



Q1 2012 Newsletter

Governor McDonnell Promotes Stewardship

Governor McDonnell is encouraging all Virginians to actively engage in stewardship of our natural resources. The 2012 Spring Stewardship Virginia Campaign kicks off in April and continues through May 31. A variety of volunteer opportunities will be available at parks and other natural areas through the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation. The program promotes waterway adoption, trail improvement, the plating of riparian buffers, invasive species control, habitat improvement and landscaping for conservation.

In a press release Governor McDonnell stated, "Virginia has a bounty of unmatched natural and historic resources that must be protected. The Stewardship Virginia campaign gives citizens the opportunity to be personally involved in making sure that those natural resources will be around for future generations. Volunteers across the state are already planning events, from waterway cleanups in Northern Virginia to native tree plantings in Southern Virginia. Stewardship Virginia projects give volunteers the tools, guidance and structure to maximize their efforts to enhance and protect our valuable resources. Whether it is removing invasive plants along the coast or cleaning up trails in the mountains, there are ways for every Virginian to get involved."

If you want to get involved call **1-877-42-WATER** or visit **www.dcr.virginia.gov/stewardship**

VIRGINIAforever Advocates for Increased Funding for Land and Water

Members of VIRGINIAforever spent the 2012 legislative session urging members of the Virginia General Assembly to support funding for strategic water quality programs and land conservation. Specifically our priorities when communicated with lawmakers were as follows:

- Wastewater Treatment – Address the current shortfall in state funding obligations under existing contracts for nutrient removal technology – \$100 million.
- Agricultural Cost Share Program – Provide sufficient funding to meet two-year milestones for agricultural reductions specified in Virginia's Watershed Implementation Plan as well as build the cost share program to meet future goals – \$30 million.
- Agricultural Technical Assistance – Restore current funding to soil and water conservation districts for critical technical services related to delivering agricultural conservation practices – \$2 million.
- Virginia Land Conservation Foundation – Increase funding to be more competitive, yield better projects, benefit more parts of the state and be more efficient – \$3 million.

Budget matters were particularly contentious during this year's legislative session and could not be resolved before adjournment. Lawmakers are making progress and a budget was passed at the end of March. While *VIRGINIAforever* was not able to reach all of our goals, we raised awareness, kept funding levels at least at current amounts and positioned our organization to keep water quality and land conservation funding in the public debate for the next budget cycle.

***VIRGINIAforever* Eco-Friendly Coffee Mugs Are a Big Hit**

During the legislative session *VIRGINIAforever* distributed ceramic mugs with our logo on them to all 140 members of the Virginia General Assembly, land and water department and agency heads and key administration leaders. The white mugs are encircled on the bottom with sea grasses and words that connect to nature such as "rejuvenate, recycle, reuse and grow something." The mugs were distributed with a list of our board of directors and some basic information about our mission and vision.

The same "Green Grass collection" mugs are available for purchase and a portion of the proceeds from the purchase will help fund Global ReLeaf – described as an education and action program that helps individuals and groups improve the local and global environment by planting and caring for trees.

If you would like to obtain one of these mugs for your desk or daily use, please contact Mark Hubbard at 804-775-1920.

Member Spotlight – James River Association

The James River is the largest river in the Commonwealth of Virginia and the state's largest tributary to the Chesapeake Bay. Many Virginians each year enjoy spending valuable recreation time on the river and various species of wildlife depend on it for food and shelter.

Recognizing the waterway's importance, the James River Association (JRA) was established in 1976 by a group of concerned citizens to be a guardian of the river and protect it for future generations. Leading the efforts of the JRA today is *VIRGINIAforever* Board Member Bill Street, who was with the Chesapeake Bay Foundation for 10 years prior to joining JRA.

"The James River is 340 miles long and the watershed itself is approximately 10,000 square miles," said Street, executive director of the JRA. "In addition to the rich history of the river, there is a burgeoning ecosystem that should be preserved and enjoyed by all Virginians and the James River Association, through the hard work of volunteers and donations, is working to protect the beauty and longevity of one of our nation's finest treasures."

Geographically, the James River begins at the headwaters of the Cowpasture and Jackson Rivers in Bath and Highland Counties and runs to its mouth at the Chesapeake Bay in Hampton Roads. The James River Watershed encompasses almost 25 percent of the state and is comprised of three sections – the Upper James Watershed begins in Allegheny County and travels through the Allegheny and Blue Ridge Mountains until Lynchburg; the Middle James runs from Lynchburg to the Fall Line in Richmond; and the Lower James stretches from the fall line in Richmond to the Chesapeake Bay.

The James River Association's headquarters are located in Richmond. As executive director, Street is responsible for overseeing all of JRA's efforts to promote conservation and responsible stewardship of the James River's unique natural and historic resources. He manages JRA's four core programs: River Advocacy, Riverkeeper, Watershed Restoration, and Education and Outreach.

"Our organization provides a voice for the river through conservation and responsible stewardship, and much like the Chesapeake Bay, the James is slowly climbing its way to back to full health," said Street. "VIRGINIAforever advocates for corresponding water and land issues in Virginia and we are proud to be part of and align ourselves with an organization that shares our common vision."

To nominate a member to be featured in our next e-newsletter, please email info@virginiaforever.org

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 more prominent.

Robert L. Dunn
Chairman