



SUMMER

2014

virginiaoutdoorsfoundation.org



Southern Surge

2013 saw a jump in the amount of land being protected in Virginia's Southside.



Last year was another big year for VOF easements—57,260 acres across 65 localities.

“Demand for voluntary land conservation remains as strong as ever in Virginia,” says VOF Executive Director Brett Glymph. “The Land Preservation Tax Credit program continues to be the most effective and efficient tool in the nation for conserving open space.”

Nowhere was the demand for easements more evident than in Southside—a region stretching along the Virginia-North Carolina border from Patrick to Dinwiddie.

Approximately 40 percent of VOF's new easement acreage was recorded in Southside. Halifax County led the state with 9,140 newly protected acres of farmland, forest, and other open space.

The largest easement, in both Halifax and the state, was donated by the Rowland family on Falkland Farms (*pictured above*), a 7,312-acre farm near Scottsburg. It is one of the largest contiguous private properties in Virginia east of the Blue Ridge Mountains, and contains nearly 10 miles of frontage along the headwaters of the John H. Kerr Reservoir, and the Dan, Bannister, and Hyco rivers.

SOUTHSIDE *continued on page 3*

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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Appalachian Highlands Region
 468 Main Street, Suite 400-B
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Central Virginia Region
 1010 Harris Street, Suite 4
 Charlottesville, VA 22903
 (434) 293-3423

Shenandoah Valley Region
 103 East Beverley Street, Suite B
 Staunton, VA 24401
 (540) 886-2460

Southeast Virginia Region
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 Richmond, VA 23219
 (804) 786-9603

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 (540) 951-2822

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 P.O. Box 909
 Tappahannock, VA 22560
 (804) 443-3029

THE OPPORTUNITIES AHEAD

Letter from the Executive Director

Last year was another resounding success for land conservation in Virginia. VOF protected more than 57,000 new acres of open space on 200 easements. That is a rate of more than six acres protected every hour. VOF now protects more than 730,000 acres, or 1,100 square miles. We thank the new easement donors for their generosity, and also appreciate all of the support we have received from our partners and friends.

As I approach my first full year as executive director, I'd like to tell you about some of the opportunities before us.

At the national level, the House of Representatives Committee on Ways and Means has proposed making enhanced tax incentives for conservation easement donations permanent. Although it remains to be seen how long it will take Congress to enact these reforms, we know that Virginia's delegation is overwhelmingly supportive of these incentives, as are many other legislators from both parties across the country.

At the state level, we met with officials from Governor Terry McAuliffe's administration and learned that land conservation will continue to be a top priority for the Commonwealth. We also heard continued support for land conservation in the halls of the General Assembly, where we have enjoyed broad bipartisan support for many years.

At the board level, we are fortunate to have trustees who bring enthusiasm for our mission and dedication to maintaining VOF's high level of integrity. We have a new board chair, Stephanie Ridder of Rappahannock County, who is herself an easement donor and will continue the high level of leadership shown by Charlie Seilheimer after several years of dedicated service as chair.

Finally, at the staff level, we are looking to build stronger relationships with landowners. Many easement owners ask us how they can help VOF carry out its mission after their own easement is completed. Some support VOF with donations, and others sign up to be volunteers. We are developing new initiatives that will allow landowners to engage with us even more.

One way you can get involved is by helping us prepare for our 50th anniversary celebration in 2016. The Board of Trustees recently formed a committee to focus on this milestone. We look forward to inviting easement owners and other partners to help us celebrate the thousands of properties we have already protected.

What we have achieved together since 1966 is an amazing accomplishment—arguably the most successful voluntary land conservation program in the nation. However, our work is not finished. Together we can seize the opportunities before us and build upon our success.



Brett with Gov. McAuliffe

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VOF Board Changes Oil and Gas Policy

At its April 22 meeting, the Virginia Outdoors Foundation's Board of Trustees voted that, going forward, it will decline to accept charitable gifts of easement that retain rights for on-site oil and gas drilling.

