

## Talking Points

- From the Shenandoah mountains to the Chesapeake Bay, from historic farm communities to whitewater rivers and trout streams, the landscape of Virginia is blessed with beauty and variety. Virginians rightfully take pride in our natural heritage. Our natural resources provide an unparalleled quality of life, making Virginia a treasured place for our families.
- Protecting our natural heritage is a core function of state government.
- Article XI of the Virginia Constitution states “it shall be the Commonwealth’s policy to protect its atmosphere, lands and waters from pollution, impairment or destruction for the benefit, enjoyment and general welfare of the people of the Commonwealth.”
- With regard to the state budget, the Governor, legislators and other policymakers all agree on one key principle: that Virginia must meet its obligations to support the core functions of state government.
- Under the Virginia Constitution, protection of our natural resources is a core function of state government.
- Barely a PENNY of each state dollar is allocated to protect Virginia’s water quality, open space, fisheries and wildlife, recreational areas and historic sites.
- Virginia’s total expenditures on natural resources approach but a penny per dollar.
- This penny must fund all of the people and programs responsible for protecting the Commonwealth’s lands, water and air; enforcing waste management policies; staffing and maintaining facilities at state parks and protecting natural areas, historic properties and Civil War battlefields; fish and wildlife management, as well as oyster reef restoration.
- In a recent poll, 2/3 of Virginia voters said they would be willing to pay more each month to protect our water quality, open space, fisheries and wildlife, and recreational areas.
- Virginia needs to spend at least \$50 million annually to conserve its precious lands.
- Virginia’s rural landscape is at risk. Nearly a half a million acres of prime farmland vanished from 1987 to 1997 alone, and 54,000 acres of forestland were lost each year between 1992 and 2000.
- Virginia should provide assistance to localities with Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) programs. PDR programs compensate property owners for restricting future use of their land. Nationally, states provide an average of sixty percent (60%) of the funding for purchase of development rights programs, recognizing that many localities do not have the ability to raise local revenues for this purpose. Ten localities in Virginia have adopted such programs and many others are examining ways to save their rural areas.

- Virginia should provide matching grants to nonprofits, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and localities. The Virginia Land Conservation Foundation leverages private, local and federal investment by paying for 50% of the cost of worthy land conservation projects.
- Public land acquisition. While occasional funding has been made available through general obligation bonds, Virginia has never provided an adequate revenue stream for natural resources agencies to meet an increasing population's needs for recreational opportunities. Funding is needed to take advantage of current opportunities to buy land for wildlife management areas, state forests, parks and natural areas.
- Additional funding is critical if Virginia is to preserve the open space that is so important to our heritage and our quality of life.
- Virginia needs to spend at least \$120 million annually to restore its nutrient-impaired waters.
- Nutrient pollution in waterways across Virginia could be cleaned up through increased state funding for the Water Quality Improvement Fund.
- Upgrading sewage treatment plants and industrial facilities will achieve 70 percent of the nitrogen pollution reduction called for in the Chesapeake 2000 Agreement. This will cost about \$120 million per year over six years. Additional funds are needed to control polluted run-off from farms, cities and suburbia in priority watersheds also will help reduce nitrogen pollution in Virginia's waters.
- Virginia needs a stable and reliable source of funding to clean up and protect the Chesapeake Bay and rivers and streams across the Commonwealth.

### **VirginiaForever Committee**

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