



# Leave a Legacy: The Benefits of Conservation Easements

Emily Warner  
Land Protection Director  
Potomac Conservancy



The logo for Potomac Conservancy, featuring the words "potomac" in blue and "conservancy" in green, with a stylized blue wave graphic above and below the text.

potomac  
conservancy

The logo for the Accredited Land Trust Accreditation Commission, featuring the word "ACCREDITED" in green at the top, a green infinity symbol in the center, and "LAND TRUST ACCREDITATION COMMISSION" in green at the bottom.

ACCREDITED  
LAND TRUST  
ACCREDITATION COMMISSION

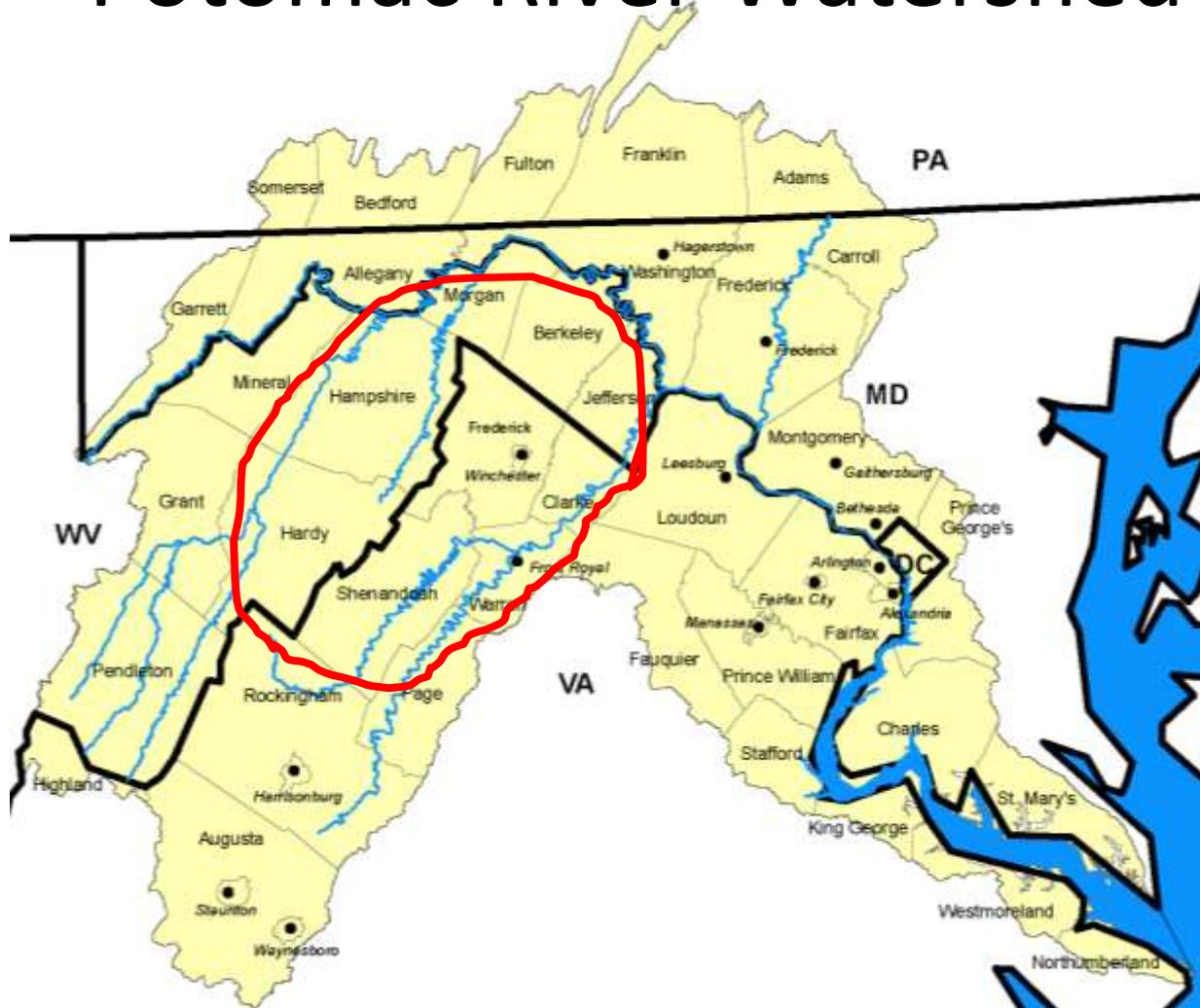
# Potomac Conservancy

Founded in 1993

Accredited in 2010

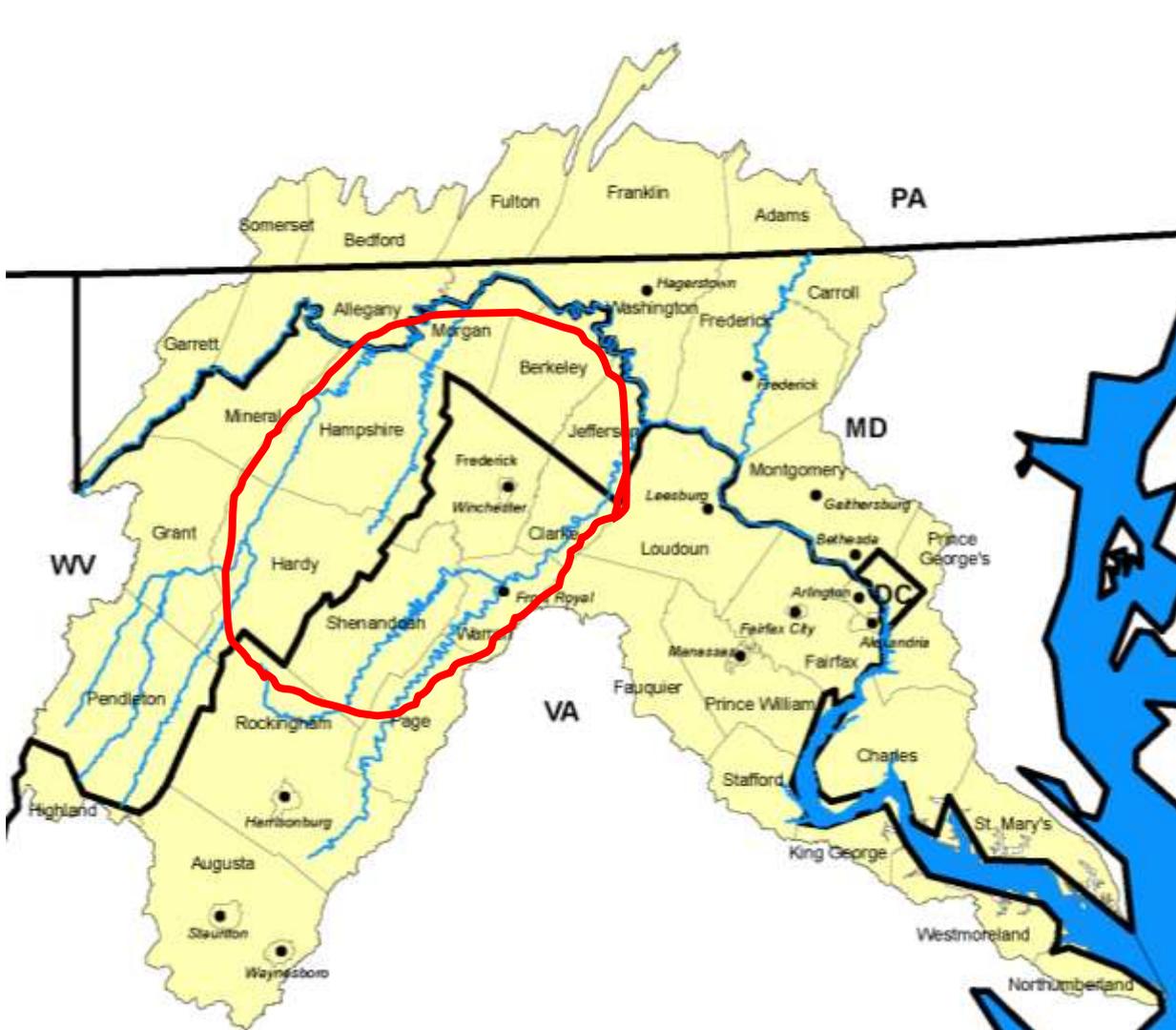
Safeguards the lands and waters of the  
Potomac River and its tributaries

# Where We Work: Potomac River Watershed



Watershed = all the land that collects water for a particular water body  
(from pond to Chesapeake Bay)

