



The Green Party of Virginia



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Greens: Where and When

Green Party of Virginia spring business meeting on Saturday, April 24, at the Staunton Public Library, second floor. The meeting begins at 10:00 and ends at 4:00. From Interstate 81 take exit 225, then west on Route 275 to Route 11. Proceed south on Route 11 three miles into Staunton, bearing to the right when the road forks. Route 11 (also called North Augusta Street) intersects with Churchville Avenue at the library.

Rockbridge Greens quarterly meetings (2nd Tues.) June 8 and Sept. 7 at 7:00 P.M. Contact Kathy Fox at 463-7001 or kathy.fox@rockbridge.net for details.

The Green Party of Connecticut is the proud host of the next ASGP (Association of State Green Parties) national gathering to be held at the Sunrise Resort in Moodus, CT, from June 4 to June 6. Previous ASGP meetings have limited the number of observers (each member state sends two participating delegates) due to space limitations. But the resort has plenty of room, so all are welcome to observe. Contact the GPVA for details.

Houses and townhouses push closer and closer to the barn. The Grove farm, inside the Waynesboro city limits after annexation, is hemmed in by residential development, interstate 64, motels, and franchise restaurants. The present owner, who can see the farmhouse his grandfather lived in crumbling on the other side of I-64, has what is left of the three-generation farm up for sale. Born in the brick house he still lives in, Grove says he doesn't see how farmers who do stay on the farm can make a living doing so.

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Can We Save Our Farms?

PDR programs offer one solution.

We are a country blessed with fertile soils and a climate ideal for agriculture. And although we have been the world's greatest consumers of natural resources, the U.S. continues to be a net exporter of food. The market value of agriculture commodities produced in the U.S. in 1996 was almost \$210 billion. This country exports \$60 billion in agriculture products each year, which represents 10 percent of total U.S. exports. The food and fiber industry accounts for 15.2 percent of all U.S. domestic product. We produce half of the world's grain exports.

Our best farmland, however, is being lost to residential and commercial development at an alarming rate. Much of our most productive soils are located next to large and medium size cities. According to the American Farmland Trust, 85 percent of our fresh fruit and vegetables, 79 percent of our dairy products, and almost 50 percent of our meat and grain are grown in and around urban counties.

The Atlanta area, which now covers some 13 counties, transforms 500 acres a week of open land into sprawl development. The greater Chicago area, which experienced population increase of only 4 percent between 1970 and 1990, grew by 46 percent in land mass during the same period. Cleveland's population actually declined during the last two decades, but it is now spread over 33 percent more land.

Annually we lose over one million acres of farmland to sprawl --- that's more than 2,700 acres each day.

Developers are attracted to farmland because open fields are easily converted to building sites and the best soils are ones which drain well and, therefore, are ideal for septic systems.

Unfortunately, too many Americans seem to agree with political pundit George Will, who commented just recently in a television discussion on farmland loss that there is no reason for worry. His assertion was we have so much over-capacity in farm production that only alarmists are concerned about paving over our croplands.

However, there are three major reasons to be legitimately alarmed about the loss of farmland. First, when we lose our best agricultural land, farming is forced onto poorer soils, which greatly increase the use of herbicides, pesticides, and irrigation. The production of more chemically-laden food, requiring ever-increasing amounts of water, is a threat to both our health and our ecology.

Second, increases in world population will require massive increases in food production. In 1996 the World Food Summit of the United Nations estimated that world-wide we will need to quadruple our food production over the next fifty years. Agriculture experts say that the United States will be a net importer of food within the next thirty to fifty years at the present rate of land depletion.

Third, as more research points to the ecological and health problems associated with the manufacture, use, and waste disposal of petroleum-based products (such as plastics), renewable, natural fiber-based products will undoubtedly grow in popularity and use. A shift to replenishable raw materials will require more --- not less --- farmable land.

Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) programs are a permanent solution to the problem of farm and other open land loss. The first PDR program was initiated in the early 1970s on Long Island when local residents decided that significant cropland was threatened by irresponsible development.

PDR programs are based on a simple strategy: a large landowner is paid the difference between what his land would sell for to a developer under current zoning and what it would sell for as open land. For example, Farmer Green owns 200 acres. If the land was developed into 10 acre tracts, as allowed by current zoning, he could expect to receive \$3,500 per acre. The same land as farmland is assessed at only \$1,000 an acre. He could, therefore, sell his right to develop the property for \$2,500 an acre for a total of \$500,000. Should Farmer Green decide to enroll in the program, he retains all rights to his property --- he can farm, grow any legal crop he chooses, give the land to his heirs, or sell the property. He is only restricted in his ability to subdivide the land.

The purchaser of the development rights --- typically a county or city --- is generally motivated to operate such a program because they realize that the money they pay for development rights will be much less in the long run than the cost of providing schools, roads, and other services for the 20 new families (in the case of Farmer Green) that developing the land would bring into the area.

Studies conducted in the Midwest and Eastern United States have shown that for every dollar paid in taxes, the average residence uses \$1.34 in local services. A study of six counties in Virginia by the Piedmont Environmental Council clearly illustrates what other studies have concluded: open space land generates substantially more in tax revenues than it requires in county expenditures. The PEC found that open land (farmland and forest land without residence) in the six counties received between eleven and twenty-one cents in services for every dollar paid in taxes.

Obviously, the negative fiscal impact of residential development is a strong argument for a PDR program. But restrictive zoning can also limit development. However, zoning is not permanent. A locality could, for instance, zone for a 25 acre minimum lot size to discourage residential development in its best agricultural land. At the next election, pro-development candidates could change the minimum to 1 acre or 1/8 acre.

Although some PDR programs allow the seller of development rights to buy back those rights after a set period of time (usually 25 years), there is some question whether the courts will allow such buy-backs. And even if the courts should agree, the cost of those development rights would probably be prohibitive for most landowners because it is based on the then current value of developable land.

The impact of a PDR program frequently goes beyond simply preserving the land enrolled in the program. Since land which can no longer be subdivided is worth less than developable land, farmland becomes affordable for new farmers. In Howard County, Maryland, which has operated a successful PDR program since the early 1980s, land enrolled in the program typically sells before real estate agents have a chance at a listing.

The funds received from the sales of development rights are most often used to strengthen the farming operation by paying off debt, purchasing equipment, and even buying more farmland.

When PDRs are used to secure a sufficient amount of land in a locality to continue to make farming viable, farmers often breathe a sigh of relief. Knowing that their neighbor's land will continue to be farmed in the decades ahead, farmers have the confidence to plan adequately for the future and the motivation to continue to invest in their operation. However, farmers who suspect that the land around them may soon be covered with subdivisions, whose residents object to farm noises and smells, and that the roads may become too congested to transport farm equipment may lack the motivation to plan and experiment and may feel forced to sell out to developers. That is why we so often see the domino effect of development in rural areas.

Most importantly, PDRs give a large landowner an important option. In most areas, if farmers run into financial difficulty, their only alternative may be to sell some or all of their land. PDRs allow the farmer to tap into the value of their land without disturbing the farm operation. And as an estate planning tool, PDRs can be invaluable. The proceeds from the sale of development rights can be used to pay inheritance taxes or "cash-out" an heir who has no interest in farming. As a farmer in Virginia Beach (the first PDR program in Virginia) told me, "I sold my development rights because it's a lot easier to divide up money than land."

Sixteen states currently fund PDR programs and many localities in other states have initiated programs to preserve farmland and other open space.

For more information about how to promote a PDR program in your community, access the American Farmland Trust web site (www.farmland.org) or contact J. Erika Shriner at jeshriner@erols.com.

Erika Shriner, the founder and chair of Save Our Land and Rural Lifestyle (SOLR), a Hanover County grassroots community organization, is running as an independent candidate for county supervisor on a "slow growth" campaign.

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Pocahontas's People Return to Jamestown on the Trail of Hope

On Saturday, May 15, 1999, support the Mattaponi Indians of Virginia in their fight against the King William Reservoir (see fall 1998 edition of this newsletter).

The Mattaponi River in King William County is home to eagles, shad, and the Mattaponi American Indian tribe. The tribe --- descendants of Chief Powhatan and his daughter, Pocahontas, live on the Mattaponi River on one of the oldest reservations in the United States, established in 1658.

A new dam and reservoir on Cohoke Creek proposed by the City of Newport News would divert as much as 75 million gallons of water a day from the Mattaponi River --- destroying more than 400 acres of forested wetlands and jeopardizing the Mattaponi tribe's culture and shad fishery. Even though three independent studies have concluded that Newport News does not need the water, the city and its mayor are moving forward with the King William Dam and Reservoir.

The Mattaponi Indians remain steadfast in their opposition to the reservoir. To demonstrate their opposition, the Mattaponi people are calling on Indian people throughout Virginia and throughout the United States and all others who support their fight to save their culture to return with them to Jamestown, Virginia, on May 15 as they begin a symbolic journey on a Trail of Hope.

The Trail of Hope begins at the Jamestown Campground then proceeds past Jamestown Festival Park and to the Colonial Parkway. The trail walk is approximately six miles; however, participants can walk a portion of the trail and return to the campground for Indian music and dance on Saturday afternoon. Registration begins at 9:00 A.M.; the walk along the Trail of Hope begins at 10:00. A registration fee of \$10 covers costs of the event and a Trail of Hope t-shirt for each participant. Please register in advance. For information call Mattaponi Heritage Foundation at 804-769-7745 or the Trail of Hope Hotline at 804-225-9670 or visit the website at www.trailofhope.org.

Directions:

From the east (Newport News), take 64 west to exit 242 A. Continue on 199 and take a right at the second stoplight. Take an immediate right onto the Colonial Parkway. Continue on the Colonial Parkway until you get to Jamestown. Make a right turn at the end of the Parkway, proceed past Jamestown Festival Park, and the Jamestown Campsites will be immediately in front of you across Route 31.

From the west (Richmond), take 64 east to exit 238. Take a right at the second stoplight. Continue straight through the next stoplight. At the next turn, take a left onto the Colonial Parkway. Continue on the Colonial Parkway until you get to Jamestown. Make a right turn at the end of the Parkway, proceed past Jamestown Festival Park. The Jamestown Campsites will be immediately in front of you across Route 31.

To join the Mattaponi American Indians on the Trail of Hope, please send the following to Mattaponi Heritage Foundation, 1467 Mattaponi Reservation Circle, West Point, VA 23181: your name, address, phone number, email address, check for \$10 made out to the Mattaponi Heritage Foundation, an extra contribution if you can (tax deductible under Mattaponi Heritage Foundation, Inc. 501 c3, non-profit corporation).

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A Tale of Two Counties

Our appreciation to Ellen Powers, Conservation Chair for the Sierra Club - Virginia Chapter, for submitting this article. The text is pulled from a script written by George Sibley, Education Chair for the Falls of the James Group of the Sierra Club.

Localities throughout the state are struggling to pay for and deal with the pressures of growth. In looking at localities around the state, we found two counties which took very different positions on how to deal with growth. Groups of 5 to 55, including civic organizations, elected officials, and reporters, have seen the slide show we offer with this story. Localities include Clarendon, Hanover, Henrico, Richmond, New Kent, Lancaster, Stafford County, Charlottesville, Goochland, Virginia Beach, King William, Newport News, Montgomery County, and many others. Please contact Ellen Powers at 804-225-9113 or ellen.powers@sierraclub.org to schedule a presentation in your locality.

Below is a summary of what we have found, told in a story fashion.

This is a story about progress --- a story about growth and success. Because these things have usually been discussed in economic terms, it's also a story about income and taxes, business and services, dollars and cents.

Clarke County in northwestern Virginia and Stafford County in the north-central part of the state are both about the same distance from metropolitan Washington, D.C. Beginning in the 1970s, the two counties became hugely different in population. Stafford, only a third bigger in area, had eight times the population of Clarke by 1996.

That growth has had some striking effects. Thirty years ago, Stafford could have easily been mistaken for Clarke and vice-versa. Today the two counties are very different.

Clarke County and Stafford County look the way they do now as a direct result of the development plans the governments of those counties made around 1980.

Stafford adopted an aggressively progrowth position. Growth Stafford wanted and growth Stafford got. But what developers wanted was growth on cheap land. That meant growth outside existing population centers. So the county had to get big money to extend water and sewage lines and to widen roads in areas where there had been only farms and rural traffic before. Between 1980 and 1990, over 7,000 new houses were built in Stafford County, almost all of them in newly created neighborhoods.

At about the same time that Stafford's county government decided to face the future by recruiting as much growth as possible, Clarke County's government decided to grow carefully and in stages.

More often than not, Stafford has considered the highest and best use of open land to be residential and commercial development. Clarke decided that places like this have value in their own right. That points up a major difference between the two counties.

