

UPCOMING EVENTS! Annual Potluck Picnic



Saturday June 13, 2009
11 a.m. To 2 p.m.

Alum Spring Park, Fredericksburg, VA
Covered Shelter- RAIN or SHINE!
Bring A Dish

Please join us for our annual Rappahannock Group Sierra Club Picnic. It's an opportunity to meet-up and kick back with fellow club members, friends and family. We will have grill items and beverages, so please bring a dish to share!

At Alum Springs Park you can enjoy a hike in the Park or sit back and relax under the covered shelter. For more information please contact: Doris Whitfield:
540-775-7856



VCN Summer Workshops: **"Conservation in Changing Times"**

The Virginia Conservation Network partnering with the Virginia League of Conservation Voters will host regional workshops on key environmental issues and discuss ways that concerned Virginians can make a difference as citizen lobbyists, activists, and educators.

Workshop Schedule

- June 16, 2009** Richmond (YMCA Downtown)
- June 18, 2009** Charlottesville (Jefferson Madison Regional Library)
- June 22, 2009** Arlington (Arlington Central Library)
- June 23, 2009** Warrenton (Warrenton Visitors Center)
- July 8, 2009** Martinsville (Henry County Admin Building)
- July 13, 2009** Norfolk (Ernie Morgan Center)

RG members will be carpooling to the June 23, 2009 workshop. Contact Doris 540-775-7856
Virginia Conservation Network: www.vcnva.org

EARTH DAY 2009 ALUM SPRING PARK



(RG Chair Doris Whitfield setting up Earth Day booth, photo by L. Muller)

by Scott Howson

Earth Day 2009 was a tremendous success with an estimated 150 volunteers and 1,200 visitors to Alum Spring Park in Fredericksburg thanks to the partnership between the Rappahannock Group and Fred. Parks and Rec Dept, and the generous support of the Free Lance-Star, FRED Transit, The R-Board, Marstel Day, Luck Development Partners, and Energy and Environment, Inc. The all-day event featured thirty exhibitors, live music, hikes and wildlife shows, plus loads of children's activities and good food. Earth Day has become one of the region's biggest annual celebrations, and a wonderfully enjoyable way to spread the word about local environmental efforts. We are grateful to the many volunteers who helped staff the RG booth through-out the day; Jody Lochmiller, Josephine Dodt, Linda Muller, Ali Thomas & LeeAnn Zies, of James Monroe High School, and Laura Pilati & Carly Byers from the University of Mary Washington Ecology Club.

Meet Our New RG Outings Leader

The Rappahannock Group is pleased to introduce a new Outings Leader: Roland Herrman. In addition to being an avid hiker and camper, Roland is a Lifetime Sierra Club member. Originally from Texas, he has lived and traveled through-out the Western states. As a trained and certified Sierra Club Outings Leader, Roland plans to include family friendly outings as well as challenging hikes. Roland can be contacted via email: rolandmh@verizon.net. See page 3 for **Outings Listings**. Be sure to check the RG web page for more **Outings updates**: <http://virginia.sierraclub.org/RG/outings.html>



Locally Grown: Growing in VA and King George County

NOTES FROM THE CHAIR

by Doris Whitfield

by Linda Muller

As we roll through late Spring and into Summer we enjoy the expanding bounty of local farmers markets. Locally grown produce, flowers, herbs, meats, cut flowers are offered directly from farms to local consumers.

The Sierra Club has long recognized the many health and economic benefits of supporting local agriculture and farmers markets. The Sierra Club's "Green Home" website

<http://www.sierraclubgreenhome.com>

and Sierra Club's social network site: "Climate Crossroads"

<http://climatecrossroads.sierraclub.org/index.html>

offers members useful information about buying "local".

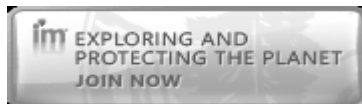
The Rappahannock Group region enjoys a plentiful offering of local Farmers Markets including the recent opening of the King George County Farmers Market. Located at the King George Elementary School on Route 205 (just off Route 3), the market is open Saturdays 8 a.m. To 1 p.m. All products sold at the King George County Farmer's Market are produced in King George County.

For more listings of local/regional agricultural markets please see:

Local Harvest: <http://www.localharvest.org/>

The Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services offers a statewide listing of regional Farmers Markets on their website:

<http://www.vdaacs.virginia.gov/vagrown/frmsmkt.shtml>



im.live.com

Sierra Club and Microsoft HOTMAIL© Team Up

Each time you send an instant message or email using Windows Live Messenger or Windows Live Hotmail, the Microsoft "i'm" program donates a portion of its advertising revenue with Sierra Club. The program is completely free, and all you need to do is sign up. More information on the Sierra Club web site:

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

EARTH DAY, EVERY DAY!!

Alum Spring Park 6th annual Earth Day April 25th was a "fun" celebration for the 1200 plus participants, especially the children & their parents. But then, any occasion that lets Sierra Club members, families, friends & like minded "lovers" of our natural resources enjoy the many attributes of places like Alum Spring Park, is special.

Thanks to Scott Howson, RG and Linda Bailey, Fredericksburg Parks & Recreation who planned and coordinated the volunteers, organizations, vendors and businesses that helped make it "the best Earth Day yet"!

[King George Farmer's Market](#) opened Sat. May 2nd, KG. elementary School, (Rt. 3 & 205) & will continue to sell only local produces from "Fields, Forests & Waters of KG for the season. A banner welcomes you to the KG Farmers Market ... "Supported by The Rappahannock Group, Sierra Club", a donation.

Hal Wiggins, Environmental Scientist with U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, presented RG's May 14, program, "Crow's Nest, Past & Present", showing how 30 years of local advocacy, leadership and commitment helped to preserve Crow's Nest, Virginia's 54th Natural Area Preserve. Hal's "[A Field Guide To Crows Nest](#)" is an invaluable resource tool that offers a cultural, historical and ecological look behind one of Virginia's premiere natural treasures. In Spring 1999, Hal took our Group on a memorable canoe trip to the Crow's Nest peninsula. Join us on another canoe trip this summer. (TBA)

"[Make Green the Color of Regional Progress](#)" headlined Sunday, May 17, FLS Viewpoints, demonstrating the progress made by the George Washington Regional Commission's (GWRC "s) [Green Government Commission](#) (GGC). The four sub-committees of GGC; Green Energy, Green Building, Green Waste management, and Green Environment replicates the Sierra Cool Cities Campaign, "Solving Global Warming One City at a time". Please let me know if you are interested in serving on one of these committees . GGC web site:

<http://gwgreengovt.homestead.com/index.html>

It's been a busy year with our program, events, conservation issues & partnering activities. Summer signals a slowing down time for Group activities. With the June 9th upcoming primary & expected political endorsements, Outings, GGC member participation, on-going conservation issues, we'll need member support. Check our web site for updates: <http://virginia.sierraclub.org/rg/>

**Hope you can join us for Sat. June 13, 11-2:00 Alum Spring Annual Picnic.
It's a relaxed, fun, sharing time for us all.**



RG ON THE WEB:

www.virginia.sierraclub.org/rg/

VIRGINIA CHAPTER:

www.virginia.sierraclub.org

SC NATIONAL:

www.sierraclub.org

BYOB* – *Bring Your Own Bag (and Bottle!)

by Christine Carlson

Almost a month has passed since Earth Day and already I'm seeing great changes around me. The woman behind me in line at the grocery store the other day had her cart filled with Wal-Mart reusable bags. Shopper's Food Warehouse (the local grocery chain) just started offering 5 cents off per reusable bag that you bring, while others like Giant and Ukrop's have been doing so for years. Target has a sign at the cash register now, asking you to decline a bag if you don't really need one, and they no longer give me a confused look when I toss my own bag onto the conveyor belt. The Free-Lance Star even had a comprehensive article a couple of months ago about the issues with plastic bags.

But now that we are becoming wiser about our bag usage, I encourage everyone to take a second look at the plastic bottles they purchase, often in bulk cases at the ubiquitous membership wholesale clubs such as Costco or BJ's. These, too, have skeletons in the closet. Bottled water has gained popularity in recent years as an alternative to soda and other less-healthy bottled drinks. Fear of contaminated tap water led people to purchase filters and more bottled water. However, the [National Resource Defense Council](#) concluded that there is no assurance that water from a bottle is any cleaner or safer than tap water. There is growing evidence that phthalates and bisphenol A (BPA) found in plastic bottles leach into the water. And while there are regulatory limits in the amount of phthalates in tap water, there are none established for bottled water.

Health aside, these plastic bottles clutter our environment with the same impact as those aforementioned plastic bags. From the oil used to create them (approximately 15 million barrels of oil a year for the U.S. alone), to the fossil fuels burned to transport them, to the energy used to refrigerate them, even water itself is wasted during filtration to fill them. More energy is used to manufacture these containers than any other type of beverage container (www.container-recycling.org). One of the most striking facts is that nearly 1.5 million tons of PET plastic, which produces contaminants 100 times that of glass, are used yearly, worldwide. The Climate Action Network points out that incineration and landfill decomposition of these bottles releases toxic chemicals (including chlorine and phthalates) into the ground and the air. Environmentalists are also challenging the companies that fill these bottles, claiming that their practices drain local aquifers and water tables.

Although our recycling of these bottles has increased, so has our consumption, leaving the

percentage of bottles recycled consistently around 24% over the past 20 years. The downcycling and reduced viability that occurs with recycling plastic bags (the fibers lose their strength) also occurs with bottles, meaning that they can only be recycled a few times. Challenges with recycling also include difficulties recycling the many different varieties of plastics they contain. The main fact that these bottles are typically consumed during trips away from home, means that recycling needs to be more omnipresent at places like stores, hotels, and gas stations.

So, just as we have re-considered our relationship with plastic bags, we must now start looking at our consumption of plastic bottles, whether containing water, soda or sports drinks. Many businesses now offer excellent reusable bottles, including the popular Sigg, which are made from aluminum and touted as tough, long-lasting, safe (no leaching into your beverage) and 100% recyclable. Buy a few, wash and reuse them during the week, and fill them with (relatively) free water right from your own tap. Oh, and if you're still looking for reusable bags, check out <http://www.reusablebags.com/>, and get a cute Chico-Bag, which compresses into its own stuff sack, the size of your palm.

OUTINGS/EVENTS

SIERRA CLUB HIKES:

Saturday, Jun. 13. GWNF: Big Schloss/Great North Mtn. Moderate 12 mi. circuit hike on the Va./W.Va. line with gorgeous view from the top and giant ant hills along the way. Total 1800 ft elev. change with first four miles fairly gentle uphill, moderate middle (except for steep but short climb to the schloss itself), and last two miles steeper downhill. Meet at 7:30 am. Call for meeting place. Leaders: Marcia Wolf, 301/565-3165 (before 9 pm) or wolfmk@comcast.net, and Sue Auerbach, 703/931-2728 (before 9 pm). Sierra Club Potomac Region Outings.

Sunday, June 14. St. Mary's River State Park. Venture forth to St. Mary's Co. in southern MD to do a moderately paced 8-9 mi. and enviro-educational hike that will wend around a 250-acre lake in an area filled with woodlands, fields, and wetlands—and a rich but alligator-free variety of late-spring flora and fauna. Post-hike option: early dinner at seafood eatery on the way back. Call for driving directions to the trailhead (there, expect a park fee of \$4/vehicle). Sierra Club Potomac Region Outings joint event with AMC/DC. Leader: Paul Elliott, 703/256-6351.

Saturday June 20, Nicholson Hollow to Corbin Cabin. We will be hiking the Nicholson Hollow to Corbin Cabin, located at the base of Shenandoah National Park near Sperryville. It is a moderate hike with an elevation gain of 2000' and covers 8 miles. Anyone wishing to reduce their carbon footprint by carpooling can meet at the Ukrops parking lot (Rt.3 & Leavells). We will leave promptly at 7:30, so please arrive a few minutes early. We will meet for the hike at the main Old Rag parking lot at 9:00am. Make sure to bring AT LEAST 1 liter of water and a substantial snack or lunch. The hike will last around 7 hours and is just around 8 miles. We will try to be back at 5:30pm. Contact Roland Herrman: rolandmh@verizon.net

Other Events: (non Sierra Club)

June 27 River Easement Hike and Float; Friends of the Rappahannock

Fredericksburg's River Steward, Lee Sillitoe, will guide us through a section of the city's riparian land holdings and discuss the importance of conservation easements and streamside buffer zones. We will canoe from Mott's Run Landing, and then hike to England Run Falls. Bring a bag lunch. Minimum age 8 years. 9 am-2 pm. *Rain or shine.* \$15 individual/ \$45 family Phone (540) 373-3448

July 25 Crow's Nest Float, Friends of the Rappahannock

Join author of *A Field Guide to Crow's Nest*, Hal Wiggins, on this tour of Crow's Nest, celebrated for its ecological importance and diversity. This area is not open to the public, so the Crow's Nest Float is an F.O.R. exclusive! Identify wetland vegetation along an undeveloped shoreline as you paddle through this biological wonder to the Potomac Creek Heronry. Bring a bag lunch. Minimum age 8 yrs. 8 am- 2 pm. Backup: July 26. \$30 individual/ \$75 family Phone (540) 373-3448

Be sure to check the RG website for updated Outings and Events:

www.virginia.sierraclub.org/rg/