



A peach farm blooms in Albemarle County.
Photo by: David Anhold.

Expanded Land Conservation Incentives in 2013

By: Katherine Vance, Piedmont Environmental Council

At the end of 2012 - as part of the Fiscal Cliff bill - Congress temporarily renewed a significant tax incentive for private landowners who voluntarily protect their land. As a result, conservation-minded landowners now have until December 31, 2013 to take advantage of a temporarily expanded federal income tax deduction for permanently protecting their land by donating a conservation easement.

A conservation easement is a voluntary agreement between a landowner and a land conservation organization (such as a public agency or a non-profit organization, like the Piedmont Environmental Council (PEC)) to permanently protect natural, scenic, and cultural resources on their land.

When landowners donate a conservation easement, they maintain ownership and management of their land. They can still sell the land or pass it onto their heirs—all the while ensuring that the property will be protected for the benefit of future generations. This temporary expansion of the federal income tax deduction makes 2013 a great year to donate a conservation easement.

Through the end of 2013:

- Easement donors can deduct the value of their donated conservation easement at the rate of 50% of their adjusted gross income per year (the deduction is typically limited to only 30% of income)
- Farmers and ranchers can use the deduction at the rate of 100% of their income
- Landowners can use the deduction in the first year and carry over any excess for an additional 15 years (the carry-forward was previously limited to only 5 years)

Virginia also has the best state income tax incentive in the nation for landowners who choose to preserve their land with a conservation easement. Specifically, conservation easement donors in Virginia are eligible for a Virginia Land Preservation Tax Credit—which is equal to 40% of the value of their donation.

In addition to being able to use this tax credit to pay their own Virginia income taxes, conservation easement donors can sell the credits to other Virginia income tax payers for cash. The ability to sell these credits is particularly important to land-rich, cash-poor landowners who may not have enough income to use all their credits to offset their own taxes. At the end of 2012, the demand and market price for these tax credits were stronger than ever.

The expanded federal incentive, coupled with Virginia's Land Preservation Tax Credit program, has contributed to the protection of hundreds of thousands of acres of productive farmland, scenic open space, important forest resources, and significant natural areas throughout the Commonwealth. In fact, in the nine-county region where the PEC works there are now more than 357,000 acres protected by conservation easements— representing 16.8% of the total land.

“The entire community wins when thoughtful landowners conserve their land this way—protecting wildlife habitat, clean drinking water, scenic landscapes, recreational spaces, and productive agricultural lands,” says Heather Richards, PEC's Vice President of Conservation and Rural Programs. “Conservation easements have become an important tool in the region for protecting our watersheds, farms and forests, and now there are over 357,000 acres of permanently protected private land in the nine county region of the northern Virginia Piedmont.”

To learn if a conservation easement is right for you and your family:

- Piedmont Environmental Council: <http://www.pecva.org/>; 540.347.2334.
- Virginia Outdoors Foundation: <http://www.virginiaoutdoorsfoundation.org/>.
- Virginia Department of Forestry: <http://www.dof.virginia.gov/land/index.htm>; 434/220-0000.
- Virginia Department of Conservation & Recreation Office of Land Conservation: http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/land_conservation/index.shtml; 804/225-2048.

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Got invasives?

Do you work to control invasive plants in your woodlands? If so, we'd like to hear from you! A team of researchers from Virginia Tech and the Virginia Cooperative Extension want to learn from your experiences trying to control invasive plants in your woodlands. Please follow the link below to complete a brief questionnaire. Your opinions will help educators, conservation professionals, and decision-makers better understand landowner's views toward invasive species, ultimately benefiting Virginia's forests. Thank you for your help!

<http://preview.tinyurl.com/cecekh>

VIRGINIA FOREST LANDOWNER UPDATE



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VIRGINIA FOREST LANDOWNER EDUCATION PROGRAM

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Safeguard Your Forest Part II

By: Bill Worrell, Neil Clark, and Jim Willis, Virginia Cooperative Extension

As you may recall, in the last edition of the *Virginia Forest Landowner Update* (Winter 2013) I shared my experience with timber trespass, a result of my boundary lines being poorly marked. And, as promised, in this edition I will share with you what I learned about how to accurately locate and mark my boundary lines, which should minimize future problems.

As I learned, a well-marked boundary line can help protect your assets. While a forest fire, the gypsy moth, the emerald ash borer, or kudzu will not stop at your property line, other things that can harm your forest assets may just decide to leave your trees alone if they can see they are crossing a well-marked boundary line. A highly visible property line shows people that they are entering someone else's land.

What I could-a, would-a, should-a done a long time ago was to mark the property boundary along the fence that my grandfather built around the property. If only I had taken the time and modest expense of painting the line, I would not have had to pay a high price to have the property surveyed; and maybe the logger working on the neighboring property would not have cut my trees.

In Virginia, there are many acres in ownership that go back multiple generations, and in some cases back to the King's grant. And in the early days of our country, property surveys were not very accurate. A description might be "begin at a 24-inch chestnut tree, go along Dipper Creek to a big rock, thence northeasterly 20 poles to a fence post, south along the Jones line for 500 poles to a 30-inch white oak stump, and follow the center line of the meandering creek back to the starting point." The property might be described as 50 acres more or less. If marked, the property line would be identified with three hacks or blazes on either side of trees which were on the line.

If you can read the handwriting on the survey, you can find out how long a pole actually is, and you realize that the chestnut is no longer anywhere to be found, no one alive has any notion of who the Jones were, and the meandering creek is now a beaver pond. You see how challenging this can become. And many people, like me, just know their boundaries from a walk with Granddad one afternoon, thirty years ago.

So often, as in my case, timber is sold on a property by an owner to a purchaser and the owner will typically walk the boundary with the purchaser and mark a boundary with plastic flagging. So the purchaser is taking the owner at his word and on good faith that the boundary is correct. Sadly, many times the investigation stops here and harvesting begins. This is frequently when mistakes are made. A careful purchaser will take a trip to the courthouse and pull the deed and any adjacent deeds prior to initiating a timber harvest. This verifies ownership, confirms boundaries, and identifies places where boundaries are unclear. This step alone can resolve many potential mistakes. In cases where there is still uncertainty, employing the professional services of a forester or a surveyor is advised. In fact, I would advise employing a consultant forester for any significant timber sale and a surveyor for any property where a modern plat has not been established.

Once an authoritative boundary has been established, mark it and maintain those marks. A surveyor will install pins at corners and directional changes, but these pins are driven in the ground and not very obvious in a forested setting. So to enhance the boundary, typically trees are marked by chopping slashes in the bark with a machete. It is usual to scrape and apply paint hash marks at frequent intervals (50 – 100") along a boundary. These painted boundary trees not only assist in avoiding timber trespass, but if properly applied, can serve as posting against trespassing of any kind.

Using aluminum-colored paint to create a vertical line at least 2 inches in width and at least 8 inches in length, no less than 3 feet and not more than 6 feet from the ground or normal water surface and visible when approaching the property achieves this posting in lieu of signage. This bark scraping and paint technique is typically effective for about 7 years, at which time repainting is advised.



A properly marked line tree.
Photo by Bill Worrell, VCE.

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Useful Resources

The 17-year periodical cicadas will be emerging in early May through June in most central Virginia counties. Learn more here: <http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/444/444-276/444-276.html>.

A new mapping tool, InFOREST, is available for forest landowners. InFOREST is a user-friendly mapping program which allows creation of high-resolution maps, as well as calculations of the value of the ecosystem services the forest on your land provides. You can calculate the amount of carbon your trees are storing now, and in the future. You can also determine how land use changes affect nutrient/sediment runoff at either the watershed or individual property level. And, if your land is in the Chesapeake Bay watershed, you can determine your nutrient offsets for the Virginia Nutrient Trading Program. Access InFOREST here: <http://inforest.frec.vt.edu/>. I highly recommend downloading the User's Manual to help you get started.

CONTACT OUR SPONSORS AND STATE NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AGENCIES:

					
Virginia Department of Forestry	Virginia Tech Department of Forest Resources & Environmental Conservation & Virginia Cooperative Extension	USDA Forest Service Forest Stewardship Program	Virginia Forestry Association	Virginia Sustainable Forestry Initiative SIC/Virginia Tree Farm Committee	
900 Natural Resources Drive Ste. 800 Charlottesville, VA 22903 434/977-6555 www.dof.virginia.gov	228 Cheatham Hall 0324 Blacksburg, VA 24061 540/231-6391 www.cnre.vt.edu/forestupdate	1400 Independence Ave. SW Washington, D.C. 20078 202/205-8333 http://www.fs.fed.us/spf/coop/programs/loa/fsp.shtml	3808 Augusta Ave Richmond, VA 23230 804/278-8733 www.vaforestry.org	3808 Augusta Ave Richmond, VA 23230 804/278-8733 www.vaforestry.org/virginia_tree_farm.html	

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 **FOREST STEWARDSHIP**

EVENTS CALENDAR			For the most complete listing of natural resource education events, visit the on-line events calendar at http://forestupdate.frec.vt.edu		
Contact	Date	Location	Event	Time	Fee
DCR	April, May & June	Virginia State Parks	A variety of events and activities For a complete list, visit: www.dcr.virginia.gov/parks	Varies	Varies
AC	Year-round	State-wide	Virginia Master Naturalist Volunteer basic training www.virginiamasternaturalist.org/chapters.html	Varies	Varies
VFA	April 11-13	Hot Springs	Virginia Forestry Summit Making Your Forest Work for You Join the ACF, SAF, and VFA for their annual meeting. Programs will be available for natural resource professionals, logging business owners and forest landowners.	All day	Varies
AD	April 14	Montpelier Station	Working Woods Walk This hike of the Montpelier Demonstration Forest will help visitors understand society's dependence on forests now and during Madison's time, and how to care for our forests today.	2 - 4	\$5 with purchase of mansion tour; \$10 without
JG	April 26-28	Appomattox	Spring Forest Landowner Weekend Retreat Join fellow forest landowners, the Virginia Department of Forestry and Virginia Cooperative Extension for an interactive weekend learning about actively managing your woodlands.	Program ends at 12:00 p.m. Sun.	\$60/person; \$90/couple** or \$30/person; \$45/couple*
SS	May 7	Palmyra	Rural Land Use and Conservation Workshop This workshop is to educate rural landowners as well as citizens about conservation options available in Fluvanna County.	1 - 4	Free
DP	May 8	Wakefield	CPS - Timberland Division's Vegetation Management Learn about options for controlling unwanted vegetation in your forest. Pesticide recertification credits (FOR, AQU ROW), CFEs and Sharp Logger credits will be available.	8:00 - 4:30	\$30*
UMD	May 9	On-line	Woodland Wildlife Webinar Series: Ecology and Management of Young Forest Wildlife As the number of acres in young forests declines, certain wildlife species are declining as well. Learn how to manage for early successional wildlife habitat.	12-1	Free
MB	May 29	Bowling Green	Lost in the Woods This program will inform and educate new landowners on the basics of forest management and the resources available to help them make sound decisions.	1 - 4:30	Free
JF	May 30	Halifax	What? Time for a Timber Sale? Do you have time to learn the proper methods involved with a timber sale? If so, this workshop is for you. Topics include timber theft, water quality, stewardship plans and markets.	6 - 9	Free
AD	July 21	Montpelier Station	Working Woods Walk See above.	2 - 4	See above
AD	Aug. 13 & 20	Fredericksburg	Focusing on Land Transfer to Generation "NEXT" Are you prepared to pass the environmental and heirloom values rooted in your forest to the next generation? Join us for a workshop with free legal guidance from professionals in intergenerational land transfer.	12:30 - 7	\$60/person or couple
JG	Sept. 6-8	Wakefield	Fall Forest Landowner Weekend Retreat Join fellow forest landowners, the Virginia Department of Forestry and Virginia Cooperative Extension for an interactive weekend learning about actively managing your woodlands.	Program ends at 12:00 p.m. Sun	\$60/person; \$90/couple** or \$30/person; \$45/couple*
Stay tuned for our October 2013 Fall Forestry & Wildlife Field Tour Schedule. Tours are being planned in Accomack, Culpeper, Patrick and Roanoke Counties.					
If you are a real estate professional or Commissioner of the Revenue, please visit the Landowner Update website for a schedule of our continuing education classes, Real Forestry for Real Estate. (www.forestupdate.frec.vt.edu).					
*meals included **meals and lodging included					

