



VALLEY CONSERVATION COUNCIL

VISION

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PROMOTING LAND USE THAT SUSTAINS THE FARMS, FORESTS, OPEN SPACES, AND CULTURAL HERITAGE OF THE SHENANDOAH VALLEY REGION



The 48-acre easement on Mole Hill includes the forested summit and north facing slopes shown here. The scenic hill helps define the line between new development west of Harrisonburg and highly productive farmland beyond.

Mole Hill Easement Fulfills Previous Owner's Wish, Protects Scenic Asset

A new conservation easement held by the Virginia Outdoors Foundation protects a highly visible portion of one of Rockingham County's most distinctive landforms, "Mole Hill." Dominating the landscape of Dayton and Dry River area, and also highly visible from much of Harrisonburg, Mole Hill is relatively unique in its geology and has served as a cultural touchstone in this farming community.

Mole Hill is an isolated hill just off Route 33 about four miles west of Harrisonburg. Well known to generations of JMU geology students, the core of the hill is a remnant volcanic plug made of harder, igneous basalt—evidence of younger, molten rock that rose up through the much older limestone bedrock of the valley floor.

Lowell Ulrich, who owned a farm that included the summit and north slope of Mole Hill, contacted VCC over three years ago for help in conserving his part of the hill. Ulrich shared his excitement about permanently conserving this land for use by people seeking a spiritual sanctuary and for the future benefit of the thousands who enjoy its subtly changing views every day. As Lowell proceeded through meetings with

VCC and Virginia Outdoors Foundation, everyone involved caught his infectious reverence for the place.

Sadly, before Lowell could see the property conserved, he died in a tractor accident. Knowing his wishes, VCC worked over several years to keep his dream alive while his estate was settled. Eventually, a very conscientious and equally conservation-minded neighbor stepped forward who wanted to purchase the property and conserve it for his own family and for the public benefits it provides.

That neighbor is Gerald Knicely, who grew up in the shadow of Mole Hill on another nearby farm. Gerald is pleased that Lowell's legacy can also be passed on to his own children and those of future generations. "My family has identified with Mole Hill for three generations. It is such a local landmark and is so much a part of the community, that we're very glad to be working with VCC and VOF to conserve it."

Knicely's easement covers 48 acres of forested land that is highly visible from Harrisonburg and Route 33. Now that the summit is permanently protected, VCC is committed to seeking further conservation of properties on and around Mole Hill.

Landowners Spread Easement Message

In October, Genevieve Goss, VCC's Upper James Conservation Steward, gave a presentation on conservation easements as part of the Mountain Castles Soil and Water Conservation District tour of Best Management Practices in the Looney Creek watershed of northern Botetourt County. Easement donors Don and Judi Race hosted the talk at their farm on Buckner's Branch. Among those present were a number of conservation easement donors: VCC Board member Kurt Kunze, John and Hallie Seibel, Jeff Henderson and daughter Courtney, Ellen Ford of Bath County, and others. They gave impromptu statements about why they had chosen to conserve their properties, providing authentic and moving evidence of the strong tie between landowners and their land.



Genevieve Goss helped lead a discussion of conservation easements after a field day in Botetourt County.

"Your Town: Conserve As You Grow" Comes to Botetourt

On November 3, VCC partnered with the Upper James Resource Conservation and Development Council to present "Your Town: Conserve as You Grow" at the Greenfield Center in Botetourt County. The workshop attracted diverse participants including planners, local officials, members of civic groups and interested citizens from Botetourt, Alleghany,

and Rockbridge counties. VCC Planner Sara Hollberg gave a slide show of examples of how small communities can conserve their character and become more livable as they develop. Over dinner, attendees were given the opportunity to share experiences concerning their own towns and suggest development initiatives. VCC Upper James Conservation Steward Genevieve Goss organized the workshop, with funding assistance from a number of small grants.

Call VCC at 540.886.3541 for information about bringing a program to your community.

