

in the use of the area, only a limited appeal could be made to citizens for funds to support the program. Undoubtedly, however, there are local residents who would be interested in contributing funds toward developing the concept of a William and Mary Natural History Area.

It is difficult to assess the level of financial support for a "Natural Area" which might be expected from other sources. The Nature Conservancy provides funds but only on a loan basis and usually for land acquisition. The report of the Virginia Outdoor Recreation Study Commission, compiled in compliance with Chapter 277 of the Acts of the 1964 General Assembly, does not specifically mention "Natural Areas" but such areas are implicit in the definition of "open-space land" on Page 87 of the report. If legislation proposed in this report is passed by the 1966 General Assembly, it would appear that funds for the development of "Natural Areas" might be forthcoming from a Commonwealth appropriation and the Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund grants which would then be available on a matching basis. It is also significant that the Old Dominion Foundation contributed \$25,000 to the above mentioned study because of its interest in natural resource conservation. This philanthropic organization might be approached for financial support for the "Natural Area" concept.

THE NATURE CENTER

(a) Definition

During the past century, the growth of our population and the unwise and wasteful use of land and natural resources have pointed to the need for a greater understanding and appreciation of conservation. Today, the capacity of existing national outdoor areas is severely overtaxed, and if the present trend continues these facilities will be wholly inadequate to meet future needs. Much more importantly, however, unless people are given deeper insights into the natural world around them and have the opportunity to form proper attitudes and a correct conservation conscience, no amount of recreational opportunity or additional facilities will be of much avail. These insights may be gained at any age but are best formulated among our youth. It was for this purpose that the nature center concept began.

A nature center can be defined as an area of undeveloped land near or within a city or town and having on it the facilities and services designed to conduct community outdoor programs in natural sciences, nature study, and conservation. It is, in fact, an outdoor focal point where the citizens of the community, both young and old, can enjoy a segment of the natural world and learn something about the interrelationships of living things, including man's place in the ecological community. Thus conceived, an operating nature center provides innumerable educational, cultural, and recreational benefits to the community, values that may be far reaching at the local level. The nature center is a new concept in community education and recreation. A nature center is not a park, a zoo, or a museum although it may incorporate some of the features of a museum such as a natural science building with exhibits. The ideal nature center, then, is a representative sample of the natural landscape of a community, designed to orient the community to ecological realities. It is clear that the concept of a "Natural Area" and a "Nature Center" are not mutually exclusive and a management plan might be developed to incorporate the best features of both.

The goals of a nature center could be as broad and purposeful as the vision and interest of the College and community. It is clear that an association between William and Mary and a nature center would be a logical one in view of the intrinsic educational opportunities provided by a center. A nature center in a community is a wise investment as few community projects have such tangible as well as intangible values. A nature center is valuable because it provides an opportunity for local people to help themselves in outdoor education. Most important, an outdoor nature center provides an effective learning situation where experiences are direct and people can learn by doing and working. It is filled with wonderful work opportunities for youngsters.

Learning is not the sole reason, however, why a nature center is valuable to a community, important as nature education and conservation may be. There are other significant values, one of which is the opportunity that a nature center affords people in such things as aesthetic enjoyment. In view of the fact that a nature center is designed to help the people of a community pursue programs of educational, scientific, cultural, and recreational value, it appears desirable to enumerate possible goals: