



## Landowners Protect Close to 20,000 Acres in 2007

Virginia and the Valley posted another impressive year for conservation easements in 2007. Virginia is now 55% of the way towards achieving the Governor's goal of 400,000 new acres in easement in four years, with two years left to go. In the Valley region, 83 easements were placed covering 19,752 acres. Most of these (69 easements and 16,159 acres) were recorded by the Virginia Outdoors Foundation (VOF). The number of VOF easements was fewer than last year, but an increase in average size kept the total acreage gain strong. Nearly a third of the VOF easements in 2007 were from the Valley region.

Increasingly, other organizations also are actively working to conserve land in the Valley. In addition to VOF,

six organizations held easements in the Valley last year, generating an additional 14 easements on 3,593 acres. VCC shares responsibility for 10 new easements totaling 1,785 acres, in conjunction with VOF.

Holders of 2007 Easements	Acreage	Number of Easements	Counties
Va. Dept. of Conservation and Recreation	115	3	Augusta, Clarke
Potomac Conservancy	77	1	Shenandoah
Va. Dept. of Historic Resources	290	4	Augusta, Frederick, Bath, Page
Ward Burton Nature Foundation	68	1	Augusta
Warren County	756	1	Warren
The Nature Conservancy	2,287	4	Bath, Highland
The Virginia Outdoors Foundation *VCC co-holds 10 of these	16,159	69	All
<b>Total</b>	<b>19,752</b>	<b>83</b>	

See page 3 for table showing 2007 Conservation Easements in the Valley Region.

## Land Stewardship a Growing VCC Responsibility

The conserved resources on ten of the properties protected by conservation easements donated in the Valley in 2007 will be the perpetual responsibility of both VCC and the Virginia Outdoors Foundation (VOF). These ten easements total 1,785 acres and span five counties. (See page 2 for a profile on two of these new easements.)

This brings the total number of properties on which VCC shares a stewardship role to 98, covering just shy of 14,000 acres. The majority (69 easements protecting 12,700 acres) are 'whole farm easements' co-held with VOF. The remaining 29 easements are co-held with other partners. Many are riparian easements, small in size but quite important for water quality.

### Properties Protected Through VCC/VOF Easements in 2007

**Augusta:** Tim and Diana Clemmer, 141 acres.

**Botetourt:** Cave Hill Dairy (Jerry and Donna Henderson), 213 acres.

**Rockbridge:** Michael Cash, 229 acres; Thomas and Nancy Kerr, 172 acres; Anonymous (two), totaling 618 acres.

**Rockingham:** Ralph and Chris Bolgiano, 100 acres; Virginia Harris, 124 acres; Norman and Ann Jarrels, 125 acres.

**Warren:** Mary, Susan, and Maurice Bowen, 158 acres.



*Above: Gentley Farm, Warren County, farmed for centuries and now protected by the Bowen family. Below: The Hendersons have protected Cave Hill Dairy Farm in Botetourt County.*

## **Landowner Profiles**

# **Newest Co-holds Protect Oldest Farms**

Two new conservation easements co-held by Valley Conservation Council protect farms that have been farmed by the same families for more than a century. Both easements are co-held with the Virginia Outdoors Foundation.

### **Gentley Farm Conserved in Warren County**

Susan and Maurice Bowen and their mother Mary Bowen have donated an easement on their 158-acre farm in northern Warren County. Gentley Farm, believed to be the oldest farm in the county held continuously by the same family, includes a circa 1840 manor house and adjoins many other easements, creating a protected block of several thousand acres.

Valley Conservation Council and the Virginia Outdoors Foundation co-hold the easement. “I’m just so grateful that VOF and VCC have these tools to protect the Valley’s lands,” said Susan Bowen. “The idea of this beautiful family farm being carved up after I’m gone has made me always want to protect it. The Valley has such quality land and we’re under such threat of losing that land.” She describes easements as “a win-win situation for those people who are serious about farming

and not selling. It only makes sense to donate an easement and benefit from the tax credits that are there.” The family was able to use the Preservation Trust Fund, a fund that helps farmers and other moderate-income landowners pay for the upfront costs of donating an easement, such as appraisal and legal fees.

### **Century Farm Protected in Botetourt County**

A conservation easement in southern Botetourt County will permanently protect Jerry and Donna Henderson’s 213-acre Cave Hill Dairy Farm. The farm has been in the Henderson family for generations and was honored as a Virginia Century Farm for continuous family operation for at least 100 years. Jerry and his family have been named Conservation Farmers of the Year by Mountain Castles Soil and Water Conservation District. The easement protects prime Tinker Creek watershed, forest habitat, and a spectacular viewshed of the mountain that rises to meet the Appalachian Trail. Looking towards the



mountain, Jerry says, “No, I wouldn’t want to see that land ever developed.” He now knows the view he sees every morning as he tends to his dairy and grain operations will be protected in perpetuity.



**VALLEY  
CONSERVATION  
COUNCIL**

17 Barristers Row  
Staunton, Virginia 24401  
(540) 886-3541; fax (540) 886-1380  
toll free (877) 216-1782  
email: [info@valleyconservation.org](mailto:info@valleyconservation.org)  
[www.valleyconservation.org](http://www.valleyconservation.org)

*Executive Director:* John Eckman  
*Office Manager:* Kim Tinkham  
*Conservation Office:* Jackie Jamison  
*Northern Valley Stewards:*  
Deb Truban, Kathryn Pfeiffer  
*Page Valley Steward:* Patti Price  
*Upper James Stewards:*  
Genevieve Goss, Cliff Gilcrest  
*Land Use Planner, Editor:*  
Sara Hollberg

## VCC Joins I-81 Lawsuit

The proposed widening of Interstate 81 up to 8 or 12 lanes through Virginia is far and away the largest land use issue facing our region. Earlier this year VCC entered into a lawsuit joining with other conservation groups asking the Federal Highway Administration to keep open the options for alternatives to a massive widening of I-81 including full consideration of proposals to divert trucks onto rails.

Beyond the immediate impacts on farms, battlefields, waterways and communities, the project would also fuel further sprawling development just when localities are working to put better growth controls in place. As we join the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the Coalition for Smarter Growth, Shenandoah Valley Network, Scenic Virginia, and others in this lawsuit, we are celebrating what VCC stands for, including reasonable solutions for the serious transportation problems facing the region.

## Patti Price Is VCC's Page County Steward

VCC welcomes Patti Price as Page County Steward. She and her husband Julian manage a 300-head beef cattle operation and she raises natural colored wool sheep and markets their fleeces through local fiber festivals. She also raises standard donkeys as guardians for the sheep and goats.

They have implemented numerous conservation practices on their farm. Patti is a member of the American Livestock Breeds Conservancy and the Virginia Draft Horse and Mule Association.

## Conservation Easements in the Region\*

County	2007 Easements	2007 Acres	Total Easements	Total Acres
Alleghany	0	0	7	4,336
Augusta	11	2,333	86	12,906
Bath	5	1,395	46	15,091
Botetourt	6	2,372	32	6,630
Clarke	2	285	109	15,215
Frederick	1	209	16	2,711
Highland	5	3,282	17	7,705
Page	1	272	15	1,230
Rockbridge	27	5,126	136	22,675
Rockingham	3	349	19	2,547
Shenandoah	1	73	28	2,689
Staunton (City)	1	2	1	2
Warren	5	459	49	6,142
<b>Valley Region</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>16,159</b>	<b>561</b>	<b>99,879</b>
Virginia	220	60,175	2,573	461,579

\*Virginia Outdoors Foundation easements only, as of April 17, 2008. Various other organizations hold easements, but VOF holds the vast majority.

## Blacks Run Easement Recorded

VCC is flying solo: we have recently taken our first conservation easement without a legal "co-holder." The easement, donated to VCC by the City of Harrisonburg, protects a 17-acre riparian restoration demonstration site in Purcell Park on Blacks Run.

Tapping close to \$500,000 from the Aquatic Resources Trust Fund, this natural stream channel design project will begin this fall to restore sinuosity and diversity to the ailing creek by putting back the curves, bends, and variety of depths and structures one would expect in a stream of that size. The project also restores forested buffers to filter runoff and improve habitat, all in a highly visible public space. The educational benefits of this site will be available for the visiting public, including school groups, local college students, and professional restoration technicians throughout the region.

The effort is a joint project of Canaan Valley Institute, the Highlands Action Program, VCC, the Army Corps of Engineers, The Nature Conservancy, and the City of Harrisonburg. VCC is charged with the perpetual responsibility to ensure the restoration area remains in its natural state.

