



WINTER 2008/2009

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

*Serving the Residents of
Culpeper, Orange, Spotsylvania, Stafford, Fredericksburg,
Caroline, King George, and Westmoreland*



UPCOMING

--Meetings and Events--

**Thurs, December 11, 7-9:00 PM
OUR GREENEST HOLIDAY EVER!**



We shared the work, now come share the cheer! To celebrate the holidays in an environmentally-friendly way, members are encouraged to bring a vegetarian or vegan dish this year for the snack buffet. We'll also have some delicious entertainment by popular area folk-singer Bob Gramann, a holiday gift basket raffle and plenty of last minute gift ideas! **Admission Charge:** Bring an item or two for the Fredericksburg Food Pantry! A jolly good time for all. Invite a friend to come along!



**SPECIAL FILM PROGRAM:
"DIET FOR A NEW AMERICA"
January 3, 11:30 am - 1 pm
Rappahannock Regional Library
1201 Caroline Street, F'burg**

Join the Vegetarian Group and RG on a video journey with author John Robbins into the truth about the American food production system and the health consequences of a diet based on animal products. Learn how to make good food choices for yourself and your family. Bring a vegetarian dish to share (or donation) and enjoy a potluck meal after the movie. Contact Christine Carlson at 786-3648 for more info.

The Role of Conservation Easements

by Joe Thompson, Field Director Northern Neck Land Conservancy

Conservation easements are some of the most powerful tools that can be used to protect the local environment. Landowners who donate conservation easements to shield their land from degradation and those who support the promotion of easements contribute greatly to the preservation of open space, wildlife habitat, and clean water. That said, not everyone is aware of how a conservation easement works or the specific impact it makes.

A conservation easement is a legal agreement between a landowner and a land trust or government agency used to protect the lands' conservation or historic values. The agreement allows the landowner to continue to own and use his or her land and to sell it or pass it on to heirs.

Conservation easements offer great flexibility. An easement on property containing rare wildlife habitat might prohibit any development, while one on a farm might allow continued farming and the building of additional agricultural structures. An easement may apply to just a portion of the property, and does not require public access.

When a landowner donates a conservation easement to a land trust, they give up some of the rights associated with the land. For example, they might give up the right to build additional structures, while retaining the right to grow crops. Future owners also will always be bound by the easement's terms. The organization that holds the easement is responsible for making sure the easement's terms are followed.

A landowner sometimes sells a conservation easement, but usually easements are donated. If the donation benefits the public by permanently protecting important conservation resources and meets other federal tax code requirements, it can qualify as a tax-deductible charitable donation. The amount of the donation is the difference between the land's value with the easement and its value without the easement. Placing an easement on a property may also result in property tax savings.

Landowners typically find the inspiration to place a conservation easement on their land based on their relationship to that property. They might be inspired by the legacy of a multi-generational ownership, a chance to preserve a physical piece of our history, or more commonly their connection to a piece of the earth that they find unique and have a close relationship with. These reasons and others move landowners to reduce or completely eliminate any possibility of their land ever being developed.

What reasons are there for you as a taxpayer to support the use of conservation easements through tax credits and deductions?

The loss of open land and the collective impacts of watershed changes during our history in the Chesapeake Bay region can be seen in the following statistics from the Chesapeake Bay Founda-

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NOTES FROM THE CHAIR

by Doris Whitfield

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www.virginia.sierraclub.org/rg/

VIRGINIA CHAPTER:

www.virginia.sierraclub.org

SC NATIONAL:

www.sierraclub.org

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RG ExCom members met on November 5, the day after this year's HISTORIC presidential election and "celebrated" a momentous occasion, and shared thoughts leading up to Barack Obama's victory and Virginia moving into the "blue state" column.

Just a few weeks prior to the election, Americans and our elected officials finally began to acknowledge and discuss the escalating economic meltdown and the myriad issues to be faced across the country. While disjointed, initial efforts appear to be underway to address and resolve the problems and hurdles facing us.

The economy tops the priority list of concerns shared by Obama and every American, including the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and global terrorism. Close behind is the loss of jobs, pocketbook issues like the cost of food, gas and healthcare, as well as affordable housing and rising homelessness, especially for families.

