



VCC's Second Biggest Conservation Year

Valley Conservation Council accepted responsibility for 18 conservation easements in 2008, varying from a 692-acre property including Breathing Cave in Bath County to 17 acres along the bank of Blacks Run in Harrisonburg's heavily visited Purcell Park. These easements keep a working Rockbridge dairy in operation and allow a father to take his children hunting on the same land where he learned in his youth. We added two more properties to the well protected landscape of the Middlebrook-to-Brownsburg Corridor. One Rockingham County farm owner with significant fertile soils was able to leverage federal and state funds to partially pay for her easement. Landowners are helping to protect native brook trout and improve water quality by installing vegetated buffers along streams.

Most of these easements VCC holds jointly with the Virginia Outdoors Foundation (VOF), but four we hold by ourselves—a big first step for the organization. We recognized that there is increased demand for conservation easements and that VCC can fill a vital role by creating another option for property owners. The decision to increase our duties as a land trust comes with a cost. It requires new staff expertise and technical support in addition to financial resources to help steward properties in perpetuity. We are still in the process of building this program and expect to take a limited number of easements initially to ensure we incorporate the highest professional standards for land trusts.

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Shenandoah Valley Region Reaches Milestone

Landowners Reach 100,000 Acre Mark

In 2008, the Shenandoah Valley region reached an impressive milestone, exceeding 100,000 acres of privately conserved land in the eleven counties which VCC serves. Landowners have protected this acreage through conservation easements with the Virginia Outdoors Foundation (VOF). While this benchmark does not include easements accepted by other agencies and organizations, it is a good indicator of land conservation since VOF accepts the vast majority in Virginia. VCC shares responsibility with VOF for more than 80 conserved properties including 14 of these latest easements.

In recent years, landowners have shown increasing interest in conservation easements particularly in the Shenandoah Valley region. Nearly a fifth of the state's easements are in the region. Rockbridge, Botetourt, and Bath counties ranked second, third, and fourth in the state for acreage conserved last year.

Statewide, VOF conserved more than 64,800 acres in 2008 with over 19,300 of those acres in the VCC service area.

Conservation Easements in the Area Served by VCC*

County	2008 Easements	2008 Acres**	Cumulative Acres
Alleghany	2	1,070	5,406
Augusta	7	1,399	14,304
Bath	11	3,693	18,772
Botetourt	2	3,962	10,593
Frederick	5	1,500	4,212
Highland	2	491	8,197
Page	0	0	1,230
Rockbridge	23	6,472	28,900
Rockingham	1	107	2,654
Shenandoah	2	600	3,289
Staunton (City)	0	0	2
Warren	1	20	6,163
Winchester	0	0	115
VCC Region	56	19,317	103,837
Virginia	N/A	64,840	525,851

* Easements held by Virginia Outdoors Foundation (VOF).

** Includes acreage added in amendments to existing easements.

Thank You, 2008 Easement Donors

Properties Conserved by VOF and VCC

Alleghany County

Anonymous
Valerie F. and Delbert G. Helper
(390 acres)

Augusta County

Robert T. and Helen Hart Wise (130 acres)

Bath County

W.R. and Barbara B. Roderick
(281 and 67 acres)
Timothy A. and Penny C. Hawes
(114 acres)
Joseph L. and Betty J. Lockridge
(692 acres)* (part in Highland)

Highland County

Joseph L. and Betty J. Lockridge
(692 acres)* (part in Bath)

Rockingham County

Dorothy Lee B. Rosen (122 acres)*

Rockbridge County

Stone Tavern, L.L.C., et al. (295 acres)
Walter L. and Edith L. Martin (220 acres)
Virginia Sue and Patrick E. Hecht
(247 acres)
Martha Boyden Stuart,
Charles D. Williams, Jr., et al.
(467 acres)

Shenandoah County

Dorothy E. Boyer (419 acres)
Anonymous

* Valley Conservation Council (VCC)
co-holds with Virginia Outdoors
Foundation (VOF)

Properties Conserved by VCC Alone

Harrisonburg

City of Harrisonburg (17 acres)

Rockbridge County

William B. Snow (two easements, 70 and 49 acres)
Linda P. and J. Alec Wilder (80 acres)



VCC's Executive Director, John Eckman (third from left), joined a groundbreaking ceremony to restore Black's Run stream to its natural state. VCC accepted the conservation easement for this property within Harrisonburg's Purcell Park in 2008. Photo includes representatives from the following partners: Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, The Nature Conservancy, the City of Harrisonburg, Canaan Valley Institute, and the Friends of Blacks Run.