# Workshop Hones Tools for Conservation Staff

VCC spearheaded a regional workshop in April that brought together about 40 staffers from the various agencies that work with landowners on resource protection.



Lindsay Potts of Virginia Farm Bureau and Kevin Schmidt of the Virginia Office of Farmland Preservation talk with John Kaylor and Buff Showalter.

‘Land Conservation Tools for Natural Resource Professionals’ covered landowner and public policy options for land conservation, from rural zoning to purchase of development rights (PDRs). Conservation easements were addressed from the farmer perspective, including potential benefits and cautionary considerations as well as remarks from farmers who have placed easements on their farms.

Many thanks to Lindsay Potts from the Virginia Farm Bureau and Kevin Schmidt of the Vir-

ginia Office of Farmland Preservation for their presentations and for Virginia Cooperative Extension for hosting the event. Other cosponsors and participants included Virginia Department of Forestry, local Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Natural Resource Conservation Service, Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, and other agencies.

# Coldwater Summit Targets Trout Habitat

Conservancies and Coldwaters: A Strategic Summit drew nearly 60 people to Waynesboro on April 18 to focus on strategies to protect mountain headwaters and spring creeks in the



northern I-81 corridor. Co-sponsored by VCC and Trout Unlimited

along with several other stakeholding organizations, the day-long event featured speakers talking about land and coldwater resource conservation, restoration and preservation related to Trout Unlimited’s I-CARE initiative.

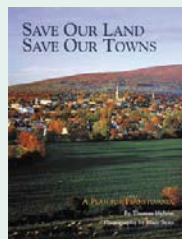
It was a fitting kickoff to the Virginia Fly Fishing Festival. Thousands flock to the side of the South River to learn about techniques to catch trout and other elusive fish that usually live in chilly, spring-fed streams. The Coldwater Summit brought out biologists, land conservationists, government officials, and others interested in protecting the Valley region’s coldwater habitats.

Participating organizations included Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, Valley Conservation Council, Mid-Atlantic Highlands Action Program, Potomac Conservancy, Trout Unlimited, Pure Water Forum, The Trust for Public Land, City of Waynesboro, and the Virginia Fly Fishing Festival.

## Upcoming Events

### Hylton to Headline Better Models Event

VCC’s Better Models Symposium, Tours, and Annual Awards will be held June 11 at the Stonewall Jackson Hotel in Staunton. Thomas Hylton, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Save Our Land, Save Our Towns* and nationwide presenter, will be the featured speaker at 4 pm. Come early for tours by trolley of ‘green’ sites in Staunton and stay afterwards to toast this year’s Better Models award winners. Events are free, but please pre-register by calling (540) 886-3541.



### Guests Welcome at State Land Trust Banquet

Join VCC members and conservation leaders from across Virginia the evening of June 12th for a banquet at the Frontier Culture Museum in Staunton celebrating “Conserving our Common Wealth.” We are proud to host this major event of Virginia’s United Land Trusts for the second year in a row.

For more information, visit [www.valleyconservation.org](http://www.valleyconservation.org), call us at (540) 886-3541 or email [info@valleyconservation.org](mailto:info@valleyconservation.org).

## VCC New Members

### Augusta

Steven Beecher  
Karen Hembree

### Highland

Keith Carson

### Page

Roger Houser

### Rockbridge

Philip Coulling

### Rockingham

Francis Tatem  
G. Taylor

Rural America  
Mortgage

### Shenandoah

John and Barbara  
Adamson

### Warren

Tom Lockhart

## Recent Grant Support

Agua Fund

Beirne Carter  
Foundation

Ceres Foundation

Campbell Foundation

Oak Hill Fund

Land Trust Alliance

National Fish  
and Wildlife  
Foundation

## Up & Down the Valley

VCC staff members have been very busy in 2008. As well as coordinating larger regional events, we've kept a full schedule of local educational efforts and displays at various conferences and fairs:

**Presentations:** 'Water Quality and Development' (Lewis Creek Watershed Advisory Committee) • 'Agricultural and Forestal Districts' (Shenandoah County Realtors Association) • 'Protecting Water Resources as Your Community Grows' (Shenandoah County) • 'Land Use and Farm Preservation' (Botetourt County Farmers Group) • 'Better Models for Development' (Page County Local Officials and Public Meeting) • 'Conservation Easements for Farmers' (Natural Resource Professionals).

