LAND SAVERS

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BLUE RIDGE LAND CONSERVANCY
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CENTRAL VIRGINIA LAND CONSERVANCY
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SOUTHERN VIRGINIA LAND CONSERVANCY
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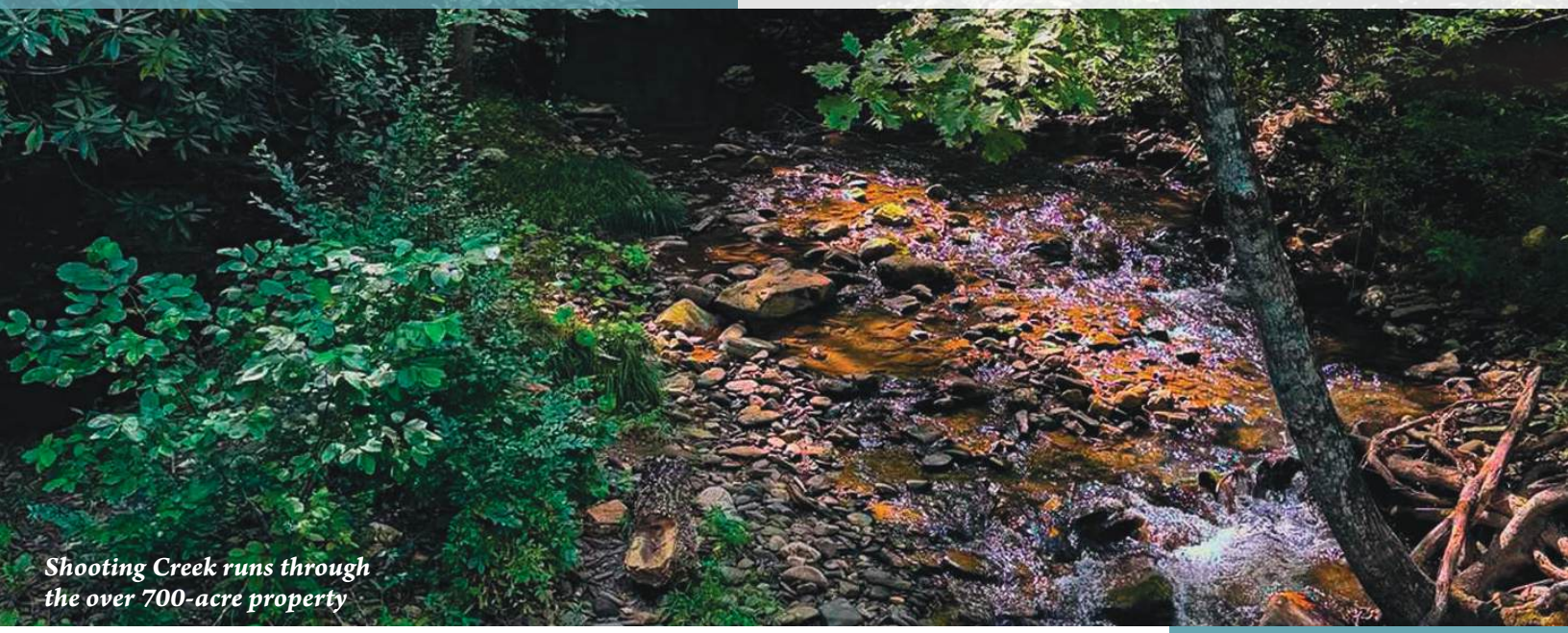

Shooting Creek runs through the over 700-acre property

Southern Virginia family creates a legacy in this life and beyond

BY CHRIS HOLDREN

Along the rugged folds of southwest Franklin and Patrick Counties, Shooting Creek runs through a landscape steeped in history, mountain traditions, and stories passed down from one generation to the next. Along this creek you can find the 716-acre tract owned by Judy Sledd and her niece Michelle Smith Johnson. It was August of last year when I was introduced to the Smith/Sledd family. They were hoping we would be willing to assist them with placing a conservation easement on the property.

After a brief introduction, we toured the property with the Sledds. I listened as Judy recounted some of the history of the area, and I could not help but notice how passionate she was regarding each aspect of their property. It did not take long to realize just how ingrained Shooting Creek and the Smith family property itself was in not only Franklin County's history but even reaching back as far as the founding of our nation. Located not far down a narrow logging road that leads out a ridge overlooking Shooting Creek rested a headstone placed by the Daughters of the American Revolution. It commemorated the life of one of the area's first landowners, Edward Cochran, who served during the Revolutionary War and had settled the area in the mid 1700s.

