

NEWS

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY TEAMS WITH THE ENVIVA FOREST CONSERVATION FUND TO SECURE ECOLOGICALLY-IMPORTANT EASEMENT IN VIRGINIA

U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities, Greenville, SC
For IMMEDIATE RELEASE (January 4, 2018)

Greenville, S.C. – The headwaters of Otterdam Swamp and Three Creek are closer to long-term protection via a working forest conservation easement on forestlands in the region. The easement is made possible through a partnership between the Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOF) and the Enviva Forest Conservation Fund. Permanent protection of the property—totaling 1,079 acres—includes mature cypress/tupelo forest and will contribute to the habitat of 29 species of plants and animals and protect a major tributary of the Nottoway River and the Three Creek Stream Conservation Unit.

The property is currently held by Family Tree Properties, LLC. Steve Wagner, managing member of Family Tree Properties, stated “This is a unique tract rich in lowland timber and diverse aquatic species. Learning there is a colony of a rare plant that exists nowhere else in Virginia made this an easy decision. We are thrilled to protect all of it for future generations.” His partner, Adrian Holler, shared “It has been great to work with the Virginia Department of Forestry and we want to thank Enviva for their generous financial assistance without which this conservation easement would not have been possible.”

“Finding opportunities that can support working forests and protect highly valued conservation land is dependent on the willingness of private landowners to recognize the connection between good stewardship practices and sound asset management,” said Carlton Owen, President and CEO of the U. S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities, which administers the Enviva Forest Conservation Fund. “We find that most landowners are good stewards of their properties and then in cases like this one, they fall into the ‘great stewards’ category.”

The property totals 1,079 acres including areas identified by the National Wetlands Inventory and more than 500 acres of lowland forested wetland. Also embedded within this property is a unique, 21-acre site that supports the only known Virginia occurrence of the Savannah panic-grass (*Phanopyrum gymnicarpon*). This area also has documented occurrences of the Roanoke logperch (*Percina rex*) and Dwarf wedgemussel (*Alasmidonta heterodon*). Both aquatic species are listed as endangered on state and federal lists. Water quality is essential to functioning ecosystems and surrounding communities. This easement will ensure maintenance of the property’s flood storage capacity contributing to the maintenance of clean water on-site and downstream.

“This property is special,” says Michael Santucci, Forestland Conservation Manager at VDOF. “The richness of conservation values is exceptional. It is rare that an easement contains this distinct combination of water quality, distinctive flora and habitats, unique forest communities and working forestland. By limiting the amount of future development that can take place on the property, the easement will protect these

ecological and economic values in perpetuity. We are very grateful to the landowners for donating a large portion of the easement and to Enviva for their contributions making this project possible.”

The Enviva Forest Conservation Fund was launched in December of 2015 by Enviva, the world’s largest producers of wood pellets. Through the first two years of this planned 10-year partnership, seven projects have been funded, committing \$1 million. When these projects are completed, an estimated 10,500 acres of sensitive wetland forest and other habitats will have been protected.

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About the Enviva Forest Conservation Fund

The Enviva Forest Conservation Fund is a \$5 million, 10-year program established by Enviva Holdings, LP in December 2015 to permanently protect environmentally sensitive bottomland and wetland forests. Administered by the U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities, the Fund awards grants annually to nonprofit organizations and government agencies for conservation projects in North Carolina and Virginia. For more information on the Enviva Forest Conservation Fund visit <http://envivaforestfund.org/>

About The Virginia Department of Forestry

The Virginia Department of Forestry (VDof) is an agency of the Commonwealth of Virginia charged with protecting and conserving the forests within the Commonwealth. Much of their conservation occurs within the confines of Virginia’s coastal waters and the coastal plain of the state. In addition to the newly acquired Three Creek easement, VDof holds 2 working forest conservation easements (537 ac) in Sussex County, 39 easements (~14,000 ac) in Virginia’s coastal plain, and a total of 168 easements (~49,200 ac) across the Commonwealth of Virginia.

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The **U.S. Endowment for Forestry and Communities** (the Endowment) is a not-for-profit public charity working 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 – www.usendowment.org