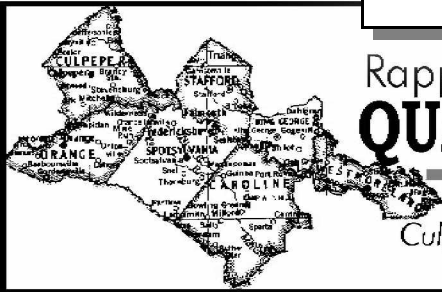
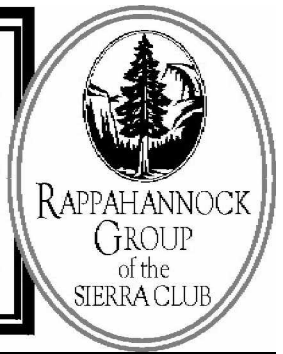


June-July-August 2006



# Rappahannock Group of the Sierra Club QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

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

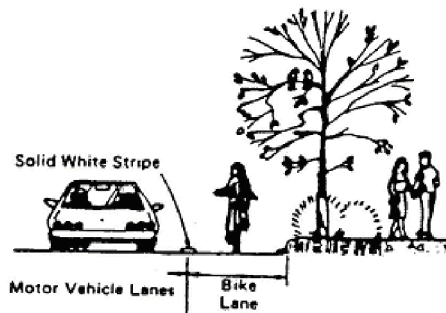


## RAPPAHANNOCK GREENWAYS

*Connecting our communities one path at a time.*

There's an exciting new RGSC project on the horizon, something that will touch the lives of everyone in the Rappahannock valley from children to grandparents, and we can't wait to tell you about it. For the past four months the RGSC executive committee has been working together on researching, planning and organizing a project that truly brings to life the Sierra Club pledge to "promote, protect, and enjoy" the natural environment right here in our region. Now we finally get to tell you, our members, what we have been working on.

It's a bold plan to connect our communities, from Culpeper to Westmoreland, with a network of bike and pedestrian paths that will allow citizens safe, comfortable and convenient alternatives to traffic, smog and congestion. Imagine being able to walk or bike safely to the mall, or to the commuter lot or rail station. Picture your family biking together to the park, to a friend's house, or to school. You could be enjoying a healthy alternative to the nerve-wracking traffic that clogs our roads, and, by keeping just one more car off the road for that one trip, you'll be helping everyone's environment in the process.



In partnership with VDOT, the VA Chapter of the Sierra Club, and the local jurisdictions' planning offices, RGSC has taken the lead in the creation of a long range plan to put bike and pedestrian paths where you need them. We'll work with neighborhood associations, developers, local and state governments, walking and biking clubs, and you, our Sierra Club members, to take a step by step approach to connect people with where they need and want to go. It's going to take time, talent, energy, and money. But one path at a time we'll make it happen.

Soon we'll announce a public forum to introduce our steering committee, and to let you hear from people who have been successful in creating bike and pedestrian paths in their areas. We want you to join with us to help in your neighborhood, and we'll be inviting you to do just that.

It's a big project and we know it's going to take years. But it's a major step in the right direction.

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the Sierra Club

## Annual Picnic & Hike

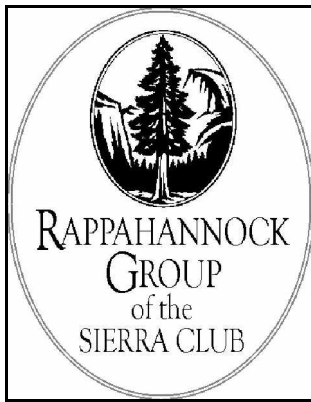
Alum Spring Park  
Saturday,  
June 10  
11am - 2pm.

We provide hot dogs and cold  
drinks.

You provide salad, dessert or  
vegetable to share with others.

Everyone is invited including  
non-members.

Call Linda Hiross 972-9640



**Sierra Club Websites**  
RGSC:

www.virginia.sierraclub.org/BFG  
State: www.virginia.sierraclub.org  
National: www.sierraclub.org

**RGSC Leadership  
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**Publicity:** Available

**Webmaster:** Ginger Thull

**Newsletter Editor:** Available

\* voting members

**Want to Help?**

**Good! We have work to do!**

# NOTES FROM THE CHAIR

It's summer again, and with summer comes vacations, or at least a slowing down from our normal activities. That applies to the Rappahannock Group as well. After our member **picnic on June 10** we all take a deep breath and relax a bit before gearing up again with the RGSC Open House in September.

As Chairman of the RGSC, I can say honestly that for your Executive Committee members this break is well deserved. It has been a very busy and productive year.

Starting with our most successful Open House ever last September, through Earth Day in April, our volunteers have worked hard to provide a full schedule of entertaining and informative member events. Our monthly meetings have delved into such subjects as energy production and efficiency, wildlife protection, transportation alternatives, and smart residential planning. And we're very happy and thankful to see more and more people coming to our member events.

We've also worked hard to make the RGSC organization function better, to improve our connections with our membership and the community, and to make sure that we serve a useful purpose in the Rappahannock Region. Our members have joined with other area groups to gain successes for the new Widewater State Park, Fredericksburg Pathways, and the Rappahannock River Easement. We're devoting time and energy to maintain and improve Alum Spring Park and the Mullins Farm, and to save Crows Nest from overdevelopment. And as you'll read elsewhere

in the newsletter, we've been working with VDOT to lay the groundwork for a regional network of bike and pedestrian trails.

It has been a good year for RGSC, and we're looking forward to next year being even better. As a first step, we're taking a mail-in survey of our members to find out what you're concerned about, what you're interested in, and how you can to help us "promote, protect, and enjoy" this wonderful Rappahannock valley. You will soon receive the survey in the mail. Please take the time to respond so that we can better serve you and the environment.

We could not accomplish anything without our members. Our voice in the community would be ignored if not for the 500-plus members we represent. Our projects would be left un-done if not for the volunteers who step forward to help. Our mission to promote, protect, and enjoy would mean nothing if not for your continued support. Come, join with us in celebrating our successes and our friendships at the annual member picnic, 11am to 2pm Saturday June 10 at Alum Spring Park in Fredericksburg. We'd like to thank you personally for your continued support.

Scott Howson

## Helping To Protect & Preserve Our Region's Natural Resources.

by Doris Whitfield

RGSC and Sierra Club members all over the commonwealth and the nation are working independently

(DRHT) is a "rails-to-trails project" support group that will work to maintain, restore and preserve several miles of the former CXS railbed in King George County for a nature, hiking and biking trail. On May 3, RGSC's Executive Committee unanimously passed a

many purposes. They are "environmental education outdoor classrooms" for families, teachers and students to enjoy, learn about and foster a desire to preserve our natural ecosystems... The plants, trees, birds & wild animals, wetlands... all right in "our own backyard". Trails encourage physical fitness, healthy life styles, and provide protected "wildlife corridors" as well as economic development opportunities. They also foster community spirit and a pride of accomplishment for citizens planning and working together for common goals.



Supporters of Dahlgren Rail Heritage Trail donating their time to help improve it.

and collectively with partners to identify and preserve open space and natural areas before they are "paved over" and lost forever.

Recent local successes include Stafford's Widewater State Park, the 4,200 acre Rappahannock River Conservation Easement and Bicycle, Nature and shared-use trails being developed throughout the city by Fredericksburg Pathways Partners. Stafford County has made an offer to purchase a large portion of Crow's Nest. Supporters will continue to work for preservation of the entire environmentally-sensitive peninsula.

The newly formed Friends of Dahlgren Rail Heritage Trail

Resolution in support of the DRHT.

The history of the DRHT includes numerous initiatives undertaken over the past 12 years by both KG County staff and citizens to establish a nature trail on the railbed, which was built in the Second World War to transport guns, munitions and workers to the Dahlgren Weapons Laboratory.

The DRHT will provide an opportunity presented to few communities, a 15.7 mile long recreational trail running through some of the wildest and most beautiful land remaining in the region and in Virginia.

As we know, nature trails serve

On Saturday, June 3, Friends of DRHT held a "ribbon-cutting" ceremony to celebrate the opening of the long awaited King

George hiking, biking and nature trail. Our chair, Scott Howson, presented RGSC's Resolution of Support for the DRHT at this event.

Future RGSC trail outings and volunteer trail maintenance opportunities for members and guests will be available shortly. Please check our web, or contact Jim Lynch or me for more information.



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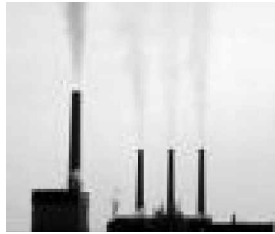
# VA Chapter Embarks on Air Quality Campaign

by James Lynch

The SC Virginia Chapter is in the process of formulating a new campaign to work toward improved air quality in the state. The focus will be in two parts: cut mercury emissions by at least 90%, and improve the efficiency of energy usage.

Mercury is a toxic pollutant that threatens public health. Forty percent of the mercury pollution in the US is released by coal-fired power plants. Other major sources include incineration of municipal and medical waste and plants that produce chlorine. Mercury exposure can cause severe learning disabilities and other neurodevelopmental problems in babies and young children.

Mercury enters our bodies primarily through ingesting fish, and fish acquire it from particulate pollution that is precipitated out into our lakes, streams and oceans. Forty-five states now warn their residents about which specific fish should not be eaten by



women of child-bearing age at least 12-18 months before they conceive and during gestation. The pri-

mary culprits to avoid are large fish such as swordfish, shark, orange roughy and tuna, according to the Environmental Defense Council. Fully one out of five women of child-bearing age have toxic levels of mercury in their bodies, according to a recent hair sample study done by the Sierra Club in cooperation with Greenpeace.

The VA Chapter Air Quality Campaign Committee met on April 23rd at the new Sierra Club headquarters in Richmond, led by the state air quality chairperson, Ana Prados. The group split into two teams, concentrating on the two aspects of the campaign. One of the key goals of the campaign is to overturn the bills passed by the Virginia legislature that provide for "trading" mercury emission compliance credits between both in-state power plants and with plants outside of Virginia. Trading pollution credits results in "hot spots" or regions with higher concentrations of a pollutants, essentially letting polluters off the hook and side-stepping any progress toward the goal of achieving a real reduction in toxic air pollutants.

The next step for the committee will be a teleconference to review the results of the work session and to plan future action. We will keep you posted on our progress.

## Things to do this Summer

### At the Movies

A "gotta see" is *An Inconvenient Truth*, starring former VP Al Gore, a documentary that grew out of his national Power Point presentation on global warming. The film got rave reviews at the Sundance Film Festival, and from critics and reviewers alike. Although not currently scheduled to show in our area, screenings are scheduled for the E Street Theatre in Georgetown on June 2, the Charles Theatre in Baltimore on June 9, and at the Westhampton 2 in Richmond on June 23. Catch one if you can!

### Outings and Adventures

Summer's on its way...are you ready? Here are some things you might want to put on your "to-do" list. Studies show that families who spend time together and time outdoors are healthier in every way. Make this a summer your family will remember!

- Go jump in a lake! Try Lake Anna, not far, wonderful beach, concession.
- Take a hike! Try a Ranger Hike at Shenandoah Park, just right for all ages.
- Float the Rappahannock by canoe or tube; contact Rappahannock Outdoor Center—371-5085
- Sail the Chesapeake. How about a day trip to Smith or Tangier Island? Phone: 804-453-2628 for reservations and info.
- Rent a cabin in the woods. Again, Shenandoah Park, or try one of the new cabins at Lake Anna or Westmoreland on the Potomac.
- For the birds? Spend a day at Caledon Natural Area in King George County. Watch eagles soar! Tour Visitor's Center and river. Bring your own picnic.
- Like history along with a walk in the woods? Head for Montpelier, just 4 miles south of Orange. Take a Big Woods walk, tour the formal gardens, and marvel at the old growth trees.
- Love grapes? Try Barboursville Vineyards (Orange County) or Ingleside Winery (King George County). Both have restaurants on the premises, with tours and wine tastings.
- Visit the farm—Westmoreland Berry Farm...great for kids, and conveniently located on Route 3. Berries galore... farm store, lunch concession, plants for sale, trails to hike.
- Pack up the family or friends, a picnic & visit the Rappahannock River National Wildlife Refuge Check out: [www.rwrfriends.org](http://www.rwrfriends.org)

## City Elections Spell "Success"

by Sandy Howson

The Rappahannock Group of the Sierra Club endorsed three candidates in the Fredericksburg City Council elections, which were held on May 2. All three of our endorsements were successful. Marv Dixon won the seat in Ward 1, George Solley won in Ward 2, and Matt Kelly won in Ward 3.

Our decision to endorse these candidates was made after long and careful consideration. First, a questionnaire was sent to everyone running. All responded with the exception of the unopposed candidate for Ward 4. After reviewing the responses, the Political Committee interviewed candidates as needed to reach a consensus. The recommended list of endorsees was then taken to the Executive Committee for approval, after which the announcement of our three endorsements was made at the next general membership meeting.

The RGSC supported the three candidates in several ways. First, RGSC's Chair, Scott Howson, wrote an Op-Ed for the Free Lance-Star in which he detailed the need for citizens to get out and vote, and the reasons we felt that Dixon, Solley and Kelly were the best candidates to represent and support the ideals of the Sierra Club. All members were encouraged to write "Letters to the Editor", and those who volunteered to help were encouraged to contact one or more of the three candidates to offer help with the campaign effort. Group members living in the City were called and asked to support our endorsees in their Wards.

All members of the RGSC should be delighted at the outcome of the elections! The entire Rappahannock region will benefit

from having a Council in the City of Fredericksburg that cares about the environment and understands that all of our decisions affect the natural legacy that we will leave for our children and grandchildren.



# SIERRA CLUB

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## Explore, Enjoy and Protect the Planet

### Earth Day Provides Rain and Fun

by Donna Pienkowski

For the second year in a row, Mother Nature deemed it more important to supply much needed rain than to allow Earth Day to take place on the planned date. As an avid gardener I am grateful. As an Earth Day organizer, I would love to get back on schedule!

Despite the rain date changes, dedicated exhibitors, entertainers, and vendors set up on Sunday, April 23. As we helped each other get ready amid early morning showers, we exchanged information and learned from each other.

RGSC member volunteers participated in a cooperative activity with Master Gardeners and Friends of the Rappahannock. Together we made plant pots from recycled newspaper, filled the pots with Rappahannock Gold potting soil, and planted seeds that are beneficial to wildlife and naturally repel insect pests. Other groups had participants painting permanent recycling bins for Fredericksburg and Stafford County, hands-on education about manatees, low-cost and free native trees and shrubs, and visitors working alongside University of Mary Washington college volunteers to build a path at Alum Spring Park.

Thanks to the help of dedicated volunteers who happily took turns manning our booth, I was able to visit other exhibits, learn about wildflowers and trees on a nature walk, enjoy a delicious lunch, and listen to first-rate entertainment. What a great day! The only thing that would have made it better would have been a Saturday date with a bigger crowd....there is always next year.

Special thanks are due to our co-sponsors at Fredericksburg Parks & Recreation, Friends of Alum Spring Park, and the Free Lance-Star. Because of their support of the event, extra income from sales and fees will go directly to improving Alum Spring Park.



### Navigating the Seafood Menu

On the Sierra Club Website:

<http://www.sierraclub.org/compass/>



## FALL 2006 PROGRAM PREVIEW

by Anne Little, Program Chair

Although RGSC takes a program break over the summer, we have already been hard at work putting together a fall line-up of programs that we hope will be both exciting and of significant interest to our members. Enjoy the summer, but mark your calendars now!

