

## Landcare is Coming to a Forest Near You

In recent months, Virginia Tech's Department of Forestry and College of Natural Resources have played a leadership role in developing a series of new LandCare Initiatives. We are now working with partners within and beyond the University to establish The LandCare Center at Virginia Tech that will serve the needs of landowners and producers of agricultural and forest products throughout the Commonwealth and beyond. The LandCare Center will be the first university-based center in North America to promote, serve, and study the landcare movement that has only recently arrived in Virginia but is thriving internationally.

LandCare is an innovative strategy for natural resource management, sustainable agriculture, and economic development. Originating in Australia in the late 1980s (where there are now approximately 5,000 landcare organizations and 4 out of 5 Australians recognize the national landcare logo), the movement has since spread to a dozen other countries, including the United States where government agencies, commercial businesses, civic organizations, and local communities are now actively promoting the concept.

Internationally, landcare has generated the interest and energy to produce:

- thousands of organizations promoting landcare as strategy for local and regional sustainable development;
- good jobs, improved taxation, thriving industry;
- improved natural resource management and environmental conditions;
- redirected government funding for conservation and development programs;
- reorganized university outreach and community engagement;
- successful partnerships between government, civic organizations, businesses, landowners, and local communities;
- spin-offs: coastcare, rivercare, forestcare, urban landcare, etc.

In the United States, the USDA and partner organizations such as the National Association of Conservation Districts and National Association of Regional Councils have developed the "Landcare Pioneers" program to promote landcare as a holistic approach to regional sustainable development. These national leaders, along with their state and local partners, are now working with the Appalachian and Commonwealth LandCare Partnerships—which include Virginia Tech; landowner and producer groups such as the Blue Ridge Forest Cooperative and the Grayson-Carroll Cattle Growers Association; conservation organizations such as the Ward Burton Foundation, the New River Land Trust, and the Greater Lynchburg Environmental Network; and, new local chapters of landcare such as Grayson LandCare in Grayson County, Virginia. As part of this effort, faculty, staff and students in the Department of Forestry at Virginia Tech are now developing Forest LandCare Management Systems (LMS) and ForestCare programs that we hope to replicate from watershed to watershed throughout the Commonwealth. The common goal of these partners is to support the growth of landcare as an innovative model for sustainable and profitable land use and economic development here in Virginia and throughout North America.

To better understand the emerging landcare movement, visit the following websites: [www.landcareonline.com](http://www.landcareonline.com) and [www.publicecology.org/grayson-landcare..](http://www.publicecology.org/grayson-landcare..) For more information or to get involved, please contact David Robertson in the College of Natural Resources at [davidrobertson@vt.edu](mailto:davidrobertson@vt.edu); 434-847-1178.