



New River Land Trust

Fall 2011 • Volume 10 • Issue 2

NEWS

Conserving farmland, forests, open spaces and historic places in Virginia's New River region

New River Land Trust Youth Education Committee Field Trip



by Lily Terango

The newly established Youth Conservation Committee of the NRLT launched its first program to engage children in our land conservation efforts in 2011.

The Committee sponsored a field trip for the children of the Harding Elementary School Green Club to historic McDonald's Mill in Catawba Valley, which is a Special Projects Area for the Virginia Outdoors Foundation and the New River Land Trust. The Mill property is under a conservation easement which permanently preserves

the land in a rural state and prescribes that it be used for traditional rural land uses such as farming, forestry and fishing.

The property and accompanying Mill building

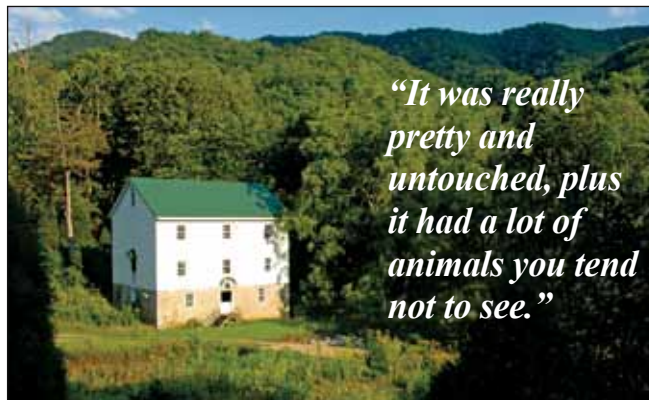
are also part of the Catawba Valley National Rural Historic District. The farm is used as pasture for dairy cows and the milk is used by the Homestead Creamery.

The landowners Ned

and Janet Yost have also participated in the VA Dept. of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF) Landowner Incentive Program (LIP). This program focuses on streambank and riparian restoration projects.

The children got to learn about the importance of land conservation, preservation of historic resources and sensitive land management that contributes to protection of critical water and aquatic resources. The legacy of the land was shared with the children in a fun and exciting way. Below are some reflections the club members

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"It was really pretty and untouched, plus it had a lot of animals you tend not to see."

Why should people support conservation? Why does land conservation and the work of land trusts matter during these times of tight budgets, rising unemployment and dramatic increases in medical, food and fuel costs? Well, if you examine what our farms, forests and open spaces provide in terms of economic benefits it quickly becomes clear.

Virginia's farms and forests generate billions of dollars each year in economic production and hundreds of thousands of jobs (\$79 billion and 501,000 in 2006).

In fact combined agriculture and forestry represent the largest sector of the state's economy. On a regional scale, agriculture alone generated \$190.6 million in 2007. Virginia's tourism industry brought in \$17.7 billion, almost 205,000 jobs and \$1.24 billion in state and local tax revenue in 2009. In the New River region tourists spent \$392.5 million supporting 4290 jobs in 2009. Our blue waterways, beautiful landscapes, clean water and abundant wildlife are what make our region so compelling and draw these tourist dollars to our communities.

These numbers are significant; how-

DIRECTOR'S CHAIR

JOHN EUSTIS



ever, they do not fully express the economic benefits from rural land. Typically for every dollar produced on the farm or from the forest an additional \$1.75 is generated as value is added to raw products moving through the processing and distribution chain. And for every farm and forest job created, an additional 1.5 jobs are produced in the economy to support these workers.

In the New River region the agriculture, forestry, outdoor recreation and ecotourism industries are the backbone of our economy. The problem is that the rural character and heritage upon which these industries are

based is at risk from poorly planned growth and development. Growth and development which too frequently fragment and then convert farms, forests and open spaces to sprawling low density rural residential land use.

Fortunately, the New River Land Trust and our conservation partners have helped place over 40,000 acres under easement since 2002. Where these conservation easements protect rural land in perpetuity (forever), this land remains available for traditional rural livelihoods as well as to support employment in the rapidly expanding outdoor recreation and ecotourism sectors. Again, it should be noted that the dollars produced by these protected properties flow beyond the farms, forests and trails into the larger economy.

