### UPCOMING

-- Meetings and Events--

#### Saturday, June 2, 10 AM: Hike Caledon State Park Natural Area

Sponsored by the Friends of Caledon, watch eagles soar on this 5-mile inaugural hike on the new Belmont Trail. Meet in the Parking Lot. Entrance fee is \$3/vehicle, exact change required. More info/questions: Contact leader Lowell Moore at <a href="mailto:lowellmoore@hotmail.com">lowellmoore@hotmail.com</a>.



#### Saturday, June 9, 11 AM-2 PM Rappahannock Group Annual Picnic in the Park

Join us for our end of the year picnic at Alum Spring Park, Fredericksburg. Bring your favorite picnic dish (salad or dessert) to share; hot dogs, veggie burgers and drinks will be provided. We'll meet at the Pavilion next to the parking lot. Take a walk on the nature trails around the park and Hazel Run. Bring a friend or the whole family!

#### Saturday, July 7, 10 AM Hike Lake Anna State Park

Learn how land and water conservationists worked together to create this versatile park. Ten miles, with some hills and rough terrain. We will take short breaks as desired. Bring water and pack a lunch. Keep an eye on the weather and come prepared. Park Fee: \$4 per car. For more info or if you have questions/reserve: Contact Jim Lynch at <a href="mailto:jplynch@crosslink.net">jplynch@crosslink.net</a>, or call 540-775-7002.

# THE POTOMAC HERITAGE TRAIL: PROGRESS AND ISSUES

by James Lynch

The Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail (PHNST) is a planned 700-mile corridor of hiking, biking and equestrian trails between the Chesapeake Bay and the Allegheny Highlands connecting the states of Virginia, Maryland, the District of Columbia and Pennsylvania. As of April 2007, 16 trails have been recognized as segments of the PHNST.

As trail work and route planning moves eastward toward the confluence of the Potomac River and the Chesapeake Bay at Smith Point, there are many governmental jurisdictions involved and few existing public land resources. Although much progress has been made, issues remain to be resolved over proposed routes and connector sites in several counties.

The George Washington Regional Commission has established a Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee to examine trails in the Fredericksburg area, including a route through the area for the PHNST. The committee is scheduled to complete their plan by the end of the year. The general concept for the backbone trail will have it enter northern Stafford County at Prince William Forest Park, traverse the county in a rough southeasterly direction (exact route to be determined), and join State Route 3 just to the west of the boundary with King George County.



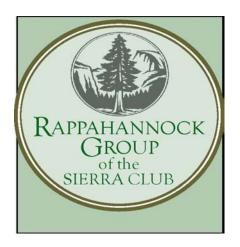
Photo: PHTA Website

An idyllic outdoor experience greets those who use the newest trails on the PHNST. This section, completed in March, 2006, is located along Piscataway Creek in Prince George County, Maryland.

In Stafford County, three new trail segments have been designated by the National Park Service in conjunction with the county: an Aquia water trail, the planned Falmouth-Ferry Farm Trail along the Rappahannock River across from Fredericksburg, and a segment on Government Island.

In King George, the trail route under consideration will head east roughly along Rtes. 3, 206, 218 and 205. A segment through Caledon Natural Area State Park is also being considered. The

.....Continued on page 3



#### RG ON THE WEB: www.virginia.sierraclub.org/rg/

VIRGINIA CHAPTER:

www.virginia.sierraclub.org
SC NATIONAL:

www.sierraclub.org

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SEAN BRENNAN: WEBMASTER

NEWSLETTER EDITOR: AVAILABLE

**OUTINGS CHAIR: AVAILABLE** 

#### NOTES FROM THE CHAIR

by Scott Howson



Summer is a paradox. For all the flora and fauna around the world, summer is prime time for getting things done between the re-birth of spring and the packing up in autumn. For people, however, summer is vacation time.

So for the next few months, the Rappahannock Group will take its annual break from monthly meetings and such. After the annual picnic on June 9 in Alum Spring Park, we won't be getting back together until the Open House in September.

Which doesn't mean that we all take three-month naps. We're still working on a number of environmental issues, including the Cool Cities campaign, the Greenways initiative, and several Global Warming concerns. We'll be watching the statewide and county election campaigns and considering our endorsements. And we'll be getting together for hikes, walks, and general fun in the great outdoors.

This spring has been busy and productive. Earth Day was a great success with hundreds of people joining in a number of events in April. We also made good progress with Fredericksburg City and County governments and VDOT, putting together a regional map of existing and potential bike and pedestrian trails for the Greenways Initiative.

Our partnership with the MWU Ecology Club keeps getting stronger every year. These outstanding students have embraced environmental activism on a scale that has "wowed" us all, from their Dormitory Energy Conservation Challenge to organizing and publicizing the local contingent of the national Step-It-Up Rally. Special thanks go to our spring Intern Amber Moore (see pg. 4) and Hilary Lufkin, our next fall intern, for all their hard work and enthusiasm.

We hope you'll join us anytime between 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. on Saturday, June 9 for our annual picnic. It's a fun and very informal time to get to know each other, talk about mutual interests, and enjoy the beauty of Alum Spring Park. We'll have hot dogs and veggie burgers, and invite you to bring along your favorite side dishes or desserts to share.

Summer may be a paradox for Mother Nature, but it's a great time to get back to being human and enjoying the fresh air, tall green trees, colorful flowers, cool, clear steams and precious birds and animals we share this planet with. And for the next few months, nobody will make you feel guilty if you do!

# CHECK OUT OUR NEW WEBSITE ADDRESS! YOU CAN NOW FIND US AT: HTTP://VIRGINIA.SIERRACLUB.ORG/RG/

**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 <a href="address.changes@sierraclub.org">address.changes@sierraclub.org</a>. For non-member subscription inquiries and address changes, call toll-free1-800-765-7904, 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

#### SUMMER BOOK NOOK!



For those of you who want easy summer reading that will both entertain and enlighten vou on environmental issues, the following recent publications come highly recommended.

#### A Walk in the Woods by Bill Bryson

People will wonder why you are laughing out loud as you follow a not so young 40-something Bill and his friend as they tackle a dream, hiking the Appalachian Trail. From pre-trek prep where friend-of-Bill lightens his load by jettisoning his food stash, to the questionably victorious mountaintop arrival at Katahdin, you just might agree that a walk in the woods takes more than unreasonable enthusiasm.

#### The Omnivore's Dilemma

by Michael Pollan

The author of The Botany of Desire compares modern mass food production methods with organic farming, sustainable agricultural practices and old hunter-gatherer ways. You will learn much about our corn-based diet and how it got that way, and what you need to know about organic foods to choose wisely. Great food for thought!

#### The Weather Makers by Tim Flannery

For anyone who finds the intricacies of climatology beyond their easy grasp, internationally-acclaimed conservationist Flannery explains the history of climate change and the CO2 cycle in clear, readable prose. A well-researched book that easily explains just how fragile our climate is while exploring more complex ideas that go well beyond An Inconvenient Truth.

#### Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder by Richard Louv

Reared in today's tech-oriented world, Louv exposes the reasons for our childrens' ignorance of nature and the alarming rise in childhood mental and physical disorders. Learn how exposure to nature fosters healthy childhood development and ways you can help your own kids and the children in your community make that first step toward a healthy nature-child reunion.

#### EARTH DAY '07 A GREAT SUCCESS!

by Scott Howson

Thanks to the hard work of many Sierra Club volunteers, Fredericksburg's Earth Day events spread the message of ecostewardship to hundreds of our neighbors. The Rappahannock Group partnered with Fredericksburg Parks and Recreation, the Regional R-Board, the Free Lance-Star, and FRED Regional Transit to offer several events during the week. Despite the changing spring weather here in Virginia, everyone had a good time.