Land Protection (continued from page 1)

The heightened interest in conservation is evident. In 2008, VCC helped conserve 4,526 acres. This was our second biggest year for easements, behind only 2006 in the number and acreage conserved. We now share responsibility for more than 19,000 acres of protected land in the Shenandoah Valley region.

Placing a property under a conservation easement is a major decision for any family.

By choosing to limit certain types of development, they are helping to protect the beauty of the Shenandoah Valley region for everyone. "You give up your right to carve up your land," said a Bath County easement donor. In describing the property, he recalled, "That was a place that I enjoyed as a kid, and I didn't want to see it built up into 20 acres lots and sold...I could keep my piece of land just the way it was."

New Members

Augusta County/ Staunton/Waynesboro

Edward R. Anderson
Thomas Benzing
Bill & Sally Brubeck
Debbie Caldwell
James & Lucinda Cook
Erik Curren
Al Dahler
Walter & Marynell Eyles
Kenneth Keller &
Susan Green
Ray & Carroll Robertson
Ralph Ruedy
Mary Vermeulen
Malcolm and Pam Warford

Rockbridge County/ Lexington/Buena Vista

Grigg & Cindy Mullen
Adam Sichel

Rockingham County/ Harrisonburg

Bill Wonneberger

Shenandoah County

Laura Revitz
Anne Zirkle

From Afar

Anonymous (2)
Rich & Marlene Ayers
Anna Berdahl
R.L. & Diane Blackwell
Ray & B.J. Blunt
David Bobzien
Jeffrey Browne
William Carroll
Everett & Dana Carson
Joseph Fleig
Anne Fraser
John & Julia Gluck
Todd Hochrein
Thomas & Meg Kilgannon
John & Elizabeth King
David Livesay
Suzanne Mink
Ken & Stephanie Shipp
Nancy Stoner
John Tyburski

Get VCC's Newsletter Online

You can help VCC cut costs and save resources by signing up to receive the newsletter online. You will receive an email when each new edition is available as well as occasional updates on upcoming events and news of interest.

Simply sign up for our email alert at www.valleyconservation.org

VCC will not sell or share your e-mail address.

Call for Volunteers

Would you like to donate your time, talent, and knowledge to VCC? Here are a few of the ways you can help:

- Help us get to know landowners in your neighborhood.
- Consider hosting a farm tour of your property.
- Connect VCC with speaking opportunities for clubs and groups in your community. We can provide a number of programs focused on land conservation or better development topics.
- Help with a VCC booth at a local fair or festival.
- Help in the office.
- Organize and index our maps.
- Host a gathering for current and potential VCC members.

If you are interested in helping out, call Jill Templeton at 540.886.3541 or email jill@valleyconservation.org.

VCC's Wish List

Annual gifts from VCC's members provide close to half of our operating expenses. There are many other costs above and beyond these basic needs that could also use your help. Please contact our office to discuss these and other giving opportunities to assist conservation in the Valley.

- Help pay off VCC's mortgage note on our Staunton office.
- Contribute to VCC's building maintenance fund.
- Support an energy retrofit of VCC's historic office building.
- Support VCC's stewardship fund.
- Remember VCC in your will.

Many thanks to those who have joined VCC and renewed their membership. Please share the enclosed donation envelope with others who might support VCC's mission.

Meet Board Member Tom Lockhart

Thomas J. Lockhart was elected to the VCC board in 2007. His goals as a Board member mirror those of VCC's mission: to preserve the Valley, its scenic beauty and history, for future generations. We look forward to having his energy and expertise added to the cause.

Tom was born in Warren County and grew up on land owned by his family for seven generations. Tom's ancestor acquired the Stinson River Farm consisting of 310 acres with 1.7 miles of frontage on the South Fork of the Shenandoah River in 1796.

Tom graduated from Randolph Macon Academy in Front Royal, and subsequently received a B. A. degree from Bridgewater College, then a law degree from the University of Baltimore Law School. Tom practices law (primarily real estate related) in Westminster, Maryland, returning to his family farm in Bentonville on most weekends.

The family farm continues as an active farm, with beef cattle being the primary product. As a boy, Tom worked alongside family members on the farm. His father started the Massanutten Canoe Company. After his father's death, the company no longer actively participated in canoe rental but does still provide primitive campsite rentals along the Shenandoah River.



The South Fork of the Shenandoah River flows along the banks of the Stinson River Farm in Warren County

Tom is deeply attached to his family land and has spent hours researching its history. Prior to the Civil War, the Stinson properties encompassed approximately 2,000 acres in the Bentonville/Over-all area. Recently, Tom found a letter on eBay written in 1848 from one family member to another, with the postmark signed by a Stinson ancestor who was the Bentonville postmaster during that period. (He was the high bidder on that item—a spectacular find.)

