresses all of the applicable category criteria and the Additional Scoring Criteria to be awarded maximum points.**

### **Program Requirements by Category**

**1. Farmland and Forest Preservation Category** – Two funding scenarios are set out in subsections C and D of Va. Code § 10.1-1020, based on the amount of funds appropriated in the state budget for VLCF. If less than \$10 million is appropriated, then there are four grant categories

with farmlands and forest preservation sharing one single category (1/4 of funds). If \$10 million or more is appropriated, then there are five grant categories with farmland preservation and forestland preservation being separately funded categories (each category gets 1/5 of funds). For both scenarios, separate scoring criteria have been developed for agricultural lands and for forestal lands. The applicant should use the set of criteria that is most appropriate for the project being submitted.

### **A. Farmland Preservation Criteria**

Contact: Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, (804) 363-9279

Bill Scruggs, Deputy Director, bill.scruggs@vdacs.virginia.gov

<https://www.vdacs.virginia.gov/conservation-and-environmental-farmland-preservation.shtml>

Applications for the permanent protection of agricultural lands will be evaluated according to:

- ◆ Soil productivity. The parcel will be ranked based on the percentage that it contains of each of the following soils (as defined in § 3.2-205 of the Code of Virginia) which can be found at <https://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/WebSoilSurvey.aspx>:

“Prime farmland” is land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, fiber, forage, oilseed, nursery, and other agricultural crops with minimum inputs of fuel, fertilizer, pesticides, and labor, and without intolerable soil erosion. Prime farmland includes land that possesses the above characteristics but is being used currently to produce livestock and timber. It does not include land already in or committed to urban development or water storage.

“Unique farmland” is land other than prime farmland that is used for production of specific high-value food and fiber crops, as determined by the United States Secretary of Agriculture. It has the special combination of soil quality, location, growing season, and moisture supply needed to economically produce sustained high quality or high yields of specific crops when treated and managed according to acceptable farming methods.

“Important farmland” other than prime or unique farmland is land that is of statewide or local importance for the production of food, feed, fiber, forage, nursery, oilseed or other agricultural crops, as determined by the appropriate state agency or local government agency, either or both, and that the United States Secretary of Agriculture determines should be considered as farmland.

**Please note, if these percentage numbers of soil productivity are not provided in the application it will be presumed that none of these soils exist on the property.**

- ◆ Property acreage. The size of the parcel in relation to average agricultural parcel sizes in the locality will be used as a determining factor. More information can be found at <https://www.nass.usda.gov/AgCensus/>.
- ◆ Current and historical use of property. Priority will be given to any property that is currently being farmed and/or is a designated Century Farm. Information about this program can be found at <https://www.vdacs.virginia.gov/conservation-and-environmental-virginia-century-farms.shtml>

- ◆ Adjacency to conserved lands. The degree to which the property is located adjacent to, or nearby, already conserved lands held in perpetuity. Larger blocks of unbroken forest and agricultural lands including forest potentially provide the greatest value and range of benefits from and protection of rural land uses.
- ◆ Development vulnerability rank. Using the Virginia ConservationVision Development Vulnerability model, parcels will be evaluated according to their vulnerability ranking. The Development Vulnerability model can be found at <https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural-heritage/vaconvisvulnerable>.
- ◆ Best Management Practices. The existence of Best Management Practices (BMPs) and farm management plans that are currently being utilized as part of the normal operation of the farm, either implemented through state and federal conservation programs or voluntarily implemented without state or federal cost-sharing or technical assistance. Best management practices may include stream fencing, buffers, conservation tillage, cover crops, or animal waste management. Examples of the farm management plans could include, but are not limited to, a grazing management plan, a nutrient management plan, a conservation plan, or a resource management plan (which would include both the conservation plan and nutrient management plan).
- ◆ Locality support. The support for the project evidenced in local farmland protection policies, including, the comprehensive plan, agricultural zoning, agricultural and forestal districts, and use value taxation.
- ◆ ConserveVirginia (<https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/conservevirginia/>). The project will be evaluated based on the percentage of the total project area that is included in the ConserveVirginia Agriculture and Forestry category.

## **B. Forestland Preservation Criteria**

Contact: Virginia Department of Forestry, (434) 459-8278

Karl Didier, Forestland Conservation Program Manager [karl.didier@dof.virginia.gov](mailto:karl.didier@dof.virginia.gov)

<http://www.dof.virginia.gov/conservation/index.htm>

Applications for the permanent protection of working forest lands will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

- ◆ Property Acreage. Larger blocks of land under single ownership are more manageable, better protect ecological communities and biodiversity, and better sustain the flow of natural goods and services over time.
- ◆ Acres of Forest on the proposed property. Larger blocks of forest under single ownership are more easily managed, better protect the productivity and sustainable flow of natural goods and services from the forest, and better protect forest conservation values (e.g., have larger less-disturbed “core” areas, protect water quality, maintain habitat connectivity, etc.). To be considered for points under this criterion, land must be devoted to forestal use as defined by the State Land Evaluation and Advisory Council’s (SLEAC) technical standards for classification of real estate devoted to forestal use. Most critically, the proposed project’s acreage must qualify as “Productive Forest Land” or “Non-Productive Forest Land” as defined by SLEAC standards and contain at least 20 acres of forest.

Land devoted to forestal use that has been recently harvested of merchantable timber, is being regenerated into a new forest and not currently developed for nonforest use qualifies for points under this criterion. In addition, acreage that is under contract to be planted or afforested qualifies for points. Also, to qualify for points under this criterion, the proposed parcels must be under the same ownership (currently or anticipated after acquisition using VLCF funds) and must be “contiguous.” To be considered contiguous, the proposed parcels must either (a) directly border each other or (b) all border another block of property already owned by the proposed landowner. If multiple, non-contiguous parcels are proposed, only those that separately meet SLEAC standards will receive points.

- ◆ Acres of forest with a “high” Forest Conservation Value (FCV) based upon VDOF’s analysis and map (2020 version). See the Forest Conservation Values map on the [Natural Heritage Data Explorer](#) or download GIS data from VDOF (see link below). “High” values are those labeled on the map as “5: Outstanding” or “4: Very High”. The FCV analysis ranks the relative conservation value of forestland based on watershed integrity, size of forested blocks, forest management potential, proximity to other conserved lands, threat of conversion, and presence of diminished tree species or significant forest communities. The FCV GIS layer and associated description can be downloaded at: <https://vdof.maps.arcgis.com/home/webmap/embedGallery.html?displayapps=true&displayinline=true&group=f40da8804f7645de9f2298945c5d897d>
- ◆ Length of intermittent and perennial watercourses as identified by the USGS National Hydrography Dataset (<https://viewer.nationalmap.gov/advanced-viewer/>), as well as wetlands and water impoundments, present on or bordering the property. Forested watersheds and streamside forests provide considerable water quality, filtration, nutrient retention, and flood attenuation to downstream users.
- ◆ Adjacency to Conserved Lands. The degree to which the property is located adjacent to, or near, already conserved lands held in perpetuity. Larger blocks of unbroken forest and agricultural lands including forest potentially provide the greatest value and range of benefits from and protection of rural land uses.
- ◆ Management of Multiple Resources. The degree to which the property is managed according to a forest stewardship management plan (or equivalent) prepared by a professional forester. Applicant should provide a copy of a current forest resource management plan and demonstrate how recommendations are being followed to achieve forest management goals. **If plan is not provided with the application, it will be presumed that no plan exists.**
- ◆ Preservation of forest acreage. The degree to which the applicant is willing to preserve a portion of forest acreage in perpetuity to protect the working forest land base. Land that is not currently forested but that the landowner will afforest and maintain as forest in perpetuity counts. **The draft deed or term sheet accompanying the application must include language reflecting this commitment; otherwise, this acreage will be assumed to be zero.**
- ◆ ConserveVirginia (<https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/conservevirginia/>). The project will be evaluated based on the percentage of the total project area that is included in the ConserveVirginia Agriculture and Forestry category.



