



New River Land Trust

Spring 2011 • Volume 10 • Issue 1

# NEWS

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



## Conservation: Mission Possible

by Chris Schellhammer

Have you ever marveled at the beauty of Southwest Virginia? Many residents and visitors do not realize that most of the open space they see is private land. Tragically, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOF) report that since 1997, Virginia has lost over a million acres of rural land to land use changes. This is a sobering reality for those interested in preserving rural landscapes.

Family farms and forest land define our region. This rural land forms large continuous areas important for agricultural and forestry production, scenic landscapes, wildlife habitat and environmental

quality through associated ecosystem services.

Yet economic considerations, primarily the money offered by developers and dramatically escalating property taxes pressure landowners to sell off rural land. Land sales frequently lead to parcelization and conversion from tradi-

tional land uses. This change negatively impacts the viability of the rural landscape to generate economic, social and environmental benefits.

At the same time, there are conservation opportunities for landowners to preserve land. The primary opportunity is to voluntarily place a conservation

easement on the land. Easements permanently restrict the land to rural uses (i.e. farming, forestry) and limit future development.

Besides love of land, the primary motivation for conservation easements comes from tax incentives. Unfortunately, tax incentives can be limited compared to the value given up by the

*See Possible, page 3*



*Conservation Land Plan, NRLT 2010*

## Philip Hanes a Conservation Champion



WINSTON-SALEM – R. Philip Hanes, Jr., passed away on Sunday, January 16, 2011 at Kate B. Reynolds Hospice Home in Winston-Salem at age 84. Phil was born in Winston-Salem N.C., on February 25, 1926

The conservation community has lost a true powerhouse with the passing of Philip Hanes. He is pictured on the left with his wife Charlotte on one of their properties overlooking the New River in Grayson County.

Phil and Charlotte were some of the original supporters of the New River

Land Trust and were integral to starting Grayson LandCare which then created the basis for Grayson Natural Foods.

Over 650 acres of their River Ridge Cattle Company farm is under easement protecting a spectacular section of the New River. The farm is also a model of progressive management through the implementation of multiple conservation practices and as a demonstration farm for pasture raised natural beef.

Phil and Charlotte have been instrumental in promoting conservation in Grayson

*See Hanes, page 2*

# Your Land and Its Story

by Jim Glanville

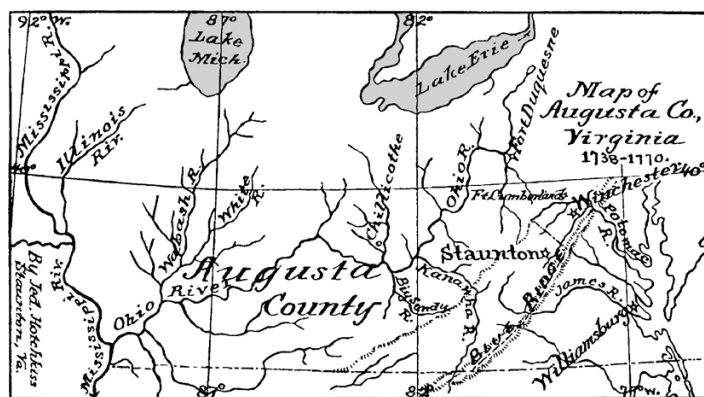
If you have conserved land through the New River Land Trust or even if you are only considering conserving land through the New River Land Trust, you are part of a mighty stream of history that flows through our region.

The region of the New River Land Trust in Virginia in the watershed of the New River (earlier known as Woods River or the Kanawha River) has been called “the Beckoning Land,” and so it was. Around 1745, the first European settlers arrived

on what they called the “western waters” in reference to the water’s eventual outflow via the Mississippi River into the Gulf of Mexico. However, this beckoning land of opportunity was also a dangerous land – American Indians resisted the settlers’ encroachment.

In 1745, the westernmost outpost of Virginia government was the court house of Augusta County (see picture) in present day Staunton. It was to that court house the surveyors returned from their land measuring trips across a vast region

to the southwest. Today, Augusta’s citizens take great pride that they live in a county that once covered an area of comparable size to western Europe (see map). This map was made by Stonewall Jackson’s “topographical engineer” Jedediah Hotchkiss. Today, a six-foot stone reproduction of



it, erected in 1988, stands on the forecourt of the court house.

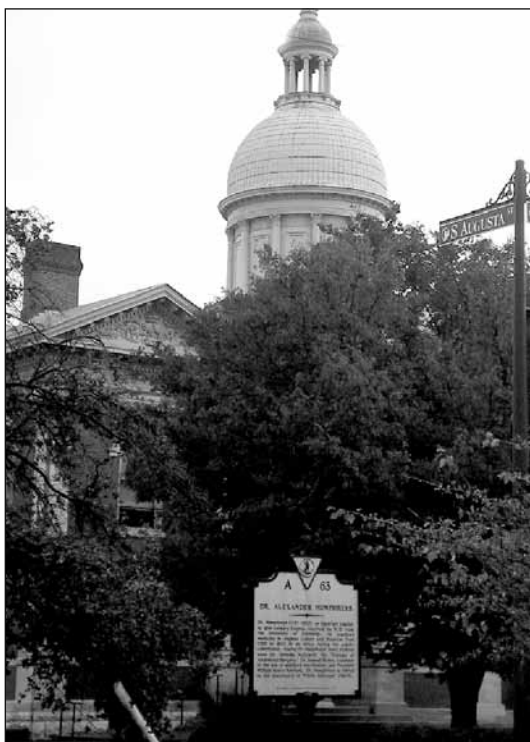
The eight-county area today covered by the New River Land Trust straddles the river toward the bottom of the map labeled Kanawha R. The original Augusta County has long since been divided into over a thousand counties: 40 in western Virginia, 55 in West Virginia, 95 in Tennessee, 120 in Kentucky, and so on. The formation history of these counties tells the story of the political and human expansion of the United States and its evolution from a string of infant colonies along the Atlantic coastal plain into a continent-spanning world power.

It was the prospect of land, new opportunities, and a better life, that energized the expansion. By 1770, the narrow, rutted wagon road from Staunton to Wytheville had, in the words of historian Carl Bridenbaugh, become “... the most heavily

travelled road in all America, and must have had more vehicles jolting along its rough and tortuous way than all other main roads put together.” So the region of the New River Land Trust stands squarely on the thoroughfare along which passed the men and women who powered the nation building of the United States.

So when you pass by your local court house, pause briefly to think about the land records that it holds, and of all the predecessor court houses with their earlier records, and especially of Augusta Court House where it all began. The land is truly a historic heritage worthy of protection.

*Jim Glanville lives in Blacksburg and is a former Virginia Tech chemistry professor who has published over twenty articles in history and archeology journals since he retired seven years ago.*



## Hanes *Continued from page 1*

County as well as in the larger New River region. He and Charlotte were a driving force behind the designation of the New River as an American Heritage River.

The Hanes have also provided access to two islands in the New River to the State for camping along the New River Blueway.

Phil’s conservation work extended well beyond the New River region. He served

as a Board member for numerous major conservation organizations including the National Audubon Society, the American Farmland Trust, the National Committee for the New River, and the Nature Conservancy and Isaac Walton League to name just a few.

He also put his energy and money where it counted by buying and protecting critical lands such as Stone Mountain

State Park in North Carolina and land in the Mount Mitchell, NC Conservancy.

Needless to say Phil’s passing leaves a void in the conservation community that will not easily be filled.

He is survived by his wife Charlotte who is a passionate conservationist in her own right and a protector of a legacy of thousands of acres of conserved land for future generations to enjoy.

2010 was a good year for conservation in Virginia's New River region. The New River Land Trust worked with 15 landowners to place 3,753 acres under easement. This means that since 2002, the Land Trust has worked with 188 landowners to protect approximately 39,634 acres of farms, forests, historic places and open spaces including almost 21 miles of New River frontage. This land will forever be maintained as rural land contributing to the landscape and heritage of our region.

Our conservation success in 2010 is especially notable because we are poised to work with our 200th landowner and exceed 40,000 acres conserved in 2011. For a small grass roots organization that is only nine years old, this is a conservation record that we should take great pride in achieving!

I have to emphasize that the credit for this success is shared throughout our regional community. From the landowners whose love of their land prompts them to conserve it; to our supporters both monetarily and with in kind services; to the volunteers and work study students who help keep our operation functioning; to our conservation partners, particularly the Virginia Outdoors Foundation; to elected

## DIRECTOR'S CHAIR



**JOHN EUSTIS**

officials and staff in our service area who support balancing development with conservation; and finally to our Board of Directors and staff.

I thank all of you for helping to make this organization successful and more importantly for preserving for future generations our region's rural heritage.

Next, I would like to touch on of

this newsletter. In last year's Fall Newsletter, we highlighted a number of talented writers who live in the New River region. We got a lot of positive feedback on the newsletter. So for this spring, we again want to share with our readers articles from local writers who support conservation.

The lead article describes a new NRLT conservation initiative. Article author Chris Schellhammer is a longtime local professional and recent graduate of Tech's Masters of Architecture program. He and other

volunteers donated their expertise to help the Land Trust develop a conservation land plan for a 500 acre farm property. The project was a departure from our past work and it is yet to be determined what will happen on the property, but this type of project may open the conservation door for other landowners and properties that do not fit with traditional conservation or development models.