The decision was made after extensive research and input gathering, which included a VOF-hosted public forum in Fredericksburg on March 13.

Although VOF's standard conservation easements have always prohibited all forms of mining, the agency has occasionally, at the request of the landowner, included language in some easements that permits limited extraction of oil and gas from the surface of the property, subject to restrictions designed to protect conservation values.

In 2012, the VOF trustees adopted additional restrictions for easements with retained oil and gas rights. As interest has grown in Virginia to explore for natural gas, the number of landowners requesting retained oil and gas rights has increased. The board worried that this increasing demand could present challenges to VOF's resources in the future, and several trustees also expressed concerns about potential adverse impacts that natural gas exploration could have on the conservation values of protected lands.

For easements that already include retained drilling rights, VOF will enforce the restrictions to ensure that conservation values remain protected. To date, no one has exercised retained drilling rights on a VOF easement.

"We thank the many partners, agencies, landowners, and citizens who have given us their input on this issue over the last few years," said Board of Trustees Chair Stephanie Ridder. "VOF will do whatever we can to protect open spaces and the environment now and for future generations."



Call for Calendar Photos

Do you have a photo of your VOF-protected property that you think would be perfect for our 2015 calendar? If so, send a high-resolution digital copy (300 dpi or greater) by email to jmgarvey@vofonline.org or mail it to VOF, Attn: Jason McGarvey, 600 East Main St., Suite 402, Richmond VA 23219. Include

a self-addressed stamped envelope if you would like prints to be returned. Landscapes are preferred, but images of wildlife, livestock, flora, farm buildings, historic structures, and other subjects on your property will also be considered. Submissions must be received before August 1, 2014.

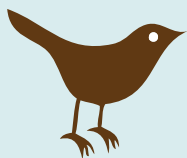
SOUTHSIDE continued from page 1

A second Halifax easement was donated by Delegate James Edmunds on his 872-acre farm, Elm Hill, in South Boston. About 82 percent of the farm's soils are designated as prime farming soils by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and 39 percent of the timber is classified as having a "High Forest Conservation Value" by the Virginia Department of Forestry. The property fronts on a designated Scenic Byway for nearly two miles and Birch Creek for more than a mile.

"This farm means a great deal to me, and it gives me great peace in knowing that it will be preserved in its original farming state forever," says Del. Edmunds, who is a long-time supporter of conservation easements. "The easement was an easy decision and provided the perfect tool to keep the land in its current state for my children, grandchildren, and descendants for years to come."

Noting the region's trend, VOF's Sherry Buttrick says, "There is a lot of wonderful rural land still undeveloped in Southside, so we have unique opportunity to protect intact open space down there. As more people in the region become familiar with the easement program and the tax benefits of land conservation, we are seeing them protect more of their land for farming, forestry, and other rural land uses."

VOF now protects more than 730,000 acres across 106 localities — an area nearly the size of Rhode Island. Of the 230,000 acres conserved during the McDonnell Administration, about 150,000 were through VOF easements.



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Please notify us if you have a new mailing address, email, or phone number. Send your new info to bcabibbo@vofonline.org or call (540) 347-7727.

Stories from Around the State

Highlights from VOF's work in 2013.



Haden Hills

ALBEMARLE COUNTY • 1,909 new acres protected

For Jessie Haden, protecting her family's 322-acre farm with an easement is about paying it forward.

"I had the good fortune to grow up on a farm where I was able to roam, explore, have fun and learn," she says. "When I married, my husband and I were able after a few years to settle down on the farm owned by his parents. I loved the land and felt so fortunate to raise my children where they, too, could roam, coming home only when the farm bell rang. Their children have come to love the land and the freedom it offers. When the decision was made to place the land in an easement I was delighted. I may not see them but I can be happy in my thoughts that future generations can have the same opportunities that I had."

The Haden Hills easement helps to protect a number of scenic and historic resources, including the Miller School of Albemarle next door, which is one of the nation's oldest coeducational boarding schools and hosts a building on the National Register of Historic Places.

