

Annual Report 2022

Friends of Dragon Run

Friends of Dragon Run is devoted to preserving, protecting, and encouraging the wise use of the Dragon Run watershed, from the headwaters in Essex County to where the Dragon flows into the Piankatank River. We carry out our mission through education, stewardship, and citizen science. We provide opportunities for visitors and students in local schools and home schools to learn about Dragon Run and how the balance between flora and fauna creates this unique ecosystem. Through stewardship we ensure that we care for our properties using conservation best practices.

Friends of Dragon Run set an ambitious agenda for 2022. We expanded our educational opportunities for members and the public by offering more kayak paddle trips, providing trips for students attending local schools, holding general meetings featuring engaging speakers, conducting guided nature hikes, and continuing our popular kayak paddle trips through the spring, summer, and fall. We increased and strengthened our stewardship activities. Throughout 2022, Board members visited each property, discussed uses for each property, and identified maintenance and enhancements for each property.

Friends of Dragon Run
DragonRun.org
P. O. Box 882
Gloucester, VA. 23061



EDUCATION



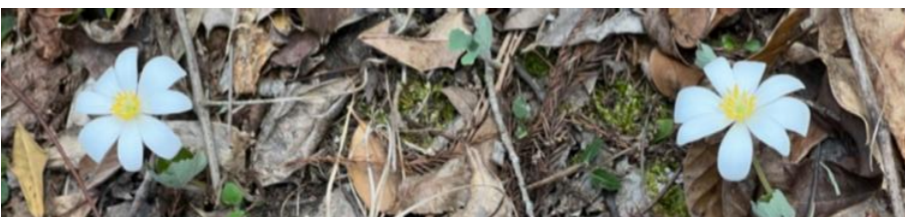
During 2022, we guided nearly 600 guests on paddle trips. We continued our covid precautions by offering round trip paddles, limiting the number of guests to eight, and holding paddle seasons in the spring, summer and fall. In 2022, we initiated a series of nature hikes for members and their guests.

Increased volunteer opportunities have increased the number of **volunteers**. While volunteer recruitment supports stewardship, it also provides educational opportunities for volunteers to learn more about the Dragon's ecosystem and our best practices that support the mission to preserve and protect Dragon Run.



Additional volunteers have assumed responsibility for tasks associated with paddle seasons, property monitoring, trash collection, flora and fauna surveys, and communications. A cadre of experienced volunteers supports our current activities and also creates a pool of competent volunteers who can assume leadership positions as they become available.

Seventy-two young paddlers from public, private, and home schools, and a 4-H group experienced the Dragon in 2022. Introducing students to the Dragon will help them discover why this unique ecosystem is so important and how all of us can preserve and protect it for future generations.





FODR hosted the 2022 Middle Peninsula Master Naturalist Basic Training Class on our Williams and Bulman properties. Trainees were taught to conduct flora and fauna surveys by FODR volunteers (who are certified Master Naturalists, retired scientists and/or teachers). Dr. Shawn Dash, an entomology professor, led an investigation of insects and spiders. The class added to the trainees' knowledge and encouraged them to partner with FODR in protecting the Dragon Run watershed.

STEWARDSHIP

In 2022, the Stewardship Management Committee examined all aspects of FODR properties, developed resource plans and a budget for FODR infrastructure. During the year, FODR Board members and member volunteers visited all ten FODR properties. During the visits, Board members evaluated the condition and future uses of properties, necessary upgrades, and maintenance to meet our goals. Using information gathered from these visits, the Stewardship Committee updated the management plan for each property and presented the updated plans to the Board. In 2022, all plans were approved. These plans will be reviewed annually.

FODR began offering more information about the Dragon's flora, fauna, and ecosystem using a variety of formats. A new feature on our website, "Swamp Sightings," provides photographs and short descriptions of flora and fauna likely to be seen in the Dragon each month. We continued with at least one in-depth article ("Streamside Attractions") about a specific plant or animal in each of our newsletters. Our 2022 quarterly General Meetings featured well-known professionals who gave presentations on fish species found in the Dragon, the lives of vultures, the potential impact of sea level rise in Dragon Run, and searching for traces of Bacon's rebellion in the Dragon.



Continued next page

CITIZEN SCIENCE

Dragon Run offers incredible opportunities for citizen science, such as species identification and monitoring the health of Dragon Run.

Prothonotary warbler nest boxes have been monitored for more than 20 years and the results are submitted for use by Virginia Commonwealth University.

FODR members participating in RiverTrends monitor water quality at the Big Island property. Data collected monthly is uploaded to the Chesapeake Data Explorer database.



STEWARDSHIP *(continued from previous page)*

Flora and fauna surveys were conducted on the Revere, Bulman, and Mascot properties during 2022. We are currently looking for volunteers to assist with these surveys on other properties. FODR's goal is to identify native, non-native, and invasive species on all the remaining properties. Plans will be created to remove non-native and invasive species. All data collected will be uploaded to a repository for biodiversity in systems such as iNaturalist and eBird.

Inspections were conducted by the Virginia Outdoors Foundation which holds conservation easements on six FODR properties. No issues were identified.



OPERATIONS

Although operational support takes place behind the scenes, it is critical to FODR's ability to carry out its mission to preserve and protect the Dragon Run watershed.



A customer relationship management system (CRM) was purchased and implemented and has significantly increased FODR's productivity. The Flipcause CRM consolidated previous excel spreadsheets into a powerful customer/contact database that ensures data is consistent and enables us to create custom lists using specific criteria. The system also adds security for our data and keeps it backed-up.

Flipcause has already reduced expenditures for online event registration and merchandise sales by eliminating FODR credit card processing fees. It also provided a custom-designed website, website hosting, and website maintenance eliminating web-related expenditures and providing an enhanced experience for FODR users. Customized member and paddler data provided by Flipcause has increased membership and revenue.

Adoption of Google Drive has provided a secure and centralized storage location. FODR volunteers can access and edit documents online without having to download documents and email them to other volunteers. The system enables us to designate levels of access depending on an individual's volunteer position. Plus, it provides a back-up for our documents. Use of GMAIL has provided centralized and secure email access and created a standard format for email names used by FODR volunteers.

MEMBERSHIP

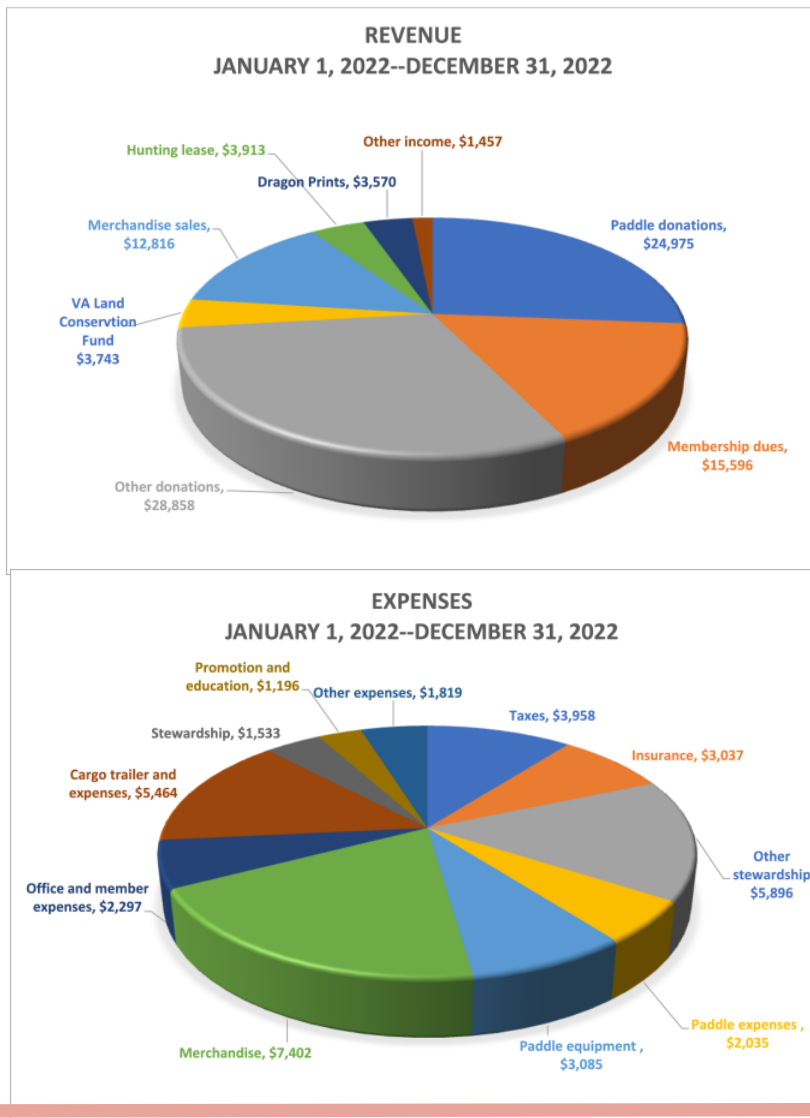
Welcome Life Members

Anonymous
David Thomas
Julie Lachman
Kip Campbell
Patty Campbell
Virginia McGehee
Phyllis Simonetta
Carol Kauffman
Jack Kauffman

| | |
|--------------|---|
| 164 | New members in 2022 |
| 46 | Automatic annual renewals; a new option |
| 5 | Automatic monthly renewals; a new option |
| 9 | New life members; donated \$1,000 or more |
| 111 | Total life members |
| 401 | Total FODR members |
| 1,500 | Total contacts in FODR database; includes annual members, life members, volunteers, donors, paddlers, hikers, Board members |

FINANCIALS

GRANT AWARDS



The National Park Service (NPS) awarded St. Mary's College of Maryland a fiscal year 2022 Preservation Planning Grant for "Mapping the Dragon: An Indigenous History of Bacon's Rebellion." The project partners are St. Mary's College, the Rappahannock Tribe, the Pamunkey Tribe, the Friends of Dragon Run, and historian James Rice, author of *Tales From A Revolution*. NPS's American Battlefield Protection Program (NPS ABPP) administers the program.

At the end of 2022 FODR received a grant from the Dominion Energy Foundation to support our expanded educational offerings for schools, teachers, and area students. This exciting and ambitious new program is called the Dragon Run Environmental Academy Mentorship (DREAM) and is designed to train and mentor teachers who serve life science students and introduce the students to Dragon Run. DREAM will begin in summer 2023.

Friends of Dragon Run
DragonRun.org
P. O. Box 882
Gloucester, VA. 23061