

# SCENIC VIRGINIA *OVERVIEW - NOVEMBER 2019*

Greetings! We're delighted to share the following 2019 highlights with you. Your support makes our work possible, and we hope you're as proud of this year's accomplishments as we are. Read on!



[L-R] Executive Director Leighton Powell; President Lisa Dickinson Mountcastle; Trustee Richard G. Gibbons, FASLA; Governor Linwood Holton; Jinks Holton; and Lynn Crump, who oversees Scenic Resources at DCR.

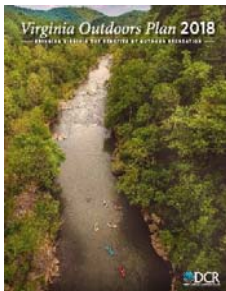
**2019 General Assembly Session.** We sponsored a successful and bipartisan Joint Resolution celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the Virginia State Scenic Rivers program occurring in 2020. Please join us in thanking Delegates Danny Marshall, Les Adams, Terry Austin, Betsy Carr, James Edmunds, Matt Fariss, and Kaye Kory, and Senators Ben Chafin, Creigh Deeds, and Frank Ruff for carrying this legislation. – In September, it was Scenic Virginia's honor to present a framed copy of HJ 1132 to former Governor Linwood Holton, who championed the program's creation during his Administration.



2019 Virginia Vistas Photo Contest Best in Show: Sunrise at Harrison Lake by Barbara Houston

**2019 Virginia Vistas Photo Contest.** On April 1, we kicked off our **twelfth** annual photo competition. When the contest closed on May 22, we had received more than 1,000 photo entries – our most ever. Please join us in thanking the hundreds of photographers from Virginia and beyond who shared their glorious images of our Commonwealth's scenic beauty with us.

In July the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* announced our 2019 Winners in a full-color cover feature in their Sunday Culture section and online in a special photo gallery that also included our Honorable Mention winners. - Notecard sets of the Winners are available for purchase (\$20/set of 10 + \$5/S&H), and we remind you that they make excellent holiday gifts! If you'd like to place an order or learn more information, contact us at [email@scenicvirginia.org](mailto:email@scenicvirginia.org) or (804) 643-VIEW (8439).



**Virginia Outdoors Plan.** In May, the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation convened the first meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) working on the 2023 edition of the VOP -- the Commonwealth's guidebook for outdoor recreation and the only state document that references scenic resources. Scenic Virginia Trustee Dick Gibbons and Executive Director Leighton Powell are pleased to serve on the TAC, as they did for the 2018 and 2013 editions. (Let's hear it for scenic resources!)



Kathryn R. Robbins

**New Program & Outreach Coordinator.** In late May, we welcomed Kathryn R. Robbins as our new Program & Outreach Coordinator. Kathryn is a 2019 graduate of UVA with a B.S. with High Honors in Environmental Sciences and a B.A. in Anthropology. Because of Kathryn, Scenic Virginia now posts a new -- and gorgeous -- Virginia Vistas photo every day on Facebook and Twitter and also features Virginia photographers' work on Instagram. If you haven't already, please take a look and 'like' us on all three platforms.

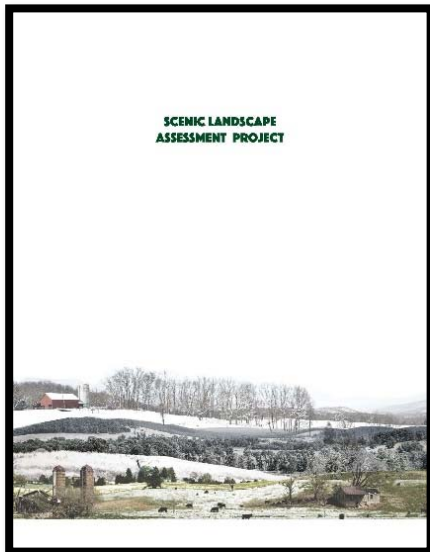


[L-R: Lord Watson, past Richmonds Medal honoree Sir David Attenborough, and Kim Wilkie

