



THE MOUNT VERNON

SIERRAN

Upcoming Events/Meetings/Actions

Meeting #2 of the Mount Vernon Executive Committee (MVG ExCom) February 26, TU, 7:00 to 8:30 The Executive Committee will discuss emerging conservation issues, options for action and review the next Group newsletter. MVG members are invited to make contributions. This meeting is open to all members of the Group (you), and we encourage your participation. RSVP to host George at 703/538-6065, gw@mgfairfax.r.com, who lives in Falls Church.

Conservation/Political Meeting #1 February 5, Tuesday, 7:00 to 8:30. Your club leaders are talking to local leaders about their environmental goals for 2002 and 2003. At this meeting, we'll discuss what we heard from them, and use that as input in defining our specific goals for the year. Open to all Group members – this is your Club, so participate. RSVP to host Andrew at 703/536-5047, anlnnich@erols.com

New Monthly Meeting Location! Metro Accessible!

MONTHLY GROUP MEETING

February 12, Tuesday, 7:30 to 9:00 Location: NRECA Building, Room CC-3, 4301 Wilson Blvd, Ballston, Arlington. Topic: Members' Forum. Speakers: You. We need you to tell us your visions for the Sierra Club, why you joined and what you feel should be the Mount Vernon Group's priorities be in 2002? Should we focus on transportation planning? Air quality? Protecting the Chesapeake? More parks? Help us develop a limited set of achievable things to do in 2002 that will get your blood pumping.

MONTHLY GROUP MEETING

March 12, Tuesday, 7:30 to 9:00 Location: NRECA Building, Room CC-3, 4301 Wilson Blvd, Ballston, Arlington. Topic: "Appalachian Treasures at the Crossroads." Dave Muhly will present a colorful slideshow featuring an overview of the Southern Appalachian Forests with images from Virginia to Alabama. Dave will follow his visuals with a "mini-workshop" on the National Forest timber sales program, with plenty of time for Q&A so we can get smarter about the conservation issues facing Virginia's national forests. He'll also briefly overview the Sierra Club's End Commercial Logging Forest campaign.

March 28, Thursday, 6:30 to 9:00. Newsletter labeling. Join us for pizza, beverages, and few thousand labels. Bruce Parker's house, 827 Fontaine Street, Alexandria, 22301. Call (703) 549-5792.

April 2, Tuesday, 7:00 to 8:30. Conservation/Political Meeting #2. We want to improve our impact by focusing on a well defined conservation issue that the unique grassroots power of the Sierra Club can best be applied. The purpose of this meeting identify such an issue. (and we may enjoy a few good microbrews as well.) Open to all Group members – this is your Club, so participate. RSVP to host Andrew at 703/536-5047, anlnnich@erols.com

The Newsletter of the Mount Vernon Group of the Virginia Chapter of the Sierra Club Jan / Feb / Mar 2002

2001 Silent Auction...Another Success!

Once again the MVG Auction Committee put together a wonderful event. Approximately 60 group members and friends attended the December 11th event at the Fairlington Village Community Center. They socialized with friends old and new, dined on a delicious Italian feast put together by Leslie Nicholls and bid on 58 items as well as homemade goodies. There were several heated bidding battles throughout the night on items such as a Personal Chef for one night, NC Beach weekend, and message therapy sessions. These and other great items helped the MVG treasury net \$2590. This is a 11% increase over last year.

The Silent Auction Committee and the Excomm wish to thank everyone who helped make this event such a great success including the volunteers, the guests, the bidders and especially the donors. Please support our donors. It's their generous support that makes our auction possible.

SUPPORT OUR DONORS!

COMPANIES

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Rock Bottom Brewery and Restaurant, Arlington, VA

continued on page 4

Excom Election Results: Group Elects Five Candidates

by *Andrew Nicholls*, Vice-Chair

Per our official bylaws, the Mount Vernon Group has 9 Executive Committee members, elected by the Group. Five are elected one year, and four the next, for two-year terms. In our last newsletter, you were asked to vote for four of the five candidates running for office. This was an error, committed by your vice-chair, whose ability to read bylaws correctly is highly suspect. In point of fact, we had exactly 5 vacancies, not four, as I had thought. The bottom line: with five excellent candidates running for five open positions, all five were elected to the ExCom.

Those individuals are: John Koch, John Powers, Pat Soriano, Rob Swennes and Mary White. Pat and John Powers are returning to the Excom, while Rob, Mary and John Koch are all new to these seats of power.

All five will serve, giving of their time and humor, for the 2002-2004 period. Meanwhile, Bruce Parker, Terri Lamb and I serve through the end of this year, completing our 2000-2002 terms. Those of you reading this will note that five plus three is eight, leaving an "open" position. That ninth position was filled by Shannon Sullivan by unanimous vote of the ExCom on January 5.

Please welcome Shannon, Mary, Rob, John, John and Pat to the ExCom.

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The Mount Vernon Sierran welcomes articles, news releases, first-person experiences, poetry, photos and artwork. We reserve the right to edit all contributions for clarity, style, and length. Submissions are preferred in electronic format pasted into emails or as attachments. Photos can be scanned and emailed as JPEG files or mailed to the editor. Please contact Bill L'Hommedieu (703/527-4690) at 4013 North 18th Road, Arlington, VA 22207 or any Excom member for info. Views expressed by contributors are their own and may not necessarily be those of the Sierra Club. To place advertisements or classifieds in this newsletter, please contact Bill L'Hommedieu at 703/527-4690. The national Sierra Club web page can be found at: www.sierraclub.org. The Mount Vernon Group's web page is: www.sierraclub.org/mvg/home1.htm. The Mount Vernon Sierran is a publication of the Mount Vernon Group of the Virginia Chapter of the Sierra Club in Alexandria, Arlington, Fairfax, Falls Church, and Prince William County and is published 4 times a year for all Group members and the local public. Its primary mission is to inform and engage group members in activities for the protection and enjoyment of the local environment.

MVG

Web site address changed to:
[www.sierraclub.org/chapters/
va/mvg/home1.htm](http://www.sierraclub.org/chapters/va/mvg/home1.htm)

Notes from The Chair

by Pat Soriano

Greetings!

I'm Pat Soriano, the new Chair of the Mount Vernon Group. After 4 years as our Group Chair, Bruce Parker, who continues to serve on our Group Executive Committee, or ExCom, is now Chair of the Virginia Chapter. Next time you see Bruce, please thank him for the fine job he did as our Group Chair, and congratulate him on his new challenge. I was Group Chair from 1996-97, and I am looking forward to serving as Chair once again.

As we start off 2002, I'd like to give you a summary of where our Group is and where it's headed this year. First, we have a good mix of experienced and new members on the ExCom. Among the new activists are Shannon Sullivan who will serve as our Group Political Chair. Also new to the ExCom is Rob Swennes who has agreed to serve as the Group Secretary, an important position that has been vacant for more than a few years. In addition, John Koch, our Membership Chair and newly elected to the Group ExCom, will be serving as co-Virginia Chapter Delegate and River Clean-up Coordinator. The past coordinator, Mary White, also is new to the ExCom. And after serving as Fundraising Chair for many years, Terri Lamb will serve in the dual role of Programs and Social Chairs this year. Those of you that attended our Silent Auction in December know that Cheryl Zablonksi has agreed to take over the key role of Fundraising Chair.

Despite ongoing turnover, our group membership

Important Contact Information

Sierra Club Headquarters: 415-977-5500; Memberhip info: 415-977-5653; Sierra Club Legislative Hotline 202-675-2394; National Headquarters: 85 2nd Street, 2nd floor, San Francisco, CA 94105-3441; Sierra Club website: <http://www.sierraclub.org>

Address Changes: Sierra Club Member Services, P.O. Box 52968, Boulder, CO 80322-2968

U.S. Congress: Capitol switchboard, 202-225-3121; SENATOR ALLEN'S OFFICE: 202-224-4024, email: senator@allen.senate.gov; SENATOR WARNER'S OFFICE: 202-224-2032, email senator@warner.senate.gov; CONGRESSMAN TOM DAVIS' OFFICE:

202-225-1492, email tomdavis@hr.house.gov
CONGRESSMAN MORAI OFFICE: 202-225-4376, jim Moran@mail.house.g

The White House: Cor 202-456-6213; FAX line 2461, email the President by going to www.whitehouse.gov and following the email prompts use

increased by over 700 members last year to over 4000 members! Though small in geographic terms, the Mount Vernon Group still is the largest in the Virginia Chapter, an important point we always mention when advocating our environmental agenda. Due in part to our rising membership, our Group's financial position is good, which allows us to carry out our various activities. The Group's total receipts this past year were about \$7600, largely from membership dues and the Silent Auction. Group total expenses were about \$6600, largely for membership expenses and our newsletter, which we issue 4 times per year. We ended the year with just over \$6400, up over \$1000 from last year.

We decided that we would use some of our increased funds to expand our newsletter from 4 pages to up to 8. The increased pages will allow us to use a larger font, which I'm sure many of our loyal readers will appreciate, and to include more articles to keep you better informed of local environmental issues.

