New farm bill gives local food a boost

Senate farm bill includes local food provisions

In June, the U.S. Senate adopted its version of the Agriculture Reform, Food and Jobs Act—the Farm Bill—including several provisions supported by Environment Virginia that will give local, clean farms a boost. The amendments were backed by Virginia Sens. Mark Warner and Jim Webb.

“The amendments added to the Farm Bill begin to shift the balance by protecting organic farmers, expanding Farm-to-School programs, and supporting farmers markets,” said Environment Virginia’s Sarah Bucci.

$20 million in annual funding

The Farmers Market Promotion Program provides grants to bolster farmers’ markets, roadside stands, community supported agriculture, agri-tourism and other direct producer-to-consumer marketing channels. Under the new bill, the program will expand to support larger scale, local food sales to institutions. The bill allocates $20 million in annual mandatory funding—double the present amount.

Sen. Toomey’s amendment to eliminate the organic cost-share assistance program was also defeated.

Organic farming growing fast

Organic farming is one of the fastest growing agricultural sectors in Virginia. Through this cost-share assistance program, organic farmers seeking national organic certification can receive help with paying high certification costs each year.

Warner and Webb also supported Sen. Ron Wyden’s Farm-to-School amendment and Sen. Merkley’s organic crop insurance amendment. The Wyden amendment allows schools across the nation to locate and purchase fresh, local produce from farmers easier. The Merkley amendment improves accessibility and fairness of crops insurance for organic farmers, allowing them to receive organic crop prices rather than less.

“We thank Sens. Warner and Webb for standing with Environment Virginia on a number of local food provisions,” said Environment Virginia’s Priscilla Lin.

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Dragonfly Farm in Beaverdam

Report shows Shenandoah threatened by logging and road-building; Virginia gears up for electric cars, and more.
This fall, Virginians like you may be preparing to participate in the many fall outdoor activities our state has to offer. You may be apple picking or stocking up on warm socks for camping and hiking trips under the beautiful foliage of Shenandoah.

Environment Virginia has been working to make sure that the air is clear when you reach the top of a Blue Ridge peak, Shenendoah is protected from dangerous logging and road-building, and that you continue to have plentiful, local produce at your neighborhood market.

We pushed hard on these issues this summer and had significant success. We were inspired because like you, we are also out there exploring Virginia’s natural environments. The work we have done this summer will hopefully keep us all enjoying these outdoor activities for many seasons to come.

Thanks for your continued support.

Elizabeth Ouzts,  
Regional Program Director

Recent action

Households could save $560 and reduce pollution

Reducing gasoline consumption provides many benefits—among them cleaner air, less global warming pollution and less pressure to drill for oil. It also saves us money. The average Virginia household would have saved approximately $560 this summer if vehicles met President Barack Obama’s proposed 54.5 miles per gallon fuel efficiency requirement.

According to a report by Environment America Research & Policy Center in May, Virginia’s pollution would have been reduced by 4 million tons of carbon dioxide had the new standards been in place this summer. Implementing the president’s plan will be a huge step to reducing our state’s dependence on oil—a major goal for Environment Virginia.

Electric vehicles ready to roll in Virginia

With the right policies in place, plug-in vehicles can reduce oil dependence in Virginia by 3,993,864 gallons per year, according to a new report released by Environment Virginia.

The report concludes 17,076 drivers in Virginia could purchase their first plug-in vehicle within the next three years—lowering global warming pollution by 13,851 metric tons per year.

President Obama has also proposed fuel efficiency standards and supported new, clean technology that Environment Virginia credits as being important steps toward building clean cars that will get us off oil.

“Thanks in part to smart policies in cities like Richmond and from the Obama administration, every major automobile manufacturer is offering a new plug-in vehicle powered primarily by electricity,” said Laura Kate Anderson, field organizer with Environment Virginia.
Shenandoah threatened by logging and road-building

Pristine areas near and within Shenandoah National Park could be at risk of logging and road-building if bills moving through the House of Representatives are signed into law, according to a report released in July by Environment Virginia.

“Trashing our Treasures: Congressional Assault on the Best of America” exposes a startling trend of legislative attacks on our nation’s treasured places—like Shenandoah.

“Shenandoah National Park is one of Virginia’s greatest treasures—from its graceful waterfalls to its sheltered stream valleys and dense oak-hickory forests, Shenandoah is home to bobcats, gray foxes, deer and eastern cottontails, and draws more than a million visitors every year.” said Environment Virginia’s Federal Preservation Advocate Nancy Pyne. “Yet Representatives Goodlatte, Griffith, Wittman, Rigell, and other members of Congress seem bent on trashing our treasures, and have launched an assault on the best of Virginia.”

Selling 36 million acres in 2012

Our report analyzes the effects various bills moving through the U.S. House of Representatives would have on Shenandoah National Park and more than a dozen treasured places across the country. Like Shenandoah, these important state and national landmarks provide clean water, improve air quality, support critical wildlife habitat, and drive recreation and tourism. Nevertheless, several Virginia representatives support the three bills that put the park at risk.

The Wilderness & Roadless Area Release Act and the Wilderness Development Act would allow road-building and logging in the most pristine areas within and surrounding Shenandoah National Park. The American Lands Act would require the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management to sell 8 percent of their lands annually until 2016 to the highest bidder—36 million acres in 2012 alone. Forests and public lands near Shenandoah, like the George Washington and Jefferson national forests, could then be sold off to developers or mining companies—damaging the ecosystems and jeopardizing backcountry recreation.

“Imagine this—you go to Shenandoah to experience the solitude of wilderness only to find that acres of forest have been clear cut. Or perhaps you’re hiking one of the remote trails deep in the park and are startled to look up and see trucks rumbling by,” said Pyne. “The Roadless Release and Wilderness Development Acts would allow road-building and logging in the most pristine and sensitive areas in and around Shenandoah National Park, even though Congress granted extra protections to Shenandoah’s wilderness and roadless areas decades ago.”

Green Future Fund

A new way to honor supporters

Environment Virginia is proud to announce the establishment of our Green Future Fund.

The Green Future Fund will honor a special group of our donors: those who are ensuring a greener future by remembering Environment Virginia or our sister group, Environment Virginia Research & Policy Center, in their wills, life insurance policies or retirement accounts.

These legacy donors are helping to ensure that Environment Virginia will continue to flourish—protecting the places we love and the values we share for years to come.

“We appreciate all of our supporters,” said Environment Virginia’s Elizabeth Ouzts. “I feel a special gratitude toward those members who have the vision and generosity to plan a gift that will protect our state’s environment beyond their own lifetimes.”

Establishing a legacy gift also offers donors a few advantages. Some supporters wish they could give more, but can’t right now. Including Environment Virginia in your estate plan costs nothing today, while ensuring support for our mission in the future. Legacy gifts may also offer tax benefits. Your professional advisor can help you determine any tax advantage.

As a Green Future Fund donor, with your permission, we’ll recognize your gift in our annual report and other publications, helping to inspire other members to make their own legacy gifts. Of course, you may also choose to give anonymously. Either way, any specific details you choose to provide about your gift will remain confidential.

If you’d like to become a member of the Green Future Fund, or if you have questions, call our planned giving coordinator, Marilyn Tesaura, at 1-800-841-7299 or plannedgiving@EnvironmentVirginia.org.
Building support for Virginia’s waterways

In April 2011, President Obama proposed much-needed clean water guidelines to protect the rivers and streams that feed and clean some of Virginia’s best-loved waters—the Chesapeake Bay, the James River, the Shenandoah River and the Potomac River. More than half of these waterways are vulnerable to toxic pollution and development—thanks to two polluter-driven Supreme Court decisions.

Long-overdue protections have yet to be finalized, due to partisan politics and polluters like ExxonMobil and Big Agriculture, which in July launched a major campaign to stop the proposed guidelines.

Despite three separate attempts to block the Obama administration’s efforts in Congress, our efforts are paying off. Our work demonstrated enough public support this summer to help convince leadership in the Senate to stop one of the dirty water bills from even coming up.

take action

The New River

Visit our website at www.EnvironmentVirginia.org and learn more about protecting Virginia’s pristine rivers.