## **2. Historic Area Preservation Category**

Contact: Virginia Department of Historic Resources (DHR), (804) 482-6094  
Karri Richardson, Easement Program Specialist, Karri.Richardson@dhr.virginia.gov  
<https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/easements/easement-program-overview/>

Applications are encouraged for projects that conserve historic resources associated with underrepresented communities. Applications for the permanent protection of historic, archaeological, cultural, or historic landscape resources will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

- ◆ Historic Significance, strong proposals are likely to protect or preserve a resource that:
  - A. Is listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register (VLR), found at <https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/historic-registers/>, either individually or as a contributing resource in a listed historic district; or
  - B. Is a battlefield property identified with a priority rating in one of the following reports issued by the National Park Service’s American Battlefield Protection Program: “Report on the Nation’s Civil War Battlefields” (1993, as amended), or “Report to Congress on the Historic Preservation of Revolutionary War and War of 1812 Sites in the United States,” (2007, as amended); contact Karri Richardson at [karri.richardson@dhr.virginia.gov](mailto:karri.richardson@dhr.virginia.gov) if you need a map to confirm the location of the property within identified battlefields; or
  - C. Has been formally determined to be eligible for listing on the VLR by DHR within the previous five calendar years and remains eligible for listing in the opinion of DHR. For assistance in determining whether a property has been determined eligible for the VLR, please contact DHR Archives at (804) 482-6102. **Note: listing on the VLR may be required** by project completion for properties awarded funding in order to meet the Virginia Board of Historic Resources (VBHR) Easement Program eligibility requirements.
  - D. Integrity. The integrity of the historic resource to be protected or preserved shall be considered. Integrity is the ability of a property to convey its historic significance through attributes such as location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.
  - E. ConserveVirginia (<https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/conservedvirginia/>). The project will be evaluated based on the percentage of the total project area that is included in the ConserveVirginia Cultural and Historic Preservation category.
- ◆ Underrepresented Resources. The extent to which the application identifies and documents resources associated with Virginia’s culturally diverse history, such as properties associated with people of color (circa 1619-Civil War), the Reconstruction Era (1861-1898), the Civil Rights Movement, LGBTQ, African-American, Asian-American, Latino, Hispanic, Native American and women’s history.
- ◆ Threat. Threatened property is defined as property (i) documented to be currently or recently on the market (within the past calendar year); (ii) threatened by development, where plans/plats have been submitted to or approved by the locality’s planning department within the last calendar year; (iii) in an estate that is currently being settled; (iv) adjacent to property currently on the market or sold within the previous calendar year; or (v) with built or other historic, archaeological, or cultural resources that are threatened by demolition, destruction, or

development. **Documentation supporting specific threats must be submitted with the application.**

- ◆ Use and Treatment of Historic Resources on the Property. The extent to which plans for future uses of (e.g. historic site interpretation, rehabilitation of the battlefield landscape) or alterations to the property are consistent with historic resource stewardship and protection. All plans must be described in or submitted with the application and must meet the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties and Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes* (36 C.F.R. Part 68). Plans submitted as part of the application must be approved by DHR before the project receives final VLCF funding.
- ◆ Historic Resource Protection. The degree to which the applicant is willing to preserve all historic resources on the property in perpetuity in accordance with the DHR's current easement template. Applicants must attach a list or summary of proposed restrictions to be included in the easement based on DHR's current easement template (please do **not** attach a copy of the easement template to the grant application). Contact Karri Richardson at [karri.richardson@dhr.virginia.gov](mailto:karri.richardson@dhr.virginia.gov) if you need a copy of DHR's current easement template.
- ◆ Adjacency to Conserved Lands. The degree to which the property is located adjacent to, or near, already conserved lands held in perpetuity.
- ◆ Furthers Public Interests. The extent to which the project includes specific plans for programs that will further or promote public interests, such as education, research, community outreach, recreation, or heritage tourism promotion. Applications for projects that conserve historic resources associated with underrepresented communities and those that also provide public educational opportunities and share untold stories to advance social equity are particularly encouraged.
- ◆ Applicants for funds in this category must provide original digital images no greater than 800 x 800 pixels in dimension. In the case of built cultural or historic structures, these should include images that document the exterior of the primary historic structure and any secondary structures, significant interior spaces and features, and the setting and viewshed of the primary resource. For archaeological sites, applicants should include a general view or site plan and images documenting the condition of the site, stratigraphy (if applicable), and representative features showing the integrity of those features. For battlefields or other landscapes, images should document the overall site, its surroundings and viewshed, and all historic and non-historic structures, roads, and other features within the project.
- ◆ If funds are awarded for the purpose of acquiring fee-simple title to or an easement on eligible historic properties, the property owner shall separately offer to convey to the VBHR a perpetual preservation easement on the property to be acquired with the VLCF funds (including any match property). The VBHR shall decide whether to accept the easement offer based on established criteria and existing policies and procedures governing the Virginia Department of Historic Resources Easement Program (Chapter 22, Title 10.1 of Va. Code). DHR staff administers the easements on behalf of VBHR. The property must meet the Easement Program eligibility requirements (see <https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/easements/>); if not, or if the VBHR declines acceptance of the easement offer, DHR may recommend an alternative easement holder.

**All properties acquired with Historic Area Preservation funds shall be open for public access for a minimum of two days each calendar year.** Public access shall not disturb any sensitive

resources thereon, and may require approval by DHR to ensure that historic resources will not be affected.

### **3. Natural Areas Preservation Category**

Contact: DCR Natural Heritage, (804) 371-6205

Rob Evans, Protection Manager, Virginia Natural Heritage Program, Rob.Evans@dcr.virginia.gov  
<https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural-heritage/>

Applications in this category must include land that will contribute to biodiversity values and statewide conservation significance. Projects/Applicants must:

- 1) address a protection need in the Virginia Natural Heritage Plan, by making a significant contribution to the permanent protection of one or more natural heritage resources, including habitats for rare, threatened, or endangered plant or animal species or state-significant natural communities;
- 2) qualify to be dedicated as a natural area preserve as provided in Va. Code § 10.1-213;
- 3) have been sufficiently evaluated by DCR-DNH staff (including site visit) for the extent, type, and viability of natural heritage resources present and their management requirements and constraints;
- 4) be recommended by, via a support letter from, DCR Natural Heritage based on specific criteria listed in Va. Code § 10.1-1022.1 (B);
- 5) have landowners who understand the requirements of their land being dedicated to the state natural area preserve system and who demonstrate commitment to the requirement for active and ongoing management activities for natural heritage resources on the property;
- 6) have been subject to adequate discussion between landowners and appropriate DCR-DNH representatives to develop confidence in the feasibility of carrying out necessary management requirements; and
- 7) ensure that the proposed area for acquisition and the applicant's ability to expend VLCF and matching funds can be conducted within two years of grant award.

