

Partnership protects forest along tributary

From staff reports

The Enviva Forest Conservation Fund, Ducks Unlimited and the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation have partnered to protect sensitive forestland along the Nottoway River, a tributary of the Chowan River.

The Enviva Forest Conservation Fund this week announced the closing of its first easement purchase from the 2016 grant cycle to the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation. The approximately 220-acre easement – known as the Crowder and White tract – is the first of two in Southampton, Va., that will be secured with financial assistance from the Fund. When the second easement is completed, a total of 385 acres of floodplain forest dominated by mature cypress-tupelo will be protected.

The land protected through this first award is across the river from another parcel already protected by DCR. Together, the two form "The Narrows," an important transit point for river herring, shad and alewife – fish species that rely on floodplain forest for spawning and nursery habitat. The Narrows will now

be permanently protected. The swamps also provide habitat for a multitude of waterfowl, water birds, mammals, amphibians, reptiles and other fish.

"The permanent protection of this property with a conservation easement is cause for celebration," said Carlton Owen, president and chief executive officer of the U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities which administers the Fund. "Not only is it a valuable property for fish, wildlife and recreation, it is also the first transaction to be completed of the four Enviva Forest Conservation Fund awards made in 2016. It's the first of many more to come."

The Fund awarded \$500,000 in 2016 to help conserve more than 2,000 acres of environmentally sensitive forests. In addition to DCR, 2016 grant recipients included the Virginia and North Carolina chapters of The Nature Conservancy and the Triangle Land Conservancy of North Carolina.

The Crowder and White tract easement was made possible through combined support from the Fund, donated timber value from the owner, and a North American Wetlands

Conservation Act grant secured by Ducks Unlimited and supported by several partners, including the Atlantic Coast Joint Venture, the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Virginia Outdoors Foundation. To learn more about the grant and to view a map of the project tract, visit the Enviva Forest Conservation Fund's website.

"Conversion to other uses is one of the greatest threats to Virginia forests," said Clyde Cristman, director of the Virginia DCR. "Our partnership with the Enviva Forest Conservation Fund and Ducks Unlimited builds on the Cypress Bridge Natural Area Preserve, allowing us to conserve another key property along the Nottoway River and protect more ecologic, recreational and scenic resources, helping to build a legacy for future generations in southeast Virginia."

The conservation easement blends forest land reclamation with conservation of cypress/tupelo swamp forest, one of four specific types of sensitive bottomland forest ecosystems the Fund has targeted for special conservation.

The terms of the conser-

vation easement will eliminate all timber harvesting in the wetlands, as well as any subdivision and development rights. The landowner, a Southampton County local who made this property available and provided a significant contribution toward the easement in the form of donated timber value in a desire to see this section of the Nottoway River permanently protected, will continue to hold hunting and fishing privileges. As the easement holder, Virginia DCR will conduct annual monitoring visits to document easement conditions.

"Conservation easements are irreplaceable in meeting the needs of landowners who wish to protect valuable natural resources," said Ducks Unlimited conservation lands coordinator Justin Park. "Ducks Unlimited is proud to work with grant partners, VA DCR, private landowners, and the Enviva Forest Conservation Fund to help landowners protect sensitive bottomlands while continuing to enjoy the area for recreation. Such easements provide the best of both worlds – protection of broad benefits to society at large while also affording rights to the landowner." "Enviva is very pleased

to announce the permanent protection made possible by our very first project under the Enviva Forest Conservation Fund – the Virginia DCR's Lower Nottoway River Project," said Jennifer C. Jenkins, Ph.D., vice president and chief sustainability officer at Enviva. "We treasure the forests and communities where we work, and we are absolutely delighted to be a part of this important project."

The Fund is a \$5-million, 10-year program established by Enviva Holdings, LP and administered by the U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities. It is designed to protect tens of thousands of acres of bottomland forests in northeast North Carolina and southeast Virginia. For more information on the Enviva Forest Conservation Fund visit www.envivaforestfund.org. Read more about the Crowder White project at the Voices of Enviva blog.

For 2017, up to \$500,000 is available to not-for-profit organizations; government agencies and tribes for the second year of Fund grants to protect bottomland hardwood and other wetland forests in 35 North Carolina and Virginia counties that include approximately six million acres of forests of

all types. The RFP and additional materials are available on the Endowment's website and at <http://envivaforestfund.org/matching-fund-grants/>.

The U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities is a not-for-profit corporation established in 2006 at the request of the governments of the United States and Canada. The Endowment works collaboratively with partners in the public and private sectors to advance systemic, transformative and sustainable change for the health and vitality of the nation's working forests and forest-reliant communities.

Enviva Holdings LP is the world's largest producer of wood pellets, a renewable and sustainable energy source used to generate electricity and heat. Through its subsidiaries, Enviva Holdings LP owns and operates plants in the southeastern United States that produce nearly 3 million metric tons of wood pellets annually. The company exports pellets primarily to power plants in the United Kingdom and Europe that previously were fueled by coal, enabling them to reduce their lifetime carbon footprint by about 80 percent.

SURVEY

Continued from 1A

help existing businesses expand.