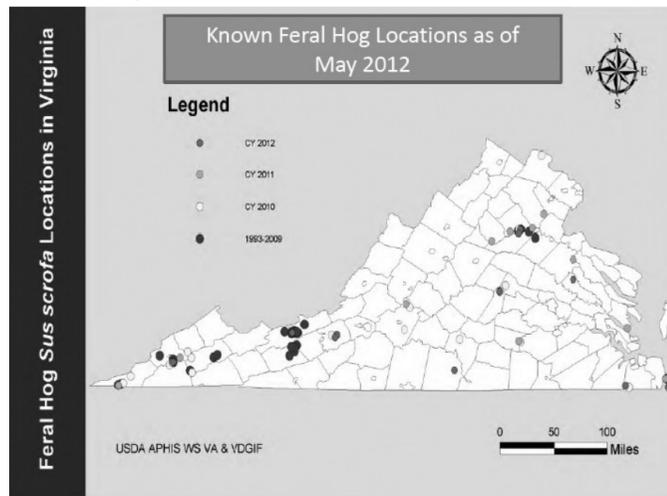
You Ain't From Around Here! Exotic Invasive of the Quarter: Wild Hogs, Part II

By: Jennifer Gagnon, Virginia Tech



In preparation for writing the second part of this article, I watched the film *Wild Hogs*. Surprisingly, it wasn't all that helpful, in spite of them riding their motorcycles through some prime hog country. However, although I'm slightly embarrassed to admit it, I laughed out loud when William H. Macy did the sprinkler dance at the Chili Festival. Of course, I'm a sucker for, as well as a practitioner of, bad dancing. But I digress. Back to the tale at hand.

In Part I of this article, which appeared in the Winter 2013 edition of the *Update*, I covered the history and biology of wild hogs, and the types of damage they cause. In Part II, I will cover where they are found in Virginia, what is being done to prevent wild hogs from getting out of hand in the Commonwealth, and control recommendations.



Virginia doesn't have anywhere near the population of wild hogs that other states, like Texas, have, at least not yet. But wild hog populations can be found throughout the Commonwealth, as this map from the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF) illustrates.

The only historic population of wild hogs in Virginia is in the far southeast, in the Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge and False Cape State Park. These hogs are remnants from subsistence farms which were abandoned in the 1920-1930's. Despite the harsh sandy environment and efforts to control these populations through hunting and collecting, there are still 200 to 500 individuals. The populations that are in most of the rest of Virginia were most likely established with some help (i.e., humans), as wild hogs are not a migratory species. I just learned this weekend that we have a population right here in Ellet Valley in Montgomery County that "some genius" released (a direct quote from someone in the know).

So what's being done to keep the pig bomb from exploding in Virginia? Or is an explosion inevitable?

We are fortunate here in Virginia in some ways. For one, there are no established hunting pens in the Commonwealth, and no strong hog hunting tradition, like in many other states (although there are clubs who do hunt wild hogs). And the wild hog populations that are here are low. These things bode well for preventing the pig bomb from exploding in the Commonwealth.

The Virginia Department of Game & Inland Fisheries maintains wild hogs on its list of predatory and undesirable species. They also consider them to be a nuisance species, which means there is no daily bag limit, and no closed hunting season on private lands (although hunting on Sunday is illegal). Hunters must have a valid hunting license and permission from the landowner.

Of course, as the map shows, there are established populations, and once established, they are very hard to eradicate. According to VDGIF, 70% must be removed each year to stabilize a population. So if you do see wild hogs, what are your options?

(As an aside, I've never written a You Ain't From Around Here! about a charismatic large mammal, or any mammal for that matter. And here's where I run into a problem. Piglets are CUTE, people! And I mean super-cute, like kittens or puppies. And they are one of the most intelligent animal species in the US. While I have no qualms about using herbicides and pesticides judiciously to control invasive plants or insects, I've always been a sucker for animals. But I know wild hogs need to be controlled. I know they cause millions of dollars in damage. I know they harm other animal species. And I've heard they are tasty.)



A wild hog piglet. Cute, right? Photo from: www.cutestpaw.com

Right now, control techniques include exclusion (fencing them out of an area), hunting, aerial hunting, dog hunting, snares, and trapping. There are a plethora of television programs on hog hunting, including: *American Hoggers*, *Leupold's Pig Man: The Series*, and *Boar Hunters*. I watched a bit of one of these shows, and in this particular episode they were hunting the hogs with dogs. It didn't seem like a humane activity for either the dogs or the hogs and I had to turn it off after a few minutes. But anyway, hunting has been shown to be woefully inadequate in controlling populations.

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Hogs cont. from page 3

According to the folks at Texas A&M (people who have been dealing with wild hogs for a long time now) trapping is the most effective and humane tool we currently have. That is, if done correctly. And correctly means treating trapping as a process, not as an event. The process entails:

1. Learning about your population. Where do they hang out during the day? Where are they feeding at night? How many are in the group?
2. Pre-baiting. Place bait along the trail they use to move between daytime and nighttime locations.
3. Placing the trap near the bait. Continue baiting – both inside and outside the trap.
4. Moving the bait continuously further into the trap.
5. Monitoring the hogs using a night vision camera to determine how many are entering the trap.
6. Setting the trap, once you think the entire group is entering.
7. Disposing of the hogs. You need to be available to check the trap the day after you set it, especially in the heat of the summer. In some areas, there are established markets for wild hog meat. I recently learned of a hunt club in Halifax County which makes sausage from hogs they hunt.



Wild hogs captured in a tear-drop shaped trap (they are able to climb out of traps with corners). Photo from: Texas AgriLife Extension.

This process is important, because if you have a failed trapping attempt, the hogs will learn and will not return. Or if you only catch part of the group, the remaining hogs will not return. To learn more about the trapping process, visit: <http://feralhogs.tamu.edu/>. On the right-hand menu, there are links to "Hogs in the Peaches Parts I – IV" – these show you how it's done.

Last year the VDGIF, along with partner agencies, formed a wild hog committee which is beginning to focus on the problem in Virginia. They ask that landowners, hunters, and wildlife enthusiasts alike all band together to understand and support the idea that there's no place for these hogs in the wild. If you see or suspect that wild hogs are on your property, please notify your nearest DGIF office (find your local office at: www.dgif.virginia.gov or call 804/367-1000).

For more information on feral hogs and control methods, please visit the following web pages: www.extension.org/feral_hogs and <http://wildpiginfo.msstate.edu/index.html>.

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This establishment and maintenance of boundaries is an important first step in avoiding liability due to trespass, adverse possession (taking of land unclaimed for seven years), and timber trespass. Folks who do find timber stolen from their property have recourse. However, as I found out first-hand, this process typically incurs much time and expense. Based on my experience, I would encourage anyone owning property to have boundaries established and maintained, to save many headaches and to give you peace of mind. Remember, most good honest people will not cut trees on the other side of a well-marked property line. But this assumes your property line is well-marked!

To learn more about locating and marking your boundary lines, see the publication: Megalos, M.A. and R.A. Hamilton. Woodland Owner Notes: Maintaining Forest Property Boundaries. NC Cooperative Extension Publication WON-35. Available at: <http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/forestry/pdf/WON/won35.pdf>. Also, this is a topic covered in detail during the On-line Woodland Options for Landowners class which is offered every spring. The next class will begin in March 2014.

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Jim Willis is the retired Southwest District Forestry & Natural Resources Agent.

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