

PRESERVING VIRGINIA'S IMPORTANT LANDS: Virginia Outdoors Foundation

**A presentation to:
SENATE FINANCE SUBCOMMITTEE ON
DEVELOPMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES**

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Virginia Citizens Value Open Space

- The 2006 Virginia Outdoors Survey, conducted by the DCR found that 67% of respondents feel it is “very important” to protect natural and open space resources.
- 85-90% of voters support preserving Virginia’s rural character and investing in our agricultural, forestry and natural resource-based industries to keep working farms, forests and open space (Mason-Dixon Poll, 2003)



VOF Mission

“To promote the preservation of open space lands and to encourage private gifts of money, securities, land or other property to preserve the natural, scenic, historic, open-space and recreational areas of the Commonwealth.”

VOF Easement, Rockbridge Co. View of House Mountain in background.

Accomplishing the VOF Mission

- The primary mechanism for accomplishing VOF's mission is through open-space easements. Open-space easements allow land to continue to be privately owned but restricted to serve and protect land for the public good.
- VOF also owns about 3,500 acres of important land throughout the state, in the Bull Run Mountains, Kohl's Island, House Mountain and Blue Ball Mountain.

View of an area of Fauquier Co. with many VOF easements from the partially VOF-owned Bull Run Mountains State Natural Area Preserve.

VOF Supports the Goals of:

- **Virginia Constitution, Article XI**
- **2007 Virginia Outdoors Plan (VOF easements support land conservation recommendations of the VOP)**
- **Chesapeake 2000 Agreement (preserve 20% of the land in the Chesapeake Bay watershed)**
- **2007 Forestry Conservation Initiative for the Chesapeake Bay Watershed (by 2020, permanently protect an additional 695,000 acres of forest)**
- **Department of Forestry Strategic Planning Goal (preserving Virginia forest land base)**
- **Local Government Comprehensive Plans (many of which specify open-space easements as agriculture and land preservation tools)**

VOF and DHR co-held Easement, Ely Mound, Lee Co.

