

VCN NEWS



A PUBLICATION OF THE VIRGINIA CONSERVATION NETWORK

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Message from the President

Dear Friends,

What Are VCN Workgroups?

VCN member organizations help shape VCN's positions and policy decisions through participation in our Issue Workgroups. Any representative of a VCN member organization can participate!

VCN has Issue Workgroups on: Air, Rural Issues & Land Conservation, Water, Energy, Land Use & Transportation, & Forest Issues. We are in the process of forming a wildlife workgroup now.

If you are interested in learning more about any of our workgroups please contact Suzanne Ankrum at (804) 644-0286 or e-mail at Suzanne@vcnva.org.

Registration for the 2006
Citizens' Lobby Day Enclosed

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Virginia Conservation Network is the Commonwealth's only statewide network.

With over 100 member organizations, VCN is working to strengthen the effectiveness of conservation groups and build grassroots involvement through:

- Increasing Public Awareness and Involvement through events like Citizen Lobby Days, Legislative Forums, and the Virginia Environmental Assembly
- Elevating Awareness of Important Environmental Issues, through the VCN Newsletter, VCN E-News, the VCN website, and the publication of conservation briefing books with white papers on each major conservation issue
- Coordinating an effective statewide response on important policy issues through workgroups on water, air, conservation, land use and transportation, energy and forest issues

Please consider a donation to support this work in the amount of \$50, \$100, \$250, or \$500.

Contribute online today by visiting www.vcnva.org and clicking the Donate Now link.

Give A Day for the Environment!
VCN hosts the
Annual Citizens' Lobby Day
January 16, 2006
at the
Valentine Richmond History Center
Registration information inside and online
at www.vcnva.org

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Legislative Workshop Empowers and Educates Citizens, Advocates

VCN Legislative Positions*

*Some positions were shortened to fit copy. For full positions please visit www.vcnva.org

Water

VCN opposes legislation for agricultural withdrawals that prioritizes agricultural uses over other instream beneficial uses such as historical, recreational, environmental, and aesthetic uses.

VCN opposes state assumption of the Federal Section 404 Wetlands Program until satisfactory stakeholder review efforts and other regulatory options are concluded.

VCN supports a minimum of \$150 million in dedicated funding for the water quality improvement fund.

VCN opposes changes that will weaken the Nutrient Trading Law adopted in 2006, including measures that may allow non-significant dischargers to participate in nutrient trading.

Air Quality

VCN supports the reduction of school bus pollution by:

- Upgrading buses that will remain in school fleets with better emission control technologies;
- Replacing Virginia's oldest school buses with newer, less polluting buses; and
- Establishing policies and practices at Virginia schools to eliminate unnecessary school bus idling.

Land Use and Transportation

VCN supports legislation requiring that state transportation funding be tied to measurable performance criteria including reducing per capita vehicle miles traveled, air pollution, and land consumption, and increasing use of other modes of other modes of transportation.

VCN supports increased transparency in reporting transportation funding allocations.

VCN supports legislation incentivizing timely compilation of a statewide build-out analysis of local comprehensive plans and zoning to determine the total transportation and other infrastructure needs and costs that would be generated.

VCN supports funding for priority freight and passenger rail corridors (I-95, I-81, and I-64).

VCN supports increased funding for transportation only if it is accompanied by state and local action to address the inefficient land use that is the primary contributor to traffic congestion in the Commonwealth and shifts a more significant share toward transit, freight rail, walking and bicycling for a balanced transportation program.

VCN supports clarification of authority to deny rezoning due to impact on the transportation system.

VCN supports enabling legislation for localities to better manage their growth.

VCN opposes the reduction of local decision-making in the determination of proffers.

Land Conservation & Rural Issues

VCN opposes legislation meant to weaken the land conservation tax credit language adopted during the 2006 General Assembly special session.

VCN supports funding for land conservation programs to implement local purchase of development rights (PDR) programs; historic preservation, farm and forestland protection, natural areas and open space (Va. Land Conservation Foundation); and to have preservation tax credits remain an important component of Virginia's land conservation program.

Agricultural Vitality

VCN supports a constitutionally sound method of allowing both instate and out-of-state wineries to self-distribute their products in Virginia.

Energy

VCN supports a Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) Bill that includes standards for energy efficiency and conservation credits and significantly limits inclusion of combustible sources of energy, provided that the Commonwealth addresses the siting of wind facilities to ensure adequate protection of wildlife, contiguous forest habitat, national and state parks, national forests, historic sites, and other cultural and scenic resources. VCN will not support a bill that allocates renewable energy credits for combustion of waste coal.

