

VISION



VALLEY
CONSERVATION
COUNCIL

Conservation Issues and the General Assembly

There will be many issues to watch as the General Assembly convenes in January. The brevity of these legislative sessions makes it important for citizens to get involved early and stay informed. Ways to do that:

Lobby Day - Please join VCC members and other conservationists from across the state for "Lobby Day" in Richmond January 21 to learn more about the issues and connect with your local legislators.

Virginia Conservation Network - VCC participates in VCN, a statewide conservation advocacy organization representing more than 110 organizations. Visit www.vcnva.org to get background information and updates during the session. The Virginia Conservation Briefing Book is particularly useful for understanding issues and proposals.

This will be a difficult budget year, which will put pressure on funding for land conservation, including state matching for local easement purchase (PDR) programs.

Stay Informed: Sign Up for Email Alerts

Get the updates that mean something to you locally. Sign up with VCC for email updates by going to www.valleyconservation.org.

There likely also will be bills concerning land development policies, transportation, and water quality.

Landowners Like Easements

As the easements roll in at the end of the year, VCC continues to add to the growing list of easements it coholds, particularly among farmers.



Among the latest conservation easements is Ralph and Chris Bolgiano's protection of this tract in Rockingham County adjoining the George Washington National Forest.

Lancaster Farmers Talk About Farmland Protection

As lifelong farm operators now in partnership with their sons, Gene Garber and Luke Brubaker know farming. As former elected officials, they know their community well. But the reason they came to Shenandoah County November 14 is that they also have put their farms under permanent protection through Lancaster County's (PA) farmland preservation programs. VCC arranged the visit because Lancaster County has the most successful program in the nation and also has much in common with the Shenandoah Valley.

The two spoke to the Board of Supervisors in the morning and met with farmers that evening. Brubaker, a Milk Marketing Commissioner for Pennsylvania and manager of a 750-cow dairy farm, told how he wanted to



Gene Garber and Luke Brubaker

keep his land in farming even though it borders developed property. He sold his development rights to the Agricultural Preserve Board and used the money to buy and preserve other farms. The PDR money stayed in the community and strengthened the farming economy.

Garber got involved in farmland preservation after tracing his high school bus route and counting over 330 new houses, all on farmland.

"We have squandered acre upon acre of farmland as if there is no end to it," he says. His family donated an easement to the local land trust. He now serves as chairman of the county's Agricultural Preserve Board, which works from a combination of local, state, and federal funds.

See Lancaster on p. 4

Newest Steward Patti Price

VCC's newest field staff member is Patti Price. She will help us connect with landowners in Page Valley. Patti and her husband Julian run a diversified farm operation in Page County, raising cattle, poultry, sheep, goats, and donkeys. Their numerous awards include recognition as a Bay Friendly Clean Water Farm and the Virginia Poultry Federation's state Environmental Stewardship award.

Hollberg Takes Staff Role

Sara Hollberg, AICP, has joined VCC staff part time. She has done numerous projects for VCC, such as *Better Models for Development*, *State of the Valley* report, and coordinating the Shenandoah Land Use Network, as a consulting planner. Now she will continue public policy work and also will focus attention on how land conservation programs such as PDRs can help keep the Valley a viable farming area. Sara graduated from William and Mary, worked in editing in Washington, DC, and earned a master's in planning degree from the University of Virginia. She and her husband Mark and their three young children live in walkable downtown Staunton, so they can devote their spare time to managing the family tree farm in Campbell County.

VCC Delivers Education

Want to know more about land conservation options? Growth management tools? VCC can draw from its extensive library of 'better models' materials to deliver tailored educational programs. Recent presentations:

- Water Quality and Development Workshop
- Stormwater Messaging Workshop
- Rockingham Municipal League meeting
- Luray Rotary Club
- Frederick County Easement Authority landowner workshop
- Harrisonburg/Massanutten Rotary Club.
- Stonyman Agricultural Forestal District renewal meeting
- Cedarville Ruritan Club and Rockland Agricultural Forestal District meeting

VCC Website Has Resources

Visit www.valleyconservation.org for up-to-date information on current topics and the full text of our books and reports. On-line materials include the following:

- *Better Models for Development in the Shenandoah Valley*
- *State of the Valley Report*
- *Middlebrook-Brownsburg Corridor Study*
- *McDowell Battlefield/Staunton-to-Parkersburg Pike Landowners Guide*
- Land Use and Community Values in Augusta County
- Rural Protection Tools

You'll also find links to local, state, and national groups; detailed information on conservation easements and tax incentives; maps, government links, and more.

