

# 2019



## **WILD VIRGINIA** **ANNUAL REPORT**



A photograph of three Barn Swallows perched closely together on a thin, dark wire. The birds have dark blue-black heads and backs, with a distinctive reddish-brown throat and breast. Their bellies are a lighter, creamy white. They are all facing forward, looking slightly to the right. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green, suggesting a natural outdoor setting.

# KEEP VIRGINIA WILD AND GREEN

Under the leadership of our Board of Directors, led by President Deirdre Skogen, and Executive Director Misty Boos, we have charted a course for the organization to build on our strengths and maintain focus on issues where we can best get results. Our mission is “to protect and connect Virginia’s wild places,” recognizing that the wild place you value may be the national forest, the Appalachian Trail, or the stream or wetland in your backyard or city park.

Report Prepared by Allison McClure  
Cover Photo by Joshua Williams on Unsplash  
This Photo by Steven David Johnson

# FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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Dear Friends,

We believe urgent action is needed to counter climate change, protect biodiversity, and prevent species extinction. Wild Virginia's efforts in our three priority areas are critical to this effort.

First, we work to protect Virginia's water quality, especially from destructive infrastructure projects like the Mountain Valley and Atlantic Coast Pipelines. We work with you to ensure that state regulators are held accountable and protect us from these industries the way they should. Second, we lead the effort to improve habitat connectivity so wildlife can move safely across the state and adapt to a changing world. Third, we provide meaningful outings and education opportunities. We want you to not only enjoy Virginia's wild places but also learn how to help protect them.

This year, we will work to provide a place for the increasing number of people, like you, who want to help protect our planet. We will focus on partnering with organizations and individuals that we have not reached before to build our influence and the momentum needed to meet large environmental challenges. Throughout this work, we will do our best to not only educate but also to listen, and elevate voices that are not being properly heard.

Wild Virginia is made up of Wild Virginians, like you, and we couldn't do our work without you.

Thank you for your support!

Misty Boos, Executive Director  
Wild Virginia





# OUR VISION



Wild Virginia envisions a healthy, connected landscape where everyone can find their wild place and know how to help protect it.

Our core programmatic areas include:

1. Protecting water quality, especially from energy infrastructure activities
2. Improving habitat connectivity
3. Providing meaningful connections to wild places through outings and education

## Water and Energy

Our priority is to continue efforts to insist that state regulators, such as the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, enforce the Clean Water Act to protect Virginia's high quality waters, and to clean up polluted streams. In partnership with Trout Unlimited, we recruit volunteers, purchase monitoring kits, and host water quality

monitoring trainings, thereby promoting public advocacy in protecting water quality. Our volunteers monitor water at over 100 locations. We make this water quality data publicly available and use it to protect forests from fracking infrastructure development.

## Habitat Connectivity

We focus on creating corridors that connect large cores of intact habitat that have been separated by roads and development. Intact wildlife corridors help sequester carbon and promote ecosystem resiliency, both incredibly important in combating and



mitigating the effects of climate change. Wild Virginia created, and is the driving force behind the Virginia Safe Wildlife Corridors Collaborative. This multidisciplinary group works to reduce habitat fragmentation

caused by Virginia's roads and to keep wildlife and drivers safe as they move across the landscape.

## Outings and Education

We bring people outdoors to hear the message of Wild Virginia while experiencing the benefits of nature first-hand. Our goals are to increase environmental literacy on the concepts of connectivity, watersheds, climate change, and forests.



# OUR MEMBERS

For more than 20 years, Wild Virginia has empowered citizens to become active participants in our wild lands' future. We inform people about issues, threats, and opportunities for Virginia's forests and waters. We train and mobilize them to provide input into projects that impact watersheds, water supplies, and ecosystems. Our programs physically bring people to the forests, because we believe the places you know are the places you care about.



As a grassroots organization, our work would not be possible without our members and volunteers. Wild Virginia mobilizes citizens to make their voices heard at key junctures in the land and water management decision-making processes in Virginia. While public lands and waters belong to all of us, it can be confusing for citizens to know what

actions will make the most impact, to whom they should be directing comments, and when is the best time to speak out. We do this work to make it clear and easy for the public to engage with their decision makers and regulatory processes. We have active members throughout Virginia, and in other states as well. We use the power of our membership, our own formal comments, petitions, call-in days, appeals and formal objections to influence decision makers.

We provide an outdoor classroom for educating people about the ecological and recreational value of our forests. We also offer activities that are focused on forest conservation, but do not require being outdoors, such as art classes, movie nights, poetry readings, book and photography clubs. We educate the public through special events, public presentations, social media campaigns, and participation in the USFS planning process.

Wild Virginia attracts hundreds of volunteers and we have come to serve as a training ground for new activists. For example, we work closely with both the University Internship Placement Program and Net Impact at UVA. These programs place students in our organization where we provide one-on-one mentoring throughout the school year. We work to teach those who feel a sense of helplessness to become



empowered citizen activists, and give them the tools to effect change in their communities and beyond.

Our teams of special event and project volunteers contribute energy and talent to all aspects of our outreach work. We know that what we do is important, but it is equally important to train more people so our efforts can truly grow and flourish.

While contending with regulatory rollbacks and a heightened sense of urgency around our mission, Wild Virginia has also witnessed a surge in civic engagement. Increased awareness about protecting Virginia's forests, water, and wildlife has brought hundreds of new members to our door. They are compelled to take action, but have no idea where to begin. Wild Virginia teaches citizens what they can do that will have an impact.



# 2019 EVENTS & OUTINGS

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## Hikes, Walks & Camping

North River Gorge Hike  
Sugar Hollow Hike  
Montpelier Hike  
Wildflower Hike  
Photography Outing  
Western VA Highlands Camping Trip  
Cellar Mountain Trail Work Trip  
ACP Pipeline Field Tour  
Soliphilia: Wild Virginia Art Walk  
SAWS Outings  
Big Siblings Outing  
Mine Bank Trail  
Nature Ramble  
ACP Route on Horseback

## Gatherings & Parties

Red Wing Roots Festival  
Book Club  
Fairfax Youth Climate Strike  
Big Siblings Event  
The Festy  
Reason Beer Block Party  
Madison Country Dems  
Master Naturalists Webinar  
TomTom Community Mixer  
Reel Change Film Festival  
Master Naturalist Volunteer Fair  
WNRN Presents: Dead Air

## Educational Events

Charlottesville Peace and Justice  
Ecorodeo  
Water Quality Monitoring Training  
Earth Day Forum: Indivisible NoVa West  
Longwood University Technical Writing Class  
Earth Day Staunton  
UVA Student Case Study on Pipeline Impacts  
Randolph College Talk on Environmental Justice  
Ties that Bind Pipeline Art  
The Wildlife Society Annual Meeting Talk

## Film Screenings

Wild & Scenic Sneak Peak: TomTom Fest  
Hidden Rivers Film Screening  
VCN Watch Party  
Wild and Scenic Film Festival



## 2019 EVENTS & OUTINGS

Wild Virginia's volunteers maintain one of the most active local programs to get citizens out into our treasured natural areas, to learn about the values they hold and the threats we need to confront, and to have fun and find peace that only wild places can supply. We also have "innings" including book club discussions (held on the second Monday each month) as well as films and talks to enhance knowledge and inspire action. Our work with school groups is also a highly valuable program we will continue to develop.

**4,518**

People reached in-person during Wild Virginia events in 2019: nearly 1,000 more than in 2018.

**4**

Volunteer events for headliner concerts.

**474**

Attendees total at the Wild & Scenic Film Festival showings: nearly 70 more attendees than in 2018.

**14**

Wild Virginia hikes, walks, and camping events in 2019.

**16**

Wild Virginia hikes in 2019: four more hikes than in 2018.

**9**

Book club gatherings.



# BATTLE AGAINST THE PIPELINE

The Atlantic Coast Pipeline (ACP) is a proposed 600-mile long natural gas pipeline to carry natural gas from West Virginia through Virginia to North Carolina. The Mountain Valley Pipeline (MVP) sources the same fracked gas and has the same delivery destinations as the ACP. Both threaten local drinking water, homes, endangered species' habitats, parks, economies and other vital, interconnected systems and attributes of the Southeast. They simply cannot be safely built. Mountain Valley has repeatedly violated water quality requirements during construction that continued through mid-October, and ACP has so far been prevented from constructing in Virginia.

We filed a formal complaint with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) against MVP on our behalf and that of partner groups and individuals. We helped lead efforts strengthen an agreement the Virginia Attorney General formed with MVP to settle an enforcement lawsuit, both through providing information and arguments during negotiations and formal comments on the draft decree. In response to our suit against the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for its failure to adequately protect endangered species from MVP, the court granted a stay of agency authorizations and FERC ordered all construction stopped in October. We will continue to push for additional administrative reviews and pursue legal challenges wherever necessary.





# VIRGINIA SAFE WILDLIFE CORRIDORS COLLABORATIVE

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Habitat connectivity, in the form of large cores of intact habitat and corridors connecting them, is critical to ensuring a sustainable future for Virginia. Wild Virginia has been leading the way, bringing people together in collaboration to improve habitat connectivity in Virginia.

We are the driving force behind the multi-agency, multidisciplinary group called the Virginia Safe Wildlife Corridors Collaborative (VSWCC). This group works together to reduce habitat fragmentation issues caused by Virginia roads and improve habitat connectivity.

We recognize Wild Virginia's unique role as an advocacy organization and a leader in the collaborative, so we will work to keep the group focused on larger habitat connectivity concerns while working on the specific fragmentation impacts of roads.

## What's Happening Now?

Wild Virginia is helping to form the Virginia Safe Wildlife Corridors Collaborative, which is working to protect people and wildlife by reducing animal-vehicle conflicts and improving safe wildlife passage. In early 2020, we helped to pass the Wildlife Corridor Action Plan. Visit our website to learn more and to download a Virginia Safe Wildlife Corridors Collaborative Fact Sheet.



*Photos by Steven David Johnson*

# GOALS FOR 2020

## Water and Energy Goals

Our priority is to continue efforts to insist that regulators, especially the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), enforce Clean Water Act protections to both protect Virginia's high quality waters and clean up polluted streams. This year, we are looking forward as well to determine ways to strengthen the implementation of state regulations to prevent future damage to our lands and waters from natural gas infrastructure and other projects like them.



*Photo by Steven David Johnson*

## Habitat Connectivity Goals

Habitat connectivity, in the form of large cores of intact habitat and corridors connecting them, is critical to ensuring a sustainable future for Virginia. Wild Virginia has been leading the way, bringing people together in collaboration to improve habitat connectivity in Virginia. We created and are the driving force behind the multidisciplinary, multi-agency group called the Virginia Safe Wildlife Corridors Collaborative (VSWCC). This group works together to reduce habitat fragmentation issues caused by Virginia roads and improve habitat connectivity.



## Outings and Education Goals

Our outings program is another popular way that we engage citizens. These programs give us the chance to help people experience the outdoors and hear the message of Wild Virginia while experiencing the benefits of nature first-hand. Our goals are to increase environmental literacy about the concepts of connectivity, watersheds, and climate change and forests.

## Outreach Goals

We aim to maintain strong relationships with media and secure direct quotes in recognized print media (state, local and national).

By identifying local business partnership opportunities and targeting new members through strategic partnership opportunities, we intend to increase Wild Virginia's revenue stream.

Finally, we aim to expand our geographic reach and increase public awareness and engagement in protecting Virginia's wild places both in-person and online.



# CHALLENGES IN 2020

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*Photo by Steven David Johnson*

Wild Virginia faces challenges in our three programmatic areas.

## Water and Energy

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) removed millions of miles of streams and around half of America's wetlands from federal oversight. The drinking water for thousands of Virginians could be threatened, as could the well-being of many animal and plant species, including endangered ones.

