

**LAND CONSERVATION: OPERATIONAL FUNDING
IN HB 1650, SB 750 (2007, INTRODUCED)**

1. Virginia Outdoors Foundation

VOF will receive \$950,000 to provide assistance to landowners with placing property under conservation easements.

Calendar year 2006 was a record-breaking year for VOF.

- Recorded more new acres in just December 2006 (44,936) than have ever been recorded in any full year of VOF's existence.
- Total acreage for 2006 was 70,000 acres (347 projects).
- Staff is already working on 100 easements that could be recorded in 2007.
- Statewide total acreage under VOF easement is now over 400,000 acres. In terms of acreage, VOF is the largest public land trust in the nation.

Additional staff is needed to work with landowners and properly steward existing easements.

- Staff shortages hamper efforts to take advantage of increased landowner interest. Addressing this need will allow VOF provide an acceptable level of service to landowners and the public as well as responsible records and data management.
- Every easement requires regular monitoring to protect the public values of the property. National standards for monitoring frequency recommend annual on-site visits. VOF cannot meet this standard with existing staff.
- Maintaining contact with landowners is critical for preventing costly enforcement actions. New staff will improve communications with easement donors and second-generation landowners who purchase easement properties.
- Because of VOF's unique status, VOF staff numbers do not count as regular state employees in agency FTE totals. Funding is in the 1st year of the biennium.

2. Department of Historic Resources Easement Program

DCR will receive \$151,920 for 2 positions (FTE) for its preservation easement program, which is integral to Virginia's land conservation effort. These easements protect historic treasures and associated lands in perpetuity, encompassing not only structures, and their settings, but also archaeological sites, cultural landscapes, and large tracts of land with broad, cross-cutting environmental values.

Premier historic preservation easement program in the nation

- 419 easements; 23,801.55 acres held under easement
- All regions, periods, and resources types ranging from Tuckahoe to simple farmhouses, African American schools to premier archaeological sites
- Primary holder for easements on battlefield land, including:
 - The Breakthrough, City of Petersburg; 345 acres
 - Slaughter Pen, Spotsylvania County, 205 acres
 - 1500 acres of battlefield land "in the hopper" now—with more expected as a result of the upcoming Civil War sesquicentennial
- Co-holder with other conservation organizations, including VOF, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, local governments, non-profits, etc.

Perpetual management is a public trust and contractual responsibility.

Services provided include but are not limited to :

- Monitoring condition and compliance
- Architectural/landscape design review and assistance as properties are rehabilitated and continue in active use
- Archaeological assistance when landscaping or ground disturbing activities are contemplated
- In 2005, DHR reviewed almost 75 applications requesting approval for changes to easement properties. This number increases every year as property owners change, as property owner needs change, and as the number of easements increases.
- When acting as a co-holder or advisor, DHR has a continuing role to guide, and/or review and approve, and/or undertake activities involving archaeology, historic structures, compatible new construction and infrastructure needs to protect historic and scenic values

3. Department of Conservation and Recreation Land Conservation Positions

DCR for its Office of Land Conservation will receive \$198,039 for 2 positions (FTE) to conduct land conservation efforts. One of the two FTEs will be switched to non-general funding effective FY2008 (nongeneral fund monies to come from the tax credit program).

Key areas that the two positions will be functioning in are as follows:

Land Preservation Tax Credits Support – NEW PROGRAM RESPONSIBILITY FOR DCR

- Conservation value review for applications of \$1 million or more
 - Development of review procedures
 - Tax credit site visits
 - Tax credit pre-reviews
- Educational material development
- Program outreach – workshops or conferences for land trusts, lawyers, accountants, brokers, etc.
- Annual reporting on the tax credit program, as required by statute

Virginia Land Conservation Foundation grant program

- VLCF report development – yearly reports on grant activities and land conservation, as required by statute
- Grant assistance – answering questions and helping with grant workshops
- Project stewardship – follow-up to ensure successful completion of projects

Landowner and Land Trust outreach

- Brochure development – materials for landowners
- Respond to landowner requests for assistance with preservation decisions
- Website updates and maintenance
- Presentations and workshops for land trusts, other conservation organizations, and local government staff
- Virginia Outdoors Plan promotion and education
- Marketing of land conservation mapping tools and the Virginia Conservation Lands Needs Assessment
- Increased work with military bases on land protection