

## *The Friends of Stadium Woods*

[www.savestadiumwoods.com](http://www.savestadiumwoods.com)

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Governor Bob McDonnell  
Office of the Governor  
Patrick Henry Building, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
1111 East Broad Street  
Richmond, Virginia 23219

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

Dear Governor McDonnell:

As you know, there has been an enormous effort to protect and preserve the old growth urban forest remnant on the Virginia Tech campus known as Stadium Woods. The woods were threatened by the proposed development of an athletic indoor football practice training facility. In response to campus, community and alumni opposition University President Charles Steger established a committee (APFSEC) to review and make recommendations on the siting of the proposed athletic facility. In the final report there 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 August 20 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. *See press release* <http://www.vtnews.vt.edu/articles/2012/08/082112-unirel-facilitystatement.html>

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

We have strongly urged 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."

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 ongoing mismanagement of the ancient trees and the entire forest ecosystem as well as the negative publicity will continue to heap shame on Virginia Tech until the woods are permanently preserved in a conservation easement. The environmental reputation of the Commonwealth and Virginia Tech are at stake as well as your enduring legacy as Governor.

We respectfully request that you prevail on President Steger and the Board of Visitors 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](http://www.savestadiumwoods.com)

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

Sincerely,

Rebekah Paulson  
Executive Director  
Friends of Stadium Woods

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VA Tech Professor Emeritus and Forester  
Co-author *"Remarkable Trees of Virginia"*

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### **The Friends of Stadium Woods**

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