

## ***Save Some Land for Our Children***

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(Appeared as "*Preserve Land for Future Generations*" in the October 16, 2002 edition of the *Connection*.)

"They aren't making any more land," is the slogan of a local land speculator. He laments this fact because the amount of land he can buy up, flip for a sizable profit, and see developed is limited. And the environmentalists have the same concern but for very different reasons. The amount of land that can be conserved, maintained for parks, or protected from sprawl is, likewise, limited.

In recent years the surge towards development of land has been evident. In Virginia the number of areas that have been taken over by development is astounding. Just take a ride west or south of our region to see the increasing sprawl.

On the ballot on November 5, voters will have two opportunities to help bring the equation on the use of land a little more into balance. A statewide bond issue for \$119 million is on the ballot for approval, as is a Fairfax County Park bond issue for \$20 million. Both deserve our support.

The "Virginia Parks and Natural Areas Bond" would provide \$78 million for construction, improvement and repair projects in the state's existing 34 parks including Mason Neck, Leesylvania and Sky Meadows State Park. These improvements are intended to make the parks more accessible to the public.

The remaining \$41 million would be used to purchase land for three new state parks and 10 new natural area preserves, expand existing parks, improve trails, and protect park land from soil erosion. For more information on projects, go to [\*\*\*www.dcr.state.va.us/bond\*\*\*](http://www.dcr.state.va.us/bond).

Virginia parks were designated this year by the professional association of park managers as being the best managed parks in the nation. From my 20 years of serving on the House Agriculture, Chesapeake and Natural Resources Committee and having visited and inspected parks throughout the Commonwealth, I can confirm that the parks are well managed and that management comes from the dedicated men and women who are employed by the Parks Department. They are as creative and hard working as any group of workers I have ever seen.

Aside from their love of their work and their dedication to land conservation and parks management, those employees have needed to be resourceful. Virginia ranks 50th in terms of percentage of state budget spent on parks and 49th in per capita park spending.

Fairfax County plans to spend its \$20 million park bond issue on purchasing additional park land and improving existing parks. A quick look around you should be convincing that we need to be buying park land locally as soon as possible.

Join me in voting for these two bond issues on November 5. And with the feel of fall in the air and the leaves starting to turn, drive out and visit a park in our region. And thank the park staff while you are there for the great job they are doing.