



20th Annual Potomac River Watershed Cleanup

On **Saturday, April 4**, from 9 AM to 12 PM, join fellow Great Falls Group (GFG) members and other volunteers to participate in the largest regional watershed cleanup. This activity has been coordinated by the Alice Ferguson Foundation since 1989. This year GFG will be hosting the cleanup of two stream segments:

- **Little Pimmit Run**, off Chesterbrook in McLean near the Fairfax County/Arlington County Boundary. Meet at 1605 Maddux Lane in McLean. Contact Linda Burchfiel at larva@attglobal.net or 703-506-4310
- **Rocky Run**, north of Tysons Corner. Meet at the dam on Lewinsville Road between Mayhurst Blvd and Lewinsville Mews Court. Contact Steve Bruckner at sbruckner@cox.net or 703-883-3622.

We will meet at 9:00 AM and will work until noon, rain or shine, so please dress accordingly and bring gloves. Trash bags will be provided. **Let's make this a record cleanup year!** If you can't make the Great Falls Group location, see if there's something closer to you. Check the Potomac River Watershed Cleanup tab at www.PotomacCleanup.org for a list of complete cleanup sites (including Loudoun and Prince William Counties) and to find out more about this regional event.

by Chris Koerner

Arbor Day and Earth Day Activities

During the month of April each year a large number of environment activities are focused on Arbor day (April 24) and Earth day (April 22) in our community. Many organizations will combine these two events into one event which will focus on environment issues and awareness, demos, giveaways, crafts, games for kids, and more.

The Great Falls Group (GFG) will be participating in some of these events by setting up a table, providing information and answering questions, for which we will need volunteers. This is a good time to get involved with GFG activities and your community. Please contact Norbert Pink at norbert.pink@virginia.sierraclub.org for more information on volunteering.

This year's Earth Day will mark the beginning of the Green Generation Campaign! For more information visit <http://ww2.earthday.net>. This two-year initiative will culminate with the 40th anniversary of Earth Day in 2010. Find an event or activity near you at <http://ww2.earthday.net/search/node>.

Current known events will be:

- **National Mall in DC** (April 17-19),

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Adding Awareness to Education

I was recently elected to the *Great Falls Group's* executive committee and selected to chair its education committee. I would like in this article to share with fellow Group members my thoughts about shaping the work of the education committee over the next year, particularly about how to enhance awareness, and not just education, about such key environmental issues as global warming.

As we educate people about environmental issues, we engage their cognitive functions. This is central and necessary for understanding global warming and climate change, but in my view it is no longer sufficient. It may have been sufficient several decades ago, but we are now at a point where environmental change is having an accelerating impact on the areas most immediately vulnerable, our planet's north and south poles. The headline of an article in the *Washington Post Express*

on February 4 says: "Study: Coastal Areas Threatened Even More". Many readers, seeing one more article on this subject and perhaps practicing a bit of denial, may have gotten no farther than the headline. If they had, they would have found that one of the coastal areas under threat is Washington, D.C. I believe that most of us who read that information would not have really

absorbed it. That is, we would not have become truly aware of the information we saw in a time scale that impacts us personally. Why is that?

We think about space—the physical space that surrounds us—with formal logic. That logic assumes permanence, assumes that the space we experience around us will in fundamental

ways be the same space that has surrounded our ancestors for millennia. We are not psychologically ready to make the perceptual and emotional leap to full awareness of the impact that climate change can

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Environmental Quality Corridors Face Challenge

While Fairfax County is business-friendly, development has generally been balanced with environmental protection. As far back as the early 1970's, certain areas of land were designated as Environmental Quality Corridors (EQC) because of their value as habitat, stream valleys, or beauty. Since the early 1990s, the County has prohibited building in EQCs. You may know some EQCs in your part of the County; often they stand out as little patches of undisturbed land among housing or business development.

This long-standing County policy is being challenged by Aerospace Corporation, which wants to build a campus-like office park on 40 acres in Sully, of which

21 are in an EQC. Much of the company's business deals with military reconnaissance and other top-secret clients, necessitating a site plan that follows Defense Department security requirements such as placing buildings a minimum distance from the road. The company's proposal is a severe encroachment into the EQC, with a parking garage, visitor's center, and tunnel placed right in the flood plain. Although Aerospace explains that there are no alternatives, County staff believes that DoD security requirements offer some flexibility, and Aerospace could adjust its plan to reduce the encroachment. Aerospace points out that the County has approved two other encroachments in the past, albeit much less severe.

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Reston Stream Controversy

The Reston Association has partnered with a contractor to undertake a major project to address erosion of three streams that flow through the Reston woodlands: Snakeden, Glade, and Colvin Run. The \$100 million project began with public support but has become controversial as work has proceeded. The visible, heavy and unexpected impact to the Snakeden stream valley, including extensive tree clearing (removal of over 1000 mature trees), stream widening and moving, and soil compaction, have led to concerns about the long term recovery of the stream



valley and about the design of the entire project. These questions have not been answered satisfactorily by the very limited documentation available for review, by verbal answers from the involved parties, or by scripted stream-walk reviews.

The Great Falls Group Executive Committee believes that too much focus has been placed on the streams with a goal of maximizing mitigation

credits, with the root causes of the erosion, the effect on the mature forests and the habitat surrounding the

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Volunteer Arboretum Used for Teaching

Marie Butler Leven Preserve (MBLP) is a twenty acre park under the management of the Fairfax Park Authority. The Preserve contains the highest local elevation and contributes to two tributaries of Pimmit Run, the watershed in which it resides. Originally a homestead, the property has many areas overrun by ornamental landscape plants but also has several truly magnificent resources, including a large patch of trillium.

The Preserve was deeded to the county with the proviso that it be an Arboretum to be used as a teaching and demonstration site for native plants. During the past five years, Earth Sangha and the Fairfax County Invasive Management Area program have both been crucial in helping to achieve this goal.

Earth Sangha, a non-profit charity dedicated to environmental action, adopted the Preserve nearly five years ago. Since then, the volunteers of Earth Sangha have been providing hundreds of hours and large amounts of plant material in a sustained effort to remove unwanted plants and replace them with native plants grown from locally collected seed. This ongoing project is a successful partnership of government and community groups to improve the quality of this great natural resource.

Earth Sangha was also deeply involved in the successful creation of a rain garden near the main parking lot to reduce the volume of rainwater runoff from the Preserve grounds into the neighboring streams. Fairfax County is striving to meet the goal of reducing runoff into the Chesapeake Bay and improving the health and stability of streams by establishing storm water control projects to capture the large volume of water flowing into our streams due to the hardscape of our houses, streets, and parking lots. The MBLP rain garden was a model project to design and build

an innovative and attractive living catchment basin that would allow the water to percolate down to the water table instead of flushing into the nearby streams.

The Fairfax County Invasive Management Area (IMA) program has been helping the Preserve remove and control invasive plants. There has been an IMA team leader at MBLP since the inception of the program three years ago. The IMA program has provided team leaders to over forty county parks in the effort to control invasive plants. By identifying a small number of particularly damaging species and providing training to the team leaders, the program sets a foundation for sustained effort in slowing the advance of invasive plants and improving the quality of the habitat. Volunteers are recruited from a wide array of interested groups, including environmental stewardship organizations such as the Fairfax Master Naturalists, Virginia Native Plant Society, and others; from neighborhood associations and church groups; and from area school programs for community service. This program also provides an opportunity to spread the word about the threat from invasive species and about how to identify and remove some of the most damaging species, such as English Ivy.

Marie Butler Leven Preserve is being reclaimed from the grip of the invasive species that threaten this special place. The efforts described here, and many others, are being implemented throughout our region by dedicated volunteers who believe that stewardship of the land is a critical task in the goal of preserving our natural community and educating our citizens about the natural world.

by Alan M Ford.

