

House Appropriations Commerce, Agriculture, and Natural Resources Subcommittee

January 18, 2007

Joseph H. Maroon, Director

Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation

- * State Parks * Soil and Water Conservation * Natural Heritage**
- * Outdoor Recreation Planning * Land Conservation**
- * Dam Safety and Floodplain Management**
- * Chesapeake Bay Local Assistance**



Land Conservation

- Overarching Natural Resources Goal
- Conserve 400,000 additional acres by 2010
- Includes acreage needed to meet Chesapeake Bay land conservation goals (PA. and MD. have reached Bay goal)
- Additional land conservation in Southwest and Southside VA
- Benefits for
 - Agriculture and Forestry Industries
 - Water quality
 - Recreation
 - Wildlife Habitat
 - Ecotourism and heritage tourism
 - Air quality



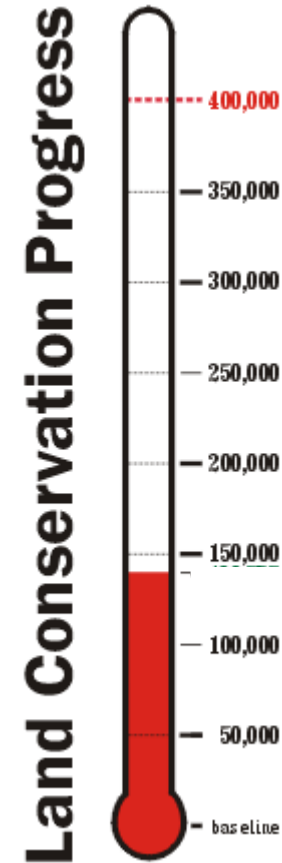
Land Conservation

- Over the past decade, Virginia has lost over 60,000 acres per year to development
- Since 1607, 25% of all development has occurred in the last 15 years
- The USDA estimates that we lose over 20,000 acres of prime farmland each year to development.
- The Dept. of Forestry's 2006 State of the Forest Report indicates that forestland loss has increased; if trend continues over 1 million acres would be lost in next 25 years to urbanization.



Land Conservation

- DCR is reporting monthly on progress being made.
- Have protected over 139,000 acres towards the 400,000 goal.
- 260,500 acres needed to reach the goal.



Progress towards 400,000 acre land conservation goal as of Dec. 30, 2006.



Virginia Land Conservation Foundation

Board of Trustees

- 19 members
 - 11 non-legislative citizen members representing congressional districts appointed by the Governor
 - 4 citizen members appointed by the House
 - 2 citizen members appointed by the Senate
 - Secretary of Natural Resources (chair)
 - Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry (added in 2006)
- DCR serves as primary staff; DCR Director is Executive Secretary to VLCF board.



Virginia Land Conservation Foundation

Grant Program

- Competitive matching grants for individual projects to buy land and purchase perpetual easements
- Leverage private and federal investments that at a minimum match state grants
- Eligible entities: state agencies, local governments, nonprofits
- Grants ranked by interagency team (DCR, VDACS, DOF, DHR, VOF, DGIF)
- Grants awarded by the Board of Trustees



Virginia Land Conservation Foundation

Current statutory grant formula

- 25% to Open Space Lands Preservation Trust Fund
 - Administered by Virginia Outdoors Foundation (VOF) to assist landowners
 - Available for local government projects
- 75% split among 4 categories
 - Open spaces and parks
 - Farm and forest land
 - Natural areas
 - Historic resources



