Why I Do What I Do: Trip Pollard
Shaping Growth in the Southeast

I have always spent much of my time outdoors—catching lizards and collecting rocks and leaves as a child, and hiking, canoeing, and camping with my own children today. I have lived in the South all my life, enjoying our incredible natural, historic, and scenic resources, as well as our wonderful communities, yet I am often troubled by our failure to cherish and protect these special places.

While I was in law school at the University of Virginia, Rick Middleton held a reception to announce the opening of SELC. I was impressed with Rick and captivated by the idea of an environmental law center devoted to the South. I knew this was what our region needed. I became one of SELC’s earliest law clerks, and I was delighted when I had the opportunity years later to work for SELC full time.

My work focuses mainly on the complex factors shaping growth in the Southeast, which has the dubious distinction of sprawling faster than any other part of the country. I direct SELC’s Land and Community Program, and our goal is to strengthen our communities, give people and businesses cleaner transportation choices, and conserve open spaces by reforming public policies that for decades have promoted paving, pollution, and sprawl.

Although I’m a lawyer, I also see myself as an educator. Part of my job is to help people see the economic and environmental benefits of smarter growth and the opportunities they have for making their communities healthier, more vibrant, and more sustainable.

Based in our Richmond office, senior attorney Trip Pollard has been with SELC since 1992. In 2008 he served on the Governor of Virginia’s Commission on Climate Change.