



Page County Couple Protects Heritage, Provides Legacy

Alice Fisher can look out across the farm she and her husband Ken have conserved and rest easier now. She has memories of this land that stretch back beyond her childhood, into the lives of her ancestors. Their many portraits still hang in the hall of her family's home place.

"The farm came to my family seven generations ago through a grant from the King of England and has been in the family ever since," she relates. "We wanted to make sure it would stay intact and remain a farm when we're gone. We wanted the farm to be here for future generations to enjoy as well as to protect the wildlife living here."

The original land grant (circa 1728) to Mrs. Fisher's ancestor Philip Long included thousands more acres. The landholdings once extended from the Valley floor to the heights of Big Meadows in Shenandoah National Park. Along with archaeological sites, old foundations, and a log "slave house" structure, the farm still has the brick home (circa 1860) where she grew up.

Today, the Fisher's 463-acre farm is important not only for its history but also for its many natural attributes. Productive soils provide for strong



Ken and Alice Fisher have conserved their Page County farm. The property boasts abundant wildlife habitat on the South Fork of the Shenandoah River.

yields of diverse crops. Paddlers floating by on the South Fork of the Shenandoah enjoy spotting

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"Next Development Cycle" Proves a Smart Topic

VCC's 2010 Better Development Symposium brought together more than 70 people and a host of speakers to address "Planning Ahead for the Next Development Cycle." Attendees ranged from



The speaker panel closed with thoughts on positive directions for the next development cycle (from left: Terry Short, Jan Briede, Jim Vickers, Milt Herd and Karen Firehock).

representatives of 15 localities, private sector professionals, nonprofit organizations, and interested citizens. The central theme was how the economy, significant regulatory changes, and market trends will change development in the future.

Many of these factors point in the direction of compact and walkable development. New state transportation policies, Urban Development Area requirements, and the upcoming stormwater

regulations all call for paradigm shifts in the way projects are designed. Together these changes could lead to more cost-efficient and environmentally sustainable development patterns.

Speakers covered "Conserve as You Grow" (VCC's Sara Hollberg previewing a new chapter in the upcoming *Better Models for Development 2010* book), Green Infrastructure Planning (Karen Firehock of the Green Infrastructure

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VCC Unveils “Conserve as You Grow”

The upcoming *Better Models for Development in the Shenandoah Valley 2010* book will have a much expanded chapter, “Conserve as You Grow” to present concepts like smart growth, green infrastructure, and environmental site design.

“This is not about conservation OR growth,” says Sara Holberg, who is producing the book,

“but about connecting them and encouraging both in a positive way.” The reasons to do this have multiplied, from all directions, and the tools are getting better and better. The book will bring this out and provide lots of examples and illustrations.

Conserve as You Grow can apply at any scale. On the landscape level, reducing sprawl can

encourage better use of development areas while maintaining the integrity of rural resources and the farm economy. Within the growth areas, building at a higher density can be balanced by opportunities to protect the environment, provide recreation, manage stormwater, and enhance quality of life. The same can apply in site design, as shown in the picture below.



Balancing Growth and Conservation: Standard development (left) overrides natural features whereas environmental site design (right) mixes density and conservation to provide distinctive living and community space.

Symposium *(continued from page 1)*

Center), State Stormwater Regulations (Jan Briede, Stormwater Outreach Manager with the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation), Developer’s Perspective (Jim Vickers, CEO of OakCrest Companies), New VDOT Standards: Connectivity, Access Management, 527 Traffic Impact Review, and Context Sensitive Solutions (Terry Short, Acting Planning Manager for VDOT Staunton District), and Urban Development Areas 101 (Milt Herd of Herd Planning and Design).

The Conserve as You Grow and Green Infrastructure presentations showed how planning for conservation can play a critical

and positive role in overall community development. Developer Jim Vickers emphasized that developers will build what they believe they can sell, which he thinks will be closer-in, smaller, multi-purpose projects. Short’s eye-catching presentation showcased VDOT’s resources to help integrate land use and transportation. Urban Development Area (UDA) density and design requirements and new stormwater regulations likewise will encourage new paradigms in site design. As one speaker remarked, it is heartening to see such diverse players pulling in the same direction.

In the input session, localities described how they are moving in this direction. The hurdles are considerable, however, starting with funding for infrastructure (particularly sewer) to support compact development and ensuring local readiness in terms of codes, developer expertise, and acceptance of density.

VCC thanks these excellent speakers for their time and expertise. The presentations and more information can be found at www.valleyconservation.org/Better_Dev_Symposium_2010.html or by contacting VCC at 540.886.3541.

Virginia's Preservation Trust Fund (PTF)

Change Helps Working Lands Easements

Even with Virginia's strong incentives for donating conservation easements, many landowners have difficulty moving forward with an easement when facing upfront legal and appraisal costs of roughly \$3,000-7,000. For those landowners who qualify, Virginia's Open-space Lands Preservation Trust Fund (PTF) may help by reimbursing those up-front costs. Funding levels vary year to year.

The Valley region has had a high number of landowners who qualified to use the fund. Often these are owners of farms and forestlands that have been in their families for generations. VCC is proud to have assisted on 74 of these PTF easements covering more than 15,700 acres.

With VCC's urging and support, the PTF was set up by the General Assembly in 1997. By all accounts the use of PTF support has been a tremendous success. Not only has the fund helped reimburse upfront costs for landowners across the Commonwealth, it has also been tapped to provide much needed matching funds that combine with federal dollars to make occasional purchased easements possible. For example, as we reported in 2008, PTF support was matched by money from USDA to purchase an easement on Dorothy Lee Rosen's farm on the Augusta/Rockingham border

The original PTF legislation required VOF to always have a local organization or government entity co-hold the easements. VCC has served this co-hold-

ing role for many years. Once easement activity really heated up about five years ago, VCC was being called on to hold as many as 20 or more easements each year with VOF. We were honored to assist so many families who chose to protect their land in this way.

Senator Emmett Hanger successfully championed legislation in the 2009 session that removed the requirement for local co-holders on PTF easements. This proposal has now greatly simplified the process for VOF and the landowners they work with and reduced substantial duplication of effort between co-holding organizations.



Jill Templeton, VCC's Program Manager, monitoring an easement during the spring thaw and rainy season.

In 2009 VCC worked with VOF to hand over or "assign" our interest in almost all of our PTF co-holds to VOF. Our record keeping, monitoring, and stewardship responsibilities were all significantly reduced by this administrative change while adding no additional burden to VOF. The lands remain very well protected.

We appreciate the leadership of Senator Hanger and the help of the many legislators who are working to maintain strong easement incentives and

the capacity of state agencies to support voluntary land conservation for the long-term benefit of the Commonwealth's citizens. We also owe a great debt of thanks to the team at VCC—program manager Jill Templeton, intern Sandra Bottoms, and our volunteer attorney, Tom Lockhart—who worked tirelessly to make this transition possible.

Best Wishes, Jill - VCC's Program Manager, Jill Templeton, left her position in May to pursue other priorities. Jill has been responsible for moving VCC forward as a land trust by leaps and bounds. During her two years with the organization she helped revamp our easement acquisition and stewardship policies and procedures and moved us along the trail toward accreditation. Our future easement work will be built on the foundation Jill has provided. Everyone at VCC wishes Jill the very best in her future endeavors.

VCC Celebrates 20 Years



VCC Founding Members: (Left to right), Steve Talley, Emily Smith Talley (standing in for the late McKelden Smith), Mark Hollberg, Sara Hollberg, Rick Chittum, Bobby Whitescarver, Faye Cooper, Jim Brown

The celebration of Valley Conservation Council's 20th year kicked off with an evening banquet at the Stone-wall Jackson Hotel back in February and continues with other events throughout the region.

"When we started there wasn't even a Virginia Outdoors Foundation (VOF) office serving the Valley," says Faye Cooper, VCC board member and one of our founders. Today the VOF office in Staunton reports that the Valley region boasts four of the top ten counties in Virginia for permanently

conserved acreage.

People make it all happen and without our long-time members and the landowners who have done so much, none of this would have been possible. VCC will continue to identify and fill the gaps in the conservation quilt that covers the Valley region. We look forward to what the next 20 years will bring.

Many thanks to the many event sponsors and to those who donated items for our silent auctions. Thanks also to the 20th Anniversary Committee—Faye Cooper, Ann Kelly Morse, Mark Hollberg, Bobby Whitescarver, Steve Talley, Kurt Kunze, Denman Zirkle, and Genevieve Goss—for their tireless efforts resulting in the huge success of the kick-off celebration in Staunton. Our volunteers Carolyn Moore Ford and Liz McCue, and special consultant Paulyn Heinmiller and many others who helped out that evening also deserve a sincere "thank you."

Bill Noack Returns to VCC Board

At VCC's February Board meeting, William H. Noack was appointed to the VCC Board of Directors. Bill and his family live on a small farm in Maryland but he is no stranger to the Valley. In fact he previously served on the board. At that time the Noacks owned Brandenburg, a conserved historic farm in the Middlebrook-to-Brownsburg Corridor area of

Augusta County. Prior to that they had another historic home in Page County for many years.

Bill Noack recently formed his own consulting firm following a 37-year career with General Motors Corporation. He was GM's director of public policy communications, based in Washington, D.C. Please join us in welcoming Bill back to the VCC Board!

New Members

Augusta County/ Staunton/Waynesboro

ABL Landscape Architecture
Jennifer Coffman & Fletcher Linder
Community Bank
Dockery Clinic of Chiropractic
EdwardJones
Ken Fanfoni
First Bank & Trust Company
Vera Hailey & Chris Valenzuela
Jennings Gap, Inc.
Becky Kohler
Quality Inspection Service
Rose Cliff Garden Club
Shreckhise Shrubbery

Botetourt County

Stephen Clinton

Rockbridge County

William D. Payne

Rockingham County/ Harrisonburg

Victoria Bakker and Tony Hartshorn
Chuck Baril
Crawford Financial Group
Barbara McKee

From Afar

L.S. and J.S. Bryan Fund
Jason Espie
Michael Kelly
Mary-Jane Nase
Ida Rademacher
David Schwartz
W.T. Steele, III
Clint Stretch

Special
Anniversary Membership Rate
for New Members!

◆◆ 20 Years ◆◆
◆◆ 20 Bucks ◆◆

Join VCC this year for only \$20
Give the gift of conservation to
friends and relatives.

Valley Landowners Conserve More Than 11,000 Acres in 2009

The pace of land conservation in the Shenandoah Valley region increased significantly in recent years, and 2009 was no exception. Landowners placed permanent conservation easements with the Virginia Outdoors Foundation (VOF) on more than 11,000 acres. Rockbridge County continues to be a leader in the Commonwealth with 15 conservation easements completed last year, more than any other county. In another notable accomplishment, Augusta County now has a cumulative total of more than 15,000 acres of privately protected land.

Over the past four years, the Shenandoah Valley region has become a prime area for land conservation. Former Governor Tim Kaine achieved his goal of conserving an additional 400,000 acres, and much of this was due to the strong commitment of landowners in the Shenandoah Valley.

While other land trusts, including the Valley Conservation Council, hold some conservation easements, VOF holds the vast majority in Virginia and its activities are the best general indicator of land conservation activity. For the fourth consecutive year, VOF conserved more than 50,000 acres. This public land trust now holds more conservation easements than any other land trust in the nation, protecting more than 580,000 acres.

Continuing a Good Idea

Governor McDonnell Sets Goal to Conserve 400,000 More Acres

Governor Bob McDonnell made land conservation a top priority for his administration by setting a goal to conserve 400,000 acres in his keynote address at the Environment Virginia Symposium in April. This continued commitment makes Virginia a leader in land conservation building on the successful protection of 400,000 acres during the previous term. The goal includes public acquisition of land and private individuals entering into conservation easements. Achieving such ambitious benchmarks requires a team approach with involvement from all levels of government—federal, state, and local—as well as private land trusts such as the Valley Conservation Council.

VOF Conservation Easements in Area Served by VCC

County	2009 Easements	2009 Acres	Cumulative Acres
Alleghany			6,326
Augusta	3	938	15,244
Bath	4	583	19,347
Botetourt	4	4,153	14,746
Frederick	2	353	4,565
Highland	6	1,193	9,390
Page	2	502	1,733
Rockbridge	15	3,068	31,968
Rockingham			2,654
Shenandoah	3	348	3,636
Staunton (City)			3
Warren	2	98	6,248
Winchester			115
VCC Region	41	11,235	115,974

Valley Helps Meet Kaine's Four-Year Goal

Statewide Goal:	400,000 acres
Conserved Total:	428,587 acres
Shenandoah Valley Region:	89,172 acres
Top County:	Rockbridge with 30,673 acres

(Includes easements, parks, preserves and other conserved lands.)

Source: Virginia Department of Conservation & Recreation

These strong public and private partnerships will prove more important for the next 400,000 acres given the severely strained state and local budgets. The last 400,000 acres were conserved in large part due to a financial commitment

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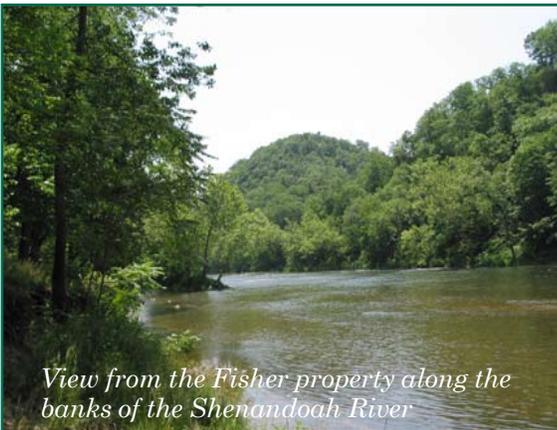
Fisher (continued from page 1)

A conservation easement is an excellent way to protect land and to make sure it will be here for generations to come.

