



### Dinner Workshop Highlights Benefits of Rural Land Protection

*"Land protection is a great tool to conserve farmland and to protect family farms in a way we might not be able to preserve otherwise."*

-George Ohrstrom, Clarke County Planning Commission Chair and Conservation Easement Authority Vice-Chair



*"The more steps we can take today to make sure we're protecting farmland for future generations, the better off our industry is going to be and the better off society is going to be."*

-Matt Lohr, Virginia Commissioner of Agriculture and fifth generation Rockingham farmer



*"Conservation easements give farmers an opportunity to invest in the future of agriculture in their communities." They "unlock the value of land for retirement, college or investment, while keeping the family farm and the business it supports intact."*

-Mike Kane, Piedmont Environmental Council Land Protection Manager and former economic developer



*"When the land protection program first came out in my county, I read about it in the newspaper. The next day, I was the first person in the county office. Now, I don't leave the farm very often ... and definitely not to go to the county. But to sign up to protect our farm was just about the most important thing I could do for the next generation."*

-Ken Smith, fourth generation dairy farmer and owner of the Moo-Thru Dairy Barn in Remington

More than 90 Shenandoah residents and guests attended the Forum's April 10 Farm-to-Table dinner and workshop on the local benefits of land protection. Our four speakers gave personal, compelling examples of how conservation easements on working lands enhance the local agricultural economy, support farm families, keep taxes low for county residents and help ensure our high quality of life.

The Edinburg Mill hosted the dinner and an exhibit of works by local artists on the theme, "Shenandoah County's Rural Heritage and Landscapes," featuring the special places, farms and scenery in our county. Swover Creek Farms, Country Rhodes Farm, Cabin Creek Roasters and Moo Thru Dairy Barn provided outstanding local fare.

Visit [www.ShenandoahForum.org](http://www.ShenandoahForum.org) to see the presentations and materials from the sell-out event.

#### **Workshop sponsors included:**

- Farm Bureau of Shenandoah County
- Conservation Partners, LLC
- MidAtlantic Farm Credit
- Potomac Conservancy
- Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation
- Valley Conservation Council
- Friends of the North Fork of the Shenandoah River

#### **We would also like to thank Cabin Creek Roasters for supplying the coffee and the following artists for participating in our special rural landscapes and working farms exhibition:**

- Debbi Dellinger, Diane Artz Furlong, Laurel Vaughan along with Marcy McCann from Shenandoah Valley Artworks in Strasburg

# THANK YOU

## A Message from Shenandoah Forum’s Chairman

### Farmland Protection Bolsters Our Ag Economy and Keeps Taxes Low

*Perhaps the most serious obstacle impeding the evolution of a land ethic is the fact that our educational and economic system is heading away from, rather towards, an intense consciousness of land. –Aldo Leopold*

I went back and re-read this passage and others from Aldo Leopold’s Sand County Almanac after hearing in April the four terrific speakers at our Farm-to-Table workshop describe the many benefits of permanently protecting rural land. Leopold wrote those words in the 1940s as he watched farm land in Wisconsin being converted, developed, mismanaged and washed away with every storm event. He wasn’t necessarily thinking of permanent land protection when he wrote about how a land ethic changes the way humankind treats the land just as much as it changes the way we value it, but I think it does ring true. The speakers that night at the Edinburg Mill made it clear that every Shenandoah County resident – young and old, country or town dweller – gains when working farmers donate or sell the development rights to their land. The land ethic those farmers display benefits us all, and the land ethic we demonstrate in recognizing the value of their land always remaining farmland is evolving and an important part of a successful land protection program.

The speakers helped draw us closer to a consciousness of the value of land by describing how conservation easements stabilize the county’s farming base by preserving prime soils and productive cropland, fields and forests. In turn, protected farms preserve our Civil War battlefields, clean water, wildlife habitat and high quality of life.

The speakers pointed to big savings in public spending. Roads, schools, water, sewer and other services cost far less in and around towns compared to serving development in remote rural areas. The speakers also showed the link between a strong farm protection program and solid growth in agriculture, our county and Virginia’s largest economic sector.

Land Protection. Strengthens Agriculture. Strengthens Communities. Keeps Taxes Low. My words pale in comparison to Leopold’s, but I hope they resonate with Shenandoah County residents the same way Leopold’s words resonate with me. Land conservation programs offer our county a clear path to a prosperous future, one based on our treasured rural past and an enduring land ethic.

*-Seth Coffman, Shenandoah Forum Chair*



Seth Coffman



### Federal Program Helps Preserve Local Battlefields

Shenandoah Forum appreciates the support of the National Park Service’s American Battlefield Protection Program (ABPP) in

our campaign to promote land protection in the county. Farm and battlefield protection go hand-in-hand, as pasture, cropland and forest comprise nearly all of the land in our four Congressionally-designated Civil War battlefield – Fisher’s Hill, Tom’s Brook, New Market and Cedar Creek.

Preservation of prime farmland on battlefields is a priority of the Shenandoah County Conservation Easement Authority. The county earlier this year accepted an easement on the Vance Farm adjacent to Fisher’s Hill and close to several other protected battlefield properties. The county’s pending project on the Hawkins Farm lies within the Tom’s Brook battlefield. Thank you ABPP!



