



FRIENDS OF THE BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAINS

2020 & 2021 Annual Report



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2020 & 2021 Annual Report

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Preserving,
Enhancing,
and Celebrating
the **Blue Ridge Mountains**

Annual Report – Letter from the President

Dear *Friends*,

2022 marks our 15th year dedicated to preserving, enhancing, and celebrating the Blue Ridge Mountains as a valuable resource and treasured space for present and future generations.

As we make plans for the coming year and the coming decades we will build upon our successes of 2020 and 2021.

Throughout the summer/fall of 2021 *Friends* managed a successful campaign to tell the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors exactly how damaging AT&T's proposed tower on Short Hill would be to the Blue Ridge environment. The construction would violate current County policy and current zoning regulations and set a horrible precedent for enforcing the County's new zoning code. In our campaign we partnered with a number of other conservation and environmental organizations including the Loudoun County Preservation and Conservation Coalition, the Piedmont Environmental Council, and Save Rural Loudoun. At its October 5th meeting, the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors voted to deny AT&T's monopole tower on the Short Hill by a vote of 8 to 1.

Together with *The Nature Conservancy* we supported a "Plant-a-Tree" campaign here in Virginia to counter deforestation by developers and invasive insects.

We actively supported opposition to the Rockwool Plant in West Virginia threatening our region with air pollution. Our bi-weekly *Happenings* emails target relevant topics like hiking safety, the all-important zoning-rewrite, and proper land stewardship by homeowners. Our annual eco-scholarships support local students preparing for a career in conservation.

In December 2020, we hosted our first ever virtual annual conference in response to the Corona Virus pandemic. At that meeting I as President delivered our first annual "State of the Mountains" focusing on the successes and challenges facing the Blue Ridge.

We are an all-volunteer Board whose members devote many hours to help preserve all that we hold dear: the Blue Ridge Mountains, its flora and fauna, our source of water, and the joy it brings us to live on or near the mountains.

This means for me and a few others countless hours of attending workshops, meeting with County officials, negotiating, and sometimes, badgering people to do the right thing for conservation.



Preserving,
Enhancing,
and Celebrating
the **Blue Ridge Mountains**

Needless to say, never has there been a time in our country, and the world, where we need to stand up for conservation and be counted. That is why we do what we do, however modest the results.

We can't do it without your support which provides us the resources to speak and act on your behalf!

Thank you for your trust and let us all stay vigilant.

Peter Weeks

Peter Weeks
President, *Friends of the Blue Ridge Mountains*

Committee Reports

1. LAND USE COMMITTEE

Norman Myers, Chairperson

Mission: Improve land use regulations and practices in the counties of the *Friends* program area. The committee focuses on the portion of the mountain range that is not protected by federal, state, or local parks or forests – the six-county area from the Virginia/Maryland border to the Shenandoah National Park -- Loudoun, Clarke, Frederick, Warren, Fauquier, and Shenandoah.



Stumptown Woods, 87 acres of land near Lucketts, has been placed in conservation easement.

As chair of the Land Use Committee, Norman Myers represents *FBRM* on the Loudoun County Preservation and Conservation Coalition (LCPCC). Norm is a member of LCPCC's the Conservation Easement Committee. Norm also monitors the meetings of the Loudoun County Zoning Ordinance Committee (ZOC) which is responsible for public input to the re-write of the Loudoun County Zoning Ordinance. *Friends* has been formally added to the list of public input organizations for the Zoning rewrite process.

Land Use Committee members include Mike Hummel, Lindsey Mohler, Paul Lawrence and Patric Copeland.

County's capacity to monitor and enforce the conservation easements for which it is the holder or co-holder. Currently the County directly holds easements on about 5,000 acres. The County does not have a specific mechanism or structure in place to monitor compliance with conservation easements. It does not even have an established process for investigating complaints regarding easement violations.

The County is considering re-establishing a Purchase of Development Rights (PDR)



Farmland placed in a conservation easement outside Leesburg.
Courtesy Photo/Ashton Cole, Land Trust of Virginia

program. A robust compliance mechanism will be critically important to the success of any PDR program. The Land Use Committee will continue to closely monitor this initiative and offer technical support and assistance where possible.

In addition to its' concerns about compliance the Easement Committee is focusing on encouraging the County to promote easements as another major conservation tool.

In the AR-1 and AR-2 zoning districts by-right development permits residential lot density of up to 1 dwelling per 5 and 1 per 15 acres, respectively. Conservation easements can reduce this typically to about 1 dwelling per 50 acres.

The land Use Committee is also monitoring proposed revisions to the cluster regulations to preserve prime soils and to make the regulations more compatible with the vision of Rural Loudoun and the Rural Villages (ZOAM 2020-0002).

Over the past year the Land Use Committee has been quite active in opposition to the construction of the Rockwell industrial plant in Jefferson County West Virginia.