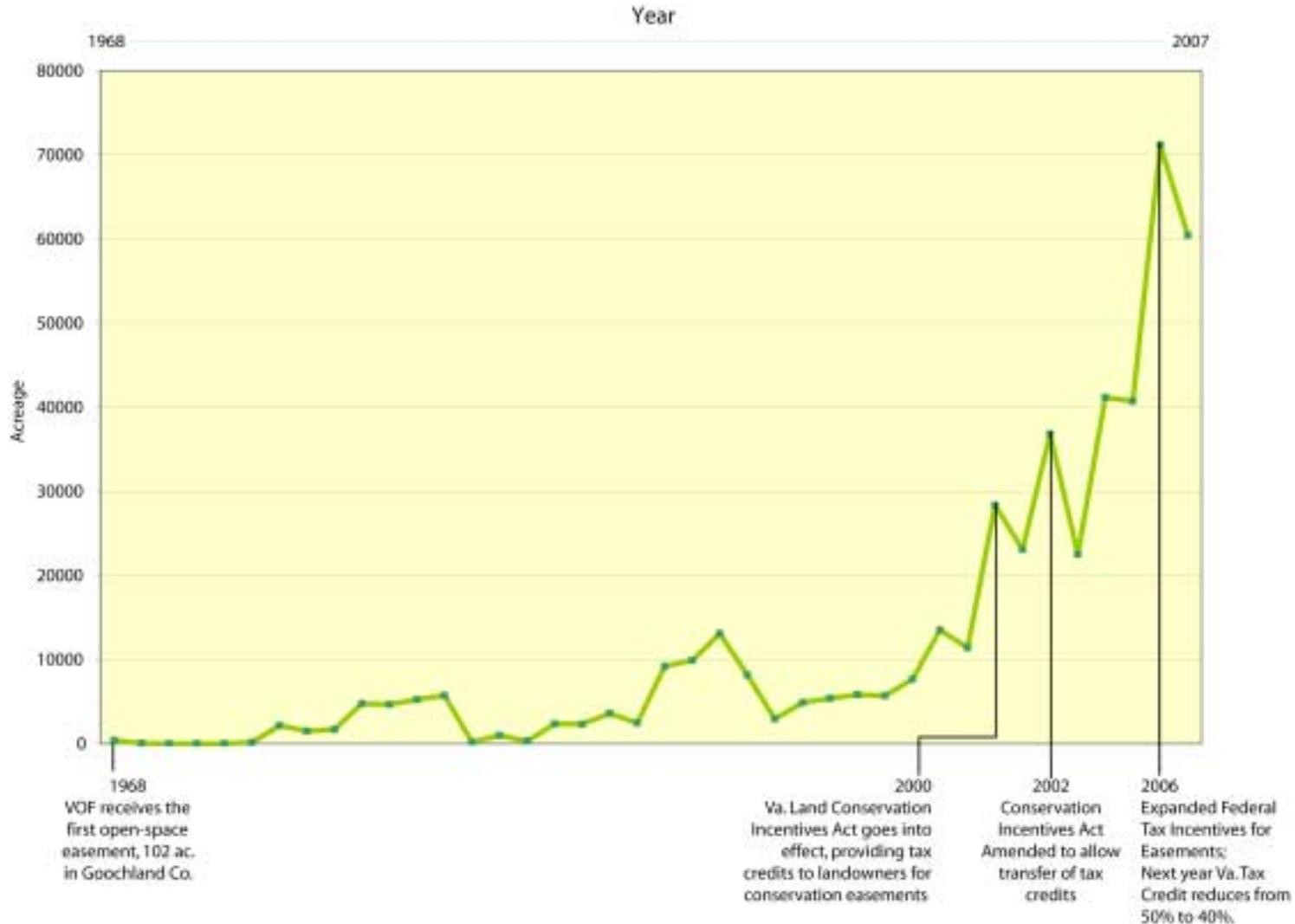
VOF Statistics

- VOF currently holds over 461,000 acres in 102 of Virginia's 134 localities.
- Easements held by VOF permanently protect public drinking water supply watersheds, Civil War battlefields, National Rural Historic Districts, prime agricultural land, tree farms and other timberlands, land adjacent to Scenic Rivers and Byways, land adjacent to public lands, rare species habitats, and many other natural and cultural resources.



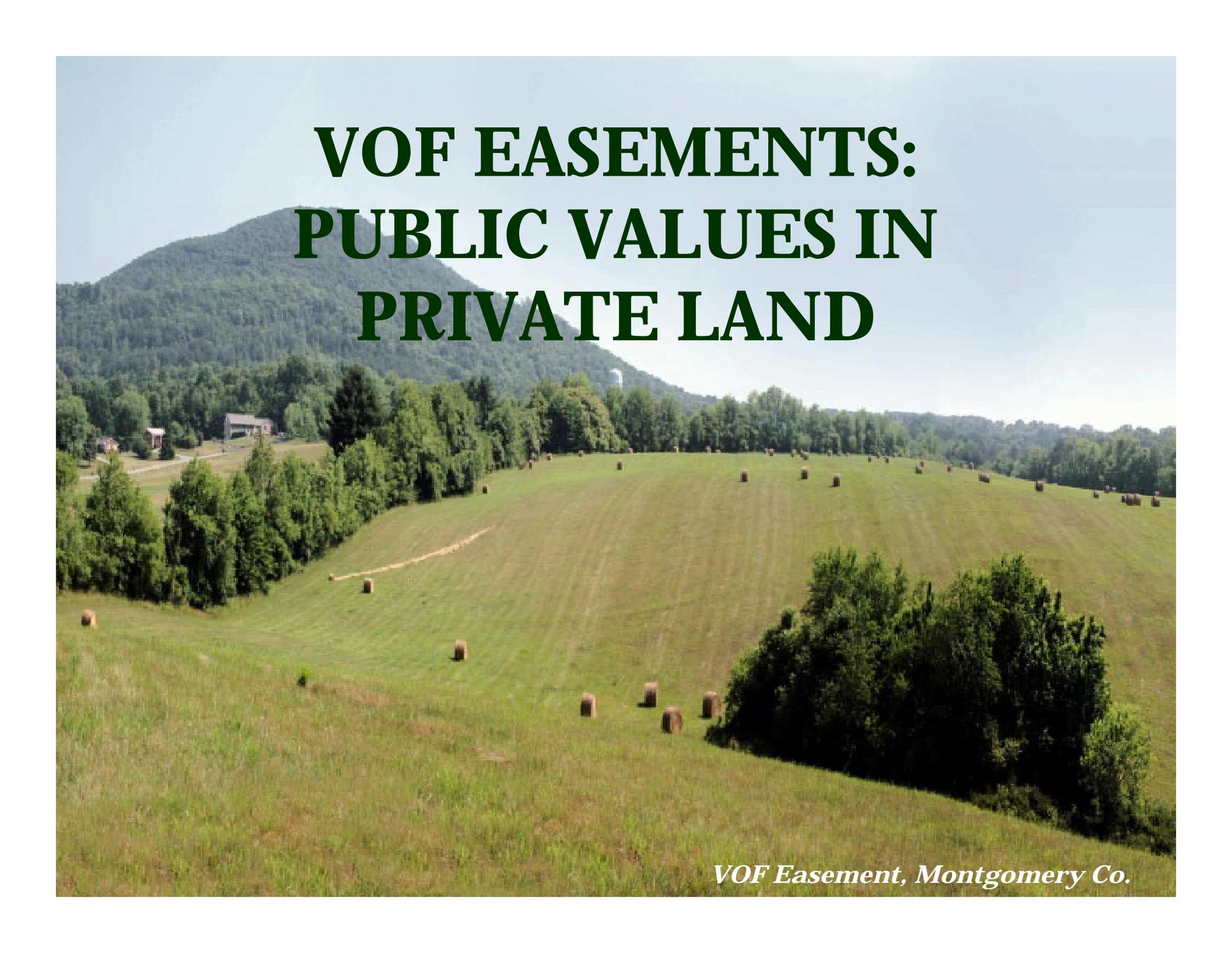
VOF Easement, Fauquier Co.