There are pockets of the 10-county Albemarle Commission region that have no Internet service at all and some areas with only very slow service.

Davison found that out when she and her family moved to off New Hope Road after she took the Commission post.

There was no Internet service to that area, but given her job and her husband's job, they simply had to have Internet service at home.

They opted for satellite service at a cost of \$200 a month. Davison knows that's far more than some people could afford, but they had no choice.

"After that our home was 'Homework Central,'" she joked. "It wasn't the best service but at least it was reliable."

There are other ways that high speed Internet can be a game changer.

High-speed Internet services would open up telemedicine to more area residents, Davison said. It would create business opportunities as well.

"They are able to have that type of service in Europe, why not here," she asked.

"It would open up having more home-based businesses" she said. "You don't always need a manufacturing plant to have good jobs."

The survey will find out what level of services customers actually have – not what Internet companies just say they have to offer.

In 2015 the FCC raised the download standards for broadband to 25 megabits per second from 4 Mbps. Upload standards to be considered broadband were raised from 1 Mbps to 3 Mbps.

Many Internet services advertise their have speeds "up to" a certain number but don't make it clear what the

lower end of the service will be. The crowdfiber service includes an actual speed test that becomes part of the survey.

Armed with that hard data, Davison said the Commission could approach Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to find ways to improve coverage and speed and bring services to more people.

"Our broadband provider partners need concrete data on demand for services in order to help demonstrate a return on investment, especially in our more sparsely populated areas."

In a perfect world everybody could get low-cost high-speed fiber optic cable delivered to his or her door, no matter how rural the area is.

Davison accepts that may not be possible.

While fiber may be the ultimate super-fast thing for Internet users, Davison said the reality is in rural areas that may not happen, and if it does, it may come at a cost some residents can't afford.

The next best thing is using fixed asset wireless. That involves putting transmitters on towers or tall structures that can bounce signals back and forth.

BIZ

Continued from 1A

including a nonprofit roundtable, job fair at the Edenton-Chowan Campus of College of the Albemarle, recognition as a certified work-ready community, Chamber golf tournament, Chamber cookout in the 1767 Chowan County Courthouse, the Chamber discount card and the Christmas parade.

Twenty-two new business, individuals and organizations joined the Chamber in 2016, she said.

"I have enjoyed serving as Chamber president this year," Turner said.

Turner thanked Win Dale, director of the Chamber, for his help throughout the year.

"Win is very dedicated," Turner said. "I am extremely honored to have served as president," Turner said in closing.

Brian Harvill, the Chamber's 2017 president, presented the President's Plaque to Turner and accepted the gavel for this year. He thanked the community for its support during the past year.

Chamber officials said there is much to look forward to this year including progress on the Hotel Hinton restoration, relocation of Standard Medical Acceptance to Edenton, development of a retirement community, opening of Edenton Antiques, development of upstairs apartments in the downtown district, continued grocery store recruitment, and development of new energy projects.

The Rev. Chris Aydtlett, pastor of Edenton United Methodist Church, offered the invocation, thanking God for the community.

CENTER

Continued from 1A

that repairs would be covered by insurance. What is slowing down the repair process is that the county still doesn't know exactly how much money the county is going to get from the insurance carrier to cover the repairs.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency might help if insurance doesn't cover all the work, Howard said, but he added he expects insurance will cover the entire cost of the repairs.

But Howard said he didn't want to sign any agreement with the insurance company until he was sure what the company was offering would be enough to cover the cost of necessary repairs.

Many counties in the eastern part of the state were flooded, Howard said, "so it's just taking time" to resolve the matter with the insurance company.

Howard said he has been talking to the insurance company at least every other week and expects to get a proof of loss statement from the company this week or next.

Patti Kersey said it appeared to be somewhat like advocating for one's own home repairs in discussions with an insurance company.

"We just have to be persistent," Kersey said.

"Yes, ma'am," Howard agreed.

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FOOTBALL

Continued from 1A

and coaches of the 2016 2A Eastern Regional Champions Aces football team were on hand for the occasion.

Jackson thanked the community for its support of the team.

"This team was quite blessed by the support we received from the community," Jackson said.

GAY

Continued from 1A

investigation by the Chowan County Sheriff's Office and the N.C. State Bureau of Investigation. Investigators approached Gay in the parking lot at the Hampton Inn in Edenton and found cocaine on his person, McArthur said.

Officers had observed

Gay driving to the location and noticed a strong odor of alcohol when they approached him, McArthur said. Officers administered a breath analysis test and charged him with DWI, McArthur said.

McArthur said investigators acted on information that Gay had drugs in his possession. In addition, Gay had been observed buying narcotics

during the course of the investigation, McArthur said.

Contacted Thursday, Gay denied having drugs in his possession at the time of his arrest.

"I was set up," Gay said. "That's all I have to say about it is that I was set up."

Asked who had set him up, he said he was set up "by a friend of mine."

CORRECTION

An item in last week's Crimewatch incorrectly stated the charges against Nancy Lynn Turner of Rocky Hock Road. Turner was charged with failing to yield on a left turn and with driving while license revoked, according to the Vance County Sheriff's Office.

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