Tom also is actively involved with Scenic 340, which was formed by concerned citizens when VDOT had plans to widen Route 340 through the Valley. As a result of his Scenic 340 participation, Tom became aware of the possibility of doing an easement on his family farm, and ultimately came into contact with VCC.

In 2007, Tom granted a conservation easement on the 300-acre Stinson River Farm in Warren County.

The family (his grandmother in particular) wanted to preserve their farmland and had been looking for a mechanism to accomplish this. For Tom, the land represents the embodiment of the last seven generations of his family and all the trials, tribulations, and difficult times they went through to keep the land intact and in the family. Tom feels there is no better tribute to the memory of his ancestors than this conservation easement. Tom said, "As my predecessors were, I am committed to preserving the integrity and natural beauty of this farm and land which has such special meaning to our family. This easement not only protects the farm forever but also contributes to a wildlife corridor and scenic river area which link the George Washington National Forest with the Shenandoah National Park."



"I am committed to preserving the integrity and natural beauty of this farm and land which has such special meaning to our family."

Will Congress Retain Expanded Tax Incentives?

Since donating a conservation easement is a major financial decision, the federal tax incentives that come with a donation help make easements possible. Last year, Congress extended through 2009 the expanded tax benefits for protecting private land. Qualified donations may allow landowners to:

- Deduct an amount equivalent to up to 50% of their adjusted gross income in any year (up from 30%)
- Raise that amount to 100% of their adjusted gross income if the majority of that income came from farming, ranching, or forestry
- Carry over the deduction for up to 15 years (up from 5)

These incentives do make a difference. According to the Land Trust Alliance, conserved acres nationwide increased by 36% (535,000 acres) during the first two years with the enhanced tax incentive compared to the two years prior

Why are conservation easements considered charitable donations? Opting for conservation helps maintain open space and keep the rural character of the working farms and forests of the Shenandoah Valley. Conserved properties also can protect the resources needed for a healthy environment, provide wildlife habitat, offer opportunities for recreation, and protect historic settings. These are significant public benefits.

The enhanced federal tax incentives are to expire this year if Congress does not act to renew them. We encourage you to contact your representatives and voice your support for land conservation.

New VCC Officers

At the February VCC Board meeting, three long-time VCC board members handed over the mantle of leadership to a new core of officers. We would like to thank the following retiring officers for their dedicated service: Mark Hollberg, chairman; Rick Shiflet, vice-chair; and Diane Kearns, treasurer. We welcome the new VCC leadership: Charlotte Stephenson, chair; Tom Lockhart, vice-chair, and Nick MacNeil, treasurer.

Speak Up for Tax Incentives

This is an ideal time to contact your Congressional representatives and ask them to make these incentives permanent. All of Virginia's delegation supported easement incentives in the 2008 Farm Bill.

Senator Jim Webb Jr. (D-VA)
144 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-4605
Ph: 202.224.4024 Fax: 202.228.6363

Senator Mark Warner (D-VA)
B40C Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-4601
Ph: 202.224.2023 Fax: 202.224.2530

Congressman Bob Goodlatte (R-VA/6th)
2240 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-4606
Ph: 202.225.5431 Fax: 202.225.9681

Congressman Eric Cantor (R-VA/7th)
329 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-4607
Ph: 202.225.2815 Fax: 202.225.0011

Congressman Frank R. Wolf (R-VA/10th)
241 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-4610
Ph: 202.225.5136 Fax: 202.225.0437



Young and old alike enjoyed the Native American Artifact Identification Day held by VCC and the Massanutten Chapter of the Archeological Society of Virginia in Rockingham County. Here archaeologist Carole Nash explains the differences in spearpoints brought in by a local resident of the Smith Creek area.



VALLEY CONSERVATION COUNCIL

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Conservation Officer: Jackie Jamison
Northern Valley Stewards:
Deb Truban, Kathryn Pfeiffer
Page Valley Steward: Patti Price
Central Valley Steward: Nate Clark
Upper James Stewards:
Genevieve Goss, Cliff Gilchrest

Upcoming Events

- Feb 27-March 1–Catch VCC at the 22nd Annual Western Virginia Sport Show in Fishersville
- April 17–Coldwater Summit in Waynesboro hosted by VCC and Trout Unlimited
- May–Better Models Awards ceremony (date to be announced)
- Sept. 12–Virginia Environmental Assembly (see www.vcnva.org for more information)

Nominations Due March 20th

Better Models Awards

Know a good development project that respects the local environment or builds community? Nominations are due on March 20th for VCC's Better Models for Development awards. Call the office or visit www.valleyconservation.org to see past winners and download the nomination form.