

Saving Land

IN WESTERN VIRGINIA

winter 2009-10

**Boyd and Virginia Claytor's Land Legacy
AEP preserves Smith Mountain
Remember WVLT this holiday season**



*The Peaks of Otter
viewed from the
Cloverlea farm, Claytor
Center for Nature
Study, protected with a
conservation easement.*

westernvirginalandtrust.org

2 Boyd and Virginia Claytor Leave a Land Legacy

Students enjoy nature study at Claytor Center

by George Kegley



Drive five miles north of Bedford City toward the Peaks of Otter, turn up a winding gravel lane and discover the Claytor Nature Study Center, an environmental jewel, informing a thousand school children each year about nature through the generosity and foresight of Boyd Claytor.

Claytor, a prominent Bedford businessman, and his wife, Virginia, donated their 470-acre Cloverlea farm to Lynchburg College and established the Claytor Nature Study Center 11 years ago. Virginia Claytor died in 1998 and he died last May. Earlier, the couple ensured permanent protection of the rolling hills and vales with a conservation easement held by the Virginia Outdoors Foundation.

“Ten years, 100 years, it’s going to be here forever. This is exactly what we wanted to happen,” Boyd Claytor said at the time. He also gave the college a generous endowment to help with operating expenses.

The center’s master plan calls for it to work with adjacent landowners to place their land in conservation easements, which would guarantee even more protection for the property. The Western Virginia Land Trust has joined Bedford Citizens for Land Preservation and the Central Virginia Land Conservancy in promoting other easements in the neighborhood.



DAVID PERRY

Local students explore the Big Otter River with dip nets.

Students from Lynchburg college, 30 miles away, frequently visit the center to study environmental science, join their faculty in research and relate their art, history and literature disciplines to nature. The property features hills, two ponds, open fields, woodlands, cliffs, wetlands and the Big Otter River. About two-thirds is in forest, inhabited by deer, wild turkeys, bobcats and other wildlife.

Public schools send students here to don boots and seine the river for macroinvertebrates to help judge water quality. In a five-hour visit, the youngsters learn about botany, animal biology and environmental science in a 7,700-square-foot education and research building.

The college has added the Belk Astronomical Observatory, an open-air educational pavilion, the Ramsey-Freer Herbarium moved from Lynchburg, and gardens flourishing behind the Claytor farmhouse, named in memory of Virginia Claytor. A marker in the garden gives credit to Virginia Claytor, “who so loved the land, animals and flowers.”

Dr. Greg Eaton, center director, hailed Boyd Claytor’s “selflessness and uncompromised commitment to conscientious financial and environmental stewardship.”



COURTESY OF LYNCHBURG COLLEGE

The A. Boyd Claytor III Education & Research Facility.

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Steve Claytor



Over twelve years ago, my father excitedly shared the good news with me—his brother Boyd had successfully put together a complex arrangement of land use protections designed to forever protect his cherished 470 acre Cloverlea farm in Bedford. At the time, I did not fully understand what “protections”

had been placed on the property but I knew that it involved a conservation easement and tree plantings along the Big Otter River.

I later learned the specifics: the entire Cloverlea farm was placed under a conservation easement with the Virginia Outdoors Foundation (VOF), about 150 acres of former cropland were placed under the management of the Federal Wildlife Incentive Program (WHIP), and an 18 acre portion of land adjacent to the Big Otter had been converted into a conserved riparian habitat under the agency’s Conservation Reserve Program.

Additionally, another 50 acres on lowland had been restored to its native habitat utilizing the Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) which resulted in thousands of trees planted. Wow! I was so impressed with the effort and attention that this private, yet successful businessman made to not only preserve but to restore this unique property. I was impressed with the many resources and assistance that were available to my uncle.

At that time, I did not fully understand my father’s excitement for his brother’s efforts and what was to be a significant step towards securing a world class educational facility for future generations to “explore, study and enjoy.” The final step on the process would be the transfer of this property to the capable oversight of Lynchburg College.

