

# Virginia Forest Landowner Update

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## RC&D Councils Host Land Conservation Programs

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This year Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Councils across the state have partnered with various groups to host land conservation programs that united local county government officials with conservation professionals. Over 160 local county officials, landowners, and people interested in land conservation attended one of four programs in Blackstone, Isle of Wight, Surry, or Tappahannock.

### Growing Pains- Balancing Growth and Conservation

On June 14, the Growing Pains Workshop was held at the Surry County Community Center. County officials from Chesapeake, Dinwiddie County, Prince George County, Suffolk, and Surry County gathered to discuss issues and topics relating to the pressures of urban sprawl on the land conservation efforts of the region.

Several conservation professionals began the program introducing various conservation tools and the state government programs. These presenters included Mike Faulk, Natural Resource Conservation Service, and Rob Farrell, Virginia Dept. of Forestry.

Almost 40 people, including a highly experienced panel, answered questions and introduced ideas about the current conservation tools and how they could be applied in the local counties. Members of this panel included Michael Drewry, Dinwiddie County Attorney, Jesse Richardson, Professor of Urban Affairs and Planning from Virginia Tech, Michael Chandler, Citizens Planning Education Association of Virginia, Ted McCormack, Virginia Association of Counties, and Jonah Fogel, Community Viability Specialist, VCE.



**Jason Fisher, VCE Forestry and Natural Resources Extension Agent, fields questions for a panel discussion at the Blackstone Forest and Farmland Conservation Strategies Short Course.**



**Brock Herzberg, Virginia Farm Bureau, speaks on Use Value Tax Assessment to local county officials participating in the Blackstone Forest and Farmland Conservation Strategies Short Course on June 15.**

The Surry Growing Pains program was a collaborative effort of Virginia Cooperative Extension, Virginia Department of Forestry, South Hampton Roads RC&D Council, and South Centré Corridors RC&D Council. This program inspired communication amongst the counties with similar demands of a developing landscape. Tools were provided at this program that county officials were able to take home and deliver to their respective boards, commissions, etc.

### Forest and Farmland Conservation Strategies Short Course

After its unveiling in late 2006, the Forest and Farmland Conservation Strategies Short Course was successfully hosted in two locations in eastern Virginia. Conservation professionals came from across the state to teach about the various forest and farmland conservation tools including comprehensive planning/sudivisions, zoning, right to farm laws, bargain sales, conservation easements/land trusts, purchase of development rights, agricultural and forestal districts, and use value taxation.

Both the Blackstone and Tappahannock locations targeted local governments and county officials. These programs provided the opportunity for inter-county/locality discussions and sharing of current experiences with particular conservation tools in use.

On February 6, the Forest and Farmland Conservation Strategies Short Course was hosted in Tappahannock by the Tidewater RC&D Council in cooperation with Virginia Dept. of Forestry and Virginia Cooperative Extension. At this course Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry, Honorable Robert Bloxom, spoke about the importance of land conservation in Virginia. He set the stage for nine other speakers to inspire viable conservation methods and their practicality and use in Virginia to the large crowd in attendance. This course featured a conservation themed lunch where course speakers and other invited professionals ate their meal with a diversity of individuals at each table including foresters, county officials, soil and water conservation district staff, landowners, and other course participants.

On June 15, the Forest and Farmland Conservation Strategies Short Course was hosted in Blackstone by the Old Dominion RC&D Council in cooperation with Virginia Dept. of Forestry and Virginia Cooperative Extension. The Blackstone course was held at the Southern Piedmont Agriculture Research and Extension Center. This course concluded with an interactive panel session where local officials were able to converse with highly experienced conservation professionals about specific conservation efforts. Panel speakers included David Hurt, Conservation Partners, Larry Land, Virginia Association of Counties, Larry Mikkelson, Virginia

Department of Forestry, Jesse Richardson, Virginia Tech, Kevin Schmidt, Virginia Office of Farmland Preservation, and Melvin Taylor, Brunswick County.

This course is a part of the Virginia Tech, Virginia Forest Landowner Education Program. The purpose of this course is to offer the people of Virginia an objective view of land conservation strategies as they are applied and understood today. Included with the course is a comprehensive notebook that provides extensive follow-up information.

### **Conservation Options**

On February 15, A Conservation Options course was hosted in Isle of Wight by the South Hampton Roads RC&D Council in cooperation with Isle of Wight County, Virginia Dept. of Forestry, and Virginia Cooperative Extension. The Isle of Wight location targeted landowners and regional individuals involved in land conservation efforts including county government officials, forestry consultants, and state and federal government staff. This landowner program was the first to be held in the state so far. RC&D Councils and Virginia Cooperative Extension Offices are currently discussing hosting landowner programs in other areas of the state.

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