



Great Falls Group Conservation Report July-Oct 2008

Group Initiatives

- **Energy Town Hall** – Mt Vernon Group and Great Falls Group sponsored a town hall meeting on *Achieving an Energy Efficient Virginia* on Nov 12 in Arlington. Presentations were given by speakers from ACEEE (American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy), Governor's Commission on Climate Change, Arlington Board of Supervisors and the Sierra Club's VA Chapter Conservation Chair. State elected officials who attended included Sen. Barker and Del. Vanderhye.
- **McLean Green Choice\$ Expo** – GFG was well represented at the McLean Green Choice\$ Expo, on Oct 7th at the McLean Community Center. Roger Diedrich tabled on Fairfax County's Cool Neighborhoods program, Ivy Main gave a talk titled *The Lazy Cheap skate's Guide to Going Green*, Ross Shearer tabled on Home Re-insulation and Steve Bruckner tabled on Vampire Loads.
- **Green Festival** – GFG joined with Sierra Club groups in the District and in Maryland to have a booth at the Green Festival, held Nov 8&9 at the Washington Convention Center. The event was well attended and the booth was crowded with interested attendees throughout the two day event.
- **Citizens for a Sustainable Tysons** – A few members from the GFG took a leadership role in forming a new group, Citizens for a Sustainable Tysons, to supplement the Tysons Task Force. The group recommended additional requirements that would make it a national model for Green Development. A position paper was written and posted on the Smarter Growth web site (<http://www.smartergrowth.net/anx/ass/library/11/visionandgoals.pdf>). It is posted as a petition (<http://citizen-networks.org/campaign/sustainabletysons>) which was signed by 240
(continued on page 2)

GFG needs Recording Secretary

Your Great Falls Group Board of Directors, known as the ExCom, needs a Secretary to attend the monthly evening ExCom meeting, take notes or minutes, and then distribute a copy of the minutes each month prior to the next ExCom meeting. You would attend the monthly meeting, learn what goes on, have an opportunity to speak up, and make a valuable contribution to the Group. If you are interested in exploring this volunteer position and helping to further our mission, please contact ExCom member Linda Freimark, Linda.Freimark@virginia.sierraclub.org. Any Sierra Club member qualifies to fill this valuable position, no prior experience necessary.

Leadership and Understanding Would Yield a Tunnel at Tysons

The November 12 public gathering of the Tysons Tunnel organization drew over 200 citizens concerned about the decision for constructing an elevated MetroRail line through Tysons Corner. The event was also sponsored by the Sierra Club, the Town of Vienna, the McLean Chamber and a number of neighborhood associations.

One speaker in particular, the former Publisher and Editor of *MASS TRANSIT* magazine, Charles Carroll Carter, caught my interest for his perspective linking understanding, leadership and financing. Most people want the project, he explained, we all need it for the costs of commuting by car, for the time lost, for the adverse environmental impacts of vehicle dependence which is "a situation that fosters less sustainable development and less attractive spatial relationships." The airport shuttle system is an extravagant, expensive

waste of energy, he added.

His explanation for all the controversy over the Dulles Metro project is the absence of leadership. The leadership that is required must provide continuity and commitment that is long term, stretching beyond the terms of political offices. "Where do we find it?" he asked rhetorically. His answer: from among ourselves. "Form yourselves into an entity, find among yourselves...those with the most to benefit from rail to Dulles, and constitute yourselves as equity owners in the project." A project of this scope, he explained, "requires that it be understood by its stakeholders...so as to avoid the current contentiousness that characterizes the project." It must be understood by its stakeholders to the extent that the stakeholders' interests are represented in the project's implementation, functioning and outcome.
(continued on page 3)

Discovering Rocky Run — My Local Stream

Following my retirement, I started to take an interest in the stream that runs through my property. The stream is in a flood plain that is miles long and is wooded on both banks. It's protected by an RPA (Resource Protection Area) that can't be developed, provides habitat for wildlife including deer, fox, raccoon and occasionally even turkey and heron. Because the RPA is wide, the stream, Rocky Run, is mostly out-of-sight and out-of-mind for the many home owners who live along it.

My first discovery came from walking a couple miles of the stream – it is suffering from significant erosion beyond its "natural" state prior to the development of the Tysons area. Stream banks are being deeply cut, undermining large trees that eventually fall, root ball and all, into the stream. This was surprising to me

because most of the adjacent homes are on large parcels of land, so it wasn't clear where the large flows came from. From the County's Stormwater Management Division I got a copy of the Watershed Plan for Difficult Run, which includes Rocky Run. By inspecting the detailed maps, I learned that the headwaters were not from the large residential lots of pervious grounds, but in fact were from the Tyco Road industrial area near Tysons!

I needed to get additional input from a county stream specialist. I contacted the Northern VA Soil and Water Conservation District and their lead stream expert, Dr. Asad Rouhi, agreed to walk the stream with me. I contacted a few more people and in short order three additional people came out for the inspection
(continued on page 3)

Home Energy Audit Presentation Fascinates Audience

At our November members meeting professional home energy auditor Jason Dispenza treated us to an absorbing presentation on home energy audits. He included the results of his audit of Linda Freimark's house. For those of you who missed it, we are sharing some of the valuable points of information from Jason's presentation. First, several concepts should be understood.

Living Space Envelope: A well built house has an envelope that is both air tight (air barrier) and well insulated (thermal barrier). Brick, wall board, and plywood are examples of air barrier materials. Most commonly used insulations such as fiberglass and cellulose provide a thermal barrier but not an air barrier. Sprayed foam and rigid Styrofoam serve both functions.

The Chimney Effect: A chimney effect occurs in houses during the winter. Breaches to a home's air

barrier allow cold air to enter openings in the basement and exit through openings in the top floor into the attic space. In the summer a reverse chimney effect occurs where heated attic air expands to enter the top floor, pushing downwards on cooler air forcing it through openings in the lower floor or the basement.

Pressure Test: To locate serious problems with the air barrier and insulation barrier, an energy audit uses a door mounted fan that places the house under negative pressure of 50 pascals (about 1/3 oz. per square foot). The effect draws external air through the weak points in a house's envelope. The resulting temperature differences are revealed by an infrared camera.

Major Sources of Energy Loss: Jason typically finds these deficiencies: unfinished or missing insulation work hidden from view in the attic or a knee wall, holes
(continued on page 2)

Conservation Report (continued from page 1)

people and 11 groups in its first week. The paper specifies goals for energy efficiency, greenhouse gas emission reductions, good parking management, transit/bike/pedestrian facilities, parks, affordable housing, tree cover, and stormwater management. The effort was led by John Byrne.

We expect to follow the work of the Planning Commission that is drafting the amendment based on the Tysons Task Force to the County's Comprehensive Plan.

- **Tysons Tunnel** – Members of GFG are actively working to add consideration of the tunnel option for the Metro Extension to Dulles Airport. Even though utility relocation construction has begun on the above ground option, the team met with staff of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee who identified precedents for revising existing plans for other federally funded large mass transit programs around the country. This demonstrated that the clearly preferable tunnel option could be considered and estimated without threatening progress on the current default above ground plan.

A rally for the Tunnel option was held on November 12th (<http://www.tysonstunnel.org>) at the Sheraton Premier to bring pressure on the powers that be to fund consideration of the tunnel option.

- **Land Use Planning Workshop** – A land use planning workshop was sponsored by Sierra Club, both GFG and MVG, and Audubon at the Braddock District office on Oct 4th. Supervisor Bulova and county staff with responsibilities for Land Use and Zoning spoke.
- **Cool Counties** – The Cool Fairfax work group, that holds monthly meetings at Chairman Connolly's office, wrote a letter to the Supervisors urging them to hire the proposed Energy manager,

despite the tight budget, because that person will save the county more than their pay will cost.

- **Riparian Buffer Regulations** – Fairfax County passed legislation this past year to extend the requirements for Riparian Buffers (plantings along stream banks) for Intermittent and Ephemeral Streams in addition to Permanent Streams. The county held two community involvement workshops to provide guidance to the zoning division on issues and concerns with respect to these new requirements. A few GFG members participated.
- **Potomac Heritage Trail and Madeira School** – Both the Mt Vernon Group and the Great Falls Group sent letters to the Fairfax County Planning Commission in support of completing the Potomac Heritage Trail near Fort Belvoir and through the Madeira School property. The trail has been on the county's comprehensive plan for decades and it surfaced as an issue when the Madeira School approached the county for zoning authorization to modify their waste water treatment facility on their property. The county sought to leverage that request to gain an easement from the school to complete the trail along the Potomac through their property. The school mounted a campaign in opposition for fear of student safety.

In the end a compromise was reached wherein the school scaled back their request and the trail was left on the Comprehensive Plan. Further requests from the school will likely require granting of the easement.

- **Global Warming Battleground – Drilling for Oil and Gas on Alaska's Public Lands and Seas** – Steve Bruckner gave a presentation to the monthly GFG chapter meeting on Sept 23rd on the above subject. The presentation, based on a 2-day workshop given by Audubon in January 2008, explored the convergence of issues related to Global Warming, drilling for Oil and Gas on the North Slope of Alaska and its adjoining Seas, the

Endangered Species Act and the actions being taken by the Bush Administration. This talk will also be presented to the MVG in February.

