



THE MOUNT VERNON

SIERRA

Inside:
Sprawl
Member Survey
Hybla Valley
Trees

The Newsletter of the Mount Vernon Group of the Virginia Chapter of the Sierra Club APRIL/MAY/JUNE 2002

Upcoming Events/Meetings/Actions

CONSERVATION/POLITICAL MEETING #2. April 4, 2002 Thursday, 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. As we reported in our last newsletter, your volunteer MVG leaders have been talking to local elected representatives about their environmental priorities for 2002 and 2003. At this meeting, we will take into consideration what we heard from you from the member survey in this newsletter. The goal of the meeting will be to define a medium-term environmental agenda based on our member's volunteer interests. We welcome your participation in this discussion. This is your Club, so come out and join in the debate! *RSVP to host Shannon Sullivan at 703-941-9059, Sullivan@merrittgrp.com who lives in Springfield.*

RIVER CLEAN-UP #1. April 6, 2002, Saturday, 9 a.m. to Noon. You are invited to donate three hours of your time to join in a spring cleaning of the Potomac River. The "work" is safe, fun, family friendly, and a great opportunity for you to get out and explore the river while meeting others willing to do their part for the environment. We will be working at Windy Run Park in north Arlington, at the end of Kenmore Lane, north of Lorcum Lane. Parking is available in either the Windy Run parking lot or on neighborhood streets. All equipment including work gloves and trash bags will be provided, as well as refreshments. *For more information, contact John Koch at 202-720-4396 or 703-684-6849, jandrko@comcast.net.*

MONTHLY GROUP MEETING. April 9, 2002, Tuesday, 7:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. Refreshments provided starting at 7 p.m. Location: NRECA Building, 4301 Wilson Blvd, Room CC-3, Ballston, Arlington. **Note: We are no longer meeting at REI.** **TOPIC: "FROM GARBAGE TO GOLD, INDOOR WORM BIN COMPOSTING"** Indoor composting with red wiggler worms is easy and convenient. The bin can even be kept in your kitchen; it is less work than outdoor composting systems. It is faster - a 14 gallon bin with about 500 to 1,000 worms can compost your egg shells, fruit and vegetable scraps and their newspaper bedding in 3 to 4 months. It doesn't smell or attract pests. The secret is the red wiggler worms - nature's fantastic composting worms. Turn your kitchen scraps into "black gold" (as organic farmers call the worm waste) right in your own home. Reduce your garbage and use the compost for fertilizer. In this presentation, you will learn all you need to know to get you started. Jeanette Stewart and Sylvia Lang of EcoStewards Alliance will set up a bin from start to finish. These two "worm ladies" as they are called have set up hundreds of bins throughout the Washington area in schools and parks. *For more information about our general meetings, contact Pat Soriano at 703-671-3129, psoriano79@hotmail.com.*

continued on page 4

The New Generation of Power

by Dan Holmes, Piedmont Environmental Council.

DEREGULATION OF THE ELECTRIC INDUSTRY is threatening Virginia's rural lands and environment. By using scare tactics such as a national energy crisis, the industry has pushed its way into rural areas, citing need where none exists.

In Virginia, 30 proposed plants represent over 20,000 megawatts of new generation, more than a 100 percent increase to the existing power generation in Virginia and almost double the number of existing plants (31). Virginia does not have a shortage of power, is not experiencing blackouts and the proposed megawatts are far greater than the projected demand. The power generated by the 30 proposed plants is enough to supply 15 million new homes in a state with fewer than 3 million homes. Virginia will get the pollution and industrial sprawl from rural siting of power plants while the power is sold on the national grid. The majority of these plants are proposed for rural sites located close to power line and gas pipeline corridors. In many cases, the plants are "merchant plants," targeting the demand for power during peak consumption periods when there is a premium price for a power unit as opposed to providing base load supply.

It is apparent that these new plants will have a severe impact on air and water quality and rural, historic, and ecologically valued landscapes. While smaller in scale than coal-fired plants, sit-

ing new natural gas fired plants in rural areas is transforming rural farmland and forests, often with important historical values, into industrial sites.

Threat to rural, ecological, and historic resources: In many areas where these plants are proposed, conservation organizations have worked for years on land conservation programs to protect important farmland, historic and natural resources. The direct impacts of the plants and the increased potential for associated industrial development threaten those efforts.

Important agricultural lands are at risk. More commonly, farmers are quitting, and moving out of concerns about water supplies and the effects of ozone on crops. Proposed plants are encroaching on registered National Historic Landmarks and Rural Historic Districts and threatening the very health of our national forests.

Environmental groups have focused on the sprawl associated with rural sites and called on the industry to locate plants at existing power plant sites or "brownfield" industrial sites. The National Park Service has attempted to draw attention to the impact of these plants on the resources within their jurisdiction.

Cumulative air quality impacts: The cumulative impact of these plants on air quality is substantial. In some parts of the United States (especially the Northeast), these plants could prevent meet-

continued on page 7

TURN TO
PAGE 7

Survey of MVG Member Goals and Objectives

THE PURPOSE OF THIS SURVEY is to determine individual member priorities and translate them into a vision for the MVG. With over 4000 members in northern Virginia, the MVG represents a potent force for environmental enhancement that has not yet been effectively tapped. We need your help to make this happen. The effectiveness of our club in addressing local issues is almost totally dependent upon your support; the national and regional offices have paid staff but we do not. ☺

Webmaster Needed!

The Mount Vernon Group needs a volunteer Webmaster to help us overhaul our group's web site. The group leadership is actively working to revise the content of the web site, but we need a volunteer to help us with the layout. If you are interested, please email Bruce Parker (bruce@chesdata.com)

MOUNT VERNON GROUP LEADERSHIP

Pat Soriano

Chair/Treasurer
5405 Barrister Place
Alexandria, VA 22304-1949
(H) 703/671-3129
(W) 202/728-5878
psoriano79@hotmail.com

Andrew Nicholls

*Vice-Chair/Conservation,
Alternate Delegate to the VA
Chapter*
6914 Farragut Ave
Falls Church, VA 22042
(H) 703/536-5047
(W) 202/646-5238
anlnich@erols.com

Robert Swennes

Secretary
6101 N. 22nd Street
Arlington, VA 22205
(H) 703/532-6101
(W) 703-696-4432
(EXCOM Calls Only Please)
robertswennes@hotmail.com

Shannon Sullivan

Political Chair
7506 Hogarth Street
Springfield, VA 22151
(H) 703-941-9059
(W) 703-556-6831
sullivan@merrittgrp.com

John Koch

*Membership Chair, Delegate to the
Virginia Chapter, 2001-2003*
2905 Farm Road
Alexandria, VA 22302
(H) 703/684-6849
(W) 202/720-4396
jandrkoch@comecast.com

Terri Lamb

Programs Chair, 2001-2003
2818 Summerfield Rd
Falls Church, VA 22042
(H) 703/538-6065
tlamb@cox.rr.com

Mary White

7503 Hogarth Street
Springfield, VA 22151
(H) 703/914-1518
(W) 703/260-8259
catmama@erols.com

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/chapters/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



IN OUR LAST NEWSLETTER, I spoke about our plans to revisit our environmental focus. Thus far, we have had some useful conversations with local politicians. We also had a very good discussion amongst ourselves at our February Group meeting. The clearest message, not surprisingly, is the need for us to balance quality of life issues against the inevitability of growth, which at its worst becomes sprawl. In this respect, we are again challenged by our limited volunteer resources to be selective about the issues we take up. We live in a rapidly growing area where open space is at a premium. In our closer-in neighborhoods of Alexandria and Arlington, the few remaining open spaces are smaller and smaller each year. So, do we dedicate ourselves to preserving these fewer and smaller spaces? On the other hand, do we devote our volunteer energies to the less developed areas of our region – in western Fairfax County for example – where more open space exists? And perhaps because the space is less costly than in Arlington, western Fairfax could be easier to preserve?

We face these questions constantly. At the February 26th meeting of our Executive Committee, or ExCom, we discussed the request by a developer to rezone for dense residential development a small parcel of open land at 1101 N. Lee Highway in Rosslyn – next to the George Washington Memorial Parkway. This parcel, which some of our members in Arlington thought was public land, is in fact privately owned. However, the site currently is zoned in a manner consistent with open space and is shown as intended for public or semi-public usage on the General Land Use Plan of Arlington County. Robert Swennes of our ExCom proposed that we send a letter to Chris Zimmerman, Chairman of the Arlington County Board, opposing the proposed rezoning of the site.

In a frank discussion, some ExCom members raised questions about whether we should

- Do you want to invest in publicly owned companies that demonstrate concern for our environment?
- Do you want to invest in tax-favored securities of public jurisdictions that are funding environmentally friendly projects?
- Do you need help identifying suitable investments?