Other easements in Albemarle last year included a 763-acre easement north of Scottsville that contributes to 6,000 contiguous acres of protected open space, and multiple easements in the Southern Albemarle Rural Historic District and Greenwood-Afton Rural Historic District.

VOF now protects about 66,000 acres in Albemarle County, which ranks second among localities in land protected by VOF easements, after Fauquier County with 71,000 acres.

WYTHE COUNTY • 2,064 new acres protected

Spanning 57 miles across five localities, the New River Trail State Park provides an opportunity for thousands of visitors to hike, bike, and ride horseback along the Earth's second-oldest river.

Thanks to two 2013 easements in Wythe County, more than 900 acres along the trail are now permanently protected from development.



Jackson Farm

Working with VOF and the New River Land Trust, neighboring landowners Tom Jones and Tom Jackson donated easements on land that is adjacent to the New River Trail's park headquarters.

The Jackson farm also surrounds the Shot Tower Historical State Park. The shot tower was built by the Jackson family in 1807 and is one of the few remaining shot towers in the United States.

The two new easements adjoin an older easement, owned by Carol Pruner of Roanoke, who is a descendent of the Jackson family and was the first person to donate an easement with the help of the New River Land Trust in 2002.



Norris Farm

AUGUSTA COUNTY • 1,255 new acres protected

When Wayne and Carrie Norris bought their farm at auction 35 years ago, it was in rough shape.

Despite the dilapidated house, teetering barn, overgrown fences, and overworked land, they saw promise in the property's 94 acres, which are bounded on three sides by the Middle River. "The dear old man,

now deceased, who had once owned and who grew up on this property, used to tell us, "This is the prettiest farm in Augusta

County,” they wrote in their easement proposal to VOF. “We often hear the same enthusiasm from people who look down on it from Route 612, who enjoy it as they canoe down the river, or who are just casual visitors. We’re inclined to agree, and we would love to see it saved that way for posterity.”

Their wish came true last year when, with help from the Valley Conservation Council, VOF accepted their easement.

The property adjoins 10 other VOF easements that collectively protect 720 acres and nearly seven miles of stream frontage and forest buffers along the Middle River.

“The conservation contributions these landowners are making to improve water quality and to secure productive farmland are remarkable,” says VCC Executive Director Faye Cooper.



Conner Dairy

FLOYD COUNTY • 769 new acres protected

Conner Dairy has been in the Conner family for more than 50 years, and Jimmy Conner would like to keep it that way. That was his motivation for donating an easement to VOF in 2013.

“This was my parents’ last wish,” he says. “They wanted me to take care of the place and keep it from being sold and being developed.”

His son, Sammy, supported the decision. “It’s a lot of work,” adds the younger Conner, who is attending New River Community College while working on the farm. “But there’s no better life than farming.”

The farm contains more than 180 acres of soils of statewide importance, and its protection will enhance the Sweet Mountain Laurel Loop of Virginia’s Birding and Wildlife Trail.

The Connors were among several Floyd County landowners who protected their land last year with VOF easements, with help from the New River Land Trust.

“This is a crucial time for Floyd County,” says Ann-Margaret Shortt, a Floyd native and president of the New River Land Trust board. “Our population is increasing, so there is a desire for development. At the same time, older and younger generations of Floyd County residents see the need to maintain farming as a livelihood. I’m grateful to these landowners who continue our long farming heritage.”



Enfield

MIDDLE PENINSULA • 10,199 new acres protected

Bounded by the Rappahannock River on the north and the York River on the south, water defines the culture and landscape of Virginia’s Middle Peninsula.

The 10,199 acres of open space and more than 30 miles of shoreline protected by new VOF easements in the region last year will help to protect this critical resource.

Much of the newly protected acreage lies in King William, where easements protect substantial portions of the Mattaponi and Pamunkey watersheds.

One of the easements, donated by Frankie and Kathy Parker of Walkerton, protects 875 acres of high-quality farmland on the Mattaponi. A 100-foot riparian buffer along 1.5 miles of the river helps to prevent pollution and erosion from impairing water quality. The easement also protects the historic 18th century dwelling on the property known as Enfield.

Across the river, in King and Queen, the descendants of Major Thomas Walker—whose family established Walkerton in 1702—placed their historic Locust Grove Farm under easement with VOF in 2013, as well (read more about their property on page 7). Together with Enfield, these two easements protect both sides of the Mattaponi River for more than a mile downstream of the Walkerton Bridge. ★

FIND EASEMENT STATS ONLINE

Visit virginiaoutdoorsfoundation.org/stats for a breakdown of how many acres VOF protected in each locality in 2013, as well as other conservation easement stats from across the Commonwealth.

VOF Welcomes Newest Trustees

Governors McDonnell and McAuliffe appointed four new members to VOF's Board of Trustees over the past year.

Stephanie Ridder, the board's new chairwoman, grew up in Fairfax County and has lived with her husband on their farm in Rappahannock County for the past 34 years. They board horses, raise organic hay and are creating a pollinator meadow on the farm. Ridder earned her B.A. from Harvard University and her J.D. from the University of Virginia. She worked for the Rappahannock Legal Services Corporation in Fredericksburg and then in Culpeper representing low-income Virginians. She is currently teaching at the George Washington University Law School and has served on the boards of the Virginia Women Attorneys Association, Virginians Against Domestic Violence, and the Piedmont Environmental Council, among others.

Elizabeth "Beth" Obenshain grew up on a family farm in Blacksburg. After a 30-year career in journalism at newspapers including *The Roanoke Times* and the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, Obenshain took early retirement in 2002 to help start the New River Land Trust and serve as its first executive director. During her tenure, NRLT worked with the Virginia Outdoors Foundation, the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, and the Virginia Department of Agriculture Consumer Services to conserve more than 35,000 acres in the New River region. She also served in 2007 and 2008 as chair and co-chair of Virginia's United Land Trusts. She is an owner, along with other family members, of three family farms,

including Blue Ridge Hall Farm in Botetourt County, which has been in the Obenshain family since the 1840s and is protected by an easement. On the other two farms, in Blacksburg and Montgomery County, the family participates in conservation programs to protect creeks, wetlands, and pastures.

Brent Thompson, of Huntley, is senior vice president and chief of global government and corporate affairs for Expedia, Inc., the world's largest travel company. Previously, he was an executive of IAC, the New York-based Internet conglomerate. Prior to that, he was in private law practice and spent five years working as an aide in the United States Senate. Thompson is a member of the Virginia Bar Association, a graduate of the University of Washington, and holds a J.D. from the George Mason University School of Law.

Matt Lohr grew up on his family's designated Century Farm in Rockingham County. After receiving a degree in agricultural education from Virginia Tech in 1995, he spent two years teaching agricultural science in Shenandoah County before returning to the family farm full time. He represented the 26th District in the Virginia House of Delegates from 2006–2010 and served as the Commissioner of the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services under Governor Robert F. McDonnell from 2010–2013. He currently works for Farm Credit of the Virginias as director of the Knowledge Center, which facilitates the sharing of knowledge and resources for the betterment of all farmers through customer-focused programs.

VOF Protects 700,000th Easement Acre

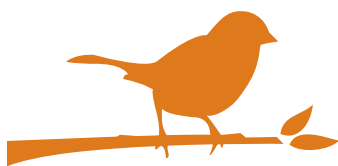
VOF protected its 700,000th easement acre in December thanks to a conservation easement donated on a 116-acre Bicentennial Farm in New Kent County.

Silver Hall Farm has been owned and operated by the Binns family since 1771. It is located along U.S. Route 60 about 20 miles east of Richmond. The farm sits across from Crawfords State Forest, which was acquired by VOF in 1995 before being transferred to the Virginia Department of Forestry.

"To me, this farm is a legacy from my predecessors," said Edward Binns, pictured with his mother, Lora Meade Binns, who also lives on the farm.