Here in Central Virginia, the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has blatantly failed to apply the Clean Water Act requirements to the Atlantic Coast Pipeline (ACP) project. Proposed work on the pipeline in Buckingham and Nelson Counties continues to threaten the James River and dozens of other waterbodies.

## Outings and Education

Many children and adults lack basic environmental literacy. Results from a recent Virginia Dept. of Education survey suggest that "environmental programming in grades K-8, is not fully implemented... respondents indicated a 'moderate' or 'high' need for support ... to provide higher quality environmental programming in their schools." Children and teenagers benefit from experiences in nature more than any other population, but their lives are often punctuated by nature deprivation.

## Habitat Connectivity

Moving between significant patches of habitat is critical for maintaining healthy populations of wildlife. Poor habitat connectivity is dangerous for both people and wildlife. Virginia is consistently among the 10 states with the highest number of deer-vehicle collisions..

## BOARD

### **Bette Dzamba**

Chair, Outings and Education

### **Katie Keller**

Chair, Outreach and Publicity Team

### **Esther Rekhelman**

Net Impact Board Fellow

### **David Sellers**

Secretary

### **Jamie Trost**

Chair, Development Team

### **Ryan Wagener**

Interim President

### **Lil Williams (Elizabeth Kennon Williams, MD)**

Board Member

### **Sarah Fromme**

Board Member

### **Leigh Kirchner**

Board Member

### **Elise Togbe**

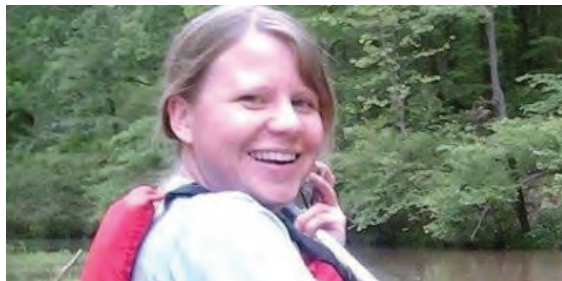
Board Member

## STAFF

### **Misty Boos, Executive Director**

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Misty Boos received a Master of Environmental Planning degree from the University of Tasmania in 2006 and a B.S. in Sociology with emphasis on Environmental Studies from Southern Oregon University. She has extensive experience in the non-profit sector working on research projects and in the field for many environmental organizations. She has been an active participant and leader for Wild Virginia outings and completed training as a Virginia Master Naturalist. Misty spent many years studying, traveling and living abroad and this time has given her a global perspective on environmental issues that she tries to apply to her efforts with us locally in Virginia. Misty particularly loves working with volunteers helping them apply their unique skills and experience to help further Wild Virginia's mission.



### **David Sligh, Conservation Director**

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David Sligh has worked for 35 years to make the promises of our environmental laws real. He has consistently and successfully pushed private parties and government agencies to base their actions on science, law, and the public interest. He has a B.A. in Environmental Science from the University of Virginia, a law degree from Vermont Law School, and is a member of the District of Columbia Bar.

Dave has worked as a Senior Environmental Engineer for the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, Founder and Director of Virginia PEER – the state branch of Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility, Southeast Regional Representative for American Rivers, Upper James Riverkeeper, adjunct instructor of Environmental Science at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, and as a consultant and advisor to citizen groups around the country.



