



Dear Willowsford Residents –

It's been an unprecedented year.

Throughout it all, Willowsford's greenspaces, nature trails and community farm offered much-needed room to safely engage in outdoor recreation, education programs and volunteer opportunities, while inviting you to relax, play, work and learn (and enjoy home-delivered farm-fresh food).

Stepping outside in the spacious outdoors, especially amid a worldwide pandemic, is part of what makes living at Willowsford unique and inspiring.

As in previous years, we take this opportunity to report on the Conservancy's work and plans for the coming year.

With many of you receiving this letter for the first time as new Willowsford residents, it is important to reflect on the Conservancy's purpose so all residents share a common understanding of our work. The mission of the Conservancy is to **"protect, maintain, and promote the viable, long-term use of the land, integrating farming, recreation, conservation and education to enhance the quality of life for the residents of Willowsford."**

In short, the Conservancy provides the open space that makes up (most of) the natural setting for your home, for outdoor recreation, nature exploration, and growing healthy, organic food. In total, the Conservancy manages 2,200 acres of natural open space and nearly 40 miles of trails exclusively for Willowsford families.

Here are five things we'd like you to know as this year comes to a close and 2021 approaches:

1.) CONSERVANCY ACTIVITIES DURING COVID-19

With appropriate safety measures in place, the Conservancy and Farm team continued our work, creatively exploring new ways of assuring trails were safe and well-maintained; work projects completed on time; fields and livestock tended; CSA boxes packed and delivered; and programs implemented "without a hitch." As families enjoyed the Conservancy trails and amenities, our team kept up with a record number of work orders, requests, and resident communications.

We loved hearing from so many residents and appreciate your positive feedback on the condition of the trails, the quality of the farm food, wildlife sightings, firewood deliveries, and camping experiences. In fact, we had a record demand for CSA shares, venue rentals and firewood deliveries and were thrilled to support the community, hoping to make your life a bit brighter and more enjoyable.

2.) THE 2021 BUDGET AND CONSERVANCY ASSESSMENT

In light of COVID's impact on many families, the 2021 Conservancy assessment will remain at \$40/month, which continues to be collected quarterly by the HOA along with your HOA assessment. We are able to maintain the assessment at a low level through cost control, revenue opportunities, and growth in the community. The approved 2021 Conservancy budget is available online at www.willowsfordconservancy.org in the "About/Document Center" section.

3.) WHAT THE ASSESSMENT SUPPORTS

The assessment helps fund our mission for you. Here are a few examples of how the assessment is invested:

CONSERVATION

- Manage forests, wetlands, grasslands and farmland with sustainable practices. More than 50% of Willowsford's total land is entrusted to the Conservancy and will remain undeveloped.
- Support beneficial wildlife and native plants, and control invasive and "nuisance" wildlife and plants.
- Manage and remove hazard trees near homes and trails, which is an increasing expense as more trees decline due to the expected impact of development, and pest and disease pressure.
- Restore native habitat by planting trees, installing grasslands, repairing ponds and wetlands.
- Inspect and remedy homeowner open space intrusions on Conservancy land.

RECREATION

- Maintain, repair and program 40 miles of nature trails for Willowsford residents. In comparison, Loudoun County maintains 87 miles of trails for 400,000+ residents. Conservancy

**Willowsford Conservancy
2021 Overview**

The mission of the Conservancy is to "protect, maintain, and promote the viable, long-term use of the land, integrating farming, recreation, conservation and education to enhance the quality of life for the residents of Willowsford."

2200 acres

\$40/month assessment per home

4 mission areas

FARMING CONSERVATION

RECREATION EDUCATION

STAY CONNECTED WITH THE CONSERVANCY

EMAIL: INFO@WILLOWSFORDCONSERVANCY.ORG

WEBSITE: WWW.WILLOWSFORDCONSERVANCY.ORG

Willowsford CONSERVANCY

WILLOWSFORD FARM 2011

The infographic is a vertical collage. At the top is a photo of a wooden signpost with a house icon and the letters 'B U R U'. Below this is a quote about the mission. The middle section features three circular icons: a tree for '2200 acres', a dollar sign for '\$40/month assessment per home', and the number '4' for '4 mission areas'. A white arrow points from the '4' icon to a photo of a wooden deck overlooking a pond. On the deck, four icons represent the mission areas: a seedling for 'FARMING', a plant in hands for 'CONSERVATION', a hiker for 'RECREATION', and an open book for 'EDUCATION'. The bottom section is a dark background with the text 'STAY CONNECTED WITH THE CONSERVANCY' and icons for an envelope (EMAIL) and a globe (WEBSITE), with their respective contact information. At the very bottom are the logos for 'Willowsford CONSERVANCY' and 'WILLOWSFORD FARM 2011'.

trails are maintained in-house for quality control, quick response time and cost effectiveness.