During the eight years of the Bush-Chaney administration, decades-old environmental laws and natural resource protections have been blatantly rolled back, ignored, dismantled and rewritten by major corporations for their own benefit, regardless of any immediate or future environmental impact.

Why should we be surprised that late on Election Day the US Bureau of Land Management announced an auction of more than 50,000 acres of oil and gas parcels right in view of Arches, Dinosaur and Canyonlands National Parks and other national park areas around the country?

Compounding these problems are across-the-board reductions in funding investments for failing and neglected infrastructures, public parks, dwindling wildlife habitat and threatened natural resources protection. Inadequate funding for research and development at major universities and non-profit organizations continues to reduce America's ability to maintain an international lead in the fields of health and the sciences.

Innovations and international collaborations promote better health care and preventive medicine, while creating new jobs with higher wages for more citizens. With an Obama presidency, the US will be working with advanced and developing countries, sharing innovative and GREEN energy solutions to both economic and global warming issues through economic development, resuming a leadership role in the world.

Some more good news! In recent public surveys, environmental issues have rapidly risen to 5th place, reflecting growing concerns about global warming and the effect of rising temperatures on our health, families and the economy. Support for renewable "clean" energy sources that include wind, solar, biomass and geothermal is widely acknowledged.

According to recent studies, nearly 9 out of 10 Virginians think global warming is a serious problem; 61% think it is a very serious problem, and 72% believe it demands immediate government action. As Sierra Club members, we couldn't agree more!

Just think what Obama's plan to invest \$150 billion in alternative sources of energy over the next 10 years will accomplish both here and abroad, where struggles are taking place over water, food and land, the most basic of resources needed for survival.

This election has been a "reality check" for Americans. The economic recovery is expected to be slow and difficult. However, an Obama/Biden administration will provide the real LEADERSHIP we need to bring us together.

As Sierra Club members, we will actively support and continue to work with other conservation organizations to regain lost ground, while encouraging new environmental protections and innovative technologies and strategies. As a Group, we will be moving forward on Energy Conservation and Recycling issues in our own communities.

Please Join Us!

MEMBER ADDRESS CHANGES: Send old and new addresses and a Sierra Club label to Sierra Club Member Services, PO Box 52968, Boulder, CO 80328-2968; phone 415-977-5653; or e-mail to address.changes@sierraclub.org. For non-member subscription inquiries and address changes, call toll-free 1-800-765-7904, or write to Sierra, PO Box 52968, Boulder, CO 80328.

MEMBERSHIP SERVICES: Members who wish to change their local SC group assignment to another local group must contact SC National Membership Services at 415-977-5653. or e-mail your request to membership.services@sierraclub.org.

Greenways Initiative Launches Phase 3

by Scott Howson

The Rappahannock Group's long-range bike/pedestrian trail project is making great progress. Called the GREENWAYS INITIATIVE, the project was started by our ExCom three years ago to create a network of bike and pedestrian trails throughout the Rappahannock region, to promote a healthier lifestyle, while creating alternatives to our dependence on motorized vehicles.

Phase 1 was a series of meetings to assess community interest, and organize partners around a common goal. A coalition was formed, including the Sierra Club, local governments, VDOT officials, the National Park Service, various walking and cycling groups, and interested citizens.

Phase 2 focused on the creation of a long-range bike/ped plan. Two years were spent on this phase, working with local governments and VDOT officials to develop a comprehensive plan that connects existing and planned trails with residential and commercial centers throughout the region. This plan has been blended with the FAMPO long-range transportation plan, and is undergoing the necessary approval process prior to being sent to Richmond for funding.

Phase 3 is the creation of a model "Friends" group, and the development of a demonstration trail along the Ni River in Spotsylvania County. The steering committee – which includes RG members Jim Lynch, Donna Pienkowski, and Scott Howson – is in the process of forming the organization and designing the trail. We've been very fortunate to have the support of Luck Stone Developers, owners of the property on which the trail will be built. The knowledge and experience we gain from this effort in Spotsylvania will be used as a model for forming similar groups and developing similar projects in each of the Counties in the Rappahannock region.