#### Shenandoah Forum Board of Directors

Seth Coffman  
*Edinburg – Chair*

Dennis Atwood  
*Maurertown*

Joan Comanor  
*Woodstock*

Carolyn F. Long  
*New Market*

Deb Truban  
*Woodstock*

John Adamson  
*Strasburg*

Ray Brownfield  
*Quicksburg*

Dee Hockman  
*Fishers Hill*

Debbie Sinclair  
*Mount Jackson*

Rosemary Wallinger  
*Mount Jackson*

#### Executive Director

Kim Woodwell

#### Friend of the Board

John D. Hutchinson

## Dairy Easement Leads to Popular New Business: Ice Cream!

One speaker at the Forum’s Farm-to-Table dinner workshop in April drew raves before he actually stepped up to the microphone. Dairy farmer Ken Smith supplied the dessert – black raspberry, vanilla, chocolate and banana ice cream – from his Moo Thru Dairy Barn in Remington, made with the milk from his Cool Long Farm.

Mr. Smith attributes his successful new agricultural business to the Fauquier County Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program, similar to the one operated by the Shenandoah County Conservation Easement Authority. A fourth generation dairy farmer with five children, he said “Everybody wanted to build on the farm. But to protect it, I realized it was best if nobody does.” Instead, he sold the development rights to the county in 2010, which “made it possible to give to my children, retire debt, grow the dairy” and

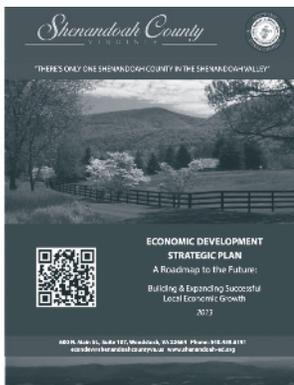


pursue “an idea, a concept of a community gathering point.” That idea became the Moo Thru Dairy Bar, which also serves soups and sandwiches, and does, in fact, have a drive-through lane. It has twice been voted best ice cream by the readers of NOVA magazine, Mr. Smith said.

The Moo Thru adds value to the milk Mr. Smith produces on Cool Long Farm, increasing the farm’s income. It also employs up to 30 people every summer. “That’s about a quarter million in payroll being spent locally,” he said.

Mr. Smith believes land protection and conservation easements are a great way to “grow your community from within,” he told the audience at the Mill. “Fund your local PDR program. It will be worth it,” he said.

## County Approves Economic Development Plan



The new Shenandoah County Economic Development Strategic Plan approved in February is a vital addition to the county’s comprehensive plan and Community Planning Project recommendations. As Shenandoah Forum hoped when planning started in summer 2011, the plan reaffirms that agriculture and our rural setting are essential to our prosperity.

Shenandoah County’s roadmap for economic development addresses

agriculture and tourism along with more traditional sectors like manufacturing and technology. The plan notes the county’s distinct qualities and identifies innovative ways to build on them.

The plan recognizes that key elements of our high quality of life – welcoming communities, an extraordinary rural landscape, distinctive towns and hamlets, working farms and local foods, an effective and relevant education system, historic battlefields and busy main streets – are important for our long-term economic success. Stewardship of these resources through compatible economic development will help Shenandoah County remain an attractive and vibrant place to live and to work.

## Forum Applauds County Supervisors



*Supervisor Conrad Helsley (left) accepted the first annual William A. “Doc” Truban Leadership Award from Forum Chair Seth Coffman at the February 26 Board of Supervisors meeting. The award, named for a revered local farmer and community leader, was made in appreciation of the supervisors’ many actions to achieve the county’s vision that the future will retain and enhance our rural, agricultural and historic heritage.*

Shenandoah Forum  
P.O. Box 654  
Woodstock, VA 22664

*Supporting Shenandoah  
County's Rural Character*



## Indian Spring Wetland Park Wins Conservation Award



Today, visitors to Indian Spring in Woodstock can view the wetland and clear water that once welcomed Native Americans and early settlers traveling the Old Valley Pike.

Thanks to the Town of Woodstock and a remarkable partnership among agencies – the Woodstock Tree Board, James Madison University and the Virginia Department of Forestry – \$50,000 was secured in 2010 to create, preserve and plan for the historic Indian Spring Wetland Park. The park not only protects a wetland rich in plants and animals. From an observation deck, the park also offers hands-on experience in the value of wetlands to the water we drink and the threat that invasive plants pose to our region's native habitats. Future plans call for a trail around the one-acre park and a boardwalk over a portion of the wetland.

Woodstock's Indian Spring Wetland Park was honored May 8 with a Better Models for Development Award from the Valley Conservation Council based in Staunton. The award recognizes outstanding public and private projects that retain the Shenandoah Valley's traditional character and unique resources.

Shenandoah Forum proudly nominated the park and its partners for this much-deserved award. Our thanks and congratulations to all for their stewardship of this important natural resource.

The park is located at 764 South Water Street, Woodstock. See the park plan and read the educational guide on our website at [www.ShenandoahForum.org](http://www.ShenandoahForum.org).



*Park Workday: Members of the Woodstock Tree Board along with family members, local high school and college students, Woodstock Town Public Works employees and a few volunteers are ready to work!*

