



# FORESTLAND CONSERVATION REVIEW

October 2014



## CONTENTS...

---

From the Director – 2

A Crystal Ball Look at What's Ahead for Forestland  
Conservation – 3

Just What are Conservation Values? – 6

Family Forest Landowners Hold the Key to Sustaining  
Virginia's Woodlands – 7

New Tools to Finance Forestland Conservation – 9

Addressing Today's Forestry Issues through Utilization and  
Marketing – 10

No Place Like "Homeplace" – 11

Introducing Kim Biasiulli, Forest Conservation Specialist – 13



## **FORGING PARTNERSHIPS... Moving Toward Greater Relevancy**

One of the most rewarding and intriguing aspects of forestland conservation is the diversity of partners that are discovered. This is a powerfully strong aspect of our work that conserves forestland and one that we need to leverage and strengthen. Many of these partners are organizations and individuals that we in the forestry community have not worked closely with before. As the forestry community seeks to become more relevant to a broader array of societal interests, forestland conservation endeavors offer great opportunities to open new doors.

A first step in developing strategies to conserve forests and mitigate forest loss is to identify the suite of drivers that offer strong potential in providing impetus or cause in valuing the retention of our forestland. Drivers we work with include the loss of forest functions and values (ecosystem services) that are associated with the necessary construction of public service infrastructure. This would include highways, power lines, gas lines and airport construction activity.

Once identified, these drivers each line up with a unique set of agencies, organizations and partners. For example, if the driver is capitalizing on how forest cover improves water quality, our partners would include the Environmental Protection Agency; Virginia Department of Environmental Quality; county governments; planning district commissions; water and sewer authorities; river basin commissions, and environmental groups. If the driver is mitigating forest loss due to power line construction, the entities we interact with would include power utilities, environmental consultants, State Corporation Commission, Virginia Department of Environmental Quality and other sister state agencies.

Many of these partners are groups that the forestry community has not worked closely with in the past. As a forester, never in a million years did I envision going to Washington, D.C., to meet with officials in the Federal Aviation Administration to partner with them on how to better address forest loss as a result of airport construction and expansion.

All of these new partnerships and contacts offer our agency an opportunity to enhance the relevancy of the forestry community. In Virginia, the audience is our 8.26 million citizens. Our forest landowners are an extremely important subset of that population and a group that merits our attention and resources to help them be better stewards of their forestland. It is also imperative that we develop programs and marketing initiatives to better connect our agency's performance to the nearly 8 million citizens who are not forest landowners. Forging new partnerships to conserve our forestland offers great promise to strengthen that needed relevancy.

Buck Kline, Director  
Forestland Conservation Division

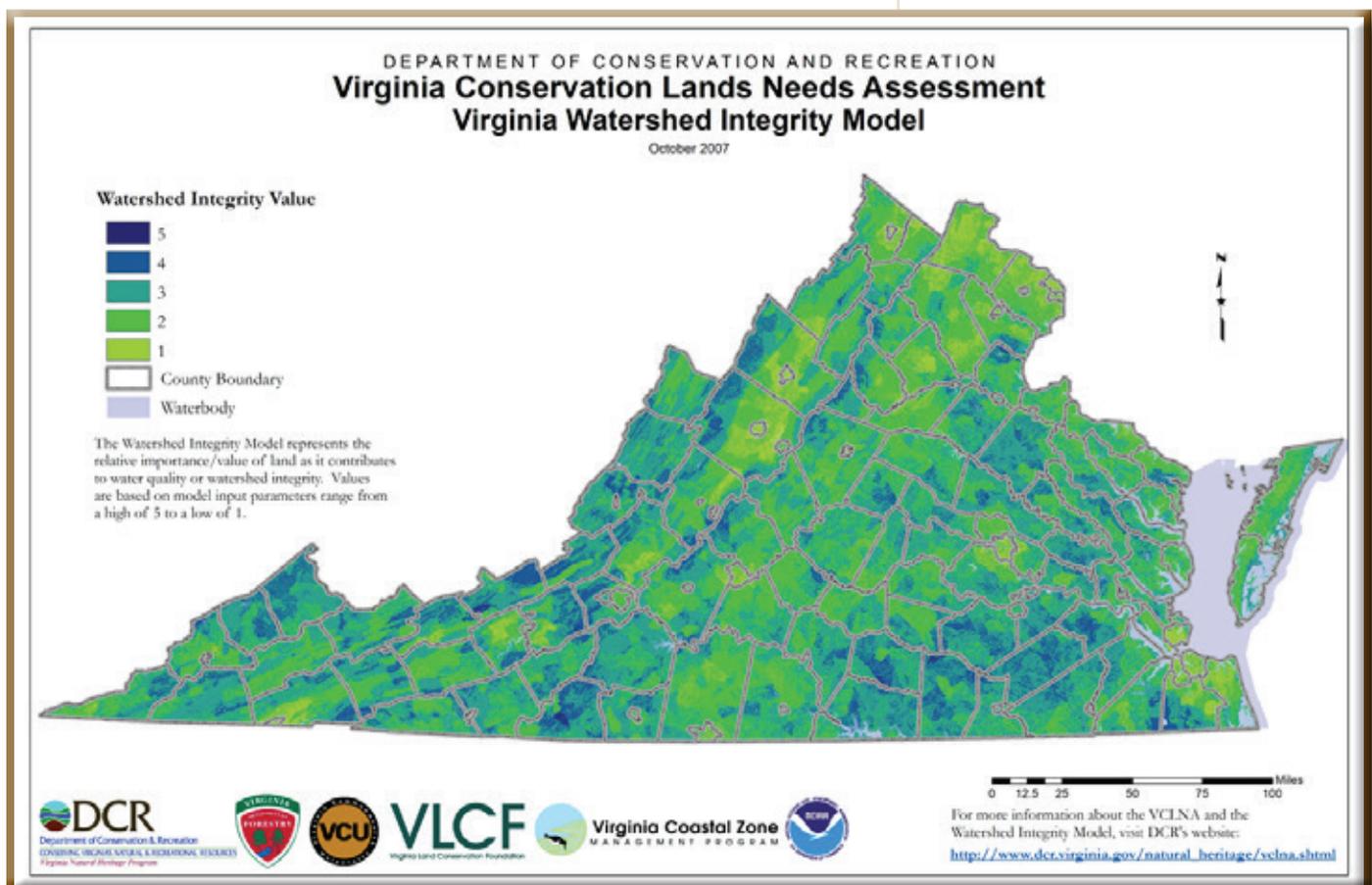
# A CRYSTAL BALL LOOK AT WHAT'S AHEAD FOR FORESTLAND CONSERVATION

By Greg Evans



Paying attention to the familiar axiom “to prepare for the future one must learn from the past” promises to pay dividends for the Department of Forestry (VDOF) as it works to reduce the rate of forestland conversion in the Commonwealth. The groundwork and investment undertaken over many years in research; in stakeholder outreach; in sponsoring innovative and experimental management practices and demonstration programs, and in initiating partnerships, has built a reservoir of knowledge and a network of potential collaborators for the agency. It has also enhanced the credibility of the Department as a conservation leader among its sister state agencies, the forest products industry, non-governmental organizations and private forestland owners at a time when state departments of forestry across the nation are being routinely asked to stretch far beyond their traditional forest management roles to meet changing societal needs.

The USDA Forest Service in its 2007 report “Caring for our Natural Assets: An Ecosystem Services Perspective” summed up this challenge in noting that “It is this critical relationship between forests and people that can lead natural resource managers to a conservation approach or perspective that is inherently tied to the dynamic needs of society....It helps forest management remain relevant in a time of growing concern about environmental change; forest management that