Arbor and Earth Day (cont'd from page 1)

- **George Mason University**(April 20-24),
- **Reston Association Nature House** (April 25),
- **Herndon High School** (April 25),
- **Northern Virginia Community College**, Annandale Campus (April 25).
- **Loudon County** will be holding its first Earth Day celebration on April 26. Organizers are seeking exhibitors and sponsoring organizations for the celebration. Potential sponsors and exhibitors should contact Oya Simpson, 703-725-8040. Further information on the event can be found at www.earthdayatloudoun.org, or at <http://www.lccss.org/campaigns.html#EarthDay>.

Please visit the GFG website, <http://www.virginia.sierraclub.org/greatfalls/>, for more information on the Arbor Day and Earth Day events we will be participating in.

by Norbert Pink

Get the latest event information delivered to your in-box every week!

Sign up for the Great Falls Group email announcement list at <http://lists.sierraclub.org/archives/virginia-greatfalls-news.html>

Vienna Green Expo April 16th

The Town of Vienna is sponsoring a Green Expo on Thursday, April 16, 2009 from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. at the Vienna Community Center, 120 Cherry Street SE, in Vienna. Over twenty organizations and businesses will offer presentations on green topics, including transportation, energy, building products, personal goods, food products and landscaping. In addition several speakers will provide information on the environment, on using green materials in buildings and on conducting home energy audits. The event is open to the public, child friendly and FREE. For more information, please contact the Vienna Parks and Recreation Department at 703-255-6356 or email csalgado@viennava.gov.

Potomac Region Outings

The Sierra Club's Metropolitan Washington Regional Outings Program (MWROP) is now **Potomac Region Outings** (PRO), with a new website address -- <http://www.sierrapotomac.org/>. PRO is a special activities section of the Sierra Club Virginia Chapter that organizes hikes and other events for the general public. Check their website for information about upcoming events, or to request a free subscription to their calendar. Their information hotline number is still 202-547-2326, and has information on unpublished outings, updates, and general announcements.

Program Attendance Prize

As an incentive to encourage members to attend the GFG monthly program, the GFG will be giving away a 2010 Sierra Club Wilderness Wall calendar to the member who attends the most monthly program meetings during the 2009 calendar year. Please make sure you sign in for each meeting. ExCom members will not be eligible.

New Executive Committee Members Take Office

The committee unanimously elected Chris Koerner as executive committee chairman at the January 18 meeting of the Great Falls Group executive committee. Chris Koerner, Norbert Pink and Linda Burchfiel were re-elected. Newly elected members Steve Bruckner, Scott Monett and Brian Morrissey took office. Steve and Scott replaced Bob Pearson and Ross Shearer, who had completed their terms. Brian will complete the remaining year of Karen Grycewicz' term. Karen, although leaving the executive committee, will continue to chair the newsletter committee. Other updated committee chairmanships are listed in the box below.

Great Falls Group Executive Committee

The monthly meeting of The Great Falls Group's (GFG) Executive Committee is usually held on the first Monday of the month and is open to all Sierra Club members. Contact Chris Koerner for time and location.