VCN supports legislation that will establish a sales tax holiday for Energy Star appliances.

VCN opposes any reduction of the ability of local governments to determine the location of energy facilities and/or transmission lines.

Citizen Involvement

VCN supports legislation that protects citizens' First Amendment rights and opportunities to participate in governmental decision-making without threat of abusive SLAPP suits (Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation).

VCN opposes removing citizens or diminishing their involvement in government decision-making on citizen

1XX Attend the 2006 Virginia Environmental Assembly

Thank you to everyone for making this year's Virginia Environmental Assembly (VEA) a huge success! VEA was held in Falls Church, Virginia, on a crisp early autumn day at the Mary Ellen Henderson Middle School. Attendants perused exhibits, participated in educational workshops, and listened to thought-provoking speakers. Everyone involved, from exhibitors to registrants to the fascinating speakers, played a huge part in making this annual event possible.

Thank You to the 2006 Exhibitors and Presenters!
Exhibitors
Presenters

VEA's keynote speaker, Dr. Bob Correll, ++++++, illuminated the audience on the science of climate change and what it portends for the Commonwealth. His presentation was moving and powerful and

View his work at:

2007 VCN Legislative Priorities

VCN's Board of Directors meets weekly during the General Assembly session to update our statements of position. These additions will be posted to the VCN website at www.vcnva.org.

Energy - Working for a Cleaner, Safer

Energy Future - - Developing a responsible energy policy for Virginia that prioritizes natural resources and human health and reduces Virginia's contribution to global warming is a VCN legislative priority. VCN will work to promote energy efficiency and conservation in our buildings, homes, factories, and power plants; to increase markets for clean, responsible renewable energy in Virginia while reducing reliance on fossil-fuels; and oppose reduction of local government control in the siting of energy facilities and/or transmission lines.

Transportation and Land Use - - Insuring transportation programs and funding transcend traditional road-building decisions that have contributed to the continuance of inefficient land use and sprawl is a VCN legislative priority. The air quality, environmental, and land use implications of transportation alternatives are varied and significant. Any funding must address the transportation-land use link, accountability through adherence to performance measures, priority consideration for existing communities, and a more balanced transportation network involving transit, freight and passenger rail, walkability, and bicycle accommodations.

Funding for Water Quality Improvement - - Obtaining adequate funding to protect Virginia's water quality is a VCN legislative priority. Dedicated funding for water quality enhancement is necessary for Virginia to meet its Constitutional authority to protect the state's environment.

Virginia's Land Conservation Toolbox - - Dedicated and adequate funding sources for the protection of the Virginia's land and open space is a legislative priority for VCN. Protection of land and natural resources that supply us with clean air, safe drinking water, scenic open space, and abundant wildlife is vital to the future of the Commonwealth.

This future can only be assured with adequate, consistent, and reliable funding for the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation and local purchase of development rights programs coupled with strong tax incentives for private voluntary land conservation through donations of conservation easements and fee simple interests in land.

Citizen Involvement - - Supporting meaningful public participation is a VCN priority. VCN will oppose any attempts to erode democracy by undermining the authority of true citizen boards or by hampering public involvement through threat of unwarranted reprisal.

2006 VCN White Papers Visit www.vcnva.org to view these documents online

- Global Warming
- Renewable Portfolio Standard
- Energy Efficiency
- Wind Power Project Siting
- Transmission Corridors
- Healthy Air for Virginia
- Cleaner School Buses
- Smart Growth
- Transportation Funding
- Public Private Transportation Act
- Context Sensitive Solutions
- State Assumption of the 404 Wetlands Program
- Land Conservation Toolbox
- Virginia Wineries
- Jurisdictional Conflicts in Forestry
- Sustainable Forestry Certification
- Citizen Environmental Boards
- SLAPP Suits

VCN Welcomes Four New Board Members

The Virginia Conservation Network is a powerful force due in large part to the dynamic members who serve on its board. VCN is proud to announce the addition of four new members who were elected unanimously at the VCN Annual Meeting. Welcome Ms. Satterlund, Mr. Broaddus, Mr. Jaffe, and Mr. Herbert! We are delighted to have you on board and look forward to your involvement with VCN.

Henry Broaddus, Williamsburg, VA

Steve Herbert, Suffolk, VA

Cale Jaffe, Esq., Charlottesville, VA

Michele Satterlund, Esq., Richmond, VA

The Virginia Conservation Network is proud to be the National Wildlife Federation's Commonwealth of Virginia affiliate.