If your answer is yes, please contact:
Clement Dinsmore
registered representative, A.G. Edwards and Sons, Inc. Friendship Heights, Washington, D.C., Member SIPC.
202-364-1611

not be in favor of residential development in close-in neighborhoods? While we do value high-density development in general, others thought that the increased traffic from the development should prevent its rezoning. Yet others thought that the value of the land as open space, where fewer such spaces remained with each passing year, was more important than the tax revenues to be gained from its development.

In the end, the majority agreed to oppose the rezoning. In our letter to Chairman Zimmerman, we said first that we recognize and applaud the efforts by Arlington County to promote the high-density development of the Rosslyn-Ballston corridor as part of an overall Smart Growth development plan. However, the concentration of more residents into a narrow area also makes it critical for the County to retain existing open space nearby so residents may enjoy outdoor opportunities close to home. We added that we believe the Lee Highway parcel along with the surrounding federal open space that is part of the George Washington Memorial Parkway offers such a nearby opportunity for people to enjoy nature.

These same issues, questions, and trade-offs are inherent in the member survey on the next to last page of this newsletter. We urge you to take a few minutes of your time to respond to the survey, and mail it back to us. We are interested in your views on these issues so we can develop both a medium to longer-term environmental focus and a plan to implement it. This last part would involve you, meaning that one important goal of the survey is to get a sense of how much time you would be willing to devote to any of these issues. For those of you indicating such a willingness, we will be calling upon you soon.

Pat Soriano

Important Contact Information

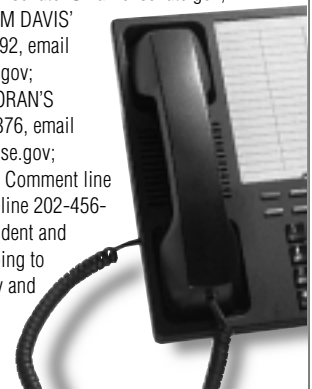
Sierra Club Headquarters: 415-977-5500; Membership info: 415-977-5653; Sierra Club Legislative Hotline 202-675-2394; National Headquarters: 85 2nd Street, 2nd floor, San Francisco, CA 94105-3441; Sierra Club website: www.sierraclub.org

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 MORAN'S OFFICE: 202-225-4376, email jimmoran@mail.house.gov;

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



BOOK REVIEW

The Coming Storm: Extreme Weather and Our Terrifying Future

by Bob Reiss

Hyperion Books, 2001, 310 pages

Reviewed by John B. Koch

In parsing the liberal-conservative dichotomy it is difficult to think of anything more conservative than wanting to keep the earth's climate pretty much the way it's always been. At least that's what Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher thought. To American conservatives, who viewed Mrs. Thatcher as little more than Ronald Reagan in a dress, the news that she and her government were actually prepared in the late 1980s to take steps to require British companies to reign in their use of greenhouse gas-causing fossil fuels was greeted with stunned disbelief. The Thatcher Government explained its position as a belief that God may not necessarily be on your side unless you do the right thing.

If you want to read one book on the subject of global warming and climate change—evidence of its existence, its cause and what steps will be required to correct the current climatic imbalance, plus the Thatcher vignette related above—you likely could do no better than Bob Reiss' *The Coming Storm: Extreme Weather and our Terrifying Future*. (Hyperion Books, 2001). At barely more than 300 pages this book is crammed full of technical and historical information but is written for a general audience that does not necessarily know or want to know the extremely technical scientific detail. Mr. Reiss is at his best when describing the gradual acceptance, by all but a few scientists, that the earth's atmosphere is warming and that humans, by insisting on burning carbon-based fuels, are responsible. The non-believing scientists are heavily dependent on fossil fuel companies for their funding.

As the title suggests, Mr. Reiss provides numerous examples of the sort of weather events a warmer future could foretell for the world. Hurricanes, floods, droughts and tornadoes will become more common and more severe. Events that should happen once in 500 years may happen every year. As the seas rise from the melting of glaciers and polar ice caps, low lying land will disappear. As the earth warms, diseases found today only in the tropics will gradually move into areas today considered temperate. Areas that get little rain now may soon get none. The incredible thing is that most people in the corporate and political world who could do something about this know it is coming but have decided to play a game of "chicken" with poorer countries as an alternative to the possibility of a reduction in profits.