We will begin the year by meeting in person with select politicians in Alexandria, Arlington, and Fairfax. Last year, we invited Gerry Connolly of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors to one of our political meetings. This meeting turned out to be both interesting and informative in terms of how things really work, and, more importantly, how we could be more effective in dealing with city and county governments. We also realized how politicians often have different views about the environmental agenda, which could provide us with worthwhile insights in deciding and carrying out the Group's focus. Also, the ExCom should hold more meetings with local politicians outside the endorsement process to both strengthen these important relationships and enable us to link our conservation and political agendas. At our next general meeting on February 12th, we will share with you what we have learned thus far from any these meetings. (Please take note elsewhere in the newsletter of our new meeting location.)

As in any other year there are of course any number of local environmental issues – from the continuing debate about the Woodrow Wilson Bridge to the Purple Line to the all encompassing issue of sprawl – on which we could focus our limited time and resources. (I emphasize here that like you, all Group ExCom and other committee members are volunteer members of the Sierra Club.) However, we thought that this year – in addition to soliciting the views of local politicians – we'd like to know directly from you what's on your mind. About half of us have served on the ExCom for a number of years. But given the competing interests in our area, we actually see few of our fellow members at general meetings and other Group events. For this reason along with the great turnover in members last year, we thought it a good time to solicit your views. And to reach out to those of you that can't make it to a meeting, we will be soliciting your views through a member's survey in an upcoming newsletter.

We still intend on having a few river clean-ups this year so we can both enjoy and protect the environment. In addition, we've scheduled our annual Group picnic for Sunday, June 9th likely at Meadowood Farms (the 900-acre farm on Mason Neck that was part of the Lorton land swap – an issue that we've followed for many years). Terri has promised to arrange some other social events for us. Look for details of these events in upcoming newsletters.

continued on page 4

Brown Gold!

SOMETIMES IT SEEMS AS THOUGH creating and maintaining a compost site is a difficult proposition. You've heard about compost recipes, compost starters, nutrients, temperatures, enzymes and so on. Although all of this is part of the composting process, you don't need to know about it all. *Compost simply happens.* As in a forest, where all the leaves on the ground decay and turn into compost, nature's helpers are already there when you start your compost site: microorganisms that eat the organic material and turn it into compost.

BUILDING OR BUYING A COMPOSTER

The first thing to do is to choose the type of composter and site you want to use. One possibility is a recycled municipal trash container (contact your local government) with airholes added. These are good for small quantities of compost and are mobile. Or using recycled wooden pallets wired together, (3-7 depending on the number of compartments you want to have 1,2, or 3). Another choice is Dog Wire fencing and galvanized pipe to create your compartments. And commercial tumblers are available. They're efficient... and pricey.

After you installed the composter of your choice, start filling it with organic materials. Compost building is a layering process for "stacking" types of composters like the heap, bin or box. The tumbler is simply operated by filling it with the right mixture of materials and turning it...every other day. If you don't care about the speed at which your yard clippings and kitchen scraps compost, all you have to do is to dump grass clippings, leaves and kitchen scraps into your composter, mix and cover with an extra layer of leaves or grass clippings. This keeps the odors inside the composter and keeps insects from eating and breeding on the kitchen scraps.

ADDING TO YOUR COMPOSTER

Adding material to a composter is easy. Make sure it is a suitable ingredient for your compost, and just add it to the material along with a little dirt, where the microbes live. Avoid "putrifiabiles" - any food scrap that is not plant based. Avoid cat and dog waste. The manure of plant eating animals is okay.

Like humans, composters prefer a healthy variety of food to grow and develop well. Your composter's diet should include about 50 percent 'brown' material like dead leaves, straw, wood chips and cardboard, 30 percent of 'green' materials like fresh grass clippings. Moisture consistency of the compost should be that of a squeezed sponge to make sure the microorganisms have enough water to survive. Don't over water.

Composting needs oxygen to work. Even though your composter might have ventilation holes in its walls, the material can become very dense during the composting process and therefore may have bad or no ventilation, so turn your compost from time to time, digging it upside-down with a pitchfork or just digging a hole into it to add new material. This brings new air into the center of the compost.

STORAGE OF MATERIAL

If your compost site isn't close to your kitchen, or you live

somewhere on the 4th floor, you don't want to walk down to the yard for every little piece of kitchen scrap. Get a small trashcan with a lid or a kitchen container with a vacuum lid normally used for flour or sugar. Apartment and townhouse dwellers can create compost for house plants and container gardening by creating an earthworm composting system that is clean and odor-free. Use your browser to find systems you can buy or build.