Our plans call for having the family-friendly bike and pedestrian trail open to the public by the end of 2009. Eventually, we hope to connect the trail to the YMCA on Massaponax Church Road and Spotsylvania Battlefield Park.

We welcome anyone interested in this, or other bike/ped projects to contact Scott Howson, Greenways Coordinator at wshowson@earthlink.net.



Spotsylvania Greenways steering group hikes along the Ni River staking out the path for the new trail to open next year (see "Greenways" article). Among the group members were RGSC's Jim Lynch, Donna Pienkowski, and Scott Howson.

Building Sustainability at UMW

by Lauren Birney, RG Fall Intern

Today's youth are trying to get the ball rolling on climate change and environmental sustainability, and the students of the Ecology Club at UMW are no exception. We've been making great strides over the past couple of years in bringing attention to the issues of climate change and encouraging the student body and administration to take on responsibility for reducing our carbon footprint.

The past two years saw major accomplishments for the Ecology Club. We worked on getting the President's Climate Commitment (PCC) signed to reduce UMW's greenhouse gas emissions, began an annual Green Week, attended Green Festival in Washington D.C. and other conferences like Power Shift '07 (the first national youth climate conference ever held in the United States). Inspired by these events, we went on to organize a free lightbulb exchange in coordination with the administration and their newly-hired engineering firm NORESCO, exchanging about 1600 light bulbs through the program, resulting in drastic energy savings and a significant reduction in greenhouse gases produced by the school.

This year, we have been working on the national Power Vote campaign, which is aimed at getting a million voters (especially youth) to sign on in support of clean energy and work to hold our leaders accountable for investment in alternative fuels, green jobs, and a national moratorium on building new nuclear or "dirty" coal plants. In October, 12 Ecology Club members traveled to Virginia Tech for the first Virginia Power Shift, a gathering of 300 students from colleges and universities across Virginia to work on the skills and connections needed to create a clean energy future for our state. Through this event, the Ecology Club has become a partner in a statewide coalition dedicated to affecting policy of the Commonwealth, educating our campuses, and pursuing measures of sustainability. We again attended the Green Festival in Washington, D.C. on November 8 and were blown away by the breadth of all things "eco".

We will also be focusing on working with a newly-formed administrative task force on sustainability to improve recycling, start a composting pilot program, and promote energy conservation. In

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light of our aim to make sustainability a major goal at UMW, we held a Sustainability Day in partnership with the administration on October 22nd to distribute information to students about recycling and paint some of our outdoor trash cans blue to transform them into recycling bins all across campus. Our continued partnership with the Sierra Club will also include a number of projects, like an Energy Conservation Forum for the community and an Inner City Outings program with local schools to get kids outside and help them to understand the value of preserving our planet. We already had a very successful (and fun!) workday with RG and six Eco Club volunteers this semester at Alum Springs repairing an eroded trail.

As your RG intern this semester, I look forward to working with the Rappahannock Group on all of these projects and issues!

Vegetarianism/Veganism: The New Green

by Christine Carlson

Did you know that researchers at the University of Chicago have found that switching from a standard American diet to a vegan one reduces global warming more than switching from a Camry to a Toyota Prius? This Thanksgiving, you may consider just taking the meat centerpiece off your table and grace it with a Tofurky instead! (Check it out at www.adoptaturkey.org)

Top 5 Reasons Why the Veggie Lifestyle is Greener:

1. Vegetarianism Reduces Pollution and Global Warming:

Producing meat creates more air, soil and water pollution than we realize. SC researchers found that, "Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations" (factory farms) are a major source of water pollution and drinking water contamination because they concentrate enormous amounts of animal waste in a small area. Roughly 80 million tons of methane [gas] are produced every year from animal agriculture – 23X the global warming potential of CO₂."

2: Vegetarianism Conserves Fossil Fuels:

Raising animals for fuel is an enormous waste of energy, from the oil needed to raise and transport feed crops, to the transportation of medicine, water, manure and animals, and finally to the transportation of the meat between companies as it is turned into different products. According to *Scientific American*, one cow uses about 284 gallons of oil by the time it is slaughtered. The animals themselves are incredibly inefficient at converting that energy into food we can eat. Most of the energy is expelled in manure and methane, which also pollutes our air, land and water.

