



Yes, Virginia!

Issue # 5

The Newsletter of Scenic Virginia

Spring 2001

Scenic Virginia Carves Out Legislative Successes in Dismal 2001 General Assembly Session

While the 2001 General Assembly Session left Virginia's conservation community with little to cheer about, two good bills – both from Scenic Virginia – did survive.

HB 2082, the VDOT tree-trimming bill sponsored by Delegate Mitch Van Yahres (D-Charlottesville) at Scenic Virginia's request, passed overwhelmingly in the House and unanimously in the Senate, and was recently signed into law by Gov. Jim Gilmore. The legislation instructs the Commonwealth Transportation Board to adopt consistent policy for VDOT's tree-trimming practices for roadside trees not affecting highway safety, operations, or maintenance; and the law specifically names Scenic Virginia to the committee determining the policy. Scenic Virginia and Delegate Van Yahres expect this new legislation to have a discernible effect on the health and aesthetic appearance of trees along Virginia's roadsides. Says Delegate Van Yahres, "It was gratifying to work so closely with VDOT and Scenic Virginia on this legislation. This collaborative effort is an example of how diverse groups can work together to preserve Virginia's natural beauty."

The bill's passage is gratifying for several reasons. First, Scenic Virginia is proud to have addressed a problem that had so many Virginians concerned and frustrated. Members were reporting incidents of excessive roadside tree trimming that left mangled branches and threatened the health of the tree, but calls to the individual VDOT districts were not producing satisfactory results quickly enough.

Also noteworthy is the fact that similar legislation was attempted several years ago without success. This year the bill found overwhelming support due to the lobbying efforts of Scenic Virginia and its supporters to position the legislation as an economic development initiative. The following points were emphasized: Tourism is the third largest industry in Virginia, visitors come from around the world to see our breathtaking

natural beauty, and the view from our roads is often the first glimpse of Virginia that a tourist sees.

Finally, this Scenic Virginia success is especially impressive because so few conservation bills made it through the General Assembly. If you have not already done so, please thank the legislators who supported the measure.

One of the more positive outcomes of the efforts leading to the passage of HB 2082 was working with several VDOT officials who agreed that a problem existed. Scenic Virginia would like to recognize Asst. Commissioner of Operations Andrew Bailey, Asst. Environmental Division Administrator Brian Waymack, and Asst. Maintenance Division Administrator Jim Cline, who listened to Scenic Virginia's concerns, identified examples of bad tree-trimming practices, established the advisory committee to address the problem, and supported the legislation during the Session. Says Brian Waymack, who is chairing the VDOT advisory committee, "I'm pleased we've had the opportunity to sit down and work together to address concerns regarding tree trimming."

Another Scenic Virginia achievement was the passage of **SJR 428**, written by Scenic Virginia and introduced by Senator (and Scenic Virginia Honorary Board member) Patricia Ticer (D-Alexandria). This Resolution designates the Virginia portion of the multi-state Journey Through Hallowed Ground project as important to the Commonwealth and deserving of recognition by all Virginians. Scenic Virginia is an active partner in the project, which starts at Gettysburg, PA; travels south on Route 15 into Maryland and Virginia's Piedmont region, and ends at Monticello and Route 20. The Journey Through Hallowed Ground features elements of multi-cultural interest, including Revolutionary War and Civil War battlefields, Colonial history, an early site of African-American commerce, Native American trade routes, and places of significant scenic and natural beauty. Visit www.cr.nps.gov/nr/

NOTES FROM THE SCENIC VIRGINIA OFFICE

2001 Session Wrap-up (continued from Page 1)

In bad news for Virginia's scenic landscapes, HB 2670, sponsored by Del. Leo Wardrup (R-Virginia Beach), will allow the billboard industry to install tri-vision panel technology and changeable message signs on Virginia's roads. During the 2001 Session, Scenic Virginia used its limited resources to protect and advance the VDOT tree-trimming bill, and so could not vigorously oppose HB 2670. Members of The Garden Club of Virginia and the Virginia Conservation Network stepped forward to oppose the bill for common-sense reasons of driver safety; but as predicted, the votes to pass the legislation were already in place.

Scenic Virginia thanks Delegates Abbitt, Almand, Amundson, Barlow, Baskerville, Bloxom, Brink, Bryant, Callahan, Clement, Crittenden, Darner, Deeds, Dillard, Grayson, Harris, Howell, Marshall, McEachin, McQuigg, Morgan, Moss, Plum, Pollard, Rhodes, Scott, Van Lanthingham, Van Yahres, and Watts for voting against HB 2670, with additional thanks to Delegates Clement (a Scenic Virginia Honorary Board member), Crittenden and Darner for speaking eloquently against the bill in the House Transportation Committee and to Delegate Grayson for his impassioned plea against the bill on the House floor. On the Senate side, thanks to Senators Bolling, Byrne, Chichester, Couric, Houck, Howell, Marye, Mims, Reynolds, Stosch, Ticer, and Whipple for voting Nay, with special mentions to Senators Houck and Whipple (a member of Scenic Virginia's Honorary Board) for attempting amendments that addressed the driver safety issue, and to Senator Ticer for raising the issue of aesthetics.

The conservation of Virginia's scenic beauty is a battle that can be won. If you don't like marred scenic views or spoiled vistas, you must tell your Delegate and Senator to support scenic preservation efforts, and you must repeat yourself loudly and often. There are too many well-funded but uninformed interests opposing the scenic movement for anyone to remain complacent. Virginia's scenic assets are a clear source of revenue. Remind your elected officials that scenic conservation is of vital economic importance to all Virginians.

New Board Member

Scenic Virginia is happy to announce that David R. Kenerson, Jr. joined the Board of Trustees in December 2000. David is Senior Portfolio Manager at Capes Capital Management, Inc. in Norfolk, where he lives with his wife and two sons. A graduate of Yale College and the University of Florida Law School, David has vast experience serving on the boards of other non-profit organizations, and has successfully chaired committees addressing Finance, Development, Fund-raising, and Strategic Planning. We are pleased to have David and his expertise he brings, and we ask you to join us in welcoming him to the Board!

Facelift for www.scenicva.org!

Scenic Virginia's web site (www.scenicva.org) is undergoing a makeover. "We're streamlining the choices and making it easier for our members to find what they need," explains Leighton Powell, Scenic Virginia's Executive Director. "We're also adding downloadable versions of good lighting and sign ordinances, as well as a page of links to pertinent sites." Members with suggestions for other features should send their ideas to our new email address, email@scenicva.org.

Scenic Virginia Email Updates a Hit!

The response to the email legislative updates that we sent during the General Assembly was overwhelmingly positive – so much so that updates will continue on a monthly basis to keep members fully informed. If you haven't yet given us your email address, please send it to email@scenicva.org. Our ability to send action alerts to a large number of people during the Session was critical to the success of HB 2082.

"Scenic Virginia Works!"

The "Scenic Virginia Works!" slide presentation continues to be our most effective tool for spreading the word about scenic preservation and for recruiting members to increase the organization's political clout. If you know a group that would benefit from the presentation, please ask them to call us at (804) 282-5522 or to email us at email@scenicva.org.

 NEWS FROM AROUND THE COMMONWEALTH

Scenic Virginia a Partner in the VA MTRP

Scenic Virginia has partnered with the Virginia Department of Forestry, Virginia Tech, and several utility companies (Dominion, AEP, and Allegheny) to research the feasibility of a Municipal Tree Restoration Project in Virginia. Based on a successful model in Pennsylvania, the program aims to improve the appearance of urban landscapes by replacing high-growing trees that disturb urban power lines with lower-growing species that don't need disfiguring cuts to keep power lines safe. The results include lower maintenance costs for the utilities and more aesthetically pleasing landscapes for the localities. Watch this page for future updates.

Scenic Virginia Thanks the CVC

Scenic Virginia had a good first year in the Commonwealth of Virginia Campaign, the charitable giving program for state employees. Thanks to those who selected Scenic Virginia as their charity. We hope you will choose us again this fall.

New Brochure Promotes Scenic Byways

A year ago Scenic Virginia supported Senator Patricia S. Ticer's successful legislation to encourage localities to nominate eligible roads for Scenic Byway designation. Soon after, VDOT went to work and has recently published a brochure entitled "Virginia Byway Designation: VDOT Answers Your Questions" that lists the criteria and steps for achieving designation in a clear, concise format. Scenic Virginia is pleased to help VDOT publicize the brochure, and we now include it among the membership and promotional materials that we distribute at presentations and conferences.

Ashland Stars in New PBS Documentary

The Town of Ashland has a starring role in filmmaker Micha X. Peled's acclaimed new documentary, "Store Wars: When Wal-Mart Comes to Town," which thoughtfully documents the Ashland community's yearlong struggle with the mega-store retailer. Mark your calendars: PBS is planning to run the film on Thursday, June 7, 2001 at 10:00 pm. For more information on "Store Wars," visit www.pbs.org/storewars.

National Urban Forestry Conference Info

Scenic Virginia urges you to make your plans now to attend the National Urban Forestry Conference in Washington, D.C., September 5–8, 2001. The event will feature general sessions, workshops, and outings, and it offers a great opportunity to learn more about the urban forestry movement. Complete details, including scholarship grant information, are available at *American Forests* magazine's web site at www.americanforests.org. Scenic Virginia will have a exhibit booth, so we hope to see you there.

Scrolling Messages— Coming to a Sign Near You?

The passage of HB 2670 means that changeable messages and tri-vision panel signs will now be allowed along Virginia's road. Does your locality have a moratorium on new billboards? Take the time now to find out. HB 2670, recently signed into law by Governor Gilmore, takes effect July 1.

On the Lookout for Campaign Billboards

It's an election year. There are many important races to be decided, and the entire House of Delegates is up for reelection in November. That means it's time for the billboard industry to offer billboard space to candidates — but at what cost? If you see a campaign billboard, please note the candidate and location. Scenic Virginia will be tracking campaign billboard usage this year as part of an statewide effort to determine how campaign billboard costs are estimated and reported.

Statewide Anti-Litter Campaign Underway

In the summer of 2000, Scenic Virginia approached the Department of Environmental Quality with an idea for a statewide anti-litter campaign. DEQ has since issued Requests for Proposals to several ad agencies and will soon be reviewing submissions. Once an ad agency is selected, we will again be involved in the creative development and execution of this multi-media campaign.

Order Your Wildflowers License Plate Now

VDOT has received about 200 orders for the beautiful Virginia Wildflowers license plate that will benefit the wildflowers planting program. VDOT needs 350 orders before production can start. Order forms can be accessed at www.vdot.state.va.us under General Info.

YES, VIRGINIA!

The Newsletter of Scenic Virginia
P.O. Box 17606
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FIRST
CLASS
POSTAGE
REQUIRED

Scenic Virginia



*Scenic Virginia, a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization,
is devoted to preserving and enhancing the scenic character of Virginia's communities and countryside.*

Special Insert: A copy of Scenic Virginia's Annual Report 2000 is enclosed.

~ ASK SCENIC VIRGINIA ~

Scenic Virginia members thoughtfully ask us from time to time, "Is there anything I can do to help?" To which we answer, "Yes!" The following are easy ways to assist us:

- ♦ Make sure we have your most current email address, and let us know if it changes.
- ♦ Please consider renewing your membership at a higher level. For example, if you currently have an Individual membership, consider upgrading it to the Family/Household level. This will increase our membership numbers, our operating dollars, and our political clout.
- ♦ Make a point of contacting your elected officials to let them know that you care about scenic preservation.
- ♦ Schedule a presentation for your local civic group. Invite your elected officials.
- ♦ Tell your friends about us. Ask them to sign up for our Scenic Virginia monthly emails and legislative alerts.

Join Scenic Virginia Today!

Name _____
Address _____
City _____
State _____ Zip _____
E-mail Address _____

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIPS

Individual \$25	Sponsor \$100
Student \$15	Patron \$250
Household/Family \$50	Benefactor \$500
Organization \$100	Corporation \$500

Selected Membership Level \$ _____
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Detach this application and mail to:

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*Make checks payable to Scenic Virginia.
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