Now, I am not suggesting that conservation alone can solve or mitigate the impacts of sprawling development or the economic downturn, but conservation of our rural landscape and heritage is a critical first step. I would argue that this is especially true in Appalachia where we still have large areas of rural land. Our land is the foundation upon which our communities rest no matter what scale one considers national, state, regional or local.

Field Trip *Continued from page 1*

had on the experience:

"It was really pretty and untouched, plus it had a lot of animals you tend not to see."

When asked why land need to be protected one student replied "Because with development and all, the creek and house could have become office buildings in no time."

Our new team leader, Alice Coddington, described it this way... "It's important to have a youth education committee because the kids of today are our future land conservationists. If they grow up with respect for the dignity of our local farmlands and forests, then they will help to carry on the legacy of land trusts throughout the world. It is my hope that by planting the seeds of land conservation in the minds of these young folks, that great tall trees will grow in their hearts."

The Land Trust has for several years been mustering its resources to develop a youth education program. We are excited to report that we got going in 2011. The Land Trust is future oriented, particularly in terms of protecting land and engaging with the children who will follow us as protectors of land, water, wildlife and rural heritage that is ours. The next generations will inherit the land we conserve today and will need to appreciate

the vital nature of this land. Here in southwestern Virginia rural land is our heritage and the foundation of our healthy social, economic and environmental systems. Finally, in what is an increasingly polarizing political landscape, the Land Trust feels that conservation of land and engagement of youth in our rural landscape and associated traditions are a common ground on which our diverse regional community can unite.





flora and fauna. Even now, the Appalachian forests are among most diverse ecosystems in the world, yet less than 1% of their original old growth remains, the rest decimated by population pressures, acid rain, scorched-earth mining and logging practices, chestnut blight, and invasive species.

Happily, exciting developments are occurring. In 2005 the American Chestnut Foundation harvested potentially blight-resistant chestnuts. Organizations such as the New River Land Trust are helping families like my own make the decision to place their lands under conservation easement. But an easement is only the beginning. So much needs to change. Current agricultural practices use massive amounts of water and deplete about six pounds of soil for each pound of food produced. One study I read estimated that worldwide only about 42 to 84 years worth of topsoil remain!

On our land, my husband and I have made a commitment to more sustainable practices. Three years ago we started an edible forest garden. Simply put, this is a type of gardening that mimics a forest. We

used sheet-mulching, layering cardboard and compost to kill off weeds, attract earthworms, and enrich the soil, much as falling leaves do in the woods. We planted food-bearing fruit and nut trees in woodland patterns, including native species like paw paws and red mulber-

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Imagining Appalachia

by Betty Hahn

On the first day of my Appalachian Studies classes at Virginia Tech, I always ask my students to describe Appalachia. Usually the responses have to do with outhouses, feuding and moonshine. Stereotypes abound, so there is much to teach: about Appalachia's rich

history, its roots music and labor disputes. To my mind, though, my most critical task is to convey to the students the importance of protecting the natural environment of this amazing region in which we live.

Before the advent of European settlers, the Appalachians were covered in virgin forest.

It was said that a squirrel could travel through the huge trees to the Mississippi River without ever touching the ground. William Bartram, a naturalist who traveled through the region in the 1700's, described an incredible environment of enormous trees towering over a rich understory of diverse



Appalachia *Continued from page 3*

ries. This is just a start in our vision for our land. Eventually we plan to use silvopasturing, fence our livestock out of the river, and plant windbreaks,

riparian buffers, and indigenous forest herbs and wildflowers.

Recently we had the opportunity to travel to the Nantahala National Forest in North Caro-

lina. The huge hemlocks have fallen and the chestnut trees are gone, but one stand of gigantic yellow poplars still remains. The sight of those few surviv-

ing huge trees brought tears to our eyes, reminding us not only of the magnitude of what has been lost, but also of the promise of what is possible.