COMPOST RECIPES

Hot recipe. A hot recipe is a recipe that provides optimal nutrition for the microorganisms in your composter. They generate heat when they are at work, so your compost can have a temperature that can reach as high as 70-80F. Parts are by volume.

- 2 parts dry leaves
- 2 parts straw or wood chips/sawdust
- 1 part manure
- 1 part fresh garden weeds / lawn clippings
- 1 part food scraps
- Occasionally add a gallon of warm water mixed with baker's yeast to juice up the microbes.

Cold recipe. This is just an example of what you might add to your composter. Composting happens within any mixture that is not dry or too wet.

- Ingredients - mix or dump in composter 3 parts dry grass clippings or leaves
- 3 parts fresh grass clippings
- optional - some food scraps

BOOK REVIEW

THIS ORGANIC LIFE

Confessions of a Suburban Homesteader By Joan Dye Gussow. A Real Goods Solar Living Book published by Chelsea Green, 273 Pages

Barbara Kingsolver calls This Organic Life "The most important book I've read in a while." I wholeheartedly agree. In her candor filled, warm and personable style, Joan Dye Gussow weaves a tale that is both memoir and manifesto, then seasons it with gardening wisdom, and her favorite recipes. The often overused slogans, "think globally, act locally" and "the personal is political," are embodied in this woman's life and in her writing. Entering her eighth decade, she speaks with the authority of experience.

Set in the suburbs of New York City, "This Organic Life" follows Joan and her husband Alan, as they abandon the large victorian home where they raised their family and much of their food, to move onto a small suburban lot along the Hudson river. Their new home comes complete with an aging and decrepit Oddfellows hall that they hope to renovate, a feisty neighbor, and a whole new set of gardening challenges, from floods to varmints. Although the book is centered on Dussow's commitment to producing all of her own fruits and vegetables, woven through



this entertaining, witty and sometimes sorrowful account of her suburban homesteading adventure, is a powerful case for locally based, ecologically sane, sustainable food systems. "This Organic Life" will inspire you to get out in the garden and think deeply about the world.

This review comes from The Seeds of Change website. I can add my endorsement and urge you to purchase a copy from the website. -Editor

Special Places!



The following article is taken from the Sierra Club's website and changes frequently.

Do you have a special place in Nature that you retreat to for reflection, meditation and stress management? Won't you share with the rest of us places that are important to you, both local and in the rest of the world.

Spending time in nature is always important - especially so in times of stress. As former Sierra Club president and current summer camp director Chuck McGrady has said, "Each of us has a special place that heals us, that quiets our confusion and helps us to hear our own voice again."

Show and tell about places in nature that were, or are, important to you. Big majestic places, or everyday places. A place that was special when you were growing up, or just last weekend. The places that mean something to you.

KONZA PRAIRIE

Konza Prairie is an 8,616 acre tallgrass prairie preserve of the Nature Conservancy and managed by the Division of Biology at Kansas State University, is located just south-

continued on page 4

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SALES AND LEASING

CHAIRS MESSAGE, from page 2

For those of you that have wondered about the sad state of website, we *dointend* to work on this problem this year. Unfortunately, due in part due to a lack of content and the lack of a full-time webmaster, we have been unable to keep it current. Until we can resolve this problem – we hope through the assistance of as-yet-identified volunteers in our Group – we have temporarily shutdown the web site. If you could assist us in this respect, please let me know.

If you have any questions about Group events or activities, please feel free to contact me by phone or email, or to contact any other of our Group leaders. We'd be interested in hearing from you.

SPECIAL PLACES, from page 3

east of Manhattan, Kansas. Konza has an abundance of whitetailed deer, turkey, and other animals. The preserve is made up of acres and acres of tallgrass prairie as well as forested areas along lowlands and streams running through Konza.

This great habitat makes Konza a delight for bird watchers, wildlife viewers, and all around nature lovers. There are miles of trails open to the public to enjoy the majestic scenery. Wildlife research as well as a bison herd can be found in other parts of the natural area. This is the place where I first developed my love of the outdoors growing up. I've been the only person at Konza many times watching the sun both rise and set. I've never felt quite as close to nature as I have there. I've hiked and run for hundreds of miles at Konza. It is one of the truly great natural places left in this part of the country.

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THANK YOU:

We wish to thank the Auction Committee: Terri Lamb, Chair; George Lamb; Paige Ireland, Rebecca Nadel, Leslie and Andrew Nicholls. We also would like to thank Bill L'Hommedieu, DesignSense, 703/527-4690, for producing the Auction Program graphics and layout.

- Do you want to **invest** in publicly owned companies that demonstrate **concern for our environment?**
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