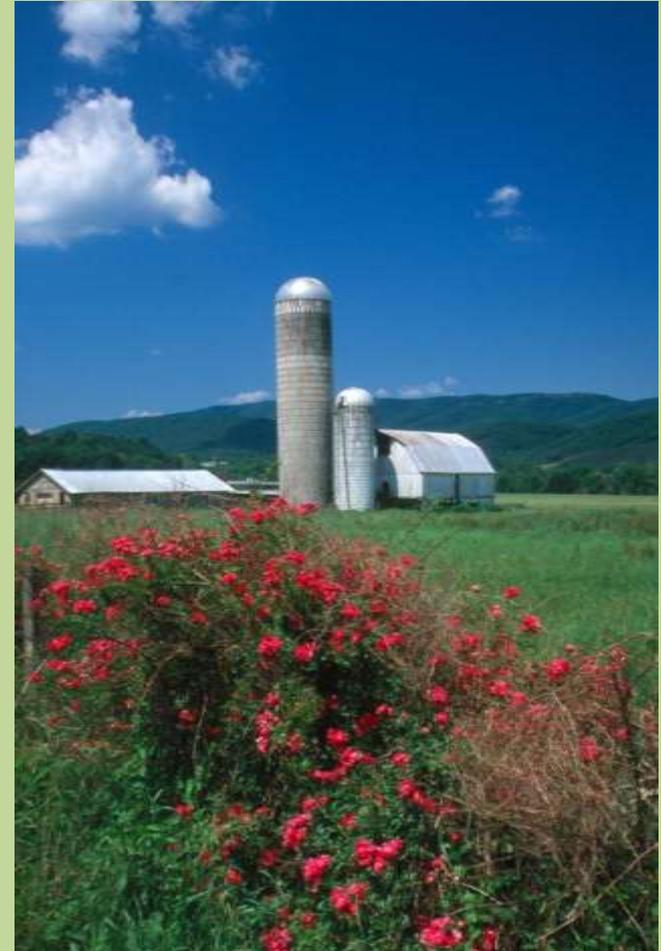
# Where We Work: Potomac River Watershed



- We technically cover the entire Potomac River watershed (PA, WV, VA, MD, & DC),
  - But since that's A LOT of land, we prioritize.

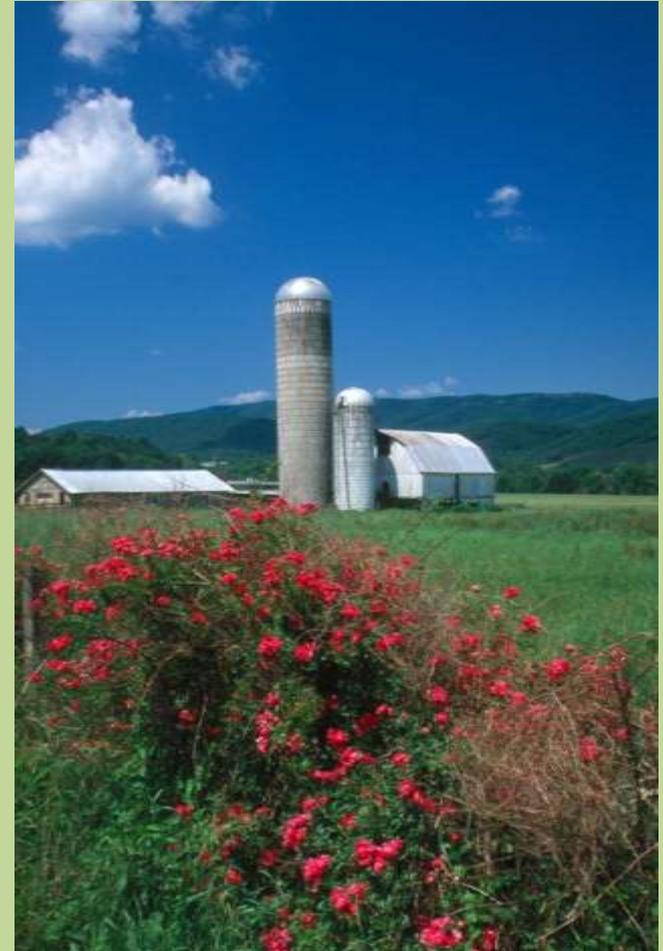
# Conservation Easements

- Permanently protect land for natural & agricultural uses
- Landowner-Driven: You decide what to restrict (& how much).
- Legal agreements between landowners & land trusts  
(You make the rules; we enforce them.)