In our nation, where the open bribery of government officials is not only allowed, but the only way to get heard, we will be safe from the most severe impacts of climate change. Americans will be able to afford air conditioning year around. We have enough space inland to escape to when the oceans rise. We have the best medical care so that tropical diseases can be dealt with through immunization and hospitalization. It's the rest of the world that will really suffer. Countries like India, Brazil and Mexico, struggling to follow in our development footsteps by the same tools that made us rich, will suffer the most because they don't have the

infrastructure to deal with disaster. The price Congress and our President are requiring for compliance with climate accords the rest of the world has agreed to follow is that these countries remain economically subservient. This despite the fact that the United States produces 25% of the carbon dioxide heating the atmosphere and that we consume 8 times more energy per person than the rest of the world.

You probably didn't realize that as an American you have a divine right to an SUV, did you? ☺



SPRAWLING DEVELOPMENT is poorly planned urban design that leads to homes that are far from jobs, shopping and other services. This causes two major problems; increased vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and increased infrastructure needs (new roads, municipal services, new utility lines, new school buildings for sprawling suburbs while center city schools decay, etc).

These needs cost individual American households \$630 more per year and produces 8 more tons of CO₂ emissions (a greenhouse gas that causes global warming). The hidden costs of sprawl require us to pay for the destruction of our environment from our own bank accounts whether we want to or not.

STUCK IN OUR CARS

Sprawl spreads things out over great distances and offers little or no transportation choice. It forces people to drive everywhere and lengthens all those trips. The average American driver spends 443 hours per year - the equivalent of 55 eight-hour workdays behind the wheel.

Residents of sprawling communities drive three to four times as much as those living in compact, well-planned areas. Adding new lanes and

building new roads just makes the problem worse - studies show that increasing road capacity only leads to more traffic and more sprawl.

Sprawling cities have driving-related energy consumption rates that can be three times that of better planned, more compact cities that also offer transportation choices.

The average US household spends about 18% of its budget on transportation, making it the second largest household expense.

OUR AIR & WATER

"Nobody in this town has ever said no to a developer. We spend tax dollars to encourage sprawl, and then it comes back to us as air pollution."

—Don Steuter, air-conditioner repairman, avid hiker, sprawl fighter. Phoenix, Az.

As sprawl increases our reliance on cars and driving, it makes our air dirtier and less healthy. Cars, trucks and buses are the biggest source of cancer-causing air pollution, spewing more than 12 billion pounds of toxic chemicals each year. Our very own Metro DC region is currently listed as a "seriously" noncompliant region for federal air quality standards. 40% of this region's air pollution comes from cars and trucks.

see *Sprawl*, continued on page 8

continued from page 1

Upcoming Events/Meetings/Actions

REGIONAL OUTING

April 13, 2002, Saturday, 12:00 pm to 3:00 pm THE MARYLAND SIERRA CLUB, ALONG WITH OTHER SIERRANS FROM VA, WV AND PA WILL TOUR THE BRAND NEW SOMERSET, PA WIND ENERGY PLANT, which is visible from the Penn Turnpike. The plant has modern, state of the art giant turbines that are beautiful, quiet, bird-friendly and earth-friendly, as they help to cut down on air, water, and land pollution/destruction. Refreshments will be provided. RSVP is required to participate. Please call or email Charlie Garlow, Chair, Air and Energy Committee of the MD Sierra Club, at 301-593-9823 or charlie.garlow@juno.com to participate and for directions or carpool information.

May 14, 2002, Tuesday, 7:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. Refreshments provided starting at 7 p.m. Location: NRECA Building, 4301 Wilson Blvd, Room CC-3, Ballston, Arlington.

TOPIC: KENT KNOWLES OF THE RAPTOR CONSERVANCY OF VIRGINIA WILL DISCUSS NATIVE WILDLIFE, RAPTOR REHABILITATION, PRESERVATION OF HABITAT, AND RESPECT FOR OUR WILD NEIGHBORS – with the help of several of his feathered friends. The evening offers a wonderful opportunity to see these magnificent birds up close. Come out and see for yourself! For more information about our general meetings, contact Pat Soriano at 703-671-3129, psoriano79@hotmail.com.

OUTING #1: May 4, 2002, Saturday, 7 a.m. to 10 a.m. BIRDING ON THEODORE ROOSEVELT ISLAND (TR ISLAND) WITH BILL YOUNG. Local-area TR Island is a mix of upland forest, marsh and swamp. On this outing, you will have a chance to see migrating songbirds, including warblers, vireos, orioles, and tanagers. You also could see nesting wood ducks as well as many of the island's year-round resident species. Bill Young has been an active birder in the Washington area for more than two decades and has led trips for the Smithsonian and local bird clubs. Bring binoculars and meet in the parking lot near bridge before the 7 a.m. start. RSVP to Terri Lamb at 703-538-6065, tlamb@cox.rr.com.