The beauty of our surroundings that we enjoy (and often take for granted) may not be here tomorrow. It is because of the efforts like these, people and resources committed to the cause of land protection (and restoration), and groups like the WVLT that help these conservation goals become a reality. The efforts by all

those involved humble me and continue to motivate me to serve this growing movement.

To many, Boyd and my father were industrious, hard working business people. This is the way they were raised; this reflects the values that they shared and their interest in preserving land for the longer term benefit of our community.

So this raises the question...why would business minded people spend the time and energy on such things? They were, of course, busy building and managing their own businesses, and taking care of their families. The answer is what makes people like this and MANY others in our area so special. It has been a privilege to work with other likeminded people in our area like Karen Waldron of Fralin and Waldron.

Many may ask how these business people and their business models fit/benefit from their participation in land conservation programs. The answer is that the goals of many businesses and the issues of environmental awareness and stewardship of our land are very compatible goals. We are fortunate to have these business leaders in our community with such vision...but there is room for much more of a business commitment.

Continued on page 5



(L-R) Steve’s grandfather Andrew Boyd Claytor, Steve’s father William Claytor, aunt Imogen Claytor Williams, and uncle Boyd Claytor.

From the President

by Janet Scheid

*There is no season when such pleasant
and sunny Spots may be lighted on,
and produce so pleasant an effect on
the feelings, as now in October.*

Nathaniel Hawthorne




There are few better places on earth to enjoy fall than in the mountains of southwest Virginia. Fall derives from an Old English verb, but it wasn't used as a noun to designate the season until the 16th century. This use most likely developed from the Middle English expression "fall of the leaf." Old English speakers called the season harvest for obvious reasons.

Fall, autumn, harvest - whatever you call the season between summer and winter in the northern hemisphere it is the time of year when sunlight wanes and the trees know to begin getting ready for winter. Just as those brilliant colors emerge, the start of the crazy season begins for those of us in the land conservation business.

Landowners, attorneys, tax professionals – all pushing to get their easements approved and recorded prior to the end of 2009. It's a good busy though. It proves to us once again how critically important our work is and reminds us once again of how critically important your support is to the land trust's mission.

This fall the Western Virginia Land Trust had a successful Conservation Celebration and enjoyed the company of Governor Tim Kaine not once but twice in a matter of five weeks. As the Governor approaches his goal of 400,000 additional acres of Virginia land under conservation we need to stop and realize what an enormous contribution this is to the future of Virginians. What a bold and courageous goal to set – what a forward-thinking and passionate leader Tim Kaine has been.

As you prepare for the approaching holiday season I hope you will find time to stop and enjoy the bounty that our beautiful landscapes provide free of charge. I am reminded of a favorite childhood verse by Elizabeth Lawrence – "Even if something is left undone, everyone must take time to sit and watch the leaves turn." 

From the Director

by Roger Holnback



This winter and into the spring, WVLT will be seeking Land Trust Alliance Accreditation. This is an expensive and very time consuming process that we have decided to take on after several years of preparation and internal review. What

is Accreditation? Who is the Land Trust Alliance? Why now, in a financially difficult time? I will try to explain.

Fourteen years ago WVLT was just a good idea and for the first few years WVLT was actually run out of

Rupert Cutler's home. Board meetings were hosted at a local attorney's board room. In 1999 WVLT accepted the gift of our first conservation easement. At that time we were more "good people doing good work for the right reasons" than we were a highly professional land conservation organization. This was not unusual; in fact it still is the national norm for land trusts, small organizations with passionate boards and small, or no paid staff that are doing good work protecting our special places with voluntarily donated conservation easements. We have grown in the past ten years to a staff of two and have a great little office at First and



Elm, in downtown Roanoke and we now have 35 easements that we hold or co-hold. In my eight years we have developed board manuals, job descriptions, HR manuals, managed our funds carefully and even had annual audits. But through much of that time and all those easements we did not have the systems in place to manage our paperwork and be the good stewards that we promised to be when we accepted the perpetual responsibilities for holding conservation easements. We did OK, but not great.

