

The Bur

Newsletter of the Virginia chapter of the American Chestnut Foundation

FALL 2010

VOLUME 4 NUMBER 2



MEMBERS AND GUESTS IN TUNE AT STONY BROOK FARM VOLUNTEER PARTY CELEBRATE A BANNER YEAR FOR ORCHARD EXPANSION AND POLLINATION



Volunteer Charles Harris and daughter query Katy McCune

Earle Martin, whose Stony Brook Farm in the Syria valley, was the site of our first 2010 orchard planting, played host again July 31 at a Gala supper in his restored bank barn.

Ninety five volunteers who participated in this season's activities showed up to enjoy a soft summer evening, music from a versatile local band aptly called Music Box, and an incisive summary of where we are and where we're headed in Virginia by chapter president Cathy Mayes.

An overcast evening made the hay barn a welcoming space for the opening reception. Guests were thanked for their efforts by TACF President Bryan Burhans in an airy space hung with antique tools.

The delicious dinner buffet by Rappahannock County's Blue Ridge Catering that followed gave VATACF members, local Master Naturalists, and other chestnut supporters ample time to swap stories.

As darkness fell, and strings of colored lights backlit the band. Music Box tuned up, playing favorites that pulled dozens of guests out on the dance floor.

With a spreading network of 10 backcross orchards across the state, backed by new research to help restoration succeed, there was much to celebrate.

In Nelson County, a partnership with The Nature Conservancy on the 755-acre Fortune's Cove Farm led to the planting of the first part of a 4-acre field dedicated to chestnut research, complete with a donation for fencing. The planting team led by Dr. John Scrivani and TNC specialist Jean Lorber put in 374 nuts harvested from last year's pollination of three trees in Greene and Fauquier counties.

In Fauquier two new orchards were fenced and planted:

The Dam Orchard, donated by Rob and Betsy Porter, and another at VATACF board member Mark Ohrstrom's Old Whitewood. All told, over 1,000 seedlings from last year's crosses are flourishing.

Another partnership was formed when The Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority acquired the Mt. Zion Church Foundation property where our first VATACF orchard is in its third year.



VATACF guests enjoy Earle Martin's restored barn

Count Our Chestnuts - Come to the Marshall Office, October 2
Burs will be opened at 10 am at the VATACF chapter office at 8266 E. Main St. in Marshall. From Route 66 the Virginia headquarters is best reached by taking Exit 28 onto Rt. 17 north, and bearing right on Stockyard Rd. Turn left at the T with Main. Call 540 364-1922 to RSVP by Oct. 1



The President's Message by Cathy Mayes

In the Midst of Plenty, The Urgency of Loss

This harvest season promises to be early and abundant. We have every reason to be grateful.

First we owe thanks to the orchard donors and sponsors who have provided the space and the means to create nine research orchards in four years. Then we salute the groups and organizations who wanted to hear our message of loss and renewal. From them came more volunteers, whose efforts and curiosity encouraged our own members. More tangible offers came too, like fencing, and active partnerships that give hope we are influencing research and career choices in Virginia colleges, and land use decisions on public and private land. It's very gratifying; and it's none too soon.

We know from our first Mega-Transect studies and the population projections of Virginia Department of Forestry research, that there are millions of lingering stump sprouts in the Appalachians. Of those, we have been able to do back crosses on some two dozen trees from the eastern slopes of the Blue Ridge since 2007. From their thousands of offspring, only a few improved specimens will survive.

Citizen science depends on volunteers, a few dozen dedicated chestnut and forest ecology researchers supported by grants and donations, and co-operating interest groups and agencies who want our trees back on the land. All have been heartened by the promise of the first generation of resistant trees.

Restoration biology depends on genetic diversity; and our first generation trees have parents that were selected for their accessibility to bucket trucks and orchard ladders. We need to remember, with deer browse reducing wild populations at alarming rates, that our efforts are vital and very timely.

Regional Science Coordinator To Serve Mid-Atlantic Chapters

Early in August, TACF President Bryan Burhans announced the hiring of Katy McCune, to serve as the first Regional Scientist for Maryland, Virginia, and West Virginia.

Katy served as the 2010 intern for the Virginia chapter, after a previous stint working for the Virginia Dept. of Forestry as a cartographer and GIS specialist on a conservation project for the Chesapeake watershed. At Tufts University she majored in Environmental Studies and Sociology. In recent years she has also worked with condors in California and the Southern Andes, and done expedition planning for a British ecotourism company in Patagonia.

