

2020

— Annual Report



PROTECTING AND CONNECTING
YOUR FAVORITE WILD PLACES



Friends,

Like everyone, Wild Virginia operated against a backdrop of uncertainty and change this year. Our world and our community looked very different in 2020. In mid-March, Virginia came under a stay at home order. In person outreach events, volunteer trainings, and fundraisers were canceled. While Covid-19 has dominated our daily lives, polluters and their allies have used it as an excuse to erode environmental protections. Wild Virginia hasn't let up; our work hasn't slowed down. This pandemic has forced us to think even more creatively about how to maximize resources through our networks and partnerships. I am proud to report that we rose to these new challenges and achieved enormous success in each of our campaign areas: protecting water quality, enhancing ecological connectivity, and providing meaningful environmental education experiences.

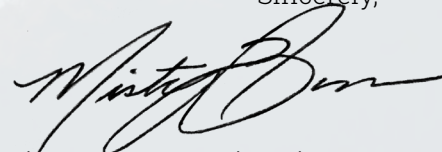
First, the Atlantic Coast Pipeline was canceled this summer! This huge win was the culmination of hard work by so many people, including supporters like you. We kept the pressure on together, and it worked.

Next, Wild Virginia played a key role in passing the Wildlife Corridor Action Plan. This Plan will make Virginia safer for wildlife and help protect their movement across our state and through our waters.

Lastly, our team of staff and volunteers found new ways to connect people to our work, to nature, and to one another. We moved our film festivals online, attracted hundreds of new viewers, and the films inspired us all when we needed it most.

Looking ahead, we are taking advantage of new online tools to host special events, regular updates on our campaigns, and opportunities for you to get involved. Your support makes all this happen, and we look forward to working alongside you to protect Virginia's wild places throughout 2021.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Misty Boos', written in a cursive, flowing style.

Misty Boos, Executive Director

PROTECTING VIRGINIA'S WATER



PROTECTING VIRGINIA'S WATER

PURSUE LITIGATION THAT PROTECTS OUR WILD PLACES

After six long years of fighting the Atlantic Coast Pipeline, the project was finally canceled in July. Lawsuits we joined against the U.S. Forest Service and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, opposing their decisions on the Atlantic Coast Pipeline, helped kill that project.

We have continued court fights to require our regulators to protect people and natural resources from the destruction of the Mountain Valley Pipeline as well. Our challenge to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service stopped work on the Mountain Valley Pipeline for most of the year and a federal appeals court granted our request to halt digging and blasting through streams and wetlands while a case against the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is heard. We also sued Fish and Wildlife officials who tried to withhold public records on the Mountain Valley Pipeline and forced them to provide that information.

With allied groups from across the southeast, we also challenged a national regulation adopted by the Trump administration to weaken citizens' rights to affect vital decisions, violating the letter and the spirit of one of our bedrock environmental laws, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).



PROTECTING VIRGINIA'S WATER

MONITORING WATER QUALITY

All of our water quality monitoring trainings were held online this year due to Covid-19. We trained volunteers to conduct visual assessments, monitor compliance with regulations, and to document impacts to streams from development projects. Our trainings also helped to ensure that enough volunteers are available to continue monitoring water quality along the Mountain Valley Pipeline route and in areas where restoration on the Atlantic Coast Pipeline is needed to prevent future impacts.

Since 2014, more than 250 citizens have been trained in either stream monitoring or visual assessment methods. On the pipeline routes, volunteers have monitored more than 150 sites and made well over 3,000 sampling trips.

This year we also worked to recruit volunteers to help illustrate how current regulations are not being applied in ways that keep our water clean at development sites throughout Virginia. This new monitoring effort will document circumstances where water quality standards are violated even though state regulators have authorized discharges. Data collected will help illustrate the lack of adequate implementation of water quality regulations by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ).



What is
Virginia's Water Future?

NEW CAMPAIGN FOR VIRGINIA'S WATER FUTURE
AUGUST 31, 2020



PROTECTING VIRGINIA'S WATER

REGULATORY SYSTEMS REFORM ACTIVITIES

Because Virginia's water quality is not being protected, Wild Virginia and 55 other groups sent a People's Platform for Change to the Virginia State Water Control Board this year. Environmental and climate groups, businesses, environmental justice advocates, and others signed on, and our combined voices are showing a way forward to a safe and sustainable water future for Virginia. The People's Platform for Change (Platform) is the first of its kind in Virginia and it has three main goals:

1. Establish numeric criteria regulations for turbidity.
2. Require the DEQ to enforce narrative criteria.
3. Ensure that all criteria are enforced whenever regulatory actions are taken.

