



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



Huge kites soared above the farm.

“Kites and Critters” Draws Crowd to Farm

VCC’s “Kites and Critters,” held April 13 in Staunton, drew close to 300 area residents to a Bells Lane farm to enjoy a fun day outdoors as well as see conservation practices that protect water and provide native habitat. Urban dwellers and young families especially

came out. By all accounts, everyone had a wonderful time flying kites, petting a lamb, oogling creek critters, releasing baby trout, and seeing projects on the ground that restore stream health and provide quail habitat.

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Welcome VCC’s New Executive Director, H. Bruce Rinker

A 10th-generation Virginian and a native of Winchester, H. Bruce Rinker, Ph.D. has reported to duty as VCC’s new Executive Director. When asked about his aspirations for VCC, he responded enthusiastically, “I’m coming home! I wish to help conserve the unmatched natural, cultural, and agricultural resources of the Shenandoah Valley. I’ve been blessed to have traveled the world... but now I want to focus my skills on my home area. With our dedicated staff,

volunteers, and partners, the VCC team will start a new chapter for conservation in the Valley.”

A highly accomplished ecologist, educator, and conservationist, Bruce most recently was the director of scientific advancement and development, and the director of México Programs, at the Biodiversity Research Institute in Gorham, Maine. Previously, he served as director or chairman of several non-profit organizations, government agencies, and educational institutions.

He was elected a National Fellow of The Explorers Club, a Switzer Environmental Fellow, and a Fellow of the New York Academy of Sciences. He serves on a number of boards and advisory councils at home and abroad focused on conservation. Bruce’s numerous science education awards include “Outstanding Biology Teacher” from the National Association of Biology Teachers. He also is the author of many scientific and popular publications.

He received his B.S. in Forestry and Wildlife Resources from Virginia Tech and his Ph.D. in forest ecology from Antioch University New England.

Bruce looks forward to meeting all of VCC’s friends and partners in the coming months. Welcome aboard, Bruce!

Bruce Rinker is ready to put his unique skills to work at VCC.



Natural Bridge Acquisition for State Park Celebrated

State and local officials and conservationists gathered at the splendid 215-foot arch of Natural Bridge on May 12 to celebrate the successful transfer of ownership of the Bridge and exciting plans for it and surrounding acres to become part of Virginia's award-winning state park system.

"It's a privilege and an honor that my family has been a part of the ownership of Natural Bridge, which is an important part of the history of the founding fathers of our great country," stated Angelo Puglisi, whose family owned and managed the property for more than 30 years. Mr. Puglisi was lauded by all of the speakers for his stewardship, generosity, and desire to see the Bridge conserved for future generations.

In February 2014, the Virginia Conservation Legacy Fund, a subsidiary of Kissito Healthcare International, purchased the Natural Bridge property and pledged to transfer full ownership to the Commonwealth of Virginia once a state loan is retired. In the meantime, the landmark property remains open to the public with many new programs and visitor experiences in the offing.

In attendance were Governor Terry McAuliffe along with Senator Creigh Deeds, Senator Emmett Hanger, and Delegate Ben Cline.

As Senator Deeds stated, "There are few iconic natural features in Virginia – the Chesapeake Bay, the James River, the Shenandoah Valley, the Blue Ridge Mountains and Natural Bridge. Nothing ties our history [together more clearly]. It's only fitting that it's protected."



Governor Terry McAuliffe with Angelo Puglisi, former Bridge owner, and Jim Woltz, Woltz & Associates

Shenandoah County Leverages Funds to Conserve Two Farms

Shenandoah County's purchase of development rights (PDR) program has hit the ground running by enabling the permanent protection of two high-quality farms. No county funds were used in the purchase of a conservation easement on Island Ford Farm but the county's participation was required for funding from partners. The easement is coheld by the county and Potomac Conservancy. The 179-acre Virginia Century Farm includes a six-acre island and over a mile of river frontage on the North Fork of the Shenandoah River and is adjacent to Civil War battlefields.

The second transaction leveraged over 90% of the cost of securing an easement on Pleasantdale Farm, containing 313 acres with prime agricultural soils. The county coholds the easement with the Virginia Outdoors Foundation.

The county's PDR program is the most successful in the Valley. However, this spring the Shenandoah County Board of Supervisors decided not to provide further funding for the PDR program.

Pleasantdale Farm north of Woodstock was protected through the efforts of Shenandoah County's purchase of development rights (PDR) program.



