



# VIRGINIA OUTDOORS FOUNDATION

Spring 2008 Newsletter

## Land Conservation Momentum in Southern Virginia

Governor's Forum Highlights a Region With Much Open Space and Important Farmland, Few Easements



*Rows of tobacco on a VOF easement in Halifax County.*

Southern Virginia enjoyed a unique experience in December 2007 when the Governor's Forum on Land Conservation was held in South Boston. Governor Tim Kaine, Secretary of Natural Resources Preston Bryant, Senator Charles Hawkins, and Halifax Supervisor James Edwards were among the speakers who addressed a capacity crowd of landowners, local business and professional people, and residents. Senator Charles Hawkins' rousing welcome and introduction emphasized that farming has shaped "who we were, who we are, and who we will be in the future in Southside."

Well-known NASCAR driver and land conservationist Ward Burton spoke to the group during lunch about his passion for preservation of land. He was followed by the featured speaker, Governor Kaine, who stressed that one of the chief goals of his Administration is adding 400,000 acres to Virginia's permanently conserved lands before his term ends.

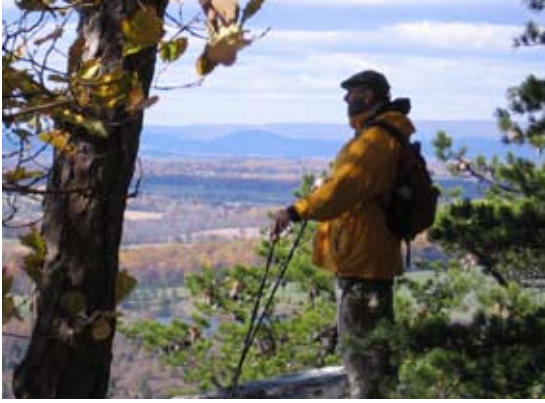
The first landowner to give an easement in Halifax, James Edmunds, was delighted to see so much interest in conservation developing in the area.

A number of Halifax landowners in the audience gave easements before the end of 2007 and interest is continuing to build in the area. As Teresa Smith Pool, a VOF easement donor states, "The need to preserve this scenic agricultural area, protect watersheds, and conserve our water and other natural resources were primary reasons for the interest in the easement as my husband and I began to see what was happening with the expansion of our community. A lot of things have changed in the last 20 years that we have owned the farm that has been in my husband's family for three generations. We feel that with the easement in place now, we have done what we can to insure the character of this property and the heritage we hold so dear." VOF hopes that momentum continues to build for easement donations in Southern Virginia, and applauds the efforts of the conservation community in promoting and spreading the word about the importance of land conservation in the area.

*"Our land, our countryside and our farms are what define our quality of life in Southern Virginia. This is the single greatest gift we can share with future generations, with our children." - Ward Burton*



*The Forum drew about 200 landowners, local officials, state agency staff and other members of the community in an old tobacco factory. Executive Director Bob Lee spoke about easements.*



*Mr. Lee views the valley below from the Bull Run Mountains State Natural Area Preserve.*

Hello Friends and Colleagues:

In 2007, the Virginia Outdoors Foundation accomplished its second-largest increase in the amount of Virginia's land conserved. The owners of over 60,000 acres granted open-space easements to VOF to protect the landscapes that they and all Virginians hold dear. This achievement is due not only to the fine work of VOF staff members, but also to the dedication of the members of the Board of Trustees.

The recent meeting of the Board of Trustees held in Albemarle County demonstrated the varied challenges that those who lead our organization must face, and solve. VOF staff can do the background and preparation work – whether for the review of easement applications, or complex stewardship negotiations like the one addressed at the last Board meeting – but the final decisions rest on the Board's shoulders.

Our seven-member Board of Trustees is appointed at large by the Governor of Virginia. The VOF Board of Trustees is one of Virginia's few supervisory citizen boards, and as such is responsible for oversight of VOF programs and policies – the fine-grain details of our operations as well as the broad-scale direction of the organization.

Every VOF easement that is recorded in the courthouses of Virginia counties and cities is reviewed and approved by the Board of Trustees in a public meeting. This can be a daunting task, since the board meetings, held quarterly, may entail more than 100 proposed easements, amendments, and other legal instruments.

The fiduciary role of the Trustees has increased greatly since the establishment of VOF

## **A LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, G. ROBERT LEE:**

### The Virginia Outdoors Foundation Board of Trustees

in 1966. Today, the land preservation state income tax credits eligible from VOF-approved easements regularly amount to more than \$50 million per year, and the foundation holds more conservation easements than any other public body in the United States.

VOF Trustees receive no compensation. Their reward is knowing that they are providing a critical public service, helping to permanently protect the cultural and natural heritage values for which Virginia has been long revered.

I salute the tireless and dedicated service of the past and present members of the Board of Trustees of the Virginia Outdoors Foundation. Thomas Jefferson would be very proud of the yeoman's service performed by these citizen public officials. Let me conclude with one of my favorite amusing quotations, attributed to Mr. Jefferson, to which past and present VOF Trustees may relate: *"Public employment leads neither to advantage nor happiness. It is but honorable exile from one's family and affairs..."*

*Bob Lee*



*A century-old Table Mountain Pine clings to the quartzite rocks at the Bull Run Mountains Natural Area Preserve.*

# Over 60,000 Acres Conserved by VOF in 2007!



Locality	Easements	Acreage
Albemarle	16	3,135.42
Amelia	2	672.7
Amherst	3	1,534.64
Appomattox	2	369.04
Arlington*	1	0.64
Augusta	11	2,333.33
Bath	4	1,395.46
Bedford	4	868.44
Botetourt	6	2,372.41
Buckingham	2	467.13
Campbell	1	217.69
Caroline	1	127.78
Carroll	4	807
Charlotte	1	264.67
Clarke	3	325.8
Craig	1	118
Culpeper	7	2,455.91
Dinwiddie	1	117
Essex	7	1,442.52
Fauquier	12	1,842.72
Floyd	4	931.18
Franklin	5	1,523.86
Frederick	1	209.36
Giles	2	431.47
Goochland	1	116.81
Grayson	6	1,391.80
Greene	3	672.51
Halifax	5	1,245.07
Hanover	5	1,681.48
Henry	3	596.77
Highland	5	3,281.96
James City*	1	400.93
King & Queen	2	119.78

Locality	Easements	Acreage
King George	2	151.51
King William	1	85
Lancaster	2	582.14
Loudoun	6	1,413.97
Louisa	2	317.11
Madison	4	524.76
Middlesex	2	571.47
Montgomery	8	1,580.65
Nelson	4	1,135.82
Northampton	2	433.53
Orange	14	2,609.55
Page	1	272.44
Patrick	1	93
Powhatan	1	54.11
Prince William	1	268
Pulaski	1	78.83
Rappahannock	6	1,006.34
Richmond	2	496.1
Roanoke	1	557
Roanoke (City)*	1	116.04
Rockbridge	25	5,125.62
Rockingham	3	349.23
Scott	2	330
Shenandoah	1	72.61
Smyth	2	324.99
Spotsylvania	4	1,768.09
Stafford	1	1,483.00
Staunton (City)*	1	2.7
Surry	1	219.85
Tazewell	2	1,536.36
Warren	3	458.58
Wythe	8	2,954.13
<b>Total</b>	<b>249</b>	<b>60,443.80</b>

- See complete and updated tables on our website: [http://vofonline.org/VOF\\_pub-statistics.php](http://vofonline.org/VOF_pub-statistics.php)
- \*Localities where landowners gave easements to VOF for the first time in 2007
- Localities with VOF Easements but no projects in 2007 include: Accomack, Alleghany, City of Bedford, Bland, Charles City, City of Chesapeake, Chesterfield, Cumberland, City of Danville, Fairfax, Fluvanna, City of Fredericksburg, City of Galax, Gloucester, Lee, Lunenburg, City of Lynchburg, Mathews, New Kent, Northumberland, Nottoway, Pittsylvania, Prince Edward, Prince George, City of Radford, Russell, Southampton, City of Suffolk, Sussex, City of Virginia Beach, Washington, City of Winchester, Wise, and York.

# Conserving Virginia's Landscapes

## Trends in the Virginia Outdoors Foundation's Regional Offices

The 220 properties put under VOF easement in 2007 are representative of many aspects of the diverse regions of Virginia and add incredible land to the Virginia Outdoors Foundation's easement portfolio. Furthermore, VOF conserved over 60,000 acres of land across the Commonwealth, making this the second largest annual increase in open-space easement land in our 41-year history.

### Appalachian Highlands



*The lush micro-habitat of a Tazewell County sinkhole. This landform is called a "karst window," a geologic feature where the aquifer is exposed to the surface. The stream was used to power the mill, with a unique design - the mill wheel was at the bottom of the sinkhole, and the rest of the mill was at the top.*

The newest VOF office, located in Abingdon, officially opened in June 2006, filling a much-needed demand for VOF easements in the far Southwestern area of the state. Neal Kilgore, the new Easement Specialist, worked closely with The Land Trust for Southwest Virginia to initiate an ambitious outreach program to inform landowners and local leaders within the Appalachian Highlands region about conservation easements. During 2007, more and more landowners began to contact VOF and place easements on their properties. Interest in easements has continued to increase, with neighbors and relatives of easement donors calling the Abingdon office to begin the easement process for their own properties. As the number of easement donors increase in the Appalachian Highlands region, there will be more positive testimonials, resulting in a robust easement program in the most pristine and unspoiled part of Virginia.

### Central

One of the oldest VOF offices, located in Charlottesville, saw new easements in 12 different counties, with a large proportion of working family farms and farms of historic significance. Two designated Virginia Century Farms (working farms in the same family for over 100 years) were put under easement. In Amherst County, a large farm that is newly under easement contains the historic Galt's Mill and grocery and fronts for over one and one-half miles on the James River. From both the road and the river, the farm affords wonderful sweeping views to those who pass by car or canoe. Orange County saw a dozen active farm properties join the easement program, including Rockwood, a designated Historic Register property adjoining Montpelier. Finally, landowners in the region's southern counties increased their participation in the easement program, with an historic dairy farm near Keysville and five other properties totaling 1,245 acres in Halifax.



*Norfields Farm, a family operation long in dairy production, has been in the same family for 108 years. This scenic historic farm is a joy to many travelers on U.S. Route 15.*

## Southeast



*Managed timberland in Amelia County. Lumber and wood products are predominant industries, with forests covering 73% of the county.*

of farmland. Further to the south, several easements protected large tracts of working forests in Amelia, Dinwiddie, and Surry Counties. Landowners in the Southern region found that by placing a VOF easement on their land they could protect their properties, generate financial benefits, and continue to manage and harvest their timber as they have done for generations. With some of the largest intact properties left in the state and a strong timber industry, VOF would like to partner with more landowners in this southernmost part of Virginia to conserve the working landscapes and preserve a rural lifestyle enjoyed by so many.

## Tidewater

The Tidewater regional office worked on a wide variety of easement projects in 2007, most notably preserving important riparian areas and historic properties. In upper Essex County, approximately 1,200 acres of prime forest and farmland were protected in an area that already contains a large amount of easements and other conserved lands. Several miles of tidal shoreline and associated wetlands were protected on the Rappahannock and Potomac rivers as well as important swamp areas on Dragon Run, which will enhance water quality preservation and improvement efforts in the Chesapeake Bay. Several multi-generational family farms were protected on the Northern Neck and Middle Peninsula, which will preserve the cultural landscape along with familiar and favorite landmarks for the driving public. Important historic houses were preserved with their settings, including Springfield in Hanover County, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and the Virginia Historic Landmarks Register.

VOF was pleased to be able to work with the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation and the Virginia Department of Historic Resources to permanently preserve Carter's Grove, a 400-acre plantation with over one mile of shoreline on the James River just below Williamsburg. The property contains the Carter's Grove mansion, a well preserved 18th-century Georgian-style brick dwelling with important 20th-century Colonial Revival-style improvements. The property is listed as a designated National Historic Landmark and contains the archeological remains of Wolsenholme Town, a historically significant 17th-century English settlement that was part of the Martin's Hundred community, a plantation of the Virginia Company founded in 1619.



*Terraced gardens down to the James River at Carter's Grove.*

## Shenandoah Valley

Of the 60-plus easements recorded in the Shenandoah Valley this year, more than one-third were on lands that had been in the same family for at least three generations. These lands belong to people who have a sense of place that many Americans do not, and value the land for far more than an investment or a commodity. Saving land before it passes out of multi-generational ownership precisely meets the goal of the Commonwealth's land preservation tax credit program – those tax credits go to folks in Virginia who will spend the money here and re-invest it in their land and farms.

Because word-of-mouth is the best way to reach this population, when a local farmer puts a conservation easement on his property his neighbors start calling VOF. Protecting blocks of agricultural land helps to sustain an agricultural economy in addition to preserving valuable farmland in Virginia. In 2007 Rockbridge County preserved more acres than any other county in the Commonwealth as landowners learned the benefits of open-space easements and began to spread the word. The surge in interest in the Shenandoah Valley is unmatched by any other region of the state. Unfortunately, VOF's small staff coupled with the threat of severe budget cuts has resulted in delays for some landowners in getting the process underway. VOF hopes that in the near future, additional funds for the creation of easement programs within each county will help alleviate this problem. Clarke County currently has a successful easement program, and other counties in the Valley are considering or starting new easement programs.



*Rockbridge County conserved more acreage than any other county in 2007. The Potter easement, pictured here, is a Rockbridge County working farm that has been in the same family for five generations. It covers 389 acres a few miles from Short Hill, a local landmark.*

## Southwest



*The Aker family donated four easements covering the 740 acres of their dairy farm in Wythe County.*

together protected almost 2,300 acres in the region. In Wythe County, the Aker family donated four easements on their entire dairy farm, covering a total of nearly 740 acres. In Montgomery and Floyd Counties the heirs to the estate of Joe Stewart, a Montgomery County farmer and elected official, protected a vast amount of family land with sentimental, historic and agricultural importance. The Miltons donated easements on more than 1,000 acres in Montgomery County, including properties containing a historic home, globally rare species habitat, and hundreds of acres of crucial landscape that will ensure rural views for generations in the County. The Weddles placed an easement on land in Floyd County containing more than a mile of the Little River, prime farmland, and over 450 acres of open space.

The Southwest regional VOF office completed a range of extraordinary projects in 2007, protecting properties with historic homes, large family dairies, and properties along important stretches of the New River and near other significant natural features. These easements contain prime farmland, large forested tracts, and key public viewsheds to be protected in perpetuity. The past year also saw easements in more than a dozen localities in the Southwest Region, including the first conservation easement ever recorded in the City of Roanoke.

Family lands comprised one of the outstanding highlights in the region, including two families who

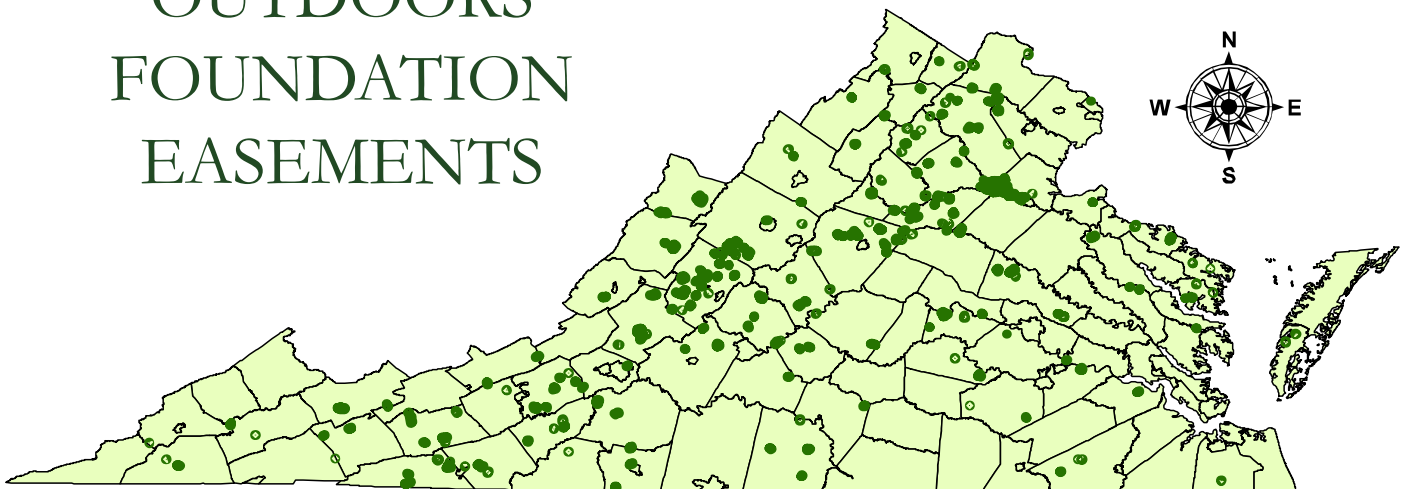
## Northern Piedmont

The Northern Piedmont Region enjoyed a successful 2007, recording almost two dozen easements in counties ranging from the more urban Prince William County to the more rural Rappahannock County. One of the most significant and exciting trends of the year was the number of projects and acres recorded in Loudoun County, which has experienced enormous growth in the past several years. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, from 2000 to 2006 the population of Loudoun County increased by 58 percent, making Loudoun the most rapidly developing county in the United States during that time period. The six projects VOF completed in the county in 2007 averaged 350 acres in size. In addition to protecting large tracts of land, these projects embody the type of conservation values VOF is hoping to protect. The projects include: protection of the viewshed of two highly-traveled, scenic commuter routes; recognition of and protection of four historic homes, including one on the National Register of Historic Places, and two archeological sites; protection of the viewshed of two public parks; and watershed protection along several miles of major waterways, including Pantherskin Creek and the Potomac River.



*This scenic and historic property in Loudoun County lies within the Bluemont Agricultural and Forestal District. Loudoun County, although one of the fastest growing areas in the United States, conserved over 1,400 acres in 2007.*

## 2007 VIRGINIA OUTDOORS FOUNDATION EASEMENTS



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**VIRGINIA OUTDOORS FOUNDATION**

**SOUTHEAST:**  
101 N. 14th Street, Floor 17  
Richmond, VA 23219  
(804) 225-2147

**CENTRAL:**  
1010 Harris Street, Suite 4  
Charlottesville, VA 22903  
(434) 293-3423

**SHENANDOAH VALLEY:**  
11 East Beverley Street  
Staunton, VA 24401  
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324 Waterloo Street  
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**SOUTHWEST:**  
900 South Main Street  
Blacksburg, VA 24060  
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**TIDEWATER:**  
P.O. Box 38  
Millers Tavern, VA 23115  
(804) 769-1407

**APPALACHIAN HIGHLANDS:**  
468 Main Street, Suite 400-B  
Abingdon, VA 24210  
(276) 623-8256


For more information about VOF and land conservation in Virginia, see our website at:  
[www.vofonline.org](http://www.vofonline.org) | [www.virginiaoutdoorsfoundation.org](http://www.virginiaoutdoorsfoundation.org)



**VIRGINIA OUTDOORS FOUNDATION**

101 N. 14th Street, 17th Floor  
Richmond, VA 23219

*It is our mission "to promote the preservation of open space lands and to encourage private gifts of money, securities, land or other property to preserve the natural, scenic, historic, open-space and recreational areas of the Commonwealth."*

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