

# Clarke County Easement News

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## Former Planning Leader Anne Caldwell Honored with 11th Wingate Mackay-Smith Land Conservation Award

*"We've got to live here," Caldwell said after researching Clarke County's comprehensive plan*

When Anne Caldwell and her husband decided to leave Connecticut – someone two doors down had illegally rehabbed a building into apartments ("I got really cranky," she recalls) – she began searching for a place to settle in the MidAtlantic area near her aging parents in Virginia.

Her quest led to Clarke County.

"I looked at lots of places," Caldwell says. "Where we lived was very important. I heard about Clarke County, looked it up, and read the comprehensive plan. The county's land-use philosophy and environmental values were critical. I told my husband, 'We've got to live here.'"

Caldwell's devotion to thoughtful land conservation helped shape Clarke County while she and her husband, Peter Elzer, called Clarke home. It's also the reason the Clarke County Conservation Easement Authority honored her with the 11th Wingate Mackay-Smith Land Conservation Award.

"Anne has been truly committed to land conservation for as long as I've known her," says Randy Buckley, chairman of the Easement Authority. "She does her homework, she shares her insights, and she's always been an ambassador for conservation and easements."

While living in Clarke County, Caldwell served from 2002 until 2022 on various boards and commissions, including the Planning Commission, Board of Zoning Appeals, Berryville Area Development Authority, Historic Preservation Commission, and Board of Septic and Well Appeals.

"It's an amazing county and I worked with a wonderful

group of people," she remembers. "So unique. The values of the county and the philosophy about land use permeated everything. The people on the county's boards were representative of the county as a whole. No political issues were brought up that had national significance. Of course, there were different views, but none of that mattered."

In 2023, Caldwell and Elzer retired to Harpswell, Maine, a small town 40 minutes from Portland with about 5,000 residents and 216 miles of coastline.

We were curious: *Why retire to snowy Maine?*

A lifelong dream, Caldwell explains. She'd wanted to live in Maine since her 20s, but not surprisingly the job opportunities aren't robust there. Now, her sister lives there and her parents also did at one point. The charm of the coast, small islands, countless trails, and the sense of community drew her there. And, of course, the open space!

"Do you think I would have retired to a place that doesn't think like Clarke County?" she laughs. "The comprehensive plan for Harpswell is clear about preserving rural space and unique lands. There's a lot of education about outdoor issues. The town has a very active land trust that holds easements and owns significant pieces of land for preservation."

### Life at River View Farm

In 1995, Caldwell and Elzer purchased River View Farm, 85 acres in the eastern part of Clarke County, and moved with their three children. Within two years, they had expanded River View to 120 acres by adding an adjacent land parcel.

In 2001, they placed the farm in conservation easement, held by

the Virginia Outdoors Foundation. (The Clarke County Conservation Easement Authority was established a year later, in 2002.)

"We were incredibly lucky to find our beautiful, beautiful farm," Caldwell reminisces. "It had remarkable privacy." When they purchased it, River View Farm was a horse facility. They eventually rented the space for horse boarding and riding – "a shoestring operation," she smiles.

Caldwell admits the care of the farm eventually was too much, with two-thirds of the acreage open pasture and vast amounts of fencing. "It became clear we couldn't maintain the farm ourselves. We kept restoring portions of it, but we just didn't have the resources to maintain it properly."

So they headed north.

As for conservation easements, Caldwell is a strong advocate: "Easements are one of the few ways to preserve precious pieces of land, especially in Clarke, where the development pressure is enormous." She advises conservation-minded landowners to investigate how an easement may work for

(Continued below)

### Capturing Clarke!:

#### A Photo Contest for Wanderers

Grab your photo equipment and head out to capture the wonder of Clarke County's open spaces!

The Easement Authority is once again hosting a photo contest that celebrates the unique, natural beauty of our county.

In conjunction with the upcoming spring celebration of our *Take a Hike!* campaign, this year we're encouraging photographers to explore areas that showcase our scenic resources. Hike a familiar trail or meander down a newly discovered path! This is a photo contest for our beloved wanderers, who often discover pockets of beauty that others never see.

Renowned *National Geographic* photographer Ken Garrett will return as the judge for this year's competition.

The contest is open to three categories of photographer – amateur, professional, and student – with awards for first, second, and third places in each category. The prizes will be photography gift cards with the values of \$300, \$200, and \$100, respectively.

#### More details about the contest:

- Contest entries are due no later than June 30, 2025.
- Please share your photos taken no earlier than January 1, 2024. (That's not a typo – we'd like to see photos depicting all the seasons, so we're stretching eligible photos back to 2024).
- Photos must have been taken in Clarke County, Virginia.
- Photos will be judged on content, composition, and creativity.
- Photographers may submit as many as five high-resolution photos electronically (preferred) or in print form.
- All community members are eligible to participate.

Find more information, including entry specifications, online at [www.clarkelandconservation.org](http://www.clarkelandconservation.org). Questions? Contact Lorien Lemmon at 540-955-5134 or email [llemmon@clarkecounty.gov](mailto:llemmon@clarkecounty.gov). Send labeled photos to [clarkephotocontest@gmail.com](mailto:clarkephotocontest@gmail.com).



"Bluebird Congress," Liam McGranaghan, 2015 photo contest winner.



Ken Garrett, *National Geographic* photographer, will judge the contest

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

### Conservation Award (Continued from above)

them and "don't be put off by the erroneous information that circulates about easements."

Caldwell plans to return to Clarke County and officially receive her award at the Conservation Easement Authority's annual reception in the fall.

*The Wingate Mackay-Smith Clarke County Land Conservation Award is presented annually to individuals, groups, or organizations that have made significant contributions to the preservation and protection of open spaces in Clarke County.*

*Other award recipients have been Holy Cross Abbey; sliding scale zoning pioneers G. Robert Lee, Margaret Maizel, Robert Mitchell, and A.R. "Pete" Dunning; Melvin Kohn; Joe and Denise Sipe; J. Michael Hobert; the American Battlefield Trust and Shenandoah University at Cool Spring Battlefield; Charles "Chuck" Johnston; Prudence Anderson; and Tupper and Wendy Dorsey.*

### Upcoming outdoor events nearby!

- **Saturday, April 5** - Bluebell Festival at Andy Guest Jr. Shenandoah River State Park, 10:00 am - 4:00 pm, Bentonville. Ah, Virginia bluebells ... plus music, food, and nature walks! [www.dcr.virginia.gov/state-parks](http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/state-parks)
- **Saturday, April 12** – Backwoods Survival for Hunters and Hikers, Sky Meadows State Park, 11:00 am – 4:00 pm, Delaplane. Outdoor adventure depends on good planning and preparation. [www.dwr.virginia.gov/events/](http://www.dwr.virginia.gov/events/)
- **Tuesday, April 22** – Earth Day Park Cleanup, 4-6:00 pm at Chet Hobert Park, Berryville. Mulch, weed, pick up debris. Bring gloves and a rake. A worthy cause! [www.clarkecounty.gov/government/parks-recreation](http://www.clarkecounty.gov/government/parks-recreation)

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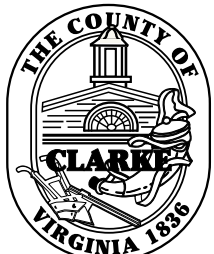
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**Clarke County Conservation Easement Authority**

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Winter 2025

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