The National Wildlife Federation tackles conservation issues on NWF has affiliate organizations in million members, with 30,000 members



(NWF) is a national organization which global, national, and regional scales. 47 states and territories and boasts 4 in Virginia alone!

NWF members in Virginia care deeply connection to the land is a Virginia member groups that are working on the neighborhoods and rural communities.



NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION
www.nwf.org

about protecting wildlife and habitat. A strong tradition shared by VCN and its member opportunity to provide them with a link to our ground to preserve these resources in their

Spotlight on the Partnership for Smarter Growth



In each issue of VCNnews, VCN highlights the efforts of one of our 115 member organizations. This helps strengthen our network by providing an opportunity to learn from successes in other regions. If your organization is a member of VCN and would like to be included in a future issue, please contact Carey Whitehead at vcngeneral@aol.com.

If you had to pick one symbol to represent the Richmond region, a good choice, sad to say, might be the bulldozer.

Not only is the Richmond area growing, the rate of change is accelerating and is significantly outstripping the rate of population growth.

For example, according to "Where Are We Growing?," a report published in 2003 by the Southern Environmental Law Center, in just one five-year period between 1992 and 1997 Metropolitan Richmond converted 58,800 acres of open space to strip malls, subdivisions, office parks, highways, parking lots, and other "development" projects. That total represented a growth rate of 30 percent for the five-year period, while the area's population grew only 8 percent. In the ten years prior to 1992, only 58,300 acres were developed. Since 1997, the area has experienced the same kind of feverish change, and all signs indicate that these trends are likely to continue.

Such rapid growth can have many ramifications for a community—both good and bad. Growth itself is not necessarily a problem. The important questions are exactly how and where will the Richmond region grow and change? And who will decide?

The answers are critical to the quality of life of area residents, since government policies and business decisions that drive growth touch every aspect of the community and affect us profoundly as individuals, too.

It is no overstatement to say that decisions

about which highways are built or how subdivisions are designed, for example, may determine how much time we spend in traffic instead of with our families, what kind of houses we can afford, how much of the natural landscape survives, how much we pay in taxes, what historical features we save, what other amenities we can enjoy; and even how safe our children are.

The Partnership for Smarter Growth (PSG) is a citizens' education and advocacy organization. Its mission is to promote smart growth principles and practices throughout the region, so that as greater Richmond grows and develops everyone can participate and everyone can enjoy a high quality of life and a genuine sense of community.

PSG's members and volunteers represent the eight localities within the metropolitan area (the City of Richmond and Charles City, Chesterfield, Goochland, Hanover, Henrico, New Kent, and Powhatan Counties).

PSG offers volunteers many ways to find a niche suited to their skills and interests: gathering information about proposed development projects within their communities, attending public meetings, raising funds, giving presentations, and more.

All are welcome! For information, visit www.psgrichmond.org or call Adele MacLean, Coordinator, at 804-225-1902.

Many thanks to Adele MacLean, PSG Coordinator, for submitting this article!



Want to know how just a few minutes of your time can make a powerful impact on Virginia's environment?

Sign up for Conservation e-Action Virginia! Alerts

Conservation e-Action Virginia (CAV!) is a collaborative effort among environmental and conservation organizations throughout the state to educate and mobilize their members by using the power of an online network. The CAV! system provides partner organizations with a powerful means of getting a collaborative action message out to concerned citizens like YOU! Participating citizens are then asked to contact their elected officials, administrative decision makers, and leaders in industry and big business.

Participation in this email alert system is fast, free of charge and completely voluntary. You need to opt yourself into the program by enrolling online. Once you are enrolled, you will receive an average of ten alerts per year regarding pressing conservation issues. The alerts provide you with a sample message that can be sent instantly to the targeted decision-makers with just a click of a button. Approximately 1/2 of these alerts will be sent during the upcoming General Assembly session.

So far in 2006, the CAV! system has been used by concerned Virginians to send over 1500 emails to legislators and state officials. This year legislators considered bills about land use, transportation, air quality and water and natural resources funding. [By responding to our CAV! Alerts, Virginia citizens helped to influence critical conservation decisions by demonstrating that Virginians truly care about the future of our Commonwealth.](#)

Just a few seconds of your time can help us make a significant difference. To learn more about the CAV! program or to sign up to become a CAV! member, please go to the website of our sponsor organization, the Virginia League of Conservation Voters Education Fund – <http://capwiz.com/valcvf/mlm/signup/>.

Can't remember if you've already signed up? Don't worry – the system will recognize you if you are already subscribed!