But guess what. After all the self-conscious economic development in Stafford, the per capita income is 25 percent higher in Clarke.

And in spite of all the recruitment of new businesses in Stafford, property taxes are nearly 30 percent lower in Clarke.

For one thing, it only spent money on additional facilities and services as it needed them ---- and growing outward from existing facilities and services, it needed them less often.

Farms and open land are not only by themselves almost as profitable to a county as commercial development, they also have the added advantage of not requiring the services that make residential development so expensive. It actually pays local governments to keep farmers in business because farms keep taxes lower than development does.

Look what happened to Stafford. It went hugely into debt bringing new development into the county.

The facts speak for themselves: Growth alone is not necessarily progress. Clarke County, which chose to grow conservatively, has a higher income and lower taxes than high-growth Stafford.

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California Dreaming Come True

The Washington Post headline read: Calif. Legislative Upset Has Democrats Feeling a Little Green.

Nationally, that "legislative upset" had Greens celebrating. In a March 30 special runoff election for the Oakland-area seat in the California State Assembly, candidate Audie Bock became the first Green Party candidate in the United States elected to a state legislature. This triumph over Democratic machine candidate Elihu Harris was achieved despite the Democratic Party's reliance on barely legal campaign tactics such as the infamous "chicken dinner giveaway" used to increase Democrat voter participation in the Assembly primary.

Ms. Bock teaches ethnic studies at a community college, a part-time position, and runs a foreign film distribution business from her home. She was a Democrat until 1996, when she joined the Green presidential campaign for Ralph Nader. She won 50.5 percent of the vote in the runoff election to squeak by Harris, the former two-term Oakland mayor. Harris had previously held the Assembly seat from 1978 to 1990. Ms. Bock won by 327 votes of a total of 29,000 cast.

Bock's campaign manager, Greg Jan, was jubilant, "This is the first time in over 60 years that a third party candidate has won a partisan election in California. Audie is thrilled that voters responded to her common-sense Green platform that included a new education policy, environmental justice, health care for all, and tax reform. We are very excited to capture such a victory when the previous Green Party of California record for a partisan race was the 13 percent of voters claimed by Green candidate Joe Desist in a 1991 three-way race for Assembly District 63 of San Bernadino County." There are 32 Green Party members in local offices already around California, but this is the first state win.

Bock commented on the Harris campaign's "massive fifteen to one superiority in spending levels compared to my campaign" and her opponent's "unwillingness to debate me" which suggests "a disdain for public discourse and a disrespect for the voters striving to make informed decisions. The Green Party of California . . . will finally be able to bring our populist message to the state level."

Bock's showing is even more significant because of the way our electoral system is biased against third parties. Caleb Kleppner, who coordinates electoral reform for the Green Party of California, notes, "Given the chance to vote for a viable Green candidate, many voters seize the opportunity. Supporters of Green candidates often face the dilemma that voting for the Green will not put the Green in office and may indirectly assist the voter's least preferred candidate. Our present voting system usually gives many voters a real incentive not to vote for their preferred candidate. California voters deserve state-of-the-art democracy, and that means more choices, more points of view, and more meaningful votes. Instant Runoff Voting (IRV) achieves all this, and the Green Party of California is pushing for this important democratic reform at the local and state levels. IRV ensures majority support for winners, reduces the need for and cost of runoff elections, and eliminates the problems of 'wasted votes' or 'vote splitting' or 'spoiling.' With IRV, taxpayers would only have had to pay for one special election to fill this vacancy."

The Green Party is the fastest growing political party in California. With 100,000 registrations, it is presently conducting a voter registration drive projected to triple its size by the end of next year.

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Speaking of Candidates . . .

Rockbridge Green Eric Sheffield has already begun his campaign for the Board of Supervisors. After a fourteen month process, the Rockbridge Greens ratified a Rockbridge Area platform made up of 95 planks covering community services, economy, education, environment, farming, government, housing, land use, and taxes. The Rockbridge Greens are currently attempting to recruit other candidates to run for Rockbridge County Board of Supervisors on the platform.

At least two other Virginia Greens are working on runs for the House of Delegates. This fall promises lots of Green possibilities, as even a partial list of open seats reflects --- all House of Delegate seats, all Senate seats, commissioners of the revenue, school board seats, boards of supervisors. Anyone interested in running for an office or working on a campaign should contact the Green Party of Virginia for advice and encouragement.

