INTRODUCTION
Virginia hosts a rich array of historic, archaeological, and cultural resources, arguably more than any other state. From Chief Powhatan’s capital at Werowocomoco and the Jamestown colony, to the battlefields of the Revolutionary War, War of 1812, and Civil War, to under-recognized historic African American schools and cemeteries and sites related to the struggle for Civil Rights, these places tell the story of our Commonwealth and our nation. Protecting these resources is essential to what makes Virginia a great place to live, work, and visit, and supports the Commonwealth’s two largest industries, agriculture and tourism.

BACKGROUND
Virginia has a number of tools that serve to protect our historic, archaeological, and cultural resources. Broadly speaking, these include:

- Land conservation through the Virginia Battlefields Preservation Fund (VBPF) and the Land Preservation Act (LPTC);
- Virginia Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit Program (HRTC); and
- Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, which is administered by the National Park Service.

While these programs are targeted toward the protection of historic resources, they also play a key role in protecting the environment. In the Chesapeake Bay watershed for example, efforts have worked to save tens of thousands of acres of battlefield land, helping to support agriculture, improve water and air quality, reduce erosion, and provide habitat for native plants and wildlife. These programs also help to make our cities and towns more livable and economically vibrant through the open space and encouragement of heritage tourism.

LAND CONSERVATION
Conservation of historic land and buildings is supported by two comprehensive grant programs (VBPF and LPTC). The VBPF is targeted to land donated during the Revolutionary War, War of 1812, and Civil War. Virginia is home to 122 nationally significant Civil War battlefields as identified by the federal government—more than any other state—as well as numerous Revolutionary War and War of 1812 battlefields. Historically, Virginia’s battlefields encompassed one million acres, but when the National Park Service last surveyed those battlefields in 2009, only 576,000 acres of those landscapes remained, and only 13 percent of that remaining acreage was permanently protected by government and private nonprofit organizations.

Since VBPF’s creation in 2006, $75.5 million in grants awarded by the state have helped to preserve 8,542 acres of battlefield land worth more than $90 million, representing a greater than 5-to-1 return on the state’s investment. That includes recent grants to save critical acreage at Yorktown that figured in the October 1781 siege that secured American independence, and at the New Market Heights battlefield where 14 United States Colored Troops earned the Congressional Medal of Honor, the greatest number awarded to African American soldiers for any battle of the Civil War.

As development continues at a breakneck pace, increasing VLCF and VBPF funding is of critical importance to help protect hallowed ground from the Revolutionary War, War of 1812, and Civil War that is being lost at an alarming rate. It is essential that Virginia does not miss out on millions of dollars in federal matching grants for battlefield preservation administered by the National Park Service, Virginia’s American Battlefields Protection Program (see Exploring Dedicated Funding for Conservation, p. 76).

A further, specific opportunity to protect and promote Virginia’s historic and cultural resources for current and future generations exists in Culpeper County. Virginia. At Blandy Station and Cedar Mountain battlefields, dedicated conservationists, utilizing programs including VBPF and VLCF, have preserved approximately 1,400 acres of hallowed ground that, if added to the Virginia State Parks system, would help to increase opportunities for public access and interpretation, while also filling in a gap in a region that at present is not directly served by the state park system.

VIRGINIA HISTORIC REHABILITATION TAX CREDIT (HRTC)
The HRTC provides a dollar-for-dollar reduction in state income tax for the rehabilitation of historic buildings. Since its inception, the HRTC has been a catalytic community redevelopment and economic development tool for urban and rural communities across the Commonwealth—it ensures that a building’s historic architectural features and spaces are preserved, while also creating new opportunities through private investment in the surrounding neighborhood. The program provides an income tax credit of up to 25 percent of identified rehabilitation expenditures, according to a new report from Preservation Virginia.

Virginia’s HRTC can be matched by federal rehabilitation tax credits. According to the National Park Service, 10 percent of the tax credits in the five states nationally for utilization of federal historic tax credits. From 2002 to 2016, Virginia leveraged more than $620 million in federal historic tax credits from 1,296 projects. This project total has had develop total costs of more than $3.7 billion. Despite the success of the HRTC, a number of bills in recent General Assembly sessions have sought to trim, sunset or eliminate this critical preservation tool. Although most of these bills have not been defeated, in light of the success of the HRTC, advocates need to be prepared to respond to suggestions of further caps or cuts to the program by sharing the economic return on the Commonwealth’s investment.

SECTION 106 OF THE NATIONAL HISTORIC PRESERVATION ACT
DHR is responsible for administering Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), which requires federal agencies to take into account the effects of their undertakings—including any funding or permit—on historic resources. DHR is extremely challenged, given current staffing limits, in adequately administering this important law. For instance, only one staff position is dedicated to review of all federally funded transportation projects. Threats posed by utility corridors such as the Mountain Valley Pipeline, the Atlantic Coast Pipeline, and the transmission lines across the James River also have stretched DHR’s capacity. Additionally, the VCRIS (Virginia Cultural Resource Information System) serves as the Department’s online cultural resource inventory.

AFRICAN AMERICAN RESOURCES
For too long, African American schools, cemeteries, and other historic resources have received inadequate protection. In recent years, the General Assembly passed several bills that help identify and fund the preservation of African American cemeteries. The Historical African American Graves and Cemeteries Fund was expanded during the 2018 and 2019 sessions to include additional cemeteries that qualify for this funding. Another bill was passed that establishes an effort to identify and document sites statewide. Additionally, federal funding through the Urban and Neighborhood Conservation Grant Program is administered by DHR to help support projects related to surveying and nominating African American and Native American sites for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

250TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION
With the Semi-anniversary of the American Revolution fast approaching, and with Virginia hosting many of the events that mark that conflict, including battlefields such as Yorktown, it is only fitting that the Commonwealth take a lead role in what is sure to be a significant national celebration. RevolutionaryVA250, a coalition of nonprofit and public history organizations operating under the coordination of the Virginia Museum of History and Culture, has begun planning for the Commonwealth’s commemoration of our nation’s founding. This important anniversary provides an opportunity to showcase diverse stories from across the Commonwealth, as was done so successfully for the sesquicentennial of the American Civil War, when more than 3.4 million people attended local 150th anniversary events across the state.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS
- Secure funding for VLCF and VBPF at $16 million and $2 million, respectively; establish new state park at Brandy Station and Cedar Mountain battlefields.
- Remove the cap of $5 million per project for HRTC projects, and oppose any further efforts to cap or weaken the HRTC program.
- Provide increased funding for DHR’s administration of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act; require that project proponents fully fund DHR’s cost, including the future to ensure historic accuracy and completeness of data in the VCRIS system.
- Provide increased funding for the identification and protection of African American historic resources, and
- Explore state commemorative commission opportunities for the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution.