



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



Saville Farm, Botetourt County

Botetourt County Easement Takes the Prize in 2014

The Saville family farm located near Eagle Rock in Botetourt County is a shining example of how private action can safeguard exceptional natural and historic resources. This 533-acre easement, donated by Louis and Betty Saville, protects a stellar array of conservation values including prime agricultural soils, large forested tracts that lie adjacent to the George Washington National Forest, a mile of stream frontage on Craig Creek that provides habitat for several rare aquatic species, and spectacular views from a Virginia Scenic By-way. In addition, the Virginia Department of Historic Resources identified four significant archaeological sites including a Spanish settlement dating to the early 1600s and prehistoric sites dating back 6,000 years. The easement is designed to protect all of these conservation values.

The Saville family came to the beautiful Craig Creek valley by way of Jamestown in the 1600s and later acquired the land through a king's grant. Having been in the same family's ownership for two and a half centuries, the farm is designated a "Virginia Century Farm."

The Saville's son, Trevor, is a recent Virginia Tech graduate with degrees in forestry and biomass energy. He helps manage the farm for a diversity

of agricultural products including timber, Angus beef, corn, hay and, most recently, maple syrup. His enthusiasm about the easement and pride in the family's commitment to the land over many generations are clear. "Our family heritage is here in the soil and in the trees. We wanted to see this land protected forever." A conservation easement donated to the Virginia Outdoors Foundation with VCC's assistance helped fulfill this family's dream.



The bucolic Saville Family Farm in Botetourt County.

Vision Focus: James Flory – “May complacency never darken our doorstep!”



James Flory, a Rockingham County resident, studied at Eastern Mennonite College, and received a BFA in sculpture and a minor in mathematics from James Madison University. In 1981, James founded “Renaissance Stone Masonry,” a business that specializes in historic preservation, conservation, and traditional stonework. His grazing farm in Highland County has a native trout stream, an old farmstead with numerous buildings and fences under restoration, and is placed under a conservation easement. He is a long-standing VCC board member, sitting on the Executive Committee and heading the newly-established Programs Committee.

In a recent interview, James spoke about his commitment to VCC.

VCC: Why are you a member of VCC? And why a board member?

JF: I became a member of VCC sometime in the early 1990s as a result of conversations with Mark and Sara Hollberg. I have continued to be a member these 20-plus years due to my belief that there are innumerable sources offering assistance to folks to “pave paradise” in our region, yet scant few, in comparison, offering assistance to folks to maintain and grow our paradise. I served on the VCC board once before for a 6-year term and am currently a board member for another 6 years. My reason for continuing on the board is simply to offer what I can to see our stated mission realized.

VCC: As the Programs Committee Chairman, what are your top 2 or 3 priorities or projects?

JF: As chairman of the newly formed Programs Committee, one of my top priorities is to see VCC become more efficient in targeting and implementing the programs needed to meet our mission statement of promoting land use that sustains farms, forest, open spaces and cultural heritage. To help facilitate that, staff and individual committee members are currently reviewing and updating our strategic plan, goals and objectives. Personally, I would like to see VCC have a more broad and consistent coverage over our entire 11-county region that encompasses the diversity of highlands to valleys and rural to metropolitan. Also, promoting land use that sustains our cultural heritage is vital to our sense of place, our identity of who we are, and our evaluation of where we are heading.

VCC: What’s your biggest concern facing the greater Shenandoah Valley region?

JF: One of the biggest challenges to VCC’s greater Shenandoah Valley region in the coming year is educating our neighbors about what we have. It’s natural to become lulled into a belief that our way of life, our farming traditions, our communities, our mountains and rivers will always be here relatively unchanged; that they will sustain themselves. Like the frog in the warming pot of water, we may not notice as our surrounding environment changes ever so slowly. Our region is under a considerable amount of stress. The blessings we enjoy and appreciate must be valued and protected or we risk the potential of losing them...sometimes forever.

VCC: In 2015, VCC celebrates its 25th anniversary. What is your hope for VCC for its next quarter-century?

JF: As we celebrate VCC’s 25th anniversary, we should most definitely reflect on the many accomplishments we have achieved. Admittedly, the Valley region is a better place thanks to the efforts of VCC members, staff, and volunteers these last years. My hope is that this solid foundation is successfully built upon in the coming years, and that complacency never darkens our doorstep.

VCC Staffer Honored by Wildlife Habitat Council

The internationally-recognized Wildlife Habitat Council (WHC, www.wildlifehc.org) selected Genevieve Goss, Valley Conservation Council’s (VCC) Upper James Program Manager, as a finalist for its 2014 Community Partner of the Year Award. Genevieve’s work serves Alleghany, Bath, Botetourt, and Rockbridge counties.

“Being recognized internationally for doing meaningful local and regional work was quite unexpected,” Genevieve explained.

The Roanoke Cement Company (RCC) nominated Genevieve Goss, and VCC’s Upper James Program, for the Community Partner Award. The RCC’s award submittal stated, “With passion, devotion, and hard work, Genevieve Goss is the embodiment of community values. As a member of numerous organizations, Genevieve plays a vital role in breaking the barrier between a large and seemingly inaccessible cement plant and the individual voices of a small rural community. Transparency continues to be a cornerstone in establishing an open and trustful relationship with our neighbors, and Genevieve is an indispensable intermediary.”

“This award was founded to recognize the special relationship between community members and a corporation’s undertaking conservation and education projects—demonstrating the tremendous power of working as a team,” said Margaret O’Gorman, WHC President. “Congratulations to all of you.”

As VCC’s local representative, Genevieve shared RCC’s wildlife projects and activities with local organizations such as the VCC and Botetourt Community Partnership to have a measurable impact

in the community. Serving as a catalyst, Genevieve assisted RCC in educating and involving neighbors in WHC’s Wildlife at Work and Corporate Lands for Learning Programs.

As a member of the Executive Council of the Upper James River Conservation and Development Council and chairperson of its Land Conservation Committee, Genevieve’s most important contribution to RCC’s environmental initiatives was the coordination of outreach for the Catawba Creek stream mitigation project. She also participated in Catawba Creek cleanups, Virginia “Save Our Streams” programs and maintenance of the Andy Layne Trail.



(L to R), Botetourt VCC member Pam Wiegandt, VCC Upper James Program Manager Genevieve Goss, VCC Board Member from Botetourt Anna L. Lawson and Botetourt Community Partnership member Joe Obenshain visiting the Catawba Creek riparian project at Roanoke Cement Company.

Allegheny-Blue Ridge Alliance (ABRA)



Keynote speakers address more than 60 ABRA members in early March.

As a founding member of ABRA and a part of its steering committee, VCC continues to monitor the

proposed Atlantic Coast Pipeline. In November 2014, the VCC Board of Directors approved a policy statement about the pipeline against the current projected routes through the greater Shenandoah Valley region. Dr. H. Bruce Rinker, VCC’s Executive Director, provided this statement for the public record with the Governor’s Office, the offices of our regional and state representatives, the Augusta County Board of Supervisors, and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. On Saturday, 7 March 2015, VCC, ABRA, and representatives from 30 other conservation, civic, and religious groups gathered in Staunton at the public library to review the project’s status, issues, and possible impacts. See www.abralliance.org for more information about the project, including related news items.

VCC Outreach in the Valley

During the past few months, VCC staff members have reached out to hundreds of citizens in the region via conferences, consultations, easement monitoring, public presentations, workshops, and more.

Recent examples include the Staunton Rotary Club, Waynesboro Roundtable, and other civic groups about VCC's general programs; landowners and farmers in Augusta, Frederick, and Rockbridge counties about conservation easements and riparian protection; students at Mary Baldwin College about plastics pollution in the region; a landowners group in northern Rockbridge County interested in an agricultural district; citizens and federal government representatives at a meeting about a proposed natural gas pipeline in the region; and young and beginning farmers about their start-up needs and involvement with social media.

In late April 2015, VCC will host the 9th annual meeting of the Virginia United Land Trusts at

Natural Bridge. Over 100 attendees are expected from more than 40 land trusts across the Commonwealth. Keynote speakers and concurrent sessions will address a variety of topics: conservation easement appraisals, threats to conserved lands from natural gas pipelines and other energy-related projects, how land trusts can use social media effectively, and legal issues related to conservation easements. See www.valleyconservation.org/conserving-our-commonwealth.



Help Us Spread the Word about Easements!

During its 25 years of conservation service, VCC and its partners have helped protect 1000's of acres of special landscapes throughout the greater Shenandoah Valley region. The conservation easement is a popular and flexible tool available to farmers and other private landowners who have a strong desire to protect their land assets for future generations. While numbers of easements were slightly down in 2014, the quality of lands protected was impressive, exemplified by the Saville family easement previously described.

VCC wishes to expand our land conservation outreach efforts. Our 5-year strategic plan in 2012 set a goal to protect an additional 50,000 acres – and we're about 42% toward that goal. Already this year we have hosted a landowner open house at the Middlebrook Store in Augusta County and are planning similar educational events in Frederick and Botetourt counties.

- You can help us reach this ambitious goal:
- Attend or host an outreach gathering.
 - If you are a landowner, consider donating an easement.
 - If you are an easement donor, tell your friends and neighbors about this option and direct them to VCC for assistance.
 - Provide us with names of people who may be interested in learning more about conservation options.

Let's make 2015 a banner year for land conservation!

2014 Conservation Easements in VCC Region

County	2014 Easements	2014 Acres	Cumulative Acres
Alleghany	0	0	8,495
Augusta	2	477	20,542
Bath	0	0	27,653
Botetourt	5	1,018	16,716
City of Covington	0	0	270
City of Harrisburg	0	0	17
City of Lexington	0	0	8
City of Staunton	0	0	247
City of Winchester	0	0	115
Frederick	2	599	7,480
Highland	0	0	13,935
Page	1	51	2,733
Rockbridge	7	835	39,498
Rockingham	4	848	6,827
Shenandoah	4	742	6,409
Warren	1	90	7,907
VCC Region	26	4,660	158,852

Source: Virginia Division of Natural Heritage (acres rounded)

VCC Focuses on Forests

VCC's "Value of Forests" initiative aims at raising awareness of the exceptional value of forest as land cover. Clean air, clean water, flood mitigation, storm water control, groundwater recharge, carbon storage, diversity of habitat, and temperature regulation are among the ecosystem services that trees and forests provide free of charge and largely unnoticed. Add the economic impact of forest products (\$17 billion statewide in 2013) and the revenue from recreation and tourism, and it becomes abundantly clear that forests are invaluable.

Each year, Virginia loses an estimated 16,000 acres of forestland—along with their incumbent ecosystem services. The costs to replace the services provided by forest cover could be staggering. The best fiscal strategy, therefore, is to retain urban forests and minimize the conversion of rural forestland.

To this end, VCC's Programs Manager Sara Hollberg is holding focus groups in the central and northern valley to help design educational outreach. A particular goal is to help local governments see the ways that forest conservation can fit into their comprehensive plans and development policies.

The VCC initiative is funded by a grant from the Keith Campbell Foundation.

The first focus group on 25 March 2015 in Staunton included a mix of professionals from local agencies that have a role in land use. These foresters, planners, engineers, and conservation staff had a lively and fruitful discussion. A tutorial followed on InFOREST, an on-line tool for modeling the impacts



In March, VCC convened a forest focus group in the central Valley.

of changes in land use. Virginia Tech Professor Randy Wynne, who helped design the tool for the Virginia Department of Forestry, demonstrated what the tool can do and invited feedback on local applications.

Farmland often includes forestland. Many VCC counties have robust forest economies. Even in the agricultural heartland, most farmers have wooded areas on their farms. The Valley region, particularly the Alleghany Highlands, is part of the state's "hardwood basket." Because hardwood forests are very hard to reestablish, preventing loss is essential.

"Starry Nights" Events Enthrall



Interested groups invited Shanil Virani to speak in Staunton (from left: Bruce Dorries of Mary Baldwin College, Joey Reece of Shenandoah Valley Stargazers, Shanil Virani, Sara Hollberg of VCC and Newtown Neighborhood Association).

"Starry Nights" events across the Valley in the last week of March brought out enthusiastic crowds. JMU Professor Paul Bogard and JMU Planetarium Director Shanil Virani were speakers in Lexington and Staunton, respectively, and many additional activities were held in Harrisonburg. VCC co-sponsored the talk by Shanil Virani at Mary Baldwin College to help address light pollution under VCC's "Better Development" program.

More information will follow in April. Earth Day Staunton has chosen "Starry Nights" as its theme for the week of 12 to 19 April 2015. Go to www.earthdaystaunton.org to find activities like stargazing, a talk on "What's Happening to Our Bats?" and more.

For more information to combat light pollution in the greater Shenandoah Valley region, and take back the Valley of the Stars, contact Genevieve Goss (genevieve@valleyconservation.org) or Sara Hollberg (sara@valleyconservation.org).

2015 Earth Day Celebrations



Join VCC on 19 April for the 2nd annual "Kites and Critters" event to celebrate Earth Day 2015!

This year marks the 45th anniversary of the first Earth Day celebration in New York City and Philadelphia. Think of all our conservation successes, locally and globally, since 1970!

Towns and cities in the Valley will offer numerous events for the 2015 Earth Day observance (for example, see www.shenandoahvalleyweb.com).

Valley Conservation Council (VCC) will provide an information booth at Staunton's Earth Day festivities downtown on Saturday morning, 18 April. That same day, VCC Board Member Bobby Whitescarver (www.gettingmoreontheground.com) and VCC Executive Director H. Bruce Rinker will speak at Gaie Lea Farm about local conservation efforts, thanks to sponsorship by the Augusta Garden Club. See www.facebook.com/HGWinStauntonAugusta?fref=nf.

Sponsored in part by VCC, the 2015 "Wild and Scenic" Film Festival will be held in Charlottesville on 11 April (Dickinson Fine and Performing Arts Center, Piedmont Community College) and on 18 April in Weyers Cave (Plecker Auditorium, Blue Ridge Community College), both at 7:00 pm. For more information, see www.wildvirginia.org.

On Sunday, 19 April, VCC will offer its 2nd annual "Kites and Critters" event at the Moore Farm on Bells Lane in Staunton. The first "Kites and Critters" event in April 2014 was wildly successful. This year's event promises even more exciting offerings: touring the farm, flying a kite, releasing trout, planting trees, and other all-afternoon activities for the entire family.

A Silver Anniversary Celebration!

On Sunday, 13 September 2015, VCC will celebrate its 25th anniversary – our silver anniversary – during its annual membership meeting. This year's gathering will be held at the White House Farm in Page County outside Luray. See www.whfarmfoundation.org for details about this strikingly beautiful setting in the Valley. Already we have volunteers signing up for our host and steering committees as well as for sponsorships. We're also looking for exhibitors, artists, and musicians to make the afternoon celebration a memorable one for family and friends. Please let us know if you would like to help – be a part of the planning for our BIG birthday party! We have much to celebrate together!



The main house at White House Farm, a conserved farm in Page County.

Rebranding VCC

As many members know, we're in the middle of VCC's rebranding efforts. In February 2015, the VCC Board of Directors approved a new logo along with a tagline and mission components. Now we're working on the redrafting and publishing of collateral materials (e.g., business cards and some brochures) along with a newly designed website. Our target release date for Phase 1 is late June 2015. Phase 2 will include social media and other brochures key to VCC's messaging. We're hoping to finish the entire rebranding by the annual membership meeting in September 2015.



VCC's first logo is on the left and the current is on the right. Our new logo will be released this spring.

Membership Drive Now Underway!



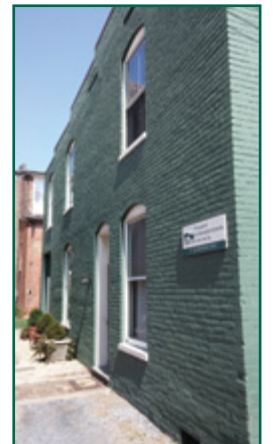
Members of all ages enjoy VCC events!

Members are the beauty, blood, brains, and brawn of VCC. Without you, VCC would not have made a BIG difference in the greater Shenandoah Valley region over the past quarter-century. Now it's time to grow our membership – from 1,000 to 2,000 in the next 12 to 18 months! It's a reachable goal. Just think: If each of our 1,000 members convinced one new person to join our network, then we could double our membership in no time at all! Will you help us reach that goal? Please consider reaching out to family, friends, and colleagues who care about the Shenandoah Valley's natural resources, cultural heritage, and agricultural vitality. We need you! Basic annual membership for individuals is \$30, for families and households \$50. And ... tax-deductible contributions are very welcome! You can donate easily, quickly, and securely at www.valleyconservation.org/donate.

Make a Difference at VCC!

Can you help VCC fulfill several important funding goals? Each one is a perfect opportunity to make a difference right away so that we can turn our full attention to programs, events, and other mission-driven needs throughout the greater Shenandoah Valley region. And we're so close!

- **Building Fund**
 - Goal: \$76,000
 - Raised: \$51,000
 - To Go: \$25,000 (to retire our mortgage and provide for repairs)
- **Conservation Easement Stewardship and Defense Fund**
 - Goal: \$182,000
 - Raised: \$109,166
 - To Go: \$72,834
- **Faye Crawford Cooper Legacy Fund**
 - Goal: \$100,000
 - Raised: \$79,370
 - To Go: \$20,630



VCC office in Staunton.

Other Ways to Give to VCC

Giving monthly, giving in honor of someone, giving to celebrate an event, giving through your estate, and giving as a member of one of our special leadership categories: these are all ways to ensure VCC's devoted work for years to come. Please contact our office for more information. Let's work together to protect the greater Shenandoah Valley region for years to come!



VALLEY CONSERVATION COUNCIL

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Office Manager: Sheryl Van Gundy
Upper James Programs Manager:
Genevieve Goss
Executive Director Emerita:
Faye Crawford Cooper



Spring brings out so many beautiful native Virginia flowers!

New Members (as of 3-26-15)

Augusta County/ Staunton/ Waynesboro

Anonymous 2015
Ted and Ellen Butchart
Marney Gibbs
Douglas Marechal
Heather Walker

Frederick County

Joanne Happ

Rockingham County

Lisa Hawkins

From Afar

Chris and Michele Saxman
The Cedars Foundation Inc.
John & Julie Walker

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