VOF Annual Acreage and Conservation Incentives



Transferable Tax Credit

- According to a 2003 VOF-Virginia Tech survey, the transferable tax credit encouraged farmers (rural landowners with farm income) to donate more easements than in previous years.
- Households with the highest incomes and the lowest incomes showed the strongest motivation to donate their easement based on the tax credit.
- 46% of respondents indicated that they would not have donated had there not been a tax credit.
- Lower and moderate income households donated easements in significantly greater numbers after the state tax credit became available.



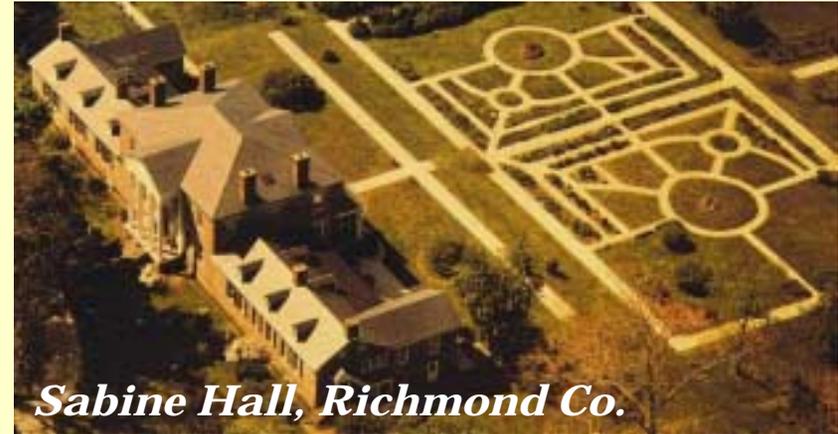
VOF EASEMENTS: PUBLIC VALUES IN PRIVATE LAND

VOF Easement, Montgomery Co.

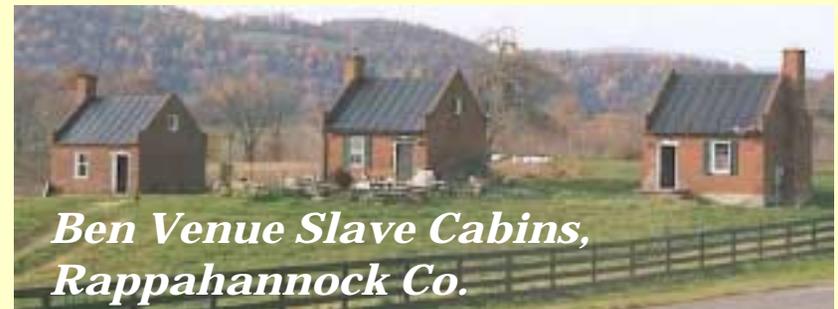
Historic Resources



VOF easements protect hundreds of acres around Monticello, ensuring protection of its viewshed and context in perpetuity.