Phillips Easement Protects Views, Prime Soils, Smith Creek, and Gateway into New Market

Thelma Phillips loves her farm and respects the tremendous effort her late husband put into farming for many years. He wasn't alone. She herself spent twenty years getting out well before dawn to milk cows.

When VCC approached her to consider an easement on the property at the Rockingham/Shenandoah county line, it just made sense. She sees the 196-acre easement as a way to help another generation of farmers maintain the tradition of farming that has defined so much of her life.

"I was raised on a farm and I married a farm boy," Mrs. Phillips said. "I would like to keep the farm so people in the community and travelers along Route 11 can enjoy the beauty of the rural area. I feel it's very

important to keep the farmland in agriculture instead of turning it into commercial development."

Chuck Mathias, who is purchasing the property from Mrs. Phillips, has worked this land for years. Mathias worked with Mrs. Phillips and the Virginia Outdoors Foundation to tailor an easement that makes sense for cattle, hay and small grain production.

The farm has over 60 acres of prime soils and fronts on Route 11 for 1,200 feet. The easement will protect the view from the road with a wide "no build" area. Its springs feed into Smith Creek, which runs along the property for nearly a mile and will be protected with livestock fencing and a riparian buffer. Smith Creek is the only federally designated "Showcase Watershed" in all of Virginia's Chesapeake Bay drainage.

“Water Augusta” Opens Speaker Series



Bobby Whitescarver (left), now with the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, and Ken Fanfoni of ACSA, spoke eloquently on Augusta’s water resources and how to protect them.

“This Place Augusta” offers Augusta County citizens a chance to appreciate the past, understand today’s trends, and take part in the future of their county. Valley Conservation Council is organizing the six sessions in coordination with the Augusta Community Partnership. Topics are water resources, history of settlement patterns, agricultural vitality, land use planning, conservation and development, and the future.

“Water Augusta” on October 17 opened with speakers Ken Fanfoni, director of the Augusta County Service Authority, and local soil and water conservation guru Bobby Whitescarver. Whitescarver brought home the pure value of the county’s rich water resources and illustrated the many watersheds that start in these headwaters of the Shenandoah and the James rivers. Fanfoni described the prolific wells and springs used by the service authority and described the complexities of treating and delivering water. Compared to when he first came to the county, now every source needs to be treated because of ‘surface influence.’ He explained how and why the county’s new Source Water Protection Ordinance was developed.

Groundwater protection relies on a clear understanding of natural features as well as human activities. This part of Augusta County has both prolific wells and prolific population growth.

“This Place Augusta” Series

(held at 7 p.m. in the Government Center)

- **Water Augusta** (Oct. 17)
- **Settlement Augusta** (Nov. 29) – Historian Ken Koons will speak on the role of geography and natural resources in the pattern of agriculture and the formation of villages and enterprises.
- **Town and Country Augusta** (Jan. 31, 2012) – Steve Saufley, regional representative to the Virginia Farm Bureau, will talk about farming. All citizens enjoy the benefits of our rural heritage, but maintaining the farming economy and lifestyle has never been so difficult.
- **Planning Augusta** (Feb. 28, 2012) – What’s in the Comprehensive Plan and how ordinances and other policies implement it (Augusta County planners).
- **Conserve as You Grow Augusta** (Mar. 27, 2012) – From farmland to natural areas and from riparian buffers and rain gardens to parks and greenways, conserved land can complement development and add value to the community (Sara Hollberg).
- **Future Augusta** (Apr. 2012) – Recap of previous sessions and discussion of the most important issues and opportunities for Augusta County.

For information, contact Sara Hollberg at 886-3541 or sara@valleyconservation.org.

VCC is grateful for funding for the series from the Community Foundation of the Central Blue Ridge.

Hurdis-Hershey Well Study Area



Emery & Garrett Groundwater, Inc.

Looking southwards towards Big Levels

Graphic courtesy ACSA.

Love this place? Please give.



VCC draws its financial support from the contributions of hundreds of donors throughout the region. Please consider an extra gift at the end of the year to help us expand our efforts and protect more land.

