



## VIRGINIA WILDERNESS COMMITTEE

*A 501(c)(3) Nonprofit*

*Pioneering Wilderness Protection in Virginia since 1969*

[www.vawilderness.org](http://www.vawilderness.org)

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# ***It Was a Very Good Year!***

ANNUAL MEETING & REPORT, July 2014-June 2015

Rain poured down but VWC members, volunteers & friends were under cover in Bob Dickerman's old farmhouse for the annual meeting & election of officers on June 27. Bob's charming house overflowed with people committed to seeing VWC move forward with the great success that our years of work have produced over the past 12 months. Here are a few highlights:

- Shenandoah Mountain National Scenic Area (NSA). The new George Washington National Forest (GWNF) management plan, released last Nov., recommended a 90,000-acre Shenandoah Mountain NSA that is very similar to the one proposed by VWC, the Friends of Shenandoah Mtn., & the Stakeholder Collaborative (see other side). Privately owned mineral rights kept the Forest Service from recommending some areas for Wilderness recommendation.
- Lower Cowpasture Restoration & Management Project. This project includes the Cowpasture, Jackson, & Calfpasture River watersheds (77,000 acres) in one of the largest planning efforts ever undertaken by the Forest Service (FS). The GWNF plan recognized the recommendations of VWC & the Stakeholder Collaborative to add acreage to Rich Hole & Rough Mtn. Wilderness Areas. On-the-ground actions like timber & biomass harvests, prescribed burning, invasive plant management, & recreation & forest road access, are being planned outside of these core areas.



Board & Officers elected June 27, 2015: Bottom from L to R: Field Director Mark Miller, VWC's only employee; Chris Bolgiano, Pres.; Christy Bradburn, new Bd. member. Back from L to R: Ron Stoltzfus, new Treas.; Jack Gentile, Bd. member; Pete Bsumek, Sec'y; Lynn Cameron, past Pres.; Bud Watson, new VP; Laura Neale, past Pres.; Jim Murray, a VWC founder in 1969. Missing from photo: Bd. member John Hutchinson & new Bd. members Steve Johnson & Mercer Cronemeyer. See [www.vawilderness.org/about.html](http://www.vawilderness.org/about.html) for bios. *Photo by Rita Gentile.*

- Northern Shenandoah Restoration & Management Project. The newest landscape-scale project undertaken by VWC & the Stakeholder Collaborative covers ca. 64,000 acres & includes the proposed Beech Lick Knob Wilderness Area near Bergton in Rockingham Cty. The vision is to have a network of core, relatively unfragmented, forested areas embedded within a landscape of diverse age & structural character that supports a variety of wildlife species, builds ecological resilience, & provides essential ecological, social, economic, & recreational benefits.
- October 2014 saw widespread celebrations for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Wilderness Act, including a conference in Albuquerque, NM. VWC's Chris Bolgiano was selected to present "Developing a

Southern Appalachian WWIMBY\* Response (\*Welcoming Wilderness in My Back Yard") about the environmental history of Southern Appalachian national forests. VWC & the VaWild50 committee of Forest Service & Wilderness advocates across Virginia developed a stunning tabletop exhibit & accompanying handouts that highlighted the benefits of Wilderness, VA's 24 Wilderness Areas, the best books on wilderness, & Ernie Dickerman's contributions as the Grandfather of Eastern Wilderness. The exhibit traveled to 22 libraries across the state.

## Stakeholder Collaborative

The idea began in 2010 when VWC's Field Director Mark Miller & John Hancock of the VA Forestry Assn. proposed a GWNF Stakeholder Collaborative to bring traditional Wilderness opponents together to discuss forest planning issues. More than 40 forest users with different management philosophies, including representatives from timber companies, game managers, hunting groups, & mtn. bikers, then met in a session facilitated by the Institute for Environmental Negotiations. Later meetings led to a series of negotiations on preservation & active management. In Oct. 2011, the Stakeholders submitted a joint set of comments to the FS that significantly improved the recommendations for Wilderness and National Scenic Area designation in the new GWNF management plan (see previous page). Mark's work with stakeholders continues as we seek ways to insure that Wilderness Areas are included in national forest planning.

From the President:

### Successes ... and Challenges

by Chris Bolgiano

By its very nature, success brings new challenges: what should our strategy be moving forward? How can we bring carbon sequestration into the planning process? Where should habitat corridors be planned to link Wilderness Areas? How much can we compromise without risking biodiversity? **And how could VWC work for Wilderness without the donations & support of our members & volunteers? They are the heart & soul of VWC, contributing over 3,000 hours in 2014, an all-time high. Heartfelt thanks to all who contributed** in so many different ways: Sherrie Good's graphic designs, Steve Johnson's photography, Lynn Cameron's public presentations, Rita Gentile's data base management, Ron Stoltzfus' trail work, Jeremy Boggs' & Karen Waterman's work as past officers, the often tedious operational work of all our board members, & donations sent by many. **The date after your name on the label marks your last donation.** For love of **Wild Nature**, join us & donate at [www.vawilderness.org](http://www.vawilderness.org) or send to Ron Stoltzfus, VWC Treasurer, 1817 College Ave., Harrisonburg, VA 22801.

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*What a Year it's Been -- of Success!  
Plus, new officers & board m*