The second article is written by Jim Glanville who explores the history of our region. It is notable because it is a history which revolves around the push west in search of open land. It makes me ask, how much different is the past from the present? Except instead of Native Americans fighting for their ancestral land, it is rural landowners and conservationists fighting to keep intact rural landscapes and traditional livelihoods such as farming and forestry.

The newsletter includes a third guest article from Lesley Howard. Lesley was the founding member of the New River Land Trust. Her article highlights native wildflowers which are a great representation of the unique natural beauty of the region.

We hope you enjoy the newsletter and thank all of you for your generous support!

## Possible *Continued from page 1*

easement donor. Also, the strict limits on division and residential development do not always fit for landowners with multiple family members and wealth tied up in land.

The situation is often polarizing. With no middle ground, valuable conservation land is commonly pushed towards development. There is a sentiment that if economic and family concerns were not as much of an issue many owners would lean towards conservation. Southwestern Virginia's rural landscape hangs in the balance: on one side – economic opportunities, and on the other – a conservation ethic.

The New River Land Trust is spearheading an effort to address this issue. "There is a lot

of interest in conservation out there," says Executive Director John Eustis, "but if we cannot address some basic realities such as accommodating families and financial concerns, we will lose many conservation opportunities."

This past year a Montgomery County family approached the New River Land Trust regarding a 500 acre farm. The family was interested in exploring both conservation of the farm and the economic opportunities available from development.

The Land Trust brought to-

gether a team of land experts to examine the property. The team developed several concept plans based on local and state

regulations, the real estate market, forest and agricultural production, wetland and riparian environments, soils and more. They then tested a broad-range of conservation

– development options against the associated opportunity costs which included strict conservation standards.

As Randi Lemon, the land planner and appraiser for the project, states, "develop what

can be developed; conserve what needs to be saved."

Moreover, the family discovered that the value of developed land increases when it is associated with conserved open space. When open space is guaranteed by a conservation easement, the land set aside for development can have a higher market value.

For landowners and conservationists, this balanced approach to land is a win-win situation. Conservation land planning protects valuable rural land while addressing landowner's family and economic needs.

For more information, contact NRLT Executive Director John Eustis at (540) 951-1704 or [nrlt@newriverlandtrust.org](mailto:nrlt@newriverlandtrust.org).

**"Southwestern Virginia's rural landscape hangs in the balance: on one side – economic opportunities, and on the other – a conservation ethic."**

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*We sincerely regret if we have omitted the name of any 2010 donor. If we have made an error, please call us at 540.951.1704 or e-mail us at [nrlt@newriverlandtrust.org](mailto:nrlt@newriverlandtrust.org)*

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**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.
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# Wildflowers

Written by Leslie Howard

Wildflowers grace us with their for-free blooms and fragrance, sometimes surprising us with their presence: many appear literally overnight. Dependent upon Mother Nature's many subtle variables, there is no one "for sure" time or location for wildflowers, although many nurseries now stock natives popular with gardeners since they're adapted to our climate. Finding wild blooms requires patience and persistence. If you're so inclined, however, you'll be rewarded. Areas adjacent to NRLT conservation easements, or on easements with public access, host more wildflowers, as the undisturbed environment afforded by the easements encourages these fragile, temporal sprigs.

In earliest spring, wild violets and snowdrops carpet forest floors across

See *Wildflowers*, page 7

## New Members of the 2011 NRLT Board of Directors

**Elizabeth Hahn** and her family moved to the mountains of Southwest Virginia before she was a year old, so this is the place she considers home, regardless of the many places she has lived and roamed. As an educator, artist and writer, Betty's varied interests include the creative arts, documentary film, indigenous cultures and the



mountain cultures of Appalachia.

Increasingly issues of environment, sustainability and responsible land stewardship have become important to Betty. As the owner of a large historic property in Ellet Valley outside of Blacksburg, she and her family are implementing such practices as permaculture, native plant cultivation and edible forest gardening. The farm is also protected by a conservation easement. The easement was one of the early easements done in the region.

**Dr. James McKenna** has just completed his 46th year in education, assuming the role of Interim Department Head of Crop and Soil Environmental Sciences in July 2008.



Retiring in July of 2010, he continues to serve until a new department head is identified.

Jim's World Crops and Crop systems class was one of the first "Global emphasis" classes in the University. Over the years, Jim has garnered awards for teaching and advising, including the University wide Alumni Award for Excellence in Advising, the Alumni Associations W.E. Wine Award for Excellence in Teaching, and the Diggs Scholar Teaching Award. He is a member of the University Academy of Teaching Excellence, and a Charter member and twice chair of the University Academy of Advising Excellence.