The Virginia Water Control Board acted on our call for numeric turbidity by ordering the DEQ to publish a Notice of Intended Regulatory Action which will start the official process and to proceed through that process as quickly as possible. The DEQ pledged to publish the required notice in 2020 and assemble a citizen advisory committee soon thereafter. Wild Virginia will be active in the committee process and will continue to marshal the technical and legal arguments to support our goals.



The importance of our demands is illustrated by scenes like these. Muddy or cloudy streams with high turbidity destroy habitat for stream animals. Excess nutrients feed nuisance algae and plant growth which is unpleasant and dangerous for both people and stream life.



PROTECTING VIRGINIA'S WATER LEGISLATION

This year, Wild Virginia helped to lead efforts to submit papers to the Virginia Conservation Network “Common Agenda.” This Agenda represents the policy priorities of more than 130 organizations across Virginia and is a tool to help frame policy proposals in 2020. The Common Agenda is also used to educate Virginia decision makers ahead of the General Assembly.

The first list of priorities Wild Virginia helped to create this year would strengthen measures to protect Virginia’s waters from polluting pipelines. The second set of policy proposals seek to improve both terrestrial and aquatic connectivity throughout the Commonwealth.





CONNECTING HABITAT FOR WILDLIFE

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VIRGINIA SAFE WILDLIFE CORRIDORS COLLABORATIVE

Wild Virginia was a key driving force behind the passage of the Virginia Wildlife Corridor Action Plan this year. We worked throughout 2020 with a host of partners to advance this important legislation. The Wildlife Corridor Action Plan will help wildlife and people move more safely by identifying and protecting both terrestrial and aquatic wildlife movement corridors. Further, before proceeding with any road project, the Virginia Department of Transportation will now need to consider wildlife corridors as part of its environmental reviews.

Wild Virginia continues to help lead the Virginia Safe Wildlife Corridors Collaborative (VSWCC). The VSWCC is a place to share inspiring ideas and leading practices for ecological connectivity. Over 100 individuals and 50 separate agencies and organizations are now members of the Collaborative. Looking ahead to 2021, Wild Virginia will help drive larger discussions about what's possible for a truly 'connected' Virginia as we continue to host VSWCC meetings. Advocacy and policy efforts and looking for ways to build on and support the new Wildlife Corridor Action Plan will also be key activities.



A group of seven people are hiking in a forest. In the foreground, three people are smiling at the camera: a woman on the left in a red jacket and purple beanie, a woman in the middle in a blue jacket and blue beanie, and a woman on the right in a red jacket and colorful beanie. Behind them, a man in a striped sweater stands next to a woman in a dark jacket and blue beanie. Further back, a woman in a tan jacket and green cap is visible. To the right, a woman in a green jacket stands near a stream, and another woman in a dark jacket is on the far right. The forest floor is covered in fallen leaves, and a small stream flows through the background.

PROVIDING ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

PROVIDING ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

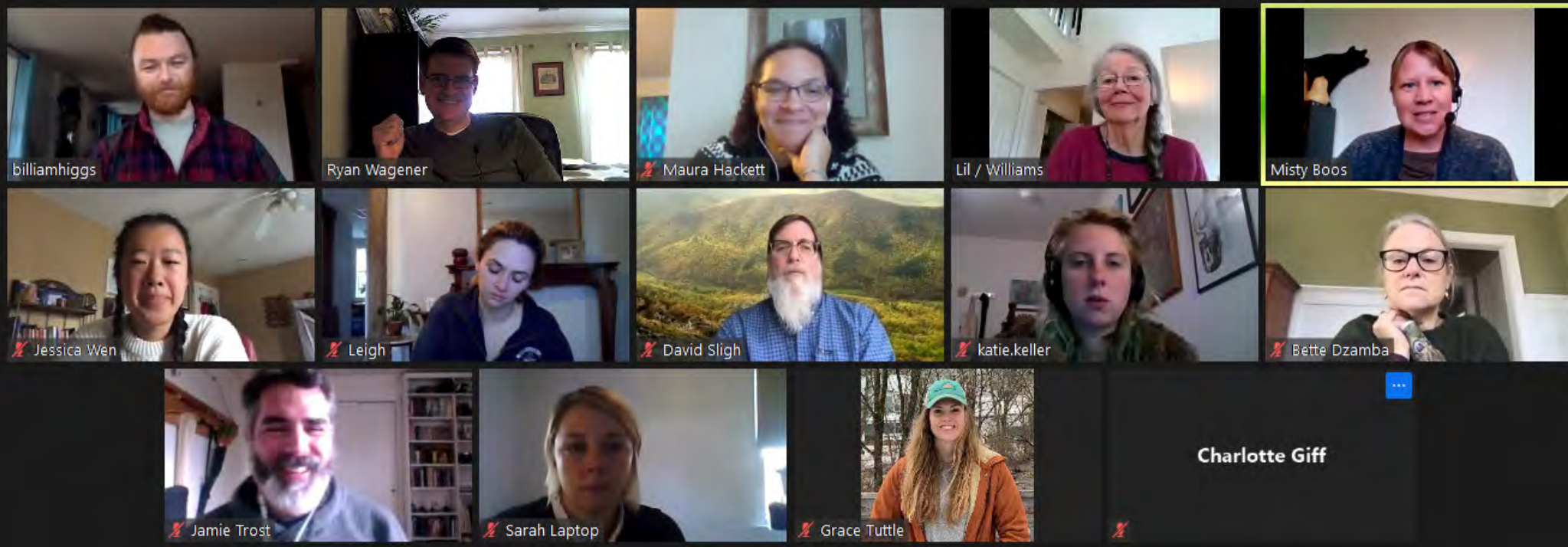
WILD VIRGINIA EVENTS MOVE ONLINE DURING PANDEMIC

When Covid-19 forced our state into lockdown, our Outings and Education Team reviewed the core goals of our educational events. Our outings connect people to our campaigns, to each other, and to wild places we want them to help protect. With the current crisis and the goal of protecting Virginians and our members, we moved all of our outings online and came up with creative new ways to meet those goals virtually. For instance, our monthly book club is now hosted on Zoom, we've partnered with the Master Naturalists to host a Backyard Wild series of short educational videos and citizen science opportunities. We've resurrected our popular Window to the Woods to help folks 'find their wild' even if they can't leave their house, and we continue to elevate the personal stories of those most impacted by these projects through interviews on our active social media platforms.

In March, when we decided to move all programming online, we had to quickly adapt our in-person film festival to an online event we called 'Wild Streams'. It screened on June 5th to coincide with World Environment Day, and mirrored our usual annual film event, but this time, we included music, poems, speakers, and door prizes. We chose films and videos that highlighted our region's water resources and during the show, we explained how the public can work with us to protect Virginia's water quality. Over 680 people registered to watch, and we partnered with over 20 local businesses and artists to create this successful event. We were so inspired by the spring show that we pulled together another film festival in December called "Walking in a Winter WILDland." These film screenings have been an excellent way to build organizational and business partners, showcase our campaigns, grow our membership base, and inspire more volunteers.

Last in-person Wild Virginia event in 2020





Wild Virginia quickly adapted to the pandemic and moved all of our educational programming online. More than 5,000 people signed up for these online events.

May 2020

Book Club - Earth Day

History of Earth Day Presentation

Backyard Wild - Hummingbirds

June 2020

Backyard Wild - Introduction

Virtual Coffee w/ AT Hiker "The Blackalachian"

Waterkeeper Alliance Webinar

Backyard Wild - Balcony Birding

UVA Class "Water on Earth" - Making Science and Law

Work in Advocacy

"Wild Streams" Film Festival

Backyard Wild - Invasive Species

Backyard Wild -Backyard Birding

Backyard Wild - Raingardens

Life in Motion Podcast with Illumine Collect

Native Plants Webinar

July 2020

Book Club - Nature's Best Hope

August 2020

Book Club - Braiding Sweetgrass

Protecting Virginia's Water - Pipelines and Beyond Webinar

Sept. 2020

Water Quality Monitoring Training

Oct. 2020

Virginia Safe Wildlife Corridors Collaborative Meeting

Last Green Thread Film Screening

Book Club - Rising

What the Pandemic is Teaching Us - Janisse Ray

Mountain Valley Pipeline Comment Writing Party

Habitat Connectivity in Virginia Talk for "The Center"

Book Club - Ecology of a Cracker Childhood

Nov. 2020

Wolves in Virginia Presentation

WILD VIRGINIA TEAM

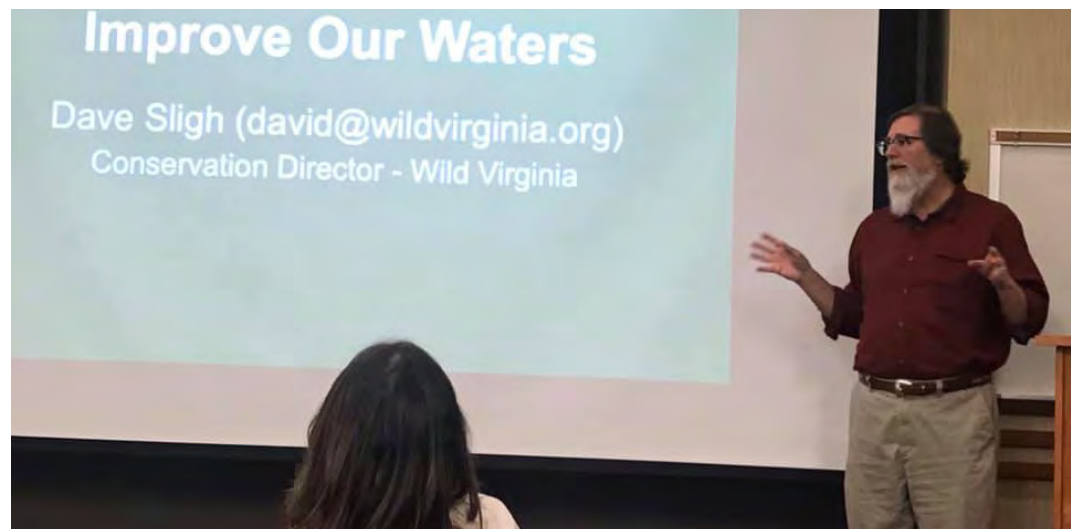
ORGANIZATIONAL UPDATE

Wild Virginia is a small organization, so we make extensive use of students, volunteers, our board, and increasingly, contract assistance to complete specific tasks. We are currently working with interns from the UVA University Placement Program and we coordinate closely with the Science Policy Initiative Direct Advocacy Committee at UVA. These students provided professional, technical analysis on both the Mountain Valley and Atlantic Coast Pipelines Environmental Impact Statements for us.

We always work with one board fellow from the Net Impact program through the McIntire School of Commerce at UVA each year. Students from this program are given the opportunity to sit on our board of directors, as a non-voting member, to learn about what board service involves.

Finally, Wild Virginia recently joined with a team of UVA students working on a grant-funded project to foster community-building through citizen science and advocacy, with water quality monitoring targeted to support our “Virginia’s Water Future” regulatory reform campaign.

As you can see from this sampling of collaborations above, we work with a host of passionate volunteers and supporters who help increase Wild Virginia’s reach and effectiveness.



WILD VIRGINIA TEAM

STAFF & BOARD

BOARD

Bette Dzamba
Chair, Outings and Education/Vice
President

Sarah Fromme
Secretary

Leigh Kirchner
Treasurer

Elise Togbe
Board Member

Jamie Trost
Chair, Development Team

Ryan Wagener
President

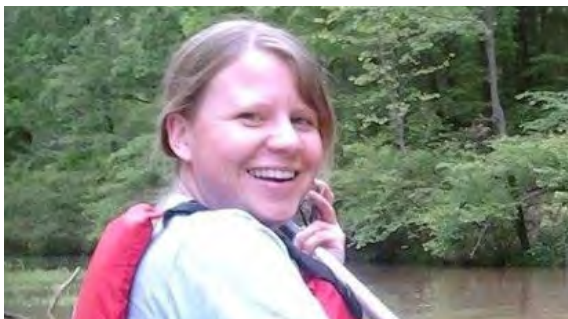
Lil Williams (Elizabeth Kennon
Williams, MD) Board Member

Jessica Wen
Net Impact Board Fellow at UVA

STAFF

Misty Boos, Executive Director
misty@wildvirginia.org
(434) 971-1553

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
david@wildvirginia.org
(434) 964-7455

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.S. 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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Email: info@wildvirginia.org
Twitter: @wild_virginia
Instagram: @wildvirginia

In 2021, you can rely on Wild Virginia to continue providing the access, tools, knowledge and confidence for citizens to act effectively to protect our ecosystems and wild spaces.

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.
- Become a monthly donor and a sustaining member.
- Join or renew your support today by visiting wildvirginia.org.
- Volunteer. Call 434-971-1553 or email info@wildvirginia.org to find out how to get involved.



Photo by Steve Michaels