~ Alice Fisher, Page County easement donor

song birds in more than 7,000 feet of the well-forested stream banks. Bald eagles soar overhead. The property serves as a significant wildlife corridor along the river.

The Fishers considered various ways to protect their land and attended a workshop VCC held in Luray. VCC shared the pros and cons of conservation easements and connected the Fishers with Kristin Ford of the Virginia Outdoors Foundation who worked with them through the details of their easement. VOF holds the easement on the land which limits all future owners to only one division of the property.



View from the Fisher property along the banks of the Shenandoah River



Historic log cabin located on the Fishers' Page County property

Up & Down the Valley

New Gas Drilling Proposed in the Valley

The Rockingham County Board of Supervisors is considering a special use permit request for the first “hydrofracking” gas well drilling site in the Valley region. This process uses large quantities of water which then must be treated. Significant concerns have been raised about water supply and the potential for pollution of surface and groundwater as well as impact on a swath of the Valley that has particularly high environmental and recreational value. But we believe the Rockingham County Board of Supervisors has every reason to promote this drilling to create a more sustainable local budget.

The Marcellus Shale formation, which holds potentially profitable natural gas deposits, underlays portions of western Shenandoah, Rockingham, Augusta, Botetourt and Rockbridge counties and extensive areas of Highland, Bath and Alleghany as well as most of West Virginia. Further information on the Rockingham permit and this form of gas extraction is available from the Community Alliance for Preservation at www.preserverockingham.org

Several states have raised concerns about the process. New York has halted drilling while further study is underway and EPA is considering hydrofracking’s impacts. Beyond the environmental concerns, substantial heavy truck traffic, forest fragmentation and public safety issues have also been raised in many communities.

Augusta Passes Zoning Package

The Augusta County supervisors in February adopted a sweeping zoning ordinance update that, among numerous changes, did away with Exclusive Agriculture zoning and added more potential uses in General Agricultural zoning, many by administrative permit. The package, developed by a board and staff committee, had a single public hearing in October. We applaud Augusta County for being on the cutting edge of land use planning that reins in sprawl and ensures ag vitality.

Rockingham County Begins Zoning Update

Rockingham has started a similar process. Its goals are to align the codes to implement the comp plan and to update decades-old language. The county has appointed several citizen committees to help develop strategies.

Valley Conservation Council Endowment Fund

Fund Provides an Enhanced Way to Protect the Valley Forever

In celebration of 20 successful years of land conservation, the Valley Conservation Council announces the creation of an endowment fund at the Community Foundation of the Central Blue Ridge. Through our work as the Valley's private land trust, VCC makes a perpetual commitment to conserving land. "This fund," explained Executive Director John Eckman, "provides an opportunity for our supporters to give above and beyond their usual annual gifts."

The creation of this fund is an opportunity for the community to join in VCC's commitment, helping to ensure that scenic landscapes, clean waters, productive soils and rural heritage are part of our legacy for future generations. The fund will develop an endowment to help with VCC's long-term responsibilities as a land trust. Faye and Peter Cooper have contributed to the fund and "know that many of VCC's members will plan to do the same."

The fund is open for donations by sending a check payable to the Community Foundation, PO Box 815, Staunton, VA 24402. For further information, contact John Eckman at VCC or Becky Kohler, CFP, President & CEO of the Community Foundation at 540-213-2150

VCC also has a fund established at The Community Foundation of Harrisonburg and Rockingham County. For information on this fund, please contact John Eckman at VCC or Revlan Hill, Director of Development & Community Relations at the Foundation, 540.432.3863.

SPOTLIGHT: NEW AGENCY FUNDS



Goal *(continued from page 5)*

from the Commonwealth to retain a strong, transferable tax credit and through more modest funding programs such as purchase of development rights (PDR) for localities and the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation. Virginia is one of only three states across the country with such a strong state tax incentive for land conservation that can be transferred or sold to a third party. PDR funding was available to localities that had adopted programs to hold conservation easements and had matching funds for farm

and forestland preservation, and the VLCF awards competitive grants to conserve land.

Over the last four years, the Virginia Outdoors Foundation (VOF) was responsible for conserving nearly 290,000 acres mostly through conservation easements but also some land acquisition. This accounted for 68% of the previous goal. In fact, the land conserved by all state agencies accounted for 81% of the goal compared with 13% from private land trusts, 5% from local governments, and 1% from federal agencies.



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Save the Date!

VCC's Annual Picnic and Membership Meeting
Friday evening, September 10
Cobble Hill Farm, Staunton

Look for details to follow.



Historic Cobble Hill Farm in Staunton is permanently protected through an historic easement.

Come join other VCC members for the Annual Meeting at this unique and lovely property.