

Friends of Dragon Run

Annual Report
2019—July 2020

Friends of Dragon Run
DragonRun.org
P. O. Box 882
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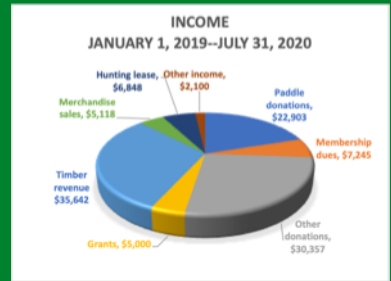


GOALS: 2020-2025

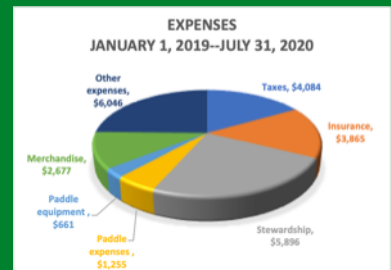
FODR's mission is to preserve, protect, and encourage the wise use of Dragon Run and its watershed. Our five-year plan is designed to support FODR's mission.

- ♣ Increase FODR membership by an average of 10 percent annually.
- ♣ Increase member participation in FODR events, such as logistics and paddle crew activities, environmental education, and property monitoring by five percent annually.
- ♣ Increase the acres of land protected via ownership and FODR-held easements from 614 to 650 acres.
- ♣ Establish an endowment to generate earnings that can be used to pay stewardship costs, if needed.
- ♣ Establish fundraising goals to have funds available for new land acquisition or easement acquisition.
- ♣ Increase FODR's pursuit of grants related to stewardship and environmental education by applying for at least two grants each year.
- ♣ Increase FODR's active monitoring of Dragon Run to at least 24 of the 40 miles annually and 100 percent of the Dragon at least every two years.
- ♣ Increase the number of individuals and groups participating in paddle trips by 10 percent annually.
- ♣ Establish paddle programs with a classroom component for schools (grades 8-12) within the Dragon Run watershed.
- ♣ Increase FODR paddle trails from two to four and gain long-term access to two additional put-in and take-out points.
- ♣ Add at least one FODR trail to the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources Birding and Wildlife Trails.
- ♣ Increase environmental education and outreach on behalf of the health of Dragon Run and the Dragon Run watershed.

FINANCIALS



Note: Timber revenue is a non-recurring income source.





FRIENDS OF DRAGON RUN

Dedicated to protecting and preserving one of the nation's most pristine waterways.

More than 1.5 million people live within 100 miles of Dragon Run, yet most have never heard of it. Since the last logging equipment was removed, the Dragon has remained untouched for approximately 70 years, allowing native plants and animals to return and creating a lush and pristine ecosystem. The Dragon Run watershed is a unique ecosystem ranked second in a Smithsonian Institute study of 232 areas which covered 12,600 square miles of the Chesapeake Bay watershed.



Friends of Dragon Run, Inc., founded in 1985, is dedicated to protecting the Dragon, but, we are also dedicated to sharing this ecological jewel with others through paddle trips, lectures, brochures, newsletters, and our website. Thus, our most important goals are education and stewardship.



This report documents our achievements in 2019 and through July 2020, and previews our goals for the remainder of 2020 and through 2025.

FRIENDS OF DRAGON RUN

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As part of our mission to protect and preserve Dragon Run, FODR engages in stewardship initiatives and educational opportunities to share with others the Dragon's beauty and importance as a natural resource.

FOREST MANAGEMENT

FODR contracted with the Virginia Department of Forestry (DOF) to update forest management plans for nine of FODR's properties. Following the directives in the DOF plans, FODR thinned pine trees on the Revere tract and harvested trees on 23 acres of the Bulman tract.

In 2020 and 2021, we will follow up with a controlled burn and reforestation with appropriate vegetation to create habitat for bobwhite quail and other species.

We have applied to the Virginia Reforestation Assistance Program for grants to help defray the costs of these stewardship activities.

LAND ACQUISITION

In November 2018, FODR acquired a 13.5-acre parcel off Route 17 in Gloucester County. In a

ceremony in May 2019, the land was dedicated as the Jimmy Morgan Tract in honor of his leadership in founding Friends of Dragon Run, raising the funds for, and organizing the purchase of Big Island, our first property.

OLD GROWTH FOREST NETWORK

We were honored to have the Big Island property in Middlesex County and the Eagles' Nest property in King and Queen County selected for induction into the Old Growth Forest Network. The ceremony was to occur in April 2020, but due to COVID-19 restrictions, it was rescheduled for October 15, 2020.

PROPERTY MONITORING

A property monitor has been assigned to each of FODR's 12 properties. These individuals survey the properties three or four times a year looking for signs of habitat and species issues, vandalism, and other types of damage or destruction of the properties.

In October 2019, FODR initiated an additional stewardship program called Dragon Keeper Surveys. Our goal is to increase

monitoring of the entire 40-mile length of the Dragon. Our 2019 goal was to survey 12 miles or 30 percent of the Dragon. Our 2020 goal is to survey 20 miles or 50% of the Dragon. Surveys will be conducted on foot and by kayak.

Additional stewardship activities included trash pickups along all bridges that cross the Dragon. Trail maintenance was conducted at Wares Bridge, Mascot, Revere, and Big Island. The trail at Mascot is part of the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources Birding and Wildlife trails. FODR members also monitored prothonotary warbler boxes in the Dragon from March through July.

HUNTING LEASES

After thorough research, FODR awarded the first hunting leases in 2018. Six properties were leased. The leases are contractual agreements that require hunters to comply with specific requirements in return for hunting rights. FODR has renewed the leases for the 2020-2021 hunting season.



SAFETY

Part of our stewardship responsibilities include ensuring the safety of paddlers, hunters, hikers, and other visitors to FODR properties. Safety measures include annual U.S. Coast Guard inspection of all kayaks, paddles, and PFDs. Paddle crew are required to complete a mandatory five-hour training session for each paddle season. And, over the past three years, FODR has standardized the kayak fleet by acquiring five new Perception kayaks and retiring six older kayaks of various lengths.

EDUCATION

Guided paddle trips by kayak along a three-mile waterway through Dragon Run are our best-known activity. These trips are a critical component of our educational mission and a significant source of funding for land purchases and stewardship. In 2019, more than 300 paddlers experienced the Dragon during the Spring paddle season. Unfortunately, we had to cancel the Fall paddle season because the water level in the Dragon was too low for paddling. Even worse, we also had to cancel the Spring 2020 paddle season to comply with the Governor's COVID-19 guidelines.

During the Spring 2019 paddle season, we expanded our educational outreach to youth. We took 12 eighth-graders and their teachers from the Aylett Country Day school paddling on the Dragon on two separate trips, an activity we hope to expand during future paddle seasons.

Educational activities also included quarterly membership meetings featuring speakers on conservation topics such as bats, beavers, and butterflies. Brochures, quarterly newsletters, our website (www.DragonRun.org), and our Facebook presence also provided information and introduced many to the beauty of Dragon Run.

Although we cancelled the 2020 Spring paddle season, we gave paddlers and members the opportunity to visit the Dragon virtually. On our website we posted videos of feather foil in bloom, bald cypress trees as they leafed out, spatterdock in bloom, the bald eagle nest and this year's eagle chick.

In July, we conducted our first summer paddle season over three four-day weekends. We followed strict Covid-19 protocols, limited trips to six guests, and used a roundtrip paddle to eliminate the need for carpooling between launch and takeout points.



In light of recent events that caused FODR to cancel the 2019 Fall paddle season and the 2020 Spring paddle season, the FODR Board decided to revive the stewardship endowment fund that was created several years ago. FODR owns more acreage now and the costs of protection have increased, principally due to increases in property taxes, insurance premiums, and other stewardship costs.

The function of the endowment is to retain a significant amount of capital that will be invested to generate earnings that can be spent to defray stewardship costs, if needed. Thus, we can secure lasting protection for the pristine, natural beauty of Dragon Run.

We hope you will support the stewardship endowment fund so that FODR can continue to provide land stewardship and community enjoyment of the Dragon. Your donation is an investment in the future preservation of Dragon Run.

To donate, visit DragonRun.org and click the donate button. Or, you can mail your donation to: Friends of Dragon Run, P. O. Box 882, Gloucester, VA 23061. Be sure to include your name, address, and email address.