3: Vegetarianism Conserves Water

Globally, the average American diet uses twice the water as other countries where people consume less meat. Nearly 2-1/2 pounds of beef requires the same amount of water to fill 40 bathtubs and flush a toilet 300 times! This is not limited to what the animals drink, but includes the water required to wash the floors of the factory farms, water the crops they eat, etc.

4: Vegetarianism Conserves Land and Saves Species

Most people are aware of the fact that rainforests are destroyed to raise animals for meat. In the U.S., 87% of land used for agriculture is used for raising animals for food, and that land often suffers from severe erosion and eventually desertification. If that land were used to grow crops for direct human consumption, such as for a vegetarian/vegan diet, *seven times less land* would be needed. Many native species have already become endangered or extinct as a result of raising livestock.

5: Vegetarianism Feeds More People

With an exploding human population and world hunger once again a hot topic, consider these facts: The world food supply on a vegan diet (meatless, no dairy, eggs, or other animal products) can feed 6.3 billion people, a vegetarian diet (no meat/seafood) 4.2 billion, but only 3.2 billion on a diet consisting of animal products. As stated previously, because animals convert most of their food into movement, manure or the growth of inedible body parts, little of what they eat becomes the meat that we consume.

Veganism is not starvation or self-denial, but an exciting exploration of foods and cuisines. The ADA and FDA both agree that vegetarianism and veganism are both viable and appropriate diets for every stage of life, including children and pregnant or lactating women. Everyone walks their own path to meat-free diets, some within a matter of days, some over years. Just picture that pound of beef you don't buy going back into the earth as a gallon of gas, 55 s.f. of land, 20 bathtubs of water, 16 lbs of grain, etc.and then pick up your fork.

Virginia Conservation Network Legislative Workshop

SAT, DECEMBER 6, from 9 am - 1 pm
Capitol Bldg, Richmond, VA

Agenda: Learn what the state budget shortfall means for the environment and what you can do to promote clean, sustainable energy. Speaker: Delegate Joe Bouchard. The 2009 Legislative Briefing Book will be distributed.

Admission: \$10, incl. breakfast

Register: www.vcnva.org or Call 804-644-0283. Car Pool Call: Doris 540-775-7856

**VCN LOBBY DAY IS:
MONDAY, JANUARY 19, 2009
Richmond State Capitol**

This is an opportunity to network with other environmental organizations and visit with elected officials to promote VCN 2009 environmental legislative priorities.

**More Details at: www.vcnva.org
Car Pool/Info: 540-775-7856 or 540-907-0198**

RG Membership meetings are held on the second Thursday of every month at the United Methodist Church, 308 Hanover St, F'burg at 7 pm. Meetings are open to all members and the public. The **RG Executive Committee meets** the first Weds of the month at 6 pm at the administrative offices of FOR on Fall Hill Ave. in F'burg. Please check our website for any cancellation notices or last minute changes to the meeting schedule or other RG events.

Take Action for a Cleaner River/ Cleaner Bay

by Emily Bowman

Easements *continued...*

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At our November RG meeting, guest speaker John Tippett, Exec. Director of the Friends of the Rappahannock (FOR), provided an update on the state of the Rappahannock and how it relates to the lack of progress in reducing pollution in the Chesapeake Bay. Unfortunately, the news is not encouraging, with no detectable improvement in Bay water quality in spite of the millions of tax dollars spent since 2000.

In the Rappahannock specifically, there is still significant non-point pollution, especially downstream of Fredericksburg. Increased stormwater run-off due to urbanization (paving, new residential and commercial development) continues to dump harmful pollutants into the river, pointing to the need for better stormwater management policies and enforcement at local and state levels.

For the past two years, FOR has worked with other river stewardship organizations to develop a set of improved stormwater regulations and municipal codes that would make Virginia's stormwater management policy one of the best in the nation. With a supportive administration and scientifically defensible regulations, Mr. Tippett is optimistic these improved codes will be adopted, but the support of local residents is needed.

On October 29, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation along with 7 other environmental partners notified the EPA they intend to go to Federal court to require a reduction in Bay pollutants. Since 2000, EPA action to clean up the Bay has been too slow, underfunded, lacking in enforcement and lacking in accountability. You can take action to demand implementation of Clean Water Act mandates by signing the petition to the EPA on the Chesapeake Bay Foundation website at www.cbf.org.

Locally, the responsibility for stormwater management and enforcement has been transferred to the VA Soil and Water Conservation Board. Contact your local SWCB and let them know you support stronger stormwater management policies for the Rappahannock, more funding, and better enforcement and accountability. (540-899-9492, or write SWCB, 4805 Carr Dr., Fburg 22408).

tion: "Since colonial times, the Bay has lost half of its forested shorelines, over half of its wetlands, nearly 90% of its underwater grasses, and more than 98% of its oysters. During the 350 years between 1600-1950, approx. 1.7 million acres of the Bay watershed were developed. During the 30 years from 1950-1980, the Bay watershed lost an additional 2.7 million acres to development." We have lost 5 million out of 13.5 million acres of farmland in Virginia over the past 50 years. We know from research and historical evidence that well-managed undeveloped lands provide the best filter for runoff. Protecting the water quality of our surface waters by permanently protecting as much of the undeveloped land as possible is the primary means to assure a healthy future of our waters. If these open lands disappear, our ability to clean up our waters will disappear with them.

A recent presentation of the Raptor Conservancy of Virginia to the RG addressed the critical need to protect the remaining habitat for raptors. This is also true for all the living components of our ecosystems, from box turtles to butterflies, red oaks to smartweeds. All species of native plants and animals need space to survive. Conservation easements are an excellent way to permanently guarantee a space for all of our native species. Additionally, these protected lands provide us a potential source for food, clean air and the aesthetic pleasure of an open vista.

Progress in land protected is being made in our own geographic area. The following are the number of acres protected in counties covered by the RG as of August, 2008:

Stafford	9 easements =	2197 acres
Spotsylvania:	18 easements =	3695 acres
King George:	12 easements =	3108 acres
Westmoreland:	20 easements =	5746 acres
Orange:	104 easements =	24,007 acres
Culpeper:	32 easements =	8304 acres

Looking at the bigger picture, Virginia has a total of 2,234 easements totaling 469,837 acres. The rate of land going under easement has increased dramatically in the last five years due to our governing body's recognition of the importance of protecting open space through the implementation of tax based incentives to encourage the placement of conservation easements on private land. The State of Virginia has a generous tax credit program in place. The Federal government also provides tax deductions that may provide financial benefit to those landowners who place easements on their lands. Additional financial benefits may be realized through reduced local property taxes and federal estate taxes. There are specific criteria that the easement must meet to qualify for these benefits, but the vast majority of easements do qualify.

Most easements in Virginia are held by the Virginia Outdoors Foundation, although many other private non-profit land trusts and conservancies also hold easements in Virginia. Regardless of who holds the conservation easement or why the landowner chose to place it, those of us who are passionate about conserving our natural resources can appreciate the legacy it leaves all future generations by protecting open space.

For additional information on conservation easements please contact author Joe Thompson at 540-903-8947.



Explore, enjoy and protect the planet



Friend or Foe?

America's water, rivers and lakes are at risk from giant, corporate-owned factory farms which are fouling our water with pathogens and chemicals. The air around these farms is contaminated with suspended dust particles, which have been linked to asthma, bronchitis and other diseases. Our government wants to pass legislation which would allow factory farms to be free from health and environmental laws. Support Sierra Club's effort to keep our water clean and our air friendly. The hogs have gone wild, now it's our turn.

Cause a stink. JOIN Sierra Club.

Name _____

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City _____ State _____

Zip _____ Phone (____) _____

Email _____

Join today and receive
a FREE Sierra Club
Weekender Bag!


