



VCC Releases Its State of the Valley Report

The Valley region, according to VCC's just-released State of the Valley Report, is seeing not only growing population but growing interest in using conservation tools. As examples, of the region's 45 agricultural districts, 38 were formed after 1990 and the number of conservation easements jumped tenfold between 1990 and 2002. At the same time, the rate of land development far exceeded the rate of population growth. Again and again the data point to conservation gains, but even greater conservation challenges.

Comprehensive in scope, but tailored to VCC's mission, the report offers data ranging from farming trends to which localities have public transportation. As many sources were tapped as possible, with information presented by county and city and analyzed for the entire region. The juxtaposition of agricultural and natural resource studies with demographic and planning data is critical. Says VCC Board Chairman Mark Botkin, "We

Easements Focus on Wildlife

Among the latest six conservation easements completed in the VCC region, several stand out for wildlife habitat protection. Michael Pelton and Tamra Willis placed an easement on 422-acre Bear Run Farm in southern Augusta County (about 10 acres are in Rockbridge County). The primarily steep forested land lies next to the Little North Mountain Wildlife Management Area.

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Tamra Willis and Mike Pelton have placed a conservation easement on Bear Run Farm in Augusta County.

need to make these connections if we want to seriously and positively affect how the region grows. Having data on these topics and in this format will help us understand the conservation challenges in each individual locality and also have a context for regionwide issues

Conservation Easements - 1990 and 2002 (Number and Acreage by Locality)

| County | 1990 | | 2002 | |
|--------------------|------------|------------------|--------------|-------------------|
| | No. | Acres | No. | Acres |
| Alleghany | 0 | 0 | 1 | 14 |
| Augusta | 0 | 0 | 36 | 5,505.98 |
| Bath | 5 | 2,183.93 | 17 | 8,716.83 |
| Botetourt | 0 | 0 | 7 | 801.07 |
| Frederick | 0 | 0 | 7 | 1,727.38 |
| Highland | 0 | 0 | 5 | 842.97 |
| Page | 0 | 0 | 6 | 489.76 |
| Rockbridge | 4 | 613.11 | 34 | 5,757.32 |
| Rockingham | 0 | 0 | 6 | 742.88 |
| Shenandoah | 4 | 272.52 | 13 | 1,519.34 |
| Warren | 3 | 730.92 | 20 | 3,755.26 |
| TOTAL | 16 | 3,800.48 | 152 | 29,872.79 |
| Cities | | | | |
| Winchester | 0 | 0 | 1 | 115 |
| VCC Region | 16 | 3,800.48 | 153 | 29,987.79 |
| STATE TOTAL | 340 | 71,038.25 | 1,205 | 224,578.17 |

Source: Virginia Outdoors Foundation; data current to December 31, 2002

VCC's research shows the dramatic increase in easements.

and opportunities."

Packed with more than 100 maps, tables, and graphics, the SOVR delivers an unprecedented amount of information. Of particular note is the Locality Ordinance and Program Checklist, which summarizes findings that are presented more thoroughly in the chapters.

See State of the Valley, p. 2

To get a copy of the *State of the Valley Report*, call VCC at 540/886-3541. (The publication is free, but there is a \$5.00 charge for shipping and handling.)

Easements cont'd

The farm contains a restored nineteenth-century farmstead and is aptly named, as black bear are known to roam the area. The easement stipulates a 30-foot riparian buffer along creeks, wetlands, and springs. Willis says, "Our plan is to improve wildlife habitat on our land using recommended best management practices of the Virginia Departments of Forestry and Game and Inland Fisheries. We are concerned about fragmentation of farm and forest land into smaller and smaller pieces. By putting our property into a conservation easement, we hope to insure that a piece of land will remain forever as viable wildlife habitat."

Also in Augusta County, two couples, Donald Plambeck and Shannon Smith and Donald and Patsy Wilson, placed an easement on 46 acres near West Augusta. The forested tract lies between the Calfpasture



Dorothy and Gerald Williams hold the sign for their newly eased property.

River and George Washington National Forest.

The other four easements span the region. In Warren County, Lynx properties, a conservation-minded partnership, secured an easement on 155 forested acres that buffer a boundary of the Shenandoah National Park and contains a portion of the Milford Civil War Battlefield. It also joins an assemblage of eight other eased properties in the area that collectively protect nearly 1,000 acres.

In Rockingham County, VCC Board Member Gerald Williams and his wife, Dorothy, protected a 38.5-acre tract near the base of Massanutten Mountain. The property is managed for pasture and as a tree farm.