Donate Online It's Easy!

The "Donate Now" button gives you a convenient way to support VCC.

- Renew your VCC membership
- Make a donation on a secure site
- Print out a form to send a check
- Order books

You can also sign up online to receive VCC news and updates and view this newsletter digitally.

valleyconservation.org

Leave a Legacy Through Planned Giving

Do you want to leave a conservation legacy in the Valley? Valley Conservation Council can work with all of the standard planned-giving methods. We would be glad to talk with you as you consider your particular wishes to protect the land, resources, and character of the Shenandoah region.

VCC accepts gifts of cash, stock, mutual funds, insurance and other planned giving. In addition VCC gratefully accepts estate gifts and gifts made in honor or memory of loved ones. All contributions made to VCC are tax-deductible to the greatest extent allowed by law.

Methods for Leaving a Legacy

• *Include VCC In Your Will* – You may name VCC as a beneficiary in your will. You may specify a particular purpose to be supported by the bequest (to establish a memorial fund, an endowment fund, a program fund, etc.) or you may wish to designate its purpose as unrestricted. If you place VCC in your will, please let us know so that we may thank you now for your generosity.

• *Designate VCC as a Beneficiary* – You may designate VCC as a beneficiary of your employer-provided

retirement plan, IRA, life insurance policy or bank account.

• *Life-Income Gifts* – A Charitable Remainder Trust (CRT), managed by a trustee of your choice such as a bank trust department, provides a way of giving to VCC while retaining an income stream for your life. When the trust ends, the principal passes to VCC to fund a purpose selected by you, the donor.

• *Gift of Securities*: Gifts of long-term appreciated stock or mutual funds offer an efficient way to make a lasting contribution to VCC with tax benefits to the donor. Donating appreciated securities may help you avoid capital gains taxes.

There are other methods by which you may contribute to VCC. To determine the most favorable method of making a gift, VCC encourages donors to consult with their legal and financial advisors. We would be happy to work with you to design a gift or estate plan that meets your goals and assists VCC.

For more information contact Valley Conservation Council at 540-886-3541 or by email to info@valleyconservation.org

**Many thanks to those who have renewed their
VCC membership! Best wishes for 2012!**

VCC Members, Friends Enjoy Annual Gathering

The Frontier Culture Museum in Staunton was the place to be on September 9th for VCC's annual Conservation Celebration and member meeting. Guests were welcomed to the pavilion by the delightful sounds of Greg Moody's jazz tunes, the clinking of glasses, and the voices of friends in conversation and laughter. Following the social hour, VCC Board Chairman Tom Lockhart formally welcomed everyone and VCC Executive Director John Eckman gave his "State of the Valley" report. Sara Hollberg spoke about VCC's Better Development program. John then presented Kathy Holm with VCC's "Conservator of



VCC Chairman, Tom Lockhart, and outgoing director, Nick MacNeil, chat before the meeting began.

the Year" award (see article on page 7) and outgoing Board members Greg Faust and Nick MacNeil each were thanked for their many years of dedicated service to VCC.

VCC's Vice-Chair, Mark Botkin, presided over the election of new VCC Board members. The business meeting thus concluded, VCC's members and guests then enjoyed a truly sumptuous meal prepared by Eric Stamer Catering; the food won many high compliments.

Many thanks to the sponsors: BotkinRose, PLC, Conservation Services, and Myers and Woods Appraisal Group. We also thank Rockbridge Vineyards, and Staunton Steam Laundry.

Six Elected to VCC Board

- **Kevin Craun** is owner/manager of the 300-acre Van Ike Farm on the North River in southern Rockingham County. The third generation of family farmers, Kevin has implemented many conservation practices on the farm. He holds a BS in dairy science from Virginia Tech. Kevin, wife Patti and their young daughters are Hokie sports fans.

