



VALLEY CONSERVATION COUNCIL

VISION

VOL. 23, NO 2
JULY 2013

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



Photo courtesy of
White House Farm Foundation

How Can A Community Conserve Its Natural Assets?

For VCC's 2013 Better Development Symposium on May 8, Karen Firehock of the Green Infrastructure Center (GIC) led a day of training on conserving a community's natural assets. "Green infrastructure" planning means incorporating the protection of critical environmental systems and other linked resources as a locality grows. The excellent program covered organizing a local effort, identifying and prioritizing natural assets, building community support, and creating maps.

A green infrastructure approach can also help meet regulatory and

economic goals. Michelle Virts of the City of Richmond explained how their GI plans link with storm water efforts, while Pat O'Brien and Ken Beyer described the economic impact of Luray's greenway.

Local officials, conservationists, interested citizens, and development professionals attended from across the region. All came away more convinced of the importance of such efforts.

Learn About Green Infrastructure: To find out how GI planning might work in your community, contact Sara



Groups practice doing a natural assets plan for a county.

Hollberg at sara@valleyconservation.org. The new *Practitioners Guide* can be ordered from the Green Infrastructure Center at www.gicinc.org.

Natural Bridge for Sale: VCC and RACC Seeking Public Solution

VCC, in partnership with Rockbridge Area Conservation Council (RACC), is responding to the recent news that Natural Bridge and the 1,600 acres around it are for sale. If not sold within a few months, it will be scheduled for auction in parcels in fall 2013.

When Thomas Jefferson purchased the Bridge in 1774 from the King of England, he recognized the iconic value of the massive 215-foot high limestone arch that is the namesake of Rockbridge County. He viewed his ownership as "a kind of public trust" and would "in no way want to see the bridge injured." We share Mr. Jefferson's sentiment!

Working with local, state and federal officials and other organizations, VCC and RACC are contemplating a plan to acquire the bridge and to protect the surrounding acreage. The ultimate goal is to move the ownership of the bridge and some of the surrounding acreage from private to public ownership, such as a national or state park, for the property's perpetual protection and enjoyment for all citizens. Updates on this urgent project will be available at VCC's website: www.valleyconservation.org.

Stay tuned!

Century Farms Celebrated at Century Farm

Valley Conservation Council celebrated the legacy of Valley farming families on April 19, 2013 with a luncheon gathering of farmers registered with the Virginia Century Farm program. In order to qualify, a farm must have been in the same family for over 100 years—an impressive achievement, given the ever-changing economic, technological, and cultural demands on farmers. The event was held at Virginia Commissioner of Agriculture (VDACS) Matt Lohr's family Century Farm and attended by 23 Century Farm families from the northern half of the Shenandoah Valley.

VCC thanks Gary and Ellen Lohr for the use of their farm, and our sponsors for their support: VDACS, Route 11 Potato Chips, Southern States, and F&M Bank.



Matt Lohr addresses Century Farm owners.

VCC Helps Plan Ag Networking Forum



Kevin Phillips of North Point Farms addresses the field trip participants.

VCC played a significant role in the success of the 2013 Chesapeake Bay Agriculture Networking Forum held March 4-6, 2013 in Staunton. Faye Cooper and Ben Craig were members of the conference planning team that coordinated panel sessions and organized field trips for over 100 conservation partners representing 60 nonprofits and state and federal agencies from Virginia, Maryland and Pennsylvania who attended the three-day conference.

Bobby Whitescarver, VCC Board Member, led one of those field trips showcasing the positive conservation outcomes in the Poagues Run watershed in the City of Staunton. Attendees on the other two field trips learned about new manure technologies and whole farm nutrient cycling. The conference is hosted annually by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the Chesapeake Bay Funders Network, sponsors of two VCC-led projects: Farm to Table and Flexible Fencing.

James River Expedition Visits Buchanan

The 2013 James River expedition was welcomed at its stop in Buchanan by Genevieve Goss, VCC's Upper James Program Manager. The expedition, sponsored by the James River Association and the Dominion Foundation, consists of three 8-day trips on the major sections of the James River. The teams represent 8 schools, including 7 teachers and 36 students, along with JRA staff, whose experiences highlight the importance of protecting the river.

The Buchanan stop was part of three 'Envision the James' forums which invite communities and individuals along the James River to help create a common vision for the future of the river. Genevieve has been participating in this program. More information is available at EnvisionTheJames.org



Students from the James River Expedition share their experiences at the Buchanan Envision the James forum.

2013 Better Models for Development Awards

Eleven development projects in the Shenandoah region received “Better Models for Development Awards” at a ceremony on May 8 in Staunton. Projects must exemplify development that respects local character, creates livable communities, and conserves natural and cultural assets.

“These projects show there are ways to grow and develop while also keeping the Valley a unique and beautiful place,” said Sara Hollberg, VCC’s planner. She notes that this group is particularly strong on creative redevelopment. *Awards in order from north to south*

Amherst Street Improvements & Green Circle Trail

“Outstanding Corridor Transformation”
City of Winchester

Winchester’s improvements to a mile-long stretch of Amherst Street have transformed the city’s western gateway into a beautiful and functional corridor. A “complete streets” approach blended major infrastructure overhauls with improvements that help walkers and bikers. A multipurpose trail, part of the Green Circle Trail, passes through the bucolic Museum of the Shenandoah property, which donated a right-of-way easement.



Amherst Street, Winchester

White House Farm

“Rural Heritage Award”
Scott Plein

The iconic White House Farm in Page County now has an assured future that builds on its deep historic and agricultural roots. Owner Scott Plein put a conservation easement on the 270-acre farm, restored the farmhouse and outbuildings, planted a 52-acre riparian buffer with native warm season grasses, and devotes a plant nursery to trees native to Virginia. To share all that the farm offers, he started the White House Farm Foundation. This conservation education and research center enables students and local groups to explore a wide range of topics.



White House Farm, Page County

“I had lots of ideas of what to do with the farm, but none felt right until I did a conservation easement.” Scott Plein

Toms Brook School Apartments

“Community Pride: New Life for an Old Landmark”
Town of Toms Brook, People Incorporated of Virginia

Toms Brook School has reopened its doors to a new community function, this time as 14 affordable apartments and community meeting space. The project took many partners and many years to achieve, but always had local support. More than 1,500 people came to the ribbon cutting, many of them former students.



Toms Brook School Apartments, Town of Toms Brook

“For a town of 300, we had 1,500 at the dedication.”
Toms Brook Mayor Phil Fauber

Fort Valley Nursery

“Building Community in New Construction”

Terry Fogle, Randy Fogle, Warren Schennum

Fort Valley Nursery is a place people love to visit. It's more than just an attractive setting for browsing plants. A garden café features local food, the venue is popular for after-hours events ranging from weddings to seminars, and the local farmers market is here. With its tree nursery in rural Fort Valley and its vibrant retail center in Woodstock, this local business contributes to both the agricultural economy and town livability.

“What’s meaningful is seeing how much people like being there. We like being part of the community.” FVN co-owner Terry Fogle



Fort Valley Nursery, Town of Woodstock

Indian Spring Wetland Park

“Best Town Conservation Area”

Town of Woodstock

This little wetland park protects a unique historical and environmental treasure right in town. The original town limits were marked by four oak trees, one of which stood in Indian Spring. In 2005, the town acquired the spring. The Woodstock Tree Board spearheaded the development of a park. With the help of many partners, the area was cleared of invasive plants, an observation deck was constructed, and educational materials were developed. The wetlands acts as a buffer to filter storm water runoff. The park protects a unique ecosystem of native plants and animals and provides an opportunity for the community to view them in their natural state.

“This was a labor of love and a labor of partnership: a special place made even more special.” Joan Comanor, Woodstock Tree Board



Indian Spring Wetland Park, Town of Woodstock

Modernboy Woodshop

“Outstanding Urban Industrial Infill”

Paul Borzellaca

The ultimate urban infill project, Modernboy Woodshop has turned an abandoned industrial eyesore into an eye-catching and productive complex. The old public works building was restored, a soaring new woodshop was constructed, and concrete was torn up to make several rain gardens. The tightly constrained and highly visible site is flanked by the railroad, a creek and other industrial uses and adjoins not just downtown but two historic neighborhoods.

“It restored the community memory of what this site was all about.” Architect Marc Paxton



Modernboy Woodshop, Staunton

Redevelopment of 1027 Richmond Avenue

"Best Corridor Site Redesign"

Tap Investments, LLC

The redevelopment of the former Tire Mart on Richmond Avenue resulted in significant design and site improvements. The redesigned building houses multiple businesses including a Massaki restaurant and Sweet Frogs. Improvements to parking, traffic circulation, signs, lighting, landscaping, and stormwater management meet the city's corridor overlay design guidelines. Paved area was torn up to make way for extensive rain gardens that absorb runoff from side and rear parking lots.

"The developers like to work outside the box." Architect Susan Lancaster



Redevelopment of 1027 Richmond Avenue, Staunton

McElroy Residence

"Most Creative Urban Adaptive Reuse"

Ty and Katie McElroy

Tucked out of sight in downtown Staunton, this contemporary urban loft was created from a 1910 brick garage with bare walls and concrete floor. Alterations complied with the city's historic district design guidelines. The new wood and glass entry, reminiscent of a store front, provides light and a shallow outdoor living space. A rooftop monitor adds additional light and height. The 1,260 square feet of living space features an open plan downstairs and a spacious bedroom and bath and small den upstairs. Making a home out of an overlooked and underutilized structure shows how residences can mingle seamlessly with commercial uses.

"We walked in and he was sold." Katie McElroy



McElroy Residence, Staunton

South River Greenway & Fish-Deck

"Outstanding Community Amenity"

City of Waynesboro

The South River Greenway connects the YMCA to the Dominion Shelter in Constitution Park. A fish deck near the shelter adds a riverside observation deck. The 0.9 mile trail, part of a plan to connect multiple parks, has proven immensely popular. These projects help redefine downtown Waynesboro as a place for accessible recreation and healthy living.

"If you have a trail like this I don't have to tell you how popular it is." Waynesboro Assistant City Manager Jim Shaw



South River Greenway & Fish-Deck, Waynesboro

Sigora Solar Company

"Commendation for Industrial Reuse"

Andy Bogdan Bindea and Shawne Cooke

As the location for its start-up company, Sigora Solar chose to reuse the chronically vacant 1890 Loth Stove Paint Shop. The company designs and installs custom solar energy systems. The panels on this building generate 15 times more energy than Sigora uses. The company's active presence is helping revive both local industry and a run-down part of downtown close to the new greenway.

"It's fitting that a hundred years ago this building was used for painting wood stoves; now it's being used for solar panels, the energy source of our day." Jeff Nicholson, Sigora Solar



Sigora Solar Company, Waynesboro

Clifton Forge School of the Arts

"Outstanding Small-Town Revitalization Project"

The Clifton Forge Company

The Clifton Forge School of the Arts occupies two acres and three buildings in the heart of the Clifton Forge Historic District. It serves citizens within a 50-mile radius with ongoing programs of instruction in the fine and applied arts. Courses range from sculpture to blacksmithing as well as drawing, painting, and music. CFSOTA hosts numerous activities and provides community meeting space. A gallery is used for exhibits and concerts while the lumber mill behind the school serves as a venue for musical events. The arts school adds momentum to the many other cultural destinations within walking distance, along with restaurants, shops, and lodging.

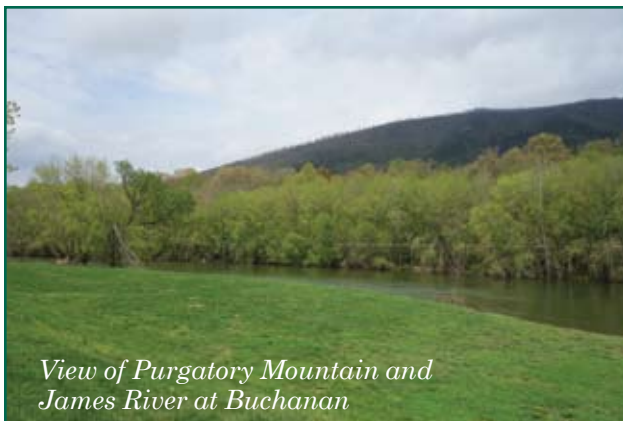
"We all listened and had one vision." CFSOTA's Helen Kostel

Many thanks to the Better Models Awards review committee, Michael Brown, Joan Comanor, Sara Hollberg, Kurt Kunze, Ann Kelly Morse, and Bonnie Riedesel.



