



Commonwealth of Virginia
Office of Governor Bob McDonnell

**Governor McDonnell Announces \$1.2 million in
Farmland Preservation Grants**

*~Thirteen Localities Receive Funds to Place Working Farmlands Under
Permanent Conservation Easements~*

RICHMOND – Governor Bob McDonnell today announced the distribution of \$1.2 million in farmland preservation grants from the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) to 13 Virginia localities. This is a significant increase from the \$100,000 available last fiscal year for state matching funds. Localities must use the grant monies to preserve farmland within their boundaries through local Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) programs. PDR programs compensate landowners who permanently preserve their land by voluntarily placing a perpetual conservation easement on it.

“Even in these difficult economic times, the General Assembly and I are committed to setting aside funds for preserving working farmland that produces goods, provides jobs, generates tax revenue for localities all while requiring little to no services from those same localities,” said Governor McDonnell. “One of my top environmental priorities is to permanently preserve 400,000 acres of land during my administration, much of which will be working farmlands and forests. In addition to the significantly increased funds announced today, the budget proposal I submitted to the General Assembly last month includes a continuation of \$1.2 million in state matching funds for local PDR programs in the next two fiscal years for a total of \$2.4 million in grant funding over the biennium. I’m hopeful the General Assembly will accept this proposal so we can continue to work with localities to preserve our valuable working farmlands.”

Twenty-two local PDR programs currently exist in Virginia, 18 of which have had some level of local funding available over the past few years. In addition, two of the 13 localities, Shenandoah and Washington Counties, are receiving state matching funds for the first time.

This is the fifth time that the Commonwealth of Virginia has provided state matching funds for certified local PDR programs. A total of \$6.45 million has been allocated since

February 2008. To date, almost 5,200 acres on 36 farms in 11 localities have been permanently protected in part with \$4.94 million of these funds. Additional easements are expected to close using the remaining funds over the next two years.

For the FY 2012 allocation round, each of the following eight localities received \$110,952.46: the cities of Chesapeake and Virginia Beach and the counties of Albemarle, Clarke, Fauquier, Isle of Wight, James City, and Spotsylvania. Other localities received the following amounts: Shenandoah County, \$105,000; Stafford County, \$66,093; Franklin County, \$50,000; Washington County, \$46,000; and Northampton County, \$45,287.30. Grant applicants had to report how much funding was available for their local PDR programs as of October 21, 2011, and the state funds matched that amount up to \$110,952.46 per locality. Currently, these 13 localities report more than \$18 million available in local matching funds (\$5,598,643 for FY 2012, and \$12,623,422 from previous years) available for their PDR programs, but state matching funds for FY 2012 are limited to \$1.2 million.

“Local governments are a key component in preserving working farmland,” said Matthew J. Lohr, VDACS Commissioner, the agency that administers the state’s farmland preservation program. “Preserving working farms not only keeps the land from development or disuse, but it also maintains the Commonwealth’s number one industry, agriculture. At the same time, we are taking steps to ensure the continuation of a reliable food supply for the future within our own borders.”

Localities interested in future rounds of grant applications for PDR matching funds should contact the Office of Farmland Preservation, Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, 102 Governor St., Richmond VA 23219 or call 804.786.1346. They may also e-mail Kevin Schmidt, the Office of Farmland Preservation Coordinator, at kevin.schmidt@vdacs.virginia.gov.