

FROM THE DESK OF DR. M. RUPERT CUTLER

November 14, 2008

Dear Friend of the Land Trust,

Every year for the past ten years, a friend of mine in Pennsylvania, Cordelia Scaife May, generously gave the Western Virginia Land Trust an unrestricted grant of \$40,000, the single largest gift to the Land Trust each year and almost 25% of its annual operating budget. Now, with her recent passing, and with her foundation directing its grant-making to social and environmental problems in the Pittsburgh area, that vital grant—based on my personal relationship with Mrs. May—will no longer be made.

This is a matter of utmost urgency to the future of the Western Virginia Land Trust. But it is also a wonderful opportunity—and challenge—for those of us who live in this area to take responsibility for the future of *our* Land Trust and not have to rely on outsiders for its support.

Since its inception in 1996, the Western Virginia Land Trust has successfully preserved 56,000 acres of farm land, open space, and viewsheds in Western Virginia. As a trustee of the Virginia Outdoors Foundation, I have the opportunity to see the operations of dozens of land trusts across Virginia. I can say, without qualification, that the Western Virginia Land Trust—*our very own*—is the equal of any land trust organization in the Commonwealth. The WVLT's outstanding staff of Roger Holnback and David Perry are extremely able and unusually effective. Their success, and the obvious need for more open space protection in our region warrant our increased financial support.

Just think of the open space land resources at risk. Views from the Blue Ridge Parkway and the Appalachian Trail are being degraded by nearby residential and commercial construction as you read this letter. This erosion of the beauty of the views from the parkway and the AT lessen their appeal to visitors as well as to us, affecting both our economy and our local quality of life. WVLT staff members know who owns the critical viewshed properties. They are contacting the owners, encouraging them to donate conservation easements to save the views.

The challenge of protecting our drinking water supply at Carvins Cove Natural Reserve from future development has begun, but the job is only half done. One conservation easement there is recorded, but winning Roanoke City Council action to donate a second easement on the balance of Carvins Cove to protect all 12,000 acres will take some doing, led by WVLT staff. Then we should move without missing a beat to see that the valley's scenic icon, Mill Mountain, also is given conservation easement protection in perpetuity.

Greenway users need the land trust's help to acquire trail rights of way. Trout anglers need its help to protect cold-water mountain streams. It is our undeveloped mountainsides and ridgelines that give our valley its unique scenic character, and those resources are at risk. Local farmers' markets depend on local farms and orchards for their produce. Only conservation easements can slow the permanent conversion of working farms, orchards, and forests to suburban sprawl development.

Making up for the loss of \$40,000 in unrestricted income will not be easy, but pulling together we can do it! Please join me in pledging an increased tax-deductible charitable contribution to the Western Virginia Land Trust today. We can no longer take

it for granted that a generous outsider will step in to support the work of the Land Trust.
We need to show that we care enough about the future of our region to step up ourselves.

Thank you for your support of the most effective environmental conservation organization in the Roanoke region.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rupert Cutler". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Rupert Cutler

Founding Executive Director, Western Virginia Land Trust

P.S. Remember, when you make a gift to the Western Virginia Land Trust, you'll receive a full year of their publication, *Saving Land in Western Virginia*, a decal for your car window or office door, E-news updates in your computer inbox, and invitations to land trust special events.