



News Release

For Immediate Release
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23 Virginia Families Honored as Century Forest Landowners

Just months after the establishment of the nation's first Century Forest program, 23 families from all corners of Virginia were inducted Monday (Nov. 21) into the inaugural class that honors those who have owned their forestland for 100 years or more during a ceremony at Montpelier, home of President James Madison and Father of the U.S. Constitution.

Deputy Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry Sam Towell and State Forester of Virginia Bettina Ring oversaw the induction ceremony and presented each honoree with a certificate from Gov. Terry McAuliffe and a Century Forest sign that will be posted at a prominent site on their land.

"To qualify for the Century Forest program means that the property has been passed down through the family for the equivalent of at least five generations," said Deputy Secretary Towell. "The shortest tenure of ownership in the inaugural class is 105 years; the longest is 235 years! That means this particular family took ownership of this land just five years after the American Colonists declared their independence from England but had yet to win that independence until the Battle of Yorktown – which took place *eight months after* the land was purchased."

State Forester Bettina Ring said, "These families and their ancestors built Virginia and they built America. What a fitting recognition of their achievements this is – being part of the first group in the nation's first Century Forest program."

The Century Forest program was created by the General Assembly in the 2016 session. The bill, SB252, was patroned by Sen. Frank Ruff and passed unanimously in both chambers. Governor McAuliffe signed the bill into law March 21st at a ceremony inside the Executive Mansion.

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Forestry is the third largest industry in the Commonwealth contributing \$17 billion a year to the Virginia economy and providing employment to more than 104,000 Virginians (1 out of every 33 adult workers). There are 410,000 private individuals and families who own most of the 16 million acres of forestland in Virginia.

Below is a list of the 23 landowners, in alphabetical order by family name, and a summary of ownership, which includes the county in which the property rests.

From Charlotte County, the Adams Family. Rush Miller Adams III and Linda Gilreath Adams own land that has been in the family for 127 years. The 154 acres was purchased in 1889. The first timber was harvested to clear the land for agriculture and to build their home and farm buildings. Over time, timber was also harvested to cure tobacco and to provide heat for the home. A sawmill and spoke factory, powered by steam, operated on the property from the late 1800s to early 1900s. And they recently found part of a steam engine in the creek on the Adams Farm.

From Mecklenburg County, the Barner Family. For more than 100 years, the descendants of John F. Barner (seven generations' worth) have called their 173.5 acres home. Under the name Wright Forestry LLC, Vance and Alan Wright are the current owners of the property. The property has been actively managed for years and has a Department of Forestry Stewardship Plan in place. The family has also placed the land into a VDOF conservation easement.

From Fauquier County, the Blackwell Family. Dr. Camellia Ann Blackwell-Taffel owns just over 72 acres that have been in the family for 121 years. The property was purchased by Dr. Blackwell-Taffel's great aunt Emma Carter, great uncle Robert A. Blackwell and cousin Moses Burton. Dr. Blackwell-Taffel is the fifth generation to own, manage and operate the property.

From Caroline County, the Burke Family. John W. Burke III cares for more than 64 acres that have been in the family for 170 years. This parcel was purchased in 1846 and passed down through the generations. He toils daily to manage the land according to his stewardship plan, and has been experimenting with a number of things, such as planting longleaf pine on land that would be considered "out of range" for longleaf. He has shown great success in such endeavors and has been gracious and kind to share his experiences with other forest landowners.

From Patrick County, the Clark Family. Mr. E. Fulton Clark owns land that has been in the family for 207 years. The 657 acres was purchased in 1809 by Gabriel Penn – Mr. Clark's great, great, great, great grandfather. The family has worked closely with the Department of Forestry since 1951, and the property was a stop on the 2013 Fall Forestry and Wildlife Field Tour.

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From Caroline County, the J.B. Collins Family. James B. Collins Jr., Joan H. Collins and Linda Collins Blehm own 183 acres that have been in the family for 141 years. William Joseph Collins, James's grandfather, purchased the property in 1875. The land included a 45-acre mill pond, a water wheel-powered grist mill, a home and country store as well as a miller's house. The property was one of the first to be enrolled in the Riparian Buffer tax program back in 2001.

From Pulaski County, the Dobyys/Gilmore Family. Theda and Larry Gilmore have 250 acres that have been in the family for 107 years. Theda's grandfather purchased the property in 1909. The land was first passed to Theda's father and then to Theda and her sister.

From Giles County, the Dorsey/Purser Family. Under the name Little Stony Incorporated, Charles N. Dorsey oversees 2,600 acres that were purchased by his great grandfather in 1909, and has been in the family for 107 Years. This is the largest property in the inaugural class of the Century Forest program and is owned by great grandchildren and great, great grandchildren of John B. Laing.

From Mecklenburg County, the Garnett Family. Charles L. and Darrel E. Garnett own 355 acres that have been in the family for 133 years. The property was purchased by Charles' and Darrel's great grandfather R. C. Rogers in 1883. The trees have been harvested several times and replanted in loblolly pines to keep the lifecycle going.

From King William County, the Gary, Edwards and Upshaw Family. Everette Pickett Upshaw oversees 420 acres that have been in the family for 156 years. William Milton Gary Sr., Pickett's great, great grandfather purchased the property in 1860. The property passed first to Mr. Gary's son, then to Mary Virginia Gary Edwards (granddaughter) then to Mary Gary Edwards Upshaw (great granddaughter) and then to Pickett. The property is under a conservation easement with the Department of Forestry.

From Sussex County, the Segar White Guy and Judith E. Guy Family. Judith Guy is a trustee of the Segar White Guy Family Trust that holds 308 acres. The land has been in the family for 128 years. First purchased in 1888, this property is under a forestland conservation easement with the Virginia Department of Forestry and is a certified Tree Farm and Stewardship Forest

From Essex County, the Haile Family. John R. Haile, Patricia R. Haile and John F.E. Haile own 304 acres that have been in the family for 172 years. Purchased by Robert Gaines Haile Sr. in 1844, the Elton Farm featured a sawmill on the property until 1950 that milled walnut railroad ties. They had their first forest management plan in place in 1950.

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From Henry County, the Hodges Family. C. Michael Hodges and James R. Hodges own Hemlock Haven Farm LLC. At 235 years, this is the oldest family-owned property in the inaugural class of the Century Forest program. The 213 acres were purchased by Henry Dillion on Feb. 1, 1781 by two land grants signed by then-Governor Thomas Jefferson.

From Dinwiddie County, the Johnson Family. The 103.5-acre property known as Family Tree, A Green Johnson Corporation is managed by Philip Johnson Jr. It has been in the family since 1879 when the father and son team of Phill and Dandridge Johnson – who were slaves then freemen – purchased the property. The Johnsons have been active in forest management, stewardship and they have a conservation easement with the Department of Forestry on the property. The family has recently donated articles – including a larger-than-life photo of Phill Johnson and his wife, Mariah Johnson – to the new National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, D.C.

From Lee County, the Jones Family. Dennis C. and Mary Jane Jones have a 69-acre property that has been in the family for 105 years. Dennis' great grandparents Joseph F. and Salina M. Flanary along with Dennis' grandfather William Flanary purchased the land in 1911.

From Henrico County, the Jones Family. Mrs. Frances Arlington Owens Jones has just shy of 42 acres of the original 259 acres that were purchased in 1902 by Henry C. Jones Jr. Seven years before the purchase, the H.C. Jones & Sons Lumber Company was established and remained in operation until 1942. The mill had two crews – a woods crew and a mill crew – that provided jobs for many people in the Glen Allen area of Henrico County. And the farming portion of the land provided food to dozens of families during the Great Depression.

From Hanover County, the MacDonald Family. Known as the Janeway Hanover LLC, managing members H.H., A.S. and D.S. MacDonald care for 948 acres that have been in the family for more than 185 years. The land was purchased about 1830 by their great, great grandfather Edmund Winston. The property has been actively managed for decades.

From Campbell County, Walter W. Puckette II. Mr. Puckette has 121 acres that have been in the family for 110 years. The land was purchased by James Douglas Puckette, who is Walter's grandfather, then passed to Walter Puckette, Walter's father, in 1933. Walter II has been the owner since 1980.

From Campbell County, Saunders Woods LLC. Sara W.H. Saunders is the owner and trustee of 1,106 acres that have been in the family for 220 years. The land was acquired in 1796 and passed down through the family. The property has a long history of forest management and has a conservation easement with the Virginia Outdoors Foundation.

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From Albemarle County, the Shackelford Family. A. Colquitt Shackelford Jr. manages Dovedale LLC, which is a 374-acre property that has been in the family for just a couple of months shy of 200 years. Zachariah Shackelford purchased the property in 1817, and it's been in the family ever since.

From Dinwiddie County, the Shell Family Farm LLC. For the last 166 years, the family has owned, managed and cared for 700 acres. In the 1830s, Ann Turner Shell, wife then widow of Dr. John Shell, moved to the property and raised her four small children. Richard Cabell Shell was the youngest of the children and the only one to remain in Dinwiddie County. The family home is one of the oldest in Dinwiddie County. The original portion of the home was built around 1750 by Thomas Scott and has qualified for placement on the National Register of Historic Places.

From Pittsylvania County, the Simpson Family. William Carter Simpson, Elizabeth Simpson, Catherine Simpson and Kristine Simpson own 284 acres that have been in the family since before 1850. The land has been actively managed since the 1930s.

From Albemarle County, the Smith Family. Roland N. and Margaret P. Smith are trustees for the Roland N. Smith Living Trust, which has just over 63 acres under management. The property has been in the family since Fleming Broadhead, their great, great grandfather, purchased the land in 1883. They have a Department of Forestry Stewardship Plan in place.

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