

Fall 2011



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Dr. Bruce Hull Nominated as Engaged Scholar of the Month by the Office of Outreach and International Affairs



Bruce Hull

Dr. Bruce Hull is engaged in research and development projects aimed at promoting sustainable land use. He advises a number of organizations, including the Southern Urban Wildland Interface Council, Model Forestry Policy Program, New River Valley Planning District Commission, and New River Valley Sustainable Communities Consortium. One of his long-held career interests, as Hull puts it, is to develop conservation methods “that heal land fractured by urbanization and globalization.”

In 2005 Hull and fellow CNRE faculty, including Harold Burkhart, Jim

Johnson, and David Robertson, began thinking about landcare from the perspective of Virginia Tech involvement. About the same time, residents of Grayson County approached CNRE for help in forming an integrated conservation and economic development program. The result was the creation of Grayson Landcare, a community-led group with active links to university faculty and resources.



Residents of the Catawba Valley learned of the Grayson County successes and, in 2006, joined with CNRE and College of Agriculture and Life Sciences faculty to establish Catawba Landcare. The group secured funding from the university and the U.S. Department of Agriculture and asked Christy Gabbard, then an ecologist with Virginia Tech’s Conservation Management Institute, to help organize community activities and act as a liaison to the university and other resources.

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Welcome to the Fall 2011 issue of “Forestry” from Virginia Tech! You will note from this newsletter that the Department of Forest Resources and Environmental Conservation had another busy, exciting, and productive fall semester. Following are some of our accomplishments that I would like to share with you.

- Our student enrollment went up significantly. Currently we have 197 undergraduate students and 80 graduate students. We are actively working with several other units on campus to launch a new undergraduate degree, “Water: Science, Policy, and Management.” In addition, we are in the process of developing a new undergraduate major, “Environmental Informatics.” When these new programs are approved, we hope that our undergraduate enrollment will increase further.
- Dr. Michael Sorice has joined us as an Assistant Professor of Recreation. He will provide leadership to our undergraduate and graduate recreation programs.



Dr. Janaki Alavalapati
Professor and Head
Forest Resources and
Environmental
Conservation

We are also pleased to welcome Dr. Frank Merry as a Resource Associate Professor. His work focuses on economics and policy aspects of tropical deforestation and climate mitigation and adaptation. He actively collaborates with national and international non-governmental organizations, government agencies, and academic institutions in the US and Latin America.

- The department engaged in several activities, including:
 - Celebrated the International Year of Forests 2011 on Oct. 13. Over 250 students, staff, faculty, and local communities participated in the event. The “Green Fire” movie attracted a lot of attention.
 - Dr. Tom Fox organized the Forest Productivity Cooperative Annual Meeting on Oct. 11-12. This meeting attracted several representatives from academia and the private sector from North and South America.
 - Dr. Mike Aust hosted a field visit to Reynolds Homestead for the Southern Group of State Foresters during their annual meeting Oct. 25-26.

I will take this opportunity to wish you and your families a **Happy Holiday Season and New Year!!**

Dr. Michael Sorice Joins Department



Michael Sorice

Dr. Michael Sorice joined the department in August 2011 as an Assistant Professor in Outdoor Recreation and Human Dimensions. He brings a diverse background to a diverse position: “I’ve studied tourists swimming with manatees in Florida, scuba divers visiting coral reef systems, ranchers implementing best management practices, and forest landowners conserving wildlife,” said Sorice. The one thing these research topics have in common? “They all focus on human behavior as it relates to environmental conservation and planning.”

His research has examined conservation of imperiled species and ecosystems and his most recent work focuses on an “endangered” ecosystem—grasslands in the U.S. Southern

Great Plains. As grasslands from Texas to Kansas are slowly converted to woodlands, Sorice focuses on how decisions rural landowners make about land use are affected by the changing ecosystem and how institutions can use innovative policy tools to improve conservation.



Tiffany Brown joined the department in July 2011 to assist Dr. Burkhart and has also done several projects for other faculty members. Tiffany resides in Pearisburg with her husband, Dewey, two-year-old daughter Amalie, and dogs Red and Bob. A former college soccer player, she now enjoys less strenuous pursuits such as cooking and baking, visiting the local library and savoring a good cup of coffee in a quiet place.



