



Changes Coming for the Mount Vernon Group

By Rick Keller

We are changing our name and our boundaries!

The Mount Vernon Group name dates to the mid-1980s, when two Northern Virginia Groups were carved out of a larger DC region group. For many members, our name is associated with the plantation that became the home of George Washington rather than the Alexandria, Arlington, Falls Church, Fairfax, and Prince William jurisdictions that make up our area of responsibility. For example, I have encountered members in Arlington who did not realize that the Group was active in their area because of the name.

To be more descriptive and accurate, the Group's Executive Committee decided to propose the name "**Potomac River Group**" after the river that borders the jurisdictions we operate in and its watershed. We felt that dropping the association with a landmark such as Mount Vernon would create less confusion about where we operate. Equally important, we would no longer be associated with a slave-owning plantation (which it was even before Washington). So "MVG" will become "PRG."

In conjunction with the name change, we looked at how our Group and the neighboring Great Falls Group (GFG) were organized; the two Groups currently split Fairfax and Prince William counties. Because our membership is primarily concentrated in the near suburbs, we have rarely gotten involved in actions in Prince William, underrepresenting Sierra Club members there. In Fairfax, it was more an issue of coordination. When was an issue limited to our area of Fairfax, when was it in a shared area, and when was it a County-wide issue? For example, the periodic political endorsement process had added complexity as three supervisor districts were in our area, three in the Great Falls Group area, and three were shared. It made being both representative to members and responsive to member issues more complex and difficult to manage.

With the GFG, we discussed a number of scenarios including a different sharing arrangement. The Sierra Club, however, defines Groups by zip codes which made the shift of Fairfax and Prince William counties under one Group, the Great Falls Group, the simplest solution.

The name change and boundary change have both been approved by the national Sierra Club leadership. We await national Club action to shift members to the new structure; because of staff workload that will not happen until sometime in December.

If you live in the cities of Alexandria or Falls Church or in Arlington County, you will not be impacted by this shift. The only direct impact will be on MVG members living in Fairfax and Prince William counties, who will be under a different executive committee. GFG also has a different newsletter and listserv that you will need to join. You won't automatically be kicked off the "Potomac River Group" listserv of newsletter distribution—if you no longer want to receive it, you will need to opt out.

There are many issues that are regional in nature and the two Groups will continue to work together on those. But with the boundary changes, the lines of responsibility will be more defined.

We hope to receive support from the Virginia Chapter staff in contacting members and completing the assignment and transition of affected MVG members.

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Chair

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