During this same period, our national educational and advocacy organization, the Land Trust Alliance (LTA) was trying to bring up the quality of the work of the land trust community that are its members. They developed and published a series of Standards and Practices (S&Ps) for land trusts, and we adopted those S&Ps in 2004. Honestly, we thought we were doing better at meeting those standards than we were. In the summer of 2006 with a grant from LTA we went through a two month review of our compliance with LTA S&Ps using outside consultants. We found that while our business, legal and financial

management were excellent, our easement paperwork and stewardship practices were in need of overhaul. Over the past two years with the help of interns from Hollins and Roanoke College, and many, many hours of board and staff time, we have reworked our files, crafted over 40 policy statements and put into place practices that we can be proud of.

So a few weeks ago, we sent in our check to begin an accreditation process that LTA began two years ago. We will, between February and May, be required to prove that we are in compliance with each and every S&P and that we are the best possible steward of every easement we hold. It is a very time consuming and somewhat expensive process, but your land trust is dedicated to being worthy of your support and that of major foundations that are going to be looking for the LTA accreditation seal in coming years. We also wanted to be one of the first 100 land trusts nationally (out of over 1,700) and the third in Virginia out of about three dozen land trusts to reach this impressive milestone. Wish us luck and smooth sailing.....

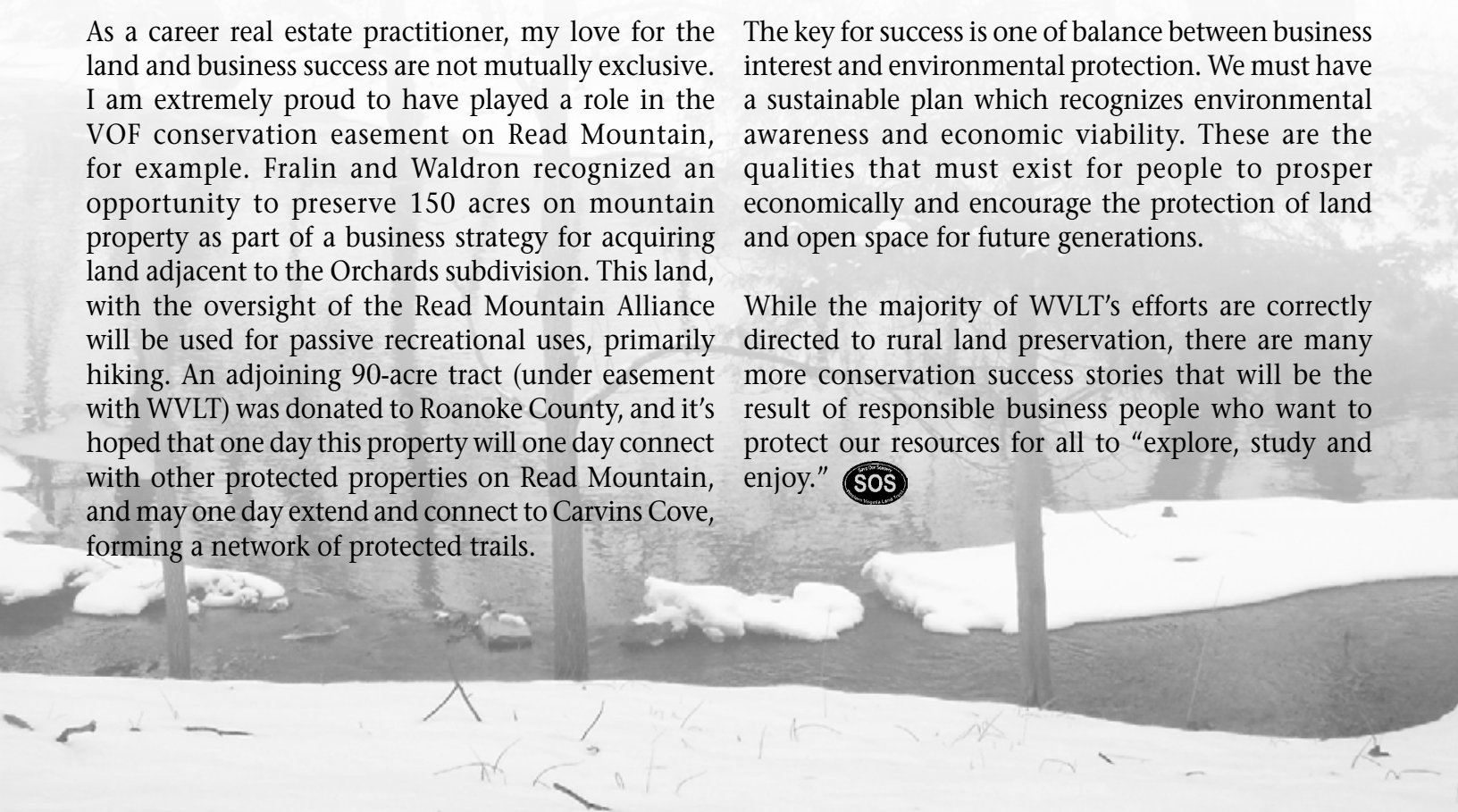


“From the Board” continued from page 3

As a career real estate practitioner, my love for the land and business success are not mutually exclusive. I am extremely proud to have played a role in the VOF conservation easement on Read Mountain, for example. Fralin and Waldron recognized an opportunity to preserve 150 acres on mountain property as part of a business strategy for acquiring land adjacent to the Orchards subdivision. This land, with the oversight of the Read Mountain Alliance will be used for passive recreational uses, primarily hiking. An adjoining 90-acre tract (under easement with WVLT) was donated to Roanoke County, and it's hoped that one day this property will one day connect with other protected properties on Read Mountain, and may one day extend and connect to Carvins Cove, forming a network of protected trails.

