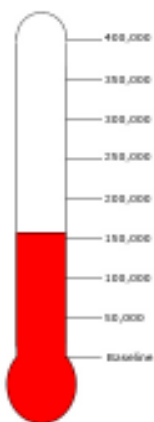




Conservation Efforts Yield Record Gain in Protected Acres

In a record year for conservation in Virginia, and especially the Valley, public and private efforts in 2006 brought the state nearly 40% of the way toward Governor Kaine's 400,000-acre land conservation goal. The annual total for the VCC region was 21,046 acres, mostly in the form of voluntary conservation easements.

The bulk of these easements in the region are held by the Virginia Outdoors Foundation (VOF), whose 97 easement projects covered 19,812 acres, more than twice the amount in any previous year. Rockbridge County led the way with 34 VOF easements protecting 6,900 acres. Botetourt County more than doubled its acreage under VOF easement in 2006, adding an additional 2,400 eased acres in 13 separate projects. In addition, The Nature Conservancy conserved 589 acres in Bath and Frederick counties through conservation easements and land purchase. The Potomac Conservancy protected 163 acres through riparian and open space easements in the northern Valley (including 57 acres with VOF). The Shenandoah Valley



Virginia: 40% to the goal

Battlefields Foundation used purchase and easement to protect 588 acres in Shenandoah, Warren, Rockingham, and Highland counties.

Statewide in 2006, VOF accepted easements on more than 70,000 acres, 70% more than in any previous year. The Nature Conservancy protected 11,077 acres.

Conservation Easements in VCC Region

(held by the Virginia Outdoors Foundation)

County	2006 Easements	2006 Acres	Cumulative Acres
Alleghany	1	386	4,336
Augusta	14	2,436	10,523
Bath	8	2,616	13,784
Botetourt	13	2,422	4,258
Frederick	5	605	2,502
Highland	4	2,568	4,423
Page	2	152	1,065
Rockbridge	34	6,918	17,630
Rockingham	5	1,085	2,197
Shenandoah	5	442	2,646
Warren	6	181	5,695
VCC Region	97	19,811	69,059
Virginia	350	70,942	389,716

Working Farm Families Double Easement Acres with VCC

In 2006, VCC more than doubled the amount of land on which it co-holds conservation easements. As co-holder, VCC shares the responsibility for ensuring that conservation terms continue to met. All but two of these 26 new easements (covering 6,470 acres) are from farm families who used the Virginia's Open Space Preservation Trust Fund (PTF) to help pay for the upfront costs of placing an easement on their land. All are co-held with the Virginia Outdoors Foundation (VOF). (See the chart on p. 2.)

VCC co-holds more PTF easements with VOF than any other land trust in the state. We are glad that VCC can play a useful role in helping traditional landowners use



John and Hallie Seibel's easement on their Botetourt farm names VCC as co-holder. VCC will help ensure its terms are upheld in perpetuity.

conservation easements. The number of PTF projects is a very strong indicator that the face of easement donors is indeed changing. More and more Valley farm families who care deeply about the future of their lands are choosing this method of permanent protection.

VCC now has varying levels of stewardship responsibility on 92 riparian (river front) and open space easements. These easements are held jointly with different groups, most often local soil and water conservation districts and VOF.

Financing Series Brings Experts to the Valley

Three regional workshops held over the fall and winter were designed to help local governments in the Shenandoah Valley develop strategies for financing various types of land protection: rural conservation, stormwater management, and greenways. These



Ken Beyer of Luray describes the town's highly successful greenway project.

“charrettes” were made possible through a grant to the Shenandoah Resource Conservation and Development Council (RC&D) and were coordinated with VCC’s grant for the Shenandoah Land Use Network. The Environmental Finance Center (EFC) at the University of Maryland facilitated the charrettes and brought in experts from throughout the East Coast.

Nearly 100 people, representing 18 localities, attended sessions on Financing Land Protection (November 16 in Verona), Financing Stormwater Protection (December 4 in Woodstock), and Financing Greenways (January 18 in Harrisonburg). EFC is conducting a follow up with several localities this spring. VCC incorporated the charrettes into its Shenandoah Land Use Network schedule, helping plan the sessions and providing staff support. For session details, go to www.valleyconservation.org.