2007 Proposed Legislation (HB 2825; SB 924)

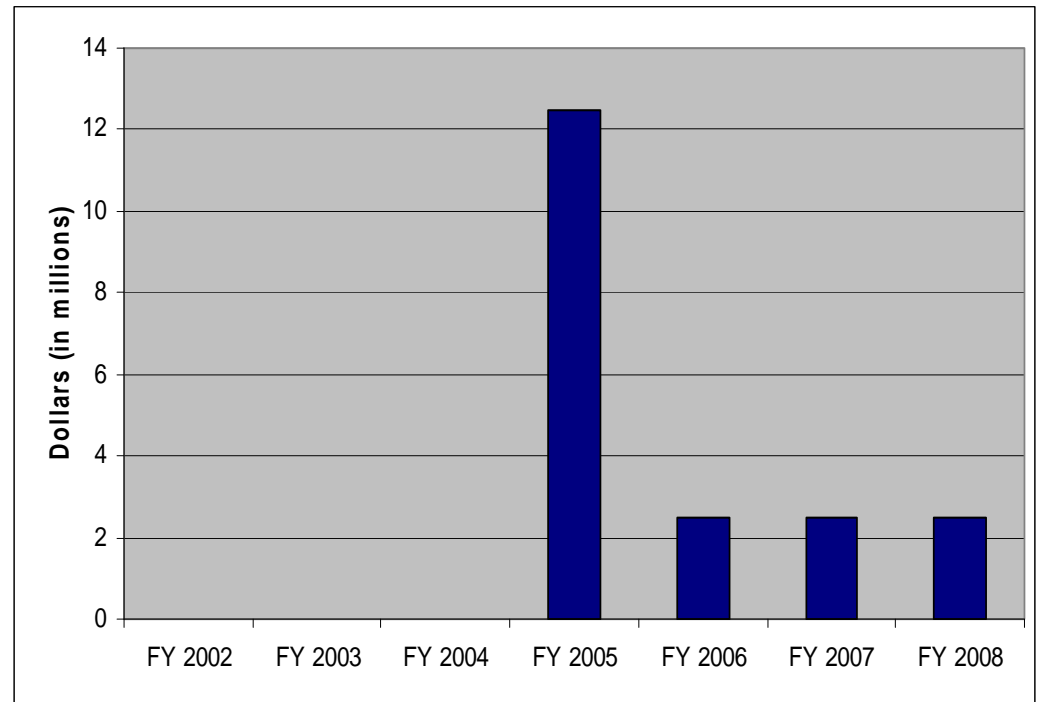
- Supported by the Agribusiness Council, Farm Bureau, Forestry Association, The Nature Conservancy, Virginia Forever, Piedmont Environment Council, Civil War Preservation Trust, APVA, VOF, DOF, DHR, DGIF, DCR
- Separates the forest and farm land categories into distinct funding categories in years when \$10 M or more is deposited into the Fund
- Adds wildlife interests specifically to the open space category
- Establishes a reversion clause for unused funds distributed to the Virginia Outdoors Foundation to revert back to the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation



Virginia Land Conservation Foundation

Appropriations History

FY 2002	\$0
FY 2003	\$0
FY 2004	\$0
FY 2005	\$12.5 M
FY 2006	\$2.5 M
FY 2007	\$2.5 M
FY 2008	\$2.5 M



Proposed 2007 Amendment

\$13.7 M



Virginia Land Conservation Foundation

Previous grant awards

- 69 of 136 total projects funded through Dec. 2005
- Funded \$21 M in total projects
- Requests totaling \$57.4 M
- Conserved over 20,000 acres through conservation easements and acquisitions

Current Grant Round (Closed January 16, 2007)

- \$5 M available (combined FY 07 and FY 08 funds)
- Received 31 applications totaling \$24.6 M in requests; representing nearly \$44 M in project value and 12,633 acres.
- Per acre average cost to the state = \$1,944



Grant Awards by Category

For most recent two grant rounds (June 2005, December 2005), out of \$12.7 M awards:

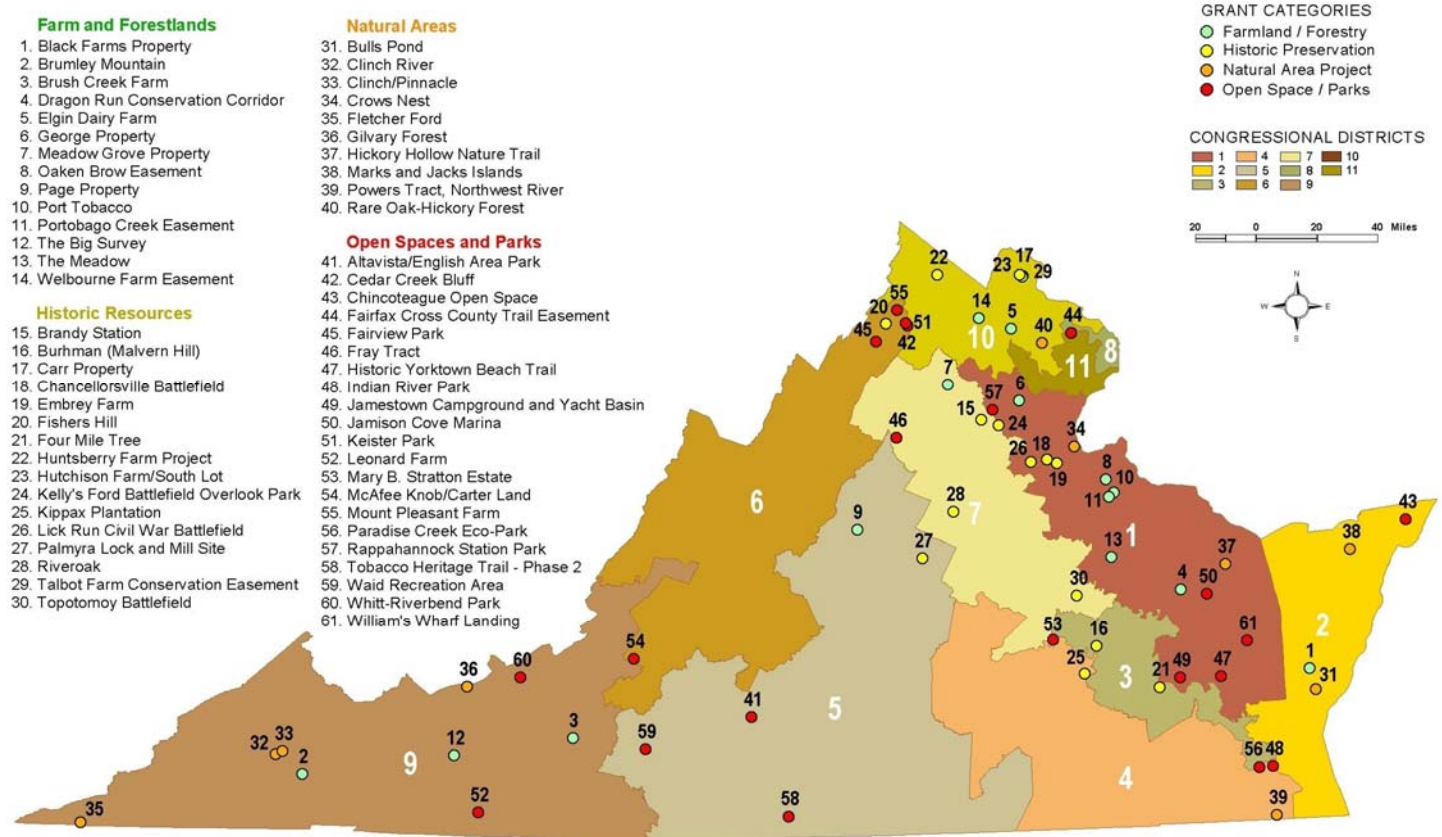
- Approx. \$3 M Open Space/Parks
- Approx. \$3 M Historic Resources
- Approx. \$3 M Agriculture and Forestry
- Approx. \$3 M Natural Areas

Applicants choose which category to compete in;
agencies score projects according to Board-approved
criteria



Virginia Land Conservation Foundation

Virginia Land Conservation Foundation Funded Projects



Examples of VLCF Grants

- **Elgin Dairy Farm:** Easement on a 314-acre dairy adjacent to State Natural Area in Bull Run Mountains; protects prime farmland and soils, scenic views, water quality.
- **Leonard Farm:** Easement on a 118-acre grade-A dairy that protects prime farmland and soils and scenic views along New River.
- **Black Farms Property:** 222 acre easement by the Nature Conservancy in Northampton County; includes 198 acres of prime farmland that produces valuable potatoes, corn & beans and 75 acres of riparian and upland forest.
- **Northern VA Tract:** Acquisition by the Northern Virginia Conservation Trust of a 180-acre tract in Western Fairfax County; connected to 830 acres of existing parkland, making one of the largest areas of public open space in Northern Virginia.
- **Historic Yorktown Beach Trail:** Acquisition by York County of nine easements on the York River beach to provide a continuous pedestrian trail along the riverfront.
- **Wildlife Mgt Fray Tract:** Acquisition by The Wildlife Foundation of 550 acres in Madison County bounded by the Rapidan Wildlife Management Area, and the Shenandoah National Park; WFV put conservation easement on the tract, and gifted land to DGIF.