The key for success is one of balance between business interest and environmental protection. We must have a sustainable plan which recognizes environmental awareness and economic viability. These are the qualities that must exist for people to prosper economically and encourage the protection of land and open space for future generations.

While the majority of WVLT's efforts are correctly directed to rural land preservation, there are many more conservation success stories that will be the result of responsible business people who want to protect our resources for all to “explore, study and enjoy.”





DAVID PERRY

“Land Legacy” continued from page 2.

Sharp Top Mountain rises behind a memorial for Virginia Claytor.


Eaton is sure that before Boyd died, he knew that he could count among his children the 1,000 young visitors every year who “learned about and rejoiced in nature” at the center.

Claytor once said the farm “was too pretty to chop up and build houses on.” Virginia Claytor “loved the farm in a way only a city girl could appreciate it.” She came from Detroit and lived at the farm for 40 years.

Eaton, who also teaches environmental science and biology at Lynchburg College, recognizes that Cloverlea farm is “incredibly valuable real estate but one of the neatest things is that it is preserved in a way that everybody gets to use it.”

The center’s master plan examines many environmental options for the 470 acres. Eaton hopes the center, with its “incredibly diverse ecosystem types for diverse fields of study, (will become) a nationally recognized research and education field station.” First on the list of proposed actions is a bridge over the river and a connecting road between the Claytor home and the nature center. The plan suggests an eco-village with cabins and a dining hall, increased access to natural features, renovation of the farmhouse and use of electric vehicles to avoid pollution and allow silent observation of wildlife.

Steve Claytor, nephew of Boyd Claytor and a trustee of Western Virginia Land Trust, recalls many hunting and fishing trips to Cloverlea farm as a boy with his late father, William “Bill” Claytor, a Roanoke insurance executive. The brothers were close, he said, and his family has enjoyed their farm in the Otterville section of north Bedford County.

Boyd Claytor saved a floundering family business, Southern Flavoring Co., and transformed it into a profitable enterprise, Steve Claytor said. His uncle also was a founding director of Liberty Bank of Bedford and had a business interest in Chicago. 