Botetourt Easement Protects Four Miles of James River

John and Hallie Seibel have placed a conservation easement on 558 acres in Botetourt County east of Eagle Rock, protecting a beautiful four-mile stretch of the James River. This portion of the James River has been designated a Virginia scenic river because it possesses outstanding scenic, recreational, historic and natural characteristics of statewide significance. The Seibel farm was named the Conservation Farm of the Year in 2004 by the Mountain Castles SWCD for using best management practices including rotational grazing, planting warm and cool season grasses and providing buffers to reduce runoff and erosion. Its outstanding soil quality will also be permanently protected through the conservation easement.

“The Seibels came forward after a VCC workshop in Botetourt,” says VCC County Steward Genevieve Goss. “We met with the family last summer and are so pleased that this easement came together for them.” The easement, co-held by the Virginia Outdoors Foundation and VCC, brings the total acreage permanently protected

through conservation easements in Botetourt County to over 4,000 acres.



The Seibel easement on Ox Bow farm protects the James River at its most scenic.

Valley Conservation Council Co-Held Easements Placed in 2006

(Jointly held by the Virginia Outdoors Foundation and VCC)

These landowners have donated conservation easements that will be upheld by the Virginia Outdoors Foundation and VCC. Their 26 easements total 6,471 acres, more than doubling the amount co-held by VCC.

Augusta County

Larry Clemmer (220 acres)
Harry & Eunice Arey (223a.)
Tim & Diana Clemmer (99 a.)
Bill Francisco (102 a.)
Robert Riley (83 a.)
Doris Riley (309 a.)
Anonymous (157 a.)
Anonymous (236 a.)

Bath County

Betty Davis Moore
& Robert Davis (497 a.)

Botetourt County

Rebecca Denhoff (98 a.)
John & Hallie Seibel (558 a.)
Anonymous (266 a.)

Frederick County

Bud & Pattie Good (119 a.)
Jeff & Teresa Green (186 a.)

Highland County

Wesley & Melanie Woods
(310 a.)

Rockbridge County

Susan Showalter (151 a.)

Donald Hasfurther (174 a.)

Charlotte Young (875 a.)
Marie & Kenneth Swink
& Betty Dixon (493 a.)
Anonymous (381 a.)
Anonymous (131 a.)
Anonymous (338 a.)

Rockingham County

Ray Showalter (118 a.)
Cassandra Naylor (347 a.)

Take Your Pick—VCC Funds Target Different Needs

In 2006, generous donors enabled VCC to establish two new funds. A revolving fund will help landowners pay for the upfront costs of donating a conservation easement. This fund will loan money to landowners who are going through the easement process but don't have the cash to pay the related costs out of pocket. Once the easement is finished and tax credits are sold, the landowner repays the fund, replenishing it for the next landowner.

The second is to support maintenance and upgrades for VCC's office building in downtown Staunton. This wonderful building, conveniently located behind the Augusta Courthouse and across from the parking garage, was purchased through the generous donations of many members. Like all historic structures it needs loving care and that costs money. Your donation to the building fund will enable VCC to make necessary repairs and improvements.

Our next focus is on building our stewardship fund. As the co-holder of 92 conservation easements, VCC has committed to monitoring and defending these easements in perpetuity. Our ability to meet these responsibilities requires a fund devoted to that purpose. Gifts to this fund, which is separate from our operational budget, will have a long legacy and an especially important impact.

Grant Provides VCC Latest Mapping Software

The Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI), makers of GIS mapping software, recently donated \$7,000 worth of software to VCC through its ESRI Conservation Program. The software replaces outdated software and upgrades VCC's ability to conduct geospatial analysis.

VCC will apply these new mapping tools to its green infrastructure and strategic conservation initiative. These tools will be ideal for helping to identify high-priority conservation lands and target efforts to these places.

Want To Be a County Steward?

Do you live in or have ties to Bath, Highland, Rockingham, or Page counties? Are you passionate about preserving rural landscapes and looking for a little flexible, part-time work? Contact VCC if you are interesting in being a county steward to promote land conservation in your community.