In Rockbridge County, William C. Johnston and Paul B. Elliott donated a conservation easement on 40 acres of rolling farmland. This easement complements six others that protect lands on and around Jump Mountain.

Farther south, in Botetourt County, Maxine Rogers placed an easement on a 40-acre tract near Eagle Rock. The easement on this forested tract allows for use as public passive recreational park.

All of these easements are held by the Virginia Outdoors Foundation. Many of the donors are VCC members: Pelton and Willis, the Williamses, Plambeck and Smith, and the Wilsons.

State of the Valley Report cont'd

Chapters cover 1) Conserve Natural and Scenic Assets, 2) Maintain a Clear Edge (Reduce Sprawl), 3) Build Livable Communities, 4) Preserve Historic Resources, 5) Respect Local Character, and 6) Reduce the Impact of the Car.

VCC released the SOVR at a November 18 press conference in Staunton. It will be distributing the book this fall to local officials and interested parties.

A Sampling of Findings from the SOVR:

- More than a third of the developed land in the VCC region was developed between 1982 and 1997, as urbanized land increased by 55.1 % (1997 Natural Resources Inventory data). It took 5 years longer (1980 to 2000) for population to increase by 26.9%, not even half that amount.
- An estimated 19,033 new dwellings will be needed in the region by 2010.
- 93.5% of that growth is expected to be in the counties.
- Of the 11 counties and 7 cities in the region, all but one have sign ordinances. Seven prohibit billboards.
- A total of 4 counties and 3 cities have landscaping ordinances

(The report includes abstracts and comparative charts of sign and landscaping ordinances.)

Augusta Gains North River Agricultural District

North River Agricultural and Forestal District, passed unanimously by the Augusta County Board of Supervisors on October 22, covers 5,192 acres. The district spreads across a strong agricultural area in the north-west portion of the county and will preclude development for a 10-year term. It is Augusta County's fourth "ag" district.

VCC provided logistical support for educating and contacting the large number of landowners. Farmer Jim Mohler noted that "a few farmers could have gotten together and formed a district just themselves, but it spawned from that. I'm really tickled to see that even nonfarmers wanted it." About 25 landowners are participating in the district.

"Sign Up" for Protection

VCC now offers attractive signs to designate properties that have been protected by conservation easements.

Free to the landowners, the signs were produced by VCC with funding from the American Kodak Greenways Project. The sign reads "This property is protected forever through a conservation easement donated to the Virginia Outdoors Foundation" and gives VCC as a contact.



Annual Meeting Draws Large Crowd For Celebratory Evening

More than 180 VCC members and friends turned out for this year's annual meeting, held September 5 at Wheatlands in Augusta County. Host Michael Godfrey spoke about the importance of easements while Board Chairman Ryan Hodges recognized easement donors - a long and impressive list. The crowd enjoyed food, company, and this uplifting chance to celebrate the beauty of the area and the steps taken to protect it. To cap off the evening, Stargazers John and Genevieve Goss had a telescope set up for a spectacular view of Mars.

Thanks especially to hosts Michael and Victoria Godfrey and to musician Bert Carlson, DiFlorio Catering, Taylor Rental, Compton Design and Printing Inc. of Lexington, Buffalo Springs Herb Farm, Veritas Vineyard, The Emporium, Donald McCaig, Garvey and Deane Winegar, and Janet Lembke. Meeting sponsors were Conservation Partners; Frazier Associates; Wheatlands Farm; Conservation Services; Timberlake, Smith, Thomas, and Moses; Allen and Mary Rutherford Ferguson; Bill Noack; Linda Holden; and Buffalo Springs Herb Farm.

VCC Board Elections

At the annual meeting, six new members were elected to the VCC Board of Directors and three current members were reelected. Re-elected were **Joseph Claiborne Davis, Jr.** (Luray), **Genevieve Goss** (Botetourt County), and **James L. Flory** (Rockingham County).

New Board Members:

Harry E. Brookby (Rockbridge County) holds geology degrees from Washington and Lee University and Oklahoma University. He is an independent petroleum geologist and owner of Summit Development Corporation, an oil and gas exploration firm in Houston. Harry and his wife, Judy, divide their time between Texas and their 69-acre farm in Rockbridge County.

Greg Faust (Augusta County) owns and operates a horse business on 200-plus acres of conserved land in Augusta County. He holds degrees in computer science from the University of Michigan and Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He has served on the executive committees and boards of directors of two high-tech start-up companies and most recently was an executive of Microsoft Corporation.

