



LAND & WATER CONSERVATION FUND REQUEST | FISCAL YEAR 2010

Project Name

Tilson Farmstead, Virginia
Jefferson National Forest

Parcel: 170 acres

LCWF request: \$500,000

Total project value: \$600,000

Natural Resources

Holston River watershed
Jefferson National Forest
Appalachian Trail corridor

Significance

Contiguous wildlife corridor
Cultural resource conservation
Open space protection
Scenic views and ridgelines
Outdoor recreation

The Tilson Farmstead is situated near the northern boundary of Smyth County, near the town of Ceres, Virginia. Rural area leaders currently anticipate increasing development pressures in coming years due to the availability of reasonably priced land combined with outstanding natural and recreational resources.

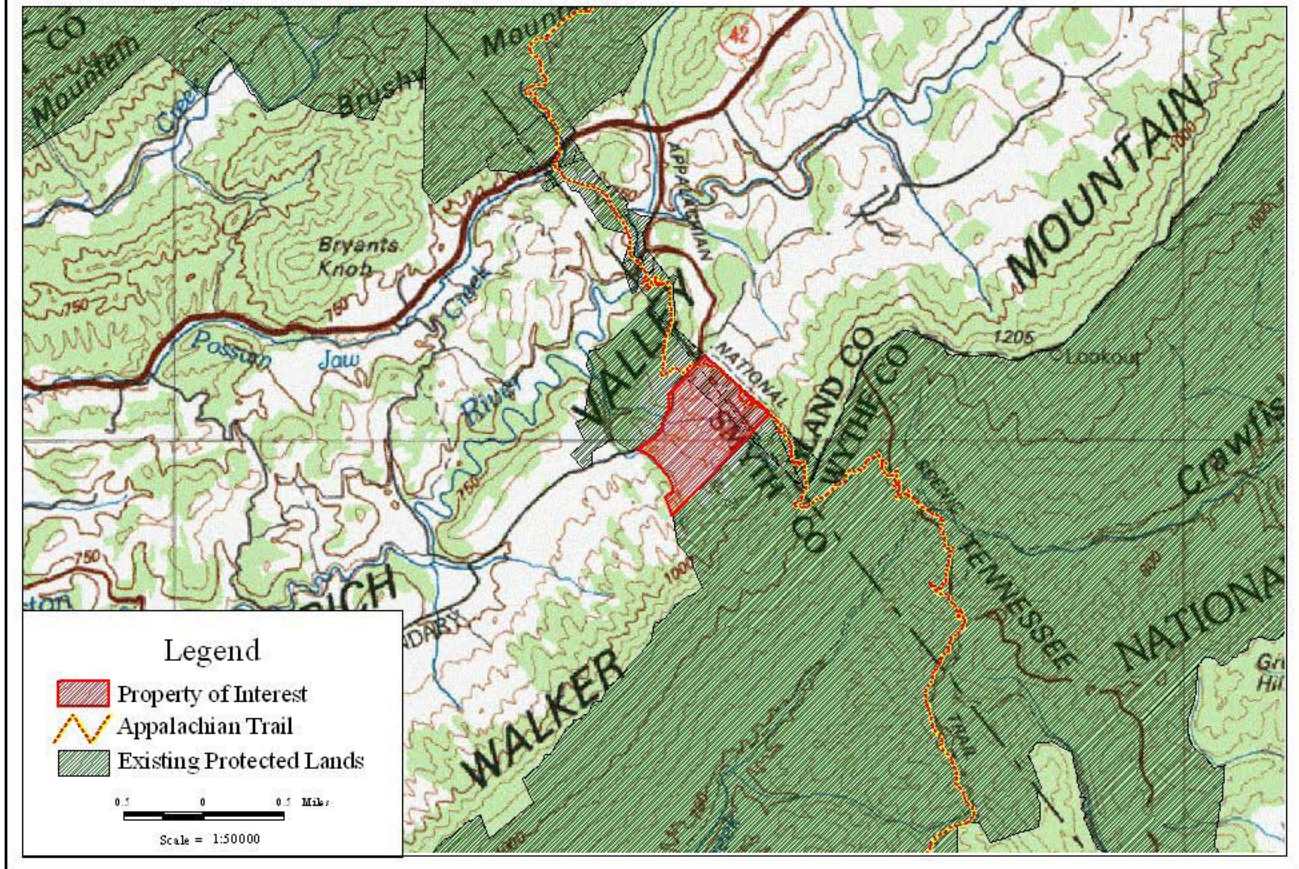
Located approximately 103 miles from Roanoke, Virginia (population 94,911) and 143 miles from Greensboro, North Carolina (population 223,891), the area is within easy reach of major population centers. In addition, Rep. Rick Boucher announced in 2005 that the U.S. Congress supported his request and appropriated \$800,000 of federal funding to support new directions for economic development in Bland County.

A major emphasis is being placed on expanding tourism as a key component of a regional economic development strategy. This is an exciting initiative for an area of Virginia that has struggled economically for years, and should be supported by projects that build and protect community and regional assets.

The 170-acre Tilson tract lies along the federally protected corridor for the Appalachian Trail, within the Jefferson National Forest proclamation boundary.

TILSON FARMSTEAD

Smyth County, Virginia



With an estimated four million visitors each year, the A.T. draws a variety of constituents seeking family recreational opportunities, youth and community outings, picnicking, hiking, camping, hunting, observing wildlife, photography, and backpacking.

Acquiring fee-simple interests to the Tilson tract will provide the public with a more secure and enjoyable route to experience the national forest along the Appalachian Trail, and help consolidate national forest lands. It will also provide the public with local access to the A.T. with a proposed five-mile loop trail on the Tilson Farm.

The Tilson Farm is also the site of an old cemetery, dating to the late 1800s, where several of the area's early settlers are buried. The cemetery has been maintained by the volunteers of the local Piedmont Appalachian Trail Hikers (PATH) club as part of a community cultural resources protection initiative. Members of PATH have a keen interest in integrating the unique cultural heritage of the rural com-

munity in Smyth County with interpretive opportunities along the A.T., and featuring this cemetery along the proposed loop trail would be a first step in that direction.

Beyond its cultural and historical value, protecting the Tilson farm will also contribute to the preservation of the headwaters of the Holston River's North Fork, a watershed that may face significant stress in coming years due to local development.

The National Park Service has offered assistance to the USFS and is handling the transaction details. The current landowner has expressed an interest in selling the tract to the Forest Service, possibly at a favorable or bargain-sale price, and the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) is assisting the Forest Service with preacquisition expenses in the hope of securing a purchase agreement or option until appropriations can be obtained. The ATC is also seeking other sources of funds to match and augment federal dollars.