



Protecting America's Legendary Shenandoah Valley

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### CONTACT:

Kathryn Piasta  
276-732-5844

[kathryn@wallace360.com](mailto:kathryn@wallace360.com)

## Valley Conservation Council Announces \$1 Million “Valley Green Fund” Program to Increase Land Protection Efforts

*Program Will Support Agricultural & Ecological Conservation in the Northern Shenandoah Valley*

STAUNTON, VA (April 18, 2023) – Valley Conservation Council (VCC) today announced the launch of the Valley Green Fund, a new program that will spur major advances in land protection in the Counties of Warren, Page, Shenandoah, and the Cedar Creek Battlefield Wildlife Corridor in Frederick. The program was made possible by a \$1 million grant from a private foundation.

The Valley Green Fund program will support protection of large parcels of land with high agricultural and ecological conservation value across the targeted areas in the northern Shenandoah Valley. It will also provide financial resources to support owners of smaller private parcels of land in taking steps to protect and conserve their land.

### ***Prioritizing Conservation with the Highest Impact***

The northern Shenandoah Valley is highly sought after for its geographic location, beauty, and development potential. Therefore, there is a significant need for financial resources in this area for land protection through conservation easements or the purchase of development rights. The Valley Green Fund program will power high-impact conservation projects that will ensure permanent protection of the region's highly productive agricultural lands and safeguard the region's waterways from future degradation. In addition to productive lands and scenic waterways, this area serves as a major travel route for the region's wildlife. The safe passage of wildlife between existing protected lands is critical for the long-term sustainability of these populations, especially larger predators like black bears and bobcats.

To take on these projects, VCC will develop and implement a fund allocation program to secure conservation easements and purchase development rights of key parcels that achieve the intended outcomes of the Valley Green Fund. VCC will leverage additional grant funding and opportunities through strategic partnerships to maximize the fund's impact.

“We are absolutely honored to be the recipient of such a significant donation and applaud this incredible act of generosity and support for conservation from the grantors,” says Adam Schellhammer, Executive Director. “This fund will have a substantial impact on our overall efforts to protect the natural resources of the greater Shenandoah Valley region. We hope to roll out similar funds for others portions of our 11-county service area across the entire Valley region in the future.”

### ***Reducing Barriers to Land Protection***

The program will help more landowners protect their land through conservation easements. It will provide necessary financial support to those who might not otherwise be able to afford the upfront costs of

securing an easement or own parcels of land too small to take full advantage of the Virginia Land Preservation Tax Credit program that incentivizes land conservation in the Commonwealth.

A conservation easement is a tool for land protection tailored to meet the landowner's wishes regarding future use of their land. Most restrict development and limit future subdivision while still allowing land uses such as farming, forestry, and recreation. The legal and financial process to protect land with a conservation easement can be costly and is a barrier to many individual landowners who might otherwise wish to permanently protect their land. The Valley Green Fund will provide the resources needed to engage potential easement donors who have not previously had the ability or incentive to engage in a land protection project.

"We work with landowners up and down the Valley to demystify conservation easements and help make them more attainable," says Taylor Evans, Director of Land Protection. "Easements have enormous benefits to the health, vitality, and resiliency of the Valley and can offer huge benefits to the landowners, as well. We are excited that the Valley Green Fund will help make easements more accessible. It's a huge win for land protection in Virginia."

Landowners interested in learning more about the process of protecting their land with a conservation easement and how the Valley Green Fund can help should reach out to [info@valleyconservation.org](mailto:info@valleyconservation.org).

### ***About Valley Conservation Council***

Valley Conservation Council is a non-profit accredited land trust that preserves and protects the lands and waters of the greater Shenandoah Valley region so they can continue to enrich the lives of its residents and visitors for generations, whether it be for hiking in its abundant forests, fishing in its picturesque rivers, farming in its productive soils or simply basking in the majesty of its spectacular open spaces. Since becoming an accredited land trust, VCC has secured 69 easements and protected over 8,500 acres throughout the Valley.

VCC is a fully community-supported organization that relies on the generous support of its members to support its land protection and outreach efforts. For more information or to donate, visit [valleyconservation.org](http://valleyconservation.org).