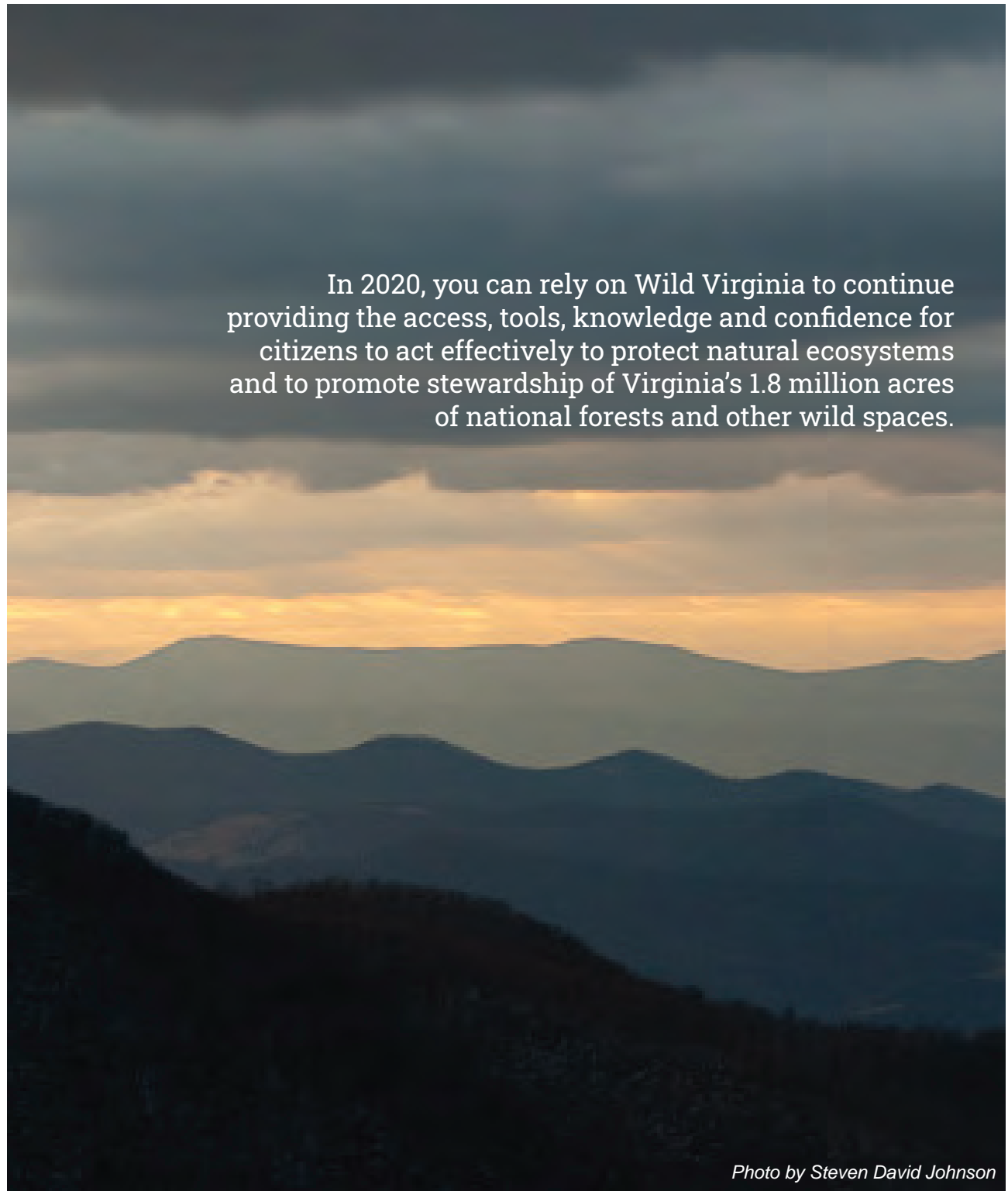


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### How you can help Wild Virginia today:

- Tell another person about Wild Virginia.
- Share with us how Wild Virginia has touched your life. Drop us a note or leave a review on Facebook.
- Consider a financial gift or increasing the amount of your annual contribution. Join or renew your support today by visiting <http://wildvirginia.org>.
- Support our cause and help us raise awareness by purchasing Wild Virginia merchandise from our online store.
- Volunteer. Call 434-971-1553 or email [info@wildvirginia.org](mailto:info@wildvirginia.org) to find out how to get involved.

In 2020, you can rely on Wild Virginia to continue providing the access, tools, knowledge and confidence for citizens to act effectively to protect natural ecosystems and to promote stewardship of Virginia's 1.8 million acres of national forests and other wild spaces.



*Photo by Steven David Johnson*