



Conserving the Farm Supports Agritourism!



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Virginia's Largest Industry

- One of Virginia's **greatest natural resources is its agricultural and forestal lands**
- Farms cover over almost **1/3 of Virginia's land area** and support working lands that help direct growth to urban areas like NOVA, Richmond and Hampton Roads
- **311,000 jobs** w/ an economic impact of **\$70 Billion**
- Every Virginia locality is affected by agriculture and forestry-related industries: **68 localities** have total employment impacts in excess of **1,000 jobs**



The Rural Landscape Defines our Sense of Place



- Rural landscapes are the part of the identity of rural Virginia but is economic development at odds with conserving these rural lands?
- ***Rural economic development and land conservation are not mutually exclusive – they complement each other!***



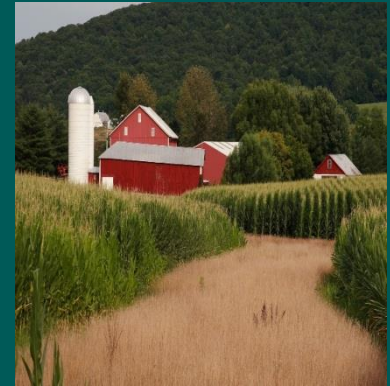
Public & Ecological Benefits

- Agritourism & forest recreation have large impact – millions of visitors & billions in economic impact yearly
- Rural landscapes provide scenic amenities that improve the quality of life and help preserve cultural heritage and fostering a unique sense of place
- Farms & forests offer important connections between water bodies and land that furnish:
 - critical wildlife habitat, protect biodiversity, improve air and water quality, flood mitigation and enhances the State's resiliency in the face of severe weather



Cost Efficient

- **Local property tax revenues** generated by farm, forest or open space land are **often far greater** than a locality's expenditures to service that land.
- In Virginia it is estimated that the average cost is **\$1.18 to service residential homes** for every \$1.00 of tax revenues they contribute, but farmland, forest land and open space requires only 35 cents in service costs for each dollar in tax revenue contributed (and 40 cents for commercial and industrial lands)





"Cows, cornfields and trees don't require much for municipal services compared to housing developments"





Threats to Ag. Viability

- 2 main challenges to Virginia agriculture industry:
 - Farmers are getting older: Average age almost 60
 - Loss of farmland to non-farm uses: over 5 million acres since 1960
- Preserving agricultural and forest land in the face of increasing development pressure has required a concerted effort by planners and policy makers



Agritourism & the Small Farm

- Activities that generates add'l farm income and creates a customer base for farm products are a key adaption strategy for small farm viability (avg. Va. farm size is 181 ac.)
- Rural landscape is key to your community's identity: value-added activities should supplement the primary use of agricultural production.
- Public awareness can educate visitors and tourists about respecting the primary agricultural use of the land, as well as landowners' right to farm and use of the road.



How Does Office of Farmland Preservation help?



www.vafarmlink.org

- **Farm Owners:** who are facing retirement and want to see their businesses continue and their land stay in production
- **Beginning and Aspiring Farmers:** who are in search of business arrangements through which they can acquire land, equipment, experience and access to the knowledge of seasoned producers



- Primary component has been Virginia Farm Link database: Online tool to connect farm owners and farm seekers in Virginia
 - partnership with Va. Farm Bureau & VDACS est. 2003 new website→ www.vafarmlink.org
 - Over 350 farm owners & 3,500 farm seekers signed up
 - Over 200 farm owners have had 2,600 contacts from nearly 800 farm seekers