1997 House of Delegate candidates Eli Fishpaw, Sherry Stanley, and Dale Diaz join Bob Bersson and the band on stage at a fundraiser for Dale. The GPVA hopes to see more of the same for the 1999 campaign.

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Welcome New Members

Blue Ridge Greens: Kristen Schaller, Fain Rutherford, Mark Petersen, Kathryn Marlow

Central Virginia Greens: Richard Crocker, Herbert Tucker, Bob Miller, Norman Dill, Robin Kells, Todd Cristian, Jennifer Hoyt

Greens of Virginia: Jerry Tenney, Wendy Ebersberger, Lewis Worthington, Thomas Berrey, Heidi Lewis, Donna Oliver, Ann Baumgardner, Scott Cloud, Jerry Bohon, Chris & Courtney Kosnik, Alex LoCascio, Madelyn Blue, John Cann

New River Valley Greens: Tom Joy, Penny Lane, Denise Wills

NOVA Greens: Michael Dunkley, Ronald & Barbara Glover, Jeanett Shin, Lasse Christiansen, Stephanie Rodgers, Martha Manzano, Matthew Hammett, Jonathan Daniels, Sharon Williams, Ramsey Kysia, Michael Piacek, Andrew Herndon, Catherine Glick, Cevdet Seyhan, Aaron Mitchell

Rockbridge Greens: Joyce Coiner, Sandra Stuart

Student Greens of Virginia: Adam Smith, Neelima Chirumamilla

Tidewater Greens: David Bugin, Patrick Baggott, Bethany McQuillen, Stuart Jones

Valley Greens: Stephen Harris, Charles Shelton, Nancy Glomb, Ben Thompson

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Thank You, Recent Contributors

Blue Ridge Greens: Kristen Schaller, Fain Rutherford, Kirk Ballin

Central Virginia Greens: Matthew & Suzanne Crane, Todd Cristian, Richard Crocker, Herbert Tucker, Bob Miller, Norman Dill, Diana Abbott, Claudia Bloemer, Aaron Feldman, Tucker & Linwood Respass, Chris & Courtney Kosnik

Greens of Virginia: David Bugin, Kevin Donaghey, Suzanne & Matthew Crane, Wendy Ebersberger, Daniel Metraux, Nancy Glomb, Denise Wills, Reber Dunkel, Sally Robertson, Fain Rutherford, Donna Oliver, Mark Geduldig-Yatrosky, Ramsey Kysia, Scott Cloud, Chris Gensic, Catherine Glick, Jonathan Bates, Carey Campbell, Norman Dill, Ben & Lois Brown, Cevdet Seyhan, Everett Heath, Aaron Kelson, Roger Hopper, Muriel Grim, Robert Cataldo, Cordelia Plunkett, John Gallini, Doug Eyde, Brent Icenhour, Dale Diaz, Patrick Hinely, Claudia Bloemer, Robert Bowman & Nancy Amdur, Jim Lowenstern, Mark Long, Aaron Feldman, Kirk Ballin, Philip Murray, Tucker & Linwood Respass, Jana Cutlip, Wes Hare

New River Valley Greens: Denise Wills, Penny Lane

NOVA Greens: Robert Farr, Sharon Williams, Amy Southwick, Catherine Glick, Roger Hopper, Muriel Grim, Matthew Hammett, Doug Eyde, Jim Lowenstern, Mark Long Rockbridge Greens: Elisabeth, David, & Tara Daystar, Shelley Bourdon, Peter O'Shaughnessy & Lindy Felix, Michael & Collette Barry-Rec, Lois & Ben Brown, Robert Lisle, Stephanie Porras, Carl Christiansen, Terry & Lenna Ojure, Arvid Christiansen, John Mayeux, Kelly Branham, Patrick Hinely, Nancy Anderson, Phil Hyre & Daphne Raz, Carol & Jim Plemister, Phil Welch, Sandra Stuart, John White, Kathy Fox

Tidewater Greens: Mark Geduldig-Yatrosky, David Bugin, Patrick Baggott

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Editor's note:

Thanks to everyone who contributed to this edition. As always, special thanks to Gerry Cervenka for his layout work and for X-High Graphics in Elkton for their printing. Please send submissions for our summer edition by July 5 to Sherry Stanley, 8 River Ridge Road, Verona, VA 24482 or e-mail: sastanle@rica.net.

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