



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



Photo courtesy Virginia Outdoors Foundation

*Hisey Easement in Rockingham County*

## Newest Rockingham County Easement Showcases Forest Restoration

After 65 years of marriage, W.E. and Frances Hisey reflect not only on their love for each other, but on their love of their land. "Life has been mighty good to me, so I wanted to give something back," declared Mr. Hisey, an avid outdoorsman since his youth.

Natives of Page County, the Hiseys retired to their 102-acre Rockingham County farm and have concentrated on converting the open land back to hardwood forest and wildlife habitat. Over the past decade, Mr. Hisey, a former employee of the National Park Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, has planted and cared for more than 10,000 hardwood trees. His careful, tireless management is reflected in the 80 percent survival rate of the seedlings.

In 2012, the Hiseys decided that it was important to permanently conserve this land that they have improved and tended over the years. Their recent conservation easement, held by the Virginia Outdoors Foundation, not only protects the reforested land and the scenic views along its frontage on US Rt. 340 from intensive development, but also contributes to the improvement of water quality. All of the property's more than 1,500 feet of frontage on the South Fork of the Shenandoah River is planted with a 100-foot forested buffer.

Mr. Hisey laments, "Wouldn't it have been smart if 100 years ago, someone would have said, let's not cut trees within 100 yards of the river." And wouldn't it be nice if every landowner in our Valley shared the land ethic clearly demonstrated by W.E. and Frances Hisey.



*W.E. and Frances Hisey displaying their VCC sign.*

# High Quality Marks Easements in 2012

The Valley region, along with the rest of the Commonwealth, experienced a relatively slow year in conservation easement donations. This is partially attributed to the sluggish economy and the Congressional delay in extending the enhanced federal tax deduction for easement donations. Nevertheless, the conservation values of the 25 easements donated in 2012 in our region are exceptional. Take for example the Hisey's easement featured on the cover page and the 175-acre easement donated by Paul and Sylvia Shirey near Middlebrook that conserves a working farm situated among many other conserved lands. Many other high-quality easements were given by devoted landowners and accepted by committed easement holders, including the Virginia Outdoors Foundation (VOF), Virginia Department of Historic Resources, Shenandoah Valley Battlefield Foundation, and the Potomac Conservancy (see easement table at right).

## 2012 Conservation Easements in VCC Region

County	2012 Easements	2012 Acres	Cumulative Acres
Alleghany	0	0	6,736
Augusta	5	723	18,746
Bath	4	1,202	26,462
Botetourt	1	572	15,667
Covington (City)	2	424	424
Frederick	1	188	5,618
Highland	1	50	13,880
Page	0	0	2,006
Rockbridge	5	635	37,186
Rockingham	1	102	5,520
Shenandoah	4	210	5,178
Warren	1	18	6,950
VCC Region	25	4,124	144,373

Source: Virginia Division of Natural Heritage (acres rounded)

## Act Now: 2013 Incentives May Not Last

The year 2013 is projected to be an outstanding year for land conservation in Virginia because of the continued offer of Virginia income tax credits and the extension of the enhanced federal tax deduction. The enhanced federal deduction allows an easement donor to claim a larger portion of the easement value (50% of AGI rather than 30%) for a longer period of time (16 years rather than 6 years) and allows farmers to claim a larger portion of the deduction. This incentive in

particular helps farmers and modest-income landowners who want to conserve their land.

The federal enhanced tax incentive was extended only through this year and is not guaranteed to be renewed again. **If you or someone you know is considering an easement, 2013 may be a good year to move forward.** Our partner VOF reports the 2013 line is growing long, so now is the time to act. Call VCC (540.886.3541) if you need assistance.

## VCC Sponsors Farm to Table Conference



Photo courtesy of VA Cooperative Extension Northern District Office

VCC co-sponsored the 2012 Virginia Farm to Table Conference: Food and Farming at a Profitable and Sustainable Scale, through our Resource Conservation & Development Program. Over 200 producers, buyers, stakeholders, and community members attended the two-day conference held at Blue Ridge Community College. Speakers and panelists addressed critical challenges surrounding a sustainable local food system while supporting collaboration, conservation, and community. The highlights of the conference included a featured presentation by Michael Shuman, author of *Local Dollars, Local Sense*, and the Buy Fresh Buy Local Networking Mixer which offered samplings of local foods. Plans are underway for the 2013 Virginia Farm to Table Conference.

# VCC Board Member Profile: Kunze Excels as Steward and Volunteer

When Kurt Kunze and his wife, Amparo, retired to Botetourt County in 1997 after Kurt's 30 years' of service with the Air Force and U.S. Agency for International Development, they sought quiet solitude in a rural community. They found the perfect location on a 150-acre farm near Buchanan in the shadow of Short Hill. Having grown up on a dairy farm in northern Illinois, Kurt was eager to return to a rural life after living abroad during the better part of his career. "Neither Amparo nor I had lived in one place for more than four years since we were teenagers and we desired to be part of a stable community," he noted.

Since moving to Botetourt County, they have devoted their time to renovating their 168-year old historic home and improving their property which harbors unique natural and historic resources. In addition to the historic dwelling, the farm features a Native American site from the Archaic Period and a portion of the 1830's Natural Bridge-Dagger Springs Turnpike. Its extensive natural assets include woodlands, wildlife habitat, and wetlands and springs that are headwaters of the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Recognizing the significance of these resources, the Kunzes took steps to conserve the farm, which lead

them to VCC and the Virginia Outdoors Foundation (VOF). They determined that a conservation easement would be the best way to preserve the integrity of their farm's valuable resources, and donated an easement to VOF in 2002.

The Kunzes' conservation easement includes specific terms that prohibit division of the farmland, limits the number of dwellings and other structures, and protects the integrity of the wetlands and forestlands. While timber management is permitted, any commercial timber harvest must include a plan to protect the quality of the surface water.

Asked about his easement 10 years later, Kurt says, "Our farm dates back to 1816, when Jacob Eversole, a Rockingham County native, bought the land and began planning to build his home. Amparo and I are but a part of a succession of owners and stewards who have had the duty and obligation to

maintain and protect this farm for future generations of Virginians. We are proud to have put our farm into a conservation easement as a way of fulfilling these stewardship obligations."

Kurt has served actively on VCC's Board since 2009. We are most fortunate to have this dedicated and exemplary conservationist serving as a VCC volunteer.



*Amparo and Kurt Kunze gather with their children Emily, Erik and Katia on the front porch of their historic Botetourt County home.*

## Botetourt Couple Hosts Easement Meeting

In February, VCC Board Member Judi Race and her husband, Don, hosted an information sharing event. Genevieve Goss, VCC Upper James Steward (right), explained how conservation easements can benefit property owners and their land.

VCC is planning to sponsor similar informal educational gatherings throughout the Valley this year. Please notify the VCC office at 540.886.3541 if you are interested in hosting or attending such an event.



# VCC Welcomes New Staff

Jill Templeton has returned part-time to VCC as the Excellence Enhancement Program (EEP) Advisor. The EEP is supported by the Land Trust Alliance and is enabling VCC to expand and improve its land conservation program. Jill previously served as VCC's Program Manager and is well suited to assist VCC in this important program-building effort. She also worked as a

fire effects monitor for two seasons in Shenandoah National Park and as the first coordinator for Project GROWS, a local youth gardening program. Prior to moving to Staunton, Jill worked with the National Parks Conservation Association and Tennessee Clean Water Network. She earned a Masters of Public



Administration degree from James Madison University and completed her undergraduate studies in Environmental Policy at Warren Wilson College.

Charlie Aller has joined VCC as the 2013 Senior Fellow from the Allegheny Mountain School. He graduated from Virginia Tech in 2011 with a degree in horticulture and has

since been involved in local food security in communities from Albemarle to Highland county. He is assisting VCC staff with all program areas as we seek to maintain the Valley's unique natural resources and to foster healthy communities.

## Please Renew Your VCC Membership Early

When you donate to the Valley Conservation Council, you help people in your community protect the lands that enrich your life — ensuring clean air and water, sustaining locally grown food, and inspiring you with natural beauty. VCC anticipates another busy and fruitful year of conservation here in our Valley. Renewing your annual support of VCC's work today will help save more acres and help us inform more citizens about land planning and conservation options.

Using the enclosed donation envelope will also replace an additional membership renewal notice this spring. You may also renew on-line at [www.valleyconservation.org](http://www.valleyconservation.org) or by calling our office.