### ANNUAL RGSC OPEN HOUSE

Thursday, September 14

Time: 7-9 pm

Place: United Methodist Church, F'berg

This is our annual program year kick-off membership meeting for old and new members alike. Meet your RGSC leaders, fellow members, and learn more about local conservation issues, RGSC on-going projects and volunteer opportunities. This is a fun, social time for all of us, and we look forward to meeting YOU, our members. More details will be coming your way in our September newsletter.

### ENERGY FORUM

Thursday, September 28

Time: TBA

Place: F'berg Main Library

RGSC will be hosting a comprehensive energy forum featuring the documentary "Kilowatt Ours", a film that reveals the underreported side effects resulting from America's voracious appetite for coal-generated electricity. The movie follows filmmaker Jeff Barrie on his 18-month journey across the southeast United States, where more than six tons of coal are burned to generate electricity for the average home annually. Barrie takes viewers from their light switches at home to the sources of our energy, examining social and environmental consequences such

as global warming, mountain top removal, air pollution, childhood asthma and mercury contamination.

Leaving the devastation behind, the story takes an uplifting turn, uncovering hope-filled examples of conservation, efficiency and renewable power at work today. Barrie makes the case that environmental problems could be minimized by utilizing alternative technologies that are available today. The solutions are surprisingly accessible and affordable to the average American. "Kilowatt Ours" presents viewers with an ambitious plan for shifting America's energy paradigm towards conservation and renewable power.

At the Forum, we will also have information about ways that an average consumer can save as much as \$600 a year just using materials readily available at their local home improvement stores. We will have representatives from various organizations showing products and services that can save energy use at home.

### GREEN ENERGY INVESTING

Thursday, October 12

Time: 7-9 pm

Place: United Methodist Church

Our speaker will be Edward Hoyt, Vice President of Eenergy International Corporation. A company on the cutting edge of clean energy sources, Eenergy is an innovative, ecofriendly entity that specializes in project investment in the development of energy-sustainable communities such as a wind farm resort community in Baja, and building a worldwide portfolio of clean energy assets.

## ORANGE COUNTY OPTS TO STAY RURAL

by Linda Hiroos

For all the sprawl and development that is literally choking the quality of life out of many of the counties RGSC serves, Orange County will not be one of them. In case you missed the news, on May 2 the Orange County supervisors voted 4-1 to accept the new county Comprehensive Plan submitted by the Planning Commission. The plan will keep a full 95% of the remaining 216,653 acres in Orange County zoned as "agricultural" or "agricultural conservation". Another 3434 acres are zoned for economic development, 5206 acres for residential development, and the remaining 1% or 1846 acres, are designated for mixed use.

What Orange County has done could well serve as an example to other counties feeling the pressures of over-exuberant development in the past few years. Although it took over two years of study and rewriting, the new Comp Plan is the result of a commission that chose to listen to its constituents. To find out what Orange County residents really wanted for the future of their county, a questionnaire was mailed to all residents, followed by several public meetings that were held in all large population centers and towns in the County. The feedback was overwhelmingly in favor of keeping the county rural; specifically, agricultural. In the meantime, all rezoning applications, mostly from developers seeking to build subdivisions, were tabled, including large projects planned for the Route 3 corridor near Lake of the Woods and in Gordonsville.

Orange County residents clearly had an impact on the Comprehensive Plan process by taking the time to show up and participating. Active citizens can effect change.

## RGSC Meetings



## E-Cycle Your Old Computer

### ANNUAL RGSC OPEN HOUSE

Thursday, September 14

Time: 7-9 pm

Place: United Methodist Church, Fredericksburg

### ENERGY FORUM

Thursday, September 28

Time: TBA

Place: Central Rappahannock Regional Library— Fredericksburg

### GREEN ENERGY INVESTING

Thursday, October 12

Time: 7-9 pm

Place: United Methodist Church

### Directions to RGSG Meetings:

Unless noted otherwise, RGSC meetings are held the 2nd Thursday of each month in the basement of the Fredericksburg United Methodist Church at 308 Hanover Street. Go to [www.fumcva.org](http://www.fumcva.org) for detailed directions.