- **James Flory** founded Renaissance Stone Masonry in 1981, specializing in historic preservation, conservation and traditional stonework. James studied at Eastern Mennonite College and received a BFA in sculpture and a minor in mathematics from James Madison University. His great-great-grandfather moved to the Valley from Pennsylvania settling in the Frieden's Church area of Rockingham County. James and his wife Yvonne recently purchased land in Highland County and have begun restoring the land and buildings.

- **Karen Hembree** is a resident of Staunton and also owns property in Rockbridge County. She has a strong interest in conservation and architectural design. Karen is active with the Staunton Music Festival, Staunton Performing Arts Center and Valley Children's Center. She is on the executive team of Sprint Corporation.

- **Ryan Hodges** and his wife Mary live on the Jackson River in Bath County where they raise trout, chickens and bees. Ryan is chairman of the Mountain Soil and Water Conservation District and founder of the Jackson River Restoration Foundation. He is a partner of Virginia Hot Spring Realty, LLC and Clarkson and Wallace, serving as principal broker.

- **Bill Jones** and his wife Lee Elliott live on an 800-acre property in Bath County that they conserved in 2008. Bill is a consulting hydrologist with Environmental Data in Warm Springs and the author of over twenty papers on karst hydrology and water tracing. Bill holds a BSF degree in forest management from West Virginia University and an MS in environmental science (hydrology) from the University of Virginia.

- **Judi Race** and her husband Don moved from Pennsylvania purchasing their Botetourt County farm in 1978. After hearing Faye Cooper speak about easements in 2002, they began the process of putting their farm in an easement. They have since acquired additional acreage and placed them under easement. Their interest in land stewardship and implementation of best management practices earned them the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation 2010 Clean Water Award.

Additionally, **Faye Crawford Cooper** and **Kurt Kunze** were re-elected to second terms.

Andreas Honored for Forest Stewardship

The Virginia Department of Forestry (DOF) recently presented Fred and Christine Andreae with an “Outstanding Forest Steward” award for their decades-long commitment to managing their properties in Page and Warren counties for the enhancement of forest and wildlife resources.

Presenting the award, DOF Area Forester Joe Lehnen praised the Andreaes for “demonstrat[ing] the land management and conservation practices that ensure the long term health of the region’s forest ecosystems.” Lehnen has worked with the Andreaes to create and implement stewardship plans for several large tracts they own along the South Fork of the Shenandoah River and U.S. Route 340.

In addition, the Andreaes and several neighbors have conserved large parcels of forest land in the Overall area that connect the forest lands of the Shenandoah National Park westward to the lands in the George Washington National Forest along the Massanutten Mountain ridgeline. Conserved through voluntary conservation easements, a tool available to private land owners to protect open space and working lands, these protected lands create a natural wildlife corridor linking the Park and the National Forest lands.

These easements and good management practices also protect the water quality of the adjoining river, safeguard stunning scenic views along US Route 340



Fred and Christine Andreae accept the Outstanding Forest Stewardship Award from Joe Lehnen of the Department of Forestry.

and the Skyline Drive, and preserve the historic Civil War Milford Battlefield.

In accepting the award, Mr. Andreae stated, “We aren’t foresters by birth. Over the years, we have learned a lot working with state foresters particularly with Joe Lehnen, who has been a wonderful teacher. We are excited to preserve and enhance these forest areas which contribute so much to the economy, to air and water quality, and to the natural beauty of the Page Valley.”

Faye Cooper Wins Leadership Award



Gerald McCarthy congratulates Faye Cooper on winning the Leadership in Environmental Conflict Resolution Award.

VCC leader Faye C. Cooper of Staunton won statewide recognition recently as the recipient of the 2011 Gerald P. McCarthy Award for Leadership in Environmental Conflict Resolution, awarded by the Virginia Natural Resources Leadership Institute.

Faye has worked in land conservation and natural resource protection for more than 30 years. In the 1980s she served as Director of Stewardship with the Virginia Chapter of The Nature Conservancy, coordinating the protection and management of Conservancy-owned natural areas statewide. In the 1990s, she helped found and eventually became executive director of Valley Conservation Council. Since then, VCC’s outreach and partnership efforts have significantly contributed to the permanent protection through conservation easements on more than 122,000 acres and thousands of additional acres enrolled in agricultural forestal districts.