**Historic Rivers Conference & Richmonds Medal Event.** In June, a delegation of Scenic Virginia supporters and James River volunteers traveled to Richmond upon Thames, England to attend the Historic Rivers Conference. Convened by our friends at the Thames Landscape, the conference focused on strengthening the partnership between the two Richmonds who share an iconic river view. – TLS celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with the presentation of The Richmonds Medal to the program's founder, The Lord Watson of Richmond, and world renowned landscape designer Kim Wilkie, who created a 100-Year Plan for the Thames for TLS.

## Others Share Our View (of the Virginia Viewshed Project, that is)!

We recently received the **incredible** news that a funder (anonymous for now) has awarded Scenic Virginia a **\$50,000 challenge grant** toward our Virginia Viewshed Register project, which is the first of its kind in the U.S. This generous funding arrives at the perfect time, given the significant progress we made in 2019. Keep reading below to learn what we accomplished this year.



**Virginia Tech Report.** In 2018, Dr. Patrick Miller, Chair of the Landscape Architecture Program at Virginia Tech, approached us to express interest in participating in our Viewshed Project. We said “Yes!” and asked Dr. Miller to demonstrate that scenic beauty is not subjective. He embarked on an extensive, year-long literature review of existing scenic resource research, and his resulting Report makes the case that the scenic elements in a viewshed can be quantified in a scientific manner. As part of his Report, Patrick also developed draft processes for nominating, evaluating, and designating scenic landscapes to a Statewide Viewshed Register.

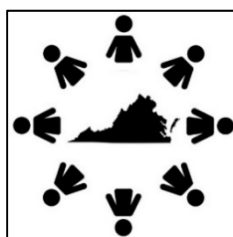
**Meeting with Viewshed Experts.** In August, Scenic Virginia reconvened its distinguished panel of experts (and added four new ones) to review, discuss, and ultimately vet the methodology and results cited in Dr. Miller’s Report and to provide feedback on the draft Viewshed Register processes. The approval from these scenic resource professionals now gives us the go-ahead to proceed with our next phase: Outreach to citizens in every locality to help them identify and recognize the scenic places they love best.



*Visual Resource Stewardship Conference*

**Presentations at State, National, and International Conferences.** Executive Director Leighton Powell presented the project at the Environment Virginia Conference at VMI in March and the Virginia Land Conservation & Greenways Conference in Richmond in April. In June, Leighton spoke about the project at the “Views Matter!” Symposium held at the Royal Botanical Gardens, Kew in England. In late October, Leighton, Patrick Miller, and Advisory Board member Lynn Crump presented the Virginia Viewshed Register Project at the national Visual Resource Stewardship Conference held at Argonne National Laboratory near Chicago.

What is most thrilling is that participants at each conference responded with great enthusiasm for the Viewshed Project concept. This tells us that our program is resonating and that we have something new and special to offer.



*Outreach to Virginians*

**Next Steps.** The following items are in the works:

- Match the \$50,000 challenge grant funding.
- Develop a Virginia ViewFinders app to allow outdoor enthusiasts to easily snap and upload their images of scenic beauty.
- Convene the Virginia organizations and agencies working on scenic resources to update them on our progress and solicit their input.
- Meet with Governor Ralph Northam and Secretary of Natural Resources Matt Strickler to review the Virginia Tech Report demonstrating that scenic beauty is not subjective, describe the Virginia Viewshed Register, and demonstrate how it complements the Governor’s data-driven ConserveVirginia land preservation program.
- Develop a marketing and communications plan for outreach to localities to help citizens identify the scenic places they consider most special. Our hope is that all Scenic Virginia supporters will turn out to assist us when we come to your town.

**In Conclusion.** We hope you agree that we’ve had a great year. Your support makes our work possible, and we are eternally grateful to you for your passion, dedication, good wishes, and generous funding. Thank you! Thank you!