DAVID PERRY

The farmhouse at Cloverlea.

AEP Preserves Smith Mountain in Bedford, Pittsylvania Counties

by David Perry

Thanks to a conservation easement donated by AEP, Virginians will now be able to enjoy Smith Mountain in its natural state for years to come.

Earlier this year, property owner AEP donated a conservation easement on 4,995 acres of the mountain to the Virginia Outdoors Foundation (VOF) and the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF), making the land one of the largest tracts of land in the state with such protection. The easement will limit future development on Smith Mountain, preserving the view for boaters and anglers who enjoy Smith Mountain Lake, in addition to providing access for fishing, camping, hiking, and hunting.

“If you look at the potential as a developed piece of property, this is something that could have gone gangbusters,” said AEP spokesperson John Shepelwich.

Smith Mountain forms the southern terminus of the 40-mile-long Smith Mountain Lake. The dam stands where the Roanoke River passes through a gap in the mountain on its way to the Piedmont.



The easement property lies in two counties, with 4,022 acres in Pittsylvania County and 973 in Bedford County.

AEP has been generating electricity at the Smith Mountain dam since the mid-1960s and was already working with VDGIF, who managed the land as a wildlife area. But it wasn't until 2006, when Virginia Secretary of Natural Resources L. Preston Bryant called, that AEP began to consider a permanent conservation easement on the mountain.

“Since we are a utility it was a rather complex situation,” said Shepelwich. “That is a power generating facility.” Shepelwich added that there are always difficulties “when you have a large corporation and issues related to the production of electricity.”

“There is a lot of regulatory involvement.”

Several meetings ensued, and in April 2008 the company announced it intended to donate the easement at an annual shareholders' meeting in Roanoke. The easement was recorded earlier this year. In addition to allowing for public recreation activities managed through VDGIF, the easement also allows

for AEP to provide for the growing energy demands of central and southwest Virginia. Reserved rights in the easement include rights of way for future power lines and allowances to upgrade or replace structures. The easement also protects critical habitat for two rare vertebrate species and a rare ecological community identified by the state. The land is adjacent to the 288-acre Bourassa State Forest.

WVLT has been very involved in the preservation of natural communities and water quality in and around Smith Mountain Lake. The land trust holds easements on properties on the northern end of the lake as well as tributaries such as the Blackwater River in Franklin County.

In addition to the public benefits of setting aside the land for conservation purposes, AEP can also benefit from federal tax deductions and Virginia Land Preservation Tax Credits for their donation, like any other landowner.

Officials are very pleased with their decision.

“From the conservation community there has been very positive feedback,” said Shepelwich.



COURTESY OF AEP

The Smith Mountain Project is a 636-megawatt pumped storage hydroelectric facility.

Conservation Tax Benefits for Corporations

Corporations who donate full or partial interest in land to a qualified conservation organization like WVLT can receive generous federal and state tax benefits. At the federal level, corporations can claim a charitable deduction up to 10% of their taxable income for up to six years. At the state level, Virginia offers corporations a state tax credit based on 40% of their easement value. These credits can be applied to the corporation's state tax liability, or sold or transferred, and are good for 11 years.

For more information, call the land trust at 540-985-0000.

Western Virginia Land Trust

Promoting the conservation of western Virginia's natural resources — farms, forests, waterways, and rural landscapes.

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Cover photo: Sharp Top Mountain in Bedford County viewed from the Cloverlea farm at the Claytor Nature Center. Credit: David Perry.

News...

Gov. Kaine makes Mill Mountain announcement

Gov. Tim Kaine announced during an October visit to Mill Mountain that Roanoke City Council intends to place the local landmark under a conservation easement. Speaking later at the same event, Roanoke Mayor David Bowers said the city will also consider an easement on Roanoke Mountain on property adjacent to the Blue Ridge Parkway that is leased to the National Park Service.