As she takes up her new position, she returns to home territory in the Appalachians, to expand work with volunteers, to manage orchards, and serve as liaison to the Meadowview Research Farm staff. Caught after a visit to West Virginia, she was typically positive.



Katy McCune in the Andean rain forest.

"I am excited to meet and start working with the volunteers in Maryland, West Virginia and Virginia. There is so much potential in this part of the country, and so many people who share a passion for the tree, I think it will be wonderful to help increase interest, awareness, and production of chestnuts in these areas.

It seems to me that TACF is also approaching a turning point, and it will soon be time to start organizing for restoration of the American chestnut. This will be such an exciting moment, and volunteers will be such an important part of it, the physical ground force that will actually put the tree back in the forest."

VIRGINIA MASTER NATURALISTS AND CHESTNUT RESEARCH - A NATURAL FIT

adapted from a VATACF web article by **Kathy Marmet**

Both Virginia Chapter President Cathy Mayes and Chapter Secretary Adele Baker are Virginia Master Naturalists. This connection with the Master Naturalist program has grown this year, as three additional Master Naturalists were among the volunteers who helped with planting chestnut orchards in early spring. A May pollination training taught by VA Chapter Board member Jack LaMonica in Madison, VA was also a training opportunity for six Master Naturalists who used their training to assist VA Chapter Board member Dr. John Scrivani with pollination of several mother trees in the counties surrounding Charlottesville, VA.

Scrivani also served as lead trainer for two training sessions for the A.T. MEGA-Transect Chestnut Project.

Of 45 participants training for the A.T. MEGA-Transect Chestnut Project so far this year, at least thirty are members of Master Naturalist Chapters.

MEGA-Transect volunteers participate in a full day of training to learn to recognize American chestnut trees in a trail setting and to learn how to collect and record information about the American chestnut trees growing along the Appalachian Trail. This data collection is part of a long-term study that scientists hope will provide insights to inform future efforts to restore the

American chestnut to its former place in the Appalachian forest, as well as identifying pollen producing trees that may contribute genetic diversity to the backcross breeding program. “This is a really a great match up.” says A.T. MEGA-Transect Chestnut Project coordinator

counting American chestnuts counts toward their required forty hours of volunteer service.” When Master Naturalists enjoy the training and the challenge of finding and counting American chestnut trees, they share the experience with others. Ed Dorsey of the Old Rag Master Naturalists



Lead trainer Dr. John Scrivani (on right) and a group of about 20 Master Naturalist trainees look up at burs still clinging to the branches of the blighted American chestnut to Scrivani's right during A.T. MEGA-Transect Chestnut Project training in Shenandoah National Park.

Kathy Marmet. “The Master Naturalists have already had forty hours of training in the natural sciences, including identification skills, when they sign up for the Chestnut Project training. Our training helps them meet the Master Naturalist requirement of an additional eight hours of advanced training, and the time these volunteers spend on the trail

put it this way, “I can't stop talking to my friends about it.” Although other states have started Master Naturalist programs, they aren't all as active at the Virginia program, which has twenty-five established and two newly formed chapters. Members of twelve different Virginia Master Naturalist chapters and one West Virginia chapter have participated *see next page*

A Rare Opportunity

TACF's Annual Meeting will be close enough for a day trip for many Virginia Chapter members and friends of the American chestnut. This is an opportunity to hear some terrific speakers and to meet some of the wonderful people on the staff and from other chapters who make TACF such a great organization.

Links to register online or view the full event brochure are at www.acf.org. Full registration (without lodging) is only \$75 for TACF members, and day passes (not including meals) are only \$40 for members on Saturday, and \$25 on Sunday. Filmmakers of *The Appalachians* will speak Saturday night.



The National Conservation Training Center in historic Shepherdstown, WV.

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in activities of either the Virginia Chapter of TACF or the MEGA-Transsect Chestnut Project this year.

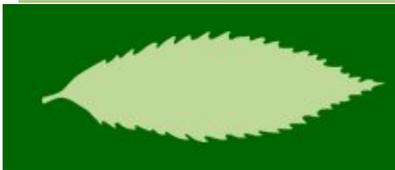
The Virginia Master Naturalist Program is based in the [Department of Forest Resources and Environmental Conservation](#) within the [College of Natural Resources](#) at [Virginia Tech](#). For more information see: <http://www.viriniamasternaturalist.org/>

FALL '10 IS ALL CHESTNUT!