Officers:	Chairman, Chris Koerner	703-715-2204	1koerner@verizon.net
	Vice Chairman, Scott Monett		Monett@monettech.com
	Treasurer, Joe Apple	703-860-1254	Joe.Apple@comcast.net
	Secretary, Raymond Smith		Ray.Smith531@gmail.com
	Immediate Past Chair, Linda Freimark	703-222-9240	Linda.Freimark@virginia.sierraclub.org
Committee Chairs:	Chapter Delegate, Joe Apple	703-860-1254	Joe.Apple@comcast.net
	Conservation, Steve Bruckner	703-883-3622	sbruckner@cox.net
	Membership, Norbert Pink	703-264-7445	norbertsierra@aol.com
	Education, Brian Morrissey	703-385-3273	brian8@ix.netcom.com
	Political, Bob Pearson	703 690-3071	Bob.Pearson@virginia.sierraclub.org
	Social, Bobbi Beck	703-464-4755	Bobbi.Beck@virginia.sierraclub.org
Committee Support:	Newsletter Sr. Editor, Karen Grycewicz	703-273-6226	Karen.Grycewicz@virginia.sierraclub.org
	Managing Editor, Raymond Smith		Ray.Smith531@gmail.com
	Layout Designer, Nanette Rock-Shraga	703-437-7323	nrshraga@yahoo.com
	Website Maintenance, Linda Stevens	703-787-8861	LnJStvns@aol.com

Reston Stream Controversy (continued from page 1)

streams, and the social issues seemingly neglected. The Committee prepared a detailed letter, addressed to Delegate Kenneth Plum and copied to numerous other local officials, outlining numerous technical, legal, and financial concerns and requesting their assistance with the Reston Association. The letter requested that work on the next phase be paused and an independent environmental engineering firm employed to review progress, provide suggestions for future phases, and ensure that the project is in compliance with appropriate federal and state laws. Since no independent technical experts have performed a thorough review of the design or considered alternative options to this very expensive and complex undertaking, this seemed an appropriate request, assuming the optimum long term health of the environment was an objective of the Reston Association.

Principal Environmental Concerns

The Sierra Club is well aware that stream channels in Fairfax County have been impaired, often significantly, due to the increasing areas of impervious surface and that many are in need of restoration. However, restoration, especially on the scale of the Reston streams, is an extremely complicated multi-disciplinary project. Phase 1 of this project involves 14 miles of streams and \$100 million in mitigation credits. Phase II will add another 15 miles of streams. It is critical that the water, forest, aquatic life, bird, and fauna habitat

be looked at holistically, and included in a technically defensible plan that is reviewed by an independent firm.

The Sierra Club is also concerned that stream restoration does not resolve the underlying problem of storm water from increasing impervious surface cover. This problem could be addressed by also implementing Low Impact Development techniques to reduce the rate at which storm water reaches streams, thereby lowering the rate of erosion and pollution migration. The affected Reston communities deserve to know that appropriate processes are being used to minimize the impact to the stream valleys, achieve the long term healthy wooded stream valley habitat required by the Association agreements, and provide the appropriate project oversight and thorough independent review that would be required for any commercial development project of similar size.

Our Recommendation

As a result of these project concerns, the Great Falls Group Executive Committee recommended pausing the implementation of the Glade project and hiring a qualified independent environmental engineering firm to:

- 1) Thoroughly review the stream restoration work plans, review stream flow and geologic modeling, and perform detailed examination of the work site to insure that the required hydrologic analysis has

- been performed and is being properly applied;
- 2) Ensure that the project is in compliance with appropriate federal and state law; and
- 3) Evaluate other options that could simultaneously achieve the stream restoration objectives and preserve the unique habitat of the Reston streams.

We believe that such an effort would require only a few months and could be done at reasonable cost, given the size of the project.

No Pause in Project

Despite the detailed concerns outlined in our letter to Delegate Plum, the Reston Association decided to proceed with the Glade project, and chose not to employ an independent environmental engineering firm.

The letter did succeed in giving visibility to the residents' views and opinions. Concerned residents have started an association, called Save the Glade, aimed at gaining more visibility for the issue. Their website, savetheglade.org, includes the full text of the letter to Delegate Plum, discussion of the issues concerning the streams and their restoration, photographs and videos, resources for expert opinions, government links, letters from concerned citizens, and links for how people can help. These links for help include a petition, people to write, and contact information.