- Provide you with outdoor recreation options, including trail running, walking, mountain biking, camping, recreational archery and nature exploration. This year, campsites and outdoor venues were popular options for mini getaways, small family gatherings and celebrations.

EDUCATION

- Despite COVID-19, the Conservancy offered over 20 programs serving approximately 700 individuals, including nature play classes, lectures, hands-on workshops and more.

FARMING

- The Conservancy operates Willowsford Farm, which creates a unique “agrihood” where viable agriculture provides you with fresh, local food, and where healthy people and healthy land co-exist. In 2020, the Farm supported families with home-delivered fresh, organic produce, partner products and flowers. More than 400 vegetable CSA shares were sold in addition to 70 meat shares, 72 milk shares, 200 egg shares, and 74 flower shares.
- More than 1,200 families are now part of Farmstand Online, our growing digital retail platform, to order products for home delivery. This has been a significant development this year, especially compared with the physical Farm Stand in The Grange. For nearly 10 years, it has served as an iconic location in our community -- a place to gather, meet neighbors, meet the farm team, and purchase goods. The previous model of placing dozens of carrots, tomatoes and other items out for purchase multiple days a week was often a hit or miss proposition with no consistent predictability of sales. The Farm Stand never opened this year due to COVID-19, except for CSA share pickups. This will continue in 2021 as the financial viability of Farmstand Online surpasses staffing the physical Farm Stand. Farmstand Online provides you with the ability to order, customize and choose exactly what you want days in advance, therefore providing more predictability, less overhead, and less waste.

4.) CONSERVANCY BOARD AND STRATEGIC PLANNING

As the Willowsford community nears completion and the Founder Control Period ends in 2021, a Conservancy board election will provide opportunity for additional resident participation. Currently, three Willowsford residents serve on the seven-member board. We will reach out in early 2021 with more information. At the same time, a strategic planning/visioning process will begin to help us all envision the next chapter of the Conservancy, including topics such as the future of the Farm Stand space in The Grange

5.) LOOKING AHEAD TO 2021

In addition to the day-to-day work of managing and maintaining more than 2,200 acres of open space with nature trails, outdoor venues and extensive infrastructure, wildlife, and habitat, plans for 2021 include:

- Phase 1 of trail accessibility improvements. We plan to invest about \$7,000 in materials and 12 days of labor in making the Pinewoods Loop Trail more accessible for individuals with wheelchairs, strollers, and mobility challenges of any kind. Phase II in 2022 will add interpretive and educational options so users of all abilities can experience nature up close. We will explore a similar option in The Grange as feasible based on trail terrain.
- Enhancements and repairs along the Dominion Pipeline Upgrade project in The Grant will be made as needed. A project fee paid by Dominion will cover costs.

- A riparian planting at Allen Farm Pond in The Grant will help capture runoff, improve pond water quality, and enhance the user experience along a future new trail segment in this recent addition to Conservancy open space.
- At the farm, we plan to improve storage capacity for farm produce to meet CSA demand.
- With the Conservancy office moving to The Boat House in 2021, we look forward to being located in the community to serve you even better.
- Administration related projects in 2021 include the transition of the board; a strategic planning effort; an annual financial audit; completion of a Reserve Study; and the opening of the Conservancy office in the Boat House.

We invite you to stay connected with the Conservancy in multiple ways, including:

- Our website at www.willowsfordconservancy.org.
- Our weekly email newsletter, "The Buzz."
- Email us anytime at info@willowsfordconservancy.org to ask questions, provide feedback and receive timely information and assistance.
- Our Land Stewardship YouTube channel <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCefrHhYPK2GF0vjeB5-3yQ> and Farm YouTube channel <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCKyE0zAjEZzzY9SLA6SuLvg>
- And don't forget to download our trails app on your phone when walking, hiking or biking!

A special thank you to the residents who "go above and beyond" and donate their time and expertise, often working alongside our team:

- The Conservancy's resident board members.
- The wildlife monitors who recorded 94 songbird fledglings this year, including 51 bluebirds.
- The team of hunters who help reduce the deer population to protect our forests and also provide significant support with trail and open space repair and maintenance.
- The team of Farm and CSA volunteers who help harvest, prepare and distribute farm products.
- The trail monitors, woodworkers, photographers, Earth Day clean-up teams, and all who supported the Conservancy this year!

The Conservancy's core mission is to "enhance the quality of life for the residents of Willowsford..." Through our work, we hope the Conservancy can support an exceptional quality of life for all residents, facilitating connection with nature, community engagement, and healthy, inspired living.

Thank you and Happy Holidays!



Iris Gestram
Executive Director