- **Jamestown Historical Waterfront:** Acquisition by James City County of 112-acre Jamestown Campground and the 85-acre Jamestown Yacht Basin; surrounds the historic and cultural resources at Historic Jamestowne on Jamestown Island and the Jamestown Settlement.
- **Page PDR Project:** Purchase of development rights grant to Albemarle County for an easement on 559 acres of farm and forest 10 miles southwest of Charlottesville.
- **Rappahannock Station Battlefield Park:** Acquisition by the Piedmont Environmental Council of a Civil War Battlefield as part of a new 26-acre riverfront park; new park will provide the only public access to the Rappahannock River in Fauquier County.
- **Paradise Creek Eco-Park:** Acquisition by the Elizabeth River Project of 18.5 acres along Paradise Creek in the City of Portsmouth for the creation of a 40-acre urban public park.
- **Tobacco Heritage Trail Phase II Land Acquisition:** Acquisition by the Roanoke River Rails-to-Trails organization of a 20-mile segment of the former Richmond & Danville Railroad in Halifax County.

Proposed Land Conservation Budget Initiatives

\$19.7 M in total additional funding proposed within
DCR budget (Caboose Bill)

- \$13.7 M for competitive grants through the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation
- \$5 M for the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services to match local government purchase of development rights (PDR) programs on farmland
- \$950,000 in support for the Virginia Outdoor Foundation's work with landowners to place property under conservation easements



Land Conservation Operational Support

Department of Historic Resources

- 2 FTE, \$151,920
- Operate expanding preservation easement program

Department of Conservation and Recreation

- 2 FTE, \$198,039 (one of the two positions will be switched to nongeneral funds in FY 08)
- Administer new responsibilities associated with land preservation tax credit program and increased responsibilities in grant program and landowner outreach



Water Quality Improvement Nonprofit Source Efforts



WQIF (Nonpoint Program)

Recent WQIF Appropriations

- FY 2005 \$9.4 M
- FY 2006 \$30.2 M
- FY 2006 Caboose \$39.6 M

Proposed Amendment For FY 07

- FY 2007 Caboose \$7.5 M

(includes \$ 3.8 in mandatory deposits; \$199,605 reserve)



WQIF - Nonpoint Program

\$69.7 M combined received in WQIF for NPS

- \$51.4 M Agricultural BMP Cost-Share
(Base program for districts; Priority Practices; TMDL; multi-year contracts, state share of Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program)
- \$2.7 M Water Quality Strategic Initiatives
(Poultry litter transport; diet and feed management; forestry logger BMP cost share)
- \$6.5 M Cooperative NonPoint Source Grants to localities
(36 competitive grants; match requirements)
- \$9.1 M Reserve

Note: NPS funds split 60% Bay; 40% Southern Rivers

Current Initiatives

- Aggressive Implementation of Priority Ag Practices
 - cover crops, nutrient management, livestock exclusion, conservation tillage, riparian buffers
 - \$267 M for 5 priority practices in Bay Watershed; would achieve 60% of nonpoint source reduction goal
- Multi-year contracts
- Improved Compliance in Developed Lands
 - Erosion and Sediment Control
 - Stormwater Management
 - Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act
- Outreach to Ag community and suburban homeowners
- Increased Service Delivery by Soil and Water Conservation Districts



Governor's Proposed Budget Initiatives

State Parks

- \$198,000 provided for State Park maintenance equipment needs
- \$15 M in supplemental capital construction costs

Dam Safety

- \$352,377 provided to fund additional dam safety engineers to determine the status of dams and to improve the Department's ability to implement new regulations
- \$616,000 to match federal grants to repair dams owned by local soil and water conservation districts