Faye next was tapped by the Virginia Outdoors Foundation to open their Staunton field office. In her five-year tenure, she helped hundreds of landowners protect thousands of acres of

Continued p. 7

working farm and forestlands, natural habitat, and cultural resources. Faye currently serves as the Virginia Liaison for the Mid-Atlantic Highlands Action Program (HAP), a four-state initiative to build partnerships among state and federal agencies, non-governmental entities, and communities to conserve and restore the natural resources and ecosystems of the underserved Appalachian region.

She continues to successfully build partnerships and achieve conservation on the ground. Recent partners include VCC, TNC, localities, and other

organizations as she facilitates targeted solutions for strategically important natural areas. Projects include Purcell Park in Harrisonburg, ecological hubs in Rockbridge County, and the Smith Creek watershed in Rockingham and Shenandoah.

A sixth-generation Augusta County native, Faye lives in Staunton, where she is an active volunteer on various, local, regional, and statewide boards. The leadership award was created in 2004 to honor Gerald P. McCarthy, executive director of the Virginia Environmental Endowment.

Holm Honored for Conservation Efforts

At VCC's Conservation Celebration in September, Kathy Holm was recognized as Conservator of the Year for her important leadership role in over a decade of work throughout the Shenandoah Valley region. Many readers may recall Kathy from her position as VCC's public policy director from 1999 to 2004. During that time she became an expert grant writer, helping VCC establish several "community partnership" projects and dozens of other land conservation and land use initiatives. Both the Botetourt Community Partnership and its sister organization in Augusta County are going strong today, testament to Kathy's vision for creating a sustainable collaborative approach.

In 2004 Kathy left VCC to join the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service as the coordinator of the newly formed private nonprofit Shenandoah Resource Conservation and Development Council (RC&D) based in Verona. This collaborative enterprise serves the Shenandoah River watershed counties by bringing together the three soil and water conservation districts, the Pure Water Forum, VCC, the Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission, and the Farm Bureau to develop and assist with local projects that protect land, improve water quality, support the natural resource economy, and facilitate innovative community development.

With Kathy's steady guidance, the RC&D Council has been able to leverage millions of dollars for the region to assist with a wide range of projects. These efforts have garnered state, regional and national



John Eckman presents Kathy Holm with VCC's "Conservator of the Year Award."

awards recognizing Kathy, her assistant Lorraine Cormier, and the RC&D Council as a whole. Kathy's steadfast focus on productive, on-the-ground projects has meant the RC&D has had a hand in helping with the establishment of the Shenandoah Valley Produce Auction, several county conservation easement programs, the Friendly City Food Co-op, the Waynesboro and Harrisonburg Farmers Market, Shenandoah Valley Buy Fresh, Buy Local, numerous community gardens and agricultural research efforts, and an exemplary "adaptive livestock exclusion" program that has changed the options for farmers interested in fencing their animals out of streams and rivers.

Water and Woods: Check Out New Resources

2011 State of the Forest from the Virginia Department of Forestry describes trends, forest health, ecosystem services, forest management, urban forestry, forest conservation, and more for Virginia's 15.8 million acres of forestland. The state is losing an average of 16,000 acres of forest annually. See the report at <http://www.dof.virginia.gov/info/index-forms-docs.htm> or call 434. 977.6555.

State of Nation's River 2011, from the Potomac Conservancy, downgrades the Potomac River to a D, down from a D+ in 2007. The report (found at http://www.potomac.org/site/SONR_2011/index.php) cites "poor land use practices in the face of a growing population, ongoing struggles to control pollution, and a suite of new concerns, ranging from emerging contaminants to invasive species."



VALLEY CONSERVATION COUNCIL

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INSIDE:

- *Mole Hill Protected*
- Trio of Conservation Leaders Win Awards
- Six Elected to VCC Board



May You and Yours Be Home
in the Valley for the Holidays