

Annual Update on the Acquisition of Conservations Easements (ACE) Program

Genesis of the Program:

- **1992** – Albemarle County’s “Open Space and Critical Resource Plan” identified the purchase of development rights (PDRs) as a critical, non-regulatory tool for protecting open space from fragmentation/urban growth
- **1997** – Albemarle Board of Supervisors (BOS) appointed a 10 person committee to develop a PDR program consistent with the Comprehensive Plan
- **1998** – PDR committee presented report to BOS; BOS directed committee to proceed with community outreach and seek public comment
- **2000** – BOS passed the Acquisition of Conservation Easements (ACE) ordinance thus establishing the ACE program; approved funding for first two years at \$1,000,000/year from General Fund and transient lodging tax

General Information:

- One of the first three PDR programs in Virginia and among first in the entire southeast
- Today, one of six active programs in Virginia
- Only program that specifically benefits landowners of modest means (payment according to adjusted gross income and income grid)

Purpose:

- Establish a program in which the county can acquire conservation easements voluntarily offered by owners as one means to assure the county’s resources are protected and efficiently used;
- Establish and preserve open-space and preserve the rural character of Albemarle County;
- Preserve farm and forest lands;
- Conserve and protect water resources and environmentally sensitive lands, waters and other natural resources;
- Conserve and protect biodiversity and wildlife and aquatic habitat;
- Assist in shaping the character and direction of the development of the community;
- Improve the quality of life for the inhabitants of the county; and
- Promote tourism through the preservation of scenic resources.

Current Applicant Pool (enrolled October 31, 2017)

- 5 initial applicants
- 4/5 applicants are eligible for funding
- hope to acquire easements on 3 properties
- 1/3 lie in watershed of a drinking water supply reservoir
- 1/3 properties adjoin land protected by easement
- 2/3 are working family farms
- would protect 408 acres
- would eliminate 29 development lots
- would protect over 270 acres of “prime” farm and forestland
- would protect land with 8,000 feet of state road frontage
- would protect nearly 13,000 feet of stream frontage with riparian buffers
- 1/3 properties in a Rural Historic District

Summary of ACE Conservation Efforts since 2000:

- 116 applicants
- acquired easements on 48 properties
- protected 9,284 acres
- protected over 4,465 acres of “prime” farm and forestland
- protected lands with over 41,000 feet along state roads
- protected lands with over 26,000 feet along a scenic highway or entrance corridor
- protected nearly 1,100 acres of mountaintop
- protected over 108,000 linear feet of streamside with buffers
- eliminated 537 development lots
- 32/48 properties have “tourism” value
- 12/48 properties in a Rural Historic Districts
- 29/48 properties adjoin permanently protected land
- 16/48 lie in the watershed of a drinking supply reservoir
- 35/48 are working family farms
- 30/48 were paid 100% of easement value; 40/48 were paid at least 94% of easement value

Funding, Costs and Grants to Achieve these Conservation Efforts:

ACE appropriations:	\$ 12,438,002
Easement acquisition costs (what we paid):	\$ 13,107,890
<u>Closing costs (appraisals, title insurance etc.):</u>	<u>\$ 248,529</u>
Net easement acquisition costs:	\$ 13,356,419 (\$1,439/acre)
Grants:	\$ 2,645,245 (VOF, OFP, VLCF)
Donations:	\$ 22,500 (PEC)
<u>Income adjustment (from income grid):</u>	<u>\$ 845,256</u>
Totals Savings:	\$ 3,513,091 (21% of easement cost)
Total easement cost (before grants, donations & adjusted values):	\$16,869,510 (\$1,817/acre)