 Check enclosed. Please make payable to Sierra Club.
Please charge my: Visa Mastercard AMEX

Cardholder Name _____

Card Number _____

Exp. Date ____/____/____

Membership Categories	Individual	Joint
Special Offer	<input type="checkbox"/> \$25	
Standard	<input type="checkbox"/> \$39	<input type="checkbox"/> \$47
Supporting	<input type="checkbox"/> \$75	<input type="checkbox"/> \$100
Contributing	<input type="checkbox"/> \$150	<input type="checkbox"/> \$175
Life	<input type="checkbox"/> \$1000	<input type="checkbox"/> \$1250
Senior	<input type="checkbox"/> \$24	<input type="checkbox"/> \$32
Student/Limited Income	<input type="checkbox"/> \$24	<input type="checkbox"/> \$32

Contributions, gifts and dues to Sierra Club are not tax deductible; they support our effective, citizen-based advocacy and lobbying efforts. Your dues include \$7.50 for a subscription to Sierra magazine and \$1 for your Chapter newsletters.

Enclose a check and mail to Sierra Club,
P.O. Box 52968, Boulder, CO 80322-2968
or visit our website www.sierraclub.org

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RG PROGRAM SCHEDULE

January 8, 2009, 7-9 pm, UMC, Fredericksburg

Program: Green Solutions Open Forum Speakers: YOU!

Here's a program where YOU become the star! This is an opportunity for members to share tips with the rest of us on the unique things they do to incorporate sustainability practices into their routines and lead a greener lifestyle. Informative and fun!

February 12, 2009, 7-9 pm, UMC, Fredericksburg

Program: Regional Transportation Alternatives

A panel discussion with experts in commuter bus, rail, public transit and car/van pools will review current transportation options available, and plans for the future expansion of public transit based on population growth and demand in our area.

March 12, 2009, 7-9 pm, UMC, Fredericksburg

**Program: Community Supported Agriculture
Speaker: Leslie Leahy, Treas/Sec'y local FACSAP**

Come find out how well the community is doing supporting our local farmers, and what you can do to reduce the cost of food and improve the environment by buying more local produce thru Community-supported Agricultural initiatives.

OUTINGS/EVENTS

Outings Leader Training: Date TBA. Do you like to plan hikes and other outdoor adventures? If you or anyone you know would like to become a Sierra Club Outings Leader, an on-line course is also available to accommodate your busy schedule! Contact Jim Lynch at 540-775-7002 for more information.

Sat/Sun December 6&7: Book Signing for "A Field Guide to Crow's Nest" by Hal Wiggins local environmentalist. Made in Virginia Store, Caroline St., F'burg. Sat: Noon to 5 pm; Sun: Noon - 6 pm. OR, catch him **December 20, 2 pm** at the Griffin Bookshop on Caroline St for a talk about the environmental threats to this wetland paradise in our own back yard.

Sunday, December 7: Prince William Forest Park 8-mile hike. Meet at 9:45 am at trailhead at Turkey Ridge Education Ctr inside park. Reserve: Call Leader Ray Abercrombie 703-854-1792 before 9 pm.

Sunday, December 14, 1 p.m. Hike the Dahlgren Railroad Heritage Trail. 6 miles, approx 3-4 hrs, rain or shine. Learn about the history and current status of rail-to-trail projects in VA. Meet at the multi-purpose lot on Rte. 605, Bloomsbury Rd, King George. Contact leader Jim Lynch to reserve at 540-775-7002.

Saturday, January 10, 10 am-12 pm. DRHT Hike and Trail Service Outing. RG adopted 1 mi of this new 15-mile trail in King George. Bring gloves, clippers, picnic lunch and dress for the weather/trail. **Rain Date: Jan. 11.** RSVP: 540-775-7856. www.friendsDRHT.org.

HOLIDAY HAPPENINGS AT CALEDON NATURAL AREA, Rte 218, King George. Family oriented programs in prime eagle sanctuary habitat. Minimal fees. Resv: 540-663-3861. More details at www.dcr.virginia.gov. November 28, Holiday Hayride, 1-3 pm or 4-6 pm; December 11, Owl Prowl Hayride, 7-9 pm. Learn about owls. December 20, Winter Open House 12 - 9 pm AND Night Before Christmas Hayride, 5 or 7 pm

SHENANDOAH PARK HIKES: There are several other Shenandoah Park hikes planned for weekend days in December. A list of both SC-sponsored area hikes and hikes planned by other area outdoor groups can be found on the RG website at: www.virginia.sierraclub.org/rg/.