WVLT called upon the Roanoke City Council to place easements on both Mill Mountain and Carvins Cove Natural Reserve in 2007. The city completed the second of two easements on the Cove in September, making the 11,000 acre park the largest tract of land under easement in Virginia. The easements are co-held by WVLT and the Virginia Outdoors Foundation.



Roanoke City Council names Hanna Court site for Vic Thomas

In September, the Roanoke City Council agreed to name the new park located at the former Hanna Court trailer park site after the late Roanoke Delegate Vic Thomas. Prior to the council's decision, the WVLT board passed a resolution in favor of naming the property after Thomas. Thomas was a native Roanoker who represented the Star City in the General Assembly for decades. He was an advocate for hunting and fishing and, along with WVLT, helped pave the way for the state to purchase the threatened Big Survey property in Wythe County in 2001. WVLT annually awards the A. Victor Thomas Environmental Stewardship Award to an outstanding conservationist.

The Hanna Court property is located on the floodplain along the Roanoke River in southwest Roanoke, upstream from Wasena Park. It's under construction now as a city park and a vital link in the greenways system.

WVLT receives grant for Floyd County outreach

WVLT has received a \$3,750 grant from the Larry Woodrow Vest fund of the Foundation for Roanoke Valley. The grant will fund the "Bluegrass and Green Beans" program in the spring of 2010 that will combine a catered homestyle dinner and hill music with a presentation to Floyd County landowners on conservation easements.



Virginia congressmen, senators support conservation tax incentive that helps low-income families

All of Virginia's congressmen and both senators are now co-sponsors of bills in the House and Senate to make permanent the generous federal tax deduction for gifts of conservation easements and conservation land. House Minority Whip Eric Cantor (VA-7) is also an original sponsor of the House bill.

The enhanced federal tax incentive for conservation gifts passed by Congress in 2006 has been a driver for the explosion of land preservation across the country, but it's set to expire Dec. 31 and revert back to the old law. Under the old rules, landowners who donate land or an easement could claim a 30% deduction off their adjusted gross income for six years, while under the current enhanced incentive, landowners can claim a 50% deduction for up to 16 years. This has allowed many "land rich, cash poor" easement donors with low incomes to benefit more from their easement donation.

Governor-elect takes strong stand on land preservation

The gubernatorial election is over now, and Governor-elect Bob McDonnell has announced he will seek to match outgoing Gov. Tim Kaine's goal of conserving 400,000 acres of land while in office. According to his website, McDonnell says he will "preserve 400,000 new acres of open space."

In a press release, McDonnell says "As our population increases, and land is developed in Virginia at a rate of roughly 60,000 acres a year, it is important we continue this bipartisan conservation effort. As Governor I will do so by ensuring that we conserve another 400,000 acres by the conclusion of my term in January 2014."

He also pledges to enhance the state Land Preservation Tax Credit, saying, "I will increase the land conservation tax credit from 40% to 50% of the qualified appraised value of the land to further incentivize citizens to participate in our successful land conservation efforts."

WVLT registers for national accreditation

The Western Virginia Land Trust formally registered for national accreditation with the Land Trust Alliance in September. The accreditation process will take place over the next nine to ten months and will involve a review of WVLT's practices, record-keeping, and financial stability by an LTA accreditation board.



According to the Land Trust Alliance website, "Independent accreditation provides the assurance of quality and permanence of land conservation the public is looking for and publicly recognizes a land trust's ability to protect important natural places and working lands forever.

"Preparing for accreditation and the application process also affords land trusts the opportunity to review and implement policies that will help streamline their operations and lead to more effective land conservation."

Currently, only 82 of the approximately 1,700 land trusts nationwide are accredited, placing WVLT in elite company once the process is complete.

VOF establishes Catawba special project area

At their October meeting in Roanoke, the Virginia Outdoors Foundation approved the Catawba Valley in Montgomery and Roanoke Counties as a "special project area." Citing the presence of the North Fork Rural Historic District, two scenic bicycle routes, the Appalachian Trail, and the endangered Roanoke log perch, as well as the support of many local conservation groups, including WVLT, the resolution authorizes VOF to "concentrate resources" in the Valley.


WVLT holds a conservation easement on the historic McDonald's Mill property in Montgomery County and has assisted with several other easements there as well. In the coming months, WVLT will work with the New River Land Trust to identify potential conservation easements and increase land preservation efforts.



10 Buy your holiday gifts and support the Land Trust, too!

This holiday season, you can do your holiday shopping and support the Western Virginia Land Trust at the same time. How? It's easy:

Shop Online: The Western Virginia Land Trust has partnered with Amazon.com to allow you to shop from the world's largest e-tailer and support WVLT—at no extra cost to you! Just visit www.westernvirginalandtrust.org, and click on the Amazon.com logo. Then, make your purchases like


 you normally would. The Land Trust will receive a commission of up to 10% of your purchase amount—again, at no extra cost to you! Remember, you have to click through from the WVLT website for your purchases to count toward our commission.



Kroger Gift Cards: Kroger Gift Cards are a wonderful gift for employees, coworkers, neighbors, college students, or anyone who needs to eat! These cards come filled with any amount from \$5 to \$500, and can be used just like a debit card for food, medicine,

and gas at any Kroger store--anywhere. Kroger sends the Land Trust a commission equal to 5% of the amount of money placed on the card, at no cost to you. To order your cards, just mail a note with your name, address, how many cards you want, and a check for \$5 per card, to: WVLT, 722 First St. SW, Suite L, Roanoke, VA 24016. And remember—seniors receive a discount on Tuesdays at most Krogers. Shop on senior discount day and rake in the savings!

Gift memberships: Give the gift of conservation to someone you care about! Use the remittance envelope included with this newsletter to send a holiday gift in honor of a special person, or in memory of someone you're missing this holiday season. You can also request that a holiday gift card featuring a local winter scene be sent to someone acknowledging that a donation to the Land Trust has been made in his or her honor. And remember, a donation to the Land Trust is the gift that keeps on giving—it's tax deductible! Let Uncle Sam give you a little back for doing your holiday shopping this year.


For more information on any of these programs, contact the Land Trust at (540) 985-0000 or e-mail dperry@westernvirginalandtrust.org. 

Remember Land Trust in Year-End Giving

When you're making your year-end donations, don't forget the Land Trust. All donations to WVLT are tax-deductible because the Land Trust is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Donations can be in the form of cash, land, appreciated stock, or other property.

New federal legislation now allows people who are 70 or older to make direct transfers from traditional and Roth IRAs to qualified public charities, but only in 2009. Donors can donate IRA assets to the Western

Virginia Land Trust without counting distributions as taxable income. The new legislation, which was passed by Congress as part of the national financial relief act, is expected to expire on December 31, 2009.

Donations from IRAs can meet IRA holders' required minimum annual distributions in 2009. For more information, call the Western Virginia Land Trust at (540) 985-0000. 



Roanoke City Councilman and VOF Trustee Rupert Cutler shares a laugh with Granger McFarlane.



Gov. Kaine and First Lady Anne Holton pose with an original oil painting by Nan Mahone Wellborn, "Look Off."



Roanoke Mayor David Bowers holds up a sign proclaiming Virginia to be a "green state."



David Perry and WVLT President Janet Scheid present Hollins University President Nancy Gray with an original photograph by New Orleans artist Anne Conway Jennings.



Conservation easement donor and local author Bruce Ingram.



WVLT President Janet Scheid addresses the crowd.



Hollins professor Renee Godard, Anne Holton and Caleb Amstutz dance after dinner.



President's Circle sponsor James Breakell speaks with attendees.