*Clifton Forge School of the Arts,
Clifton Forge*

Buffalo Creek-Purgatory Mountain Named VOF Special Project Area



*View of Purgatory Mountain and
James River at Buchanan*

The Virginia Outdoors Foundation (VOF) approved VCC's and the Rockbridge Area Conservation Council's submittal of the Buffalo Creek-Purgatory Mountain Special Project Area. Located in both Rockbridge and Botetourt counties and providing the headwaters of the James River, this area includes one of the few remaining intact rural east-west connections across the Valley of Virginia between the Alleghany and Blue Ridge Mountains providing critical habitat connectivity.

This area has seen extensive conservation easement activity in recent years (over 19,000 conserved acres). Special Project Areas are particular geographic regions where protection through easements is especially warranted and where VOF expects to concentrate resources.

VCC Committed to Easement Monitoring



VCC's Charlie Aller takes a compass reading on an Augusta County farm.

a tree / grass buffer protection for a waterway, such as the Middle and South rivers, and also wildlife habitat.



Riparian easement along Middle River fosters wildlife and clean water.

This spring VCC monitored its Augusta County easements that are co-held with Headwaters Soil and Water Conservation District. Headwaters volunteer, Sandy Greene, accompanied by VCC's Sheryl Van Gundy and Charlie Aller, visited 18 properties with the dual purpose of performing annual monitoring to ensure that the properties are in compliance with the terms of the deed of easement and to gather data to complete present conditions reports on each property.

The Augusta County easements co-held with Headwaters are among the oldest of the easements held by VCC (dating back to the late 1990's). Many are riparian easements that provide



Sandy Greene surveys the results of the spring rains (this portion of property not under easement).

Allowed to regenerate naturally over the last 15 or so years, many of these riparian areas now boast lush undergrowth, maturing hardwood trees and, this spring, a bounty of lovely flowers. Multitudes of bluebells and numerous other native species were observed. Also evident were many songbirds, blue herons, a snake or two, and signs of abundant deer and beaver. One landowner reports golden eagles and two reported recent bear sightings. Wildlife benefits from the habitat created by these buffers and the buffers also help keep the waterways clean.

VCC Members, Your Support Makes Good Things Happen

As a VCC supporter, you can be proud of all the good conservation work VCC is doing throughout its 11-county service area. This *Vision* issue attests to the demands that face our small staff for advising, educating, stewarding and conserving.

If you have already renewed your member support for 2013, we thank you! If not, PLEASE consider renewing now. Our conservation successes benefit all of us who live and work in this magnificent valley. You can contribute by check, or by credit card either on-line at www.valleyconservation.org or by calling our office at 540-886-3541. THANK YOU!

Save the Date VCC Annual Celebration September 8, 2013

Join VCC members and friends to celebrate conservation in the Valley at the beautiful Bells Lane Farm in Staunton on Sunday, September 8, 2013.

3 p.m. Field Trips

A walk to Staunton founder John Lewis' gravesite and a riparian forest buffer tour

5 p.m. Reception and Dinner

Featuring local foods, live music, and silent auction



VALLEY CONSERVATION COUNCIL

17 Barristers Row
Staunton, VA 24401

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
HARRISONBURG, VA
PERMIT NO. 75

INSIDE:

- Symposium Focuses on Conserving Natural Assets
- 2013 Better Development Award Winners
- Natural Bridge for Sale



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
www.valleyconservation.org

Executive Director:
Faye Crawford Cooper
Program Manager: Ben Craig
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

Visit
valleyconservation.org
to sign up for
e-news



Announcing VCC's 2013 Photo Contest "For the Love of the Valley"

VCC is sponsoring a photo contest to showcase the beauty of the Shenandoah Valley region.

Categories are:

- Kids at Play Outdoors
- Life in the Valley
- Native Flora and Fauna
- On the Farm
- Splendid Valley Landscapes

Send in your best shot.

\$150 grand prize!

Contest ends 10/31/13.

Full details and rules at

www.valleyconservation.org

New Members (as of 7-8-13)

Augusta County/ Staunton/ Waynesboro

Lee Ann Beam
Michael Brown / Architect
Tom Carlsson
Bob and Mary Beirne Nutt
Sigora Solar

Page County EVP, LLC

Rockingham County

Farmers and Merchants Bank
Philip Maxwell
Betty Redmond
Richard Roller

From Afar

Fetzer Institute
The Hershey Company
Betty & Travis McPherson
Northwestern Mutual
Kate Olsen
Southern States Cooperative
VDACS
Roger Williams
Bob and Theresa Zwaska