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## VOF Protected 26,375 Acres of Open Space in 2012



Working with landowners and partners, the Virginia Outdoors Foundation permanently protected 26,375 acres of open space through 128 conservation easements in 2012—a rate of more than three acres every hour.

“I applaud the efforts of the Virginia Outdoors Foundation and VOF Board Chairman, Charles Seilheimer,” said Governor Bob McDonnell in a press release announcing the year-end numbers. “VOF is a key player in working to conserve Virginia’s many beautiful open spaces. When we conserve more open space we make Virginia an even better place to work, expand a business, and raise a family.”

“It’s a win-win when private landowners partner to conserve open space, working farms and forests,” added Doug Domenech, Virginia’s Secretary of Natural Resources. “We all benefit from enjoying Virginia’s natural beauty. It’s good for the environment as well.”

VOF recorded easements in 53 localities, including its first easements in the City of Covington, which protect nearly a mile of a state-designated native brook trout stream, contain portions of a public hiking trail, and border the George Washington National Forest.

Smyth County had the most open space protected with 2,569 acres on five easements.

For a county-by-county breakdown of where VOF protected new acres in 2012, see the table on page 5.

The 2012 easements include about 120 miles of streams, 11,000 acres of U.S. Department of Agriculture-designated high quality farm soils, and 1,700 acres along state-designated scenic roads and rivers, among other conservation values.

VOF now protects about 675,000 acres—more than 1,000 square miles—across 107 localities. That is an area three times

larger than Shenandoah National Park. Roughly 75 percent of the acreage lies within the Chesapeake Bay watershed. VOF-conserved lands help to protect about 3,500 miles of streams.

VOF was established by the Virginia General Assembly in 1966 to encourage the preservation of the Commonwealth’s natural and cultural heritage lands. Governed by a seven-member board of trustees, it operates seven regional offices and holds more conservation easements than any land trust in the nation.

*“When we conserve more open space we make Virginia an even better place to work, expand a business, and raise a family.” — Governor Bob McDonnell.*



The largest easement that VOF recorded in 2012 was on this 1,321-acre farm in Smyth County that has been in the same family for more than 100 years. The property is in the Clinch Valley region, designated by the Nature Conservancy as one of the “Last Great Places.”

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 Warrenton, VA 20186  
 (540) 347-7727

**Appalachian Highlands Region**

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 (276) 623-8256

**Central Region**

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103 East Beverley St., Suite B  
 Staunton, VA 24401  
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1108 East Main St., Suite 700  
 Richmond, VA 23219  
 (804) 786-9603

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900 South Main St.  
 Blacksburg, VA 24060  
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# An Uncertain Future

## *Letter from the Executive Director*

Virginia's land conservation community got something of a wake-up call to start the new year.

At the national level, concerns were high that the federal tax incentives for donating conservation easements would not survive the "fiscal cliff" crisis. At the state level, two pieces of legislation were introduced to repeal the Commonwealth's venerable Land Preservation Tax Credit program. Although these challenges didn't appear to be motivated by disdain for land conservation, they did send a signal that nothing is sacred in these lean times.

Fortunately, thanks to the collective efforts of the land conservation community, neither bill to repeal the LPTC program made it to the General Assembly floor, and the federal fiscal cliff package not only spared the federal deductions for easements, it actually renewed and extended enhanced incentives through 2013. You can read about the specifics of these enhanced incentives on page 6.

Most readers of this newsletter understand better than anyone the positive impact these programs have on encouraging open-space protection. Land Preservation Tax Credits have fostered the protection of more than 600,000 acres in Virginia, mostly through VOF easements. In 2011, the program was deemed by the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission to be one of the most efficient and effective tax incentive programs in the state.

Although it appears that these programs will remain intact for this current tax year, their long-term future is uncertain. Legislators at both the federal and state levels will undoubtedly continue to question the value of these programs relative to other priorities.

We at VOF believe that public investments in voluntary land conservation reap dividends well beyond their cost. Over the coming year, we encourage easement donors to share their stories about how these programs have benefited their lives, their communities, and their livelihoods—especially those who make their living from the land. Perhaps the Land Preservation Tax Credits enabled you to protect land that has been in your family for generations, or expand your farming operation, or invest in conservation practices that improve water quality and wildlife habitat. Your story could help to save the program for future easement donors.

If you or someone you know is thinking about donating an easement or adding acreage to an existing easement, talk to your tax and legal advisors to determine whether now is the time. We don't know how long the incentives will continue, but we do know this: VOF stands ready to help Virginians protect the land they love, as we have done for nearly 50 years—and hope to do for many more.



Bob Lee, Executive Director  
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## VOF Welcomes Two New Trustees

In October, Governor Bob McDonnell announced the appointment of Peter C. Bance and Childs F. Burden to the Virginia Outdoors Foundation's board of trustees.



**Peter Bance** was raised in Goochland County where he now resides with his wife, Susan, and their two daughters. He spent many of his younger years during the summers working on the farm of his grandparents at Wheatland in Loretto, Virginia. He and Susan are the owners of various parcels of land in Essex including Wheatland, which he now owns with his brother, Teddy, and was protected with a VOF easement in 2006. Susan and Peter raise cattle on their farms in Goochland and Essex counties. He is a managing partner of Jones Brown, Inc., a private insurance brokerage firm headquartered in Toronto, Ontario. He is also a principal of Bluegrass Thoroughbred Services, a thoroughbred sales agency located in Nicholasville, Kentucky.



**Childs Burden**, of Middleburg, is a graduate of the University of Virginia and holds a Financial Analyst Charter from the Institute of Chartered Financial Analysts. He has been actively involved in various projects for historic preservation for many years. He is currently a member of the board of the Middleburg Financial Corporation, the Land Trust of Virginia, and the Mosby Heritage Area Association. He has also been appointed to the Loudoun County Heritage Commission. Mr. Burden placed a VOF easement on his Loudoun County farm in 1998.

### BY THE NUMBERS

The Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation identifies unfragmented natural habitats called Ecological Cores, or large patches of natural land cover with at least 100 acres of unfragmented, interior conditions. VOF protects nearly 200,000 acres in these high-priority core areas.



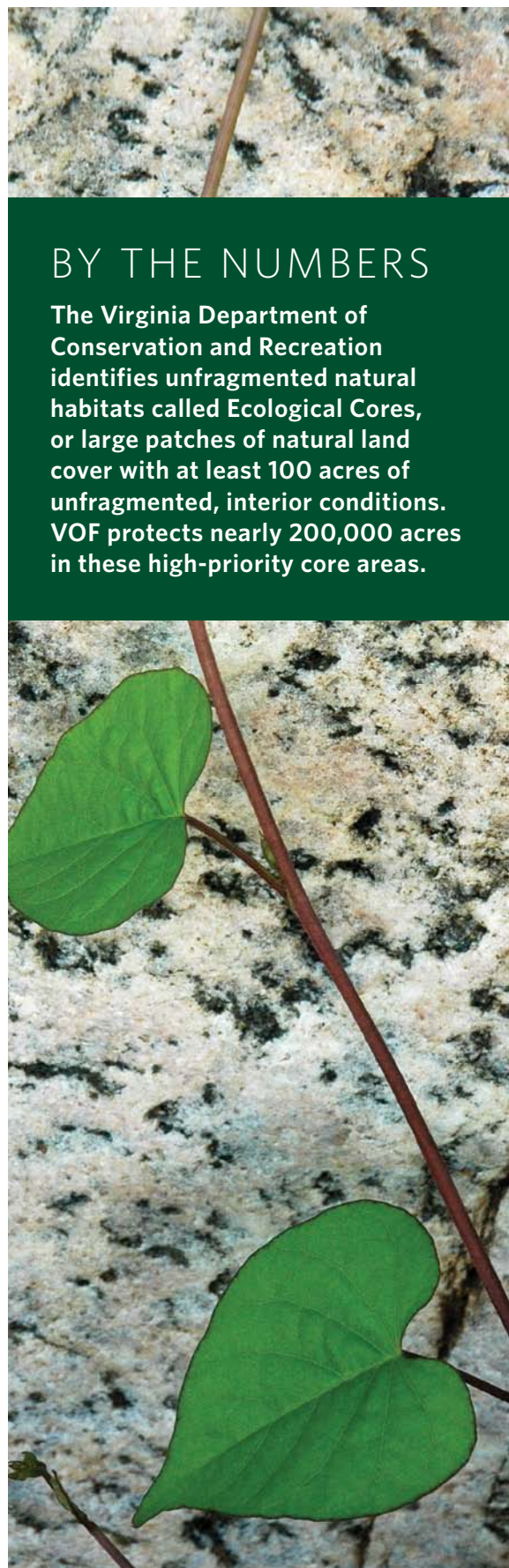
### Call for Calendar Photos

Do you have a photo of your VOF-protected property that you think would be perfect for our 2014 calendar? If so, send a copy by email to [jmcgarvey@vofonline.org](mailto:jmcgarvey@vofonline.org) or mail it to the Virginia Outdoors Foundation, Attn: Jason McGarvey, 1108 East Main St., Suite 700, Richmond VA 23219. Include a self-addressed stamped envelope if you would like prints to be returned. Also include

a brief description of the image, as well as your contact information. If we select your picture for publication, we'll notify you later this year.

Images should be horizontal, and digital images should be high resolution (at least 300 dpi). Landscapes are preferred, but images of wildlife, livestock, flora, farm buildings and equipment, historic structures, and other subjects depicting the character of your property will also be considered.

Landowners whose pictures are chosen will receive extra copies of the calendar to give to family and friends. Submissions must be received before August 1, 2013.



## Partners in Conservation

*Virginia's open-space easement program attracts the attention of Puerto Rican conservationists.*

The Conservation Trust of Puerto Rico (CTPR) is similar to the Virginia Outdoors Foundation in many ways. Both were established more than 40 years ago. Both are very dependent on governmental support. And both serve citizens who revere their natural and cultural heritage and are concerned about development pressure.

A big difference between the two organizations is the way in which they have protected land. Most of CTPR's 23,000 acres have been protected through fee-simple acquisitions, while most of VOF's 675,000 acres have been protected through voluntary conservation easements.

CTPR recently decided to expand its easement program, setting a goal of protecting 15,000 acres of land through easements over the next 10 years. Last spring, Fernando Lloveras San Miguel, CTPR's executive director, contacted VOF to coordinate a visit to Virginia to learn more about its conservation easement program. He knew that VOF held more easements than any land trust in the nation and wanted to know what factors led to such success, with the hope of replicating that success in Puerto Rico.

In April, Lloveras and two other members of the CTPR staff traveled to Northern Virginia to meet with VOF during a two-day visit. On the first day they met with senior staff and trustees, representatives from the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, and Virginia's Secretary of Natural Resources Doug Domenech (who is a former CTPR advisory board member). The meeting provided a general overview of VOF's easement program, mapping technologies, acquisition strategies, stewardship initiatives and the state's management and preservation of historic resources. On the second day, the group visited a number of VOF easement properties and went on a hike in the VOF-owned Bull Run Mountains Natural Area Preserve. They hiked to the top of the mountains, to a spot known as White Rocks, and from there could see one of the state's most expansive and dense concentrations of easements, protecting tens of thousands of acres of open space less than a one-hour drive from our nation's capital.

"The Trust learned about VOF's educational campaigns, landowner outreach strategies, delineation of Special Project Areas, easement evaluation and conveyance process, easement stewardship program and regional office integration," Lloveras told the Land Trust Alliance in an interview about the partnership. "We are currently designing a detailed strategy to augment the number of conservation easements in Puerto Rico focused on the strengthening of its easement program's



**CTPR staff Gustavo Altieri-Figueroa and Neida Pumarejo Cintron (in khaki shirts) hiked to the top of the Bull Run Mountains with VOF staff (from left) Amanda Scheps, Kristin Ford, Leslie Grayson, and Brian Laposay during their visit in 2012 to learn more about VOF's easement program.**

workflow through the integration of its regional offices, the design of a landowner outreach and marketing campaign and the implementation of various demonstration projects at three priority conservation areas. VOF's extraordinary experience in easement expansion provides a blueprint for the design, implementation and evaluation of this strategy."

In September, CTPR followed up by sending staff member Maryolis Cruz-Pabón back to Virginia for a few weeks to delve further into VOF's policies, practices, procedures and programs. She spent time at each regional office, getting a chance to see the diverse types of projects that VOF has worked on over the years.

Both groups look forward to continuing the partnership. Says VOF Executive Director Bob Lee, "After Maryolis's visit, I would like us to reciprocate by sending VOF staff to Puerto Rico to gain insight into the Trust's work and the challenges and opportunities that it faces, especially with regard to the lands that it owns and manages for public use. There is potential for VOF to be a stronger vehicle for public land acquisition in Virginia, but we must have the capacity and expertise to manage those lands. We learn a great deal from collaborations such as the partnership with the Trust, and we hope that the easement model we've developed in Virginia can be adapted in Puerto Rico with similar success."



## EASEMENT ACREAGE BY LOCALITY

Locality	2012 Acreage	Total Acreage	Locality	2012 Acreage	Total Acreage
Accomack	0.00	1,222.00	King William	1,103.60	7,575.48
Albemarle	650.25	64,240.06	Lancaster	172.71	2,319.95
Alleghany	0.00	6,469.47	Lee	0.00	331.74
Amelia	64.13	14,463.98	Loudoun	121.06	24,612.49
Amherst	78.00	5,591.60	Louisa	64.26	6,797.95
Appomattox	0.00	2,234.18	Lunenburg	268.55	2,200.64
Arlington	0.00	0.64	Lynchburg (City)	0.00	89.37
Augusta	724.29	18,501.32	Madison	0.00	11,653.45
Bath	1,202.24	25,158.66	Mathews	0.00	60.25
Bedford	1,573.52	9,807.80	Mecklenburg	0.00	121.67
Bedford (City)	0.00	44.92	Middlesex	640.00	2,441.47
Bland	0.00	2,004.11	Montgomery	514.57	11,774.70
Botetourt	572.00	15,401.05	Nelson	1,288.45	10,306.49
Brunswick	374.36	1,312.68	New Kent	0.00	257.5
Buckingham	214.60	3,249.32	Northampton	0.00	2,061.28
Campbell	160.52	6,899.15	Northumberland	46.34	2,244.16
Caroline	271.39	5,411.20	Nottoway	1,038.08	1,396.60
Carroll	0.00	3,657.44	Orange	1,156.46	30,921.73
Charles City County	0.00	1,410.20	Page	0.00	1,793.12
Charlotte	0.00	3,524.39	Patrick	58.13	1,970.35
Chesapeake (City)	0.00	542.71	Pittsylvania	0.00	5,959.53
Chesterfield	0.00	559.03	Powhatan	355.85	2,095.42
Clarke	0.00	15,145.78	Prince Edward	1,245.56	3,916.35
Covington (City)	424.00	424.00	Prince George	0.00	1,965.45
Craig	323.99	4,452.64	Prince William	0.00	819.98
Culpeper	36.50	10,157.79	Pulaski	0.00	2,964.32
Cumberland	0.00	1,152.36	Radford (City)	0.00	203.62
Danville (City)	0.00	73.15	Rappahannock	1,126.92	29,239.02
Dinwiddie	189.22	872.69	Richmond	0.00	4,933.91
Essex	1,277.53	13,982.48	Roanoke	175.13	6,141.42
Fairfax	0.00	127.73	Roanoke (City)	0.00	653.32
Fauquier	1,118.79	71,068.84	Rockbridge	634.74	35,834.61
Floyd	167.30	6,528.50	Rockingham	102.49	3,823.31
Fluvanna	79.00	11,125.49	Russell	207.00	2,709.63
Franklin	1,080.66	7,300.34	Scott	0.00	979.38
Frederick	0.00	4,564.76	Shenandoah	4.00	3,640.25
Fredericksburg (City)	0.00	128.96	Smyth	2,569.21	9,590.85
Galax (City)	0.00	50.00	Southampton	0.00	1,134.36
Giles	0.00	4,343.32	Spotsylvania	72.92	3,962.72
Gloucester	0.00	444.69	Stafford	0.00	2,398.24
Goochland	72.40	2,577.90	Staunton (City)	0.00	2.70
Grayson	0.00	7,637.47	Suffolk (City)	363.47	902.24
Greene	180.89	7,854.09	Surry	0.00	1,579.15
Greensville	0.00	1,120.77	Sussex	0.00	1,187.04
Halifax	0.00	4,428.11	Tazewell	367.50	7,360.23
Hampton (City)	0.00	72.51	Virginia Beach (City)	0.00	341.69
Hanover	0.00	2,994.01	Warren	0.00	6,345.44
Henrico	0.00	108.10	Washington	44.00	2,674.03
Henry	461.54	2,004.42	Westmoreland	323.50	7,015.49
Highland	49.70	11,333.38	Winchester (City)	0.00	115.27
Isle of Wight	0.00	38.73	Wise	0.00	266.47
James City	0.00	400.93	Wythe	802.79	8,648.92
King and Queen	161.84	4,347.04	York	0.00	18.50
King George	0.00	4,284.31			
Figures are as of December 31, 2012. Data compiled January 9, 2013.				<b>TOTALS</b>	26,375.95 673,204.45

## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT



In his first year as a volunteer steward with the Virginia Outdoors Foundation, Casey Crichton is back doing what he most enjoys—hiking through the fields and forests. He assists with easement stewardship in Loudoun County, where he has completed nine stewardship field reports and logged more than 25 hours. From graduate work in Recreation and Parks to being certified as a Virginia Master Naturalist, his avocation has included a love of the outdoors and sharing nature with others. He has participated in a variety of citizen science projects such as sampling macroinvertebrates in streams, participating in frog-call surveys, counting butterflies, and identifying birds. He also participates in stewardship activities such as trail maintenance and constructing pollinator gardens.

## Tax Incentives for Easements Survive Federal, State Challenges



Despite threats to the federal and state tax incentives in January (see *Director's Letter on page 2*), conservationists have reason to cheer for at least one more year.

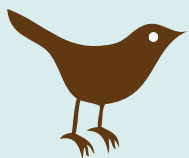
As part of the fiscal cliff package, Congress renewed a 2006

incentive that enables family farmers, ranchers, and other moderate-income landowners to get a significant federal tax benefit for donating a conservation easement on their land. The incentives, which are set to expire December 31, 2013, allow easement donors to:

- Deduct up to 50% of their adjusted gross income in any year (up from 30%);
- Deduct up to 100% of their adjusted gross income if the majority of that income came from farming, ranching or forestry; and,
- Continue to take deductions for as long as 16 years (previously 6 years).

In addition, two bills seeking to repeal Virginia's Land Preservation Tax Credit program never made it to a vote in the General Assembly. As a result, conservation easement donors may continue to apply for Land Preservation Tax Credits at 40% of the value of the easement. Any unexpended portion may be sold to another Virginia taxpayer.

To learn more about the tax benefits of donating conservation easements, contact your nearest VOF office, which you can find online at [virginiaoutdoorsfoundation.org](http://virginiaoutdoorsfoundation.org) or by calling (804) 786-9603.



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# EASEMENT SPOTLIGHT

## *A Life's Work • Bath County*

Ed Cook was just a boy when he fell in love with the Bath County farm he now owns. Back then, the property belonged to Mr. and Mrs. Law, who had owned it for 50 years. The young Cook admired the land and dreamed of one day owning a property like it.

In 1949, he went into the military and spent three years as a soldier in Korea. He was wounded and spent 28 months in an Army hospital. While there he saved his money, and when he got out of the hospital and returned home, he went to visit Mr. and Mrs. Law. Mr. Law had passed away. "I told Mrs. Law I was interested in buying her farm, which she agreed to," Mr. Cook recalls. "I purchased the farm in 1956 and moved my mother and father in with me." He has lived there ever since, adding to the acreage and bringing it to 315 acres today. "With the streams running through it and rolling hills and flat land for my cattle to roam, I couldn't have asked for more," he says.

Mr. Cook watched as the land around him—nestled in a beautiful stream valley deep in the George Washington National Forest—was gradually developed. Twenty-five acres of land adjoining his farm was subdivided into 11 different homes, cabins, and camps, which brought more roads and traffic. Despite posting his property, he had problems with trespassing hunters and four-wheelers.

In making his estate plans, he realized that the beauty and natural resources of his farm could similarly be degraded by future development. With the help of his attorney, he sought options for making sure that this land remained a farm forever. The Virginia Outdoors Foundation stepped in to help and learned that the cost associated with completing a conservation easement would be a challenge for Mr. Cook.

The Valley Conservation Council, one of VOF's long-time

partners, was asked to help and was able to arrange assistance from an anonymous donor. In July 2012 Mr. Cook brought an easement proposal before the VOF board, and in October the easement was recorded.

The easement permanently protects productive farm and forest land by prohibiting division and limiting future development. It also protects robust wildlife habitat and extensive frontage on Back Creek, a popular native trout stream and possible home to a threatened species of shiner (the Virginia Division of Natural Heritage reports a 50-50 chance that the shiner can still be found in the stream). Back Creek flows through the property for close to two miles, goes through the pass at O'Roarke Draft, and then through the Blowing Springs campground, which is a favorite destination for trout anglers. The easement protects the stream with a 35-foot no-plow buffer.

The farm is rich with other conservation values, too. It is adjacent to George Washington National Forest lands on both the east and west boundaries for a total of 2.6 miles, providing a green connection between two tracts of public land. About two-thirds of the soil is classified as agricultural "Soils of Statewide Importance" and "Prime Soils" by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service. The property is visible from both State Route 600 and the Bogen Run public hiking trail. It also lies with the National Audubon Society's Allegheny Highlands Important Bird Area.

Mr. Cook is happy knowing that the VOF easement will protect his land long after he is gone. "This land has been my life's dream and I worked hard to obtain it," he says. "I love this land and don't want it to change."

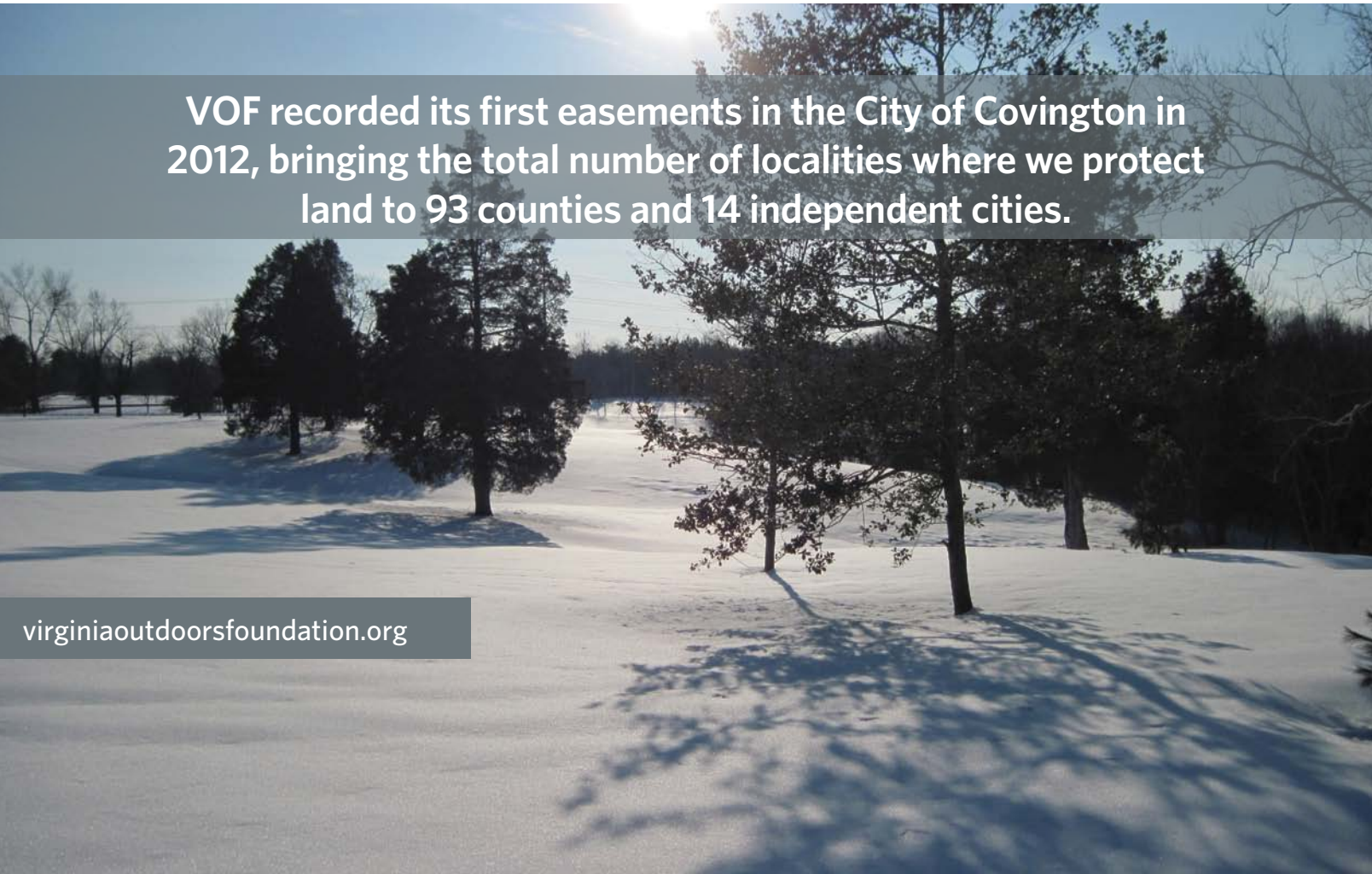
*This article includes portions of an earlier piece by the Valley Conservation Council.*



## WINTER ❄️ 2013

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**VOF recorded its first easements in the City of Covington in 2012, bringing the total number of localities where we protect land to 93 counties and 14 independent cities.**