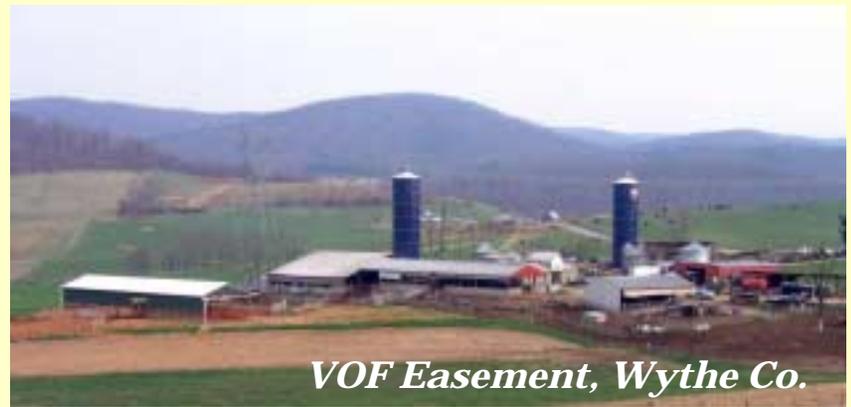
Sabine Hall, Richmond Co.



*Ben Venue Slave Cabins,
Rappahannock Co.*

- VOF holds easements on many historic properties, battlefields and Rural Historic District land.
- VOF co-holds some easements with the Dept. of Historic Resources, a partnership that effectively protects significant buildings along with their original context.

Valuable Farm and Forest Land



Scenic Views



- Tourism is a top industry for Virginia.
- Much of Virginia's appeal as a tourist destination is based on historic resources and scenic beauty.

Wildlife Habitat



- Landscape fragmentation is one of the most prominent threats to wildlife in Virginia (Va. Wildlife Action Plan).
- VOF Easements protect wildlife habitat for game and non-game species.
- VOF co-holds easements with Division of Natural Heritage (DCR) and DGIF.

Water Quality Protection



*Rappahannock/Rapidan River riparian
VOF Easement, five counties*



Wetland, VOF Easement Powhatan Co.

- One-third of VOF easements are in areas designated by the Va. Health Department as Public Drinking Water Protection Areas.
- Most VOF easements include riparian buffers, which vastly improve water quality. VOF easements are perpetual, unlike many other buffer programs.

Carter's Grove – James City Co.



- Built 1750-1755 and is one of Colonial America's most impressive examples of Georgian Architecture. Owned by Colonial Williamsburg 1969-2007.
- Named a National Historic Landmark and is listed on the Virginia and National Historic Registers; with important historic, natural and archeological resources, including one mile of tidal shoreline along the James River, old growth forests, and 25 acres of wetlands. Co-hold with DHR on 400 acres.

Smith Mountain Lake – Pittsylvania and Bedford Counties



- 4,993 acre soon-to-be-recorded easement from American Electric Power which includes the 1,000 foot high mountain peak.
- An important scenic and recreational resource open to the public.
- Contains a rare ecological community.
- Adjacent to Bourassa State Forest and three miles from and within the viewshed of Smith Mountain Lake State Park.

Edgewood – Albemarle Co.



- 393 ac. in the SW Mountains Rural Historic District of Albemarle Co., which is on the National Register of Historic Places.
- Located on State Scenic Byway 22/231.
- Main dwelling designed by Waddy Butler Wood, renowned Virginian architect of the early 20th c.

Glenowen – Loudoun Co.



- Scenic 396 acre property in the Bluemont Ag and Forestal District, very visible from highly traveled public roads (5,500 feet on Routes 7 and 711), the Town of Purcellville, the Town of Round Hill and surrounding areas because it extends to the ridge line of the Blue Ridge Mountains.
- A working farm, Glenowen contains a historic stone house circa 1775, and the property historically served as a stop on the Washington and Old Dominion Railroad line.