Colleen Carlson joined the department in July 2011 as a Research Associate working with the Forest Productivity Cooperative as a database manager and data analyst. Colleen has an MSc from the University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa, and a diploma in data metrics from the University of South Africa. Colleen, her husband Ross, and son Daniel moved back to the New River Valley after two years in New Zealand.

Samuel Frye joined the department in October 2011 as a Lab & Research Technician working with Brian Strahm and John Seiler. Sam received his B.S. in Wildlife Ecology (Minor in Biology) from the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, and his previous experience includes working on field crews with the Forest Service in Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and Montana and at the UWSP-Treehaven Field Station.



John Kidd joined the department in August 2011 after his wife Rebecca began her doctoral studies in FREC. John is a Project Associate and the coordinator for the PINEMAP Intern Program. He is interested in biology education and extension for both secondary students and the general public. He received a B.S. in Wildlife Science from Auburn University, M.S. in Forest Resources from University of Arkansas at Monticello, and M.Ed. in Secondary Biology Education from Auburn University.



Dr. Chris Kiser joined the department in September 2011 as a Post-Doctoral Research Associate. He completed his Ph.D. in Forestry at Virginia Tech specializing in forest soils and plantation silviculture. Chris will be working on a Virginia Tech/U.S. Forest Service cooperative project investigating the Sustainability of Harvesting Appalachian Hardwood Forests for Biomass Bioenergy.



Dr. Frank Merry joined the department in September 2011 as Research Associate Professor working with Greg Amacher on a grant from the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation to establish a sustainable forest business model in Amazonia. Frank is a well-known researcher in the area of international forest policy and forest economics and has worked in several regions of the world focusing on broad problem areas, including smallholder farmer and forest user behavior, as well as forest policy design and instruments aimed at slowing forest and natural resource degradation and exploitation.



Dr. Michael Sorice joined the department in August 2011 as Assistant Professor of Natural Resource Recreation and Human Dimensions. Mike received his Ph.D. in 2008 from the Department of Wildlife & Fisheries Sciences at Texas A&M University and worked as a post-doctoral research associate in Texas A&M's Department of Ecosystem Science & Management from 2008 to 2011.



Drew Morris and Jonathan Baigis
measuring vegetation on the top of Spruce
Knob, West Virginia

Spruce Knob Field Trip

This year Dr. Copenheaver's Forest Ecology and Silvics class traveled to Spruce Knob, West Virginia, for their annual weekend field trip. They measured vegetation along transects from the top of Spruce Knob (4,863 ft) down to Spruce Knob Lake to identify how vegetation changed with elevation. The students spent Saturday night in yurts at the Mountain Institute located near Spruce Knob and worked into the night keying out the wildflowers they collected along their transects. Students presented the results of their study during class presentations.

Awards Presented From the Association of Natural Resource Extension Professionals

Three FREC faculty members received national awards from the Association of Natural Resource Extension Professionals (ANREP). These awards will be presented to the recipients at the 2012 ANREP Convention in Hendersonville, NC.

Scott Barrett won the Gold Award in the Individual Program Leadership category for the Virginia SHARP Logger Program. Scott is the coordinator for the SHARP Logger program (www.sharplogger.vt.edu) which provides training in the principles of sustainable forestry, environmental protection, and workplace safety. Trainings are offered throughout Virginia to over 1400 active SHARP Loggers.



Scott Barrett



Adam Downing

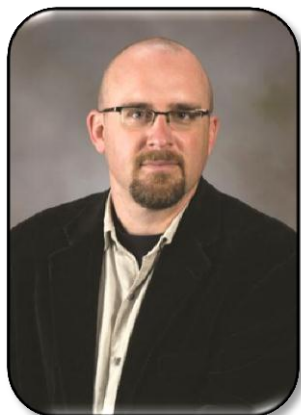
Adam Downing was part of a team recognized with a Gold Award in the DVD/Video/CD category for their "4 Minutes to a Better Backyard" video aimed at promoting stewardship and sustainability on small-scale properties, such as backyards. Jonathan Kays of the University of Maryland, a graduate of Virginia Tech's forestry program, led the development with the support of Adam and Jim Finley from Penn State University. The team has also won other national recognitions for their earlier work in development and delivery of educational material targeting small acreage forest owners with their book, "The Woods In Your Backyard: Learning to Create and Enhance Natural Areas Around Your Home."

Jennifer Gagnon received the Gold Award in the category of Newsletter/Series of Articles for her quarterly newsletter, the "Virginia Forest Landowner Update." Articles are provided by partners in Virginia Cooperative Extension, Virginia Department of Forestry, Virginia Department of Game & Inland Fisheries, Virginia Tech Faculty, graduate students, and many others. Currently, the newsletter is distributed electronically via the Forestupdate Listserv to 3,000 people; an additional 4,000 copies are sent out via USPS.



Jennifer Gagnon

Grants Awarded to Advance Forest Farming on a National Level



John Munsell

John Munsell, Assistant Professor and Forest Management Extension Specialist, has been awarded two grants totaling \$200,005 to advance forest farming on a national level. Forest farming is an agroforestry practice that intentionally cultivates edible, floral, medicinal, and craft products that grow underneath a forest canopy. Wild harvests of these products are often associated with substantial markets. Forest farming is an alternative to wild gathering that can tap into existing markets while also enhancing product consistency and resource sustainability. The first project is funded by the National Institute of Food Agriculture and the USDA Forest Service through the Rural Resources Act National Focus Funds program and will work through the eXtension project to develop a forest farming community of practice. The community of practice consists of practitioners and educators

across the country that will provide, compile, and deliver forest farming techniques and market information via eXtension's online portal. The second project is funded through a joint venture with the USDA Forest Service Southern Research Station and is intended to develop procedures for creating a non-timber product output report that will provide market information, such as non-timber product and volume flow, to forest farmers via public reports and a graphic user interface. Jim Chamberlain of the USDA's National Agroforestry Center, Steve Prisley and Matt Brinckman of FREC, and Tom Hammett in the Department of Wood Science and Forest Products are also involved in the joint venture.

Growing Virginia Kids and Trees for Virginia's Forests

Free seedlings will be available to youth, thanks to a partnership with VA Cooperative Extension/4H, VA Department of Forestry, VA Forestry Educational Foundation, Virginia's Customer Owned Electric Cooperatives, and Old Dominion Electric Cooperative. Pine seedlings are generally available without restriction while hardwood seedlings will be available on a limited basis. To request seedlings, contact your county Extension Office. For more information: <http://frec.vt.edu/freeseedlings/>



Junior Hokies Showcase Held on Virginia Tech Campus



Nearly 1,000 youth from surrounding elementary schools came to the Virginia Tech campus in October for a day of learning activities focusing on agriculture and natural resources. Emeritus Professor and Extension Specialist Jeff Kirwan, along with Cooperative Extension Agents from Giles, Pulaski, Craig, and Montgomery Counties and Master Naturalist volunteers, taught students the 10 most important trees in Virginia and their uses. Students learn about Virginia's natural resources in fourth grade.

Graduate Student Nina Craig Wins Multiple Awards

Nina Craig, M.S. student working with Dr. Brian Strahm, has received four awards for presentations made this past year:

- 2011 President's Award Recipient (\$300 prize), Canadian Society of Soil Science
- Best Poster, Division S-7 Graduate Student Poster Session, Soil Science Society of America International Annual Meeting
- Best Poster (\$300 prize), American Society of Mining and Reclamation Annual Meeting
- Best Poster, Department of Forest Resources and Environmental Conservation Graduate Student Symposium



Nina Craig

Additionally, Nina was invited to present her research at the 8th North American Forest Ecology Workshop in an Organized Session on Forest Land Reclamation.

Dr. Susan Day Publishes Book Chapter

Congratulations to Dr. Susan Day for having her book chapter published:

Bassuk, N.L. and S.D. Day. Site Design: Soils. 2011. In *The Sustainable Sites Handbook: A Complete Guide to the Principles, Strategies, and Best Practices for Sustainable Landscapes*. M. Calkins (Ed.). Wiley & Sons, Hoboken, New Jersey. 560 pp.

Susan Day

Dr. Susan Day Serves on Committee for Signed Executive Order 13514

Dr. Susan Day made significant contributions to guidelines in the area of soil protection and rehabilitation. She served on the Soils Technical Committee, the Core Technical Committee, and as a Credit Steward for Sustainable Sites Initiative (SITES™) during the past 5 years.

President Obama signed executive order 13514 "Federal Leadership in Environmental, Energy, and Economic Performance" that adopts guidelines developed from the Sustainable Sites Initiative (SITES™): Guidance for Federal Agencies on Sustainable Practices for Designed Landscapes.

Ms. Holly Kays Invited to Phi Beta Kappa

Holly Kays

Ms. Holly Kays, Senior in Natural Resources Conservation, has been invited to membership in Phi Beta Kappa, the nation's oldest and most widely known academic honor society. This is a very prestigious recognition of her hard work and talent.

During her time at Virginia Tech, Ms. Kays has also been heavily involved with Common Ground, a ministry of Ambassadors for Christ, and is a member of Phi Kappa Phi. She was the CNRE Outstanding Senior 2011, won the Dedman Prize in Professional Writing in 2009 and 2011, and earned second place in the Virginia Outdoor Writers Association Essay Contest in 2009.

Faculty Complete Virginia Natural Resource Leadership Institute Program

Dr. John McGee and Ms. Jennifer Gagnon completed the Virginia Natural Resource Leadership Institute in June, 2011.

The Virginia Natural Resource Leadership Institute (VNRLI) program is designed to support the needs of Virginia's leaders in the private, public, and nonprofit sectors to learn to address community conflicts over environmental issues. The Institute is a partnership between the Institute for Environmental Negotiation of the University of Virginia, Virginia Cooperative Extension, and the Virginia Department of Forestry.



John McGee



Jennifer Gagnon

VNRLI Fellows learn about conflict resolution and consensus building involving multiple stakeholders and they receive leadership training. In addition, participants delve into some of the more demanding challenges that Virginians face today, such as water quality and supply, human and animal waste management, urban and rural forestry, TMDL planning, chip mills and coal mining, sustainable agriculture, growth and land use. The VNRLI faculties expose participants to successful partnerships and efforts as well as to protracted or unresolved conflicts. The institute consists of six three-day sessions that are hosted at various areas across Virginia.

FREC Ambassadors

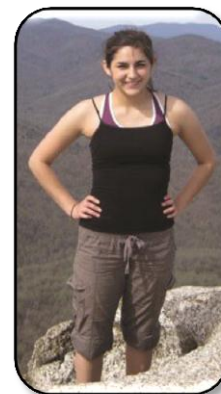


Lorelai Mackenzie



Colleen O'Connell

The FREC department has selected four students to serve as ambassadors. These students will be tasked with recruiting new students to the degree programs offered in our department. Lorelai Mackenzie, Alex Darr, Johanna Arredondo, and Colleen O'Connell will begin their positions as FREC ambassadors in the upcoming spring semester.



Johanna Arredondo

- Lorelai Mackenzie is majoring in Environmental Resource Management with a minor in Forestry, graduating in spring 2012.
- Colleen O'Connell is majoring in Natural Resources Conservation and Recreation Management with a minor in Forestry.
- Johanna Arredondo is double majoring in Natural Resource Conservation (Conservation and Recreation Management option) and Forestry (Urban Forestry option), graduating in 2013.
- Alex Darr is a Forestry major.

Virginia Loves Trees License Plates Available

A new revenue-sharing specialty license plate for Virginia is in the works to raise awareness of the value of community trees and fund community tree outreach and education around the state. Urban forestry faculty Dr. Susan D. Day and Dr. Eric Wiseman have worked with supporting organizations, including Trees Virginia (The Virginia Urban Forestry Council), The Virginia Nursery and Landscape Association, the Mid-Atlantic Chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture, the Green Industry Council, and others to propose the plate. Virginia Tech students created the design. The program needs to pre-sell 450 plates for the Department of Motor Vehicles to put the plate into production. Visit www.valovestrees.org for more information or to order your own plate!



Dr. Janaki Alavalapati Named Senior Fellow in U.S. State Department Program



Janaki Alavalapati

Janaki Alavalapati has been named a 2011 Senior Fellow in the Energy and Climate Partnership of the Americas program of the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs at the U.S. Department of State.

As a Senior Fellow, he will promote the Americas program addressing issues such as clean energy, sustainable landscapes, and climate-change adaptations. Fellows also visit Western Hemisphere countries to share best practices and expertise in research and development with assistance from U.S. embassies. This regional partnership was announced by President Barack Obama at the Summit of the Americas in April of 2009.

“I’m honored and excited to be invited to help our partner countries address their energy and environmental challenges,” Alavalapati said. “I hope to draw upon my economics and policy background and sustainable forestry experience in advancing the Energy and Climate Partnership of the Americas program.”

In the Energy and Climate Partnership of the Americas, Alavalapati will serve as a resource and work with representatives from government and nongovernment agencies and academia in countries seeking assistance. As a Senior Fellow, he will also work in an outreach capacity and participate in interviews by the media. His one-year appointment began September 1, 2011

Dr. Bruce Hull Nominated as Engaged Scholar of the Month

(Continued from page 1)



The Catawba Valley spans about 25 miles across parts of Botetourt, Roanoke, and Montgomery Counties in southwestern Virginia. With guidance from Gabbard and other university experts, Catawba residents and business people have promoted forest and riparian management, local food processing and marketing, and local tourism.

Catawba Landcare promotes “the triple bottom line of landcare – economy, community, and environment,” Hull says. “Mostly, it is about the residents taking charge of their future.”

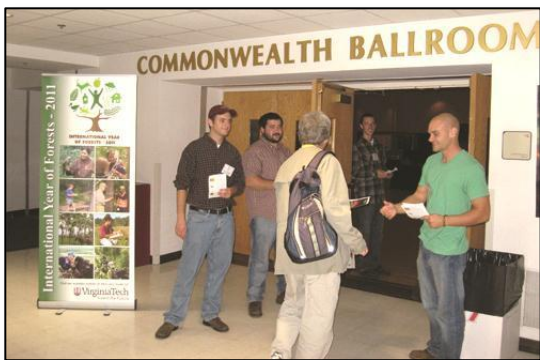
As university and community interest in the benefits of landcare grew, Virginia Tech’s Outreach and International Affairs joined with business and government sponsors to establish the Catawba Sustainability Center and VT EarthWorks. The center, situated on a 377-acre site in the Catawba Valley, is a showcase for land-management practices that promote environmental stewardship. VT EarthWorks supports new agricultural and natural resources businesses.



Urban Forestry Club

Four club members attended the Tree Care Industry Expo in Hartford, CT in November. There the club members participated in the intercollegiate arboriculture competition that included universities from around the United States. Senior Alex Darr won first place in the Arborist Safety Exam.

Club members also helped lead the annual campus tree planting during Sustainability Week in October. The students planted about a dozen maples, oaks, and cypresses on campus.

Virginia Tech Chapter of Society of American Foresters

The Virginia Tech Chapter of SAF has been active this semester with projects for the community. The chapter led an invasive species removal project in the landmark oak forest grove behind Lane Stadium. Additionally, the chapter helped organize and co-sponsor a movie screening of "Green Fire," a movie about Aldo Leopold and the land ethic he promoted for our time. The screening occurred in conjunction with a public panel that discussed local forests in a global context, and displays showcasing research from the College of Natural Resources and Environment at Virginia Tech.

Over 200 people attended the event, which was highlighted by Virginia Tech's Office of Outreach and International Affairs at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1r72ib1M6_k.

The chapter is actively participating in the ApSAF mentor program along with attending the Blue Ridge Chapter fall meeting in Roanoke. The chapter arranged for Ms. Kathy Radigan from the Division of Forests and Woodlands, US Bureau of Land Management, to present in the FREC Department Seminar Series. In the spring semester, the chapter plans to attend the annual Appalachian Society of American Foresters meeting in Wytheville with roughly 21 members.

Xi Sigma Pi

Xi Sigma Pi has been active by implementing a new tutoring program this year and offering mentoring and class advice to students in just about every major in the college. This will continue in the spring along with new service project opportunities to benefit the college and the community.



Xi Sigma Pi Members
and Faculty Advisors

Graduate Students Present Research

In October, Kevin McLean and Bethany Mutchler - both Master's candidates in the Department of Forest Resources and Environmental Conservation Human Dimensions Program - attended the 2011 North American Association of Environmental Conservation (NAAEE) Annual Conference in Raleigh, NC.

There they presented their preliminary findings from research conducted in 11 National Parks located around the country. NAAEE is an opportunity to share new research in the field of environmental education and showcase ideas about where the field can go in the future. Both students attended workshops and presented during the poster session as representatives of Virginia Tech.

Between May and August of 2011, the two traveled to National Parks ranging from Ford's Theater to Yosemite and Great Smoky Mountains to Point Reyes. During these three months they each attended over 100 interpretive programs, where they collected data about the programs and conducted surveys with visitors. This information, along with that gathered by another team from Clemson University, has been compiled into one of the largest databases on interpretive programming to date.

NAAEE was an opportunity to showcase this data and discuss preliminary results regarding which program and interpreter characteristics create the most positive reactions in visitors. There was a great deal of interest in the project from others in attendance at the conference. Final data analysis will likely yield empirical data that can guide interpretive practices in the future and continually improve the field of interpretation.



Visitors immerse themselves in the beauty of Yosemite National Park by taking a trip down the Merced River, with Yosemite Falls in the distance.



A ranger recounts the history of the Star-Spangled Banner with visitors during one of the daily "Flag Talks" at Ft. McHenry National Historic Site in Baltimore, MD.



During their visit to Gettysburg National Battlefield Park, a family learns more about the tragic events that unfolded during the Battle of Gettysburg.

FREC Volleyball Team..... "DIG THIS"



"Dig This" Volleyball Team is a co-ed team consisting of FREC faculty, staff, and graduate students. They played throughout the fall season at the Blacksburg Community Center.

Pictured: Tom Kuhar, Bruce Hull, Nina Craig, Christine Blinn, Stacey Kuhar, and James Wilson. (Not pictured: Tal Roberts, Laura Wear, Caysie Martin, Jason Martin)

Congratulations Summer and Fall 2011 Graduates!

Ph.D. Program

Asim Banskota
Joseph Conrad
Valquiria Quirino
Susmita Sen

M.S. Program

Courtney Reijo
Tyler Wright

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Welcome New Graduate Students – Summer and Fall 2011

Ph.D.

- Ranjith Gopalakrishnan
- Huiquan Jiang
- Rebecca Kidd
- Andrew Lavinier
- Brian Morris
- Andrew Neal
- Santosh Subedi
- Bingxue Wang
- Man Zhang

Master's

- Sean Allen
- Elizabeth Boehme
- Adam Christie
- Kenneth Comish
- Cody Gillin
- Brett Heim
- Maura Leveroos
- Laura Lorentz
- Kelly McDonald
- Elizabeth Moore
- Lara Nichols
- Regis Oubida
- Melissa Shockey
- Paliza Shrestha



David Groeschl

David Groeschl (1991 M.S. Forestry) has been named Idaho's State Forester by Idaho Department of Lands Director Tom Schultz. Schultz states that Groeschl brings a wealth of experience to a job that requires a strong understanding of the nuts and bolts of forestry along with the complexities of managing endowment lands within a state dominated by federal public lands.

"We are lucky to have someone of David's caliber to take over the reigns as the state forester. He brings

experience from the private sector and other parts of the country adding to his extensive forestry background in Idaho to help us succeed in our endowment mission to maximize these resources for the beneficiaries of the state."

David's broad forestry experience over the last 23 years includes work in the private, industrial, and public forestry sectors as well as in three different geographic regions of the country – the South, the Lake States, and the Intermountain West.

He joined the Idaho Department of Lands (IDL) in 2008 as the Forestry and Fire Division Administrator. David was appointed as the Acting State Forester in July of 2011.

Gifts from our clients and friends have a direct impact on the quality of learning, discovery, and engagement programs that the Department of Forest Resources and Environmental Conservation offers. We invite you to become part of our team! To make a tax-deductible contribution, send your check, payable to the Virginia Tech Foundation, Inc., to: Department of Forest Resources and Environmental Conservation, 313 Cheatham Hall (0324), Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA 24061

For further information on memorial giving, endowed professorships, gifts of securities, planned or deferred giving opportunities or other contributions, please contact Mr. Bob Mollenhauer, Development Officer, at 540-231-8859 or send an e-mail to bobm5@vt.edu.