Mark D. Hollberg (Staunton) works for the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation as the conservation district coordinator for the six soil and water conservation districts in the Shenandoah region. He previously worked for the Virginia Department of Forestry, serving private landowners. He holds degrees from William and Mary and Duke University. Mark was a founding board member of VCC.

Diane Kearns (Winchester) works with the family business, Fruit Hill Orchard, which operates nearly 3,000 acres of apple and peach orchards in Virginia and West Virginia. Diane is past president of the Frederick



Annual meeting guests enjoy a beautiful evening at Wheatlands.

County Fruit Growers Association and serves on the board of directors for Virginia Apple Storage and Winchester Warehousing. She is on the steering committee of the Community Consensus Coalition, a group working toward a long-term vision for the Winchester, Frederick and Clarke County area. Co-owner of Mountain Trails L.C., a backpacking and climbing outfitter in Winchester, Diane holds physics degrees from Wake Forest and Boston universities.

Richard "Rick" Shiflet (Augusta County) a full-time farmer, is past president and current board member of the Augusta County Farm Bureau Federation and has been president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer of the Virginia Young Farmer's Association. Rick raises poultry and cattle on his family farm in Swoope, where he has placed a riparian easement and established a forested buffer. Rick served on VCC's board in the early 1990s.

William T. Wilson (Alleghany County) is an attorney with Wilson, Updike, and Nicely Law Firm in Covington. He has chaired countless boards and committees and served in the Virginia House of Delegates General Assembly from 1974-1989. He graduated from Hampden-Sydney College, earned a law degree from the University of Virginia, and then served in the Virginia Air National Guard before beginning his law career.

Awards Deadline Extended: Nominations Due Dec. 31

VCC seeks nominations for excellent development projects (Better Models for Development) and for individuals who have made outstanding contributions to conservation (Valley Conservators). An awards ceremony will be held in early 2004.

For information or to get a nomination form, contact the office, 540/886-3541 or vcc@ntelos.net.

Seeing is Believing: Looking at the Valley with New Eyes

Dear VCC Members and Friends,

My first eight months with the Valley Conservation Council have been life-changing! I have lived in the Valley for 20 years. I tell my family and myself that we are blessed to live in the most beautiful place on earth. I've looked at the farms, the fields, and the mountains every day. But in eight short months I've developed new eyes. I SEE the Valley differently!

I see communities losing precious open space. I see farms – beautiful, rolling pastures – dotted with homes. Now I see the danger in the loss of farmland environmentally, aesthetically, and economically. I see empty shopping centers, gas stations, even houses. Before coming to VCC I drove by these ghosts without a thought for what might have been in that place before the concrete and glass.

The State of the Valley Report is the eyes of VCC. I hope it will soon become the eyes of the localities, planners, leaders, and citizens of the Valley to make positive changes in their communities. Look closely at the State

of the Valley and you too may see the Valley with “new eyes”.

This document, so crucial to the future of our Valley, is possible only because individuals and organizations have supported VCC financially. Every easement we secure, every workshop we sponsor, every community partnership we foster, even every word we print is possible only because our members care enough about the Shenandoah Valley region to join VCC and support our mission through contributions.

With your help, our children and our children's children will see the Valley through our vision for their future... a valley still green, open and prolific with farms, forest and wildlife. You make our work possible. We thank you for this commitment and for your future support of Valley Conservation Council.

Sincerely,

Melanie Griffis Tillison, Director of Development
mgvcc@ntelos.net

Yes, I want to preserve the Valley's rural heritage!

Please accept this contribution to VCC.
(Checks should be made payable to Valley Conservation Council).

___ \$30 Member ___ \$100 – 249 Sustainer ___ \$500-999 Benefactor
___ \$50-99 Sponsor ___ \$250-499 Patron ___ \$1,000 Conservator

Enclosed is my contribution of \$ _____

My company _____ will match this gift to VCC. My/our total gift will be \$ _____.

Contributions to VCC are fully tax deductible.

Name(s) _____ (please print)

Check here if you wish to remain anonymous and not be acknowledged in VCC publications.

Address _____

_____ State _____ Zip _____ - _____

Daytime Phone _____ Evening Phone _____

Email _____

I do not want to receive legislative alerts.

I do not want to receive notice of VCC events.

I am a landowner and would like information about Conservation Easements.

I would like information about planned giving/bequests/donating stocks or securities.