FBRM was an active participant with Jefferson County Vision in raising funds to cover the legal fees of opposing the construction of the plant. We purchased a table at the *Starry Night Celebration* at the Breaux Vineyard in Mid-April. We also helped publicize the event to *FBRM*'s members.

Through the Land Use Committee *FBRM* joined with many other conservation groups in formally protesting the development sending letters to the Mayor and City Council of Ransome, WV. *FBRM* is also plaintiff in the case against the plant.

As Chairman of the Land Use Committee Norm is an active member of LCPCC's Committee on Unmet Housing Needs. Beckwith Bolle is also a member of the committee on behalf of the Realtors.



2. MEMBERSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Peter Weeks, Chairperson

Mission: Expand the FBRM membership for the purpose of ensuring that we maintain a strong financial base, providing volunteers for special projects and raising awareness of the need to safeguard the treasured Blue Ridge Mountains. The Committee cultivates and seeks major gifts from individuals, corporations, and foundations as needed for special projects.

Population growth, development pressures, and climate change, particularly in western Loudoun County will pose major threats to the Blue Ridge Mountains in the coming decades. In 2020 and 2021 Peter, as Chair of the Committee initiated a number of steps to strengthen and build the organization to make sure it can meet the increasing challenges. He began a major review of *FBRM's* by-laws, which had not been revised since adopted in 2007, with the objective of creating a robust organizational structure equal to the challenges ahead. He hired *FBRM's* first ever Executive Director and has directed a yearlong initiative in 2022 to broaden *FBRM's* sources of revenue to assure that the organization has the resources to sustain its ambitious program agenda.



3. STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE

Patric Copeland & James Remuzzi, Co-Chairs

Mission: Highlight the value of stewardship practices in conserving the health of the Blue Ridge mountains to members and the public through Action, Education, and Outreach; and to help raise funds to assist members with on the ground stewardship projects.

Finished Bioswale



Patric Copeland is in charge of the subcommittee which is working with Town of Round Hill on the Sleeter Lake Park project, including developing trails which will eventually link up to Franklin Park.

Patric was also manager of the successful 2021 project to construct a demonstration bioswale at Sleeter Lake. The bioswale project was

unique in that much of the work was actually done by high school students as part of a “Capstone” project. Based upon this success, FBRM will explore the possibility of additional capstone projects in 2022 and beyond.

4. EDUCATION COMMITTEE -- Carole Napolitano, Chairperson

Mission: Promote awareness and appreciation of the importance of audiences through programs and initiatives that feature the mountains diverse resource and historic/cultural significance.



In 2020 and 2021, the Education Committee focused on expanding awareness of interest in *FBRM's* Jane Pratt & Jed Shilling Blue Ridge Mountains Educational Scholarship program. The Committee Chair (Carole Napolitano) made personal visits to three Loudoun County High schools – Loudoun Valley, Woodgrove and Loudoun County. She spoke with the Environmental Science classes to talk about the scholarship program and to encourage students to apply.

Juanita Tool, as a member of the Education Committee initiated the contact with Loudoun County High School and accompanied Carole on the visit to the school.

In 2020, *FBRM* increased the number of scholarships we awarded from two to three and increased the largest award from \$1,000 to \$1,500 based on several qualified candidates. This year *FBRM's* scholarships were awarded to:

1. *Matthew Soiland* of Purcellville, who now attends Virginia Tech College of Engineering was awarded \$1,500. At Tech he will pursue his interest in finding ways to use emerging technologies to improve infrastructure, promote ecological sustainability and enhance the quality of life in underserved communities across the globe.
2. *Ava Kalina* of Hamilton, currently a student at Miami University (Ohio) where she plans to pursue *Sustainable Development and Non-profit* studies, received \$1,000 award. Through research and other opportunities provided at Miami she hopes to find ways to help underdeveloped communities thrive, while serving the environment.
3. *Elliot James Petersen* of Hamilton, who has begun studies at Northern Virginia Community College, received \$500 award in recognition of his volunteer efforts in restoration and enhancement at Purcellville's Chapman DeMary Trail.

In the coming year, The Education Committee will continue to award Jane Pratt & Jed Shilling Blue Ridge Mountains Educational Scholarships to high school students who have demonstrated interest in and a commitment to conservation.

We also plan to renew our program of making awards at the Loudoun County Regional Science and Engineering Fair (RSEF) which was canceled in 2020.

Although a goal of the Education Committee in 2021 is to seek to expand partnerships with schools in our focus area beyond Loudoun County, we recognize that the circumstances of the pandemic are likely to limit our opportunities in 2022.

Blue Ridge Conservation Alliance (BRCA)

The BRCA, for which *FBRM* is a founding member and maintains a leadership role on the Steering Committee and Program Committee, brings together conservation organizations in the region for the sake of finding opportunities to leverage their collective impact.

The Program Committee currently provides leadership to BRCA by providing opportunities for partner organizations to come together for networking, educational programing, and other activities that support the goals of the Alliance. Over the past year specific initiatives included:

Strategic planning: Through a grant from the National Park Service (NPS), Anne O’Neill (along with several interns) from the Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program of NPS has provided technical assistance to lay the groundwork for the development of BRCAs strategic plan through stakeholder interviews and analysis and the development of asset maps.