- **Tree Removal by Columbia Gas in Reston** – Steve Bruckner provided assistance to a home owner in Reston who was trying to save 100 trees on his property that Columbia Gas plans to remove because they are in their easement to protect their pipeline. Steve researched and proposed an alternative solution that could save a significant percentage of their trees by trenching and burying a geotech fabric that would serve as a barrier to tree roots from reaching the pipeline.

Last week we learned via the Washington Post that Columbia Gas went ahead and removed the trees without considering the suggested alternatives.

- **ACEEE Report - Energizing Virginia: Efficiency First** – ACEEE published their report, *Energizing Virginia: Efficiency First*, in September. We are seeking to leverage this report to significantly increase Virginia's commitment to energy efficiency and reducing GHG emissions. We wrote a Fact Sheet summarizing their recommendations, suitable for distribution to legislators. We are also leveraging the report to create draft legislation, to be proposed in 2009.
- **Governor's Commission on Climate Change** – Glen Besa, VA SC Chapter Chair, and other VA environmental organizations are working to influence the draft recommendations of the Governor's Commission on Climate Change. Consolidated input was prepared and distributed to members on the Commission. We hope to influence the final recommendations. We have already learned that the Commission accepted the middle investment scenario from ACEEE's report to reduce the state's consumption of electricity by 19% by 2025.
- **Legislation – Weatherization for Low Income Households** – The chapter is working with stakeholders in the state to propose legislation in 2009 to increase the level of funding for Weatherization of Low Income Households. Given the significant increase in energy prices, the need has increased considerably.
- **Offshore Wind Conference** – The VA Chapter co-sponsored, along with AWEA, the American Wind Energy Association and the Offshore Wind Energy Consortium, an Offshore Wind conference

Home Energy Audit (continued from page 1)

in the air barrier hidden from view, disconnected air supply ducting, spaces where ceiling wall board meets a wall header allowing air to flow through a wall's interior, leaks at the point where the basement sill plate meets the top of the basement cement or block wall, and leaks from ceiling light fixtures mounted in a ceiling where there is attic space directly above. He finds that recessed lights are among the biggest offenders, especially when there are a number of them. Builders often fail to use insulated ceiling rated boxes or "cans" in these attic side applications. Due to heat build-up from the incandescent bulb, do not place insulation against the attic side of cans not rated for an insulated ceiling. If an unrated can is accessible from the attic, Jason suggests using wall board to construct an oversized 5-sided box to house the can, using polyurethane foam to join and seal the wall board components. Then you can insulate the outside of the boxes after they are secured to the attic floor with foam. Alternatively, one can replace the can with an insulation rated model or consider the cool-operating and very efficient LED recessed fixtures just now entering the market.

Audit Results: A home energy audit will prioritize the energy conservation actions indicated for your house.

Indoor Air Quality: Tightening an existing home

improves comfort and reduces outside noise intrusions. It is hard to tighten an existing structure so well that indoor air becomes unhealthy. Should this occur, it is easy to install a powered fresh air supply.

Learn more at: http://www.energystar.gov/ia/partners/publications/pubdocs/DIY_Guide_May_2008.pdf or <http://www.edge-gogreen.com/>

by Ross Shearer

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 Linda Freimark for time and location.

Officers:	Chair, Linda Freimark	703-222-9240	Linda.Freimark@virginia.sierraclub.org
	Vice Chair, Chris Koerner	703-715-2204	Chris.Koerner@virginia.sierraclub.org
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	Membership, Norbert Pink	703-264-7445	norbertsierra@aol.com
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	Website Maintenance, Linda Stevens	703-787-8861	
	Environmental Education, Amelia Kissick		

Yield a Tunnel at Tysons (continued from page 1)

This understanding "will ensure that all stakeholders see the realization of the project as favorable to them, as it is viewed favorably by all others. From leadership and understanding will come the basis for being able to get the financing needed, financing that is clear and unambiguous, not tentative or uncertain as appears now to be the case." Carter is confident that financing, will follow once the difficult work of establishing leadership and understanding is achieved.