Only time will tell what will come of the streams. The concerned residents seem to be fighting an uphill battle, but they have demonstrated tenacity in fighting for the health of the entire ecosystem. We believe it is right for their local Sierra Club group to stand with them on this issue.

by Judd Stephenson, reporting about a GFG ExCom letter

Statewide Volunteers Target Invasive Species May 2nd

The Virginia Master Naturalists and the Virginia Native Plant Society announce the first-ever, statewide Invasive Plant Removal Day. The program will take place at locations all over the state on Saturday, May 2, 2009. Information can be found at online at: www.virginiamasternaturalist.org/invasives/

Invasive species are, generally, non-native species that cause ecological or economical harm. They share certain characteristics, such as being able to mature quickly, generate many offspring and can tolerate a wide range of habitats. Because of the characteristics that allow a species to successfully establish in new territory, invasive species make terrible neighbors. They out-compete native species for the same resources, eventually harming trees, wildlife and water quality.

Invasives have taken a firm foothold in many parts of the state and everyone's help is needed to reclaim our natural areas. Removing invasive plants and sowing native flora is a fantastic way to restore water quality and wildlife habitat in any biome. There are activities planned throughout Virginia including Arlington County, Charlottesville, Fairfax County, Falls Church, Reston and Alexandria. More sites will be added throughout the spring, check the web page (www.virginiamasternaturalist.org/invasives/) to find a location to volunteer near you, or add your own site.

by Virginia Master Naturalists

Awareness to Education (cont'd from page 1)

have on the space around us. Our cognitive functions admit, while our emotional selves deny, for example, that not only our children and grandchildren, but we ourselves may now be living in a United States that has its present capital and our homes under threat of inundation by a vastly expanded Atlantic Ocean.

By adding *awareness* to my role as education committee chairman, I hope to be able to address questions such as:

- Does the public in Northern Virginia have a real awareness of the scope and magnitude of the environmental issues facing them and us, particularly the threat posed by climate change and global warming?
- What can we in the Great Falls Group do to affect and change that level of awareness?

Over the course of the next year, I hope to address these questions. I also hope to engage the support of our Great Falls Group members in doing so.

by Brian Morrissey

Environmental Policy (cont'd from page 1)

To mitigate the encroachment, Aerospace has offered some attractive trade-offs such as a stream restoration on a nearby site and an ambitious underground system to control storm water, as well as other sweeteners to make the encroachment easier to swallow, including promises to try to build by LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) standards, to use LID (Low Impact Development) construction techniques, to build a rain garden, and \$350,000 to start a Sully District Recreation Fund.

County staff nevertheless recommended denial of the permit because it goes against the long-standing policy of protecting EQCs. The Planning Commission disagreed, recommending approval because it deemed the trade-offs valuable enough to justify the broken policy.

After studying these opposing recommendations, the Board of Supervisors will make the final decision on February 23. Will they change the policy of protecting EQCs? What precedent will this set for the redevelopment of Tysons Corner? *Watch this space!*

by Linda Burchfiel

YES,
I want to join the Sierra Club!

Name _____

Address _____

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Annual dues include subscriptions to SIERRA (\$7.50) and chapter publications (\$1.00). Dues are not tax deductible. Enclose check and mail to:
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Membership Type	Individual	Joint
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The Cascade

The Great Falls Group Newsletter

March-April 2009

www.virginia.sierraclub.org/greatfalls

Upcoming Programs – Everyone Welcome!

Mon. March 16th 7:30-9pm – "Get the DIRT Out" Ed Merrifield, a Potomac Riverkeeper, introduces this new volunteer program which shows residents how to take action against one of the biggest problems in our watershed: polluted runoff from construction sites. Learn how to evaluate polluted runoff violations on construction sites, report violations, and help ensure that construction sites are not contaminating our rivers and streams. **Lake Anne Community Center, 1609 Washington Plaza N, Reston***. Refreshments and socializing start at 7. Questions? Linda Burchfiel at 703-506-4310 or larva@attglobal.net.

Tues April. 21st 7:30-9pm – Our Endangered Wildlife - Join Susan Jewell, wildlife biologist and environmental writer, as she discusses endangered wildlife in the mid-Atlantic and introduces her latest book, *GATORS, GOURDHEADS, AND PUFFLINGS: A Biologist Slogs, Climbs, And Wings Her Way To Save Wildlife*. Books will be available for signing and purchase, and part of the proceeds will benefit the Great Falls Group. **McLean Government Center, 1437 Balls Hill Rd, McLean**. Refreshments and socializing start at 7. Questions? Linda Burchfiel at 703-506-4310 or larva@attglobal.net.

Mon. May 18th 7:30-9pm – "Celebration of Spring" Dr. Stanwyn Shetler, Curator Emeritus for Botany at the Smithsonian Institution, shares some of the beautiful wildflowers and birds of a Washington-area spring with his colorful and fast-paced slide presentation. **Fairfax County Government Center, conference room 3, 12000 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax VA**. Refreshments and socializing start at 7. Questions? Linda Burchfiel at 703-506-4310 or larva@attglobal.net.

Mon. June 15th – TBD

Check our website for meeting updates or changes:
<http://www.virginia.sierraclub.org/greatfalls/>

Also See Inside:

Old Dominion Sierran

The Sierra Club's Newsletter for Virginia

1 – Making a down payment on the green economy

2 – Notes from the Chair

Taking the message of green jobs to Capitol Hill

Some green jobs found to be poor jobs

3 – February town hall meeting on green jobs future

Virginia Chapter steps up tubing action

You can help bring clean energy to Virginia

Win a canoe trip down the Mattaponi River

4 – Survey on Climate Change sent to state legislators

Urban runoff polluting, eroding our streams

Is your refrigerator an energy hog?

5 – Court opens floodgate for more mountain top removal

Decision one step backwards in march to climate justice

Offshore drilling threat at start of new Administration

6 – Petition to reduce "Hopewell Smell" delivered

Sierra Club influences SCC's IRP guidelines

7 – Annual Gathering of chapter members planned

Canoe excursion in ancient Bald Cypress swamp

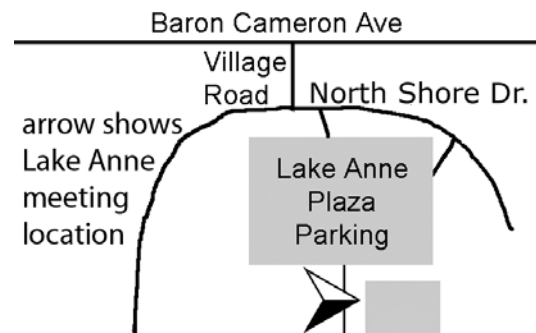
Learn to Lead - Sierra Student Coalition training

Hiking season soon to hit its stride

8 – Even if price is right, will we buy it?

*Socializing at 7PM, program 7:30-9PM, at Lake Anne Community Center: 1609 Washington Plaza N, Reston (703-476-4500). From Rte. 7 take Baron Cameron Ave., turn south (left) onto Village Rd., left onto Northshore Dr., then immediate sharp right into the Village Center parking lot. From Fairfax County Pkwy go east on Baron Cameron Ave., turn right onto Village Rd., continue as above.

The Cascade is published 5-6 times per year by the Great Falls Group of the Virginia Chapter of the Sierra Club. We are always open to contributions from members, including stories and photographs. We reserve the right to edit all submissions, both editorial and advertisements. The views expressed are those of the authors and may not be those of the Sierra Club. Deadlines are the same as for the ODS. For consideration, mail articles or photos to Karen Grycewicz, 3508 Winston Place, Fairfax, VA 22030 or email them to karen.grycewicz@virginia.sierraclub.org. Please send articles as plain text in an email or in Word or WordPerfect file format. For placing an ad, please contact Bobbi Beck at 703-464-4755 or bobbi.beck@virginia.sierraclub.org for details and pricing.



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