VCC Building Goes Green

In color at least. Thanks to a generous contribution to VCC's building fund, VCC headquarters in downtown Staunton received a much-needed coat of paint at the end of 2006. Green, of course. Interior upgrades include an 'on demand' water heater that uses power only when hot water is needed.

Member Renewals Due

It's easy to join or donate online:
www.valleyconservation.org

Many thanks to everyone who has renewed their VCC membership. May is the annual renewal month. You can join or renew online (look for the Donate button). The website also has details of VCC events and information on a range of topics on growth and development in the Valley.

VCC Members Can Get Involved in a Good Cause

The cause is right, and VCC welcomes volunteers. Please contact us and tell us how you'd like to help (886-3541 or jackie@valleyconservation.org). We'll put you on the list of people we send notices to about volunteer opportunities, such as the following:

- **Special Events** - Help with registration, setup, or food for special events such as our annual meeting. We appreciate the help, and you might enjoy the chance to work with other members and share your talents.
- **Local Conservation Efforts** - Contact VCC if you would like to help with land conservation efforts in your community. Members working together can help build the connections that lead to conservation opportunities and address policy issues.
- **Spread the Word** - We are looking for volunteers from every county who can assist VCC at local events such as county fairs and help display information about conservation easements.
- **Professional Skills** - Contact us if you would be interesting in offering your professional expertise to VCC.
- **Work Days** - Would you like to help VCC on work days to keep our building in shape?



VCC's office at 17 Barristers Row

Better Models for Development Awards

VCC Award Winners Mix Development and Conservation

This is the seventh year that Valley Conservation Council has honored projects that demonstrate the best in economic vitality, respect for community character, and environmental protection. The awards take their criteria from *Better Models for Development in the Shenandoah Valley*, first published in 1999 by VCC and The Conservation Fund. For more details on the principles and the awards, visit www.valleyconservation.org.

Outstanding Public-Private Project

Stonewall Jackson Hotel & Conference Center

The 80-year Stonewall Jackson Hotel once again stands proudly as the cornerstone of Staunton's downtown area. The city searched for years to find the right combination for redeveloping the hotel and found it in private developers Armada Hoffler and the continued participation of the local owners. Long underused and deteriorating, the landmark building is once again a major positive economic force. In a near-even split of the \$21.1 million cost, the private developers rehabbed the hotel while the city built the adjoining conference center. *Honored: City of Staunton, Staunton Hotel LLC, Persinger Family.*



Stonewall Jackson Hotel and Conference Center, Staunton

Excellence in Adaptive Reuse

Heritage Museum, Waynesboro

Built in 1908, the former First National Bank of Waynesboro has been beautifully rehabilitated to house the Heritage Museum and retail space on the first floor and six apartments in the upper floors. The success of this project reflects an admirable cooperative effort and demonstrates the positive impact of steps taken by the city in recent years to spur downtown revitalization. Changes in the zoning code to encourage residential in upper stories, the nomination of a historic district (enabling the use of



Heritage Museum, Waynesboro

tax credits), and nearby streetscape improvements all played a part. *Honored: South River Development Corporation and Waynesboro Redevelopment and Housing Authority.*

Best Historic Preservation Project

The Dutch Inn, Lexington

After years of neglect, the Dutch Inn complex has been gracefully restored to its 1920s appearance. This result was not at all certain. Vacant for a decade and dilapidated, the three connected frame buildings seemed destined to be torn down for redevelopment. Instead, new owners Bruce Schweizer and Matthew Gianniny (Dutch Inn, LLC) committed to a project that would be both economically viable and retain the structure's historical integrity. The restoration contributes to downtown vitality by adding 14 living units and a retail space. *Honored: Dutch Inn, LLC.*



Dutch Inn, Lexington

Better Development Symposium Features Speakers

On March 22, VCC welcomed planners, developers, and officials from throughout the Shenandoah Valley to Staunton's Stonewall Jackson Hotel for its Better Development Symposium. Guest speakers, open discussion, and walking tours made up the program.