**Easement Workshops for Landowners:** Warren County (Jan. 23) • Dabney Lancaster Community College (Feb. 6) • Botetourt County (Feb. 29) • Shenandoah County (Apr. 8).

## Letter from the Director

### It's the [Farm] Economy, Stupid

The farmers I meet show such dedication. They face tough markets, rising input prices, and pressure to sell their land for development. Nature, not always the most dependable partner, throws challenges their way. Yet Valley farmers continue to improve their practices, build their operations, and care for their land and waters.

Agriculture is a huge factor in the Valley's economic stability, providing around a billion dollars in annual receipts, using lands productively, providing jobs for thousands, and helping keep government service costs low. Unfortunately, this economy is not always part of the dialogue of economic development in our communities. VCC is working on several fronts to continue focusing on the needs of real farmers—those who produce and rely on income from their operations. We help landowners understand their options, like agricultural districts, and we encourage public policy, such as purchase of development rights (PDRs), to counterbalance the immense pressures to convert land out of farming.

Keeping farmers on the land is the best way to save the landscapes that they — and all of us — love. That is why VCC is helping to develop the markets, facilities, and demand for local foods in the region. Stronger demand for locally grown products gives farmers the opportunity to diversify and expand.

VCC, along with partners like Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE), Rockbridge Grown, the Harrisonburg/Rockingham Healthy Community Council, local restaurants, farmers markets, and growers, is working to launch a "Buy Fresh, Buy Local" chapter in the Valley. The recent Community, Farm, and Food Systems Conference in Augusta County drew over 200 participants, including food service professionals who can increase the demand for local products through the institutions they serve. Clearly this message resonates with farmers, consumers, grocers, and food buyers.

Local grown makes economic sense. Keeping food local keeps dollars local. As Eric Bendfeldt of VCE points out, if each household in the state spent \$10 a week on food grown in Virginia, then more than \$137 million would come back to support our communities, locally owned businesses, and farms.

So much is going on at VCC today. We are hiring new staff to meet the growing demand for sensible conservation and better growth throughout the region. Shrinking state budgets also mean VCC needs to be ready to assist other agencies when appropriate.

Thank you for caring about land conservation and supporting our work through your generous contributions.

*John Eckman, Executive Director*



# VALLEY CONSERVATION COUNCIL

17 Barristers Row  
Staunton, VA 24401

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

NON-PROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
HARRISONBURG, VA  
PERMIT NO. 75

## INSIDE:

- **Valley Landowners Protect Close to 20,000 Acres in 2007**
- **Hylton to Headline June 11 Better Models Event**
- **State Land Trust Banquet Set for June 12**

## Central Shenandoah Farmers Hear Lancaster's Experience

As they face the challenges of keeping farming strong here, Valley farmers can look to Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, which has had farmland preservation programs for more than 20 years. Two Lancaster farmers returned to the area on March 18 to talk about farmland preservation with farmers from Rockingham, Augusta, and Rockbridge counties. Gene Garber and Luke Brubaker spoke to 120 people at a workshop in Mt. Crawford and then to another 50 that night at Christians Creek Holsteins in southern Augusta County.

VCC sponsored the trip and worked with the staff of Virginia Cooperative Extension and Shenandoah Valley SWCD to bring the program to local farmers. VCC Executive Director John Eckman presented the ins and outs of conservation easements and invited local farmer perspectives. "Conservation easements are the only protection," said Rockingham farmer and easement donor Buff Showalter. "Zoning is only as good as the next election." Likewise, Kevin Craun invited others to join a nascent effort among farmers and agribusiness trying to "stop the cycle of farmer retirement and land loss." He called on the farming

community to get more engaged in discussions like zoning. "We need a complete tool box," he said.

In Lancaster, Garber described how gradually opponents of purchase of development rights (PDR) programs have been won over. Farmers, at first skeptical, now participate in such numbers that more than 230 farms are on the waiting list to have their development rights purchased. Support for farmland preservation is very high throughout the community. That includes developers. "They are 100 percent behind the program," says Garber, "because they have the certainty of where they can develop." He suggests that all citizens should embrace this kind of program. "Why? Because it will force good planning."



*Lancaster farmer Luke Brubaker talks with Rockbridge farmer and VCC board member Keith Holland.*