*continued on page 4...*

# A CRYSTAL BALL LOOK AT WHAT'S AHEAD FOR FORESTLAND CONSERVATION

*Continued*

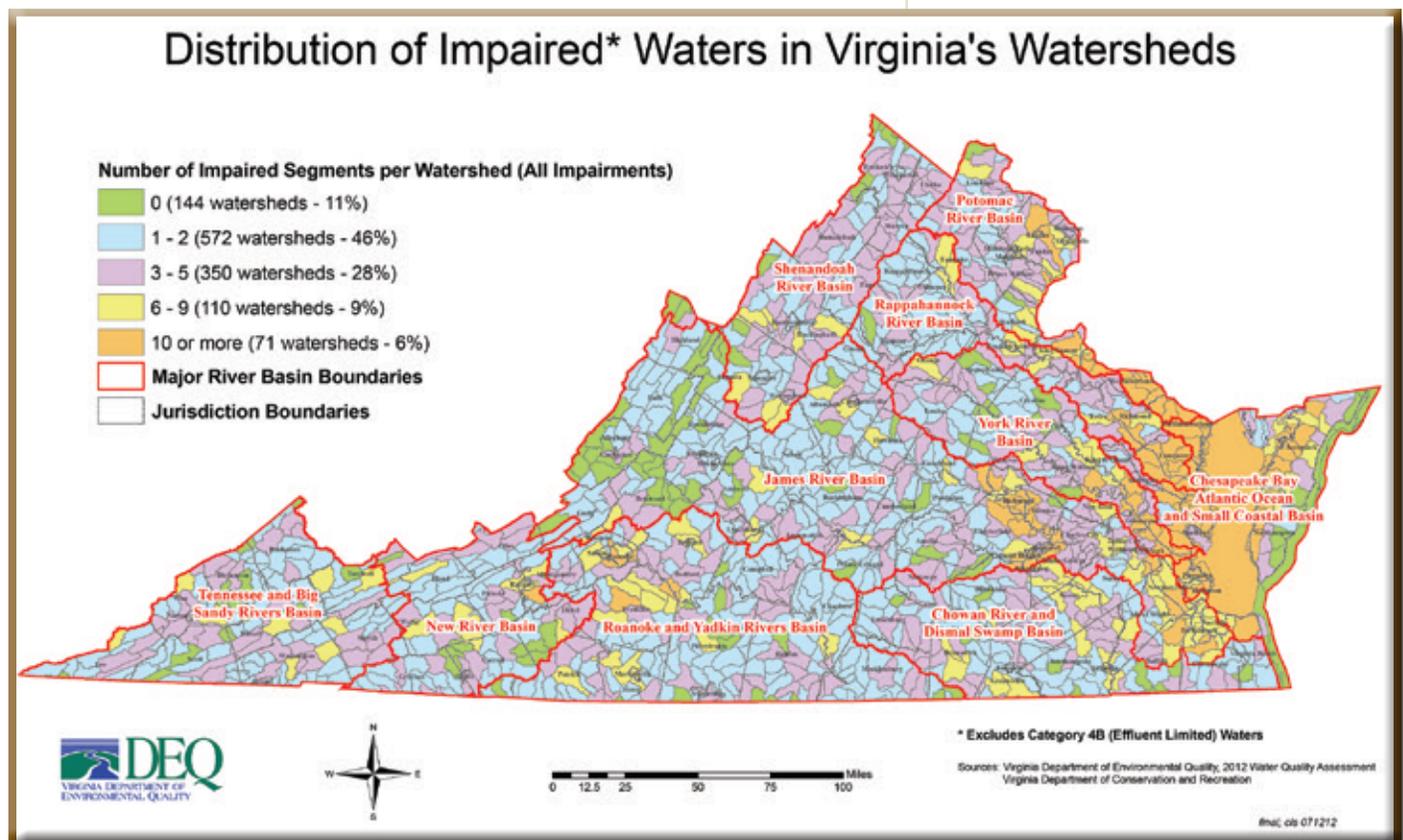


considers water quality, carbon sequestration, ecotourism, bioenergy and other benefits, and engages and serves a broad public.” Those words have proven prophetic and today represent, in the view of large segments of Virginia’s citizenry, the principal reasons to retain forestland as forestland.

So what are the big, non-forest product-oriented drivers pertaining to retaining forestland in Virginia? It depends on whom you ask, but probably high on everyone’s list are forestland’s water quality and source-water protection benefits. The more forest cover a watershed has, the less money has to be spent on water treatment. Even in developed areas, protecting riparian areas can help control pollution. A 2002 study by the Trust for Public Lands and the American Water Works Association and referenced by the Valley Conservation Council found annual water treatment and chemical costs to be \$297,000 for a source area that is 60 percent forested compared to \$932,450 for one that is 10 percent

forested. Costs decline approximately 20 percent for every 10 percent increase in the source area’s forest cover.

Other major drivers pertain to growing urban populations and resulting land-use changes, atmospheric deposition and fragmentation and degradation of vital habitat. Changes in land use and land cover can affect atmospheric circulation and the movement of moisture locally. Evaporation from neighboring states, which depends on land use, can be the source of as much as one-third of the



*continued on page 5...*

# A CRYSTAL BALL LOOK AT WHAT'S AHEAD FOR FORESTLAND CONSERVATION

*Continued*



precipitation of inland areas. The preservation of forestland for working rural landscapes, wildlife habitat, urban parks and recreational trails, is emerging as an integral component of smart growth programs in urbanizing areas. VDOF's own forestland conservation efforts have historically focused on conservation easements, tree planting and land purchases. However, it is now beginning to also look at how forestland conservation can fit into the comprehensive planning and zoning processes in communities. To do this, partnerships and collaborations must be broadened; common ground must be found, and cooperation toward common goals must be achieved.

VDOF is an agency partner to both the Departments of Environmental Quality and Transportation responsible for evaluating development projects proposed under those agencies' environmental review processes and recommending actions to limit adverse impact on Virginia's forestlands. This effort has created the opportunity for VDOF to recommend to project sponsors changes in the design of project footprints that reduce forest loss and to suggest adoption of forestry best management practices in the construction and long-term management of large-scale municipal infrastructure projects.

In another area, the demands of the Chesapeake Bay Program watershed implementation phase II (WIPII) program required to meet the regulatory mandated Bay total maximum daily load targets and the new Chesapeake Bay Partners Agreement recently signed by the Governors of the Chesapeake Bay states, the Mayor of the District of Columbia and the Administrator of the U.S. EPA will increase the trajectory and pace of implementation required to meet Virginia's 2017 Chesapeake goals. The Chesapeake Bay Foundation reports that the land-to-water ratio for the Bay is larger than any other large, enclosed coastal estuary in the world. As a result, land conservation may well be the most important factor in the success or failure of efforts to restore and protect the Bay.

Governor McAuliffe has pledged Virginia's full participation in the new Partners' Agreement and commitment to meeting the Bay total maximum daily load goals, and this will necessitate more involvement by VDOF. The Agreement's land conservation goal calls for maintaining water quality and habitat and sustaining working forests. Two million additional acres throughout the watershed identified as high-conservation priorities at the federal, state or local level will be required to meet the Bay Agreement's 2025 protected lands outcome. This includes 695,000 acres of forestland defined as being of highest value for maintaining water quality. The Agreement's Riparian Buffer goal stands at 900 miles of new buffers per year across the watershed; and the urban canopy goal seeks to reach 2,400 acres across the watershed by 2025. Other forestry

related outcomes include developing by 2017 a Chesapeake Bay watershed-wide methodology and metrics for measuring the rate of land conversion of agricultural and forestlands, and for measuring the extent and rate of change in impervious surface coverage. The states are also called upon to evaluate policy options and identify potential incentives, resources and other tools that could assist local governments in their efforts to better manage and, when possible, reduce the rate of consumption of agricultural and forest lands. This complements what VDOF is beginning to do already in working with communities to stimulate forestland retention incentives.

These examples demonstrate without question the importance of forestland conservation policies and practices that can adapt to meet the dynamic needs of society. VDOF has been and will continue to be a leader in this effort to conserve forest cover and improve the forest productivity that is critical to maintaining functioning forest ecosystems and sustaining the Commonwealth's robust forest products industry.

# JUST WHAT ARE CONSERVATION VALUES?

By Larry Mikkelson



During my tenure as a field forester with the VDOF, in Amelia County many years ago, I have to admit that my goal was to assist Amelia's private forestland owners in producing dollars from the trees on their property – to harvest trees that were economically mature and to plant more trees (almost exclusively loblolly pine) that would produce more dollars from the trees on their property as time moved forward. It was a good thing to manage the forest with this goal in mind, but it was a narrow focus, and the only “value” considered was green, and I don't mean the loblolly needles.

While the traditional forestland owners I worked with believed in maintaining their ownership in fields and forest, and saw the value in that over time, the future of using the land for those purposes was only guaranteed during their tenure as owner. Of course, future owners might not hold those same values and could choose to grow houses once the more-populated Chesterfield County spilled across the Appomattox River and Amelia began to grow.

Today, those traditional forestland owners, found not only in Southside but all across the state, have the conservation easement tool to guarantee that the land they love can remain forever in agriculture and forestry. While easements can be considered a tool to reduce development, and they do just that, their broader purpose is to conserve in perpetuity the various conservation values that a property possesses.

So, what might these conservation values be? Well, there is the one I opened with – the economic value of wood products. Another obvious one – water quality. Our field personnel encounter this on a regular basis when dealing with harvesting operations near water sources. While our efforts often center on problems, like a logger who didn't do right, the purpose of our efforts is to allow the forests to do what they do best – filter sediment and enhance water quality. Another obvious one – wildlife – not only for hunting, but the value that in most every public survey comes up as the No. 1 reason that people value forests. Then there is open space. I think most citizens would agree that it is more pleasurable to drive along a highway and observe pastures, farm fields and forests rather than housing developments. Sometimes scenery is the value to be conserved. Virginia has designated many roads and portions of various rivers as scenic. A conservation easement can protect those viewsheds. VDOF easements protect in perpetuity these and several other less common forest values, including historic sites, endangered species, natural heritage resources and important geologic sites.

These conservation values are what the Forestland Conservation Division's personnel intend to conserve when considering a particular property and negotiating the appropriate language to protect these resources in a VDOF easement. Our goal is not only to limit the number of houses that can populate a site, but to make certain that the various values that forests enhance or provide are conserved for the future.



# FAMILY FOREST LANDOWNERS HOLD THE KEY TO SUSTAINING VIRGINIA'S WOODLANDS

By Mike Santucci



## 5th Forest Transition Workshop a Success

More than 10 million acres of Virginia's forests are in the hands of family forest landowners. These family-owned woodlands form the backbone of the Commonwealth's working forestland base. Since 1977, more than a half-million acres of forestland have been converted to non-forest uses, most of which is residential or commercial development. A majority of it has been family woodlands.

Multiple studies reveal that family-owned woodlands are most at risk of conversion at the point of intergenerational transfer. While a majority of current family forest landowners wish for their property to remain intact, in forest and in the family, only three percent have taken steps to ensure that happens by planning for the transition of their woodland from one generation to the next.

In the Commonwealth, 70 percent of the family-owned forestland is owned by someone 55 years or older; 41 percent by someone 65 years or older. Tens of thousands of acres of family-owned forestlands will undergo an intergenerational transfer in the next two or three decades, and more than 95 percent of these transfers will happen with virtually no planning. The decisions made during these transitions will play a crucial role in sustaining the economic benefits of our forests and the flow of natural goods and services from them, ultimately impacting all 8.2 million Virginians.

Passing forestland forward to the next generation is a process with financial, legal and emotional dimensions. To be successful in passing the woodland and an active commitment to its stewardship, three things must be transferred: the land itself; a commitment to good forest stewardship, and a passion for the land. Many tools are available to ensure land is transitioned intact to the next generation. However, deliberate family communication and planning is crucial and must involve the entire family to ensure that each member's values are understood and the transfer of the property to the next owner or owners is equitable. When land is passed to heirs with clear visions about how it is to be managed and why, the land is much more likely to be kept intact and managed as a legacy to the parents. This can establish a pattern for future generations.

To help family forest landowners address these topics and learn about the various succession planning tools, Virginia Cooperative Extension and the Virginia Department of Forestry have developed "Focusing on Forest Land Transfer to Generation 'NEXT'." This workshop engages the next generation in effective family communications, describes the estate planning landscape and provides effective planning tools. The workshop equips family members with the information and means needed to increase the likelihood of successful intergenerational transfer

of their forests and their associated woodland legacy. Speakers include legal and financial experts experienced in estate planning



*continued on  
page 8...*

# FAMILY FOREST LANDOWNERS HOLD THE KEY TO SUSTAINING VIRGINIA'S WOODLANDS

*Continued*



as well as natural resource professionals who work with landowners to conserve land and plan the future.

The 2014 offering of this award-winning program was held July 29th and August 5th in Farmville. Southside is in great need of legacy planning, as large blocks of high forest conservation value woodland remain intact and under single ownership. The program was highly successful, as 33 individuals representing 5,100 acres of land attended. The hope is that this program has planted a seed and will serve as a catalyst to bring increasing awareness and similar sessions to the region.

Overall, the five offerings of Generation NEXT appear to be having a positive impact. More than 149 individuals representing 77 families have participated these workshops. A vast majority of participants indicated the workshop would increase the likelihood of their property staying in the family (75%) and remaining in woodland (74%). Most estimated an average family savings of \$625,000 as a result of the program. Follow-up surveys revealed that more than three-quarters of the participants had begun forestland transition planning in the six months following the course. As these landowners continue executing their plans, nearly 50,000 acres of Virginia's forestland are expected to remain sustainable, family-owned and intact.

Plans are underway for a 2015 offering, most likely in the Shenandoah Valley. For further information, contact Adam Downing of Virginia Cooperative Extension at (540) 948-6881 or Mike Santucci of the Virginia Department of Forestry at (434) 220-9182.



# NEW TOOLS TO FINANCE FORESTLAND CONSERVATION

*By Chandler Van Voorhis, managing partner, C2I LLC and Michael Collins, executive director, Center for Natural Capital*



The world of conservation is undergoing a new fundamental change that will enlarge the tools, mechanisms and sources of capital to both conserve and enhance our natural capital base.

Since the days of Teddy Roosevelt, conservation has largely been delivered by a central planning and technocrat culture. This movement was a necessary reaction to ensure that the compact between generations did not threaten the proverbial Golden Goose that enshrines our national identity and the resource base from which our economy is derived.

Guarding against the over consumption of resources was a function that resources like trees did not have economic price or value until it was harvested. As society and capitalism begin to put a price on our natural capital, a price that is greater than the default price of \$0, we are creating a healthy tension between whether a tree is worth more up than down.

Stephen Small, who authored the Federal Tax Law for Conservation Easements rules while at the IRS in the 1980s, has recently authored his fourth book titled "The Business of Open Space: What is Next?" In his book, Small states conservation in the private sector has been largely about extinguishing a right rather than growing something of value. This is a fundamental shift in how we look at engaging conservation. As this shift continues to unfold, it will require the creation of more public-private partnerships.