# Conservation Easements

- Permanently protect land for natural & agricultural uses
- Landowner-Driven: You decide what to restrict (& how much).
- Legal agreements between landowners & land trusts  
(You make the rules; we enforce them.)



# Conservation Easements

## Protect

- Streams & Rivers
- Wildlife
- Agriculture
- Forests & Forestry
- Historic Sites
- Scenery

## Restrict

- Subdivision
- Development
- Stream degradation
- Mining/Gas drilling
- Industrial Uses
- Impervious surface

# Why a Conservation Easement?

- Preserve Farm/Forest for next Generation
- Ensure Habitat for Wildlife
- Preserve your Community's Iconic Features
- Keep Property in the Family
- Tax Benefits/Sale Income

# Frequent Questions

- **May I still run livestock?**
  - Yes. Moo!
- **May I still cut timber?**
  - Yes, with a management plan.
- **May I give my land to my kids or put it into a trust/LLC?**
  - Yes, Yes, and Yes.
- **Will my land be open to public access?**
  - No, not unless you want it to be.
- **Will the land trust tell me how to run my farm?**
  - No. Land trusts enforce the terms of your easement only. Anything else is your business.

**YOU decide the specifics of YOUR easement!**

# Easement Holder

- Easement Holder = Land Trust or Conservancy
- Holder's Duty => Enforce the Conservation Easement so as to protect the Property's Conservation Values
  - Annual monitoring
  - Approvals
  - Violations
  - Recordkeeping



# Landowner Benefits

A man and a woman are standing on a hillside, looking out over a vast, green landscape. The man is on the left, wearing a plaid shirt and a cap, and the woman is on the right, wearing a blue shirt. They are both looking towards the right, where a valley opens up. In the distance, there are rolling hills and a small farm with a white house and a barn. The sky is overcast.

- **Peace of Mind**
- **Keep Land in Family**
- **Leave a Land & Water Legacy**
- **Tax Benefits/Sale Income**
- **Avoid Family Land Arguments**

# Financial Benefits

$$\begin{array}{r} \$ \text{ Property Value (no restrictions)} \\ - \quad \$ \text{ Property Value with Easement Restrictions} \\ \hline \$ \text{ Conservation Easement Value} \end{array}$$

## 1. Sale Income

## 2. Donation Tax Benefits:

- Local Property Tax Reduction
- Federal Income Tax Deduction
- Estate Tax Deduction (often allows heirs to keep land)
- Virginia *Transferable* Tax Credits Earned

# Easement Donors' Speak Out

“So many of today’s generations did not grow up on a farm and have been denied the chance to bond with the land. Here you can do just that.

- Caroline Stalnaker  
Easement Donor/Innkeeper



Mt. Pleasant Farm (1812)  
Shenandoah County, VA

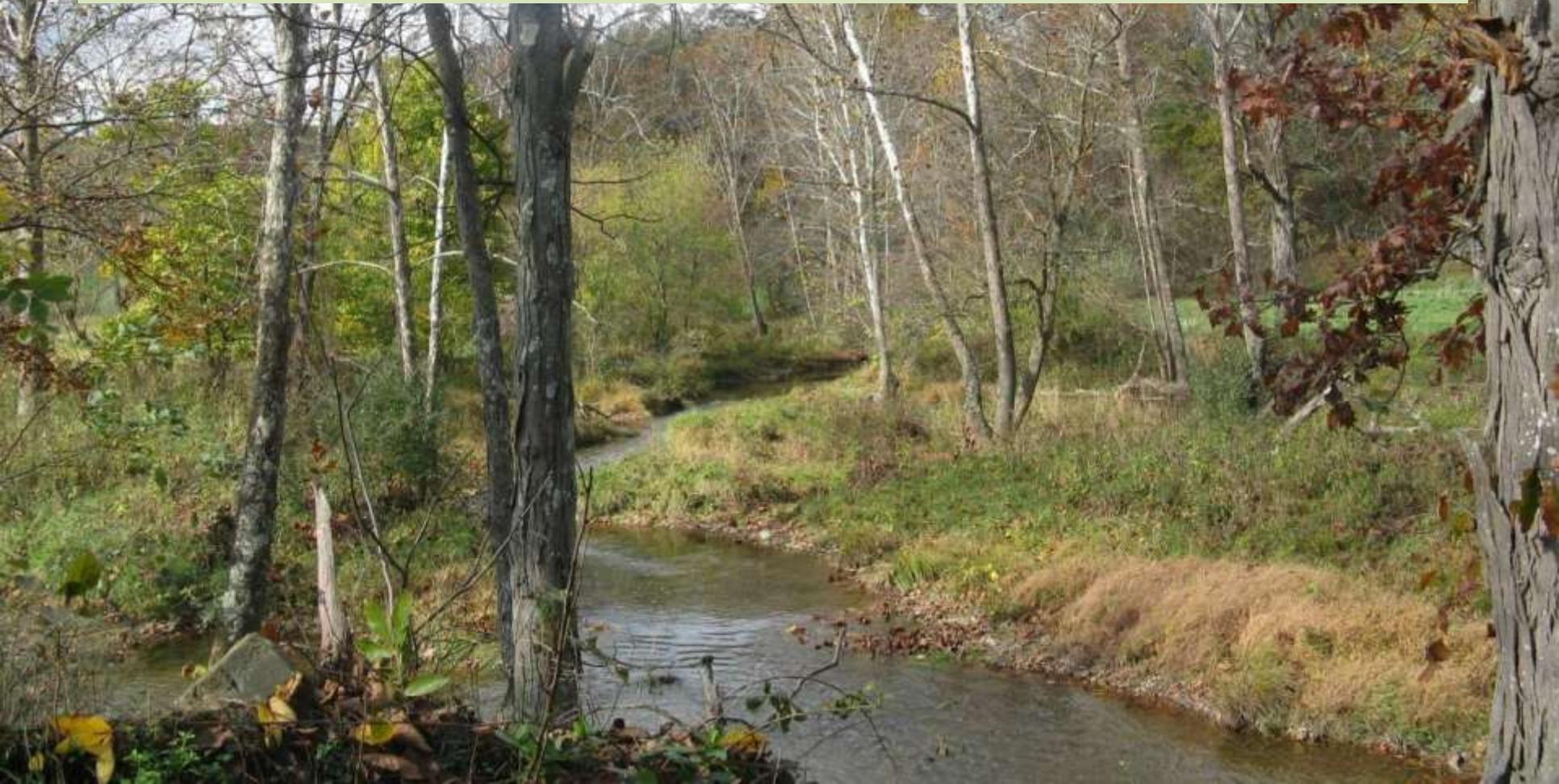
“I don’t believe I would ever be able to leave this world in peace, knowing that someone was just around the corner, waiting to cut up and destroy something that is such a part of me.”

