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Clarke County Easement News

SUMMER

2023

New Conservation Planner Lorien Lemmon Learns Quickly that Clarke County Loves Its Land: “There’s a different mantra here.”

When Lorien Lemmon took the position of Conservation Planner-GIS Coordinator with Clarke County in April, she wasn’t fully prepared for the depth of commitment to land conservation she’d find in this small county. But she quickly learned.

“Clarke County is definitely special,” she says, smiling. “People here love their land and are very protective of it, especially given our proximity to the DC metropolitan area. It makes my job so much easier.”

Lemmon’s primary responsibilities – “besides answering a lot of emails,” she laughs – are working with Easement Specialist Alison Teetor, as she’s being trained to assume many of Teetor’s roles. Teetor officially retired in 2021 but has since helped the Authority transition to new leadership.

For the Easement Authority, Lemmon reports she’s becoming familiar with different types of easements, making maps, conducting research for grant applications, and assisting with meetings. She’s also tasked with additional responsibilities for the county, such as working with the Board of Septic and Well Appeals and assisting the Litter Committee.

Given her mapping expertise, Lemmon eventually will provide GIS mapping services for the entire county. (For the curious, GIS stands for Geographic Information System, a system that creates, manages, analyzes, and maps all types of data.)

Lemmon’s background is a perfect fit for the position. She came to this area from Illinois to intern at the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute in Front Royal. Later she worked for NEON (National Ecological Observatory Network) for eight years, also stationed at the SCBI, where she used GIS technology extensively. Her bachelor’s degree from Eastern Illinois University is in environmental biology and GIS.

Lemmon’s favorite part of the position thus far?

“Going on field trips, like visiting the Kohn Cabin recently. I enjoy seeing folks doing conservation-related activities. The landowners here are always excited about land conservation, and I like helping answer their natural resource and conservation questions. I’ve made a lot of new contacts and have been exposed to new and interesting



Stop by the Clarke County government offices to say hello to Lorien Lemmon, the new Conservation Planner-GIS Coordinator. She enjoys learning more about the county from landowners.

programs. And, of course, I love seeing all the gorgeous property.” (The Janet Kohn Memorial Cabin was donated to the Easement Authority by Melvin Kohn in memory of his first wife. It sits on 50 acres in Bluemont and is currently managed by the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club as a rental available to the public.)

While she admits she’s still learning about the county’s natural resources from its landowners, Lemmon hopes the community “continues to have that spirit of protecting this land. Everybody has this passion, and it’s really unique to this county. There’s a different mantra here. When other counties may want to get another McDonald’s or Sheetz, you don’t hear that in Clarke County.”

You can reach Lemmon by email at llemon@clarkecounty.gov or by phone at 540-955-5134.

Another Successful Summer of Interning! The Authority Looks for Interns Year-Round



The ride was a bit rocky, but joining this summer’s Easement Authority intern, Emma Coutts, to visit an easement landowner was an educational adventure. We traveled to Calmes Neck, in southern Clarke County, to review and file reports on two easement properties.

Equipped with an iPad and new easement data management software called Landscape (see article on back),

Coutts breezily completed the monitoring process and the online report. After greeting landowner Rebecca Hanley, who with husband Wayne owns an 18.5-acre parcel of land that’s been protected by conservation easement since 2007, Coutts and Hanley walked to the back of the property overlooking the Shenandoah River. Hanley noted the only property change since the Authority’s visit last year is a new stone patio in the backyard. Coutts quickly notes the addition using the software.

Back in the vehicle, intern Coutts completes a series of additional questions posed by the software – “What areas on the property were visited? Are there plans for the coming year?” – and finalizes the report. The onsite process was finished in about 15 minutes.

“Interns are a crucial part of our easement process here,” explains 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, would like county residents to help them identify college students who, ideally, are studying an environmental science or related curriculum. “A child, a grandchild, a neighbor – you may know someone who would be a good fit,” says Teetor. “So please point them in our direction.”

This summer’s intern, Coutts, recently returned to campus as a third-year student at the University of Virginia, studying engineering with a minor in urban and environmental planning.



The new Landscape software is intuitive and makes the monitoring process easier for intern Coutts.

“Interns are a crucial part of our easement process here. That’s why we’re always looking for students to join our team each summer.”

The Easement Authority’s Annual Donors & Friends BBQ Picnic – Friday, October 13, 2023

6:00 – 8:00 pm

Join us for our annual *thank-you to you*, our generous Easement Authority donors, landowners, and friends!

Thank you for helping us continue to grow the land-conservation movement in Clarke County. Because of you, Clarke County is well-known and respected statewide for protecting our natural, historic, cultural, and scenic resources!

Please join in our annual celebration – and feel free to bring along a friend or neighbor who may be interested in learning more about our conservation mission.

SAVE THE DATE!

Hosted by Easement Authority member

George Ohrstrom II at Camden

400 Sunny Canyon Lane, Boyce, VA

RSVP to Kristina Maddox by October 6 at kmaddox@clarkecounty.gov or call 540-955-5132.

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

Successful intern (Continued) She describes her typical day as an intern: Use the morning to make calls and send emails to let landowners know she’d like to visit and set a time to meet. Schedule trips to visit properties for the afternoon.

“But interns have flexibility in their schedules,” she adds, “which I really liked.” And their typical work week, according to Teetor, is 16 to 20 hours spent between the hours of 9:00 am and 5:00 pm.

Coutts also enjoyed the positive office environment and getting to know the county better – “It’s so beautiful! I didn’t realize how much of this county I hadn’t seen before.” Plus, she adds with a smile, she liked meeting the friendly landowners: “One lady gave me ice cream, and another asked if I could help move a few mattresses, which I was happy to do.”

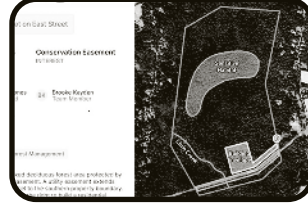
The stipend for the summer internship for one student is \$1,000.

When she last checked Landscape before she finished for the summer, Coutts reported 111 properties were marked “complete” and 40 were still “in process.” Not bad for a summer internship!

State-of-the-Art Software Elevates Authority’s Work

This summer, the Easement Authority staff began using new software, called Landscape, to allow the team to easily collect, manage, and report on the county’s natural resource data, including conservation easement information. The Landscape database software streamlines the process of monitoring and reporting on easements, replacing antiquated paper and spreadsheet documentation with state-of-the-art record-management methods. The Easement Authority team deploys the software on iPads as they go into the field to visit properties.

Landscape is being used by more than 230 organizations, including well-known conservation groups, such as the Nature Conservancy and American Farmland Trust, as well as many state and regional land trusts and land-conservation nonprofits.



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(Our most recent donors are included here. Please consider joining this list.

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Summer 2023