

# Progress on Virginia's Land Conservation Goals

Natural Resources and Economic Development  
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# Today's discussion

- Governor Kaine's 400,000-acre goal and the Chesapeake 2000 goal
  - What the goals mean
  - How and why they were established
- Important programs
- Status of efforts to meet the goals



# Land Conservation



- Benefits for
  - Land base for agriculture and forestry Industries
  - Water quality
  - Recreation
  - Wildlife habitat
  - Ecotourism and heritage tourism
  - Air quality



# Virginia is changing

- Over the past decade, Virginia has lost over 60,000 acres a year to development.
- This is approximately 165 acres per day (188 acres per day in the Chesapeake Bay watershed).
- The USDA estimates that we lose over 20,000 acres of prime farmland each year to development.



# Broad Public Support

## 2006 Virginia Outdoors Survey

- “Should the state spend public funds to prevent the loss of exceptional natural areas to development?” YES: 78%
- Importance of protecting Virginia’s natural and open space resources?, 95% said it was either “very important” (67%) or “important” (28%).
- 70% of those surveyed said they favored outright purchase from willing sellers as an appropriate tool for conserving open space.



# 400,000 – Acre goal

- Chesapeake 2000 goal (signed in 2000): permanently protect 20% of the watershed by 2010
- As of April 2006, PA and MD had already achieved this goal
- December 2005 Virginia Land Conservation Foundation report: VA had 358,000 acres to go
- 400,000 acres statewide was intended to allow us to exceed C2K goal and protect lands in Southside and Southwest Virginia



# Chesapeake 2000 Goal

- Error that was made in 2000 was not discovered until autumn 2007
- Baseline calculation mistakenly included National Forest lands in West Virginia (116,511 acres)
- The corrected number (as of 12/31/07): about 312,000 acres to go



# Land conservation

Land conservation = acquisition

- Acquire what?
  - Fee simple
  - Conservation easements
- Who acquires?
  - State and federal agencies
  - Private land trusts
  - Local governments
- Acquire how?
  - Purchase
  - Donation



# State programs that will get us to 400,000 acres

- Land preservation tax credit
- Virginia Outdoors Foundation
- DHR easement program & Civil War Historic Sites Preservation Fund
- Office of Farmland Preservation
- Virginia Land Conservation Foundation
- State agency land acquisitions



# Land preservation tax credit

- Changed 1/1/07
- *Still the most generous tax credit in the nation*
- Tax credit = 40% of the value of the gift (that is, the easement or land)
- TRANSFERABLE
- Statewide rolling cap of \$100 million per year (+ inflation adjustment)
- Carry-forward: 10 years
- Donations greater than \$2.5 M are subject to DCR conservation value review.



# Virginia Outdoors Foundation

## Virginia Outdoors Foundation

- Primarily accepts donated conservation easements
- 461,000 acres under easement
- 2,223 properties
- Rate of donations has accelerated significantly because of the land preservation tax credit



# Importance of VOF

*About 80% the land protected in Virginia is through conservation easements donated to the Virginia Outdoors Foundation*



# Department of Historic Resources: Preservation Easement Program

Nationally acclaimed easement program;  
first in the country to use preservation  
easements statewide

- Protects landmark properties: sites, buildings, battlefields, etc., from every region and period
- DHR's portfolio (446 properties) ranges from architectural masterworks to simple structures, representing the breadth of Virginia's significant cultural assets
- DHR staff also provides architectural and archaeological services and review for thousands of properties held by other public and private holders



## Department of Historic Resources: Civil War Historic Site Preservation Fund

- \$5.19M for FY 09 and \$190K for FY10
- Matching (at least 2:1) grants for land acquisition
- Sites must be listed in the “Report on the Nation’s Civil War Battlefields” compiled by the federal Civil War Sites Advisory Commission



# Department of Historic Resources: Civil War Historic Site Preservation Fund

Sites eligible include, but are not limited to:

