



## UPCOMING EVENTS

More exhibitors, more activities, more food, more happy people – what more could you want? This year’s Earth Day April 19th at Alum Spring Park was a smashing success! Even Mother Nature cooperated, providing a beautiful spring day for almost 1,000 visitors to celebrate and enjoy our natural environment. Kids made recycled paper, built birdhouses and roasted marshmallows, while us grownups took nature hikes and enjoyed the live music. The park was filled with 28 exhibitors presenting programs about everything from protecting manatees and honeybees to using environmentally-friendly household products.

Many thanks to all our Sierra Club volunteers, and to Fredericksburg Parks and Rec staff, FRED Regional Transit, the Free Lance-Star, and Marsdell-Day, LLC for making this wonderful celebration possible.



### We Can Do It! Forging A Clean Energy Future

by Linda Muller

*“A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step”*

As we experience an astronomical climb in energy prices, energy conservation and clean energy resources have received front and center attention. The Sierra Club has been at the forefront in promoting energy conservation and clean energy sources as a means to reducing energy costs and reducing green house gases.

One of the most economical ways to reduce energy costs and greenhouse gases is through the simple act of energy conservation. The good news is, by taking a few “small” steps to conserve on energy--in our homes, at our offices and in our communities--we can reduce green house gases (CO2) and put a little “green” back into our pocketbooks. Sierra Club’s “We Can Do It” website offers some easy steps to take:

**-Car Care:** a well-tuned car with properly inflated tires burns less gas, cutting pollution and **saving money at the pump.**

**-Skip the Drive:** where possible--take public transit, carpool, walk or even bicycle when you can.

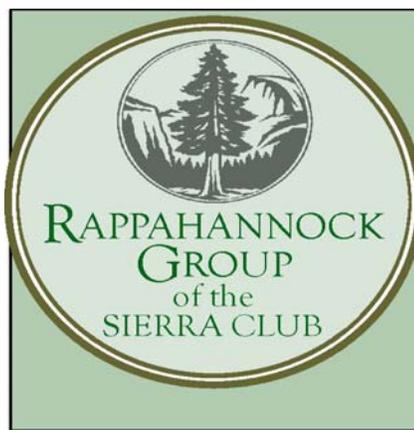
**-Replace incandescent light bulbs** with fluorescent bulbs. Compact fluorescents produce the same amount of light as normal bulbs, but use a quarter of the electricity and last ten times as long.

**-Buy energy-efficient electronics and appliances.** Ready to replace your old refrigerator or air conditioner? Look for the Energy Star on new appliance labels for the most energy efficient products. Check out the website for listings: [www.energystar.gov](http://www.energystar.gov).

**-Save at home** with caulking, weather stripping, window shades, and insulation. Keeping the house properly sealed and insulated helps you save on air conditioning in the summer months and heating in the winter months. For more tips, go to <http://www.sierraclub.org/wecandoit/>

In addition to energy conservation, the development and use of alternative energy/renewable energy sources is the key to long-term stability in our energy markets and a healthier environment.

See “We Can Do It” page 3

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[www.virginia.sierraclub.org/rg/](http://www.virginia.sierraclub.org/rg/)

**VIRGINIA CHAPTER:**

[www.virginia.sierraclub.org](http://www.virginia.sierraclub.org)

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[www.sierraclub.org](http://www.sierraclub.org)

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*Volunteers Needed in All Areas!*

**NOTES FROM THE CHAIR**

by Linda Muller



It was not ideal conditions for a hike in May; clouds, drizzle, a stiff breeze and temps barely hanging above 55. We planned to hike at Shenandoah National Park on our return trip from Luray, Virginia, and since we did bring our rain gear, we had no excuse to “skip” the trek. We wrapped up, strapped down, and geared up for our 6-mile hike, making sure that we carried plenty of water and snack bars. It was a steep strenuous hike, with a rocky and sometimes slippery path. About 2 hours into the hike I noted that, yes, the quadriceps and calf muscles have been awakened from a long winters nap--and would appreciate a good stretch. We reached the top of the ridge, and we could feel a slight tug of fatigue. As I scanned around our hiking path, my eye caught a tinge of red color tucked under a green leaf and quickly refocused my gaze. Wow! To our amazement, we saw not one or two, but six large Pink Lady Slippers (*Cypripedium reginae*) in full bloom, with four others not yet open. These elusive and beautiful wild orchids go by many names (moccasin flowers; Venus’ shoes) but are a rare find. Seeing these rare beauties was a re-energizing experience, and we continued our hike with a lighter step.

My recent hiking experience re-enforced, once again, the many reasons why we are engaged in Sierra Club’s mission to Explore, Enjoy and Protect the Planet.