New VCC Board Members



New VCC Board members (from left) Denman Zirkle, Roger Houser, Tom Lockhart, and Cullen Sherwood

Roger Houser is a fifth-generation Page County farmer. He and his wife Debbie run Luray Homes, a real estate management firm. Last year they placed an easement on 100 acres of the family farm and plan to do more in the future.

Tom Lockhart, an attorney practicing in Maryland, has roots in Warren County that go back many generations. He placed an easement on his 300-acre family farm there. Tom also has been very active with Scenic 340 and the group's efforts to conserve important historic and natural heritage lands along the South Fork of the Shenandoah River.

W. Cullen Sherwood, Ph.D., of Harrisonburg is a Professor of Geology at James Madison University. His research interests involve trends in the geochemistry of natural fresh waters and the origin and development of fluvial landscapes and soils. Cullen also has a strong interest in how soils have shaped history and their role in pivotal events of the Civil War.

W. Denman Zirkle lives on his family's farm in Shenandoah County. Most recently Denman served as chief executive officer of Carret and Company, a New York-based investment advisory firm. He is a board member of the Civil War Preservation Trust and a founder of the Zirkle Mill Foundation.

Returning for second, three-year terms are **Mark Hollberg** of Staunton and **Rosemary Wallinger** of Shenandoah County. Our thanks go out to retiring board members Mark Botkin, Allen Mead Ferguson, Marian French, and John D. Hutchinson.

Green Infrastructure Boost

The Keith Campbell Foundation for the Environment has provided VCC a three-year grant to expand staffing for strategic land conservation initiatives. Combined with other grants and member support, this funding will allow us to undertake specific conservation corridor projects.

VCC Members Welcome the Rain, Enjoy Annual Meeting

After a dry summer that's been tough on farms, the gentle rain that greeted VCC members and guest at our 17th annual meeting brought more smiles than dismay. Usually this event is held at a farm, with pasture parking and limited shelter but for this first-ever rainy meeting, those attending settled happily into the Cochran Pavilion at the Frontier Culture Museum in Staunton.

VCC Executive Director reported on a year marked by staff expansion, new strategic initiatives, and growing public support for conservation. It also saw VCC double the amount of acres on which co-holds easements.

Guest speaker Nikki Rovner, Deputy Secretary of Natural Resources, noted the important role of land trusts in helping the state meet its land protection goals. "VCC is one of the groups helping lead Virginia's land conservation movement and doing it right – keeping people and their communities in mind," she said.



Nikki Rovner addresses the gathering.

VCC Names 2007 'Valley Conservator' Award Winners



VCC Director John Eckman with Roberta H. and Bob Kranich

Robert & Roberta Hinkins Kranich 'Lifetime Conservators'

This Shenandoah County couple helped found the Friends of the North Fork of the Shenandoah River and contributed to its riparian restoration and policy work. They each also donated easements on strategic riverside tracts in 2006.

John & Hallie Seibel 'Farm Conservators'

The Seibels placed an easement on their 558-acre farm in Botetourt County, protecting a four-mile stretch of the James River in a portion so outstanding that it is named a Virginia Scenic River. In 2004, their Ox Bow farm was named Conservation Farm of the Year by the Mountain Castles Soil and Water Conservation District.

Ralph & Chris Bolgiano 'Natural Heritage Conservators'

Nature author Chris Bolgiano won awards for her book *Living in the Appalachian Forest: True Tales of Sustainable Forestry*. Ralph, as a DEQ employee, was instrumental in the regulatory action against Avtex. They have donated land to the American Chestnut Foundation and placed on easement on their western Rockingham County farm.



John Seibel with, from left, VCC Steward Genevieve Goss and Laura Thurman of the Virginia Outdoors Foundation



Chris and Ralph Bolgiano.

