



NEWSLETTER UPDATE

Rappahannock Group Fall Open House

September 10, 2015 - 7 PM to 9 PM
 Fredericksburg Central Regional Library
 1201 Caroline St., Fredericksburg, VA 22401

Special guest speakers:

Sarah Perry from the Good Turn Earth Company, a local Fredericksburg business, will talk about how they divert "green waste" from the landfill, and turn it into a rich soil conditioner, compost. <http://goodturnearth.com>

Bill & Diana Johnson: Bill & Diana have been organic gardeners since the mid 1970's and they will share their insights into growing and preserving organic vegetables and fruits, including bug control, rotating plants, and preserving methods like canning and freezing.

The RGSC Fall Open House 2015 will include information displays, updates on upcoming events, light refreshments, and of course great company!

Volunteers are always appreciated to help support: refreshments, set up, and clean-up. Please contact Paula Chow, Program Chair paulachow32@gmail.com if you can help assist /volunteer with our Fall Open House.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!!!

Holiday Open House

Sunday, Dec. 6th at 2:00pm - 4:00pm

at the American Legion Hall Post 51 at 461 Woodford Street, Fredericksburg

Light refreshments served

Silent Auction gift baskets

Program presentation TBA

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

RGSC is one of the several organizations (or individuals) volunteering with the City of Fredericksburg Dept. of Parks & Recreation to plan the annual Earth Day on the Rappahannock every April. The planning meetings are chaired by Linda Bailey who coordinates the ever growing Earth Day event. Meetings are held once a month on a Friday at 9:00am beginning in October through April at Eileen's Cafe and Bakery on Caroline Street in Fredericksburg. Volunteers need not commit to major amounts of time, rather, whatever capacity a volunteer can serve will be helpful. If you are interested in helping out for even a few hours, contact Paula Chow at paulachow32@gmail.com and enter "Earth Day" on the subject line.

RGSC Board Member Contacts:

Chair: Linda C. Muller, lmuller@mindspring.com

Vice Chair, Bill Johnson, billatthelake@comcast.net

Program Chair: Paula Chow, paulachow32@gmail.com

Treasurer: Diana Johnson, diamatthelake@comcast.net

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"Like" RGSC on FACEBOOK!

www.facebook.com
 RGSC Website

<http://www.sierraclub.org/virginia/rappahannock>

RGSC Email News Group send an email to sign-up

rappsierragroup@gmail.com

RGSC Mailing Address:

RGSC
 P.O. Box 7972
 Fredericksburg, VA 22404

OTHER ORGANIZATIONS/LINKS

Virginia Conservation Network
www.vcnva.org

Virginia League of Conservation Voters
www.valev.org

Southern Environmental Law Center
www.southernenvironment.org

Friends of the Rappahannock
www.riverfriends.org

Tree Fredericksburg
www.treesfredericksburg.org

VA CHAPTER SIERRA CLUB ANNUAL GATHERING SEPTEMBER 25, 26 & 27

Location@ Caroline Furnace Lutheran Retreat Center, in George Washington National Forest about 30 miles from Front Royal. Join fellow club members for a weekend of hiking, music, fun and, of course, learning about how to protect our natural environment in Virginia. This 3 day, 2 night gathering includes nature hikes, Virginia Sierra Club happenings, great music, and fellowship.

Sign up at:

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

Memo from the Chair

By Linda C. Muller

"We owe it to ourselves and to the next generation to conserve the environment so that we can bequeath our children a sustainable world that benefits all."

Dr. Wangari Maathai, founder Green Belt Movement Kenya, 2004 Nobel Peace Prize Recipient

I was fortunate to attend Dr. Maathai's lecture presented by the Smithsonian Institute in the Fall of 2007. What was so impressive about Dr. Maathai's efforts to address environmental concerns in her native country of Kenya, was she employed a relatively simple concept: plant seedlings and trees in watersheds to help protect and preserve water sources and water quality.

"Where there is water, there is life and livelihood."

We often take for granted our essential natural resources when they are plentiful and readily available especially fresh clean water. I was reminded this summer while traveling in the arid West that we should take extra care to conserve and protect our water resources. The Rappahannock Region enjoys an abundance of fresh water resources and is served by a vast network of water tables and artesian aquifers. Citizens must remain engaged and vigilant in conserving and protecting critical fresh water resources. The industrial practice of hydraulic fracturing (fracking) proposed in the Taylorville Basin will require millions and millions of gallons of water, from somewhere, that will be mixed with secret chemicals and abrasives that must be stored and treated. Unexpected fracking well leaks can contaminate nearby well water (as in Pennsylvania, May 2015). While the Virginia Department of Mines Mineral & Energy is reviewing proposed fracking regulations, localities such as King George County are stepping up to consider local ordinances to address fracking. A hearing is set for September 1, 2015, at 6pm, in the James Revercomb Building Board Room, 10459 Courthouse Drive, King George, VA. Stay engaged.

Link to King George County Fracking info:

<http://www.king-george.va.us/news-and-announcements/announcements/taylorville-basin---hose-meeting-powerpoint-slides-feb-4-2014.php>

Yours in Exploring, Enjoying and Protecting the Planet,

Linda C. Muller

Conservation Chair

By Bill Johnson, Conservation Chair

Lots of things have been happening at both the local and national level and your Group has been involved, including:

Clean Power Plan (CPP): In August, the Environmental Protection Administration issued a far-reaching set of proposed regulations that are intended to reduce the amount of greenhouse gases released into the atmosphere by 32% by 2030. The reaction from industry and government has been as expected, with the fossil fuel industry opposed to it, and most environmental groups in favor of it. Surprisingly, Dominion Power's response was rather muted, because of last minute changes that made it easier on that utility to conform to the mandates. There were not happy that existing nuclear power plant emissions could not be used to meet CO2 emission targets, only new plants. Delegates Israel O'Quinn (Virginia's 5th House District) and Scott Taylor (Virginia's 85th House District) wrote a misleading Op-Ed for the PilotOnline.com website falsely condemning the CPP.

Hydraulic Fracturing (Fracking): Also in August, the King George County Board of Supervisors and the Planning Commission issued a proposed set of changes to amend both the county zoning ordinance and the Comprehensive Plan to address fracking issues. They set a September 1 hearing date to address residents' concerns and answer questions. Attorney General Mark Herring said counties could legally ban fracking, but most jurisdictions do not want to face costly litigation that extraction companies threaten. So, they have chosen to use zoning laws to ensure that both the environment and the health of residents is protected, a practice that has already been litigated and accepted. Unfortunately, neither Caroline nor Essex County have yet taken steps to address the issues which include: earthquakes, excessive water use, wastewater disposal, and pollution of aquifers; the disposal of radioactive materials brought to the surface; excessive road wear and tear; 24x7 noise; greenhouse gas (methane gas) escaping from wellheads; odors; and other noxious problems.

Solar energy has been more active, as a group called Solarize Fredericksburg has been actively promoting the solar industry in the Fredericksburg area.

Nuclear Power: Dominion Power continues to push for a third nuclear reactor at Lake Anna, despite the obvious. The Virginia Senate passed a bill (SB 1349) that allows Dominion to be insulated from regulator review until 2022, enabling them to cover up the expenditures related to nuclear power. Those costs will be passed on to customers. According to filings in its 2015 biennial review before the State Corporation Commission (PUE-2015-00027), Dominion Virginia Power is projecting that the capital cost of a third nuclear reactor at its North Anna facility will total over \$19 billion, costs that will be shifted to customers. This capital cost is roughly ten times the capital cost of a new natural gas-burning plant being built by Dominion, making the approximate kilowatt-hour cost almost 4 times as expensive as some electricity sold by Dominion today.

Uranium Mining: There has been a moratorium for 33 years on uranium mining in Virginia, but Virginia Uranium Inc. and several other companies filed suit in the federal court in Danville to overturn that ban, so that they can mine what is perhaps the largest uranium deposit in the world in Pittsylvania County. The suit will be opposed by virtually every environmental group in Virginia, and most of the cities and counties downstream from the site who depend upon water piped from that area.

http://www.richmond.com/news/virginia/article_7e509d5f-876a-5745-9dcf-6e5274c5d420.html

Trans Pacific Partnership: This treaty, backed by President Obama and most Republican legislators, but not most Democrats in Congress, is slated for fast-track approval from Congress possibly as early as late this summer. However, it contains significant provisions that will hurt the US environmentally. It will provide foreign companies the ability to sue the US in a world court for any laws that limit that company from making profits, even if they are imposed to safeguard the environment or the health of its people. It is an attempt to remove sovereignty from our hands.

Reusable Bag Program Saves Businesses Money

By Paula Chow

A chance to win a \$25 gift card at Olde Towne Butcher customer to bring their own reusable bags. In January RGSC partnered with Old Towne Butcher to implement a "Bring Your Own Reusable Bag" program. The program was simple - if a customer brought or purchased a reusable bag, the customer would get a chance at each visit to win the \$25 gift card. The program was popular - there were close to 1,000 names entered for the month. Lee Russell, the proprietor of Olde Towne Butcher at that time, reported that he saved \$396 as a result. He would have continued some sort of incentive program had he not retired. RGSC will have a conversation with the new owner when he is more settled about continuing a reusable bag program.

RGSC kicked this same \$25 gift card incentive for reusable bags to Kicksaw's Downtown Market, a small organic and locally sourced products store, on William Street for the month of February. There were over 150 participating customers. Proprietor Kathy Craddock thought it was a great idea and would like to continue to encourage her customers to bring their reusable bags but she is focusing her attention now to expanding her business.

Ann Glave, executive director of the Main Street Program, took notice of the success of this reusable bag program. She said that she would like to consider a similar program for the downtown businesses.

"Sludging" a.k.a. "biosolids" Continues in Spotsylvania and Across Virginia

Linda C. Muller

Despite residents concerns about the health and environmental impacts of spreading sludge over 6,000 acres in Spotsylvania County, the Virginia Water Control Board voted on June 25, 2015 to approve sludging application permits. When asked how many sludge permits the State Board has denied, the answer was "none".

What is Sludge ?

Basically, sludge is all the stuff that gets flushed down the toilet, poured down the drain and ends up in a municipal water treatment plant. The solid waste is separated from the liquid, treated (help reduce odor and pathogens) and packaged into the industry product labeled "biosolids". Commercial companies such as Synagro are paid by municipalities to haul the waste water sludge, which then "converts" it into a "biosolid" sludge product. Companies like Synagro must then find a location to "spread" the sludge and offers to spread it over vast acreages of farm and rural land at a reduced fee or for free. There are different categories of sludge" Class A, (contains no detectable pathogen) Class B, (has detectable levels of pathogens) and Industrial Sludge (waste water treatment from industries such as Tyson's Food, RockTenn Paper Mill) . While the end product sludge does contain nutrients like phosphorus and nitrogen, it also contains heavy metals, pathogens, PCBs, dioxin, pharmaceuticals, and even viruses. The toxic cocktail can makes it way into waterways, become airborne and travel multiple miles, and can be absorbed by crops. In Spotsylvania County, the permit was for Class B sludge.

USDA Certified Organic Label Prohibits Sludge

If growers want to obtain the USDA certified organic label on their agricultural products, they are prohibited from using or applying sludge. Yet, commercial companies and supporters of sludge describe the end product as "organic". From a basic chemistry understanding, sludge contains benzene, benzene. Sludge has been found to contain Benzene, a known carcinogen, which is also an organic chemical compound.

Localities Have Limited Options

While Virginia Counties currently cannot outright ban the application of sludge (VA Supreme Court Case:(Reuben L. BLANTON, et al. v. AMELIA COUNTY, et al.) localities can adopt local monitoring and testing ordinances for sludge applications. Rappahannock County has adopted such an ordinance in 2013. Most citizens have no idea there is sludge in their community until after the fact (the odor gives it away).

To stay up to date on the latest proposed application permits, citizens need to monitor the Virginia Townhall website: <https://www.townhall.virginia.gov> for future notices from the Department of Environmental Quality and the Virginia Water Control Board. Its important to raise your concerns about sludge with your local and state elected officials. Additional info from SourceWatch:

http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php/Sewage_sludge

CALIFORNIA DREAMIN' IS SCREAMIN'

By Paula Chow

After 40 years of living in Napa, we were drawn to the historic, lush green landscapes and the small city feel of Fredericksburg. Our newly found friends in Fredericksburg thought we were crazy to leave the idyllic life in the wine country where my husband had made wine as a hobby since 1969. We lived in a well-preserved modest Victorian house built on a foundation of redwood with a postage stamp yard.

That was eight years ago. Since then, we make our twice annual journey to California to visit our family and friends. This summer's visit was significantly different visually. The hills have always been brown (golden); this is why it's called the "Golden State." But this time, the landscapes looked especially parched and stressed. The lawns and yards were mostly brown or obviously struggling to stay alive. Some yards were in the process of being converted to drought friendly landscapes. The trees still looked healthy but they certainly did not look vibrant like ours on the East Coast.

We believe that we did everything on our part to minimize our water usage. We sleep around (well, it's staying with family and friends every two days or so). To avoid anyone washing sheets and towels after our stay, we brought our own and used them at each overnight stay. In the dry California heat, we don't sweat much so not taking frequent showers wasn't a big deal. Yes, it would have been nice and refreshing to take a shower just before our flight home, but when considering the seriousness of the drought, another day without a shower wasn't going to be unbearable (nor for fellow flight passengers).

Back in the '70's the saying was, "If it's yellow, it's mellow. If it's brown, flush it down." This practice is even more crucial to this drought period. Gray water collection became easy. Keeping a small tub or container in the sink to collect gray water each time we used the faucet meant that the outside plants would get enough to drink. There's even a technique to rid the soap off the dishes and hands without wasting water.

Most of the restaurants are strict in not automatically bringing water to the table. On the one occasion at a new Asian eatery, the server not only brought all of us tall water glasses, but he kept coming back to refill them, in spite of putting my hand over the glass to indicate that I didn't need anymore. All the staff were very friendly with the manager walking about. With their overly friendly style, I decided to take the opportunity to make a friendly suggestion to the manager about the water usage. He openly discussed this and acknowledged that they "should" probably ask the customers if they want water instead of bringing it to the table automatically due to the drought. Great!

On the flight back, I read an article entitled, "Mist Opportunity." Technology to capture fog via screens is being used in Chile and South Africa where water is scarce. Seventy to 200 square meters of screen can collect about 200 to 1,000 liters of water. I thought about the volume of fog in San Francisco which could produce supplemental water for a number of purposes. Is this being utilized or a missed opportunity?

Our water issues in Virginia compared to California's drought are no less compelling. Threats to our water resources are an ongoing struggle. Demand for water is increasing be it for energy, technology, agriculture or growth, continuing to impact water quality. Because these issues are consequences of humans and not nature, I can, hopefully, make a greater impact.