Quarterly Meetings: The BRCA June quarterly meeting (virtual) featured a conversation with Dr. Mark Cucuzzella, a Professor of West Virginia University School of Medicine. Dr. Cucuzzella is a strong advocate of the importance of outdoor space to one’s personal health. Play outdoors is not only vital to our overall health, but also a potential “prescription” for curbing diseases, such as diabetes.

On December 8, 2021, BRCA hosted a very successful webinar: *Conservation Easements in the Blue Ridge*. BRCA’s co-hosts for the event included -- *FBRM*, the Clark County Planning Commission, The Potomac Appalachian Trail Club (PATC), the Piedmont Environmental Council (PEC) and the Land Trust of Virginia (LTV).

Annual Meeting: The centerpiece of BRCA’s annual meeting was a presentation by Bill Labich, Senior Conservationist with the Highstead Foundation on regional

conservation partnerships (RCPs). Labich leads Highstead's Regional Conservation Program with the goal of advancing the pace and practice of collaborative landscape conservation. His work there has raised \$23 million for regional conservation since 2009, and Bill is recognized as a national expert in collaborative landscape conservation. BRCA is looking at RCPs as a possible model for galvanizing action, as an Alliance, to protect the Blue Ridge.



Friends of the Blue Ridge Mountains

2020 STATE OF THE MOUNTAINS ADDRESS

Dear *Friends*,

Our world has become very small over the past year.

For many of us, our home has been our world. We've probably hunkered down at home for days, maybe weeks or months, before venturing out for food and other necessities. Perhaps we've been permitted to telecommute or teach remotely. Regardless of the scenario, we've definitely spent more time at home with our spouses and children than we've ever had.



Not surprisingly, with all this time at home, we've noticed our home and grounds need a bit of work: painting, landscaping, plumbing issues, and the "honey-do" list becoming longer and longer!

Have you noticed? Handyman services, painters, landscapers are solidly booked. And building supply stores are in short supply as we tackle this deferred

maintenance.

Our situation at home is really a microcosm of a growing worldwide realization: the deferred maintenance of our planet is long overdue.

The combined calamities of climate change, invasive plants and pests, polluted waterways, indeed the combined threats to our entire ecosystem can feel overwhelming.

Despite these challenges, this is the simple reason we should not relinquish hope: human beings created this impending ecological disaster and it will be human beings who will help us to avert it and restore our environment. Recent research noted a 30% drop in carbon emissions and over 20% reduction in air pollution since the start of the pandemic. This is a guide to what's possible to achieve even in a short period of time.

As dubious as it may seem, 2020 may later be described by conservationists as the year our vision was restored to 20/20. Significant and lasting steps were conceived to practically grapple with the issues that threaten us.

Here at *Friends of the Blue Ridge Mountains*, in coordination with our conservation partners throughout Virginia's Piedmont region, our contribution to preserve and protect our invaluable natural resources is being the primary steward of the Blue Ridge Mountains, from the Short Hills to Front Royal, the gateway to Shenandoah National Park.

Starting with this annual statement, *Friends* will every year deliver a "State of the Mountains" assessment, informing the public as well as county and state officials throughout our service area of both the challenges the mountains face and accomplishments towards meeting those challenges.

Friends of the Blue Ridge was formed 13 years ago on two principals.

First – our home is an area of unique assets both natural and manmade. Over the centuries geology and climate have combined to create beautiful vistas with a unique and diverse mix of plants, trees and animals found in few other places in the world. At the same time, our ancestors – stretching back long before written history -- have been an active part of this environment taking advantage of its bounty and shaping it.



Photo Credit: Jay Grey

As every school child learns America's earliest history takes place against the backdrop of these mountains. In 1755 George Washington marched through present day Leesburg with Virginia militiamen on their way to attack Fort Duquesne. President Madison removed the treasures of the White House to Leesburg to shelter them from the British. Much of our nation's most violent struggle was fought in the valleys and along the roads that today are our neighborhoods, shopping centers and parks.

Second -- our unique area is dynamic. Over the centuries it has changed and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future.

The trees that clean our air and water are different than the trees through which Commander Mosby and his raiders rode during the Civil War. Gone are the mountain forests characterized by large stands of mature trees included chestnut, hemlock, and many varieties of oak to be replaced by sweetgum, elms and yellow poplar. Our beautiful but winding, rutty and muddy farm roads have been straightened, widened, and paved. Our economy is no longer farm based or slave based.

In 2020 a huge segment of our population earns a very good living sitting at a desk – increasingly sitting at a desk at home – doing things that generations past could not have imagined.

The job of *Friends* has been and remains to help people appreciate and enjoy our unique environment and at the same time to help manage the inevitable forces of change so that future generations can continue to enjoy the best our mountains have to offer.



With that in mind we must ask what are the most pressing forces of change? Where must *Friends* focus our attention today, tomorrow and over the coming years to be most effective?

We see five major forces that are going to greatly impact our lives in the coming decade or two. Our task is to manage those forces and those

changes in a way that preserves and enhances what is best about living in the Blue Ridge. Our aim is not to stop change but to manage change.

Climate

Of course, the most formidable force of change is the warming climate. Inevitable. Average temperatures will rise and continue to do so for the rest of our lives. Storms will get more severe and more frequent. The birds, the fauna, and the animals will change.

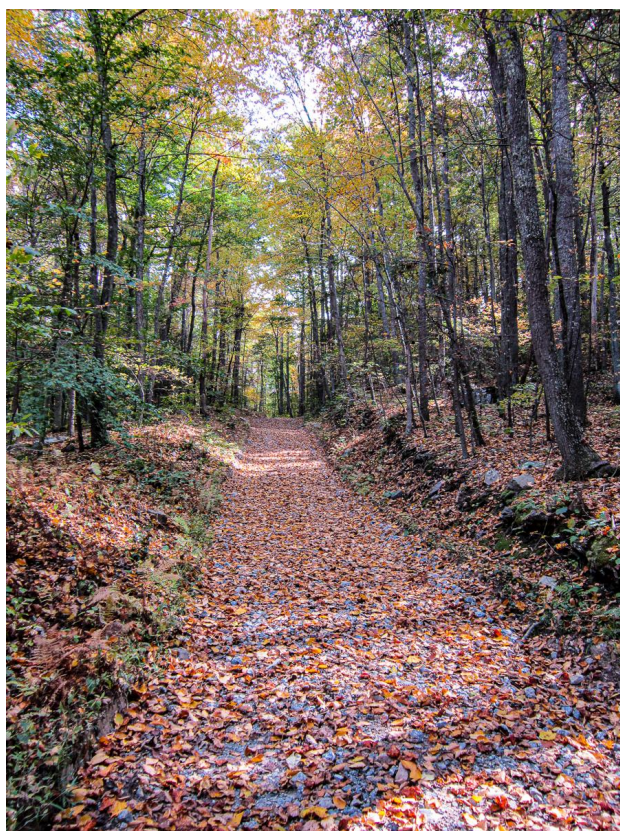
Our Blue Ridge Mountains will see more forest fires and associated flooding and erosion.

While climate change is inevitable there are things FBRM and our partners in conservation are doing to help reduce its worst impacts. We are planting trees.

Trees are the most efficient consumers of carbon dioxide. As they grow leaves pull carbon dioxide and water from the air converting them to sugars that feed the tree. As a by-product oxygen is produced and released back to the air.

One acre of trees pulls about six tons of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere each year producing about 520 tons of oxygen – each year.

Trees are natural sponges, collecting and filtering rainfall and releasing it slowly into streams and rivers, and are the most effective land cover for maintenance of water quality.



This year *Friends* made a financial contribution to The Nature Conservancy's program to plant Longleaf pine restoring the forests that the earliest European settlers found in what is now Virginia. Friends also matched on a dollar-for-dollar basis contributions that our members made to the program.

Trees are not the only plants important to helping our area thrive in the changing climate. The clean-cut, manicured lawns that are the staple of our neighborhoods are not environmentally friendly. Between the chemicals that we use to make them grow and the fuel we use to cut them when they do grow lawns are a significant source of greenhouse gasses in our atmosphere and pollutants in our streams, rivers, and the Bay.

While recognizing that our collective addiction to short green grass is not going away quickly, Friends has and will continue to take steps to educate our readers to the problems with lawn grasses. There are attractive, less damaging landscaping options.

Conservation landscaping is the practice of modifying the plant, ground cover, and flora around a home or business in a way that incorporates environmentally sensitive design, low impact development, non-invasive native plants, and integrated pest management.

Practices like rain gardens, beds of native grasses and wildflowers, and planting native trees and shrubs are great ways to benefit pollinators, improve water quality, and sequester carbon

while still meeting neighbors' expectations of what the area around a home or business should look like.

Several states including Pennsylvania, Minnesota, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts providing financial assistance to encourage/help landowners find alternatives to the traditional lawn.

In the coming year Friends will look closely at these programs with an eye towards encouraging their adoption in our area.

The Road Network

What happens with our road network over the coming years is going to have more of a direct impact on the Blue Ridge than almost any other public policy.

Your access to shopping, school, work, entertainment is determined by the nature and condition of the roads you drive more than the number of actual miles between those places.



There is constant pressure to straighten, widen, and smooth roads to make it easier and faster for you to get where you want to go.

The more roads are straightened, widened, and smoothed the more people will move to areas that were previously inconveniently accessible -- in other words the valleys,

farms, villages, open fields and rolling slopes of the mountains. The more people that move to previously inconveniently accessible areas the more traffic will be generated and the cycle will continue.

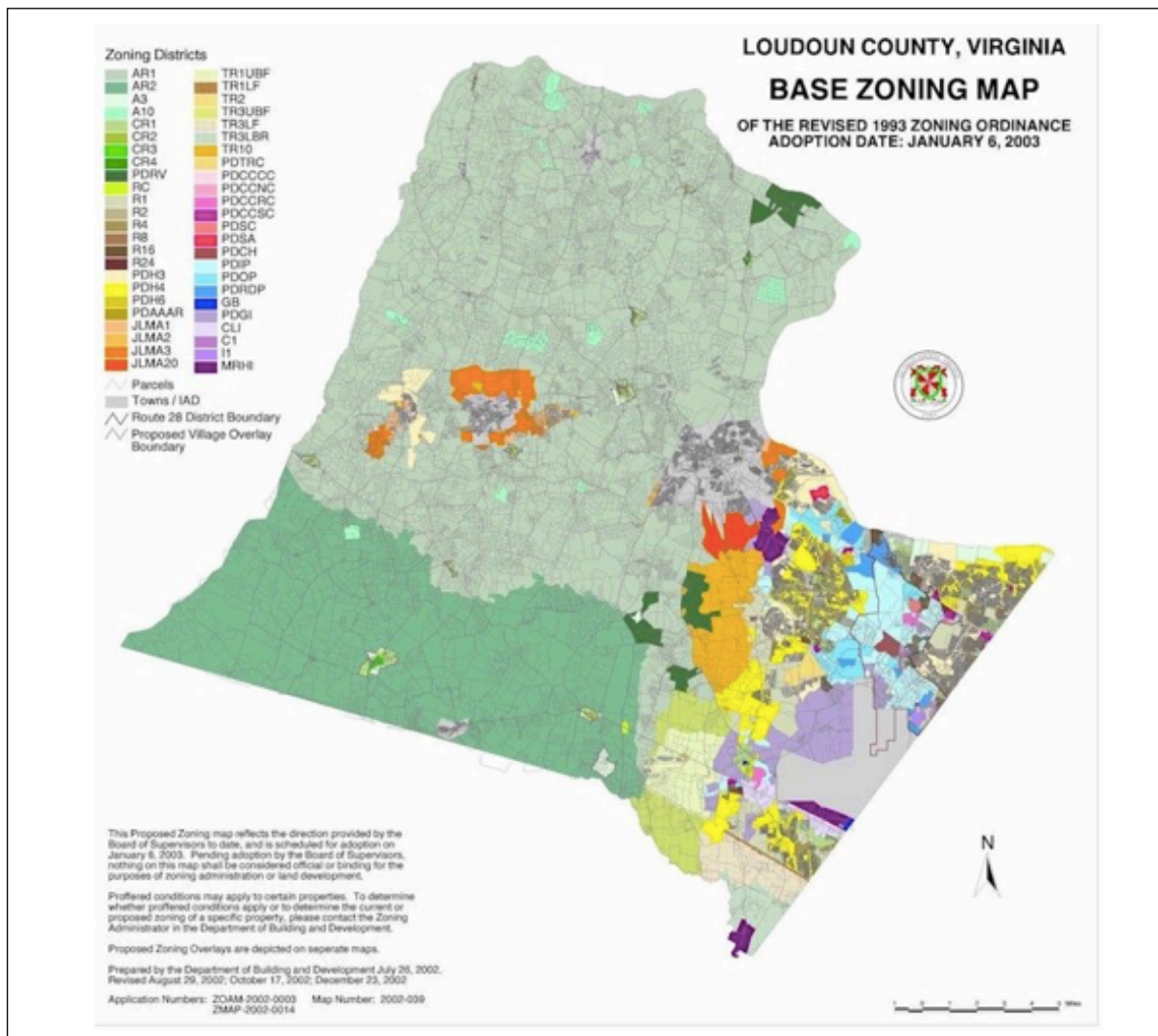
While *Friends* cannot and does not oppose all road improvement projects, we approach them with a healthy skepticism and the knowledge that road improvements create traffic they do not eliminate traffic.

In Loudoun County there is a unique obligation to monitor road improvements. Loudoun County has more miles of unpaved roads than any other Virginia County and many people in Loudoun like it that way. On June 18, 2020, the Virginia Department of Historic Resources

declared the road network officially eligible for listing on the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places.

Such a designation will not by itself protect the roads from being paved and improved but it should give all concerned pause before paving historically significant roads.

Within a few minutes' drive of the most sophisticated data centers in the world one can ride a horse, bike, walk or even ride in a horse drawn carriage on a quiet farm lane that looks and sounds much as it did in 1800.



The Zoning Rewrite

Loudoun County's zoning rewrite process is a third factor that is going to have an impact on our Mountain environment for many years to come.

The victories for agriculture, the environment, and the mountains that *Friends* and other groups won during Loudoun's Comprehensive Planning process can be lost in the County's zoning rewrite process.

We and many other groups including Loudoun County Preservation and Conservation Coalition (LCPPC), Piedmont Environmental Council (PEC), Save Rural Loudoun (SRL), and the Farm Bureau devoted countless hours and great effort to making sure that the Plan protected the irreplaceable agricultural and environmental assets of Western Loudoun not to mention the rural lifestyle. Those efforts bore fruit. The Plan adopted by the Board of Supervisors on June 20, 2019, include many statements about protecting rural/agricultural Western Loudoun County.

However, as important as the Plan is for establishing County policy, the real battle for protecting Western Loudoun and our mountains is just beginning.

The Plan is not law and has little direct impact on day-to-day decisions County staff make in reviewing development applications.

The policies of the Plan must be written into regulations – particularly the zoning ordinance and the Facilities Standards Manual -- before they impact day-to-day decisions.



In September 2019, the BOS authorized the rewrite of the County zoning ordinance for the specific purpose of implementing the Comprehensive Plan. This rewrite will determine the shape and scope of development in Western Loudoun and the entire County for the next 20 to 30 years.

It is not safe to assume that the agricultural/rural/environmental protection policies in the Plan will make it into the specific language of the new zoning ordinance.

We and other organizations that worked so diligently to shape the Plan are staying involved in the rewrite process. We prepared and distributed two long *Happenings* articles to our members describing the current zoning and the rewrite process. We monitor every meeting of the newly formed Zoning Ordinance Committee.

The timeline for the rewrite process has two more periods of public input – January to March 2021 and Summer 2021. We will alert our members of issues that merit their attention and work with likeminded organizations to make sure that the zoning ordinance fulfills the promise of the Comprehensive Plan.

There are two areas of immediate concern in the zoning rewrite.

One is the proposal to allow so called commercial whole house rentals in western Loudoun – districts AR-1, AR – 2 and A-10 for those of you who appreciate specifics. Currently this is not a permitted use. We see the proposal as opening the door to widespread motels disguised as houses – think Ocean City or Myrtle Beach.

This is not our vision of the mountains and we doubt if it is yours.

The second is the question of how best to protect the irreplaceable prime agricultural soil of the western county. While there is widespread consensus that the current zoning does not provide adequate protection, the specifics of how to do this are complicated, controversial, and technically challenging.

Friends will keep our members informed on these and all other zoning issues threatening our mountains. When necessary, we will work to focus public attention on the most critical questions.



Industrial development

Another major force shaping the future of our beautiful mountains can be summed up with one word – Rockwool. As you know a Danish Company – Rockwool International – is in the process of building a large manufacturing plant in Ranson, West Virginia – just 20 miles north of Bear’s Den.

Without going into the specifics -- which all of you probably know as well as I – the air and water pollution threats of this plant to the Blue Ridge and surrounding area are massive.

FBRM has joined with many other groups including the citizens of Ranson and Jefferson County in efforts to stop the construction. As of the moment construction has been halted and a Danish regulatory body is reviewing the situation.

While the threats of the Rockwool plant are our immediate focus, we are equally concerned about rockwool type situations arising all over. Air and water do not respect political boundaries. The most sophisticated, aggressive local environmental regulations cannot protect the Blue Ridge from threats of extractive industries hundreds of miles away.

In the coming years we will continue to work with other environmental and conservation minded organizations throughout the region and the country to identify threatening development.

Enforcement

One other area of concern that we will focus on in the coming year is enforcement. The rewritten zoning code, conservation easements, the proposed Transfer Development Rights (TDR), the historic designation of Loudoun's unpaved roads and all of the other tools to help us protect and enjoy the Blue Ridge are only effective if enforced.

Sometimes enforcement in Loudoun County appears to be spotty. Spotty enforcement threatens the anticipated benefits of the programs it is also grossly unfair to the vast majority that accept and live by the rules of the program.

The zoning code in particular is a concern. The primary enforcement mechanism is public complaints about violations. Neighbors complaining about neighbors. Not a formula for harmonious community life. Friends will continue to work with other organizations to try to find ways to strengthen enforcement policies and programs in Loudoun and all other counties in our region.

Conclusion

Deteriorating climate, expanding road networks, zoning changes, industrial development and pollution, questionable enforcement – all big forces trying to change the beautiful, bountiful Blue Ridge environment we all cherish.

And yet JOY.



The joy of being able to live here. On the most stressful day we can each walk or drive or ride a bike or horse through areas of great beauty; across ground upon which much of our nation's history has taken place.

We as true *Friends* of the Blue Ridge Mountains struggle daily to shape the powerful forces of change

in ways that preserve and even enhance what is best.

We do not -- we cannot -- stand in the way of change. We can hope to shape it.

Friends of the Blue Ridge Mountains

2021 STATE OF THE MOUNTAINS ADDRESS

Dear *Friends*,

I often say to people who inquire what *Friends* does that we are the only conservation organization that protects and preserves the Blue Ridge from Harpers Ferry to Shenandoah National Park.

Then I expand upon this point by saying that it is one of the only stretches of the Blue Ridge that is privately owned by individual landowners and corporate entities.

Herein lies the rub. While many of the landowners are stewards of the land, placing their land in conservation easements or by safeguarding their rural landscape, others see an opportunity to profit monetarily regardless of ordinances and community protests.

Countering these negative forces is the reason the Blue Ridge community must stand firm to do the right thing.

Does this mean revoking the property rights of landowners? No, it doesn't. What it means is enforcing the ordinances already on the books throughout the five counties that encompass the areas we serve.

The Mountain Overlay District (MOD), steep slopes, restrictions on land use and clear-cutting of forests are the tools in our toolbox to protect and preserve. But these regulations only work where there is enforcement by county authorities. And enforcement primarily commences when individual citizens like you bring the potential issue to light and file a complaint. We've learned over the years that it is the community, you and I, who have to be vigilant and poised to react.

Our many conservation partners, like PEC, Loudoun Wildlife, Piedmont Heritage, work diligently to stay ahead of the game. PEC, for example, has an employee regularly examine all proposed permits for construction, entertainment centers (see wineries and breweries), and other potential blights upon the mountain viewshed and its ecology.

Staying ahead of the game is key. But simply uncovering potential misuse would be futile without the strength of the conservation community to confront and defeat those self-serving interests who do not respect the integrity of the rural landscape.

We're fortunate that *Friends* has land-use experts on our Board who represent us at county meetings which include the MOD, zoning, the historic rural villages, and public safety. Hours of preparation are contributed by these Board members, all of whom serve as volunteers.

But the past few years have demonstrated that *Friends of the Blue Ridge Mountains* needs to grow as an organization to wield the kind of influence that makes a difference – that keeps us ahead of the game.

Accordingly, for the first time in our history, we have hired an Executive Director, Larry Malone, who has the administrative expertise and understanding rooted in his passion for the mountains and conservation who can move our agenda forward.

Financially, this is a challenge for us when membership dues only cover a fraction of our annual expenses. Through sponsorships, grants, and private and corporate donations, we have entrusted Larry the challenge of supplementing our membership drives with financial support necessary to achieve our goals.

Our recent success to thwart AT&T's proposed monopole tower on the Short Hill exemplifies why we are worthy of support.

Faced with an opponent that had far superior resources to spread their bogus message via television, social media, and a cadre of PR lobbyists, *Friends* turned to our greatest resource – you.

Responding to a survey meant to provoke and elicit your thoughts, members responded with clear statements of purpose and resolve. Your remarks touched me deeply and inspired an idea.

Away on vacation attending a family reunion, I was forced to address an important Board of Supervisors public input session by phone. My idea: simply read the comments you made on the survey to the Board. If you've never been to a BOS meeting, they sit on a dais before rows of benches that seat several hundred people ringed by loudspeakers. Later, when I spoke to people who attended the meeting, they described that it sounded like the voice of God speaking thru the loudspeakers!

Certainly, the voice of the heart and good common sense prevailed in the long run to protect and preserve our mountains. The final vote by the BOS was on October 5th and we won!

I entered that final meeting cautiously hoping we could add to our only sure votes of three supervisors who opposed the tower. I thought the final vote could be 5-4 or 4-5 for either side. There was a feeling of disbelief as each supervisor cast their vote and explained why they did.

A summary of this meeting is on our website. One by one they voted and it became clear as day that it was not just a narrow victory but a 8-1 landslide victory! To quote a famous baseball story, "Such was the joy in Mudville when mighty Casey struck out!"

We all made this victory possible: our members, the conservation community, and county staff. The ordinances were enforced as they were written, in this case, no monopole towers on our ridgelines. The last legal tower on the ridgeline was constructed in 1983. We will continue to ensure never again.

Do you feel empowered? You should! I do. Let's stand together to meet the challenges ahead. My vision is to increase the number of conservation easements on our mountains and strengthen the Mountain Overlay District by prohibiting uses that compromise water quality, wildlife habitat, and the tree canopy. Also, I would like to see enacted the nomination of the Blue Ridge as a National Scenic or Historic Area to reinforce the necessity of its protection. Working together, we will steadfastly remain "ahead of the game."

Friends of the Blue Ridge Mountains 2020 and 2021 Financial Summary

Category	2020	2021
Sleeter Lake Upkeep		\$2,000
Total Donations	\$42,514.70	\$10,904.88
Membership Fees	\$6,260.44	\$5,401.70
Merchandise		\$775
Total Income	\$48,775.14	\$19,081.58
Partnerships	\$1,295.44	\$2,708
Membership & Development	\$967.80	\$1,475.20
Land Use Committee	\$6,750	\$5,775
Education Committee	\$3,150	\$2,000
Celebrations Committee	\$292.66	\$908.97
Administration	\$7,371.34	\$15,442.02
Operations		\$84.27
Total Expenses	\$19,827.24	\$28,393.46
Net Income	\$28,947.90	(\$9,311.88)

**Table #1.1 -- Donations Detail
2020 + 2021 Profit and Loss Table**

Category	2020	2021
Memory of Jed Shelling	\$35,000	
Endowment	\$500	
Plant A Tree	\$35	\$343.75
Giving Tuesday	\$103	
Give Choose 2021		\$1,978.57
Website Promotion	\$1,000	
Grants	\$500	\$4,350
Sleeter Lake Park Promotions	\$51.50	
Give Choose	\$4,043.53	\$1,015
Donations – Unpledged - Other	\$1,281.67	\$3,209.29
Amazon Smile		\$8.27
Total	\$42,514.70	\$10,904.88



From the Director's Desk

I am Larry Malone and I am very proud to say that I am the new Executive Director of Friends of the Blue Ridge Mountains.

I once worked for a gentleman that would occasionally open a senior staff meeting by saying "ladies and gentlemen, we are facing a wonderful business opportunity -- very cleverly disguised as a serious problem." And with that simple sentence he firmly set the framework for our discussion of the serious problems. The amazing thing is how often he was right. We often found ways to turn serious problems into opportunities.

As Executive Director, I propose to bring this attitude to our discussions of the problems facing our beloved Blue Ridge Mountains in the coming months and years. We all know that the problems are many and are serious. They range from global to exceedingly local.

The warming climate will seriously impact our mountains in a frighteningly short period of time.

- ◆ Storms will become more intense with associated run off and erosion problems.
- ◆ Forest fires will become more common and more severe.
- ◆ Trees that flourish now will not flourish as the average temperature rises by even a degree or two.
- ◆ The wonderfully diverse animal life that we all enjoy will change as the trees and ground cover change.

Friends' role in fighting climate change is probably limited to aggressively promoting every local, national, and international initiative to reduce greenhouse gases and to providing information as to what to expect and how to minimize the damage.

On a less global level, the role of Friends of the Blue Ridge Mountains is more direct and more complex.

Federal, state, and local governments will be making decisions on where roads are built or widened, how many houses will be added and where, what types of factories will be constructed, how many farms will continue to be financially viable, and what lands will be preserved. All of these government decisions will be impacting the Blue Ridge against the backdrop of a warming global climate.

Friends has a role to play in all of these decisions.

Loudoun County is in the process of rewriting its zoning ordinance to implement the recent Comprehensive Plan. The new ordinance is going to shape development for decades throughout the County including in and near the Mountains.

- ◆ How are the steep slopes to be protected from development?
- ◆ Can the Mountain Development Overlay District restrictions be strengthened?
- ◆ How are the prime agricultural soils and the farms at the base of the mountains in Western Loudoun to be protected?
- ◆ Can the Zoning Ordinance encourage implementation of Loudoun's new Linear Parks and Trails System Plan?
- ◆ How are we going to keep telephone and cell towers off the Mountain ridges?
- ◆ How are the streams, ponds, and waterways to be protected?

The current schedule is that the draft Zoning Ordinance will be available for a 90-day public review and comment period beginning in April. I can assure you that Friends will be doing everything possible to help our members access, understand, and comment on the ordinance in order to protect the mountains.

In the coming months Loudoun County will also be making decisions about powerful new tools for conservation including potentially adopting a Purchase Development Rights (PDR) program and strengthening the conservation easement program. Again, Friends will do all we can to keep our members informed and knowledgeable about these issues.

Recently the Board of Directors of Friends has taken steps to make sure that the organization is prepared to find the wonderful opportunities disguised as serious problems.

One of these steps has been to hire an Executive Director.

My job is to help the Board and the membership to implement the many impactful programs and policies it develops to protect, preserve, and celebrate the mountains.

The Board and the membership have a tremendous vision of the role of mountains in our lives. The mountains clean our water, the mountains convert our carbon dioxide into oxygen, the mountains slow our rainfall preventing erosion. And they do all this for free. If we had to build a water filtering, oxygen generating, erosion preventing machine what would it look like and how much would it cost? And incidentally the mountains do all of this while providing grand vistas, and vast acres for recreation.

However, in order for this grand vision of the Board of Directors and the membership to impact the day-to-day decisions of governments there are a number of mundane tasks that need to be performed.

Agendas need to be prepared, newsletters need to be written and distributed, meetings need to be arranged, draft zoning ordinances need to be read and understood, alerts need to be sent and occasionally alarms need to be sounded and the campaigns organized.

This is where an Executive Director comes in handy.

There is one other mundane task that needs to be done for the Board of Directors and the membership to successfully accomplish the mission of protecting, preserving, and celebrating the Blue Ridge Mountains. Budgets need to be prepared and funds need to be raised. A big part of my job this year and in future years will be to help find the funding to support all of the important activities of the Board and the membership.

As we move into 2022 and beyond, we hope you share our mission and we hope that you can share in bearing the cost of achieving our mission. We are asking you as individuals and you as representatives of the businesses that depend upon the health of our Blue Ridge Mountains to bear a small portion of the costs of accomplishing our mission of protecting, preserving, and celebrating the Blue Ridge Mountains.