CALENDAR OF EVENTS:

- September 25- Harvest burs in Fauquier and Loudoun
- October 2 - Process and record nuts at the Marshall office
- October 9 -10 Blandy Arboretum Arbor Fest
- October 9-10 Rowlesburg, WVA Chestnut Festival
- October 15-17 National TACF Mtg, Shepherdstown, WVA
- October 22 -23 VATACF Board and Annual Members Meeting, Staunton, VA

We increasingly depend on our vatacf.org website to reach all our members and interested supporters throughout the state, particularly when timely updates to our Calendar of Events arises. This Fall we hope that all members who are unsure if they can attend the Annual Meeting will access the website to read our Board nominee profiles in full and send in a proxy by October 11 so your votes count.



The American Chestnut Foundation
Virginia State Chapter
PO Box 158, Marshall, VA, 20116



**4th Annual Member Meeting of VATACF
to be held October 23, 2010 at
The Museum of Frontier Culture, Staunton, VA**

A museum that celebrates pioneer life the Appalachian forest is the perfect Fall venue for chestnut supporters. A ceremonial planting of chestnut at the Museum is scheduled. Information on lodging Staunton area attractions, and other speakers will be available to registrants. Plan now to join us for the day, or make the most of a peak of Fall weekend.

9 am - Board of Directors Meeting (open to members)

1pm - Annual Members Meeting

***Report from the Board**

***Election of Directors & Officers**

*** Guest Speakers:**

**Phytopthera researcher Dr. Joseph James, Carolinas chapter
Katy McCune, Mid-Atlantic regional scientist
Essie Burnworth, MD chapter, TACF Board secretary**

Please Join Us in a beautiful setting near Staunton to learn of this year's accomplishments, and our future plans in your area. **If you cannot attend**, or are unsure please access the profiles of Board of Directors' nominees and a more complete agenda on our website, vatacf.org, to print and **return your proxy ballot to us at VATACF PO Box 158, Marshall, VA, 20116 by October 11**. Otherwise you may cut and enclose this proxy form, choosing up to 5 Board candidates from among those nominated.

Name: _____ Member since _____

Address: _____ E-Mail _____

Phone: _____

I cast my vote for the following candidates for the VATACF Board of Directors on October 31, 2009.

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____

Other _____ or, I authorize the presiding officer to cast my ballot _____

Signed: _____ Dated: _____

Board of Director Nominees 2011- 2013



Warren Laws



Neel Rich



Kathy Marmet



Wayne Bowman



Cathy Mayes

Warren Laws is serving as co-coordinator of the Albemarle County area orchards. A former Air Force and American Airlines pilot, he retired in 2003. Aside from chestnut restoration, his other interests are military history and French travel. This will be his first term as a Director representing the growing commitment to chestnut restoration in the central part of the Blue Ridge.

Neel Rich served as first Treasurer of the Virginia chapter from 2006 through 2009.. A retired head of the Southwest Virginia Cooperative Extension Service office in Abingdon, he has been a staunch supporter of the Meadowview Research Farm, helping found the Elder Hostel program. It provides volunteer labor to help TACF staff test thousands of young chestnuts for blight resistance each Spring. Currently serving as an interim appointee to the Board, pending the 2010 elections..

Kathy Marmet came from the Maryland chapter, where she served as President, to join us in 2008. She promptly was elected Vice-President for Education, focusing on implementing Maryland's successful programs to engage students at all levels in the science of chestnut restoration. She also has been active in

recruitment and training of volunteers for the Mega-Transect program to catalog the presence of chestnut and the condition of the eco-system along the Appalachian Trail. Community building for conservation is her passion.

Wayne Bowman is a native of Appamattox and life-long Forester for the Virginia Department of Forestry who was appointed to the Board of Directors in 2007. He has presided over the resurgence of chestnut research at Lesesne State Forest in Nelson County, leading field trips that have inspired Tree Stewards, Master Naturalists and landowners to get involved as orchard donors and volunteers. The DOF has also allowed Meadowview to grow out 5,000 backcross seedlings in their main nursery in Amherst County.

Cathy Mayes was recruited by our first President to use her legal skills to create a Strategic Plan for the new Virginia chapter in 2007. As her reward she has spent the past two years responsible for implementing it as President of the VATACF.

She has been instrumental in presenting our story to help create active partnerships with conservation groups like Master Naturalists and the Smithsonian's Conservation Biology Inst.