Photo Courtesy of Scott Howson

Many exhibitors with booths and displays like those above helped make Earth Day a great success this year at Alum Spring Park.

The week started with a "Step-It-Up" rally in downtown's Hurkamp Park, in a cold drizzly evening on Saturday, April 14th. About 35 people listened to a group of speakers urging better energy efficiency and alternate and recyclable energy sources to stop the progression of global warming. Everyone there left wet, but convinced that we CAN do something.... (Continued on pg 7)

#### Potomac Heritage Trail from pg. 1....

trail will pass through the town of Colonial Beach in Westmoreland County before heading east again, touching Wakefield National Park (George Washington's birthplace), Westmoreland State Park, and Stratford Hall (Robert E. Lee's birthplace).

In the Northern Neck, several routes have been suggested for inclusion in the PHNST. At a meeting of the Northern Neck Regional Planning Commission in April, PHNST Park Manager Don Briggs and BikeWalk Virginia Executive Director Alan Turnbull gave an interesting presentation on several existing biking trails that might be included as segments of the PHNST. Additional routes will be considered that lead directly to the confluence point of the Potomac River with the Chesapeake Bay.

While the Dahlgren Railroad Heritage Trail is not currently being considered for inclusion in the PHNST, it may serve as an alternate route for permit holders. The trail has been cleared and can be hiked. It can also be used by hardy bikers. In the future, plans are to accommodate wheelchair and equestrian users. A parking area at the Rte. 205 trailhead has been built by a scout as an Eagle Scout Project. Future scout projects will include other parking areas and a back-country campground.

#### ANTI-GLOBAL WARMING TIPS OF THE MONTH

Use cloth napkins at meals—
save a tree!..and buy only products
that come in biodegradable or
recyclable packaging.

#### A Message from Amber Moore: RG's MWU Spring Intern

Well, this year is drawing to a close, and what a year it has been! My internship with the Rappahannock Group was an extremely enjoyable and rewarding semester. I gained experience working with the local chapter of an amazing conservation organization, which strongly reaffirmed my desire for working in the field of conservation and environmental policy. This semester, I felt like I was really involved in the RG and helped to make a difference in the environmental movement. One of my biggest projects, Step-It-Up 2007, was a day of rallies across the country telling Congress to cut carbon emissions 80% by 2050. Even though the day did not necessarily provide the best weather for a rally, Step-It-Up Fredericksburg was a big success. We had a great turnout at both the University of Mary Washington and Hurkamp Park, and the space on Caroline Street was filled with youth from around the area who were excited about what the rally represented. Hopefully, we helped to get Congress' attention so that they, too, will "Step-It-

In contrast, we could not have had a better day for Earth Day at Alum Spring Park on April 21, and I am so glad that I could contribute and show the Fredericksburg community how important it is to save our planet. I feel like Fredericksburg is well on its way to becoming a "Cool City," and I hope that my contributions have helped that journey.

My internship was a wonderful and worthwhile experience, and I am sad to have to say "goodbye!" Thank you for the opportunity to work with all of you and learn so much about conservation, environmental policy, and the politics of organizations like the Sierra Club. I know that this experience will benefit me for the rest of my life!

## Green Housekeeping: —How Do You Score?

Although most of our readers are probably already doing a good job purchasing "green" products to use in their homes, the household product manufacturing industry has, at least until recently, given us few choices that allow us to both keep our homes clean AND keep toxic chemicals and wasteful products out of our homes, waterways and landfills. As we wait for industry to catch up with this stepped-up level of green thinking, in most supermarkets there is a fast-growing selection of alternatives we can look for when we do our weekly shopping.

The list below contains products that are used in just about every American home. See how GREEN you are and how you might be able to improve your GREEN housekeeping score!



**Laundry Detergent:** Buy 100% biodegradable products, which quickly break down into water and basic minerals.

**Dish Detergent:** Choose one without petrochemicals that also comes in a recyclable plastic bottle.

**Drain Cleaners:** These are among the most toxic chemicals on the marketplace. Choose one made with natural enzymes.

Polishes and Waxes: Bees wax will do just fine, thank you!

**Trash Bags:** The single largest item responsible for road litter! If you must buy them, buy those made from recycled material and which are also compostable or biodegradable.

**Glass Cleaner:** Simple and inexpensive. Mix 2 tsp white vinegar with 1 quart of warm water. Apply with a linen towel or soft cloth. Vinegar is also a great disinfectant for sinks and kitchen counters, proven to kill 98% of all surface bacteria.

**Paper Towels and Napkins:** Use cloth napkins whenever possible and save a tree. When you must purchase, buy napkins and towels made from recycled paper, and try the "short sheet" paper towel rolls to minimize waste.

**Bath and Facial Tissue:** Brands like Marcal boast of 65% post-consumer content, and facial tissue from recycled sources.

**Chlorine Bleach:** Use an oxygen-based (sodium percarbonate) product, which is kind to both fabrics and colors and does the job just as well.

**Pest Control:** Pest control tends to be one of the toughest areas to find new, safer products. Got mice? Use a humane mouse trap, which is poison-free. Cockroaches can be caught using baited sticky traps that are safe for children and pets.

**Cleaning/Dish Cloths:** Choose soft, washable microfiber cloths for just about any job that does not require use of oils or waxes, from washing windows to washing the car. Microfiber cloths are less abrasive and pick up more of the dirt you are after. Internet shoppers can find them on: <a href="https://www.solutions.com">www.solutions.com</a>.

Ref: <u>www.greenhome.com</u> is an environmentally-conscious company with a large selection of chemical-free cleaning products.

#### **New Volunteers on Board!**



We have seen a number of new faces at our meetings and outings lately, which is definitely good news. Many thanks to Christine Carlson who has agreed to be our Hospitality Chair this coming year; Joe Thompson, ExCom member, who will be filling Helen Sanders "big shoes" as our new Conservation Chair in September (a BIG thanks to Helen for serving us so well as Conservation Chair for so many years we've lost count); and Michelle Acton, who will be sending our monthly e-mail meeting notices to members and friends.

Thanks, too, to the several other members who have stepped forward to serve on one of our committees.

Our efforts on all fronts are only as good as the volunteer staff who give so generously of their time to make the Rappahannock Group the best it can be!

**PROGRAM IDEAS** and suggestions are welcome at any time. Contact Brenda King at <u>brendajoyceking@mac.com</u>, or call her at 540-891-2088.

**RG Membership Meetings** are held on the second Thursday of every month, except June, 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 <a href="https://www.fumcva.org">www.fumcva.org</a>.

RG 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.

**E-MAIL LIST:** To receive monthly meeting and outings notices, send your name by e-mail to Michelle Acton at <a href="mailto:emakton@hotmail.com">emakton@hotmail.com</a> with the subject line: RG E-Mail List. Please indicate if you are a member or non-member.

**NEWSLETTER BY E-MAIL:** To receive your newsletter via e-mail, send your name and address to Linda Hiross at <a href="https://lines.ps...broks46@yahoo.com">lines.ps...broks46@yahoo.com</a> with the subject line: Newsletter by E-mail.

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

#### **Not All Biofuels Are Created Equal!**

by Linda Hiross

A lot has been written about biofuels, enough to have you thinking that biofuels are the "it" energy alternative to coal and oil, the biological hero that will save the planet from the disaster of global warming we have created. But before we inflict any more damage on ourselves, we need to take a closer look at a misguided proposal that will be coming before the US Senate for a vote in early June.

As part of major energy legislation initiatives, Bill 987 has just passed through the Senate Energy and Resources Committee. This bill which requires the annual production of 36 billion (yes, that's BILLION) gallons of biofuel per year by 2022. Fifteen billion of that <u>must be corn ethanol</u>, which is the equivalent of half the corn currently grown in the entire US. **TELL YOUR SENATORS TO OVERHAUL OR SCRAP THIS BILL!** 



Although we should remain excited about the opportunities offered by biofuel production, to require such a large percentage of biofuels come from corn will do nothing to lighten our atmospheric carbon overload, and will actually make it much worse.

According to statistics provided by *Friends of the Earth*, an international environmental advocacy group, growing and processing this much corn for fuel would:

- Create over 100 million metric tons of global warming pollution, most due to the need for oil and gas to run farming equipment and haul product to processing centers.
- Lead to the ecologically damaging conversion of millions of acres of land, since a lot more land will be needed if we are to retain agricultural diversity and still grow all the corn we need for food use.
- Increase non-sustainable agriculture, erosion, pesticide use and fertilizer use.
- Require 60 billion gallons of water, necessary for growing and for the conversion process.
- Drive the price of corn through the roof, essentially removing it from the diet of the world's poor. (The amount of corn it takes to fill one 25-gal SUV tank with ethanol could feed a person for a year!) Already the price of corn is starting to rise on the global market.

Few people understand how fuel and resource-intensive the mega-farm industrial production of corn really is. Our senators need to know there are other more promising biofuel crops out there (e.g., switchgrass, algae). Bill 987 only goes to show how little our senators actually know of the pollution fostered by this proposal for mass corn-sourced biofuel production.

Tell BOTH your senators that this bill, as written, is just too bad to support and should not be the foundation for major energy legislation.



Explore, enjoy and protect the plane



#### 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 its our turn.

#### Cause a stink. JOIN Sierra Club.

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Join today and receive a FREE Sierra Club Weekender Bag!		3
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or visit our website www.sierraclub.org

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#### Appreciating the Importance of Wetlands

by Linda Hiross



It is not often we get to appreciate the importance of wetlands in our own back yard, but this February I was fortunate to notice some unfamiliar waterfowl on a small pond near my house. Binoculars and a good field guide helped me identify them as Bufflehead ducks and Greater Scaup. I had never spotted either of these duck species before, and we are, indeed, fortunate to live in an area so close to the Atlantic ocean and wintering grounds of these less common waterfowl.

February, of course, is the start of the spring migration of marine waterfowl from the Chesapeake Bay to breeding grounds to the north and west, and these rare guests had just stopped by for a little R&R and a stay at the local B&B.

Unlike migrating geese that move in large, showy flocks during the day, ducks fly in small groups at night, which is why you don't see them coming or going, but may well find them on a stopover come daylight. Flight legs are generally limited to 50-100 miles for these birds, which is why preserving small wetland areas across our landscape is so important to their survival.



Photo Courtesy of: Jan Tyndall

Wetlands, like those above at the Rappahannock River Wildlife Area in Warsaw, VA, are crucial to the survival of migratory birds.

It didn't take long to realize why these birds felt so welcome at our small pond. As I watched them diving and bobbing frantically, the pond bottom, obviously rich with grasses to refuel their metabolism, was being churned up enough to muddy the surface waters. A small water fountain kept the cold surface water free of ice, and a thick growth of cat-o-nine-tails at one end of the pond provided shelter at night and protection from open winds and predators.

Watching these birds was a delight, but the wetlands were—yes--PRICELESS!



# SIERRA CLUB OPEN HOUSE! 7:00 to 9:00 PM Thursday, September 13 United Methodist Church Downtown F-burg

Join us as we kick-off the 2007-08 year of group activities of meetings, outings and special events. If you are one of our many newer members of the Sierra Club, this gathering is for YOU! You will hear about our current and future projects and conservation priorities. Learn how volunteering in key areas of local importance can be both satisfying and fun! Bring a friend and meet new ones!

#### **Earth Day** cont. from pg 3...

as individuals, communities and nations to ameliorate this growing problem.

The weather on the following Saturday, April 21st, could not have been more beautiful. More than two dozen exhibitors filled the picnic grounds at Alum Spring Park under a clear blue sky, while local musicians entertained us. Many of the hundreds of area residents who attended took part in the hikes that looked at the history, trees, and wildflowers along Hazel Run, and everyone enjoyed the FRED shuttle bus that carried families to and from the parking area.

The message was serious--we have to be more aware of the effects we have on our environment --but the atmosphere was fun and entertaining. It was a great way to let people know that the solutions to global warming and energy abuse can be simple and don't have to drastically alter our lives. It's just a matter of taking small steps in the right direction. We CAN make a difference, and have fun doing it!

#### GET OUT!

#### RG OUTINGS SCHEDULE JUNE - AUGUST. 2007



All Sierra Club activities and outings are free (except park admission fees) to members and open to the public. Check with the RSG website/event leader for directions or any changes, cancellations, and other general outings information, or to make reservations (recommended).

Saturday, July 7, 10:00 AM - Lake Anna State Park Hike, Lake Anna, VA. Learn how land and water conservationists worked together to create this versatile park. We'll hike ten miles, with some hills and rough terrain. We will take short breaks as desired. Bring water and pack a lunch. Keep an eye on the weather and come prepared. Park Fee: \$4 per car. For more info or if you have questions/reserve: Contact Jim Lynch at <a href="mailto:jplynch@crosslink.net">jplynch@crosslink.net</a>, or call 540-775-7002.

#### WE NEED OUTINGS LEADERS!

If you have an interest in the great outdoors and would like to learn more about how to become an outings leader with the Sierra Club, please contact Jim Lynch at <a href="mailto:jplynch@crosslink.net">jplynch@crosslink.net</a> or call him at 540-775-7002.

#### OTHER EVENTS OF INTEREST:

(NOT sponsored by Sierra Club)

Saturday, June 2, 10:00 AM – National Trail Days Hike, Caledon Natural Area, King George, VA. Sponsored by the Friends of Caledon. Watch eagles soar on this 5-mile inaugural hike on the new Belmont Trail. Meet in the Parking Lot. Entrance fee is \$3/vehicle, exact change required. More info/questions: Contact Leader Lowell Moore at <a href="mailto:lowellmoore@hotmail.com">lowellmoore@hotmail.com</a>.



**June 2-3: First Annual Rappahannock River Easement Celebration,** Old Mill Park, Fredericksburg. Multiple events include: The Whitewater Mid-Atlantic Canoeing and Kayaking Championships, Paddle for a Cause and Scout Challenge Race. Call the Virginia Outdoor Center at 540-371-5085 for more information.

**June 10: Family River Safety and Tubing Trip.** Learn river safety and then put it into practice as you tube down a section of the Rappahannock. Plan on getting wet and wear shoes that will stay on your feet! Min age: 8 years. 12:30-4:30 pm. Raindate: July 1. Cost: \$3 Reserve: Friends of the Rappahannock 540-373-3448.

**June 16: Civil War Canoe Float.** Park Service Historian Greg Mertz will lead this engaging canoe trip through the history of the Civil War. As you paddle down the river, you will stop at several sites to learn how rivers played an important role in Civil War events. Register early! Bring a bag lunch. Min. age: 8 years. 9 am to 4 pm. Cost: \$5. Info/Reserve: 540-373-3448.

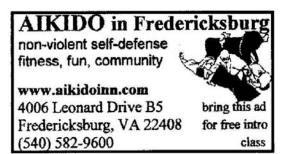
Rappahannock Group of the Sierra Club Box 7972 Fredericksburg, VA 22402 Address Service Requested

Non-Profit Organization U.S. Postage Paid Fredericksburg VA 22401 PERMIT 665

#### **ANNUAL PICNIC JUNE 9!**

**GET YOUR NEXT NEWSLETTER** BY E-MAIL; SIGN-UP NOW AND SAVE A TREE! (See pg. 5)







www.mykeepitgreen.com KEEP IT GREEN (540)361-1416

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