

The Friends of Stadium Woods

www.savestadiumwoods.com

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Virginia Tech Board of Visitors

RE: The protection, preservation and management of the old growth urban forest known as Stadium Woods on the Virginia Tech campus

Dear BOV member:

As you know, the ad hoc Athletic Practice Facility Site Evaluation Committee (APFSEC) formed by President Charles Steger in January 2012 finished its work and submitted its report to the President's office May 30 and briefed the Board of Visitors at its June 4, 2012 meeting. In the report were five specific recommendations unanimously approved by the committee. The first recommendation is for permanent protection of the woods. *(The entire report and detailed recommendations are available at <http://www.vt.edu/administration/2012-facility-report.pdf>)*

President Steger's office announced last week that he accepts the APFSEC committee and Vice President Sherwood Wilson's recommendation to find a more suitable location --outside the woods-- for the proposed indoor athletic football practice facility. We are extremely pleased that the proposed facility will not be constructed in the rare, old growth white oak urban forest. Unfortunately President Steger did not accept the committee recommendation to permanently preserve Stadium Woods, leaving the forest at risk of future proposed development.

Virginia Tech is likely the only university in North America with a forest such as this on its central campus. This woodland should be celebrated and acknowledged by insuring its future existence. We have the opportunity to literally "Invent the Future" which ensures the protection and continued presence of the forest.

We strongly urge the Virginia Tech administration and the Board of Visitors to reconsider the recommendation to permanently preserve Stadium Woods in a conservation easement or other appropriate designation. The Virginia Tech Community (with the exception of the central administration team) and the public are strongly in support of preserving this rare piece of remnant old growth white oak urban forest. Virginia Tech is the commonwealth's most comprehensive university, its leading research institution, and espouses a strong, outspoken "green and sustainability" commitment. There is great pride in VT's Tree Campus USA Arbor Day Award as well as the Climate Action Commitment and Sustainability Plan.

The APFSEC report specifically states that "faculty and independent assessments (by Biohabitat consultants) of the woodland have characterized Stadium Woods as a functional old growth forest remnant unique in the regional if not the eastern U.S., with trees of heterogeneous age classes that provide diverse beneficial wildlife habitats, ecosystem services, and human uses." This has recently been confirmed by a dendroecological reconstruction conducted by forest ecologists at Virginia Tech (a scientific manuscript is currently in review). "The remnant forest is already designated as part of the Campus

Environmental Greenway. The Committee recommends elevating the status of the core of the Woods, designating it as the Stadium Woods Old Growth Reserve or comparable title and protecting it in perpetuity."

"The committee also recommends the development of a use and management program to protect and enhance the Woods' ecological value and its beneficial uses by the campus and Town communities, and possibly extending the Reserve through reforestation and control of invasive species. The Arboretum Committee is the appropriate governance unit to oversee development of such a program."

Furthermore, the Biohabitat consultants hired by the university to conduct a forest ecological assessment of the old growth forest noted the importance of the woods to provide natural capital in terms of carbon sequestration, carbon storage and air pollutant removal. The monetary value of the woods was assessed at more than \$5 million dollars. Most experts agree that the woods are priceless in terms of their uniqueness and natural capital benefits.

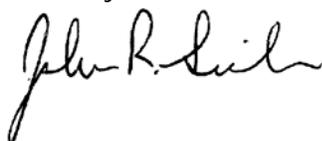
The "hullabaloo" about the mismanagement of the ancient trees and the entire forest ecosystem will continue to heap shame on Virginia Tech until the woods are permanently preserved and properly managed. The environmental reputation of the Commonwealth and Virginia Tech are at stake. We will renew our lobbying efforts to persuade the Governor and the Secretary of Natural Resources as well as our congressional representatives of the importance of a conservation easement for Stadium Woods.

We respectfully request that you prevail on President Steger to publicly announce that the university is following the recommendations outlined in the APFSEC report to a complete and positive end by permanently preserving the woods.

Enclosed is a fact sheet briefly explaining the uniqueness of Stadium Woods and the reasons it should be preserved forever, remaining free of the threat of development. For more detailed information please visit our web site at www.savestadiumwoods.com

We look forward to hearing from you. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



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Forest Biology

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Jeff Kirwan
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Advisory Board: Tammy Belinsky, Doug Chancey, Elizabeth Fine, Betty Hahn

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The all-volunteer, grassroots, campus and community group formed to advocate for the preservation of VT's old growth forest