Applications for Natural Areas Preservation category funding will be evaluated based on specific scoring (Appendix B) that address these project attributes, including the percentage of the property that is included in the ConserveVirginia Natural Habitat and Biological Diversity category.

All properties acquired with VLCF funds in this category, or used as match, shall be dedicated as natural area preserves in accordance with Va. Code § 10.1-213. Properties shall be open for public access for a reasonable amount of time each year without disturbing the sensitive resources thereon, and shall be open for DCR Natural Heritage approved research, associated monitoring and necessary stewardship activities. Applicants shall provide a public access plan that addresses these issues and contains a minimum of one guided nature hike per year.

#### **4. Open Spaces and Parks Category**

Contact: DCR - Planning and Recreation Resources Division, (804) 786-4379  
Kristal McKelvey, Program Planner, recreationgrants@dcr.virginia.gov  
<https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/recreational-planning/>

Applications for the permanent protection and acquisition of public recreational lands or open-space lands will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

- ◆ Acquires an interest in land that provides increased public access to state waters offering recreational potential.
- ◆ Acquires an interest in land that creates new outdoor recreational opportunities for underserved communities or expands existing park systems or other recreational resources to protect public conservation or recreational interests.
- ◆ Protects viewsheds or land important to the protection of (i) any federally designated Wild and Scenic River or American Heritage River in or adjacent to Virginia, (ii) Virginia's Scenic Rivers, (iii) designated Scenic Roads, (iv) Virginia Byways, or (v) nationally designated scenic lands or recreational trails, including state-wide connecting trails, greenways or blueways. See the VOP Mapper at: <http://consapps.dcr.virginia.gov/dnh/vop/vopmapper.htm>
- ◆ Supports local or regional plans for parks, open space, and outdoor recreational facilities, or contributes to the protection of a state, regionally, or locally identified conservation corridor.
- ◆ Addresses a need identified in the *Virginia Outdoors Plan* (VOP). The VOP may be accessed at <http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/recreational-planning/vop>
- ◆ Makes the grant-funded land available for public access and use, including, but not limited to, hunting, fishing, hiking, or wildlife watching.
- ◆ Provides an outdoor recreational resource to an underserved community. The Social Vulnerability Index created by the Virginia Institute of Marine Sciences may be used to identify underserved areas of the state: [http://cmap2.vims.edu/SocialVulnerability/SocioVul\\_SS.html](http://cmap2.vims.edu/SocialVulnerability/SocioVul_SS.html). Data from other sources may also be considered for this criterion if applicant provides the source reference.
- ◆ Recreation Access Need. The project will be evaluated based on the demonstrated recreation need of its location based on the DCR Nature-based Recreation Access Model (2021) and the Trust for Public Lands ParkServe Model. Projects offering land-based recreation opportunities will be scored on whichever model demonstrates a greater need. Projects offering water-based recreation opportunities will be scored on the Nature-based Recreation Access Model's water-based recreation need rating. Information on the Nature-based Recreation Access Model can be found at <https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural-heritage/vaconvisrec>. ParkServe can be found at: <https://www.tpl.org/parkserve>.
- ◆ ConserveVirginia (<https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/conservedvirginia/>). The project will be evaluated on the amount of the total project area that is included in any ConserveVirginia category so long as the project provides daily public access.

## 5. Additional Scoring Criteria

All applications are also scored on the following criteria. See Appendix B for a breakdown of potential points and be sure your application addresses these criteria.

- ◆ Virginia Outdoors Plan (VOP) Identified Need: Zero to three points will be awarded if a project satisfies resource conservation needs identified in the VOP or a local comp plan. Information can be found at: <https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/recreational-planning/vop>.
- ◆ Nature Based Recreation Access Model Identified Need: Zero to three points will be given to a project that provides public access and is located in an area where there is at least a moderate need for recreation access identified in the Nature Based Recreation Access Model's terrestrial or aquatic layers. Information can be found at: <https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural-heritage/vaconvisrec>.
- ◆ Water Quality Benefit: Zero to 11 points may be given for projects that protect water quality by requiring permanent vegetated riparian buffers exceeding the mandatory 35-foot width. Points will also be awarded for forested buffers that maintain an evenly dispersed minimal 50% forested canopy. Because protecting water quality is a long-standing goal of the Commonwealth supported through many voluntary cost-share and tax-credit programs, these points are awarded to those projects that voluntarily provide greater water quality protections beyond the 35-foot riparian buffer in perpetuity.
- ◆ Protection of Cultural Resources: Zero to 10 points may be given for projects that identify and protect local cultural resources on the property and provide public educational opportunities. Provide with your application photos and documentation of the cultural resources found on site that will be protected by your project. Also, provide draft language to be used in the deed to protect the resources, and indicate whether there will be educational opportunities provided for the public. See page 28 for examples.
- ◆ ConserveVirginia Value-added (<https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/conservevirginia/>): Zero to 12 points may be awarded for those projects that demonstrably address more than one of the seven ConserveVirginia categories (listed on page 28). Two points may be awarded for each additional ConserveVirginia category identified by the applicant that is protected in perpetuity by the project, e.g., a farmland project that falls within the Agriculture and Forestry category that also includes an historic building or site located within the Cultural and Historic Preservation category and is protected in the easement.
- ◆ Fish and Wildlife: Zero to 10 points may be given; with zero to three points for fish and wildlife habitat protection and management (one point for identifying wildlife, one point for protecting habitat, an added point for providing public access to view, hunt, or fish wildlife). An additional three points may be awarded for the identification of Department of Wildlife Resources Species of Greatest Conservation Need or a state or federal threatened or endangered species; with another four points awarded for protection of associated habitat. For more wildlife information, see: <https://services.dwr.virginia.gov/fwis/> or contact the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources, (804) 593-2043.
- ◆ Public Access: Zero to 10 points may be given dependent upon the extent of public access provided. Full public access means the property is open for public visitation 365 days a year. Visual access means the applicant can demonstrate the scenic value of the property and that the project will protect the integrity of the public's scenic view.
- ◆ Underserved Communities: Up to 10 points may be given to projects that benefit underserved communities. The Social Vulnerability Index created by the Virginia Institute of Marine Sciences may be used to identify underserved areas of the state:

[https://cmap2.vims.edu/SocialVulnerability/SocioVul\\_SS.html](https://cmap2.vims.edu/SocialVulnerability/SocioVul_SS.html). Data from other sources will also be considered for this criterion if the applicant provides the source reference.

- ◆ Ratio of Match to Total Project Cost: The amount of match provided by the applicant can add up to three points. If the applicant claims 60 percent or more of matching funds, then a preliminary appraisal must be submitted with the application for verification to be awarded points.