I thought about how Carter's observations make a case that indicts the processes of Virginia's Public Private Transportation Act (PPTA) that gave us the current elevated proposal. The Metro-to-Dulles public square was vacant. Taking its cue from Milton Friedman's economic antagonism for the open processes of the public square, the PPTA loosed free market Darwinism to exploit the leadership vacuum. The result is tearing us up, when it should be lifting us up. Public policy decision making must be a civilizing force for increasing our capacity for awareness, enjoyment of life and appreciation of beauty, so we are able, as William Blake wrote, "To see a world in a Grain of Sand and a Heaven in a Wild Flower, To hold Infinity in the palm of your hand, And Eternity in an hour". The civilizing force of Carter's message extends beyond the controversies surrounding the Metro-to-Dulles project, to the broader questions ranging from mass transit policy to the daily management at WMATA.

Discovering Rocky Run (continued from page 1)

walk – Irv Auerbach, a local activist neighbor; Ed Pickens, head of Fairfax Trails and Stream, and Zack Fields, Gerry Connolly's Land Use Assistant, who was eager to see more of the area that will be impacted by Tysons redevelopment. The walk resulted in an informal assessment and recommendations for projects to improve the condition of the stream. I also learned the stream was in better condition than many in the county.

Next, I wanted to learn more about stormwater handling of the Tyco Road area and how it was managed in a Stormwater Impoundment Facility. The Tyco Road area, which is 280 acres in size and is almost entirely paved, includes car dealerships, light industry and apartment complexes. When those properties were developed the stormwater management model was to pipe all rainfall into sewers that feed into streams to get to the Potomac as fast as possible. So all that stormwater is piped, via a large culvert, under the Dulles Toll Road and emerges into a 13.5 acre Stormwater Impoundment Facility. The dam that holds back the water has an opening at the bottom that slows the flow of water into Rocky Run. But the volume of water into Rocky Run is much greater than before Tysons was developed because instead of the water being absorbed into the ground where it fell, it is instead "piped" into storm sewers that lead to Rocky Run.

I also discovered that more than a decade of trash washed through the storm sewers and had accumulated in the impoundment facility. It was possibly the largest collection of trash in the whole county short of the dump itself. Cleaning up the impoundment facility area became our first task. For the effort, Irv and I formed a group called *Friends of Rocky Run*. We contacted local scout groups and local middle schools and organized a cleanup day. About 45 people came out, 2/3 young teens and 1/3 adults. The event was a huge success, collecting 75 bags of trash – mostly cans, bottles, coffee cups and plastic trash – but also tires, an air conditioner, a hot water heater

Other speakers included former DOT Secretary William Coleman and the Sierra Club's Roger Diedrich. The former Secretary characterized the elevated proposal as "irresponsible" because the tunnel option would yield greater economic benefits both after and during construction. He also expressed his opinion that the tunnel option would cost less. Later, Roger took the podium to speak for the interests of the Sierra Club's 8,000 members located in Northern Virginia. Those interests include climate change, impacts from energy extraction and air quality. He spoke about the opportunity the tunnel presents as part of a solution to those concerns by establishing high quality, smart growth in the County. "Designing Tysons to include an unattractive, noisy barrier running through its middle would be a major disadvantage" to those goals, he said.

Everyone has a stake in MetroRail and that stake must be realized more favorably than it is under the present approach because everyone is counting on WMATA's success to solve many problems for us, including those of us who rarely or never use it. The path for meeting the future challenges for MetroRail and WMATA require leadership and understanding in a formula Mr. Carter described that should receive serious consideration.

by Ross Shearer

and a gas pump hose! We also hope to convince the HOA that owns the impoundment facility to add a trail to make it function more like a park amenity for them instead of as a single purpose stormwater facility that is largely useless to them.

Additional tasks were recommended by the stream expert. Just north of the impoundment facility are 300 yards of grassy sloping stream banks that flow directly into the stream instead of being protected by plantings that form a *riparian buffer*. Over the next few years we hope to organize community planting events to plant the buffer. Also there are trees bordering the stream that are threatened by erosion. We hope to engage a few Eagle Scouts in projects that *armor* the bank beneath the trees so they will last longer. We are also looking to recruit a neighbor to become certified as a Stream Monitor and monitor it for pollution. This involves sampling the stream four times annually to identify and count the insects that are found. These serve as a proxy for the health of the stream. And we will have more cleanups because the trash will continue to flow into the impoundment facility.

The long term solution to the erosion problem however lies with the redevelopment of the Tyco Road area as part of the overall redevelopment of Tysons Corner over the next decades. Stormwater management strategy has evolved and the current approach is to have the water absorbed where it falls by installing green roofs, French drains, and *pervious* paving. Once that's done then, in time, the flow of stormwater into Rocky Run should be reduced significantly and, as a result, reduce the erosion caused by it.

