

SECTION 1

BACKGROUND

TOPIC 1.1

Objectives

Participants will:

1. understand the basic principles of sustainable forestry; 2. know that SFI® is an industry sponsored program to insure that all member companies of the American Forest and Paper Association practice the principles of sustainable forestry

Resources:

+Sustainable Forestry: A Guide for Virginia Forest Landowners

WELCOME & OVERVIEW/PRINCIPLES OF SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY

Who is sponsoring this course?

The Virginia Forest Landowner Short Course Series is coordinated by the Virginia Forest Landowner Education Program, which develops and promotes educational opportunities for Virginia's non-industrial private landowners.

What is sustainable forestry?

Sustainable forestry consists of forest practices that meet the present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Examples of sustainable forestry include:

- Maintaining riparian buffers to trap sediment and regulate stream temperature
- Planting or naturally regenerating immediately following a timber harvest
- Maintaining key habitat elements for wildlife species
- Reducing exotic species and pests

Sustainable forestry integrates the regeneration, growing, nurturing, and harvesting of trees for useful products while conserving soil, air and water quality, wildlife and fish habitat, and landscape aesthetic quality.

What is the Sustainable Forestry Initiative?

"The Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI®) program is a comprehensive system of principles, objectives and performance measures developed by professional foresters, conservationists and scientists, among others that combines the perpetual growing and harvesting of trees with the long-term protection of wildlife, plants, soil and water quality. There are currently over 150 million acres of forestland in North America enrolled in the SFI® program, making it among the world's largest sustainable forestry programs.

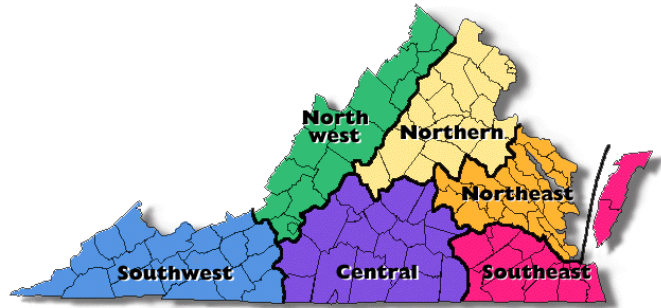
Who can help me implement Sustainable Forestry Practices on my forest land?

Forest management assistance is available throughout Virginia from many agencies. The next page, which can be pulled out of this manual, lists some of these resources and contact information. There is a more extensive list of resources listed in Appendix B.

Sources of Professional Forest Management Virginia Cooperative Extension

In addition to the State Landowner Education Program Coordinator, each district (see map below) has a Forestry & Natural Resource Agent who is responsible for local forestry education programming and assisting forest landowners.

Jennifer Gagnon
State Coordinator
Virginia Forest Landowner Education Program
540/231-6391; jgagnon@vt.edu



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757/657-6450 Ext 406; southeast@vt.edu

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540/948-6881; adowning@vt.edu

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Northwest District
540/564-3080; yancey@vt.edu

Virginia Department of Forestry

Each county in Virginia has an area forester who can assist forest landowners. To find out who your area forester is, contact the Regional Office nearest you.

Waverly Regional Office
Ed Zimmer - Regional Forester
804/834-2300; ed.zimmer@dof.virginia.gov

Salem Regional Office
Chuck Hutsell - Regional Forester
540/387-5461;
chuck.hutsell@dof.virginia.gov

Tappahannock Regional Office
Dave Slack - Regional Forester
804/443-2211; dave.slack@dof.virginia.gov

Charlottesville Regional Forester
Buck Kline - Regional Forester
434/977-5193; buck.kline@dof.virginia.gov

Farmville Regional Office
Greg Winston - Regional Forester
434/392-4159;
greg.winston@dof.virginia.gov

Abingdon Regional Office
Ed Stoots - Regional Forester
276/676-5488; ed.stoots@dof.virginia.gov

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SECTION 1

BACKGROUND

TOPIC 1.2

Objectives

Participants will:

1. understand the importance of forestry in Virginia; 2. learn about parcelization and fragmentation

Resources:

+ Virginia Forest & Farmland Facts and Virginia Development Map
+ The Eastern Non-Industrial Private Forests
+ Selling the Farm to Save the Business?
+ Stakeholder's Perceptions of Parcelization in Wisconsin's Northwoods
+ Should We Care About Forest Fragmentation in Virginia?
+ Fact Sheet: The Farmland Protection Toolbox
x Farmland Protection Programs: What Does the Public Want?
x Agricultural Land Fragmentation: The Spatial Effects of Three Land Protection Strategies in the Eastern United States
x Growth Management in Context

FRAGMENTATION/LOSS OF FARM AND FORESTLAND

VIRGINIA FOREST & FARMLAND FACTS

"Virginia is currently home to 7.5 million people. Between now and the end of my term in 2010, our population will grow 5%. It will increase by nearly 15% by the year 2020 and nearly 24% by the year 2030. By then, Virginia's population will be 9.3 million people." Virginia Governor Tim Kaine at the 17th Annual Environmental Virginia Symposium, VMI, April 20, 2006

- Virginia is 62% forested (15.8 million acres)
 - Between 1992 and 2003, over 615,000 acres of forestland have been lost to land use changes
 - 62% for urban development
 - 37% to other agricultural uses
 - 1% to water impoundments
 - Average rate of rural land converted to developed uses: 70,000 acres annually
 - Hardwood forests make up 78% of all Virginia timberland (11.8 million acres)
 - Softwood forests make up 22% of all Virginia timberland (3.4 million acres)
 - Non-industrial private landowners own 66% (10.1 million acres; 2.4% loss since 1992)
 - Non-forestry corporations own 13% (2.0 million acres; 26.9% gain since 1992)
 - Forest industry owns 7% (1.0 million acres; 32.2% loss since 1992)
 - Public owns 14% (2.1 millions acres; 9.7% increase since 1992)
 - Total hardwood timber volume increased by 4.7% since 1992
 - Total softwood timber volume increased by 2% since 1992
 - Growth rates are exceeding removal rates
 - Plantations account for 12% of Virginia's timberland and 54% of all softwood acreage
 - Forestry contributes \$30.5 billion annually to Virginia's economy
 - Forests provide more than \$3 billion in recreational opportunities to 2/3 of Virginia's citizens
 - Forestry provides more than 248,000 jobs in Virginia
- (Virginia Forest Fact Sources: Virginia Department of Forestry (www.dof.virginia.gov) Draft 7th Survey Results for VA, USDA FS, SRS-FIA; Virginia's Forests, 1992, USDA FS Resource Bulletin SE-151; Virginia's Forests ASDA-FS AFES release #11, 1942).