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Easy ways to support the NRLT

JOIN – encourage others to become NRLT members. Help spread the message of land conservation and preservation in the New River region.

DONATE – NRLT is a member-supported organization. Your generous contributions help fulfill its mission to conserve farmland, forests, open spaces and historic places in Virginia's New River region.

ESTABLISH A LEGACY – You can help save the land and rivers that define our community by donating to the New River Land Trust either in your lifetime or in your estate. Some of your options include:

- Make a gift in your will. Talk to your financial advisor about the best way to leave a legacy to the NRLT.
- Include NRLT on your list of annual charitable contributions.
- Make a gift of land. Many people don't have heirs who will care for and love their land. One donor has chosen to leave her home and 12 acres to the NRLT.
- Consider a gift of stock.

Leaving a Legacy

The New River Land Trust Protector Society

By Anne Armistead

After years of supporting our conservation work, you understand that ensuring a reliable long term source of funding is essential for the New River Land Trust's continued success and sustainability. We have helped conserve almost 40,000 acres of rural land since 2002. Unfortunately some experts predict that we only have another 20 years left to save our most precious natural areas. Giving now and planning for the future will make for good stewardship of our region's natural heritage.

Making a long term commitment means planning for the future today. That is why I'm asking you to consider taking a significant step towards continued protection of our region's farmland, forests, open spaces and historic places. That simple step is joining the New River Land Trust's Protector Society and remembering the New River Land Trust in your estate planning.

When you and other loyal supporters make bequests in your will to the New River Land Trust, we are assured of future funding. Sustainable funding is critical to the organization and we want to show our sincere appreciation by recognizing your commitment to conservation excellence by adding you to the growing Protector Society list of legacy supporters.

To receive more information on how to make a gift to the NRLT through your estate, please contact me at annie@newriverlandtrust.org or 540-951-1704. If you have already included us in your will, please let us know, so that we can add your name to the New River Land Trust Protector Society list.

*We can leave this earth a better place than we found it
by planning today for the future protection
of our region's most precious natural places.*

LAND AND RIVER REVEL 2011

A celebration of the Land, Landscape and Lifestyle of the New River Region

The Draper Mercantile and Trading Company was the perfect setting for the New River Land Trust's annual Land and River Revel which was held on September 18th.

We are extremely pleased to report that it was another great year for the event with a large enthusiastic crowd and over \$9,000 raised. This is money that will go directly to supporting the Land Trust's critical conservation work.

This historic and beautiful mercantile is located in Pulaski County's rural community of Draper, close to Claytor Lake and up the street from the New River Trail State Park. Given the location and history it was ideal for the New River Land Trust's conservation celebration. Having the event at what was and now is again an important community hub was a wonderful way to celebrate our heartland and our heritage.

The event is also a great opportunity to share our conservation mission and our message with friends, neighbors and other mem-



The beautiful, historic Draper Mercantile and Trading Company dressed up for the NRTL celebration of the land, landscape and heritage of our region.

bers of New River regional community.

The love of the land and need to honor our heritage and our homeland is embedded in our conservation work. The protection of a regional rural legacy falls to us, handed down from our fathers, grandfathers and forebearers. We take this responsibility very seriously with a full awareness that future generations of humans as well as flora and

fauna depend upon us to keep their habitat safe, our water pure, and our farmlands and forests viable.

We are so glad to have these moments to share our conservation successes with all of you. We recognize that our work depends upon you and on your support. We are grateful for the energy and effort that each of you offers to us to sustain our work.

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Special Thanks!


The New River Land Trust would like to extend its heartfelt thanks to all of the donors, sponsors and volunteers who graciously contributed their time, talents, treasures and financial resources to support our 2011 Land and River Reveal.

We also express our gratitude to all of our guests for sharing the moment with us as well as a vision of conserved heritage and homeland in the New River region.

Our record of 40,000 acres conserved including over 21 miles along the New River would not be possible without all of your support.

Thanks to you our community, we will continue to work to ensure that our land and natural resources are conserved forever.





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Our Mission Statement:
Conserving farmland, forests, open spaces and historic places in Virginia's New River region



New River Land Trust

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