I now have a new recreational activity – stream maintenance. Usually all I need is a trash bag. But for when the going gets rough, I bought a pair of hip boots, for wading into the stream, and saws, a hand winch, webbing and a log skidder to pull

Conservation Report (continued from page 2)

at the Univ of DE on Sept 9 & 10. The conference included parallel sessions targeting policy issues of interest to state energy officials and utility company officials, which went beyond the usual vendor focus of AWEA. This conference gave us great exposure to a national and international audience interested in Offshore Wind. David Hamilton, Sierra Club's Director of Global Warming and Energy gave the keynote address. Glen Besa, VA Chapter Director, and Ivy Main each moderated a session.

Ivy Main and Steve Bruckner wrote a two-page fact sheet on Offshore Wind Energy suitable for distribution to Virginia legislators.

by Steve Bruckner

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.

logs out of the stream.

In summary, I found my local stream was neglected and in need of restoration. I also found that there were many resources and neighbors who welcomed coming together to enhance their local stream and make it something they could be proud of.

by Steven Bruckner

YES,
I want to join the Sierra Club!

Name _____
Address _____
City _____
State _____ Zip _____

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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:
Sierra Club, PO Box 52968, Boulder, CO 80322.

Membership Type	Individual	Joint
Introductory	<input type="checkbox"/> \$25.00	N/A
Regular	<input type="checkbox"/> \$39.00	<input type="checkbox"/> \$47.00
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Table of Contents

Great Falls Group Conservation Report, July-Oct 2008

Leadership and Understanding Would Yield a Tunnel at Tysons

Discovering Rocky Run - My Local Stream

Home Energy Audit Presentation Fascinates Audience

GFG needs Recording Secretary

Potomac Region Outings

Get the latest event information delivered to your in-box every week!
Sign up for the Great Falls Group email announcement list at
<http://virginia.sierraclub.org/greatfalls/greatfalls-news.html>

WANTED: Volunteer newsletter assistants. Help us maintain and improve the quality of this newsletter. Write articles. Submit photographs. Manage submissions of articles (no editorial or writing skills needed). Edit submissions. Proofread. Please contact ExCom member Linda Freimark at **Linda.Freimark@virginia.sierraclub.org**.

Also See Inside:

Old Dominion Sierran

The Sierra Club's Newsletter for Virginia

- 1 – Virginia targeted for off shore drilling
- 2 – Notes from the Chair
- Green Jobs Expo to be held in D.C. Feb. 5
- Rachel Flynn, planner, gets Green Giant award
- Virginia Chapter excom election results
- 3 – Repower, Refuel, Rebuild Virginia
- Governor's commission final report on climate change
- Taking delivery on environmental victories
- Conservation Citizen Lobby Day
- 4 – Help elderly, disabled weatherize their homes
- Decrease trash, increase items recycled
- Great Backyard Birdcount
- 5 – 2009 Virginia General Assembly Session
- Wise Energy - 2008 and promise of 2009
- 6 – Chapter volunteers saw many political victories
- Campaigners take on variety of chores
- Members volunteer 25, 50, 100 hours and more
- 7 – Busy outings program for all ages, abilities
- Book news
- 8 – Sierra Club's Climate Recovery Agenda



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The Cascade

The Great Falls Group Newsletter

January-February 2009

www.virginia.sierraclub.org/greatfalls

Upcoming Programs – Everyone Welcome!

Monday, Jan. 12th – Environment Issues and the 2009

Legislative Session 7:30-9pm Come learn about legislation proposed for the upcoming Virginia legislative session and how you can support conservation issues, including how to participate in the Virginia Conservation Network's Lobby Day January 19. McLean Government Center, 1437 Balls Hill Rd, McLean. Refreshments and socializing start at 7.

Monday Feb 23, 7:30-9 pm. Ansel Adams: A Documentary

Film. Join the Great Falls Group of the Sierra Club for this Emmy Award-winning film featuring beautiful scenery from the American West and photographer Ansel Adams. Socializing and refreshments start at 7, program at 7:30. Lake Anne Community Center at 1609 Washington Plaza N, Reston, VA, see directions below.

Monday, March 16, 7:30-9pm. Potomac Riverkeeper, Ed

Merrifield, will describe his organization and what they are doing to protect the Potomac. He'll also introduce their new program to help address the challenges of development and corresponding sediment pollution, and tell you how you can get involved. Lake Anne Community Center, 1609 Washington Plaza N, Reston, see directions below. Refreshments and socializing start at 7.

Note the new monthly program locations.

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

Questions? Contact Linda Burchfiel at 703-506-4310 or larva@attglobal.net.

***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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