

SHENANDOAH COUNTY CONSERVATION EASEMENT AUTHORITY DRAFT STRATEGIC PLAN: 2017-2020

Mission: To retain the rural character, ensure agricultural sustainability, and protect historic and natural resources in Shenandoah County by promoting, holding/co-holding and purchasing Voluntary Conservation Easements.

3 Goals

1. **Conservation Goal:** Work with willing landowners to protect the land that protects the Shenandoah River and the unique natural resources that make the region special.
 - Strategy 1-1: Identify priority areas, or “Critical Conservation Areas”, that further the CEA’s mission based upon criteria to target conservation
 - Strategy 1-2: Protect land through conservation easements and acquisitions
 - Strategy 1-3: Engage in collaboration/partnerships within the County and with other non-profit organizations, government agencies, and municipalities
 - Strategy 1-4: Manage lands and easements to ensure that appropriate, identified conservation values are protected (water quality, recreation, views, habitat, etc.).

2. **Capacity Goal:** Strengthen the CEA’s capacity to protect lands in the Valley.
 - Strategy 2-1: Secure funding to support the needs of the CEA
 - Strategy 2-2: Develop and enhance capacity of the CEA

3. **Education and Outreach Goal:** Promote better understanding of the importance of the easements and the CEA’s role in protecting lands in the Shenandoah Valley.
 - Strategy 3-1: Promote environmental education programs in local schools and communities
 - Strategy 3-2: Improve the community’s awareness of CEA’s role and easements in general

Conservation Goal

Work with willing landowners to protect the land that protects the Shenandoah River and the unique natural resources that make the region special.

Protecting available acres/parcels that host forest, ag, battlefields, riparian buffers, and unique flora and fauna

STRATEGY

Identify priority areas, “Critical Conservation Areas”, that further the CEA’s mission based upon specific criteria to target conservation

Activity to Further the Strategy	Timeframe and Responsible Party
Identify Critical Conservation Areas for targeting conservation easements. Update project selection evaluation criteria for potential land protection (include protection of water quality, viewshed, forests, battlefields, ag, and other sensitive areas).	Proposed: Staff and CEA members – Draft 8/8/17; Final 10/8/17
Using existing studies, establish Critical Conservation Areas a map for each ranking criterion (water quality, steep slopes, battlefields, prime farmland, forestlands).	Staff – Draft 8/8/17
Develop a summary statement for protection of each Conservation Area - conservation values, threats, and tools.	Staff and CEA members – 12/8/17
Identify stakeholders and seek input on important places to be protected.	Staff and CEA members – 2/8/18

Measure of Success: A map of Critical Conservation Areas representing diverse natural resources to preserve throughout the County; a summary statement for each Conservation Area.

STRATEGY**Protect land through conservation easements and acquisitions****Activity to Further the Strategy****Timeframe and Responsible Party**

Identify parcels for easements in the Critical Conservation Areas and work with landowners to raise awareness of easements.	Staff and Conservation Authority – ongoing (reps per Conservation Area?) 4/8/18
Other?	

Measure of Success: An easement in the pipeline by 6/19 {of being either held or co-held with partners} in one of the Conservation Critical Areas.

STRATEGY**Engage in collaboration/partnerships within the County and with other non-profit organizations, government agencies, and municipalities****Activity to Further the Strategy****Timeframe and Responsible Party**

Work with local chamber of commerce, corporations	CEA – 12/8/17
Partner with other County programs (Tourism, Ag & Forestal District program,	Staff and CEA – 12/8/17 Draft
Partner with adjacent County CEAs, Realtors, Potomac Conservancy/ Valley Conservation Council / Virginia Outdoors Foundation / SVBF, and/or State Agencies – DCR and DOF - on projects that benefit the Valley.	Staff and CEA – start outreach in early 2018
Investigate landscape-scale conservation initiatives that may be beyond the CEA County that also benefit the regional Valley and the Authority.	CEA – draft 4/8/18; final 1/8/19? Ongoing collaboration – potential opportunities

Measure of Success: One collaborative project completed annually (website, an event, partnering for eased lands, etc.).

STRATEGY

Manage lands and easements to ensure that appropriate, identified conservation values are protected (water quality, recreation, views, habitat, etc.).

Activity to Further the Strategy	Timeframe and Responsible Party
Develop policies to monitor properties protected by easements and monitor annually	Staff and CEA – Draft 10/8/17; Final 2/8/18
Monitor all County-held easements annually	Staff – by 12/31/17, 12/31/18, 12/31/19
Develop a newsletter or other means communication to deliver information/assistance to easement grantors and landowners	Staff and CEA – Draft 2/8/18, Final 6/8/19
Advocate and educate the public on BMPs and invasive animal and plant species control on eased lands through partnerships with agencies and other orgs	Staff and CEA – Draft Plan 2/8/18; final Plan 6/8/18

Measure of Success: A portfolio of protected land that is managed in the best manner possible so as to protect each property’s unique conservation values.

Capacity Goal
Strengthen the CEA’s capacity to protect lands in the Valley

STRATEGY

Secure funding to support the needs of the CEA

Activity to Further the Strategy	Timeframe and Responsible Party
Develop a fundraising plan annually	CEA and Staff – Draft plan 4/8/18; final plan 8/8/18
Expand grant-writing to support operations	Staff and CEA – 10/8/18 apply to at least one grant
Explore funding ops for Authority through reduced fees in escrow for match to implement fundraising plan for Conservation Areas	CEA and Staff – in concert with funding plan (above)

Measure of Success: CEA will secure sustainable funding in 10 years, based on incremental annual increases in funding through a diverse public private funding stream. {Adequate funds to protect against any threats to the properties and manage/steward the land through perpetuity.}

STRATEGY

Develop and enhance capacity of the CEA

Activity to Further the Strategy

Timeframe and Responsible Party

Participate in the Virginia Trust network	
Continue regional and national networking	
Develop / strengthen rapport with lending/granting orgs for future funding	
Annually revise and update the CEA Strategic Plan for 3 year outlook	Staff and CEA draft 4/8/18; final 6/8/18; draft 4/8/19 and final 6/8/19
Weave CEA verbiage more into other County program plans and reports	Staff – 12/8/17

Measure of Success:

Education and Outreach Goal
Promote better understanding of the importance of the easements and the CEA’s role in Protecting lands in the Shenandoah Valley

STRATEGY

Promote environmental education programs in local schools and communities

Activity to Further the Strategy

Timeframe and Responsible Party

Prepare outreach materials and host events for students (through school, FFA, 4H, faith based orgs, etc.) to share benefits of conservation values and eased lands.	Staff and CEA – Draft 10/8/17; final 10/8/18
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Measure of Success: One annual event or outreach effort successfully held with student organization.

STRATEGY

Improve the community's awareness of CEA's role and Easements in general

Activity to Further the Strategy
Timeframe and Responsible Party

Develop materials to inform public about CEA's role in conservation of natural resources of region	
Develop materials to inform public of land trusts, and how our work is different from, but compliments other organizations in the Valley	
Update website to disseminate information about conservation issues	Staff – draft 8/17; final 10/17
Coordinate AFD and CEA agritourism brochures for unified messages	Staff – draft 7/17; final 8/17
Explore using social media to connect with the community and supporters	
Work with Public policy-makers and conservation agencies to determine further priorities (water quality information, important parcels that either need protection or are sources of problems for the Shen River)	
Publish two newsletters per year	Staff and CEA – Start 2018, June and Dec.
Develop contacts with local and state orgs/ associations to increase discussion of conservation issues	

Measure of Success: Annual outreach materials disseminated plus two 2 newsletters annually.

STRATEGY

Other....

Activity to Further the Strategy

Timeframe and Responsible Party

Activity to Further the Strategy	Timeframe and Responsible Party

Measure of Success: