

# Clarke County Easement News

**PRESERVING:** ■ FAMILY FARMS ■ SOIL ■ SCENIC VIEWS ■ RIVERS & STREAMS  
■ CULTURAL SITES ■ SCENIC BYWAYS ■ GROUND WATER ■ RURAL CHARACTER



## The Right Time & Place to Care for a Special Piece of Land

*"The last line of defense for Clarke County in this area"*

To say Dennis and Lisette Pippy are enthusiastic about the conservation easement on their recently purchased property may be an understatement. The two eagerly offer tales about how the deal came together, how the easement process unfolded, and what they see as the promise of the parcel they recently acquired.

Last year, the couple made the leap to add 67 acres adjacent to their 49-acre Newfound Farm on Barbour Lane off Moose Road in Berryville. They were offered a unique opportunity: The daughter of the owner of the large Haggerty Farm that straddled Frederick and Clarke Counties was looking for someone to buy the Clarke County acreage. Only two landowners were adjacent to the parcel and could make good use of it. A major developer had purchased the segment on the Frederick County side of the Opequon Creek and was building 440 townhouses there.

The research began.



Lisette and Dennis Pippy, along with their pointers Greta and Woody, explore the new easement property along carefully carved trails.

Specialist, they landed on a potential appraised value grant purchase involving several partnering organizations – the Virginia Land Conservation Fund, the Clarke County Conservation Easement Authority, The Piedmont Environmental Council and VDACS (the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services). The plan proved a good path forward.

**"We just want to be good stewards of the land. That's what's important to us."**

"It was such an advantage to work with Alison," Lisette points out, "because she connected us with experts in issues important to us – the creek, the history, the wildlife, like wood turtles."

### A Modern-Day Balboa

After only one year, the terrain has changed quite a bit. A winding tour of the easement property in the family's bright yellow Jeep revealed two man-made ponds, thanks to Dennis, one stocked with largemouth bass, blue gill, catfish, and koi, plus miles of a carefully cleared pathway crossing the parcel.

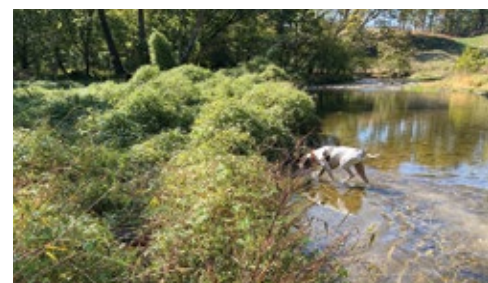
"Dennis put in this private trail himself," Lisette proudly adds. "He was a beast, kind of like Balboa crossing the Isthmus of Panama, blasting through with

a machete," she laughs.

Dennis also worked with a neighbor to clear 21 acres of an overgrown field nearest to the Opequon Creek, which provides the boundary between the Pippy property and the housing development, Opequon Crossing.

"With the easement property, we now have 4,000 feet of frontage on the Opequon," Dennis explains. "Our boundary runs right down the middle of the creek. We retain access to Frederick County across the Opequon. We feel in some ways like we're the last line of defense for Clarke in this area."

Protecting not only the land but the habitat is important to Dennis and Lisette. The list of wildlife their land supports is lengthy: "Fox, owls, bald eagles, coyotes, box turtles, wood turtles, turkey, blue heron, green heron, deer...." Dennis' voice trails off. "We just want to be good stewards of the land. That's what's important to us."



The Opequon Creek is the boundary for the easement property between Clarke County and Frederick County. To the upper right is the construction area for 440 housing units in Frederick County.

Advice from the Pippys for others considering a conservation easement?

"Younger people hold on to their property, perhaps for their children. I understand that," says Dennis. "But elderly people who are holding onto their property should put it in easement. I know some don't want to give up control, so they hesitate. But the message is they don't lose control and, at some point, a conservation easement just makes the most sense."

Quarterly newsletter published by the Clarke County Conservation Easement Authority dedicated to preserving properties with natural, cultural or scenic resources worthy of protection

## Hats Off to Another Successful Year of Land Conservation

*With 28,601 acres in easement, it was time to celebrate at the annual donor reception.*

"We can't do this without you!" This was the message, clear and simple, at the annual Donor Thank-You Reception hosted by the Clarke County Conservation Easement Authority in mid-October.

Nearly 100 donors, easement landowners, and conservation easement friends attended the gathering on a beautiful fall evening at the barn at Camden, the property of George Ohrstrom II, a long-time member of the Easement Authority.

No one could agree on just how many donor thank-you receptions have taken place – 17? 22? More? No matter.

The event is always a celebration of the hard work offered generously by so many – hard work that pays off with the perpetual protection of Clarke County's land, culture, and history.

Ohrstrom shared the sentiments of the Authority members: "We hope you know we're very grateful for all you do to help preserve and protect Clarke County's magnificent land. Your commitment to land conservation sets a high bar for other counties in Virginia – and even other states."

The "high bar" includes 28,601 acres in conservation easement (554 added since the last reception) and 317 retired dwelling unit rights, with the ultimate measurement of 25% of Clarke County acreage protected forever.

Throughout the evening, guests mingled, catching up on family events, sharing stories, and enjoying a special bourbon tasting, cheerfully manned by bourbon aficionado John Hedlund, a member of the Easement Authority.

Finally, Ohrstrom encouraged the crowd to "continue to be ambassadors for land conservation in Clarke County. Tell your neighbors, your relatives, your friends how vital our open spaces are to our community. We accomplish more when we work together."



What a wonderful evening to gather to thank those who make Clarke County's land conservation movement such a success story!

## Accepting Summer Intern Applications Now!

"Interns are a crucial part of our easement process here," says Alison Teetor, the county's Conservation Easement Specialist. "That's why we're always looking for students to join our team each summer."

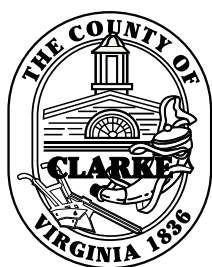
Teetor and Lorien Lemmon, the new Conservation Planner-GIS Coordinator, are encouraging local college students and high school juniors and seniors to send resumes now for one or two summer intern slots. Ideal candidates are studying environmental science or a related curriculum.

Interns support the Easement Authority with property recordkeeping, assisted by state-of-the-art software, visiting easement properties to ask landowners about any updates or changes that may have occurred since the last visit.

With some flexibility in their schedules, interns typically work 16 to 20 hours each week, between 9:00 am and 5:00 pm, says Teetor.

The stipend for the summer internship for one student is \$2,000; if two students share the work, the stipend is \$1,000 each.

If you know of someone interested in applying for an internship, please contact Teetor at [ateetor@clarkecounty.gov](mailto:ateetor@clarkecounty.gov) or Lemmon at [llemmon@clarkecounty.gov](mailto:llemmon@clarkecounty.gov). Or call 540-955-5134.



**Clarke County Conservation Easement Authority**

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Berryville, VA 22611

Fall 2023

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**YES! I want to help preserve open space in Clarke County.**

☐ Please accept the enclosed donation in the amount checked below made payable to Clarke County Conservation Easement Authority.

☐ Instead, please charge my credit card for the amount checked below. ☐ MasterCard ☐ VISA

Account Number \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ Security Code \_\_\_\_\_

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☐ \$35 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$75 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$250 ☐ \$500 ☐ \$1,000 ☐ Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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Make check payable to: Clarke County Conservation Easement Authority & mail to the address at left.

Or make your donation online at [www.clarkelandconservation.org](http://www.clarkelandconservation.org)