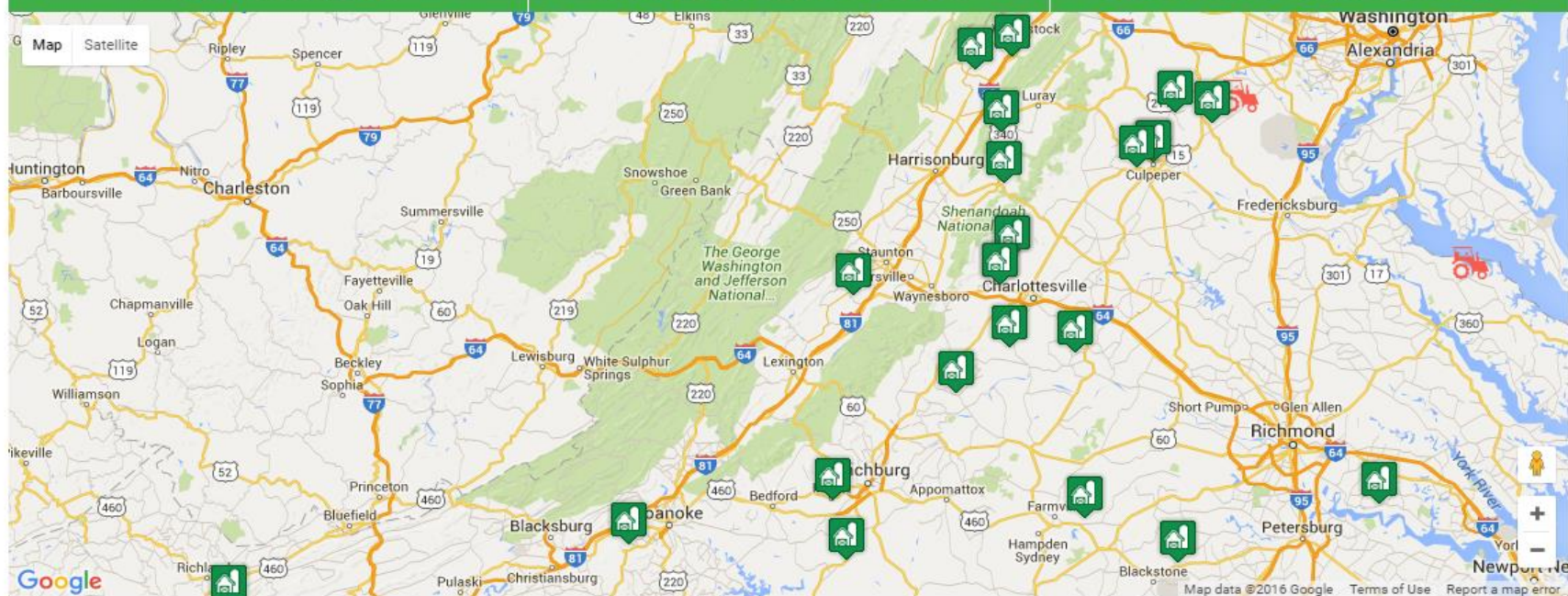




Find Farmland

Find a Farm Seeker

Certified Farm Seekers



Farm Owners

1. #383, Albemarle County, 60 Acres
2. #377, Albemarle County, 72 Acres
3. #388, Albemarle County, 200.00 Acres
4. #204, Augusta County, 74.5 Acres
5. #368, Bedford County, 25.00 Acres
6. #46, Campbell County, 263.00 Acres

Certified Farm Seekers

1. #2057, Fauquier County
2. #1227, Pittsylvania County
3. #3429, Westmoreland County



What is the Certified Farm Seekers Program?

- Partnership between Virginia Farm Bureau Young Farmers and VDACS to promote the Virginia Farm Link database
- Designed to help farmers plan for their future farming operation - Provides tools to demonstrate farming commitment & vision to farm owners
- 20 farm seekers certified with another 75 working through applications





CFS Requirements

- Professional Resume
- Business Plan
- On-Farm Experience

If you already have any, or all, of the three program requirements, you are that much closer to becoming a Certified Farm Seeker!

If you need help completing any of the requirements, there are modules available as resources.





Va. Incentives for Conserving the Farm

- To help slow the loss of prime farmland to non-agricultural uses: Virginia Matching Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) Program
- PDR programs enable local governments to permanently conserve working farmland by the purchase conservation easements – sometimes called development rights – from farm owners
- In return for voluntarily placing a conservation easement on their farm, land owners retire the right to develop the land



Va. Incentives for Conserving the Farm



- VDACS PDR program that provides 1:1 matching state funding to localities that have established locally funded PDR programs
 - Since 2008: 15 localities – 77 farms – almost 11,000 acres statewide
- Many farmers use the proceeds from easement sales to reduce debt loads and expand operations and as financial resources that can help ensure the transition of the farm to the next generation.



Other Support for Conservation Easements and Working Lands

- VDACS organized the Working Lands Group in 2010 in response to the perception by some in the agricultural community that the donation of a conservation easement was not a viable option for protecting productive working lands
- Produced the “working lands variant” to VOF’s standard conservation easement template with primary purpose for use with agricultural and forestal lands



For Additional Information:

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