A financial statement for VCC is available upon request from the Virginia Division of Consumer Affairs.

VCC Holiday Open House on December 5

VCC invites you to its annual Holiday Open House, December 5, from 4 to 7 p.m. Join us a few blocks from the office at Trinity Episcopal Church's McCracken Hall (corner of West Beverley and Lewis Street). Please join us for fun and merry making.

Outdoor author Bruce Ingram will be signing his books, including The James River Guide and The Shenandoah/Rappahannock Rivers Guide. Poinsettias in varied colors (red, white, pink, or marble) will be available for purchase at \$8.00 for a 6-inch pot and \$14.00 for an 8-inch pot, with proceeds benefitting VCC. Call the office by November 25 to place your order.

VCC Staff Updates

Welcome to Jananne K. "**Nan**" **Fiebig**, VCC's new office manager. A Minneapolis native with a history and psychology degree from William Jewell College in Missouri, Nan has hit the ground running. She brings professional experience in higher education development and non-profit work. She and her husband Jeremy live in Staunton, where he is pursuing graduate work with Mary Baldwin College's Shakespeare program.



Nan Fiebig

Nan's enthusiasm has already been put to good use. "I am very excited to be part of the VCC community," says Nan. "I'm eager to dive into the good work that goes on here every day."

Congratulations to Melanie Griffis on her marriage to Tony Tillison.

Welcome back to Kathy Holm, Public Policy Director, and congratulations to her family on their return from China with their lively young daughter, June.

Many thanks to **Martha Ross** for her years of dedication and countless contributions to VCC.

Best wishes to **Bill Funk**, who left the organization this summer.

The search is on for a new Executive Director for VCC. For information, call the office.

New Members - October 2003

Rockbridge County/Buena

Vista/Lexington

Penny and Brian Ross

Warren County

Susan R. Bowen

Harry and Faith Krum

Shenandoah County

Edwin and Lori O'Neill

From Afar

Laura Fauver

Rod and Marcia Frohman

Strasburg Heritage Association Hears About Better Models

At its September 21 meeting, about 40 members of the Strasburg Heritage Association heard VCC representatives talk about "Better Models for Development." With Strasburg facing explosive growth and some potentially divisive development projects, the group contacted VCC. Valuing their small-town heritage, the group was especially interested in how to preserve historic resources. Sara Hollberg, co-author of the book produced by VCC and the Conservation Fund, delivered the slide presentation, while Melanie Griffis Tillison spoke about VCC's mission and work.



At far right, Melanie Griffis Tillison and Sara Hollberg pose with Strasburg Heritage Association members.

Prickly Pair Entertain

The Prickly Pair, aka Les and Locke Hamilton, brought their Wyoming humor and infectious music to the Valley October 28. About 50 VCC and Shenandoah Shakespeare supporters enjoyed



dinner and an intimate concert at the home of Victoria and Michael Godfrey. Thanks to the Godfreys, Allen and Mary Rutherford Ferguson, the Prickly Pair, Karen DiFlorio Catering, and the staff of Shenandoah Shakespeare for making this benefit possible.

Log on to VCC Member Info

To keep members apprised of local conservation issues, VCC would like to offer email notices and alerts to interested members. Quick connections will be especially important in the upcoming General Assembly season, when votes come up quickly and bill language changes constantly.

To participate, give VCC your email address by filling out the form attached or sending an email to VCC (vcc@ntelos.net). Your email address will be used sparingly and will not be shared or visible on outgoing email.

Art and Conservation Go Well Together at October Event

In a natural union of interests, VCC and the Beverley Street Studio School (BSSS) held an evening reception in the studio, amid paintings of the Valley's stunning landscapes. More than 150 members and friends attended the October 10 event, which was both fun and a successful venue for promoting land conservation. More than a dozen paintings and over 75 packs of notecards were sold. Proceeds go to benefit both organizations.

Attendees were treated to a delightful atmosphere, delicious food, and the full ambience of the Valley in 2D. Top among the volunteers to thank are Victoria Godfrey and Anne Sills for organizing and providing the food and bartenders Boyce Brannock and Donnie Moses. Thanks also to Zin Wines and Taylor Rental for their generosity.

Great stocking stuffer! "Views of the Valley" art cards (four large cards by different artists) can be purchased for \$8.00. Catch them at the Open House (gift wrapped), at the office any time, or call or email for them to be shipped for a small fee.

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Carole Baker, John Sills, and Virginia Dean enjoy the art and conservation reception.

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