### *More Ways to Help...*

- Donate appreciated stock
- Host a "meet and greet" to help spread the word
- Refer us to prospective conservation easement donors
- Share this newsletter with a friend
- Give a "gift" membership (\$20)
- Include VCC in your will – leave a legacy to future generations
- Line up a VCC presentation with your civic groups
- Order Chesapeake Bay license plates (funds conservation projects)



# Citizens Like Greenways and Green Spaces

Staunton, Augusta, and Waynesboro citizens turned out in high numbers on January 29 to learn about “Greenways and Green Spaces.” The highlight was the area’s only off-road trail, Waynesboro’s South River Greenway, now one mile long and soon to be doubled. The city plans for a full network connecting not just destinations, but economic development and quality of life. The greenway, says Waynesboro Planning Director Michael Barnes, “has been fabulously received. It has done so much of what we wanted it to do.”

Bonnie Riedesel of the Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission explained how the 2004 Central Shenandoah Valley Greenway Plan inventoried natural and cultural sites and provides a

framework for developing interconnected green spaces and trails. Bike the Valley.org, which describes 40+ bicycling routes, and the award-winning Fields of Gold agritourism program grew out of this effort.

Staunton Planner Amy Arnold described the multiple plans and ordinances stemming from Staunton’s goal of developing in a way that encourages a green environment. Among them are a 2009 green infrastructure study, the Richmond Road multimodal corridor plan, Peyton Creek daylighting, and low impact development requirements.

## Bike Staunton to Waynesboro and Beyond?

While citizens (and quite a few tourists) might dream of biking from Staunton to Waynesboro and on to the Appalachian Trail or through the Crozet Tunnel, actual projects are a long way off. Funding is the most obvious challenge. Speakers encouraged citizens to lead the way in advocating for plans and seeking practical ways to make progress, such as lower-cost designs, private sector and volunteer partners, and on-road markings.

The event was organized by Valley Conservation Council and co-hosted by the Augusta Community Partnership. For more information, contact [sara@valleyconservation.org](mailto:sara@valleyconservation.org).



Planners Michael Barnes (Waynesboro), Amy Arnold (Staunton), and Bonnie Riedesel (CSPDC) presented.



Waynesboro’s Greenways network (in green) would connect city parks along the South River and link to destinations beyond, including the Crozet Tunnel (at top) and a trout management area (at right).

## Download the Better Models Book

VCC now offers *Better Models for Development in the Shenandoah Valley 2010* in digital form.

The *Better Models* book uses real examples and nearly 300 photos to illustrate concepts like designing for water quality, building new urban neighborhoods, and reworking the commercial strip.

Go to <http://valleyconservation.org/better-development-better-models-2010/>



# VALLEY CONSERVATION COUNCIL

17 Barristers Row  
Staunton, VA 24401

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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:*

Faye Crawford Cooper

*Program Manager:* Ben Craig

*Development Officer:* Bob Barron

*Office Manager:* Sheryl Van Gundy

*Land Use Planner:* Sara Hollberg

*Upper James Steward:*

Genevieve Goss

*2013 Fellow:* Charlie Aller

*Excellence Enhancement Program Advisor:*

Jill Templeton

### Coming May 8 ...

## Green Infrastructure Symposium

**Save the date ...** VCC's 2013 Better Development Symposium will focus on green infrastructure planning for localities and will feature Karen Firehock of the Green Infrastructure Center.

## Awards Ceremony

That afternoon, the latest Better Development Award winners will be announced. Plan to join the celebration at the Frontier Culture Museum in Staunton. Call for information or check [www.valleyconservation.org](http://www.valleyconservation.org) for updates.

## New Members (as of 2-15-13)

### Augusta County/ Staunton/ Waynesboro

Diane Baker  
Nancy Blanton  
Madison and Katharine Brown  
Robert Clements  
Howard and June Ratcliffe  
Darlene Schneck  
David and Miriam Wenger

### Bath County

Ed Cook

### Botetourt County

Erik and Ruth Schwendeman

### Frederick County

John and Marjorie Glover

### Rockingham County

W.E. and Frances Hisey

### From Afar

Anonymous  
Jenny Harper  
Greg and Becky Porter  
Jamie and Alison Small

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