Luncheon speaker Stewart Schwartz, executive director of the Coalition for Smarter Growth in Washington, D.C., kicked off with a riveting slide show "Blueprint for Smarter Growth" showing visual choices on how to develop. His mantra: "Help development go to the right places so there's less pressure on the wrong places." He raised the concept of geographic metrics, such as how much land do you need to accommodate new growth and how much can you provide infrastructure for? In one slide, the entire downtown mall of Charlottesville with all its economic activity was overlaid within a single site on Rt. 29 north. Another slide showed how concentric circles of commuting range bring in exponentially greater acreage with each increase in radius. This commuting range now reaches into the Valley, increasing land speculation. He described innovative ways that other communities in the greater region are coping with growth challenges.

Jerry Austin of Miller Associates next described the challenges and satisfaction of redeveloping quality older properties in urban areas. The firm is redeveloping the original Western State property in

Staunton into a combination of rehabbed historic buildings and compatible new structures.

Planner Sara Hollberg covered the State of Better Models in the Valley. She found many positive projects, particularly in downtowns, but little progress on changing the character of new development. Communities experiencing the highest growth pressure seem the least likely to put forward good examples.

Conference attendees enjoyed the rich tapestry of downtown Staunton by foot and trolley before returning for the presentation of the Better Models awards.

(Clockwise) Stewart Schwartz, tour of the Wharf district, Jerry Austin.



City Exchange Building, Harrisonburg

and professional office space. This project has brought vitality to the north end of downtown and proved the viability of lofts in the area.

Honored: Developers Andrew Forward and Barry Kelley and restaurant owners Steve and Cookie Flack.

Best Downtown Redevelopment Project

City Exchange Building, Harrisonburg

This immense four-story brick warehouse built in 1911 was renovated to include a restaurant, lofts, and office space. Originally the City (Produce) Exchange, one of the largest poultry fattening plants under one roof in the U.S., the building later was home to Wetsel Seed Inc. Now the high ceilings, large interior timber supports, and original windows grace 35 loft apartments, an upscale restaurant,

Outstanding Community Initiative

The Highland Center, Town of Monterey

Highland County's old high school now is a business and community incubator thanks to the resourcefulness of a group of local citizens. The nonprofit Highland Center purchased the vacant building in 1997 and uses it as a catalyst for cultural and economic development. The Center houses four businesses and five nonprofit tenants. It also runs an incubator kitchen, a farmers' market, and



Highland Center, Monterey

youth employment program. The building's auditorium is often used for concerts, theater productions, meetings, and community events. Renovation plans will maintain the integrity of the 1922 neoclassical landmark which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2002.

Honored: The Highland Center Board.

Best Innovation in Transportation

Hawthorne Street Bridge Renovation

The Hawthorne Street Bridge in Covington was built in the late 1800s and is one of the few remaining examples of the Phoenix type truss. Even as improvements clearly became necessary, the city stood firm in wanting to retain its historic features. Fortunately, they found a way to renovate this historic bridge and allow it to continue to serve the community. The key was a newly designed fiber-reinforced polymer (RFB) deck. Designed at Virginia Tech specifically for this project, this extremely lightweight deck enabled the bridge weight limit to be increased from 5



Hawthorne Street Railroad Crossing, Covington

tons to 20 tons. It is currently the only one of its kind in Virginia. Total project cost was \$2.2 million. *Honored: Virginia Department of Transportation, City of Covington.*

Best Community Park

Heritage Park in Broadway

The new Heritage Park in the Town of Broadway lies along Linville Creek immediately adjacent to the downtown. This five-acre park protects precious green space in a strategic location and provides a cohesive pedestrian link between commercial, residential, and public places. It connects to an existing park, a large subdivision, and an elementary school through existing sidewalks and the



Heritage Park, Broadway

initial phase of a greenway. Amenities include the first phase of the Linville Creek Greenway, an activity field, a pedestrian foot bridge over the creek, picnic shelter, 'tot lot,' sand volleyball court, basketball court, horse shoe pits, and informational kiosks. *Honored: Town of Broadway.*

Excellent Public Amenity

Jackson River Recreation / Sport Complex

With its Jackson River Recreation / Sport Complex, the City of Covington has hit a home run for both economic development and quality of life. The 50-acre tract, bordering the scenic Jackson River and set against beautiful mountain views, offers both active and passive recreational uses, including athletic facilities of a caliber to attract major tournaments from March to November. These amenities improve the quality of life for residents and the visitors boost the economy. This project is only part of the city's concerted effort to improve outdoor amenities. It has upgraded seven neighborhood parks and plans to provide pedestrian links between the south and north ends of the city and direct access to the Allegheny Trail that leads from the city limits to Warm Springs. In the planning phase is a trail along the river and a pedestrian bridge that would cross the river and enable connections to three other parks and a major commercial center. *Honored: City of Covington.*

Augusta Board Amends, Then Adopts Comp Plan

In April, the Augusta County Board of Supervisors passed its first Comprehensive Plan update since 1994. Citizens found much to like in the proposed plan, but the Board made a number of amendments the night they adopted it that seem to run against the core of the plan and its goal of directing growth. In particular, the Board added more development areas to the map, removed language favoring small and medium-sized industry, and removed a timeline for implementation.

Facing a compressed time frame and limited chances for input, farming and natural resource advocates had worked together through the Augusta Community Part-



Jackson River Recreation/Sport Complex, Covington

Best Public Planning and Design Program

Winchester's Corridor Enhancement District

Winchester's Corridor Enhancement District will have a significant effect on the future look and function of the city. The ordinance sets standards for site features such as sidewalks, parking lots, signs, landscaping, and lighting, and also addresses the location, orientation, materials and design of buildings. The intent is to improve the appearance of the corridors and increase walkability and interconnectivity.

The ordinance has been applied to four corridors, with more in the works. Each corridor is addressed separately. Extensive public outreach includes a city website that posts the ordinance, illustrated guidelines for each corridor, maps, forms, and 'how to' information for property owners. Buildings approved under the new guidelines feature an orientation to the main street with parking mostly in the rear and architectural designs that reflect area traditions in terms of roof pitch, building materials, and window design. *Honored: City of Winchester.*



Augusta residents look at maps at the January 18 Forum.

nership to make citizens aware of what was proposed in the Draft Plan and encourage them to attend the public hearings. VCC, with the Augusta County Farm Bureau and the Headwaters Soil and Water Conservation District, coordinated speakers and materials for an educational forum on January 18 that attracted more than 100 people.

Public support was strong for the draft plan and its core strategy of changing the development pattern to greatly reduce the rate of new lot creation in rural areas and encourage mixed use, walkable projects in urban areas. The economic development chapter, reflecting the recent outcry against a proposed industrial megasite, maintained the long-standing emphasis on small and medium-sized industrial projects. But the Planning Policy Area Map created a stir because it seemed counter to these goals. Citizens raised concerns over the size of the area slated for development on utilities and the pockmarking of low-density residential throughout all rural areas.

The Steering Committee and the Planning Commission incorporated much of this input into the final draft and map. The Board, however, made dozens of amendments, stripping away many of the compromises. More than 27,000 acres were designated back from agriculture to rural development, statements that would have cautioned against an industrial megasite were removed, and implementation was downplayed.



Building designs approved under Winchester's corridor guidelines.



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Series Brings Financing Experts



At the Financing Land Protection charrette in November, Mel Atkinson of Virginia Beach (left) and David Carter of the Trust for Public Land talk Purchase of Development Rights with a team from Rockbridge County.

see details on p. 2

New VCC County Stewards Hired to Help Landowners

With financial support from the Chesapeake Bay Restoration Fund, the Oak Hill Fund, and the Virginia Environmental Endowment, VCC is staffing up a new locally based conservation initiative. Part-time county stewards conduct conservation outreach at the local level and coordinate VCC's presence and outreach at public events such as county fairs and festivals. They also organize opportunities for landowners to learn about voluntary land conservation options. Our northern Valley team now includes Deb Truban, Jeff Green, and Katherine Pfeifer. Debbie Judd is assisting us in Page County. Genevieve Goss heads up efforts in the southern Valley.

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