Photo © Shenandoah County

Kites & Critters (Cont'd from page 1)

The event was made possible by grants from Pure Water Forum; Cadence, Inc.; USDA Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry Program; and Keith Campbell Foundation. A host of partners helped with exhibits, activities, and preparation: Friends of the Middle River, Virginia Department of Forestry, Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Augusta Bird Club, Headwaters Soil and Water Conservation District, Pure Water Forum, and many individual volunteers. Most of all, thanks to Carolyn Moore Ford for sharing her farm.



Photo © J. Tompkins



Photo © L. Weeks

Quality time with the creek critters helped this boy regain his curiosity for insects, reported his grateful mom.

This trout's headed for release in Poague Run.

Celebration Highlights Latest Century Farm

Farm owners from the central Valley gathered May 23 at "The Cedars," a Rockbridge County farm owned by Bowman and Abbie Cutter, to celebrate "Century Farms" that have remained in the same family for 100 years or more. A delightful mixture of Century Farm families participated from Rockingham, Augusta, and Rockbridge counties. Each farm and each family has a unique story, but this event gave them all the chance to be recognized and to meet others who have made similar commitments to their farm heritage.



Century Farm owners from Augusta and Rockingham counties enjoy social time in the Cutters' spacious barn.

Sandra Adams, Acting Commissioner of Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, and Andy Sorrell, who directs the state's Century Farm program, addressed the group and presented the Cutters with their sign, marking them as the 49th Augusta County Century Farm and the 1,292nd in Virginia.

"The Cedars," a 200-acre working farm, was acquired by Bowman Cutter's great-great grandfather in the mid-1850s. The Cutters' children are the sixth generation who "have spent a significant part of their lives there," according to Bowman.

He gives credit to his parents, who decided that the couple should buy out the rest of the family to keep the farm intact and in the family. "The hold that a piece of land can have on your heart," as Abbie put it, led the couple to VCC. VCC helped them protect the farm with a conservation easement donated to the Virginia Outdoors Foundation.

Many thanks to the Cutters and other landowners who value their land and their heritage.

Has your farm been in the family for 100 years? For information on the Century Farm program, contact VCC, or Andy Sorrell, Virginia Office of Farmland Preservation, andrew.sorrell@vdacs.virginia.gov; (804)786-1906.

New Grant Program Supports Local Foods Businesses

Valley Conservation Council (VCC) and the Staunton Creative Community Fund (SCCF) have funded eight projects through the Agriculture Cultivates Resilient EconomieS (ACRES) grant program. The grant recipients are farms and local foods businesses committed to excellence in water quality:

Aleta Springs Farm: a sheep and goat farm using funding to enlarge a driveway culvert, for greater stream health and farm access.

Cool Breeze Stables and Farm: an innovative vegetable farm at an established stable and riding center using funding to install a pond to collect runoff from driveways and the roof of a large indoor riding arena.



Holly Mayton, Malcolm's Market Garden intern, harvests onions alongside Daniel Malcolm. Holly's position is funded by an ACRES grant to help her learn about local food production.

Dancing Star Farm: a permaculture vegetable farm using funding to redirect driveway runoff with a water bar, new retention pond, and mycoremediation

to clean and rehabilitate water entering the property from other places.

Malcolm's Market Garden: a production vegetable farm in Staunton using funding to pay their summer intern.

Mt. Crawford Creamery: a local dairy in Mt. Crawford using funding to build a break room, to provide their 15 employees with better work conditions.

Nu-Beginning Farm in Greenville: a small organic farm and Staunton storefront using funding to purchase an open-faced cooler to display local produce in the store.

True & Essential Meats in Harrisonburg: a local meat slaughter and butcher facility using funding to build a website connecting consumers with available local meat from their client producers.

White Barn Company in New Hope: a family livestock and row crop farm using funding to secure a hammer mill to grind their own non-GMO feed, as well as custom labels and an auto-watering system for their pigs.

Each grant recipient has demonstrated practices that support excellent water quality, and each will work with the Staunton Creative Community Fund to improve their business practices. As a result of the ACRES program, Augusta and Rockingham's conservation-oriented farm economy will be \$24,000 stronger. An event in the fall will bring recipients together to celebrate and share their projects with each other and the community. This program was made possible by a grant from the Agua Fund.