### **III. APPLICATION REVIEW AND GRANT AWARDS**

#### ***First Application Review***

Applications will be received and reviewed by DCR for completeness. Complete applications will be shared with an interagency task force of subject-matter experts for review and scoring.

#### ***Second Application Review***

The interagency task force will rank the projects and consider geographic distribution, percentage of projects with public access, and those being placed under easement.

#### ***Final Review, Grant Award, Notification***

Highly ranked applications will be presented to the Foundation for consideration, action, and grant approval. After Board action to approve grants, successful grant recipients will be notified of the pending grant award via an email from VLCF staff.

### **IV. REQUIREMENTS FOR GRANT RECIPIENTS**

#### **Grant Agreements**

Within a few weeks of email notification of a grant award, a grant agreement will be emailed to the grant recipient to sign and return the document. After the Executive Secretary has signed the agreement, a scan of the fully-executed agreement will be provided to the grant recipient.

Grants are made for a two year period. Administrative extensions of up to one year may be granted upon extenuating circumstances being documented by the grant recipient.

#### **Periodic Status Reporting**

Grant recipients will report the status of the project twice per year.

#### **Final Steps and Closing**

Certain required documents must be provided to VLCF, and approved by VLCF, prior to grant funds being disbursed. These documents are listed in Appendix A.

Under no circumstances will VLCF funds be disbursed until all required documents have been provided, reviewed, and approved by VLCF, and all of the required deeds have been recorded.

If grant funding is provided to a closing agent, then a copy of the recorded deeds must be provided to VLCF within **two months** after closing.

## **V. APPENDICES**

### **List of Appendices:**

Appendix A	VLCF Grant Specifications
Appendix B	Score Sheets for each Category and Additional Scoring Criteria
Appendix C	Example Match Letter
Appendix D	Required Property Protections and Vegetated Riparian Buffer Information

## **Appendix A – VLCF Grant Specifications**

### **I. Required Items in an Application (the grant application portal will prompt you to upload these items):**

1. Minimum of two maps of the project: Aerial map and Topo map (USGS USA Topo Map), both showing any neighboring conserved lands.
2. Minimum of three photographs of the project property, representing the conservation values being protected.
3. A signed letter from all landowners stating that they are willing participants in the proposed transaction.
4. A match letter (see Appendix C) if the required 50% match is not yet in hand or a governing body resolution.
5. For easement projects, a term sheet or draft easement indicating the proposed protections of the project's conservation values.
6. For nonprofit applicants:
  - a. an acknowledgement letter from the public body willing to: hold or co-hold an easement on the property; or hold the property in fee simple, and
  - b. evidence that the nonprofit meets the holder requirements found in Va. Code §§ 10.1-1009 to 10.1-1017.
7. For applications in the Historic Category, additional information and documents specified on pages 9 through 11.
8. For applicants claiming more than 60% match, a preliminary appraisal is required to get points.
9. Include screenshots of your project in all intersecting layers of ConserveVirginia.

### **II. Additional Recommended Items:**

1. Letters of support and resolutions from governmental bodies for the project.
2. Forestry plan or agriculture plan, if applicable.
3. Shapefile delineating the boundary of your project (including match property, if applicable).

### **III. Eligible Expenses for the Grant Program:**

1. The appraised value of the property or interest acquired.
2. Actual expenditures (written expense documentation is required) for:
  - Appraisal
  - Title search, binder, title insurance
  - Boundary survey
  - Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (fee acquisitions only)
  - Legal Fees; Recording Costs
  - Property Line Demarcation

### **IV. Documents and Due Diligence Items Required Prior to Closing:**

1. A full appraisal report that meets USPAP Standards, or UASFLA Standards, performed within six months of closing.



2. Title insurance policy within 90 days prior to closing:
  - a. must confirm that the seller or donor owns marketable fee simple title
  - b. encumbrances of record must not impair conservation purposes
  - c. encumbrances of record must be acceptable to VLCF
3. Boundary survey by a Virginia Licensed Surveyor that meets Va. Administrative Code 18 VAC 10-20-370 Minimum Standards and Procedures for Land Boundary Survey Practice
4. Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (fee acquisition only); prepared no more than six months prior to closing
  - a. report and findings must be acceptable to VLCF
  - b. issues revealed may require remedial action
5. The final version of the required deeds for final VLCF approval before closing
6. A copy of the settlement statement for the transaction

**NOTE:** VLCF funds will not be distributed until all due diligence documents have been provided, reviewed, and approved by staff and all required deeds have been recorded.

## Appendix B – VLCF Category Scoring Sheets

### Farmland Preservation Category

Criterion	Score
<p><b>Category I: Land Evaluation (40 points)</b></p> <p><b>A. Soil Productivity (25 points)</b>            Calculate the percentage of project land in each soils class. Points are awarded based on the combined percentages of these three categories x 25 (e.g., 30% prime, 20% unique and 10% important = 0.60 x 25, which equals 15 points.) More information on these soil classes can be found in § 3.2-205 of the Code of Virginia.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Value the soils classified as “Prime farmland”</li> <li>2. Value the soils classified “Unique farmland”</li> <li>3. Value the soils classified as “Important farmland”</li> </ol> <p><b>B. Parcel Size (15 points)</b>            Using data from the most recent Census of Agriculture, score the size of the farm as it compares to the average sized farm in the locality.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Larger by 25% or more = 15 points</li> <li>• Larger by 0% - 24% = 10 points</li> <li>• Smaller by 1% - 24% = 7 points</li> <li>• Smaller by 25% or more = 5 points</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Category II: Land Use (40 points)</b></p> <p><b>A. Current use and status of the land (8 points)</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Is the land currently being farmed? 4 points, if yes.</li> <li>2) Is this a Century Farm? 4 points, if yes.</li> </ol> <p><b>B. Proximity to conserved lands (10 points)</b>            To what degree is the land adjacent to or in close proximity to other preserved lands, either in agriculture production or non-active in farming?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parcel adjoins other preserved lands = 10 points</li> <li>• Parcel is within one-quarter mile but not adjoining other preserved lands = 7 points</li> <li>• Parcel is within one-half mile but further than one-quarter mile of other preserved lands = 5 points</li> </ul> <p><b>C. Development vulnerability (8 points)</b>            What is the vulnerability rank for this parcel as determined by the ConservationVision Development Vulnerability model (<a href="https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural-heritage/vaconvisvulnerable">https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural-heritage/vaconvisvulnerable</a>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each ranking from Class II to Class V is awarded 2 points (e.g., a property in Class IV = 6 points)</li> </ul> <p><b>D. Best Management Practices (BMPs) (10 points)</b>            Is a farm management plan that specifies BMPs or voluntary BMPs (e.g., stream fencing, buffers, conservation tillage, cover crops, animal waste management, etc.) being utilized as part of the normal operation of this farm? Does the property have either/both a conservation plan or a Nutrient Management Plan for all nutrient applications made to cropland, hayland, and/or pastureland?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicant has implemented applicable BMPs to protect water quality, either voluntarily or through a state or federal conservation program = 4 points</li> <li>• Applicant has a conservation plan developed by local conservation staff (Soil &amp; Water Conservation District or Natural Resources Conservation Service) = 3 points</li> <li>• Applicant has a Nutrient Management Plan prepared by a DCR certified nutrient management planner = 3 points</li> </ul> <p><b>E. Local farmland policy (4 points)</b>            Is the project supported by local farmland protection policies?</p>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One point each for: comprehensive plan; agricultural zoning; agricultural and forestal districts; and use value taxation.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>F. Category III: ConserveVirginia (20 points)</b></p> <p>Is the project included in ConserveVirginia? (<a href="https://vanhde.org/content/map">https://vanhde.org/content/map</a>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multiply the percent of the property included within the Agriculture and Forestry Category layer by 20 to calculate points. (e.g. 60% of the property is in the Ag and Forestry category; <math>.60 \times 20 = 12</math> points)</li> </ul>	

**Total Maximum Score 100 points** \_\_\_\_\_

## Forestland Preservation Category

Criterion	Score
<p><b>1) Property Acreage (10 points)</b>            Is the size of the tract adequate to protect and allow for management of forestal resources? Larger blocks of land under single ownership remain more manageable and functional over time. To calculate points for projects up to 999 acres, divide acreage by 1,000, then multiply by 8. For parcels larger than 999 acres, see points below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Score:        0-999 acres = Property Acreage / 1000 * 8 points</li> <li>                  1000-4,999 = 8 points</li> <li>                  5000-9999 = 9 points</li> <li>                  <math>\geq 10,000</math> acres = 10 points</li> </ul>	
<p><b>2) Acres of Forest (20 points)</b>            How many acres of the property are currently forested or devoted to forestal use? To be considered forested or devoted to forestal use, acreage must meet the State Land Evaluation and Advisory Council (SLEAC) technical standards for classification of real estate devoted to forestal use. See the grant manual for more detail on which land can qualify as “devoted to forestal use.” For up to 999-acre projects, divide the acreage by 1,000, then multiply by 18 to calculate points. For parcels larger than 999 acres, see points below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Score:        0-999 acres = Forested Acreage / 1000 * 18 points</li> <li>                  1,000-4,999 = 18 points</li> <li>                  5,000-9,999 = 19 points</li> <li>                  <math>\geq 10,000</math> acres = 20 points</li> </ul>	
<p><b>3) Acres of high forest conservation value (FCV 4 and 5) (15 points)</b>            Score is based upon VDOF’s analysis and Forest Conservation Values map that ranks relative conservation value of forestland based on water quality, site productivity, terrestrial and aquatic habitat, intactness, and threat to conversion attributes. Find the map here: <a href="https://vanhde.org/content/map">https://vanhde.org/content/map</a>. To calculate points for projects up to 999 acres, divide High FCV acreage by 1,000, then multiply by 13. For larger parcels, see below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Score:        0-999 acres = High FCV acreage / 1000 * 13 points</li> <li>                  1,000-4,999 = 13 points</li> <li>                  5,000-9999 = 14 points</li> <li>                  <math>\geq 10,000</math> acres = 15 points</li> </ul>	
<p><b>4) Water Quality (15 points)</b>            Streamside forests provide considerable water quality, filtration, nutrient retention, and flood attenuation to downstream users. Scored based on the total linear feet of intermittent or perennial streams or rivers (as identified on the USGS 7.5” quad) or wetland or impoundment shoreline that is on or bordering the property. To calculate points, divide total length of streams or shorelines (measured in feet) by 1,000.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Score:        0 -15,000 feet = feet / 1,000 points</li> <li>                  <math>\geq 15,000</math> feet = 15 points</li> </ul>	
<p><b>5) Adjacency to Conserved Lands (5 points)</b>            Is the property is located adjacent to, or within five miles of, already conserved lands held in perpetuity? To calculate points, subtract the distance from already conserved land in miles from 5. Greater than 5 miles receives 0 points.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Score:        Within 5 miles = 5 – (miles away from conserved lands)</li> </ul>	

<p><b>6) Management of Multiple Resources (5 points)</b>  Does the landowner manage the property according to a forest stewardship management plan (or equivalent) prepared by a professional forester and follow plan recommendations to achieve the forest management goals?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Score: Owner has an existing management plan, and with demonstrated plan implementation = 5 points  Owner has management plan but no demonstrated plan implementation = 3 points</li> </ul>	
<p><b>7) Preservation of Forested Acreage (10 points)</b>  Landowner is willing to preserve a proportion of the property in a forested condition in perpetuity. Land that is not currently forested but that the landowner will afforest and maintain as forest in perpetuity counts. To calculate points, multiply percent forested by 10.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Score: Percent of property that the landowner is willing to retain as forest * 10</li> </ul>	
<p><b>8) ConserveVirginia (20 points)</b>  Is the property included in ConserveVirginia? (<a href="https://vanhde.org/content/map">https://vanhde.org/content/map</a>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Score: To calculate points, multiply the percent of the property included within the Agriculture and Forestry Category by 20. (e.g. 60% of the property is in the Ag and Forestry category; 0.60 x 20 = 12 points)</li> </ul>	

**Total Maximum Score 100 points \_\_\_\_\_**

## Historic Area Preservation Category

Criterion	Score	Notes
<p><b>1) Historic Significance</b> <span style="float: right;"><b>Maximum score: 30 points</b></span></p> <p>1. <u>Historic Resource/Property is:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individually listed on VLR or is a contributing resource in a listed historic district = <b>25, or</b></li> <li>• Determined by DHR to be eligible for listing on VLR = <b>20, or</b></li> <li>• Civil War, Revolutionary War, or War of 1812 site or battlefield designated as Priority I, II, III, or IV in the Battlefield Reports (see p. 8 of Grant manual) = <b>25</b></li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>-AND-</b></p> <p>2. <u>Integrity:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resources that retain a high degree of historic integrity = <b>5</b></li> </ul>		
<p><b>2) Underrepresented Communities &amp; Resources</b> <span style="float: right;"><b>Maximum score: 10 points</b></span></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Property contains documented resources representing Virginia’s culturally diverse history, such as places or sites associated with people of color (circa 1619-Civil War), the Reconstruction Era (1861-1898), the Civil Rights Movement, LGBTQ, African-American, Asian-American, Latino, Hispanic, Native American and women’s history = <b>5</b></li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>AND/OR</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Property or area has special community significance related to its history, as explained in application, regardless of formal documentation = <b>5</b></li> </ul>		
<p><b>3) Threat</b> <span style="float: right;"><b>Maximum score: 10 points</b></span></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Currently on the market for sale, in an estate being settled, threatened by development, or in imminent danger of demolition = <b>10</b></li> <li>• Recently on the market for sale or sold within the prior calendar year, resource is vacant/unoccupied, or resource is significantly deteriorated and in need of immediate preservation = <b>5</b></li> <li>• No documentation of threat = <b>0</b></li> </ul>		
<p><b>4) Use &amp; Treatment of Historic Resources &amp; Property</b> <span style="float: right;"><b>Max. score: 10 points</b></span></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plans for future use(s) (e.g. interpretation as a historic site, subdivision, timber harvest) of the property are appropriate and consistent with historic resource stewardship and protection = <b>5, and</b></li> <li>• Plans for treatment, alteration, and maintenance of historic resources on the property are appropriate and consistent with historic resource stewardship and protection = <b>5</b></li> <li>• No documentation of plans for uses of property or treatment of historic resources = <b>0</b></li> </ul>		
<p><b>5) Historic Resource Protection</b> <span style="float: right;"><b>Maximum score: 10 points</b></span></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proposed easement terms and restrictions provide comprehensive protection for historic resources and are specifically consistent with VBHR easement template = <b>10</b></li> <li>• Proposed easement terms and protections for historic resources are acceptable, and generally consistent with VBHR easement template = <b>5</b></li> <li>• No list of easement terms provided = <b>0</b></li> </ul>		
<p><b>6) Adjacency to Conserved Land</b> <span style="float: right;"><b>Maximum score: 5 points</b></span></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adjacent to existing conserved land = <b>5</b></li> <li>• In viewshed of, or in close physical proximity to significant historic resources, and/or existing conserved land = <b>3</b></li> <li>• Not in viewshed of, or in close physical proximity to significant historic resources or conserved land, but represents a unique cultural resource within the geographical area = <b>1</b></li> </ul>		

<p><b>7) Further Public Interests</b> <span style="float: right;"><b>Maximum Score: 5 points</b></span></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project includes specific plans for programs that promote research, education, community outreach, or heritage tourism = <b>5</b></li> <li>• Project includes general plans for programs to be developed that would promote research, education, community outreach, or heritage tourism = <b>3</b></li> <li>• Project contains no plans that would further public interests = <b>0</b></li> </ul>		
<p><b>8) ConserveVirginia</b> <span style="float: right;"><b>Maximum score: 20 points</b></span></p> <p>Is the property included in ConserveVirginia? (<a href="https://vanhde.org/content/map">https://vanhde.org/content/map</a>)</p> <p>To calculate points, multiply the percent of the property included within the Cultural and Historic Preservation Category by 20. (e.g. 60% of the property is in the Cultural and Historic Preservation category; <math>0.60 \times 20 = 12</math> points)</p>		

**Total Maximum Score 100 points** \_\_\_\_\_

## Natural Area Preservation Category

Criterion	Score
<p><b>I. Biodiversity Significance (35 points)</b></p> <p>1. <u>Will the proposed project protect one or more of Virginia’s highest quality examples of a natural heritage resource?</u> (parcel overlaid on conservation sites layer) <b>Maximum score: 20 points</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Located within Essential Conservation Site = 20 points;</li> <li>• Located within conservation site = 10 points;</li> </ul> <p>2. <u>Parcel Significance:</u> What is the number of natural heritage elements present on the subject parcel, or associated with it? <b>Maximum score: 10 points</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 point per viable, extant EO;</li> <li>• 2 points per essential EO;</li> <li>• 0.5 point per viable, extant EO outside parcel but within conservation site that also overlaps the proposed parcel for protection</li> </ul> <p>3. <u>Does the project have global significance?</u> (biodiversity rank of conservation site) Proportion of parcel area (acres) within conservation sites, weighted by B-rank <b>Maximum score: 5 points</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• B1 = 5 points x proportion within conservation site;</li> <li>• B2 = 4 x proportion within conservation site;</li> <li>• B3 = 3 x proportion within conservation site;</li> <li>• B4 = 2 x proportion within conservation site;</li> <li>• B5 = 1 x proportion within conservation site</li> </ul>	
<p><b>II. Ecological Integrity (20 points)</b></p> <p>1. <u>Regional Landscape Integrity:</u> What percentage of parcel area (acres) is within one or more ecological cores, weighted by Ecological Integrity rank (i.e.C-rank)? <b>Maximum score: 10 points</b> (points may add up to more, but 10 points is the max)</p> <p>Parcel is located in a Core ranked:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• C1=10 points x proportion within ecological core;</li> <li>• C2=8 x proportion within ecological core;</li> <li>• C3=6 x proportion within ecological core;</li> <li>• C4=3 x proportion within ecological core;</li> <li>• C5=1 x proportion within ecological core; <b>AND</b></li> </ul> <p>Is any portion of the parcel within the Natural Land Network?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parcel intersects with the Natural Land Network (1 point)</li> </ul> <p>2. <u>Local/Parcel Integrity:</u> How much of the parcel is in natural vegetation? <b>Maximum score: 5 points</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parcel supports natural community/natural vegetation: 75% or more of parcel area = 5 points, 50-74% = 4 points, 25-49% = 3 points, 1-25% = 2 points</li> </ul> <p>3. <u>Connectivity with Conserved Lands:</u> Is the parcel adjacent to other conserved lands with Biodiversity Management Intent (BMI)? <b>Maximum score: 5 points</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adjoins BMI 1 = 5 points;</li> <li>• Adjoins BMI 2 = 4 points;</li> <li>• Adjoins BMI 3 = 3 points;</li> <li>• Adjoins BMI 4 or 5 = 2 points;</li> <li>• Land not adjacent to conserved land = 0 points</li> </ul>	



<p><b>III. Management Needs, Likelihood of Success, and Threat (25 points)</b></p> <p>1. <b>Management Needs:</b> What is the intensity of current and future management actions needed to successfully maintain/restore natural heritage resources? <b>Maximum score: 10 points</b></p> <p>Parcel conditions require:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• minimal natural heritage resources management = 10 points;</li> <li>• moderate management = 6 points;</li> <li>• intensive management/restoration = 3 points</li> </ul> <p>2. <b>Management Capacity:</b> Does the applicant have proven experience and capacity in terms of staff resources and expertise to address management needs? <b>Maximum score: 8 points</b></p> <p>Application provides:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a thorough description of both experience and staff capacity = 8 points;</li> <li>• a cursory description = 4 points;</li> <li>• not mentioned = 0 points</li> </ul> <p>3. <b>Site visit &amp; Owner contact:</b> NHP Staff have had timely opportunity to visit tract and discuss with landowner necessary conservation measures and implications of natural area preserve dedication. <b>Maximum score: 5 points</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site visit &amp; discussion = 5 points;</li> <li>• Site visit only = 3 points;</li> <li>• Discussion only = 2 points</li> </ul> <p>4. <b>Threat:</b> Is there high development threat for the project area? <b>Maximum score: 2 points</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tract threat is ranked Class IV or Class V in the ConservationVision Development Vulnerability Model = 2 points; ranked Class III = 1 point; otherwise = 0 points. Or Tract is on the market or in estate for settlement = 2 points.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>IV. ConserveVirginia (20 points)</b></p> <p>Is the property included in ConserveVirginia? (<a href="https://vanhde.org/content/map">https://vanhde.org/content/map</a>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To calculate points, multiply the percent of the property included within the Natural Habitat &amp; Ecosystem Diversity Category by 20. (e.g. 60% of the property is in the category; 0.60 x 20 = 12 points)</li> </ul>	

**Total Maximum Score 100 points \_\_\_\_\_**

## Open Spaces & Parks Category

Criterion	Score
<p><b>1) Public Access to State Waters (10 points)</b>            Does the project acquire land or an easement that provides increased public access to state waters offering recreational potential?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public access to state waters that provides boating, fishing, <u>and</u> beach/bank swimming opportunities = 10</li> <li>• Public access that provides <u>two</u> of those recreational opportunities = 8</li> <li>• Public access that provides <u>one</u> of those recreational opportunities = 5</li> <li>• Public access that provides opportunities to view water resources while recreating = 2</li> </ul>	
<p><b>2) Project Location (10 points)</b>            Does the project conserve and create a new outdoor recreational opportunity? Or is it located adjacent to an existing park, protected conservation area, or other recreational resources that expands and protects public conservation or recreational interests?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conserves new stand-alone facility that is critically needed to provide or support recreational activities = 10</li> <li>• Conserves an in-holding or addition that is critical to the recreational use of an existing site = 5</li> </ul>	
<p><b>3) Scenic Resources Protection (10 points)</b>            Does the project protect scenic viewsheds or land important to the protection of any federally designated Wild and Scenic River or American Heritage River in or adjacent to Virginia, Virginia's Scenic Rivers, designated Scenic Roads, and Virginia Byways, statewide connecting trails, or identified greenways or blueways?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conserves land adjacent to, or in direct viewshed of one of the listed resources = 10</li> <li>• Conserves land adjacent to, or in direct viewshed of, a <b>potential</b> resource or a <b>proposed</b> statewide connecting trail identified in VOP = 7</li> <li>• Conserves land adjacent to, or in direct viewshed of, a recreational trail = 5</li> </ul>	
<p><b>4) Alignment with Local or Regional Plans (15 points)</b>            Does the project support local or regional plans for parks, open space, and recreational facilities, or contribute to the protection of a documented conservation corridor? Include the name and page # of plan cited.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the project/acquisition is specifically mentioned by location AND purpose/features in a local or regional plan = 15</li> <li>• If project purpose is mentioned in a local or regional plan or other documents or fulfills a specific need in a local or regional plan = 10</li> <li>• If area of project has a general reference in local or regional plan or project meets a general goal identified in a plan = 5</li> </ul>	
<p><b>5) Virginia Outdoors Plan Need (10 points)</b>            Does the project addresses a need identified in the <i>Virginia Outdoors Plan</i>? Applicant must specify VOP page #. <b>Add all that apply:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project provides public access to natural areas = 3</li> <li>• Project provides public access to a developed park = 2</li> <li>• Project provides trails for hiking or walking OR access to water trails = 2</li> <li>• Project provides public access to historic areas = 1</li> <li>• Project provides bicycle or equestrian trails = 1</li> <li>• Project provides other need identified in VOP = 1</li> </ul>	
<p><b>6) Public Utilization (10 points)</b>            Availability of land for public use may include, but is not limited to, hunting, fishing, hiking, or wildlife watching.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open for public utilization between 241 and 365 days per year = 10</li> <li>• Open between 181 and 240 days per year = 5</li> </ul>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Between 121 and 180 days per year = 3</li> <li>• Between 61 and 120 days per year = 2</li> <li>• Between 1 and 60 days per year = 1</li> </ul>	
<p><b>7) Benefit Underserved Community (15 points)</b></p> <p>Does the project provide a recreational resource to an underserved population? Use the <b>VIMS Social Vulnerability Index</b> (<a href="https://cmap2.vims.edu/SocialVulnerability/SocioVul_SS.html">https://cmap2.vims.edu/SocialVulnerability/SocioVul_SS.html</a>) to determine if the project benefits an underserved community:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very High Social Vulnerability = 15</li> <li>• High Social Vulnerability = 10</li> <li>• Moderate Social Vulnerability =5</li> <li>• Low or Very Low Social Vulnerability =0</li> </ul> <p><i>Applicant must provide a reference source if not using the VIMS Social Vulnerability Index.</i></p>	
<p><b>8) Recreation Need (10 points)</b></p> <p><b>I. Land-based Recreation Need (Maximum score: 7)</b></p> <p>Will the property <b>provide land-based recreation</b> and is it located in an area of land-based recreation need as identified by either the DCR <b>Nature-based Recreation Access Model</b> (2021) (<a href="https://vanhde.org/content/map">https://vanhde.org/content/map</a>) <b>or</b> the Trust for Public Land’s <b>ParkServe Model?</b> (<a href="https://www.tpl.org/parkserve">https://www.tpl.org/parkserve</a>) (score will be higher of the two if data is available on both models)</p> <p><b>A. DCR Nature-based Recreation Access Model Land-based Recreation Need:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very High: 7</li> <li>• High: 5</li> <li>• Moderate: 3</li> <li>• Low: 1</li> <li>• Very low need: 0, but other supporting evidence provided to show need: up to 3 points</li> </ul> <p><b>B. ParkServe Park Need:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very High: 7</li> <li>• High: 5</li> <li>• Moderate: 3</li> <li>• No need identified in the model, but other supporting documentation provided, such as evidence of no other parks within ½ mile walk: up to 3 points</li> </ul> <p><b>II. Water-based Recreation Need (Maximum Score: 3)</b> Will the property <b>provide water-based recreation</b> and is it located in an area of water-based recreation need as identified by the DCR Nature-based Recreation Access Model (2021)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very High: 3</li> <li>• High: 2</li> <li>• Moderate: 1</li> <li>• Low or very low need but other supporting evidence provided, such as new type of water recreation for area or documented overcrowding at existing nearby sites: 1</li> </ul>	
<p><b>9) ConserveVirginia (10 points)</b></p> <p>Is the property included in any category of ConserveVirginia <b>and</b> providing daily outdoor recreation access? (<a href="https://vanhde.org/content/map">https://vanhde.org/content/map</a>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To calculate points, multiply the percent of the property included within any category of ConserveVirginia and providing daily access by 10. (e.g. 60% of the property is in the category; 0.60 x 10 = 6 points)</li> </ul>	

**Total Maximum Score 100 points \_\_\_\_\_**

## Additional Scoring Criteria

### **1. Virginia Outdoors Plan (VOP) Identified Need**

Degree to which a project satisfies resource conservation needs as identified in the *Virginia Outdoors Plan (VOP)* or in a local comprehensive plan.

#### **Maximum 3 points**

- Meets a resource conservation need identified in the VOP **and** in a local comprehensive plan = 3 points
- Meets a resource conservation need identified in the VOP **or** in a local comprehensive plan = 2 points
- Not identified in VOP or in a local comprehensive plan = 0 points

### **2. Virginia Nature Based Recreation Access Model Identified Need**

If the project includes public access AND there is at least a moderate need for recreation access identified in the Nature Based Recreation Access Model, based on the terrestrial or aquatic layers, then up to 3 points may be awarded.

#### **Maximum 3 points**

- Demonstrated moderate, high, or very high need for terrestrial **and** aquatic recreational access = 3 points
- Demonstrated moderate, high, or very high need for terrestrial **or** aquatic recreational access = 2 points
- No demonstrated moderate, high, or very high need for terrestrial or aquatic recreational access = 0 points

### **3. Water Quality Benefit**

Extent to which the project will protect water quality beyond the required 35'-wide vegetated buffers on perennial streams, rivers, shorelines, and waterbodies with perennial outflow.

#### **Maximum 11 points**

- 4 points if the buffer is forested (at least 50% forest canopy) and protected as such in perpetuity, PLUS
- Up to 1000' of water frontage that is buffered by a 50'-wide buffer = 2 points
- 1 point for every 1000' of water frontage that is buffered by a 50'-wide buffer, up to 3 points, OR
- Up to 1000' of water frontage that is buffered by a 100'-wide buffer = 3 points
- 1 point for every 1000' of water frontage that is buffered by a 100'-wide buffer, up to 4 points

### **4. Protection of Cultural Resources**

Is there a local cultural resource on the property that will be protected by this project? Examples include remnants of prior settlements or burial sites of enslaved or indigenous people, former segregated schoolhouses, sites of early racial integration, historic roadbed or railbed systems, etc.

#### **Maximum 10 points.**

- Provide photographs and other documents to authenticate the resource = 8 points
- Project will provide educational opportunities for the public, signage, trails, etc. = 2 points

### **5. Additional ConserveVirginia Values**

Does the application include information to support additional ConserveVirginia values? If the project includes conservation values other than the primary application category, then two points may be awarded for each additional identified category if the applicant demonstrates that the property is located within another ConserveVirginia category, and the project also protects those respective resources in perpetuity.

#### **Maximum 12 points**

ConserveVirginia Categories:

- Agriculture & Forestry = 2 points
- Cultural & Historic Preservation = 2 points
- Floodplains & Flooding Resilience = 2 points
- Natural Habitat & Ecosystem Diversity = 2 points
- Protected Landscapes Resilience = 2 points
- Scenic Preservation = 2 points
- Water Quality Improvement = 2 points

## **6. Fish and Wildlife Values**

Degree to which the application includes information to demonstrate that the project benefits wildlife, habitat, and human/wildlife interaction.

### **Maximum 10 points**

- Identify wildlife presence = 1 point; if Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) Species of Greatest Conservation Need or State or Federally listed threatened or endangered species is present = additional 3 points
- Protect wildlife habitat = 1 point; if DWR Species of Greatest Conservation Need or State or Federally listed threatened or endangered species habitat is protected = additional 4 points
- Provide public access for viewing or hunting wildlife, or for fishing = 1 point

## **7. Public Access**

Degree to which the project provides public or visual access.

### **Maximum 10 points**

- Full Public Access (365 days/year) = 10 points
- Restricted Public Access (180 to 364 days/year) = 5 points
- Limited Public Access (1 to 179 days per year) = 3 points
- Visual Access only = 2 points

## **8. Underserved Communities**

Degree to which the community where the project is located is underserved/socially vulnerable.

### **Maximum 10 points**

- Very high social vulnerability = 10
- High social vulnerability = 8
- Moderate Social Vulnerability = 5
- Low or Very Low Social Vulnerability = 0

## **9. Ratio of Match to Total Project Cost**

If providing 60 percent or more match, to get points provide an appraisal or pre-appraisal with your application.

### **Maximum 3 points**

- Eighty percent or more of total project cost is provided as match = 3 points
- Sixty to 79 percent of total project cost is provided as match = 2 points

**Total Maximum Score for Additional Scoring Criteria: 72 points**

## Appendix C – Example Match Letter

*[Date]*

Virginia Land Conservation Foundation  
c/o Matthew Wells, Executive Secretary  
Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation  
600 East Main Street, 24<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Richmond, VA 23219

Re: VLCF grant application from *[organization]* for *[project]*

Dear Mr. Wells:

In the grant application submitted by our organization for the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation's FY24 grant round, our project budget included a total match amount of \$\_\_\_\_.\_\_\_\_, of which \$\_\_\_\_.\_\_\_\_ is to be obtained through grant funding that is not yet committed by any granting agency. We understand that VLCF will not grant funds for a project whose match is uncertain, and we agree that, if this project is funded through VLCF, we will commit our organization's resources to complete the project within the two-year time frame required by the VLCF program.

Sincerely,

*[Organization representative]*  
*[Job Title]*

## **Appendix D – Required Property Protections and Vegetated Riparian Buffer Information**

To safeguard water quality and the conservation value of land conservation projects, the following protections are to be included in all VLCF projects, whether fee simple or easement acquisitions:

1. **Limitations on placement of utilities:** Utilities that serve permitted structures on the subject property are allowed. Utilities that do not serve permitted structures on the subject property require the grantee's review and prior written determination that the construction and maintenance of such utilities will not impair the conservation value of the property.
2. **Agricultural Conservation Plan:** If the property contains five acres of land or more in agricultural production, then a written agricultural conservation plan shall be developed or in place that stipulates the use of best management practices for water quality protection (such as proper nutrient management, utilization of cover crops, and stabilization of highly erodible lands). This plan shall be developed in consultation with the local Soil and Water Conservation District or the Natural Resources Conservation Service and shall be implemented and periodically updated by the landowner as long as at least five acres of the property remains in agricultural production.
3. **Forest Management Plans:** If the property contains 20 acres or more of forest lands, then a current written forest management plan or Virginia Forest Stewardship Plan, and a Pre-Harvest Plan shall be in place prior to the commencement of timber harvesting or other significant forest management activities. Such a plan shall be developed by, or in consultation with, the Virginia Department of Forestry, or be consistent with Virginia's Forestry Best Management Practices for Water Quality Guide.
4. **Vegetated Riparian Buffers:** An area of land where natural vegetation shall be maintained at least 35-feet to 100-feet or more in width along a river, shoreline, perennial stream as depicted on the USGS National Hydrography Dataset (<https://viewer.nationalmap.gov/advanced-viewer/>), or body of water that has perennial outflow. Additional requirements for vegetated riparian buffers are:
  - Livestock shall be excluded from the buffers and associated watercourses and bodies of water.
  - Mowing shall be limited to three times per calendar year.
  - Earth-disturbing activities, plowing, and dumping are prohibited (however, tree planting; streambank restoration; forest management in accordance with Virginia's Forestry Best Management Practices for Water Quality Guide; archaeological investigations; and restoration, reconstruction, and maintenance of documented historic landscapes on historic properties are permissible).

The following structures, activities, and landscapes are allowed within the required vegetated riparian buffers on VLCF funded projects:

- a. Buildings, structures, roads or other impervious surfaces existing in the buffer prior to the grant award are permissible but cannot be enlarged within the buffer.
- b. A limited number and size of water dependent structures such as docks or boat launches.

- c. A limited number of stream crossings for livestock, pedestrians, or vehicles. Livestock crossings must be addressed in a written conservation plan that specifies the use of riparian buffers for water quality protection.
- d. Access points to reach the water and structures permitted in the buffer.
- e. Lawns (up to 50 feet of frontage) associated with a primary residence, if the site is not subject to severe erosion and the diminished buffer is offset by nearby buffers that are wider than 35-feet.
- f. Forest management including timber harvesting in accordance with a pre-harvest plan and compliance with Virginia's Forestry Best Management Practices for Water Quality Guide.