

# Virginia's Return on Investment in Land Conservation

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The Trust for Public Land conducted an economic analysis that quantifies and summarizes the significant economic benefits resulting from investments in state parks, natural areas, forests, and working lands. Lands conserved in Virginia provide a host of benefits that have a measurable economic value to the commonwealth and its communities. They include natural goods and services such as water quality protection, air pollution removal, wildlife habitat, and carbon sequestration.

The study found that for every public \$1 invested in land conservation, \$4 in natural goods and services is returned to the Commonwealth of Virginia.

In addition, land conservation funded by Virginia supports key industries that depend on the availability of high-quality protected lands. The commonwealth has also been successful in leveraging funding support from federal, local, private, and nonprofit sources, expanding the impact of the state's investment.

For the full report, visit [www.tpl.org/va-roi-report](http://www.tpl.org/va-roi-report).

## Maximizing the impact of state dollars

The state's investment in land conservation leverages funding from federal, local, private, and nonprofit sources. By attracting support from other sources, the state shares the cost of conservation projects and maximizes its investment.

For example, every \$1 invested in land conservation through the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation between 1999 and 2014 leveraged at least \$2 in additional contributions.

## Generating jobs and growing local economies

From 1999 to 2014, Virginia funded the conservation of 89,400 acres of state parks, natural areas, forests, and working lands, helping to support the outdoor recreation, tourism, forestry, farming, and commercial fishing industries.

- In Virginia, outdoor recreation generates \$13.6 billion in consumer spending, \$923 million in state and local tax revenue, \$3.9 billion in wages and salaries, and creates 138,000 jobs each year.
- In 2014, one-quarter of tourists participated in outdoor activities.
- Visitors to Virginia spend an estimated \$21.5 billion each year.

Agriculture, forestry, and commercial fishing are critical industries, and every locality in Virginia is affected by agriculture or forestry. In fact, 68 of the commonwealth's localities have total employment impacts of 1,000 jobs or more.

## Improving quality of life and enhancing economic development

Open space amenities can enhance a community's quality of life. Places with beautiful scenery, clean air and water, and diverse opportunities for outdoor

recreation attract skilled workers and businesses to Virginia.

In 2015, *Forbes* ranked Virginia the seventh best state for business and careers, based on a host of factors including quality of life, for which it ranked fifth in the nation.

## Promoting fiscal health

Land conservation saves Virginia communities money through avoided costs on expensive infrastructure and other municipal services required by residential property owners (e.g., schools, police, and fire protection).

Open space and working farms and forests in Virginia require on average only \$0.35 in services for every \$1 paid in taxes, while residential lands require an average of \$1.18 in services.

## Improving human health

Access to parks and conserved lands increases the physical activity and the health of residents and workers in Virginia.

- In Virginia, health care costs related to obesity are estimated to reach between \$4.20 billion and \$9.38 billion by 2018.
- In 2013, 25.5 percent of the commonwealth's adults were physically inactive. In 2014, nearly 60 percent of adult women and nearly 70 percent of adult men were overweight or obese.
- Availability and proximity of parks increase the physical activity of adults and children.

Source: The Trust for Public Land, *Virginia's Return on Investment in Land Conservation*, San Francisco, CA: The Trust for Public Land, 2016. For the full report, visit [www.tpl.org/va-roi-report](http://www.tpl.org/va-roi-report).

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The Trust for Public Land creates parks and protects land for people, ensuring healthy, livable communities for generations to come.

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