

The News & Advance

Conserving state land
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Virginia Land Conservation Foundation grants will help a family continue farming land they have owned since the 1600s, protect an old-growth stand of northern red oak, purchase part of a Civil War battlefield slated for development and buy a 2,000-acre Eastern Shore island.

The Lynchburg-based 500-Year Forest Foundation received one of 12 grants awarded by the state land conservation board Tuesday in Richmond. The \$224,130 grant will protect about 225 acres of old-growth forest owned by Bob and Darlinda Gilvary in Giles County.

The 500-Year Forest Foundation, which just this week announced its success in getting an easement on a forest in Scott County, will give the grant to the Gilvarys in exchange for a conservation easement to protect this stand, which includes a 360-year-old chestnut oak and is estimated to be worth \$450,000.

"It's really exciting," said forest foundation President Ted Harris.

The Gilvarys, who are foresters, had planned to log the property, but told Harris they wouldn't if his foundation could come up with \$200,000 for the easement.

Virginia Land Conservation Foundation grants are used to acquire and protect special lands in four categories: open space and parks, historic areas, farm and forestry and natural areas. This year the foundation received 24 requests totaling more than \$6.2 million. The grants require a minimum of a 50 percent match.

The projects represent more than \$12.25 million in public and private money going to land conservation across the state.

"This is the first time the foundation has had grant funding available during the Warner administration," Joseph Maroon, director of the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation and the foundation's executive secretary, said in a news release. "The number and strength of proposals submitted speaks to the importance placed on land conservation throughout the commonwealth."

The other grant winners were:

- Cedar Creek Bluff (Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation) to purchase a conservation easement on 117 acres in newly established Cedar Creek and Belle Grove Historical Park, \$244,793.
- Mount Pleasant Farm (Potomac Conservancy) to purchase a conservation easement on a 106-acre property on Cedar Creek in a rapidly developing area of Shenandoah County, \$100,000.
- Fray Tract (Wildlife Foundation) to acquire 550 acres in Madison County bounded by the Rapidan Wildlife Management Area and Shenandoah National Park. The area will become part of Rapidan WMA and accessible to the public, \$190,500.

- Fairview Park (Town of Woodstock) to purchase 23 acres to expand the existing park, \$250,000.
- Fishers Hill (Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation) to facilitate acquisition of 25 acres of Shenandoah County battlefield including earthworks that will be accessible to the public, \$212,408.
- Battle of Brandy Station Park (Brandy Station Foundation) to buy 19 acres of Culpeper County battlefield slated for residential development that will be accessible to the public, \$362,400.
- Riveroak (Trevilian Station Battlefield Foundation) to purchase 938 acres at the Louisa County battlefield. Long term plans to be open to public, \$200,000.
- Port Tobacco (Virginia Outdoors Foundation) to place a conservation easement on a 1,803-acre Essex County farm owned by the same family since the 1600s. Home to two endangered species, \$258,000.
- Black Farms Property (The Nature Conservancy) to place an easement on 222 acres of farmland in Northampton County, \$400,000.
- Page Project (Albemarle County): to purchase development rights on 559 acres of farm and forestlands 10 miles southwest of Charlottesville, \$85,433.
- Marks and Jacks Island (The Nature Conservancy) to purchase the 2,000 ocean-side island in Accomack County on Virginia's Eastern Shore, \$500,000.