Public Policy: Development Impacts and Water Quality

Local Officials in the Region Learn About Stormwater Regulations and Environmental Site Design

Many of our local streams, as well as the Shenandoah River itself, are polluted. The culprit, increasingly, is not a pipe, but various pollutants that wash off developed land during storms. The Water Quality and Development conference held September 26 in Harrisonburg gave localities in the region better understanding of how current and proposed stormwater regulations can minimize such pollution.

VCC worked with a local advisory committee and the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (VDCR) to put on the conference. The 41 participants represented more than 20 localities and organizations.

Lee Hill, from VDCR's Richmond office, spoke on the status of state water quality regulations. He was joined by Linda Campbell, a Page County resident who chairs the State Soil and Water Conservation Board (VSWCB). Already, development disturbing more than 1 acre must address water quality. The upcoming revisions will require an approved permit before construction, thus making water quality a required element in local development review. A handbook and web-based resources, also being developed, will guide developers and plan reviewers.

Guest speaker David Hirschman of the Center for Watershed Protection presented the core design principles of the proposed regulations. To meet the water quality requirements, developers will be encouraged to use Environmental Site Design principles, such as buffers and rain gardens, that minimize runoff and filter pollutants.



David Hirschman led an exercise comparing conventional site design to what would meet water quality standards.

Attendees learned from each other as well. VCC planner Sara Hollberg set the context by outlining development trends and illustrating ways that localities can address the challenge of protecting water quality. Members of the Stormwater Local Advisory Committee reported on innovative programs in the region. In the final session all participants gave an update on their programs and shared perspectives. Details, a quick summary, and presentations can be found at www.valleyconservation.org.

These projects were supported by a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and are part of the Shenandoah Land Use Network project.

How to Help Citizens Link Land Use to Clean Water

A second workshop VCC organized this fall enlisted American Rivers to help a focus group discuss educational



Katherine Baer (American Rivers), Joe Lehnen (Virginia Department of Forestry), and Chris Anderson (Page County) discuss educational needs on stormwater issues.

needs to support better stormwater management. The Shenandoah Stormwater Messaging Workshop, held November 27 in New Market, brought together 14 participants, representing a variety of water groups, localities, and state agencies.

Often the general public and local officials have never had reason to put together the pieces linking development and site design to pollution problems. VCC's Sara Hollberg laid out the challenges of stormwater management and the status of local and state programs. Katherine Baer of American Rivers, a Washington-based organization that "stands up for healthy rivers" shared findings on Water Words That Work (terms that work well when talking to the general public) and their Stormwater Messaging Research. The latter aims at giving clean water advocates clear and persuasive messages to use with local leaders. She shared the types of phrasings and graphics that can communicate the problem and potential design solutions.

For details and to view the presentations, go to www.valleyconservation.org or contact Sara Hollberg, sara@valleyconservation.org.

Lancaster View: Farmland Preservation Works

So far, more than 75,000 acres and 1,000 farms have been preserved in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, which has a population of about 500,000. The Lancaster program began in 1980 but languished for years without funding. Once a few respected farmers got behind it, people started to look at it more closely. Now, farmers support it (there's a backlog of 240 applicants). Developers are for it, says Brubaker, because it gives them the certainty they need. Citizens overwhelmingly support the publicly funded program. In a poll this fall, 85% of Lancaster citizens favored continued funding for the farmland preservation program; 65% said they would support higher taxes to preserve farmland.

“20 years from now, this county will see this was a very good investment. Counties that don't take action, get behind, and quick.” *Gene Garber*

The visiting farmers stressed the economic and quality of life value of keeping farms viable. Garber has found that all communities face the same issues. “Farmland preservation is not a stand-alone solution. It's a piece of the land use puzzle. PDRs are a tool that you can use to accomplish sound planning.”