In a world where government dollars are increasingly scarce, where philanthropic dollars are stretched and where the average age of the landowner results in lands not only changing hands but possible use, these new tools can help bring new sources of capital to be used in conjunction with tradition source of funding to create a unifying force on an ever-fragmenting landscape.

One such example is the how the carbon markets are putting a price on the value of our forests through the sequestration of carbon. In the California Cap and Trade market, timber landowners across the United States can participate largely through the Improved Forest Management mechanism. Essentially, if a stand is carrying more basal area (i.e. 90 sq. ft. of basal area) than is common practice (i.e. 70 sq ft of basal area) for that type of stand and site class within a particular region as determined by the Forest Inventory Analysis, the landowner can convert the differential into carbon credits. Moving forward, the landowner can then convert the annual growth of his or her forest into carbon credits. As a point of flexibility, landowners can decide how much of the annual growth they want to take in annual carbon credits and how much they want to reserve for a future timber thinning.

Ultimately, the carbon markets are helping create an optimization structure for the landowner that enables multiple income streams to flow to the landowner. Most importantly, this multi-billion dollar a year market is helping society to put a price on the forest as a forest, not simply board feet and stumpage values.

Over the next several issues, we will delve into specific areas where this mindset, these new tools and examples of the public private partnership are reaffirming the compact between generations and growing our natural capital base.

# ADDRESSING TODAY'S FORESTRY ISSUES THROUGH UTILIZATION AND MARKETING

By Charlie Becker



Virginia is blessed with almost 16 million acres of diverse forest that provide us with multiple economic, environmental and social services. This includes an annual economic impact of more than \$17 billion. One of the main roles of the Department of Forestry is to help sustain and enhance these forests so that they continue to provide the multiple benefits upon which we depend. How successful we are at protecting and developing healthy, sustainable forest resources for Virginians will be determined on how they are valued.

A wildlife professor once told me that although we have wildlife managers in name, that they were actually people managers. We can have all types of programs to enhance wildlife habitat, improve species diversity, deal with nuisance issues, etc., but to be successful, people will need to make it happen. In many ways, managing our forest is the same. We can provide all types of educational, cost-share and other programs, write Stewardship Plans, provide technical assistance and other services, but if the landowner or public does not believe it is valuable enough to act on it, no management takes place.

Through Virginia's history, we have seen where people's actions or inactions have shaped the forest we have today. When settlers first came to Virginia, they saw an "endless forest" that carried many threats and spent much of the time cutting and clearing the forest. Although they used and traded many of the products from the forest, there was so much forest that it had little perceived value. Cleared land provided room for agriculture and development as well as less places for predators and enemies to hide. When the land was no longer able to be used for agriculture or other purposes, it was abandoned and people moved and cut more forests and cleared additional lands. Lands abandoned reverted back to forest in most cases. Over the years, some lands went through this cycle several times. Because of the perceived belief that we would never run out of trees, few saw value in conserving or managing our trees for centuries.

As more of our forests were harvested to provide shelter, fuel, products, etc., there was increasing concern that our actions were having undesired impacts and that the forests were not endless. Also with the increased use of fossil fuels, demand for forest products for fuel and agricultural land for food for draft animals decreased. These various factors shifted the value balance (cost/benefits) to where the preserving, conserving, replanting and managing forestlands was important and led to the large increase in forestland in Virginia through most of the 1900s.

During the 1960s, forest inventories were showing that we were harvesting pine forests faster than they were growing. Virginia's forest industries, concerned with the future sustainability of the resource worked to pass a self-imposed tax to expand reforestation, management and protection of private forestlands. This led to the creation of the very successful Reforestation of Timberlands (RT) program that was the basis for other state and federal reforestation programs. At the same time, a lot of research was going on in tree improvement to develop faster-growing and higher-quality

trees. By providing cost-share and other assistance, private landowners saw the benefits of better managing their forests, and pine timber volumes in the state increased significantly.

Virginia's forests, especially hardwood, have always been very diverse. But due to markets, some species are more valuable than others. This has led to the removal of high-value and quality trees (high-grading) and leaving the low value and poorer quality trees to make up the future forest or seeing the forests converted to other uses. Over time, markets for timber can change as new technology or demands change. Each of these changes also can affect forest landowners' decisions on values and benefits of managing and owning their land.

As populations and demand for forest resources grow, new opportunities appear that could help increase the value or incentives that landowners receive to better manage or expand their forestland. At the same time, we are seeing many issues that are impacting the quantity and quality of our forests including insect and disease and other forest health issues; forestland conversion; poor harvesting or management practices, and no management. Over the next few newsletters, we will look at programs we are working on to increase markets and the values and benefits landowners receive to better manage and conserve their working forestlands, as well as provide us with everything we expect from our forests. In the end, what values Virginia's citizens, forestland owners and other stakeholders place on the forest will have a major influence on its future condition.

