



Rockingham Civil War Site Hosts VCC's Annual Meeting



VCC's annual meeting this fall treated more than 100 members and guests to a mix of celebration and activity. Irvin and Nancy Hess hosted the event at Widow Pence Farm, where skirmishes occurred as part of the Battle of Cross Keys. The 50-acre farm is protected by an easement. The circa 1840 farmhouse and newer barn were filled with displays of historic and pre-historic artifacts from the area.

New this year were side activities. Nicole Vachon of Canaan Valley Institute and Sandy Greene from the Headwaters Soil and Water Conservation District guided children on a search for stream life in the small creek on the property. John Goss offered visitors a unique astronomical experience—a solar telescope set up to safely view sun spot activity. Faye Cooper of the Virginia Outdoors Foundation offered a conservation easement workshop for a sizeable group of local farmers and curious members.



Jack Dixon, a young bugler in full confederate uniform, called the membership in from all parts of the property with an authentic cavalry call. The meeting was opened by Board Chair Mark Botkin, followed by a brief report from Executive Director John Eckman. Both praised the people who make land protection possible—those landowners with the foresight and commitment to place their own land under permanent conservation easements. When all of the easement donors in the room were asked to stand, a considerable portion of the crowd filling the barn rose to their feet. By sharing their names and describing their properties, landowners put the focus of the meeting where it belongs: on people, places, and results.



Retiring board members Faye Cooper, Jim Brown, and Lucile Miller were recognized for their dedicated service. Reflecting on their 15 years of involvement with VCC from the beginning, Cooper and Brown provided a perspective on just how far land conservation has come in the region. Cooper, a former executive director of VCC, remembers talking about easements and ag districts and the response being "WHAT'S that?" "These were unheard of land conservation tools in 1990," she said.

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Northern Counties Especially Gain Easements

Of the latest crop of conservation easements, many are in the northern Valley, a welcome antidote to the intense development in that area. All of the easements described below are held by the Virginia Outdoors Foundation (VOF) and all but one include provisions for riparian buffer zones.

Two easements in Shenandoah County protect opposite sides of a segment of the North Fork of the Shenandoah River that is a potential Virginia Scenic River. **Robert H. Kranich's** 67-acre tract southeast of Strasburg borders the river on two sides, providing protection of the riverside for approximately 2,900 feet of frontage. The site consists of open meadows and bottomland fields with riparian forests. In close proximity to Kranich's land, **Roberta W. Hinkins** placed an easement on 23 acres of rich woodland habitat situated on a bluff overlooking the river with approximately 1,325 feet of river frontage. Both easements contain riparian buffer provisions and protect scenic views for recreational users of the river.



The Drumhellers on their Augusta County farm

providing enjoyment to the driving public and users of one of the nation's premier national parks.

In Augusta County, **Charles and Vicki Drumheller** have placed an easement on 365 acres near Swoope. The property contains an 1807 brick farmhouse that has been determined eligible for the National Register. A mix of productive farmland and forest, this working family farm is contiguous to other eased land and has frontage on a tributary of the Middle River. Approximately 60 acres are enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), which calls for active planting and management of a buffer area. The property is zoned exclusive agriculture and being active farmers, the Drumhellers set easement terms that reserve the right for agricultural buildings.



Natalie Zuckerman on her Page County farm

Natalie Zuckerman of Page County donated an easement on 89 acres near Stanley. The family dwelling consists of a late 1800s farmhouse with a unique rock addition in 1910 and a later expansion. The farm features farmstead outbuildings, open pasture and hay fields, and 20 acres in forest. The easement terms specify a riparian buffer for the frontage on Hawksbill Creek and that the historic dwelling cannot be willfully demolished. As Zuckerman says, "It's a lovely piece of land and I'd hate to see it dotted with houses."

Warren County has gained two easements. The first covers two tracts totaling 203 acres owned by friends **Adalbert von Gontard, Wayne Chatfield-Taylor, Robert Crosby,** and **Sherrill Toole**. The property is open farm land with a small portion in forest and lies in a pristine area adjacent to other easements. A farmhouse dating to the 18th century is being renovated as a family dwelling. Also in Warren County, **Robert and Jean Lenderking and Jane and William Talbott** placed an easement on 82 acres near Browntown. The property, primarily rolling meadows, falls within the viewshed of Gooney Overlook in the Shenandoah National Park,

Why Would a Farmer Do an Easement? Seeing a Restriction as a Gift

As he mulled over the decision to place an easement on his land, Augusta County farmer Charlie Drumheller wrote these words:

What if my descendents want to do something with this land that I can not foresee? Is this easement a gift or a restriction? Can a restriction be a gift? I sincerely hope so, for that is what I am trying to do. I intend to provide a permanent gift, not only to my children's children, but to all who may see this beauty and appreciate it as I do.

I was raised on this land and loved it from my childhood. However, it is a farm and must be productive. How it remains productive and viable will likely change in ways that we can not even imagine. Hopefully, with the language that we have in the easement, it will be able to change with time to remain a productive piece of ground. But the beauty and the open space, it must remain permanent.

(adapted from a letter to the Virginia Outdoors Foundation)

Augusta Community Partnership to Host Plan Session

The Augusta Community Partnership has asked VCC to help with a workshop on December 6 to help Augusta County citizens be informed participants as the county updates its Comprehensive Plan. The session will explain the comp plan process and different patterns of growth.

The county's informational session hosted by their consultants played to a packed audience in October. Concerned residents overflowed the main board meeting room and most of the questions related to growth issues.