OPEN SPACE LANDS PRESERVATION TRUST FUND



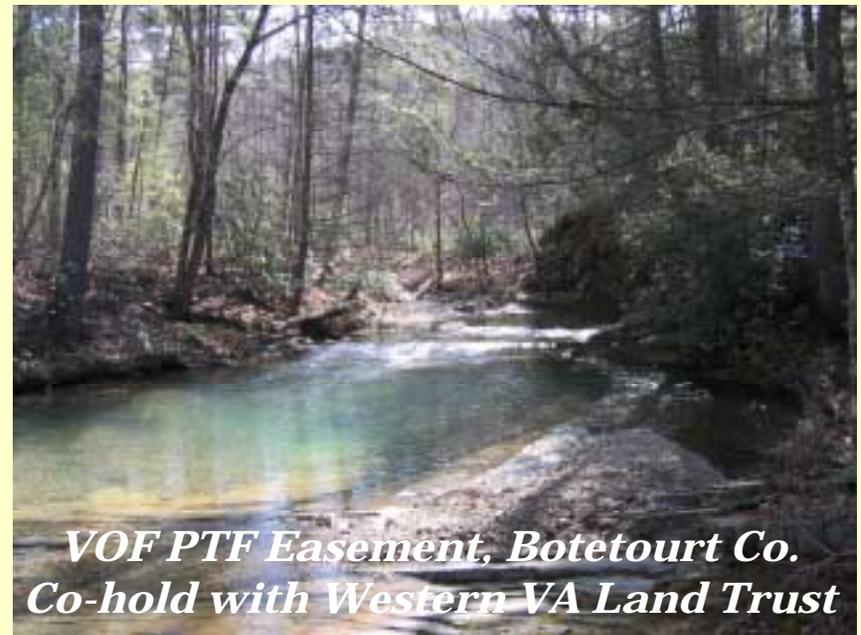
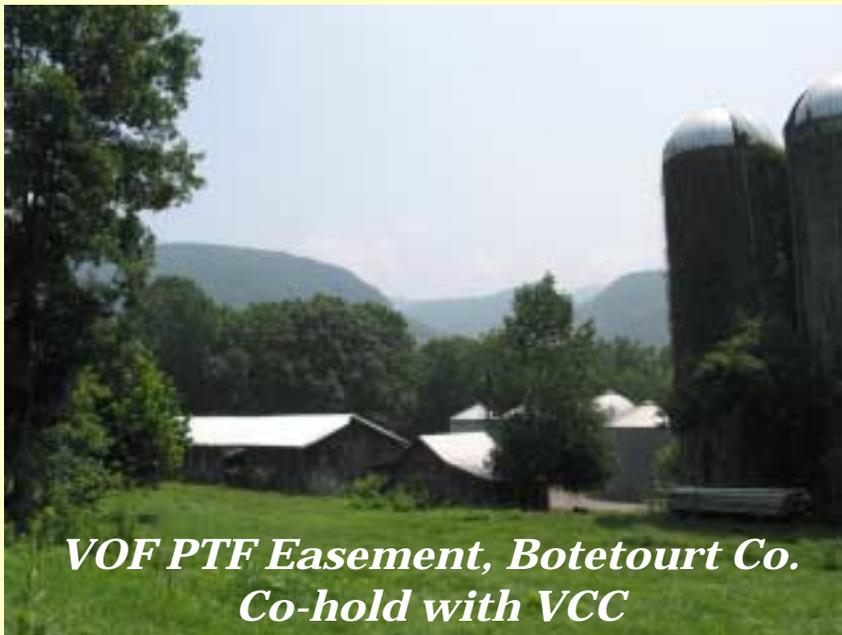
VOF PTF Easement, Northampton Co.

Preservation Trust Fund

- PTF projects account for 10% of total VOF projects.
- The 1997 Virginia General Assembly created a new fund, the Open Space Lands Preservation Trust Fund (Va. Code Sections 10.1801-2), to assist landowners with the costs of conveying open-space easements and the purchase of all or part of the value of the easements.
- The Fund is administered by the Virginia Outdoors Foundation (VOF), and does not include operating funds for VOF.
- Local governments may also apply for assistance from the Fund to support PDR programs.

Preservation Trust Fund

- **Costs That the Fund May Reimburse:**
 1. Legal costs
 2. Appraisal and other costs
 3. All or part of the easement's value



Preservation Trust Fund

- **Priority May Be Given In Applications That:**
 1. Seek cost-reimbursement only
 2. Demonstrate financial need
 3. Cover a family-owned or operated farm



STEWARDSHIP AT VOF

- **Once an easement is donated, VOF must ensure that VOF easements continue to provide public benefit in perpetuity.**

VOF Easement, Fauquier Co.

Stewardship Duties

- The dedicated staff of the VOF Stewardship Program perform many duties in an effort to maintain the conservation values of eased properties. These activities include:
 - Maintaining updated stewardship files on every VOF easement property
 - Tracking land records
 - Visiting conserved lands to ensure the easement provisions are upheld
 - Answering landowner questions regarding stewardship or management of their land
 - Responding to requests for reviews and approvals for activities to be conducted on the property
 - Interpreting provisions in easement deed
 - Helping landowners correct easement violations



Stewardship Workload

- VOF holds 2,230 original easements, some of which have been divided according to their terms. Currently, 2,442 properties need to be monitored, and each represent an individual stewardship commitment.
- VOF can potentially have 4,652 properties to monitor, if every eligible landowner divided according to their easement terms.

Year	Visits
2004	117
2005	401
2006	569
2007	581
2008*	1029

*2008: 1029 is extrapolated based on having achieved 343 visits as of May 1.