-John Gavitt, Hampshire County, WV



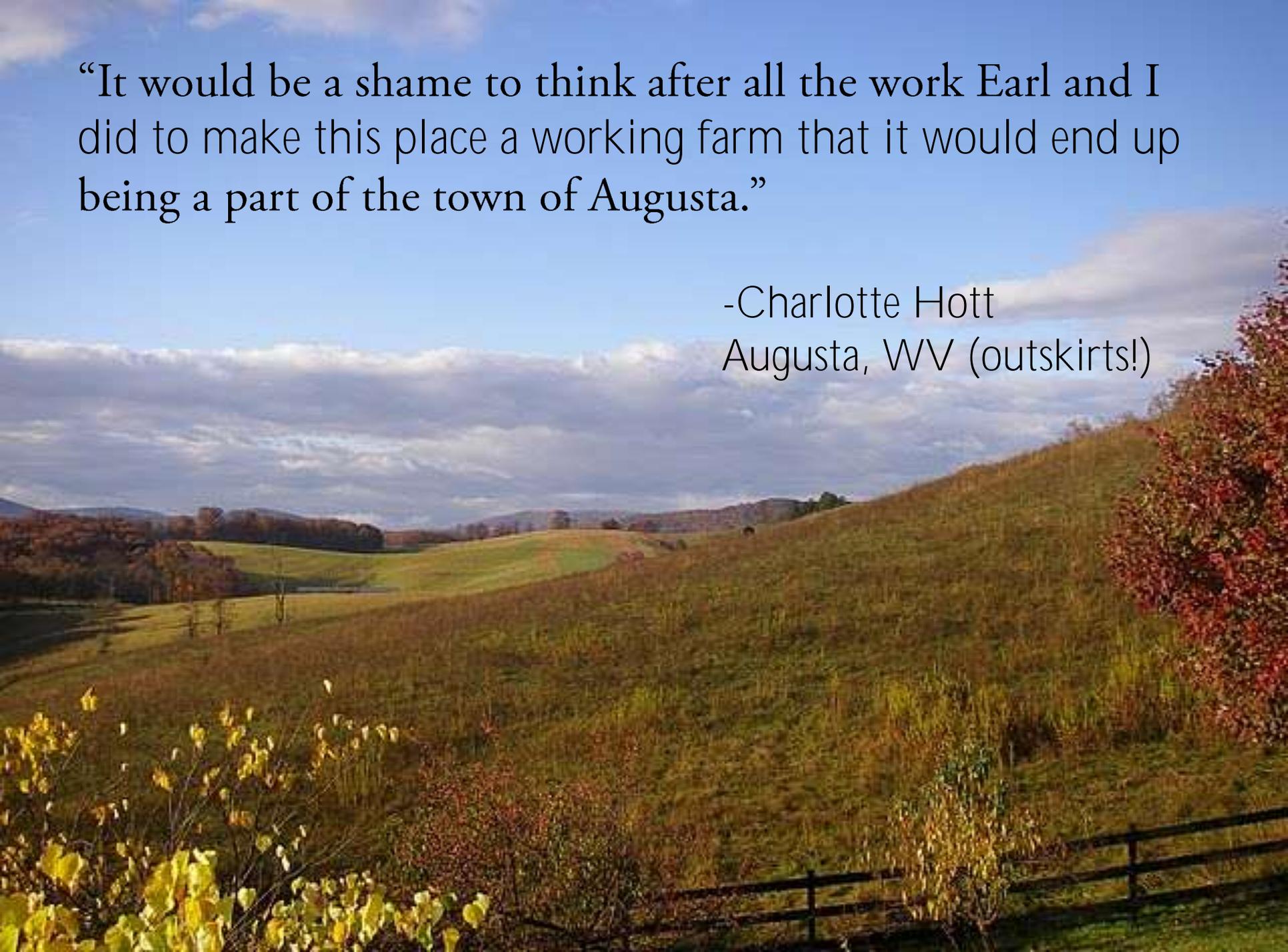
**“With this conservation easement, we celebrate Helen and Lynn's vision to protect this land, this creek, these hills, and the wild animals that inhabit them in perpetuity. ”**

- Sally Myers, Frederick County, VA



“It would be a shame to think after all the work Earl and I did to make this place a working farm that it would end up being a part of the town of Augusta.”

-Charlotte Hott  
Augusta, WV (outskirts!)





**“It is important to me to see my land continue open for cattle grazing purposes. Open land with its beauty is something we all need to preserve or all will be gone in time.”**

**- Betty Snapp  
Frederick County, VA**

Now I know the land will be beautiful forever.

~ Nancy Pfaff



# Find a Land Trust

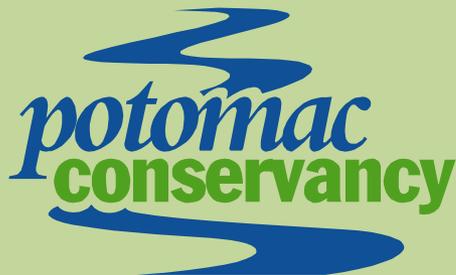
[www.findalandtrust.org](http://www.findalandtrust.org)

VA: [www.dcr.virginia.gov/land\\_conservation/whereto4.shtml](http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/land_conservation/whereto4.shtml)

WV: [www.wvfarmlandprotection.org](http://www.wvfarmlandprotection.org)

MD: [www.dnr.state.md.us/met/landtrustslists.pdf](http://www.dnr.state.md.us/met/landtrustslists.pdf)

PA: [www.conservationtools.org/organizations](http://www.conservationtools.org/organizations)



Emily Warner  
Land Protection Director

**540.667.3606**

210 S. Braddock St  
Winchester, VA 22601

[warner@potomac.org](mailto:warner@potomac.org)

[www.potomac.org](http://www.potomac.org)