## Got Email from the Rappahannock Group of the Sierra Group?

Would you like to receive notices and reminders of our meeting, events, hikes, outings, etc?

It's Simple! Please send an email to:

[battlefields\\_sierra\\_group@yahoo.com](mailto:battlefields_sierra_group@yahoo.com)

and on the subject line put "include me on email notices" and you'll receive periodic reminders of our events.

We promise not to SPAM you and will, at any time, at your request promptly remove you from the email list.

Just send us an email that says: "Please remove me" and we will promptly respond.

If you are still at a loss to figure out what to do with your old computer, take a few minutes to drop it off at the Goodwill store the next time you visit Fredericksburg. Rappahannock Goodwill Industries sponsors a program which trains many area residents with disabilities to disassemble computer parts for recycling. You will be helping disadvantaged adults in our area learn new skills while at the same time keeping dangerous heavy metals out of our landfills. The Goodwill Store is located on Route 3, just east of I-95. Take your first right after crossing over I-95; the Goodwill store is in the shopping center on your left before you get to Home Depot. Other drop-off locations are in Stafford, at 72 Doc Stone Road, and 736 Warrenton Road (England Run Shopping Center), and in Culpeper at 504 Culpeper Town Square (off Bus. 29).

(Advertisement)

## Residential Lot for Sale in Local Ecovillage

1/3 acre FSBO in Loudoun Co., VA near Lovettsville. Water well & electric service installed; septic drainfield site pre-approved by county. Peaceful rolling hills, forest, and creeks. MARC train 10-min drive away. Part of new 180-acre green Ecohousing community requiring eco-friendly construction. 8 homes now built and occupied. Standard house plans available; custom designs also allowed. Lot price includes usage & shared ownership of over 100 acres of common land and forthcoming community house & swimming pool. \$143,700.

Info on this lot: contact Mike, [Opitz@macconnect.com](mailto:Opitz@macconnect.com), 301-962-5060

Info on the Ecovillage: [www.ecovillages.com](http://www.ecovillages.com)

"Every good thing, great and small, needs defense." — John Muir

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REGULAR	<input type="checkbox"/> \$39	<input type="checkbox"/> \$47

Contributions, gifts and dues to the 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 \$1.00 for your Chapter newsletter.



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## Renne DuVall

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By Appointment

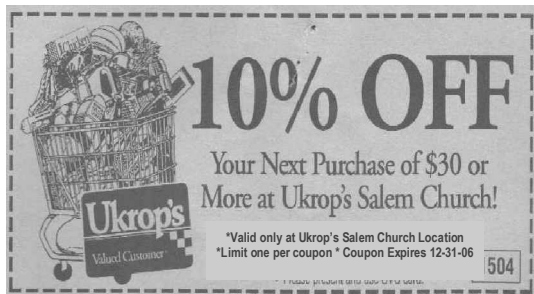
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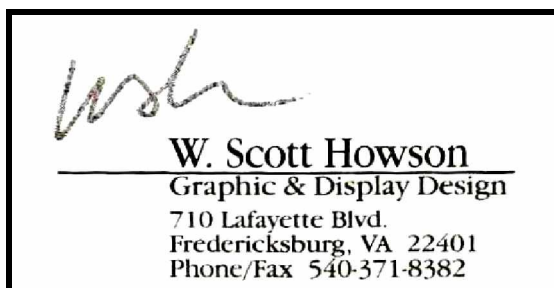
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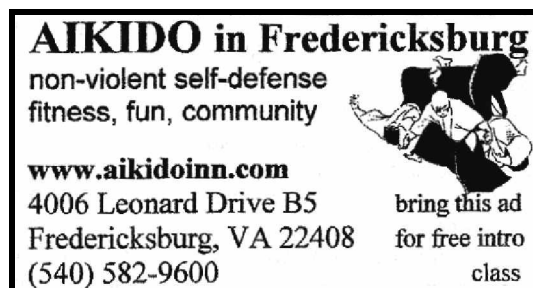
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