Annual Meeting, cont'd

"When VCC was founded there were 16 easements in the region. By the end of 2004, there were 201."

Board elections were the final order of business. After a delicious barbecue picnic, guests enjoyed old-time music from Mike Williams, Becky Sasser and Jim Scott.

Many thanks to hosts Irvin and Nancy Hess; bugler Jack Dixon; the many workshop facilitators; the strong backs of James Flory, Bob Eggleston, and Irvin Hess; and the dedicated help of Betsy Eggleston, Laura McMillan, Genevieve Goss, and many others. Special thanks to sponsors Conservation Services, Myers & Woods Appraisal Group, the law firm of BotkinRose, Staunton Steam Laundry, and Calhoun's Restaurant & Brewing Company.

Last Chance to Double \$\$

It's not every year that we have a chance to double your money. VCC members have already raised over \$25,000 in new and increased gifts this year, and that means a total of \$50,000 new dollars supporting conservation. As we head toward the end of our 2005 Membership Challenge, please keep in mind that every additional dollar you give over what you gave last year will be matched, dollar-for-dollar, by several generous donors. Every donation from a new member will also be matched fully.

Thank you to everyone who has already given so generously. Please help us make our goal of \$40,000 in new and increased gifts. Support VCC and double your money today.

Give a gift of VCC membership.

Double not only your gift but your impact.

Better Models for Development Awards Nominations Due Dec. 31

Know a good development project that respects local character or builds community? Nominations are due December 31 for VCC's Better Models for Development awards. Call or email the office or visit www.valleyconservation.org to see past winners and download the form.

Valley Conservator nominations also are sought. This award recognizes those who have worked to conserve the Valley's rich natural and historic setting.

New Faces Join VCC Board

Re-elected to VCC's board of directors were Carole Baker, Robert Eggleston, Greg Faust, and Henley Gabeau. They are joined by three new members (below).

Marian French has roots in Augusta County and a broad family presence in Shenandoah County. Her nine children and 35 grandchildren all live there and over half of them are actively involved in farming. She has more than 30 years in the real estate business and is owner of Valley Real Estate, Ltd., and president of the Massanutten Association of Realtors. She and her children decided recently to place a conservation easement on their farm on one of the Seven Bends of the Shenandoah.



New board members Nick MacNeil and Marian French

Nick MacNeil, VCC Volunteer of the Year in 2001, lives in Staunton with his wife Linda. He has been active with the Augusta Community Partnership, serving as secretary and coordinating several community forums. During his career with the U.S. State Department, Nick's work included three years in the Bureau of Oceans, Environment, and Science and several overseas posts. Nick holds a history degree from Princeton University.

Charlotte Stephenson of Highland County brings years of professional and civic experience. She is a real estate broker and co-owner of United Country Shamrock & Stephenson Realty. Charlotte is the president of Highlanders for Responsible Development and vice president of the Highland County Chamber of Commerce. Her past positions include deputy treasurer of Highland County and member of the Monterey Town Council.

New Members Oct. 2005

Augusta County/Staunton/ Waynesboro

Bruce and Olimpia Dorries
Carol Marie Grieshaber
Barbara Kasch
Bonnie Kiblinger
Gabriel Templeton

Rockingham County/ Harrisonburg

Patricia Chawkat
Tim and Tricia Cummings
David and Diane Ehrenpreis
Karina Kline-Gabel
Richard and Kathleen Pantaleo

Highland County Charlotte Stephenson

From Afar Allen Perrel



**VALLEY
CONSERVATION
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Busy Year Mapped Out for Planning Issues

VCC is looking ahead to a busy year in public policy, aimed at helping local communities deal with the most critical growth management issues in the region. Workshops are being developed on topics such as low impact development (LID), road standards for smart growth, and financing rural protection. Planners throughout the region have participated in the design of these projects.

First off is LID for Engineers, scheduled for November 29. Engineering staffs as well as private sector firms are invited to learn details on designing for low impact development (LID). LID reduces stormwater flow by mimicking and enhancing natural systems, rather than shunting runoff into streams and treatment plants. Compared to standard design, LID should offer reduced flooding and improved water quality. But because it is such a different way of designing, LID will not take hold in the Valley until technical issues are worked out and ordinances are changed.

VCC Open House Dec. 2

You are invited to VCC's Annual Open House on Friday evening, December 2, starting at 5 p.m. Come by for refreshments and socializing. The office, 17 Barristers Row, is just behind the Augusta County Courthouse.

VCC Supports 'Reasonable Solutions for I-81'

VCC's board of directors has endorsed a resolution for Reasonable Solutions for I-81. This six-point plan calls for solving safety and traffic problems with well-considered spot improvements instead of new truckways the length of I-81 in Virginia as have been proposed.

Local governments, including Augusta and Shenandoah counties and a number of towns also have supported the resolution, calling for a safer road that limits impacts on the surrounding natural and cultural resources. This truly regional issue, the proposed widening of I-81, directly impacts 6 of the 11 counties VCC serves. To learn more about Reasonable Solutions for I-81 see www.shenandoahvalleynetwork.org or call VCC.

Valley Conservation Council
17 Barristers Row
Staunton, Virginia 24401
(540) 886-3541; fax (540) 886-1380
toll free (877) 216-1782
email: vcc@valleyconservation.org
www.valleyconservation.org

Executive Director, John Eckman • Conservation Officer,
Jackie Errecart • Botetourt County Steward, Genevieve
Goss • Vision Editor & Planning Consultant, Sara Hollberg