# NO PLACE LIKE "HOMEPLACE" ... AN INTERVIEW WITH LANDOWNER ROBERT GIBSON

By Rob Suydam



Working with landowners to develop a conservation easement can be a very special thing. Rob Suydam, Eastern Region forest conservation specialist with the Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOF), had the pleasure of assisting landowner Robert Gibson convey a conservation easement on 273 acres of land in King and Queen County to the VDOF. Since it takes several months to develop an easement, Rob got to know Mr. Gibson, his American success story and how he came to own and love his land from humble beginnings.

This tract is particularly special to Mr. Gibson, as he refers to it as “Homeplace” – the farm he considers his childhood home. Mr. Gibson was born in King and Queen in 1936 and originally lived in a house with no electricity or bathroom until age 10. His family eventually moved to “Homeplace” because, at the time, Route 14 was one of few roads in the county that was tarred with electricity alongside.

During his school years, when most boys his age would play baseball after school, Mr. Gibson would go home and help farm the land his family owned or work for other farmers in the area. It was at this time of his life that his love of the land took root. Rob met Mr. Gibson on the farm on which he resides (which was his first conservation easement he conveyed in 2011), and sat down to talk a little more about his life and his love for the land.

VDOF: So you’ve been a part of this land for 68 years; guess you know it pretty well?

GIBSON: I used to squirrel hunt a lot on Homeplace when I was younger, so I’ve pretty well walked all over the land at one time or another.

VDOF: How did you learn to farm and manage your forestland?

GIBSON: I started shucking corn at age 8. As I got older, I worked for some other farmers. But my Grandfather was always involved with farming, and my Daddy was involved with it some, too. I’d go home and help my Grandfather, who lived about a mile from us. I also worked for the farmer who owned this property I live on now, which I put under easement in 2011.

VDOF: What do you most like to do on your land?

GIBSON: I like to look over the forestland once a year. I walk just about every acre of woodland I own.

VDOF: Do you remember when you first started working with the VDOF?

GIBSON: Probably sometime in the early ‘80s, I guess. After I bought this place, I started working with [VDOF]. The next place I bought, off of [SR]610, was 200 acres of woodland, and [VDOF] helped me with that land.

VDOF: How did you learn to manage your forest?

GIBSON: I learned all that from the [VDOF]. The [Area] Forester Dave Milby was a big help to me over the years. And in recent years [VDOF’s] Ken

Sterner has been very helpful.

VDOF: How did VDOF help you?

GIBSON: I cut some of [the forestland] and then replanted it. They helped out with all that. They gave me good advice, and they seemed to know what they were doing.

VDOF: At what point in your life did you feel like you needed to protect the land?

GIBSON: I started farming right much when I was 15. I really liked to farm. I worked for a dairy farmer right down the road. You can practically see it from here. Sometime after we worked all day, we’d take ride around and look at all the property he owned. He told me “Young man, buy all the land that you can.” It was good advice. It’s been a good investment for me, and it’s worked out alright. Of course, when I got out of school I didn’t have any money, so I went to work for Chesapeake in order to buy a farm. When I bought this farm in 1970, I started thinking about protecting it somehow.

VDOF: So this being the first farm you ever bought, it had to be pretty special when you developed your first conservation easement on it back in 2011.

GIBSON: Oh, yeah. And you can see everything around here has been divided, houses everywhere. The easement I did with [VDOF] was special, too, because that was the farm my Daddy bought in 1945, when we moved from Coldwater. That farm is my home place; the place I grew up. I moved there when I was 10 years old and stayed there until I got married.

*continued on  
page 12...*

# NO PLACE LIKE "HOMEPLACE" ... AN INTERVIEW WITH LANDOWNER ROBERT GIBSON

*Continued*



VDOF: How do you feel about farms and forestland being developed?

GIBSON: I like clusters of development and things like that. To me, the worst thing you can do is put a house right in the middle of a nice field. I see that quite a lot. Some of the land I farmed when I was 15 now has a house in the middle of it, with very little field left to do anything with.

VDOF: What was your first impression when you heard about conservation easements?

GIBSON: It was something new to me, and I tried to learn more about it, get as much information as I could. I have always been one of those who wanted to save the land and keep it in good shape.

VDOF: When you were considering a conservation easement, who did you discuss it with, and how did those discussions go?

GIBSON: I first discussed it with Bill Latany with the Farm Bureau, and he got the information for me. His mother-in-law had done a conservation easement, and he had been involved with it, so he knew a lot about it. Then I discussed it with my wife.