The family learned about VOF's program from the Capital Region Land Conservancy, a local nonprofit that promotes conservation easements throughout the Richmond region.





EASEMENT SPOTLIGHT



Locust Grove Farm, King and Queen County

It's one thing for a farm to stay intact for 350 years. It's another thing for a farm to stay in the same family for that long.

Next year, Locust Grove will achieve both.

The King and Queen farm has been owned and operated by the Walker family since February 26, 1665, when the King of England granted the land to Major Thomas Walker. Sitting high above the Mattaponi River just downstream from the village of Walkerton, the 634-acre property has survived thanks to the hard work and dedication of 12 generations of Walkers.

Last year, the current owners —siblings Missie and Jerry Walker, and Jerry's wife, Cecky—ensured the farm's future as open space by donating a conservation easement to the Virginia Outdoors Foundation.

The easement limits divisions and buildings on a property that is a developer's dream, given its proximity to Richmond and million-dollar views of one of the state's most scenic tidal rivers.

It also protects a wealth of cultural and natural resources.

An archeological resource on the property, Fort Mattapony, is listed on the National Register and was used by Mattaponi Indians for protection against hostile tribes from the north. (The family still enjoys a close relationship with the tribe.)

Today, the Walkers manage the land mostly for small grain and turf production. More than half of the soils on the farm

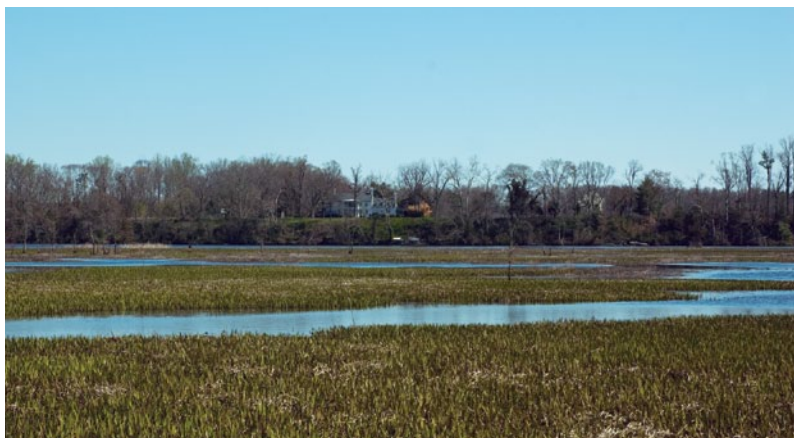
are designated by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service as Prime Farmland. To supplement their farming income, the family makes Locust Grove available for weddings, reunions, festivals, Scouting activities, meetings, art shows, and other events. They host an annual Wine & Arts Festival, as well as an annual Christmas art show that is free to the public.

The property's most striking feature, though, is the 1.5 miles of frontage it shares with the Mattaponi River. Not only is this stretch of the river popular with boaters and anglers, but it is also home to a wealth of plants and animals, including several rare species. The easement protects more than 16,000 feet of forested riparian buffers on the river and several tributaries—all helping to prevent erosion and runoff from polluting the water.

In April, the easement was recognized for its exceptional public benefits when the McAuliffe Administration presented the Walkers with a Governor's Environmental Excellence Award.

Locust Grove was one of several properties along the Mattaponi that went under easement last year. Another was on an 875-acre easement across the river on a farm called Enfield. Together, the easements illustrate a trend among Tidewater landowners to protect what remains of the region's riverfront farmland.

Explaining the trend to the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, Jerry Walker said, "The people involved are my age or older.... They're looking at it as a way to hold onto these farms for themselves and their children."



Left: Cecky and Jerry Walker (left) discuss their easement with VOF's Estie Thomas and Rex Springston, a reporter with the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*. **Right:** The view of Locust Grove from across the Mattaponi River. The marshes in the foreground are part of Enfield, also under easement.



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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

SUMMER ★ 2014

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In 2013, the Virginia Outdoors Foundation protected open space at a rate of more than six acres every hour.



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