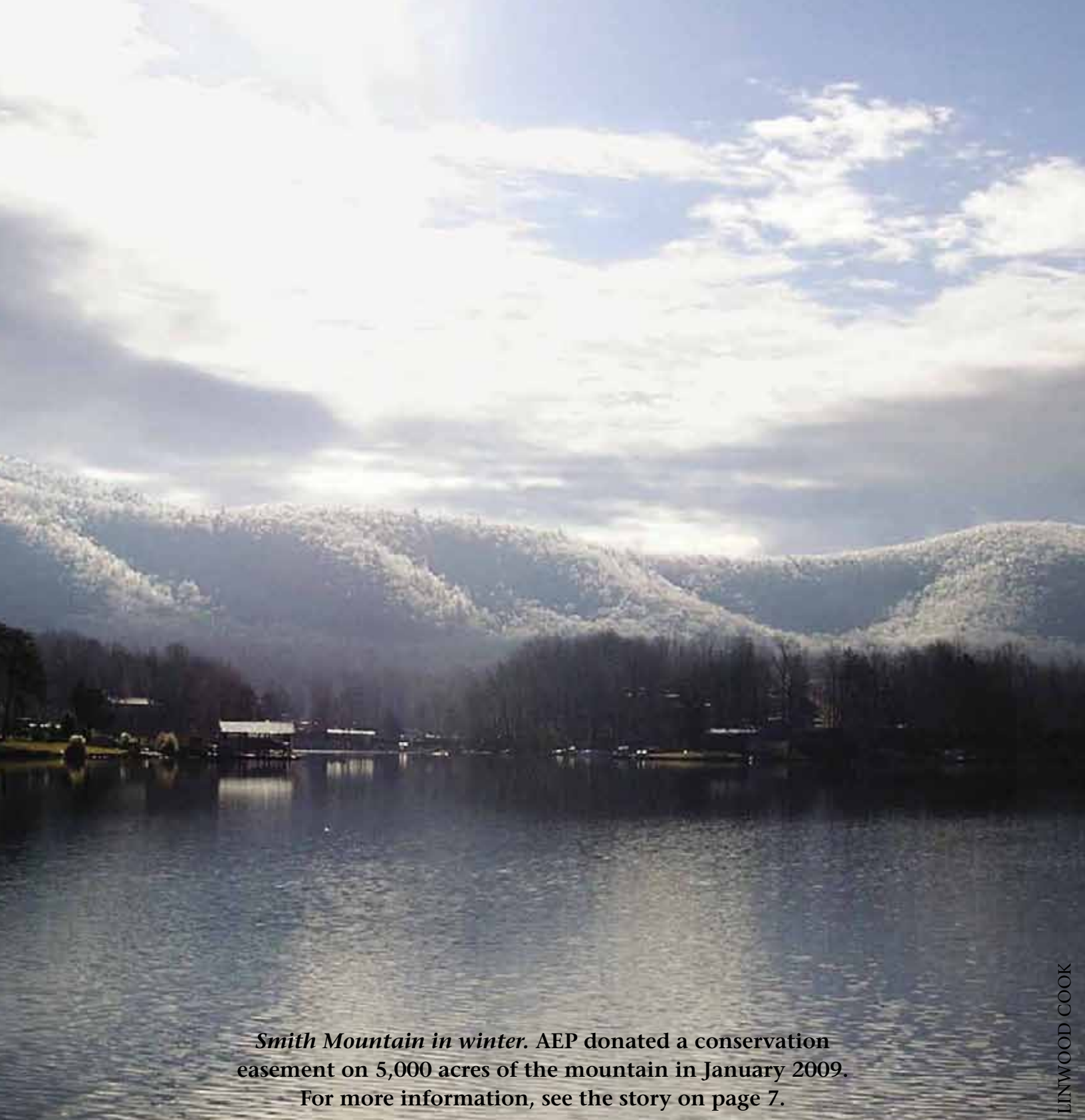


Gov. Kaine enjoys a cold local beer.

Conservation Celebration 2009

All photos by Jonathan Roberts





Smith Mountain in winter. AEP donated a conservation easement on 5,000 acres of the mountain in January 2009. For more information, see the story on page 7.

LINWOOD COOK



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