



## Q1 2011 Newsletter

April 11, 2011

**SAVE THE DATE! Annual Virginiaforever Bridge Builder Roast**



**Virginiaforever**  
invites you to save the date  
for the Bridge Builder Roast of

**The Honorable William J. Howell**  
*Speaker of the House*

Wednesday, June 15, 2011

Richmond Marriott  
500 East Broad Street  
Richmond, Virginia

## 2011 Session Review

As we began the 2011 legislative session, it was clear that the budget outlook was not good for the Commonwealth. *Virginiaforever* worked to make the case that natural resources funding should not bear an unfair share of cuts. Leading into the legislative session *Virginiaforever* advocated for funding for land preservation and water quality.

After each house came out with their budgets, we worked to encourage budget conferees to adopt the best parts of each budget when finalizing their conference report. We shared our concerns about the unmet financial obligation the Commonwealth has already made to localities who have upgraded their publicly owned wastewater treatment plants and facilities. We asked conferees to support the Senate's effort to take a bigger step forward by proposing \$107.9 million in VPBA bonds. We asked that they continue support of the Water Quality Improvement Fund as well as maintain the fee on the recordation tax to the Virginia Natural Resources Commitment Fund (VNRFCF) for the agricultural best management practices program. Finally, in the area of land preservation we asked them to support the Senate's decision to provide an additional \$1 million for farmland preservation. Additionally, we stated that we would also like to see the restoration of \$1 million cut from the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation in the House budget.

After the conference report was approved, and Governor's amendments offered and approved, we are pleased with the funding natural resources received in such a tough climate. The Governor stayed true to his pledged goal of preserving an additional 400,000 acres of open space by putting back into the budget \$1 million for land conservation efforts and the House and Senate supported this amendment. The House and Senate continue to be supportive of efforts to support the Water Quality Improvement Fund as well as funding for agricultural best management practices.

## Going Forward

Stay tuned as *Virginiaforever* will be engaging with agency officials as Governor McDonnell prepares his budget beginning this summer.



## Member Spotlight: Virginia Farm Bureau

Land and water are possibly the two most important components when it comes to farming and producing a safe, fresh and locally grown food supply. So it should come as no surprise that the Virginia Farm Bureau is one of the leading advocates for land and water conservation in the Commonwealth.

An affiliate of the American Farm Bureau Federation, the Virginia Farm Bureau represents nearly 38,000 farm families from 88 county Farm Bureaus and is the Commonwealth's largest farmers' advocacy group.

"The Virginia Farm Bureau is a new member of *Virginiaforever* and has been a proponent of the benefits of land conservation for working farms in Virginia," said Martha Moore, Vice President of Governmental Relations for the Virginia Farm Bureau. "As farmers, we also possess a keen understanding of the importance of water quality and do our part to ensure we are as environmentally friendly as possible by reducing runoff and preserving watersheds."

Virginia Farm Bureau was instrumental in getting the Office of Farmland Preservation established in the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. Two of the main functions besides landowner education are administering the purchase of development rights (PDR) grant program and the FarmLink Program. The FarmLink Program is crucial in providing assistance in the transition of farm businesses and properties from retiring farmers to active farmers. Since the establishment of the Office, numerous localities have established PDR programs, had discussions about farmland preservation or received grants from the program. This creates another viable tool at the local level in order to preserve farmland.

On the water quality side, Virginia Farm Bureau has worked with many of the other members of the *Virginiaforever* in advocating for adequate, consistent and reliable funding for Virginia's AgBMP Cost Share Program. Some of the methods and best management practices used include planting cover crops to slow or stop soil erosion, putting vegetative buffers like grass and trees between fields and waterways, covering manure piles with storage sheds, applying manure only according to nutrient management plans and fencing livestock out of rivers and streams. The cost share program is a great example of a public private partnership for water quality. With the increased funding as well as a little more stability, Virginia farmers have increasingly elected to voluntarily utilize conservation practices on their farms.

Agriculture and forestry combine to create the number one industry in Virginia, making it the economic engine driving Virginia's robust economy while also providing environmental and aesthetic benefits to its citizens. The preservation of our land and protection of our waterways has always been, and will continue to be, a top priority of the Virginia Farm Bureau.

To nominate a member to be featured in our next e-newsletter, please email [info@virginiaforever.org](mailto:info@virginiaforever.org).

Thank you for all that you do to support funding for the protection and preservation of our natural resources.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert L. Dunn". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Robert" being the most prominent part.

Robert L. Dunn  
Chairman