SECTION 2

GOVERNMENT INITIATED TOOLS

TOPIC 2.1

Objectives

Participants will:

1. understand the concepts of comprehensive planning
2. understand the concept of zoning and how different zoning strategies affect land use patterns
3. understand the role of subdivision ordinances in the planning process

Resources:

- + The Comprehensive Plan
- + Density Limits Lead to Sprawl
- + Subdivisions
- x Enabling Legislation for Comprehensive Planning in Virginia

COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING, ZONING & SUBDIVISIONS

Comprehensive Planning:

Each locality in Virginia is required to have a **comprehensive plan**. A comprehensive plan, which is reviewed every 5 years, establishes guidelines for the "harmonious development of the territory which will, in accordance with present and probable future needs and resources, best promote the health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity, and general welfare of the inhabitants" (from the Albemarle County comprehensive plan).

Although general in nature, comprehensive plans must include provisions for transportation (roads, railways) and affordable housing. They typically also include goals, policies, community service facilities (parks, public buildings), historical areas, urban renewal areas, public and private development (drainage, recreation), and maps/charts of desired future conditions.

Current trends in comprehensive planning include:

- Providing benchmarks and quality of life indicators
- Setting goals and evaluating progress
- Frequent use
- Detailed street networks
- Longer planning periods (up to 50 years)

You can find your community's comprehensive plan on-line by doing a search using "comprehensive plan, your city" as the search terms.

Advantages:

- Provides guidelines for community development (governs infrastructure)
- Can be used to approve or deny rezoning requests
- Public input is encouraged

Disadvantages

- These plans are only guidelines for developing and implementing zoning ordinances and are not required by law to be followed (however, zoning decisions should be consistent with the plan)

Zoning:

Historically, the idea of zoning stems from the desire to separate different land uses on the landscape (i.e., keep farming practices away from residential areas). This removes folks from downtown areas and access to shopping, forcing them to travel to acquire services. In contrast, the "Smart Growth" concept is the idea that growth should occur in compact clusters, near jobs and services, to decrease sprawl and decrease traffic. Virginia has a zoning enabling act (VA. Code Ann. § 15.2-2283) "To provide for the preservation of agricultural and forestal lands and other lands of significance for the protection of the natural environment".

Agricultural Zoning: Zoning is a form of local government land use control; segments counties, cities, townships and towns into areas devoted for specific land uses and establishes standards and densities for development. Agricultural zoning is used to designate areas where agriculture is the primary land use. Desirable agricultural land is determined based on soil conditions and location. In the U.S. there are both **exclusive** (only allow agriculture) and **non-exclusive** (allow agriculture and some residential development) agricultural zoning ordinances. Only non-exclusive agricultural zoning is used in Virginia.

Advantages:

1. Inexpensive and quickly implemented
2. Flexible
3. Many ordinances include anti-nuisance clauses to protect landowners from complaints from residential neighbors
4. Limits intrusion of new, non-agricultural activities

Disadvantages:

1. Not permanent and easily changed
2. Some ordinances allow for non-agricultural uses, so land remains vacant (not farmed or forested, as intended)

Large-Lot Zoning: Requires a minimum lot size for homes; i.e., 1 home every 25 acres. Lot size is generally at least 10 acres. Intent is to maintain open/rural atmosphere.

Advantages

1. Works best in areas where agriculture is already prominent
2. Saves local governments money. Large lots mean fewer homes so the government needs to provide fewer services and infrastructure (i.e., schools, sewers), but is still getting money from property taxes collected on high-valued homes.

Disadvantages:

1. Creates low density development patterns often for individual homes (taking land out of agricultural production)
2. Promotes sprawl; e.g. Montgomery County Maryland - large lot zoning ordinance for 1 home per 25 acres (as opposed to normal subdivision zoning which allows 30 homes every 6 acres, or 0.2 acres/home); a 700 home development has been proposed. (see enclosed publication: Density Limits Only Add to Sprawl by Peter Whoriskey)

Under ordinary zoning: 700 homes x 0.2 acres/home = 140 acres impacted; Under large lot zoning: 700 homes x 25 acres/home = 17,500 acres impacted!

Cluster Zoning: Allow or require homes to be grouped close together on small lots - to protect open land. Undeveloped parcel may be protected under a conservation easement. Also known as cluster developments, open space- or open land subdivisions.

Advantages:

1. Conservation easements placed on the open areas permanently maintain open space
2. Maintains neighborhoods with open public areas

Disadvantages:

1. Open areas are often not large enough for agriculture or residents may not approve of typical farm/forestry activities so close to their homes
2. Promotes sprawl into previously rural areas - result is usually small pockets of development in rural areas
3. Takes land out of agriculture

Fixed-Area Based Zoning: Only a certain number of homes are allowed on a given acreage - usually required to be clustered. Dwellings are located on small lots within the larger parcel.

Advantages:

1. Maintains open character of neighborhood.

Disadvantages:

1. Can result in high levels of rural residential development
2. If open areas aren't protected under an easement, they can be subdivided any time.
3. Brings residential development in close proximity to agricultural activities in rural areas - disputes can arise.

Sliding-Scale Zoning: As parcel size increases, the number of homes allowed decreases. For example, on a 14 acre parcel, 1 house is allowed; on a 100-acre parcel, 4 houses are allowed. The intent is to preserve larger parcels of land for farming and forestry, and develop smaller parcels of land (which can't be used for agriculture) at a higher rate.

Advantages:

1. Development is concentrated
2. Retains larger parcels of land

Disadvantages:

1. Does not provide area-wide protection because small parcels can be developed
2. Parcels can be subdivided if there isn't an easement on the open land
3. Doesn't promote agriculture

For more information on the Virginia Zoning Code, visit: <http://leg1.state.va.us/>

Subdivision Ordinances

In addition to zoning regulations, which dictate the uses and permissible ways in which land may be developed, **subdivision ordinances** "identify the procedures for dividing land and impose requirements for providing public infrastructure and other improvements when land is developed". Subdivision ordinances require subdividers to follow state and local standards for laying out roads and other improvements. These ordinances are not actually conservation tools, but are instead tools used to implement the comprehensive plan.

In addition, all subdivisions must promote public health, safety, convenience and welfare of the county's citizens.

Advantages

- Puts the burden of infrastructure development (roads, storm-water management) on the developer, not the public

Disadvantages

- Subdivision (parcelization) often leads to fragmentation of the landscape (as discussed in Section 1.2)

Section 2

GOVERNMENT INITIATED TOOLS

TOPIC 2.2

Objectives

Participants will:

1. understand the function of Right to Farm and Right to Practice Forestry Laws;
2. examine issues related to these laws

Resources:

- + The Right to Practice Forestry
- + Farmers Appealing Case to Virginia Supreme Court
- + Issue 8 - The Urban/Rural Edge

RIGHT TO FARM & RIGHT TO PRACTICE FORESTRY LAWS

Definitions; Advantages & Disadvantages

Right to Farm And Right to Practice Forestry laws address conflicts between agricultural and non-agricultural neighbors by protecting farmers and forest landowners from complaints to odor, dust, noise, or other normal, approved, best farming & forestry practices. In addition, the Right to Farm Law prevents localities from passing ordinances against normal agricultural practices. The Right to Practice Forestry law prohibits counties from adopting ordinances which require a permit or fee.

In a developing state like Virginia, as cities sprawl into rural areas, these conflicts are common. People like the rural atmosphere and open space in the country, but not the smell of fertilizers or the noise from a timber harvesting operation. These laws only apply to lands which have been in agricultural use at least one year prior to the surrounding residential development, and to landowners who comply with best farming/forestry practices. Additionally, the Right to Practice Forestry Law only pertains to forestland that either remains in forested used or is converted to agriculture.

Localities can regulate farming and forestry practices if they pose a threat to public health or safety and the operations can be held liable if their practices cause pollution of change of condition to another's steams or lands.

Every state in the nation has at least one right-to-farm law. Virginia adopted its first Right to Farm statute in 1981; it was revised in 1995. The Right to Practice Forestry Law (also known as the Private Forestlands Conservation Act) was enacted in 1997

§ 3.1-22.28. **Right to farm;** restrictive ordinances.

"In order to limit the circumstances under which agricultural operations may be deemed to be a nuisance, especially when nonagricultural land uses are initiated near existing agricultural

operations, no county shall adopt any ordinance that requires that a special exception or special use permit be obtained for any production agriculture or silviculture activity in an area that is zoned as an agricultural district or classification.

For the purpose of this section, "production agriculture and silviculture" means the bona fide production or harvesting of agricultural or silvicultural products but shall not include the processing of agricultural or silvicultural products or the above ground application or storage of sewage sludge. However, counties may adopt setback requirements, minimum area requirements, and other requirements that apply to land on which agriculture and silviculture activity is occurring within the locality that is zoned as an agricultural district or classification. No county, city or town shall enact zoning ordinances which would unreasonably restrict or regulate farm structures or farming and forestry practices in an agricultural district or classification unless such restrictions bear a relationship to the health, safety and general welfare of its citizens. This section shall become effective on April 1, 1995, and from and after that date all land zoned to an agricultural district or classification shall be in conformity with this section. "

Virginia has an additional Right to Farm statute, the only one of its kind. This statute was adopted in 1991 after local ordinances were passed to prohibit intensive hog operations. This statute limits the authority of local governments to regulate agricultural activities, including intensive livestock operations, in agriculturally zoned areas.

§ 3.1-22.29. When agricultural operations do not constitute nuisance.

A. No agricultural operation or any of its appurtenances shall be or become a nuisance, private or public, if such operations are conducted in accordance with existing best management practices and comply with existing laws and regulations of the Commonwealth. The provisions of this section shall not apply whenever a nuisance results from the negligent or improper operation of any such agricultural operation or its appurtenances.

B. For the purposes of this chapter, "agricultural operation" shall mean any operation devoted to the bona fide production of crops, or animals, or fowl, including but not limited to the production of fruits and vegetables of all kinds; meat, dairy, and poultry products; nuts, tobacco, nursery and floral products; and the production and harvest of products from silviculture activity.

C. The provisions of subsection A shall not affect or defeat the right of any person, firm, or corporation to recover damages for any injuries or damages sustained by them on account of any pollution of, or change in condition of, the waters of any stream or on the account of any overflow of lands of any such person, firm, or corporation.

D. Any and all ordinances of any unit of local government now in effect or hereafter adopted that would make the operation of any such agricultural operation or its appurtenances a nuisance or providing for abatement thereof as a nuisance in the circumstance set forth in this section are and shall be null and void; however, the provisions of this section shall not apply

whenever a nuisance results from the negligent or improper operation of any such agricultural operation or any of its appurtenances.

(1981, c. 384; 1994, c. 779.)

§ 10.1-1126.1 Silvicultural Practices; local government authority limited.

A. Forestry, when practiced in accordance with accepted silvicultural best management practices as determined by the State Forester pursuant to § 10.1-1105, constitutes a beneficial and desirable use of the Commonwealth's forest resources.

B. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, silvicultural activity, as defined in § 10.1-1181.1, that (i) is conducted in accordance with silvicultural best management practices developed and enforced by the State Forester, and (ii) is located on property defined as real estate developed for forest use under § 58.1-3230 or in a district established pursuant to Chapter 43 (§ 15.2-4300 et seq.) or Chapter 44 (§ 15.2-4400 et seq.) of Title 15.2, shall not be prohibited or unreasonably limited by a local government's use of its police, planning and zoning powers. Local ordinances and regulations shall not require a permit or impose a fee for such silvicultural activity. Local ordinances and regulations pertaining to such silvicultural activity shall be reasonable and necessary to protect the health, safety, and welfare of citizens residing in the locality, and shall not be in conflict with the purposes of promoting the growth, continuation and beneficial use of the Commonwealth's privately owned forest resources. Prior to the adoption of any ordinance or regulation pertaining to silvicultural activity, a locality may consult with, and request a determination from, the State Forester as to whether the ordinance or regulation conflicts with the purposes of this section. Nothing in the sections shall preclude a locality from requiring a review by the zoning administrator, which shall not exceed ten working days, to determine whether a proposed silvicultural activity complies with applicable zoning requirements.

C. The provisions of this section shall apply to the harvesting of timber, provided that the area on which such harvesting occurs is reforested artificially or naturally in accordance with the provisions of Chapter 11 (§ 10.1-1100 et seq.) of Title 10.1 or is converted to bona fide agricultural or improved pasture use as described in subsection B of §10.1-1163.

The provisions of this section shall not apply to land that has been rezoned or converted at the request of the owner or previous owner from an agricultural or rural land to a residential, commercial or industrial zone or use.

Nothing in this section shall affect any requirement imposed pursuant to the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act (§ 10.1-2100 et seq.) or imposed by a locality pursuant to the designation of a scenic highway or Virginia byway in accordance with Article 5 (§ 33.1-62 et seq.) of Chapter 1 of Title 33.1.

(1997, c3 7.)

Advantages:

1. Allows farmers/foresters to practice their trade

Disadvantages:

1. Doesn't provide any permanent protection for the land
2. Virginia law, in particular, allows *CAFO's* (Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations) to operate, even though they generally create much more waste/pollution than smaller agricultural operations, and are considered by some to be industrial, not agricultural, operations.
3. Localities can still pass forestry ordinances which may hold up in court.

SECTION 3

LANDOWNER INITIATED TOOLS

TOPIC 3.1

Objectives

Participants will:

1. understand the concept of bargain sales

BARGAIN SALES

Definitions; Advantages & Disadvantages

Definition: A transfer of property that is in part a sale or exchange of the property and in part a charitable contribution. In other words, the selling of land for less than its fair market value (FMV; the price of the property at its highest and best use). This is the primary tool Land Trusts (see Topic 3.2) and public charities use to acquire land. In terms of tax benefits, a bargain sale is similar to making a gift or a charitable donation, as long as the buyer is a government or nonprofit entity. In this case, the value of the gift is the difference between the fair market value of the land and the bargain sale price.

Advantages:

- Makes land more affordable for land trusts/charities
- For taxes, seller can deduct value of gift from adjusted gross income
- If land has appreciated considerably (particularly important in areas with high development pressures) capital gains taxes can be reduced or eliminated.
- With the tax benefits, the landowner may be in the same financial situation as if the land was sold for FMV, but with the added satisfaction of knowing they have contributed to the conservation of the land.

Disadvantages:

- Landowners may have to pay an appraiser, although there is some funding available for this through the Virginia Outdoors Foundation
- Works best if property has been owned for awhile - allowing it to appreciate in value.

As with any conservation tool, please talk with a qualified tax advisor before committing to a Bargain Sale.

SECTION 3

LANDOWNER INITIATED TOOLS

TOPIC 3.2

Objectives

Participants will:

1. understand the principles of conservation easements; 2. learn about land trusts and their function

Resources:

- + New River Land Trust Packet
- + Tax Benefits of Land Conservation
- + Western Virginia land Trust: Saving Our Land & Water
- + U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Rappahannock River Valley National Wildlife Refuge Brochure
- x President Signs into Law New Conservation Tax Incentives

CONSERVATION EASEMENTS & LAND TRUSTS

Definitions; Advantages & Disadvantages

A conservation (open-space, or preservation) easement is a voluntary legal agreement between a landowner and a public body or conservation group in which the landowner donates or sells certain ownership rights to conserve the agricultural, environmental and open space value of their land. Depending on the organization granting the easement, certain conservation practices (such as following Best management Practices to protect water quality) may be required, and the landowner relinquishes most of the development rights to the property. Easements provide substantial state and federal tax benefits.

- Conservation easements are generally into perpetuity; occasionally, term easements can be written
- Putting an easement on your property DOES NOT give the public access to your property - you are still the landowner and retain all ownership rights other than those you donate/sell with the easement
- Forestry and agriculture can still be practiced on the property (unless the landowner asks for specific prohibitions to be written into the easement)
- Tracts are generally at least 50 acres (but smaller parcels with high conservation values will be considered)
- Landowner retains some development rights (for example, one house site (main house plus one smaller dwelling) per 100 acres; two houses and two smaller dwellings per 250 acres)
- Easement values are typically the difference between the value of the land at its highest and best use (usually development) and the value of the land used for forestry or agriculture
- Tax credits can either be used by the landowner, or sold to other, typically high-income, Virginia tax payers

Advantages:

- Voluntary
- Permanent land protection
- Can be customized
- Generous state and federal tax advantages
- Land under easement can be sold or passed onto children at any time - remember the easement remains with the property forever.

Disadvantages

- Forever is a mighty long time - land under a perpetual easement can never be developed - restricting future options
- Voluntary nature does not ensure protection of critical lands
- Tax benefits may only apply to present generation
- May limit ability to borrow against the land
- Landowner must compensate appraiser - can be expensive**
- Must be in line with Comprehensive Plan

Some funds are available through the Virginia Outdoors Foundation and the Fish & Wildlife Service to help with these expenses. Additionally, some appraisers will accept a percentage of the tax credit sales in lieu of payment upfront.

What is a Land Trust?

(From the Virginia Department of Conservation & Recreation website www.state.va.us/dcr/olc/wheretof.htm)

"Nonprofit organizations in Virginia qualified to accept land for protection are defined as a charitable corporation, charitable association, or charitable trust that has been declared exempt from taxation pursuant to 26 U.S.C.A. § 501 (c) (3) and the primary purposes or powers of which include:

- retaining or protecting the natural or open-space value of real property;
- assuring the availability of real property for agricultural, forestal, recreational, or open-space use;
- protecting natural resources;
- maintaining or enhancing air or water quality; or
- preserving the historic, architectural or archaeological aspects of real property.

These qualified land conservation organizations are defined as "holders" in the act, essentially meaning they are eligible to acquire and hold a conservation easement by gift, purchase, devise or bequest. These groups must have had a principle office in the Commonwealth for at least

five years. Until such a group meets these requirements, it may co-hold a conservation easement with another holder that meets the requirements.

In addition to holding easements, many land trusts and conservancies buy or are given land. And there are many conservation organizations that do not actually hold easements or acquire land. They work instead to educate and promote use of the various land conservation tools."

Virginia's United Land Trusts (VaULT) was formed in 2000 to coordinate private and public land conservation efforts to aid in statewide conservation efforts. There are currently 35 Land Trusts in Virginia. The type of lands a Trust may protect may vary. For example, the 500-Year Forest Foundation grants easements on land owned by folks interested in having old-growth forests. The enclosed booklet titled "Virginia Land Conservation" provides contact information and mission statements for each of these Land Trusts.

In addition to state Land Trusts, there are national and regional land conservation organizations as well. Names and contact information are below:

1. The Nature Conservancy - www.nature.org
2. Land Trust Alliance - www.lta.org
3. Trust for Public Land - www.tpl.org
4. American Farmland Trust - www.farmland.org
5. The Conservation Fund - www.conservationfund.org
6. Civil War Preservation Trust - www.civilwar.org
7. National Park Trust - www.parktrust.org
8. Ducks Unlimited - www.ducks.org/conservation/Projects/

SECTION 3

LANDOWNER INITIATED TOOLS

TOPIC 3.3

Objectives

Participants will:

1. understand the principles of PDR/TDR Programs; 2. learn which areas of Virginia have these programs; 3. learn about the PDR Program in New York State

Resources:

- + Fact Sheet: Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easements
- + New York State's Farmland Protection Program: Purchase of Development Rights
- + Status of Local Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) Programs
- + Map
- + A Quiet Victory
- x A Model Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) Program for Virginia

PURCHASE OF DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS/TRANSFER OF DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS

Definitions; Advantages & Disadvantages

Definition: A **Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) Program**, also known as Purchase of Agricultural Easements (PACE) or Acquisition of Conservation Easements (ACE), allows land owners to voluntarily sell the development rights of their property to a government organization or conservation agency, which then extinguishes the development rights.

The value of the development rights is generally determined by professional appraisers. Landowners are most often paid the difference between the value of the land at its highest and best use (generally residential or commercial development) and the value of the land for agriculture (anywhere from 50 to 80% of the highest and best use value). This is similar to a conservation easement, except instead of receiving tax credits, the land owner receives a cash payment. Installment Purchase Agreements (IPA) spread out payments to the landowner (over 20-30 years) in semi-annual payments. Cash can then be used by the landowners to invest in their agricultural operations or to retire. An added benefit is that the sale price of the property should be lower, making the land more affordable for future generations (however, recent studies have indicated that the sale of development rights does not significantly decrease property values).

Typically, government bodies use this tool in areas with significant natural and cultural resource values. PDR programs can be administered by state, local, and a combination of state and local governments. PDR programs stress maintenance of agricultural activities, not vacant land, and may even require the landowner to have a written management plan. Priority for PDR monies is generally given to agricultural operations which are likely to stay in business. Also taken into consideration are soil quality and threat of development.

In Virginia, 11 localities currently have funded and developed PDR programs (Albemarle County, Chesapeake City, Clarke County, Fauquier County, Isle of Wight County, James City, Northampton County, Rappahannock County, Rockbridge County, Spotsylvania County and Virginia Beach City. Three counties have adopted PDR programs, but are not funded (Frederick, Loudoun, and New Kent). Virginia is working on state-wide PDR program which would compliment local programs already in place. The goals of the state program will be to support, assist, and guide local programs. The state program would also disperse state funds to localities to match local PDR funds in the purchase of easements for farmland.

Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) Programs are designed to protect sensitive areas from development by permitting or requiring the transfer of development from a location deemed unsuitable to a location considered more appropriate. These can be either voluntary OR mandatory.

The **sending zone** is an area where development is discouraged (the area from which development rights are sent). The **receiving zone** is an area where high density growth is encouraged and accommodated (the area that receives the development rights). These areas **MUST** be designated in the Comprehensive Plan.

Landowners in the receiving zones can purchase development rights from landowners in the sending zones; generally, under a TDR, development in the receiving zone can be at higher densities than is usually permitted in the surrounding area. Strict development restrictions are placed on the landowners in the sending zones.

The Virginia Legislature approved a State TDR Program in early 2006; at this time, no communities are participating, although several are exploring the possibility. Localities may have trouble convincing property owners in the receiving area that higher development density is something desirable.

Advantages:

- Generally a conservation easement is placed on the property, ensuring that the land will never be intensively developed
- Provides landowners with a source of income, which can be paid in installments
- Voluntary
- Landowner reserves the right to build a limited number of new farm buildings and additional dwellings

Disadvantages:

- A stable source of funding is required to purchase development rights - this is an expensive program
- PDR programs may not have enough funding to keep up with demand from farmers wanting to sell easements

- Land is under easement and can never be developed - which may cause problems for future owners of the property
- Monitoring and enforcing easements is an on-going and time-consuming process

SECTION 3

LANDOWNER INITIATED TOOLS

TOPIC 3.4

Objectives

Participants will:

1. learn what an Agricultural & Forestal District is;
2. learn how to form an Agricultural & Forestal District

Resources:

- + Agricultural and Forestal Districts
- + Agricultural and Forestal Districts, 2003 x Loudoun County FAQ's

AGRICULTURAL & FORESTAL DISTRICTS

Definitions; Advantages & Disadvantages

Definition: Agricultural & Forestal districts (AFD's) are voluntary rural conservation zones reserved for the production of agricultural products, timber, and the maintenance of open space. Districts are initiated by farm and forest landowner(s) to receive benefits such as use-value property taxation (see section 3.5), protection from nuisance ordinances, limitation of municipal annexation, participation in PDR programs, etc. In return, the district members agree not to convert their land to more intense commercial, industrial, or residential uses for a term of 4 to 10 years. In return, the county and Commonwealth agree not to take action or make infrastructure investments which will increase pressure on landowners to convert land in the district to more intense land uses during the term of the district.

As opposed to agricultural zoning, which can promote low density sprawl, AFD's discourage land uses not in keeping with agricultural, forestal or open-space land uses. Also, AFD's are usually for a minimum of 4-10 years, unlike zoning which can be easily changed at any time.

Virginia has statewide and local AFD programs. As of 2007, 33 Virginia localities have AFD's, which protects approximately 762,000 acres of farm, forest and open space. Somewhere between 60-70% of these protected acres lie in or near rapidly urbanizing areas of Virginia (including Tidewater and Northern Virginia).

To form an AFD, there must be a 200 acre core of land - there can be many owners in this core, but all properties must be adjacent. Once a core is formed, landowners within one mile of the core may also apply to be included. Once the minimum core is established, there is no minimum parcel size

and no minimum number of landowners required, and no maximum size limit for a district. A landowner may only include a portion of their property in the AFD.

If this is desired, the parcel should have a separate tax parcel number and be a legally separate parcel of record. Land in an AFD may be sold at any time, but the land remains in the District.

The county review process takes 180 days; during this time, land can be added or withdrawn.

Once the review process is over, land can only be added to the district. Early withdrawal from AFD's is allowed under the following conditions:

- If a landowner dies during the term of an AFD, the heirs have 2 years to withdraw the land
- A written request for withdrawal due to economic hardship may be submitted by the landowner

Landowners interested in forming an AFD need to file an application with the County Board of Supervisors. The application should include the following documents:

- Acreage of each parcel to be included and parcel number
- Name, address and witnessed signature of each landowner joining the district
- Proposed term (4-10 years)
- Location and total acreage of the district
- Type of district (agricultural, forestal or both)
- Proposed name of district
- USGS map (7.5 min. series, available at <http://store.usgs.gov/>) showing district boundaries
- A county real property map (available from the county assessor's office) showing district boundaries
- County road map showing location of district
- \$300 fee

Advantages:

- Ensures use-value taxation (even if local government doesn't have a land-use program in place)
- Provides some protection from eminent domain (VDOT will consider the presence of a District when determining road locations)
- Protection from nuisance ordinances
- Voluntary
- Promotes neighborly cooperation and encourages landscape-level planning/management
- Creates a critical landmass important for maintaining a viable agricultural/forestal landscape.
- Local governments must consider the presence of a district when making administrative and planning decisions

- Keeps land in forestry & farm use for the length of the program (significant penalties for early withdrawal)

Disadvantages:

- Process of forming a district can be timely and complex
- Not effective tool in areas with high development pressure
- Incentives not always enough to get farmers to enroll

SECTION 3

LANDOWNER INITIATED TOOLS

TOPIC 3.5

USE-VALUE TAXATION

Objectives

Participants will:

1. learn about use-value taxation policies in Virginia; 2. learn which counties offer use-value taxation

Resources:

- + Local Use-Value Tax Assessment by Virginia Counties
- + A Citizen's Guide to the Use Value Taxation Program in Virginia
- + Does Use-Value Taxation Hold Potential to Lower Farmers' Property Tax Bills?
- x DVD - Brock Hertzberg on Use Value Taxation
- x Results of Agricultural and Horticultural Use Value Taxation program Survey

Definitions; Advantages & Disadvantages

Definition: Although authorized at the State level and implemented at the County level, differential tax assessment programs (aka use value or current use assessment) are generally initiated by grassroot movements within a county. These programs allow local governments to assess farmland at its current use value, which is generally lower than its fair market value, for real property tax purposes. Although Virginia has approved the program, each county has the right to adopt or reject the program. However, all property belonging to Agricultural and Forestal Districts qualifies for land use taxation, regardless of whether or not the county has adopted the program.

If a county adopts the program, a property must fall under one of four classifications to qualify:

Agricultural: land must be in *bona fide* crop or livestock production for sale, or be in an approved soil conservation program.

Horticultural: *Bona fide* production of fruits, vegetables, ornamental plants, or ornamental products for sale

Forested: Productive and nonproductive forest land

Open Space: Used or preserved for parks, recreation, conservation, flood ways, wetlands, riparian buffers, historic or scenic purposes, or for public interest.

Advantages:

- Lowers property taxes for rural property owners
- Shifts tax burden to those who use more services (urban residents)
- Makes land ownership more affordable for future generations

Disadvantages:

- Locality collects less revenue - must either reduce services or increase taxes on other residents - may not be popular with those whose taxes will increase
- Determining reasonable use values can be difficult

Sliding Scale Tax Rates - This is another options localities can consider, one that takes a middle-of-the-road approach. Sliding Scale Tax Rates were authorized by the General Assembly in 1999, however, they are not currently being used by any Virginia locality.

To use Sliding Scale Tax Rates, the land must meet the same qualifying uses as the use-value taxation program. The landowner makes an agreement with the locality to keep their property in agricultural/forestal/horticultural or open conditions for up to 20 years. The locality then reduces the property tax by anywhere from 100% of normal to 0%. In this situation, a qualifying landowner could possibly be relieved of all property taxes for the term of the agreement.

"Sliding Scale Tax Rate - New

Effective Date: July 1, 1999

Code Sections Amended: §§ 58.1-3231, 58.1-3234 and 58.1-3237

House Bill 2754 (Chapter 1026) permits localities to establish a sliding scale tax rate which could lower tax rates for real estate devoted to special use and held for longer periods of time. This sliding scale tax rate applies to real estate which is taxed on its agricultural, horticultural, open-space or forest use value and is available only to those taxpayers who enter into a written agreement, subject to a 20 year limit, with the locality under which they promise to use their real estate for such uses for a mutually agreed upon period of time. The benefits of this sliding scale tax rate are in addition to, and do not change, current law which provides for special assessment of real estate (use value assessment as opposed to fair market value assessment) for real estate devoted to agricultural, horticultural, open-space or forest use. Use value assessment is available to taxpayers if a locality adopts a land-use plan and ordinance providing for use value assessment, but there is no requirement that an owner of real estate enter into a written agreement with the local governing body."

From: <http://www.virginia.edu/coopercenter/vastat/taxrates1999/sec01.pdf>

**Local Use-Value Assessment by Virginia Counties
(data compiled by Brock Hertzberg, Virginia Farm Bureau)**

Accomack	Yes	Fairfax	Yes	Madison	Yes	Scott	No
Albemarle	Yes	Fauquier	Yes	Mecklenburg	No	Shenandoah	Yes
Alleghany	Yes	Floyd	Yes	Middlesex	Yes	Smyth	Yes
Amelia	Yes	Fluvanna	Yes	Montgomery	Yes	Southampton	Yes
Amherst	Yes	Franklin	Yes	Nansemond	Yes	Spotsylvania	Yes
*Appomattox	No	Frederick	Yes	Nelson	Yes	Stafford	Yes
Augusta	Yes	Giles	Yes	Northampton	Yes	Surry	No
Bedford	Yes	Gloucester- Mathews	Y/N	Northumberland/ Lancaster	Y/N	Sussex	No
Bland	Yes	Goochland	Yes	Nottoway	Yes	Tazewell	Yes
Botetourt	Yes	Grayson	No	Orange	Yes	Virginia Beach	Yes
Brunswick	No	Greene	Yes	Page	Yes	Warren	Yes
*Buckingham	No	Greensville	No	Patrick	No	Washington	Yes
Campbell	Yes	Halifax	No	Pittsylvania	Yes	Westmoreland	Yes
Caroline	Yes	Hanover	Yes	Powhatan	Yes	Wise	No
Carroll	Yes	Henrico	Yes	Prince Edward	Yes	Wythe	Yes
CC/JC/NK/York	N/Y/Y	Henry	Yes	Prince George	Yes		
Charlotte	No	Highland	No	Prince William/Fairfax	Yes		
Chesapeake	Yes	Isle of Wight	Yes	Pulaski	Yes		
Chesterfield	Yes	King & Queen	No	Rappahannock	Yes		
Clarke	Yes	King George	Yes	Richmond	Yes		
Craig	No	King William	Yes	Roanoke	Yes		
Culpeper	Yes	Lee	No	Rockbridge	Yes		
Cumberland	Yes	Loudoun	Yes	Rockingham	Yes		
Dinwiddie	Yes	Louisa	Yes	Russell	Yes		
Essex	No	Lunenburg	No				

*These counties are in the process of trying to implement use-value taxation.

SECTION 4

LANDOWNER EXPERIENCES

TOPICS 4.1- 4.4

Objectives

Participants will:

1. hear from other non-industrial private landowners and/or natural resource professionals regarding their personal experiences using these tools for forest & farmland conservation; 2. interact on an informal level with these speakers

CONSERVATION EASEMENTS, PURCHASE OF DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS, AGRICULTURAL & FORESTAL DISTRICTS AND USE-VALUE TAXATION

In this section of the short course, invited guests will speak about their personal experiences with conservation easements, purchase of development rights programs, agricultural & forestal districts and use-value taxation. Speakers will also answer questions regarding their experiences. Some or all of these topics may be covered. This is an excellent opportunity to help you determine which programs may be suitable for you and your land and to interact on an informal level with other landowners and natural resource professionals.

The speaker(s), topic(s) covered, and length and style of these presentations will be determined by the local course facilitator. A visit to one of the properties may be included.

APPENDICES

LAND CONSERVATION TOOLS SUMMARY

APPENDIX A

Objectives

Participants will:

1. review the forest & farmland conservation tools covered in this short course

Agricultural zoning consists of zoning ordinances used by local governments that seek to protect the farm land base by identifying desirable farmland based on factors such as soil conditions and location and limit the density of residential development and other land uses.

Nonexclusive agricultural zoning techniques allows for residential and other development along with agricultural uses.

Large lot zoning increases the lot size required in residential zone districts where farming operations exist, generally 5-50 acres or more (depending on the objective farmland-protection vs. rural character).

Cluster/open space development zoning allows or mandates the dwellings to be grouped on part of the property and restricts development on the remainder of the parcel, often through conservation easements. Density bonuses and other incentives are often given for clustering.

Fixed area based zoning allows for a certain amount of homes per number of acres. The dwellings must generally be located on small lots within the larger parcel. For example, one dwelling for every 50 acres in a parcel to be located on a building lot of up to 2 acres to allows landowners some development rights but also protects areas for agriculture or open space.

Sliding scale zoning decreases the number of dwellings per area as the size of the parcel increases. The idea being that smaller parcels are not viable for agriculture and should be developed at a higher overall density than larger parcels.

Right to farm laws address the conflicts between farmers and their non-farmer neighbors generally through the protecting farmers from complaints to odor, dust, noise, or other unpleasant aspects of agricultural that are considered normal, approved, or best practices. The right to farm laws also protect against localities passing ordinances against normal farming practices.

Bargin sales allow landowners to sell land for less than its fair market value, similar to making a gift or charitable donation. The value of the gift is the difference between fair market value and the bargain sale price.

Conservation or preservation easement is a voluntary agreement between a land owner and the holder of the easement regarding the use of the property. The property is still owned and used by the landowner but the property is protected by an easement that “runs with the land” regardless if the property is sold, rented, mortgaged or otherwise transferred. The easement may be perpetual or short-term although generally most easements are perpetual. Easements may cover the entire property or only part of the parcel.

Purchase of development right program (PDR) allows the land owner to voluntarily sell the development rights (through a conservation easement) to a governmental agency or private land trust. The landowner receives compensation in return for the restrictions placed on the land. The landowner retains the title of the land and has the ability to sell or pass the farm to another person. These programs are also known as purchase of agricultural conservation easements (PACE).

Transfer of Development Rights (TDRs) is a tool to transfer the development rights (assigned per specific number of acres) from an area that the community wants to preserve to another area where the community wants to promote development. The desired area of preservation is called the sending area and the area where the development will occur is the receiving area. The development rights are generally bought by the developers who use them

to increase the number of units they can develop in the designated growth area or receiving area.

Agricultural & forestal districts are voluntary associations created by farmers to receive benefits such as use-value property taxation, protection from nuisance ordinances and municipal annexation, participation in PDR programs, other tax exemptions, etc.

Differential tax assessment programs allow local governments to assess farmland at its use value, generally lower, than the fair market value for real property tax purposes. The agricultural use value represents what the farmer would pay for the land regardless what the net farm income he/she expects. Whereas, the fair market value is the amount an individual such as a farmer or developer would pay for the land. Differential assessment is also known as current use assessment and use value assessment.

Other Programs:

Smart Growth originally referred to the Maryland statewide program passed in 1996 that provides financial incentives to local governments and developers who concentrate development where infrastructure already exists in “priority funding areas” and better accommodate growth. The term is now commonly used to describe concentrated development that is not considered sprawl development.

Urban Growth Boundaries (UGBs) allows development to occur inside the defined boundary and areas outside the boundary are kept for agricultural land, open space and other environmentally important areas. UGBs generally accommodate enough land area for a 20 year growth period with periodic revisions.

Level of Service (LOS) is used by local governments to require a minimum level of existing services or need to be provided by the developer in order to gain approval for development projects. The level of services is determined by the localities and may include water, sewer, road capacity, and fire/police protection.

Circuit breaker tax programs offer tax credits based on their amount of real property tax bill and their income. The following four states have this type of program: Michigan, Wisconsin, New York and Iowa. State governments typically fund these programs. Often other measure such as a 10 year restrictive agreement, agricultural zoning, etc. is required with these programs.

Comprehensive plans, also known as general or master plans, outline government policies, objectives and guidelines for development and conservation goals.

Keep farming profitable/support local agriculture through the following strategies:

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) consists of a community of individuals who pledge support to a farm operation so the growers and consumers share the risks and benefits of food production. Generally, the ‘shareholders’ pledge money in advance of the season and receive a share of the products produced and may participate in a minimum amount of work.

Farmers’ Markets are located in or near a community to offers the market environment and market convenience where many sellers can sell their farm-origin products to residents and visitors. The products may include variety of vegetables. In addition, flowers, fruit, meat, honey, eggs and dairy products are also sometimes available through CSAs.

Farm Fresh Network programs build partnerships among farmers, chefs and consumers to strengthen regional agriculture by teaming up farms and restaurants to provide the fresh local food at restaurants.

Farm Link programs provide assistance to retiring farmers and individuals seeking to become active farmers in the transition of farm businesses and properties from retiring farmers to active farmers.

Estate planning lays the foundation for a smooth transition of the ownership of a farm or ranch. A complete estate plan should: (a) transfer of ownership, control and management of farm assets, (b) avoid unnecessary transfer taxes (estate, gift, or income), (c) ensure financial security for all generations, and (d) develop the next generation’s management ability.

APPENDICES

SOURCES OF ADDITIONAL INFORMATION & ASSISTANCE

APPENDIX B

Objectives

Participants will:

1. receive a listing of natural resource agencies which provide landowner assistance

American Tree Farm System

C/O American Forest Foundation
1111 Nineteenth Street, NW
Suite 780
Washington, D.C. 20036
(202)463-2462
www.treefarmssystem.org

The American Tree Farm System (ATFS) is a private program of the American Forest Foundation with the mission to promote growth of renewable forest resources on private lands while protecting environmental benefits and increasing public understanding of all benefits of productive forestry. State ATFS Committees bring foresters, consultants and government agency officials together with experienced Tree Farmers to plan and administer each state ATFS program. ATFS is a nationally recognized certification system, and the oldest certification system in the world.

Forest Legacy

Forest Legacy Program Manager
USDA Forest Service;
NA State and Private Forestry
271 Mast Road
Durham, NC 03824
(603)868-7695
www.fs.fed.us/spf/coop/programs/loa/flp

The Forest Legacy Program is a partnership between States and the USDA Forest Service developed to identify and protect environmentally important forests from conversion to non-forest uses. The main tool used for protecting these important forests is conservation easements. The Federal government may fund up to 75 percent of program costs with at least 25 percent coming from private, State or local sources.

U.S.D.A. Forest Service

1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250
(202)205-8333
www.fs.fed.us

The mission of the Forest Service, a federal agency of the United States Department of Agriculture, is "to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations". For over a century, the Forest Service has managed public land in national forests and grasslands, currently totaling over 193 million acres.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

1849 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20240
(800)344-WILD
www.fws.gov

The Mission of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) is to work with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The USFWS is committed to a collaborative approach to conservation. Their strategy is to empower Americans to become citizen conservationists.

Virginia Cooperative Extension & Virginia Tech Department of Forestry

313 Cheatham Hall (0324)

Blacksburg, VA 24061

(540)231-5483

www.cnr.vt.edu/forestupdate

www.sharplogger.vt.edu/

These state agencies administer the *Virginia Forest Landowner Education Program* and *SHARP Logger Training*, and provide basic forestry, wildlife, and natural resource management information to forest landowners, farmers, and the general public. Forest resource extension personnel conduct educational tours, meetings, and short courses on a variety of forestry and wildlife topics. They publish numerous natural resource extension bulletins including the *Virginia Forest Landowner Update*, a quarterly newsletter. All Virginia counties have local Cooperative Extension offices; see the blue pages in your phone book under State Government.

Virginia Department of Conservation & Recreation

203 Governor Street Suite 213

Richmond, VA 23219

(804)786-1712

www.dcr.virginia.gov

www.vainvasivespecies.org

The Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) is a state agency that works with Virginians to conserve, protect, and enhance their lands and improve the quality of the Chesapeake Bay and rivers and streams. DCR promotes the stewardship and enjoyment of natural, cultural and outdoor recreational resources (e.g. State Parks), coordinates statewide non-point source pollution control, insures the safety of Virginia's dams, and, via the Land Conservation Office, provides statewide land conservation information. The Natural Heritage Program, which protects land for conservation of biodiversity, manages the habitats of rare, threatened, and endangered species, protects significant natural communities, geologic sites, and other natural features, and provides information on invasive species, is administered by DCR.

Virginia Department of Forestry

Fontaine Research Park

900 Natural Resources Dr.

Suite 800

Charlottesville, VA 22903

(434)977-6555

www.dof.virginia.gov

The Virginia Department of Forestry (DOF) is a state agency that provides basic forest management planning and forestry information, seedlings and seed mixes for reforestation and wildlife, BMP guidance, and enforces water quality, seed tree, and burning laws. The DOF administers cost share programs, and maintains lists of private forestry consultants, contractors and timber buyers by county. The DOF cooperates closely with other state and private resource agencies and companies in conducting education programs for loggers and landowners. Most counties have local offices; see the blue pages in your phone book under State Government.

Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries

4010 W. Broad St.

P.O. Box 11104

Richmond, VA 23230-1104

(804)367-9369

www.dgif.virginia.gov

The Department of Game & Inland Fisheries (DGIF) is a state agency that provides information, education, and technical assistance on wildlife management to forest landowners. The DGIF monitors wildlife populations, enforces hunting and fishing regulations, and provides technical assistance to federal agencies on cost share programs for wildlife management practices on private lands. The agency is currently developing a comprehensive strategy for managing wildlife, including threatened and endangered species.

Virginia Forestry Association

3808 Augusta Ave.

Richmond, VA 23230-8733

(804)278-8733

www.veforestry.org

This private non-profit membership organization represents Virginia's broad forestry community. The Virginia Forestry

Association (VFA) is active in legislative and regulatory issues affecting forestry and forest management, works with the media on forestry issues, sponsors forestry and environmental camps for school-aged youth, provides general forestry and forest industry information, and assists member landowners and others in interpreting regulatory requirements relative to forestry. *Virginia Forests*, a quarterly magazine on forest management and issues, is published by the VFA.

Virginia Outdoors Foundation

101 N. 14th Street 17th Floor

Richmond, VA 23219

www.virginiaoutdoorsfoundation.org

The Virginia Outdoors Foundation (VOF) is a state agency charged with the preservation of cultural and heritage lands In Virginia. VOF works with private landowners to establish voluntary conservation easements to protect farm and forest land. The VOF easement program has grown to over 1,700 properties (289,000 acres).

Professional Foresters

Professional foresters are employed by government organizations, forest industry, and private consulting companies.

Professional foresters offer a full range of services to private landowners including management planning, timber appraisals, timber sale preparation and administration, site preparation and reforestation. Landowners are advised to check references and professional affiliations before choosing a forester. These references include membership in organizations such as the Association of Consulting Foresters (ACF, www.acf-foresters.org) and the Society of American Foresters (SAF, www.safnet.org). Lists of professional foresters are available from your local VDOF office (www.dof.virginia.gov), ACF and SAF.