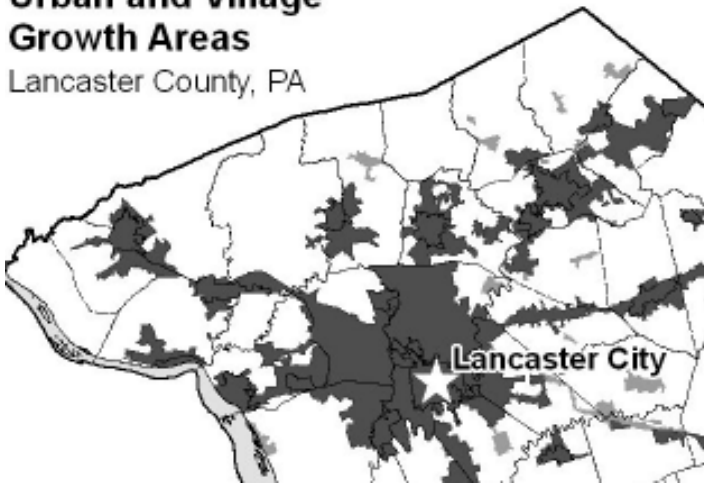
Garber advised the Shenandoah supervisors, “Zoning is not the answer. It is only as strong as you guys are, and there will always be another election.”

VCC, with support from the Beirne Carter Foundation, plans to bring more such educational programs to the Valley. For information, contact the VCC office.

Keeping Farming Areas Secure and Directing Growth to Services

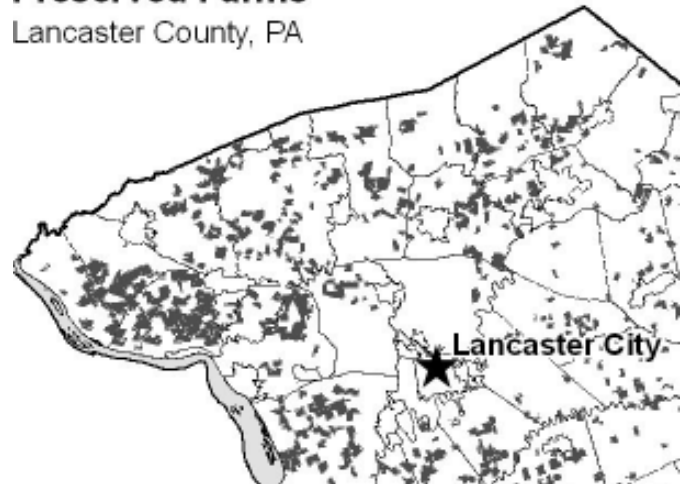
Urban and Village Growth Areas

Lancaster County, PA



Preserved Farms

Lancaster County, PA



Lancaster County's PDR program works in conjunction with the Comprehensive Plan and other planning tools. These close ups show the northeastern section where Garber and Brubaker farm. The growth areas (left) and preserved farms (right) are like reverse images, showing the effect of clearly defining where development can occur and keeping farming the primary use in other areas. (Graphics by Lancaster County GIS.)

VCC Engages Green Infrastructure Approach

It's easy to understand that communities need to plan for and pay for gray infrastructure, like roads and utilities. Green infrastructure is an approach that encourages equal attention to the critical but often overlooked natural systems that sustain communities, providing clean air and water, flood control, and recreational and aesthetic benefits. The Green Infrastructure approach fits well with VCC's mission of promoting land use that sustains natural and cultural assets.

Green Infrastructure Workshop. As VCC works to bring the concept into practice in the Valley, one avenue has been through the Resource Conservation and Development Councils (RC&Ds). VCC's John Eckman is vice-

chair of the Shenandoah RC&D, serving with chairman Jim Lawrence of Winchester. Jim and John also serve on the Virginia Association of RC&D Councils' Land Protection Committee, which has been working to promote Green Infrastructure planning throughout the state. The committee hosted a Green Infrastructure Workshop November 16 in Charlottesville that drew overflowing attendance from all over Virginia. Presenters from The Conservation Fund, the Green Infrastructure Center, and state agencies, were followed by local case studies. One goal was exploring how to integrate the green infrastructure approach into comprehensive planning.



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Annual Meeting Cheer More on p. 3



Doug Kiracofe and daughter Jessica provided shuttle service.



Conservation Award winners Hallie and John Seibel

Shenandoah County Adopts PDR Ordinance

The Shenandoah County Board of Supervisors has adopted a purchase of development rights (PDR) ordinance. No funding has been determined, but the county is looking at options. The county will appoint an authority, which would be authorized to hold easements.

This year the state for the first time offered matching funds for local PDR programs. Fourteen programs qualified. Future funding will be part of the budget discussions in the upcoming General Assembly.

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