VDOF: Was she on board with the idea?

GIBSON: No, not really. My wife had some concerns. She was afraid we were going to lose the place, but when we went to some of the [land conservation education] workshops to learn more about conservation easements, she came around.

VDOF: Conservation easements last forever, as does the partnership between the landowner and the easement holder. While your land is mostly forested, it also contains some farm land. How did you decide VDOF was your best partner for this CE?

GIBSON: Since it was mostly forestland and I wasn't planning on clearing much more than 25 percent of the trees to make new farmland, I thought it would be a good fit.

VDOF: Conservation easements most often require an experienced attorney and appraiser. How did you find the professionals that you used?

GIBSON: I called the attorney I had used for years, and he did the rest in terms of finding the appraiser and the title company.

VDOF: Who did you have help you through tax-benefit process?

GIBSON: That was Les Taylor, my certified public accountant (CPA). A CPA is just as important as an attorney or an appraiser.

VDOF: Conservation easements have tax benefits associated

with them. When a property is placed in a conservation easement, quite often the value of the property is reduced. Tax benefits are based on this reduction. Did you find the tax benefits associated with conservation easements confusing?

GIBSON: I did, at first. Now that I've been through the process, I feel a lot better about it. It took me a while to find out the gift part of it with the [Federal] tax deduction, it being a big benefit to your income tax. I didn't know about that at first. I knew about the [Virginia Land Preservation] tax credits, though.

VDOF: Looking back on claiming the tax benefits, did it end up being easy for you?

GIBSON: Yes.

VDOF: Did you get a preliminary appraisal that gave you an idea of what the tax benefits would provide before going all-in?

GIBSON: No. I had made my mind up that I was going to protect this land regardless of the appraised value.

VDOF: What considerations went into deciding the terms and restrictions of the easement, in particular the number of times it could be divided and the number of homes that could be built on each resulting parcel?

GIBSON: I wanted to keep the land like it had been for the last 100 years. It was two parcels, and I wanted to keep it that way. Each parcel can have one house.

VDOF: Were you happy with the work VDOF did to help you with the Homeplace conservation easement?

*continued on  
page 13...*

# INTRODUCING KIM BIASIOLLI, FOREST CONSERVATION SPECIALIST



Kim Biasioli became the new Central Region forest conservation specialist in August of 2014. She is working to develop new conservation easements and helping to steward more than 100 easements already held by VDOF.

She said, “Forested landscapes are shrinking and becoming more and more fragmented as the pressures to develop and convert forested land are growing. There are so many reasons why it’s important to protect forested lands — for their natural features; their economic potential, and their aesthetic values, to name a few. I feel very lucky to have the opportunity to do such important and meaningful work here in Virginia.”

Kim comes to VDOF from the Yolo Land Trust in California, where she worked on land conservation through development and stewardship of conservation easements. Prior to her work in California, she served as the state parks botanist for New York State Parks for five years. Kim is originally from Massachusetts but has family in Virginia and has visited frequently over the years. She is living in Charlottesville with her husband and their son, Oliver.

Kim received a B.S. in environmental science from the Evergreen State College and an M.S. in natural resources from the University of Vermont, where she did research on forest ecology and forest management practices in northern hardwood forests. She has worked professionally for more than 14 years on natural resources conservation projects. She said, “It is wonderful to be back in the eastern forests. Folks at VDOF have been very welcoming, and I am enjoying getting out with the foresters and landowners and seeing the impacts of our work on the ground firsthand.”

## NO PLACE LIKE "HOMEPPLACE"...

### *Continued*

GIBSON: Yes, I think so. I remember I was pretty happy when the Homeplace easement was recorded.

VDOF: Has the easement changed the way you manage the land or affected the income generated from it?

GIBSON: No.

VDOF: Does the annual monitoring of the easement have an effect on the privacy of your ownership?

GIBSON: No.

VDOF: What do you wish you knew before you started?

GIBSON: With my first easement, I wish I had a better understanding of the Federal tax benefit. I would have moved quicker if I had known more about it. When I first started going to the [conservation workshops], I didn’t pick up that part of it. I didn’t think I could get it. Now I’ve got all that straight. By the time I did my second conservation easement with [VDOF], it was no problem.

VDOF: What is the single most important piece of advice you would give potential future donors/folks thinking about conveying an easement?

GIBSON: Don’t put it off. A lot of times you put things off and they never get done.



**Virginia Department of Forestry**  
900 Natural Resources Drive, Suite 800  
Charlottesville, Virginia 22903  
Phone: (434) 977-6555  
[dof.virginia.gov](http://dof.virginia.gov)

VDOF P00210; 10/2014

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.