Pipeline Proposals Being Scrutinized

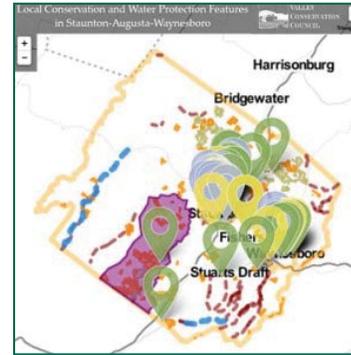
VCC, along with concerned partners and local governments, is urgently seeking more information about two major natural gas pipeline proposals. One, known as the "Southeast Reliability Project," is proposed by Dominion Power. If constructed, this large-scale pipeline (42 inches) would cross both Highland and Augusta counties, potentially through areas of significant natural and cultural value, such as Laurel Fork, the McDowell Battlefield, the Middlebrook-Brownsburg Corridor (a VCC nominated Special Project Area), and large portions of National Forest

that contain sensitive ecosystems and municipal water supplies. Another similar pipeline proposed by Spectra Energy would traverse Frederick and Warren counties. Both projects are in preliminary stages of consideration by the companies. If determined to be "feasible," they will go through an extensive federal review process. VCC will keep members informed as we learn more. More information and maps are available at the Shenandoah Valley Network website <http://www.svnva.org/>.

Click on Conservation: S-A-W Map Is Up

Want to see the good stuff? VCC's Interactive Conservation Map of Staunton-Augusta-Waynesboro shows conservation activity in the area. The map showcases 56 sites where property owners or local government have acted to protect water quality, habitat, or historic value.

In addition, viewers can choose layers ranging from agricultural districts and conservation easements to watershed boundaries and scenic rivers. The map project was supported by grants from Chesapeake Bay Restoration Fund, USDA Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry Program, and Keith Campbell Foundation.



View the map at www.valleyconservation.org.

We're Planning A Tribute to Faye!

VCC will make a tribute to Faye Crawford Cooper at the annual membership celebration at Natural Bridge on 7 September 2014. Please help us make the occasion even more special for Faye.

- Send personal cards or special photographs to VCC, 17 Barristers Row, Staunton, VA 24401 or e-mail these to sara@valleyconservation.org.
- Send a financial contribution to the Faye Crawford Cooper Legacy Fund (noting "legacy fund" on the memo line of your check).

Faye Crawford Cooper Legacy Fund

Conservation That Makes a Difference!

A legacy fund has been created by the VCC board of directors to honor the exceptional conservation work of **Faye Crawford Cooper** throughout the Shenandoah Valley.

As one of VCC's co-founders, and its 2nd and 6th executive director, Faye helped to steer the 25-year-old nonprofit from possibility to reality as a major player in the valley for the protection of its **unsurpassed agricultural, biological, and cultural heritage**.

The fund was seeded by a generous gift from long-time VCC supporters, **Bill and Lisa Moore**. As Bill explained, "Thanks to the tireless efforts of Faye and her colleagues at VCC, future generations will be able to enjoy the valley's pastoral beauty and agricultural legacy."

VCC board president **Mark Botkin** added, "Faye changed the face of conservation in Virginia."

The legacy fund helps to **ensure VCC's position as a major conservation player for years to come**. Already it provides support for saving

land, improving development, conserving resources, and educating young people and the public in the VCC's 11-county service area.

Our goal for the Faye Crawford Cooper Legacy Fund: **\$100,000**. And already we're halfway toward that goal!

Will you help us?

Please consider making a **meaningful gift** today to the legacy fund. To make a gift, please write a check to VCC and note the fund on the memo line. Your generosity will help support conservation in Virginia that makes a difference today and tomorrow.

Thank you!

Faye and Bruce





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Save the Date for VCC's Annual Conservation Celebration - September 7

Plan now to attend VCC's Annual Conservation Celebration on September 7 at Natural Bridge. Celebrate the saving of the bridge and other conservation achievements in 2014. Participate in election of VCC's Board of Directors for 2015. Enjoy a program including tours and educational discussion of the bridge, caverns and the Monacan village.

Beverly Street Studio School will have artwork available for your viewing pleasure and purchase - all created at a "paint-out" at the bridge earlier this year.

The event will include a reception followed by supper and dessert. Discounted rooms will be available at the Natural Bridge Hotel for those wishing to stay the night.

You will not want to miss this fun and educational event at one of Virginia's most stunning natural wonders! **Mark your calendar today and watch for invitation.**