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The preservation of this pristine property is truly a family legacy.

—JUDY SLEDD

Left to right: Charlie, Judy, and Adam Sledd

We protect the lands and waters you love, forever.

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MEMBER OF:

FROM THE DIRECTOR

For Pete's sake, don't recycle!

What are you going to do with this newsletter when you're through reading it?

If you said recycle it, you're probably like most of us. If you said throw it away, well . . . shame on you.

Actually, shame on both camps.

Don't recycle this newsletter or throw it away. And don't leave it lying on the kitchen counter or the coffee table or wherever stuff piles up in your house.

That's just selfish.

That's right: ***Recycling is selfish.***

I want you to think of someone that might enjoy this newsletter, and give it to them.

Your neighbor. A coworker. Someone at church. Someone in your pickleball group. Someone you ride or run with.

Give this newsletter to them, and say the following words: "Clyde, I'd like you to read this."

(But only call them Clyde if Clyde is their name. We will trust you to use your judgement here.)

Say, "Clyde, I'd like you to read this. We support saving land, and I think you should too."

Now THAT is a good use of a once-read newsletter. Not the recycling bin or the trash can or the dining room table stuck underneath an L.L. Bean catalog and the cable bill.

Yep, share the good news. Spread the gospel. Jesus didn't have a printing press, but if he had, he wouldn't have told the apostles to read that week's lesson and throw it away. In fact, Jesus told the apostles to share what he'd taught them with all of creation!

And I'm only asking you to give one gently-perused newsletter to someone you know. I realize I can't make any promises about your rewards in the afterlife, but I can give you a reasonable assurance that you'll feel good about passing along some info about a cause you care about.

To summarize: Recycling bad. Sharing good.

Clyde is waiting.

David Perry
Executive Director

Southern Virginia family creates a legacy in this life and beyond

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Franklin County, especially the area around Shooting Creek, was once known for the production of illegal whiskey. The hills and hollows along Shooting Creek became the haunts for those looking to make "White Lightning" as it is locally known. The Smith/Sledd property was no different. Throughout the afternoon I listened to Judy recount tales regarding various aspects of moonshining that had taken place in and around their property.

One such tale was that of an illicit moonshine bust that had taken place on the property. Judy ushered us into a cabin used by the Shooting Creek hunting club, another long-standing tradition in the area that was established by Judy's grandfather. Inside hung a framed newspaper article recounting the events, as well as photographs of the moonshine seized, and the illegal stills used during the production. The tales Judy recounted attached to the creek and the property were fascinating. After our meeting, I made my way back to the office with not only a sense of excitement for such an impressive property but a sense of urgency to help the Sledds see the conservation easement through to its completion.

Edward Cochran, one of the area's first landowners

There were lots of agencies involved, because the Sledds had received a state grant to purchase part of the conservation easement and donate the rest, and the property lies in two counties. Over the next few months, the easement came together through collaboration with the Patrick County Soil and Water Conservation District, Blue Ridge Soil and Water Conservation District, and Conservation Partners, a group from Lexington that assists landowners that we often work with. It took the combined effort of all the partners who understood the importance of getting the work done. The cooperation between the Patrick County Soil and Water Conservation District, Blue Ridge Soil and Water Conservation District, and Conservation Partners showed how local relationships can make a real difference when everyone is willing to work together with urgency, trust, and a shared sense of purpose.

Sadly, within a few days of Judy learning that the property she loved so much had been protected forever, she passed after a courageous battle with cancer. It was truly an honor for Southern Virginia Land Conservancy to work with the Smith/Sledd family on the conservation easement for their Franklin and Patrick County property. Every easement begins with a landowner's love for a particular place; Judy and Michelle's commitment reflected a deep respect for the land and its history.

Landscapes protected today become part of a legacy that outlasts any one lifetime. In that way, this family's easement is both a remembrance and a promise: a remembrance of a landowner who cared deeply, and a promise that the land will remain protected for those who come after. To quote Judy, "The preservation of this pristine property is truly a family legacy." She has forever protected that legacy! I am grateful for the opportunity to have worked with Judy and her family on this meaningful easement. Her conservation decision stands as a testament to the power of individual action and to the enduring value of protecting the lands that shape Southern Virginia's identity. I am honored to have helped carry their vision forward.

REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

BLUE RIDGE LAND CONSERVANCY

BY KACIE AMSTUTZ

Hello, Land Conservancy friends! I'd like to (re) introduce myself as the new Assistant Director of Blue Ridge, Central Virginia, and Southern Virginia Land Conservancies. Many of you may already know me from my nearly four years as Stewardship Manager, where I had the privilege of working with our landowners and monitoring the beautiful properties you've helped protect. I'm excited to step into this new role and continue supporting our mission in new ways as we grow conservation efforts across our regions.

In the Blue Ridge region, we are working with landowners to protect two new properties in Roanoke and Botetourt Counties, while interest in conservation has grown significantly in Bedford and Franklin Counties following the launch of our new Tobacco Commission grant program. It is encouraging to see landowners exploring ways to protect their farms, forests, and family legacies for generations to come.

Conservation is also about building connections, with land and with one another. Looking ahead, we are excited for our 2027 Ecuador adventure. This trip will give supporters the opportunity to experience one of the most biologically diverse places on Earth while traveling with fellow conservation-minded friends. From cloud forests to incredible wildlife, this adventure will be an unforgettable way to celebrate the beauty and importance of protecting natural landscapes, both here at home and around the world. Please see brlcva.org/ecuador-trip for more information and don't hesitate to reach out to me at (540) 985-0000 ext. 2 or kamstutz@brlcva.org if you have any questions. Registration closes January 2027.

As I step into this new chapter, I want to thank each of you for your continued support for BRLC, CVALC, and SVALC. Your generosity makes every conservation success possible. I look forward to working together as we forever protect the places that define our homes and communities.

SOUTHERN VIRGINIA LAND CONSERVANCY

BY CHRIS HOLDREN

I hope everyone found a way to beat the heat for the summer and hopefully everyone received some beneficial rains. I have some exciting news that I hope will benefit our organization and our landowners in the future. The Tobacco Commission recently funded a grant throughout the entire SVALC service area that will help landowners offset costs up to $10,000 for professional services related to conservation easements. What's even more exciting is that as of the beginning of August we have received our first official application to take advantage of that grant.

We are pleased to be able to offer a program of this nature to landowners who may be considering a conservation easement. I look forward to helping more landowners with their applications and the eventual completion of their easements to add to the ever growing list of conserved properties throughout southside Virginia. Please give me a call at (276) 224-6489 or e-mail me at choldren@svalc.org if you're a Southern Virginia landowner who'd like to take advantage of this opportunity.

CENTRAL VIRGINIA LAND CONSERVANCY

BY CHARLES C. LACY, JR.

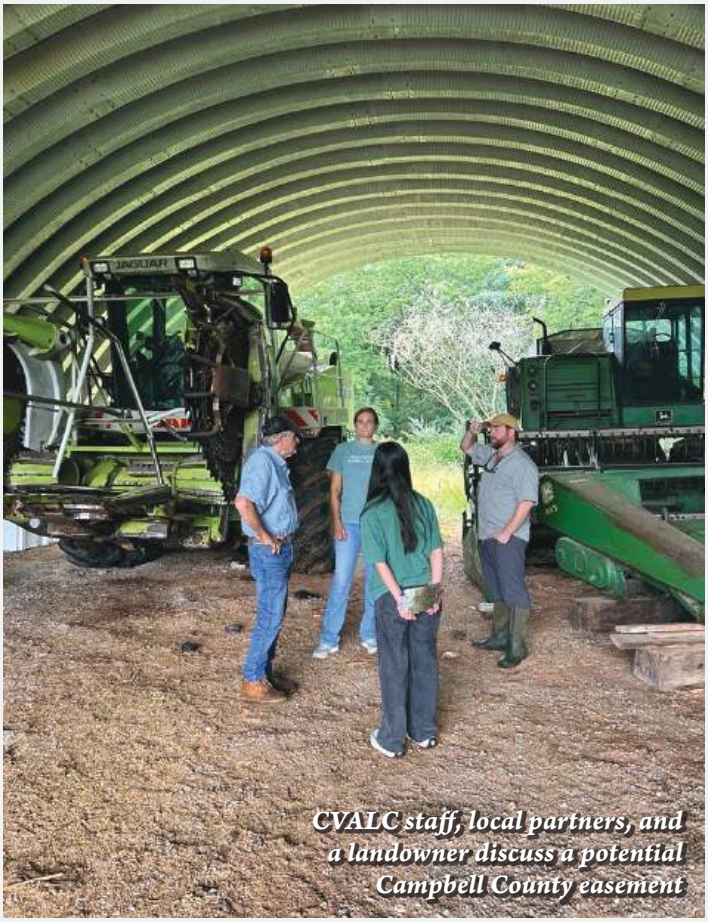
Central Virginia Land Conservancy has had a busy, but FUN, summer so far. We've worked booths at several exciting festivals in the service area: the James River Batteau Festival, Monacan Powwow, and Rustburg Summer Reading Street Fair, to name a few.

In between events, we have eight new conservation easements currently in development – about half of which we expect to close this calendar year.

Stewardship monitoring of our easement portfolio is ahead of schedule, and as always landowners are taking excellent care of the land that makes our region beautiful.

We look forward to filling the rest of summer with more festivals and more land protected. Be on the lookout for a series of landowner easement workshops we are planning for the fall and winter. More info to come.

Please reach out to Charles Lacy at clacy@cvalc.org or (434) 942-4320 if you have any questions, or would like to get outside for a field visit sometime.



CVALC staff, local partners, and a landowner discuss a potential Campbell County easement

CVALC staff checking out the landowners forage harvester

Program manager, Charles Lacy, with his wife and daughter, work a booth at the Summer Reading Grand Finale Street Fair in Rustburg

Stewardship update from Rose Harvey, new Stewardship Manager

Rose Harvey

Hello! My name is Rose Harvey, and I am the new Stewardship Manager for the Blue Ridge, Central Virginia, and Southern Virginia Land Conservancies. I graduated from Virginia Tech last May with a degree in Ecological Restoration. As a Roanoke native, I am excited to begin a career helping to conserve the landscapes that raised me. Last summer, I had the opportunity to intern with BRLC, an experience that taught me so much about the world of land conservation and inspired me to continue pursuing this field.

Since starting in July, I have enjoyed meeting landowners and visiting the properties they have conserved. It is a privilege to experience these beautiful parts of Virginia and learn about the many reasons landowners choose to protect their land.

Rose working as a land conservancy intern last summer.

In my free time, I enjoy traveling and spending time outdoors hiking, camping, climbing, and paddle boarding. I am also an artist and potter, and I love creating art inspired by things I see in nature.

Other Ways to Give

You can donate your extra vehicle, real estate, or stocks to support us.

VEHICLES

REAL ESTATE

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BLUE RIDGE LAND CONSERVANCY
brlcva.org/turn-cars-into-land.html

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SOUTHERN VIRGINIA LAND CONSERVANCY
svalc.org/turn-cars-into-land.html

LAND CONSERVANCY RECEIVES GRANT
from Tobacco Commission

Your local land conservancy was delighted to receive a $100,000 grant from the Virginia Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission to help save land! Specifically, we're now able to offer qualifying landowners grants of up to $10,000 each to help cover the costs of placing a conservation easement on their farm or forest land.

The Tobacco Commission seeks to meet the region's specific challenges related to a historic dependence on tobacco production, textile and furniture manufacturing, and coal production. Agriculture is our region's #1 private industry. Conservation easements help Virginia's rural economy by helping farmers keep farming and ensuring their land remains available for agriculture and forestry in the future. Conservation easement donors can earn valuable state and federal tax benefits that can be used to expand farm operations, pay off farm debt or other uses.

The grant is available to landowners in Franklin, Patrick, Henry, Pittsylvania, Halifax, Bedford, Campbell, Appomattox and Buckingham counties. To qualify for a grant, landowners have to meet certain income and land use guidelines, and their property has to be approved for a conservation easement by the land conservancy.

For more information and to arrange someone from our staff to visit you on your property, call Kacie Amstutz at (540) 985-0000 ext. 2.

BLUE RIDGE LAND CONSERVANCY
OUTDOOR ADVENTURE SERIES

ADVENTURE AWAITS....

FULL MOON HIKE

- September 26
- Carvins Cove
- 7-9 PM
- $10 per person

Limited space! Sign up early!

CAHAS HIKE

- October 24
- Franklin County
- 9 AM - 3 PM
- $10 per person

MORE INFO >

$5 of the fee is a tax deductible donation.

Or contact Tina at tbadger@brlcva.org
540-985-0000 x 3
brlcva.org/outdoor-adventures.html

Members get a $5 discount on event fees

WASKA AMAZONÍA

BLUE RIDGE LAND CONSERVANCY

SCAN ME

EXPERIENCE ECUADOR

Join the Blue Ridge Land Conservancy in Ecuador, August 8-22, 2027 to experience the Land of Four Worlds! We will be exploring from the Andes to the Amazon and hope you'll be one of the 18 people joining us!
The 15 day experience is $4,450 per traveler and limited to 18 people.

Registration is now open on our website:
brlcva.org/ecuador-trip

For more information please contact Kacie:
kamstutz@brlcva.org 540-985-0000 x 2