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**Stratford Hall Permanently Protects 480 Acres in Land Conservation Easement**

*Stratford, Virginia* (October 19, 2026) – In a signing ceremony in front of the Great House on Sunday, October 18, Stratford Hall Historic Preserve and the Virginia Outdoors Foundation (VOF) created a perpetual open-space land conservation easement on approximately 480 acres along the Potomac River. Known as the Kentucky Hills, the acreage will remain part of Stratford Hall Historic Preserve with new permanent protections for the historic landscape and its wildlife. Funding for the easement was secured by Trust for Public Land and includes United States Department of the Navy REPI funding, and grants from the Virginia Land Conservation Fund (VLCF) and the VOF Preservation Trust Fund (PTF).

“Conservation of natural and historic landscapes is integral to the mission of Stratford Hall,” said President & CEO Karen Daly of the non-profit organization, which has protected and interpreted the land since 1929. “We are honored to partner with the Virginia Outdoors Foundation and Trust for Public Land to achieve this lasting legacy which permanently conserves a substantial piece of American history in the Chesapeake Bay area. The Kentucky Hills are connected to the very beginnings of the Northern Neck’s vital history. They were home to indigenous peoples and the early Clifts Plantation as well as an anchor for the economic routes along the Potomac River. Today, they carry the stories of the enslaved laborers who made the Lee family’s influence on the Colonial and Revolutionary eras possible.”

Historically a part of the Lee Family’s colonial plantation, the Kentucky Hills acreage includes paleontological and archaeological resources and has been used for agricultural and forestry purposes in recent years. Future plans for the land include

a publicly-accessible trail system for sharing the region's rich natural and human history with the public.

"When combined with prior VOF easements, Westmoreland State Park, and George Washington Birthplace National Monument to the west, roughly 7,000 contiguous acres and 8 miles of Potomac River shoreline are now permanently protected, said Brett Glymph, Executive Director of the Virginia Outdoors Foundation. This is a remarkable achievement made possible through decades of dedicated partnership."

The VLCF, managed by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, was established in 1999 by the General Assembly and the Governor of Virginia to fund protection of open spaces and parklands, lands of historic or cultural significance, farmlands, forests, and natural areas. In alignment with the VLCF and the VOF, the Navy's REPI program seeks to maintain the rural character of the lands around Naval Support Facility (NSF) Dahlgren in Virginia and Naval Air Station (NAS) Patuxent River in Maryland and the Atlantic Test Ranges (ATR).

"Permanently protecting these 480 acres ensures that the historic landscapes, wildlife habitat, and cultural resources of Kentucky Hills will be conserved for generations to come," said Lynda Frost, Senior Project Manager at Trust for Public Land. "We're proud to have helped bring together the resources needed to protect this special place, including honoring and sharing the stories of the enslaved people whose lives and labor shaped its history."

Thomas Lee purchased the Clifts Plantation in 1717 with the construction of the Great House beginning around 1738. The Lees purchased additional parcels in 1732, including the Kentucky Hills. In 1929, the Robert E. Lee Memorial Foundation (now Stratford Hall) purchased over 1,000 of these acres, adding over 800 acres over the ensuing decades. Stratford Hall has previously placed 1,009 acres of the Historic Preserve in open space easements with VOF, and a historic preservation easement held by Virginia Department of Historic Resources permanently protects the Great House.

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### **About Stratford Hall Historic Preserve**

Stratford Hall Historic Preserve, a National Historic Landmark in Westmoreland County, Virginia, brings together people from around the world to experience 1,800 acres of natural and human history, preserved and presented so that they can all learn from the courageous struggles of their ancestors, taking inspiration both from what they endured and what they accomplished. With the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 2026, now is a significant time to elevate the stories of the people who lived and labored here, including two signers of the Declaration of Independence, revolutionaries, and the Africans and African Americans who shaped the history of Stratford Hall. Learn more at [StratfordHall.org](https://StratfordHall.org).

### **About Trust for Public Land**

Trust for Public Land (TPL) is a national nonprofit that works to connect everyone to the benefits and joys of the outdoors. As a leader in equitable access to the outdoors, TPL works with communities to create parks and protect public land where they are needed most. Since 1972, TPL has protected more than 4 million acres of land, created more than 5,504 parks, trails, schoolyards, and iconic outdoor places, raised \$112 billion in public funding for parks and public lands, and connected nearly 10 million people to the outdoors. To learn more, visit [tpl.org](https://tpl.org).

**[Download press release photos here.](#)** Image credits Terry Cosgrove.



*Brett Glymph, Executive Director of the Virginia Outdoors Foundation (left) and Karen Daly, President & CEO of Stratford Hall (center) in front of the c. 1738 Great House.  
Image credit Terry Cosgrove.*



*Brett Glymph, Executive Director of the Virginia Outdoors Foundation (left) and Karen Daly, President & CEO of Stratford Hall (center) sign the conservation easement for the Kentucky Hills.  
Image credit Terry Cosgrove.*



*Stratford Hall Board Chair Dr. Virginia U. Collier welcoming ceremony guests.  
Image credit Terry Cosgrove.*



*Left to right: Brett Glymph (Virginia Outdoors Foundation Executive Director), Ann Ramsey (Stratford Hall Director for Virginia, Easement Taskforce Chair), Karen Daly (Stratford Hall President & CEO), and Dr. Virginia U. Collier (Stratford Hall Board Chair). Image credit Terry Cosgrove.*



*Aerial view of the Kentucky Hills from the Northwest. Image credit Terry Cosgrove.*



*Aerial view of the Kentucky Hills from the West. Image credit Terry Cosgrove.*



*View of the Kentucky Hills from the Stratford Beach. Image credit Terry Cosgrove.*



*Aerial view of the Kentucky Hills from the South. Image credit Terry Cosgrove.*