

OCHCF SPRING EVENT ~ MAY 17 & 18, 2024

The OCH Conservation Foundation and Smithsonian's Virginia Working Landscapes (VWL) had a tremendously successful Spring Event on Friday, May 17th and Sunday, May 18th.

On Friday evening, Jacqueline B. Mars hosted the OCHCF and VWL Cocktail Reception and Landowner Panel Discussion at her lovely Meredyth Pavilion. The theme of the evening was "Care and Share," as conservation spreads through conversation from neighbor to neighbor.

A panel of VWL network landowners and leaders in stewardship shared their conversation practices and advice with attendees.



Many landowners in the OCHCF Territory attended the panel and learned about conservation practices they might implement on their own properties.

The panelists included Landon Butler of Gap Run, speaking about native tree preservation and restoration, Beatrice von Gontard of Oxbow Farm, addressing bird-friendly farming practices, Sue Puleo of Faire Meddow, sharing her experiences with native plant conservation and meadow

creation, and Brian Gratwicke of Dogwood discussing wetland and pond management for amphibian conservation.

<p>Beatrice von Gontard</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Bird-friendly Haying and Grazing- Nest Boxes for Birds- Bee-friendly Cattle Grazing- Native Meadow Restoration- Pollinator Gardens- Cover Crops- Prescribed Burns (forest and meadow) 	<p>Brian Gratwicke</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Vernal Pools- Wetland Restoration- Nest Boxes for Birds- Wildlife-friendly Ponds- Native Plant Gardens- Native Meadow 	<p>Sue Puleo</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Invasive Species Management- Nest Boxes for Birds- Winter Sowing of Native Seeds- Meadow Restoration- Native Tree Conservation 	<p>Landon Butler</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Native Tree Conservation and Restoration- Native Meadow Restoration- Nest Boxes for Birds- Rotational Cattle Grazing- Native Plant Gardens- Prescribed Burning 
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Chris Rademacher, VWL's biodiversity technician sponsored by OCHCF, explained, "It can be daunting to apply conservation management practices to your landscape. Hearing about the successes and struggles from our neighbors, with properties of all different sizes, can be the motivating factor to try something new. What I love dearly about VWL's collaboration with OCHCF is the ability to share what we care about on properties connected to each other. We're helping whole neighborhoods embrace conservation, making that much more of an impact!"



VWL's Chris Rademacher, whose position is sponsored by OCHCF, chatting with attendees from the event. The reception allowed attendees to chat with the panelists and VWL staff.

The evening fostered community and collaboration, showing how sharing knowledge can inspire others to take action in preserving our natural landscapes.

The Spring event continued Sunday, May 19th, with a highly successful guided tour at Jeanne and Michael Morency's stunning Broad Hollow Farm. Whether choosing to explore on foot, horseback, or by gator, attendees were treated to an immersive experience led by VWL biologists and local conservation professionals, who shared their expertise on various conservation practices in action. Each group explored established native meadows, turtle habitats, riparian management through Beaver Dam Analogs, key native bird habitats and nesting boxes, and bird banding demonstrations.



Attendees rotated from station to station to learn about conservation practices and see them in action. The day was chalk full of caring, sharing, and making new connections.

Christopher Rademacher observed, "It's one thing to talk about conservation practices but to be immersed in a beautiful landscape and see the beauty of biodiversity is truly inspiring. One of my favorite aspects of this position is getting to part the "curtain of grass" and share how much life these grasslands foster"

Following the guided exploration, participants gathered for a casual picnic, where they shared their experiences, engaged with native plant and wildlife experts, and enjoyed freshly brewed bird friendly coffees from around the world! The event was not only educational but brought together neighbors and friends, old and new, while encouraging attendees to discover ways to enhance biodiversity on their land.



The event concluded with time to mingle, enjoy snacks, and participate in a bird friendly coffee tasting!