- Appomattox in Appomattox County
- Brandy Station in Culpeper County
- Chancellorsville in Spotsylvania County
- Cold Harbor in Hanover County
- Fredericksburg in the City of Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania County
- Glendale in Henrico County
- New Market in Shenandoah County
- Petersburg in the City of Petersburg and Dinwiddie County



# Office of Farmland Preservation

## Office of Farmland Preservation

- Model Purchase of Development Rights program.
- Provides matching funds to localities for PDR programs on a noncompetitive basis.
- Local programs must be certified.
- \$4.25 M in grants issued in February 2008.
- FY 09-10 funding : \$500K & \$ 1 M





# VA Land Conservation Foundation

Competitive matching grant program  
for individual projects

- Eligible: state agencies, local governments, nonprofits
- Grant applications are ranked by an interagency team
- Grants awarded by a Board of Trustees



# VA Land Conservation Foundation

## Virginia Land Conservation Foundation

- Statutory formula
  - 75% split among 4 categories
    - Open spaces and parks
    - Farm and Forest Land (these categories are split if there is more than \$10M in the fund)
    - Natural areas
    - Historic resources
  - 25% to Open Space Lands Preservation Trust Fund
    - Administered by VOF to assist landowners
    - Available for local government projects



# VA Land Conservation Foundation

## Virginia Land Conservation Foundation (continued)

- \$12.5 million in FY 06
  - In \$10 million grant round VLCF received \$30 million in requests
- \$2.5 million in FY 07 & 08
- \$2.0 million in FY 09 & 10



# Agency land acquisition

- Department of Conservation and Recreation: state parks and state natural area preserves
- Department of Forestry: state forests
- Department of Game and Inland Fisheries: wildlife management areas
- 2008 General Assembly has approved the issuance of \$30 M in VPBA bonds for state agency acquisition



# **\$30 M VPBA bond: criteria for project selection**

- Conservation value
- Ability to maximize acreage per dollar invested
- Ability to complete the project in a timely manner
- The need to achieve some level of geographic diversity



# Summary: state programs

- Land preservation tax credit: best in the nation
- VOF: long history, cost effective, landowner-driven, fueled by tax credit
- DHR: receives donated easements and manages a 2:1 grant program
- Local PDR programs, funded through Office of Farmland Preservation: leverages local investment, reflects local priorities
- VLCF: competitive, statewide priorities, leverages private and federal investment
- State agency acquisition: funding authorized by 2008 General Assembly



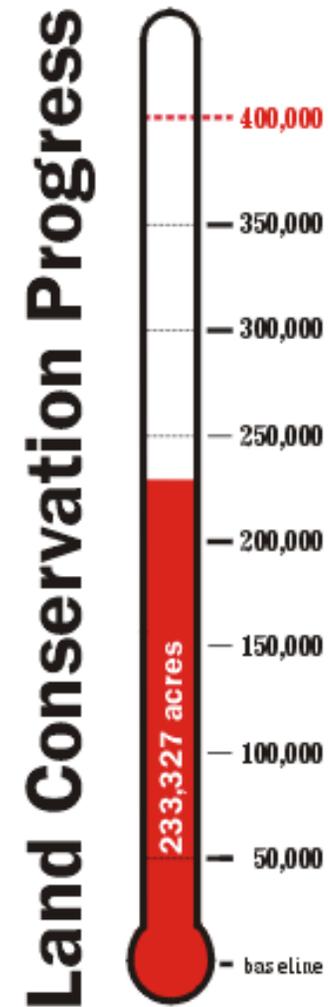
# Accelerating land conservation

- Collective efforts of state agencies and private land trusts
- Overcome obstacles
  - Training of attorneys and other advisors
  - Capacity in agencies and land trust
- Increase awareness and funding
  - Landowner education and outreach
  - Partnership with local governments



# 400,000 Acres

- Average when goal was set: 56,000 per year
- CY 2006 total: 95,129
- CY 2007 total: 81,041 acres.
- Left to go as of 4/31/08: 157,026



# Questions?

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