Our Rappahannock Group members are actively involved in programs and projects that have positive impacts in our communities, including wildlife habitat restoration, green building, land conservation, protection of endangered species, supporting regional bicycling/hiking trails, promoting Greenways, advocating Cool Cities, supporting clean/renewable energy resources, and participation in the Green Government Commission. Also, through our Outings Programs, we are blessed with bountiful opportunities to explore and enjoy our region with a variety of events and hiking activities.

RG is officially heading into “Summer Break” and will kick it off with our annual Membership Family Picnic. Please join us Saturday June 14, 2008, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Pavilion, Alum Spring Park Fredericksburg. Our next regularly scheduled meeting will be September 11, 2008 for our annual Open House.

The strength of our Club is truly in our volunteer members. Through our volunteer’s committed dedication, we are able to participate and enjoy the many benefits the Sierra Club has to offer. We are always looking for new volunteers to step up to the challenge and hope you will consider participating. Enjoy your summer; keep notes of your travels and activities for a future educational newsletter article or program, and see you at our annual membership picnic on June 14, 2008.

**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](mailto: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](mailto:membership.services@sierraclub.org).

**We Can Do It** *continued from page 1...*

In what is described as an energy technology “renaissance”, clean and renewable energy has garnered the attention of businesses, municipalities and even churches as a real solution to our energy needs. What’s more, the long-standing argument that alternative energy/clean energy technology cannot generate interest in the financial markets (investors) is no longer valid. Price Waterhouse Coopers reported that in 2007 clean energy, (which includes energy-efficiency technology) was the fastest-growing sector of venture capital investments in the US. This is certainly a strong and positive trend for a clean energy future and a healthier environment.

For more information, please link to <http://www.sierraclub.org/wecandoit/>.

## **Friends of Stafford Creeks: Citizen Stream Monitoring and the Potomac River Watershed**

by Linda Muller

Virginia is divided into several watersheds, so no matter where you live in Virginia, you live in a designated watershed area. The small creeks and streams that run behind your house, cross under the roadways, or overflow during heavy rains are part of a vast network of “water pathways” that make up your watershed.

Stafford County, for example, is divided into two major watersheds: the Potomac River/Shenandoah watershed and the Rappahannock River watershed. Both watersheds flow into the Chesapeake Bay. Friends of Stafford Creeks (FSC) a nonprofit volunteer organization, monitors the water quality of thirteen sites in Stafford’s tidal and free-flowing waters of the Potomac River tributaries. FSC supports Virginia’s Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) stream monitoring program and reports all collected data to DEQ. All of FSC’s stream monitoring is conducted by dedicated volunteer citizen scientists. In addition, FSC promotes education and stewardship of aquatic and wildlife resources and watershed protection.

### **Why Stream Monitoring?**

Stream monitoring helps identify trends and changes in water quality over time and helps identify existing or emerging water quality problems. There are several parameters used for measuring and monitoring the health of a stream including:

- a) Chemical – levels of dissolved oxygen, ph and nutrients.
- b) Biological –presence or absence of certain invertebrates, bacteria, chlorophyll and submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV).
- c) Physical – temperature, turbidity, stream flow and visual stream assessments.

Free flowing sediment from erosion, nutrients (fertilizers i.e. phosphorus and nitrogen), run-off from impervious surfaces (i.e. asphalt surfaces), harmful bacteria (e-coli) can wind up in local streams and have a devastating impact on water quality and dependent natural resources. During her presentation to the Rappahannock Group (April meeting), Friends of Stafford Creeks founder Patricia Kurpiel noted that excessive nutrients and sediment that eventually wind up in Chesapeake Bay contribute to massive algae blooms and oxygen “deadzones”. While algae are a natural component of the Bay ecosystem, large algae blooms block out sunlight to underwater bay grasses, starve out oxygen to fish, and interfere with the feeding of shellfish. Like going to the family physician for a regular check-up, citizen stream monitoring plays an important role in tracking the health of local streams, and provides an essential service in protecting our vulnerable watershed regions.

Interested citizens are encouraged to consider participating in local citizen stream monitoring programs like FCS, Friends of the Rappahannock, or even help establish a program in their own community. More information is available from the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality Stream Monitoring <http://www.deq.virginia.gov/cmonitor/>; Friends of Stafford Creeks at <http://staffordcreeks.org/>, and from Friends of the Rappahannock [www.riverfriends.org](http://www.riverfriends.org).

## A Gift for Dominion: Mile-Long Petition Delivered

by Hilary Lufkin

“Dominion Dumped—Mile Long Petition Delivered”...so read the Chesapeake Climate Action Network’s (CCAN) homepage last week, after more than 200 citizen activists from around Virginia descended upon Richmond to deliver the “No New Coal” petition to Dominion Virginia Power.

The petition to Dominion Power CEO Tom Ferrell was an attempt to stop their plans for a new coal-fired power plant in Wise County, VA. The Sierra Club and CCAN, in conjunction with Appalachian Voices, Southern Appalachian Mountain Stewards, and the Southern Environmental Law Center (SELC) have waged a campaign against the plant for more than two years, due to the harmful environmental and health impacts of coal mining and its associated burning processes.

Dominion proposed the plant, promoting it as a carbon-capture compatible plant with minimal environmental impacts and emissions. However, on March 31, the State Corporation Commission (SCC) ruled that the Wise County Plant is really only designed as a conventional coal-burning facility. Because of the potential for environmental damage and the shady politics Dominion has used to circumvent the legal system and build the plant without environmental regulation compliance, environmental groups got together with the Southern Environmental Law center to raise a two-fold legal and educational campaign against the power giant.

The “No New Coal” Coalition has worked on the Mile-Long Petition drive and an educational campaign at schools, churches and in communities across the state. The May 8 petition delivery was a culmination of the coalition’s efforts thus far, and an eloquent, artistic way to represent the interests of VA citizens to Dominion. A mile of paper with names of all signatories to date was woven around Kanawha Plaza in front of Dominion’s Richmond headquarters. Speakers from Wise County, the Sierra Club, students, and others made their pleas to the utility in the interest of Virginians, while the Richmond-based bluegrass group *Whiskey Rebellion* played along. The paper petitions were then rolled into gold-wrapped gift boxes and presented to two stone-faced Dominion officials, while hundreds looked on from the Dominion windows.

The fight against this plant is far from over, as Dominion continues to limbo EPA regulations and Governor Kaine fails to weigh-in on the environmental impacts of the plant. The petition drive is ongoing, with more EPA Citizen Air Quality Board Hearings scheduled. But the May 8 rally was a huge success, and a demonstration of the willingness of Virginia citizens to work for the good of our commonwealth and preserve The Old Dominion!

**RSG Membership Meetings** are held on the second Thursday of every month, except in July and August, at the United Methodist Church, 308 Hanover Street, in downtown Fredericksburg from 7-9 pm. Meetings are open to all members and the general public. For directions, please call our Hospitality Chair, or consult the UM Church website at [www.fumcva.org](http://www.fumcva.org).

**RSG Executive Committee meets** on the first Weds of the month from 6-8 pm at the administrative offices of FOR on Fall Hill Avenue in F’burg. All ExCom meetings are open to SC members, and their guests (with prior notice). Please check our website for any possible last minute cancellations, changes to the meeting schedules, or special forums and events.

To place advertisements or classifieds in this newsletter or to become a newsletter sponsor, please contact Linda Hiross at 540-972-9640.



Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

## All Creatures Great and Small



"Every good thing, great and small, needs defense"

- John Muir

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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 newsletter.

Enclose a check and mail to Sierra Club,

PO Box 57668, Boulder, CO 80521-2668

or visit our website [www.sierraclub.org](http://www.sierraclub.org)

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## Rappahannock Group "Volunteers Wanted"

### We Need You !

If you have the talent, skills and time--we have a volunteer position! As a 100% volunteer organization, the key to our Club's success is dependent on its time and talent of our member-volunteers. Can you help?

### Newsletter Editor/Coordinator

**Help spread the good news** about the Rappahannock Group Sierra Club as our Newsletter Editor/Coordinator. If you enjoy creating, editing, arranging articles we need you! We publish our RG newsletter 4 times a year; Sept. 1, Dec. 1, Mar. 1, and Jun 1. If you are interested in honing your desktop publishing skills, have an eye for newsletter layout and/or want to sharpen your journalism skills, this is a perfect opportunity. Responsibilities include: editing; layout of text, photos and graphics, coordinating contributed articles and copy-center delivery. We will provide support/training as needed. If interested please send your email inquiry to [rgsc@mindspring.com](mailto:rgsc@mindspring.com), or call Linda Muller at 540-907-0198.

### Newsletter Contributors – Attention Members!

**RG strives** to share local educational experiences on a wide variety of topics and issues related to the environment. We also encourage our members to share their own environmental initiatives/experiences with other members through our newsletter. We'd love to hear about what YOU are doing! Perhaps you are involved in a special community conservation or environmental education project, wildlife study, took an exciting eco-trip recently, or attended a conservation workshop. Consider submitting an article for our next newsletter. The deadline will be **August 15, 2008**. If interested please email Linda Muller at [rgsc@mindspring.com](mailto:rgsc@mindspring.com) or call her at 540-907-0198.

### Newsletter Support

Every quarter we prepare our newsletters for mailing. This requires folding, sorting, and labeling our newsletters. Once a quarter, we set aside a couple of hours one afternoon or evening at a convenient location; coffee shop, member's house, local library. Having a few volunteers help out makes this essential task a breeze. If interested please email: [rgsc@mindspring.com](mailto:rgsc@mindspring.com) or call Linda Muller at 540-907-0198.

Be sure to check out other volunteer opportunities with the Rappahannock Group on our website:

[http://virginia.sierraclub.org/rg/ways\\_to\\_help.htm](http://virginia.sierraclub.org/rg/ways_to_help.htm)

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