**Jim Newlin** is a native of Burlington, NC, and worked in budgeting and public policy for the North Carolina legislature for over 30 years.

He moved to Floyd, VA in 2009, fulfilling a lifelong dream to live in the mountains.

Newlin has undergraduate and graduate degrees in economics and regional planning from the University of North Carolina.

"Living in a rapidly urbanizing area of North Carolina, I understand the need to preserve our natural areas, protect watersheds, and preserve agricultural lands for future generations. I hope to work on those areas with the New River Land Trust."

Newlin lives in Floyd with his wife Silvie Granatelli, a professional potter, their dog and three cats.



**Dr. Eugene Seago** is the R.B. Pamplin Professor of Accounting at Virginia Tech and has been a member of the College of Business faculty for 40 years.



He holds a PhD in Accounting and a J.D. from the University of Georgia. He is also a member of the Virginia Bar Association.

Dr. Seago is a long standing environmentalist and has published an article on the environmental tax credit for *Environmental Law and Policy Review Journal and Tax Notes*.

He has distinguished himself as a consultant for the Internal Revenue Service and Social Security Administration.

He has a special interest in environmental issues and conservation.

He has three children and resides with his wife Pat on a small farm in Craig County.

# Wildflowers *Continued from page 6*

southwest Virginia, tiny harbingers of spring and a heads-up to waterproof your hiking boots. From mid-April through mid-May, lace up and head to the limestone cave and waterfall area at Falls Ridge. Local hikers recommend visiting from mid-April through mid-May and keeping your eyes open for Trillium; native Red Columbine (growing in the rock crevices above the caves); wild Ginger; Bloodroot; and Jack-in-the-Pulpit. When walking to the waterfall's top, look for Wild Delphinium, and more Trillium. If you're visiting later in the season, meander through this section to spy the Wild Orchid in the forest

above the path on the right; locals report this one is shy. Also at Falls Ridge, Flame Azaleas grace the walk from the parking area through a long meadow.

Even if you can't spend much time outdoors, the Virginia Department of Transportation

has invested in swaths of native wildflower median plantings. And although no one's planted it deliberately, Roadside Chicory gives us the pleasure of its clear blue flowers from spring through summer. Queen Anne's Lace contrasts with it beautifully – and is likely to be found “volunteering” along roads as well. Other hardy “weeds” with pretty blooms are Ironweed and Joe Pye Weed.

A few last notes: Trailing Arbutus shows off its petals at Pandapas Pond in early spring, concurrent with Daffodils, when evenings re-

main chilly. Milepost 42 on the Fries branch of the New River Trail hosts Red Trilliums avid hikers find worthy of a pilgrimage each May.

Regardless of where you find yourself this spring, slow down, look around and perhaps even allow yourself to sit for a spell. The earth abounds with wildflower treasures small and large. And thank the NRLT for helping to protect the rural landscape that is their habitat.

Photo by Anne Jacobsen



## NRLT ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT

*The New River Land Trust works hard to stretch every dollar. In 2010, every \$42 collected helped us to save one acre of precious rural land.*

REVENUES	2010	2009
Contributions	86,922	85,865
Grants	31,478	27,798
Special Events	34,967	32,439
Other	6,447	6,651
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>\$159,814</b>	<b>\$152,753</b>
EXPENSES		
Administration & Programs	111,836	111,717
Board & Committees	1,127	2,108
Fundraising & Appreciation	24,789	23,882
Special Events	10,250	8,202
Grants	8,023	14,570
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$156,025</b>	<b>\$160,479</b>
END OF YEAR		
Assets	183,512	179,309
Liabilities	1,981	4,371
<b>Net Assets</b>	<b>\$181,531</b>	<b>\$174,938</b>
<b>Change in Net Assets</b>	<b>\$6,593</b>	

**THE FLOYD COUNTRY STORE**  
 206 South Locust Street . Downtown Floyd, VA  
 540.745.4563  
[www.FloydCountryStore.com](http://www.FloydCountryStore.com)

# Americana


# Afternoons

Starting at Noon

Join Us For Live Americana Music

# Every Saturday

Americana Open Mic at 1:30  
 Free Admission    Tips Encouraged



**New River Land Trust**  
P.O. Box 11057  
Blacksburg, VA 24062  
Phone: (540) 951-1704  
e-mail: [nrlt@newriverlandtrust.org](mailto:nrlt@newriverlandtrust.org)  
[www.newriverlandtrust.org](http://www.newriverlandtrust.org)  
**Visit Our Website:**  
**Our Mission Statement:**  
Conserving farmland, forests, open spaces and historic places in Virginia's New River region.



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**Tamara Vance** – Va. Outdoors Foundation  
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