MEETING #3 of the Mount Vernon Executive Committee (MVG ExCom) May 21, 2002, Tuesday, 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. - All are welcome.

At this meeting, your volunteer Group leaders will be picking up from the Conservation and Political meeting in April to further refine our medium-term environmental agenda. We also will be planning our Group picnic, the next issue of our newsletter, and progress-to-date on improving our website. This meeting is open to all members of the Group (you), and we encourage you to join us. *RSVP to host Andrew Nicholls, 703/536-5047, anlnnich@erols.com, who lives in Falls Church.*

SPRING PICNIC. June 9, 2002, Sunday, 12:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Location: Pohick Bay Regional Park in Lorton, Va., shelter #3 (with covering in case of rain. Come join us at the annual MVG picnic! This year, our picnic is moving to Pohick Bay Regional Park. The park offers fun for the entire family including hiking trails, fishing, and boat rentals. Burgers, dogs, and beverages are provided but please bring a dish to share. Go to www.nvrpa.org/pohickbay for directions and park information. *RSVP to Terri Lamb at 703-538-6065, tlamb@cox.rr.com.*

RIVER CLEAN-UP #2. June 15, 2002, Saturday, 9 a.m. to Noon.

Time and place to be determined. For more information, contact John Koch at 202-720-4396 or 703-684-6849, jandrko@comcast.net, or check the Mount Vernon Group website at <http://virginia.sierraclub.org/mvg/home1.htm>

OUTING #2. Kayaking on Piscataway Creek July 13, 2002, Saturday, 6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

Join fellow club members and friends for a sunset kayaking trip on Piscataway Creek led by the Atlantic Kayak Co. We begin at the Piscataway Creek Marina and go on one of two routes, depending on river conditions. One route takes us out to the mouth of Piscataway Creek, former tribal grounds of the Piscataway Indian Nation. Paddle under the looming ramparts of Fort Washington for views across the wide Potomac to George Washington's Mount Vernon estate. The other route takes you upstream towards the headwaters, meandering through marsh plants into a narrow creek overhung by trees. This trip is on calm waters, and no experience is required. To register, contact Atlantic Kayak at 703-838-9072 and reference the "Mount Vernon Group of the Sierra Club group trip." The cost of the outing is \$49. Non-members are welcome.

LETTER WRITING NIGHT. July 17, 2002, Wednesday, 6:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

All members are invited to participate in an after-work conservation letter-writing social. Join us for an opportunity to learn about current environmental issues and then putting that knowledge to work as a conservation activist. We will provide the wine, cheese, and appetizers, while you provide the writing talent. (Sample letters will be available.) *RSVP to host Andrew Nicholls, 703/536-5047, anlnnich@erols.com, who lives in Falls Church.*

MEETING #3. Mount Vernon Executive Committee (MVG ExCom) August 27, 2002, Tuesday, 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. For more information, contact Pat Soriano at 703-671-3129, psoriano79@hotmail.com.

• PAID ADVERTISEMENTS •

COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE

**Timothy A. Reese
Buck & Associates**

Specializing in:
Arlington • Alexandria
Falls Church • District of Columbia

703/528-2288 x13
timothyareese@aol.com

SALES AND LEASING

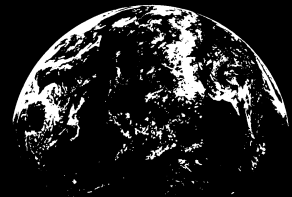
The Sierran

is printed by
QUALITY GRAPHICS AND PRINTING
4720E Lee Highway
Arlington, Virginia 22207
703 / 528-6161

Volunteer for Earth Day!

- Tabling at Earth Day events in Arlington and Alexandria during Week of April 20 – April 28. (2-Hour Shifts)
- Hand out Earth Day Postcards at Metro Stops during Morning Rush Hour Monday, April 22. (1 Hour Shifts between 6am – 8:30am)
- Or, Help Us Organize Volunteers and Logistics for these events!

Contact: Neha Bhatt
neha.bhatt@sierraclub.org
or
John Koch jandrko@home.com
703-312-0533 x108



Join Sierra Club's Virginia Action Network

Virginia Sierra Club is one of the first chapters in the country to utilize a brand new activist tool—our web and e-mail based Action Network! If you have not yet signed up, please visit our web site at <http://virginia.sierraclubaction.org>

The Virginia Action Network is a free, fast and easy way to respond to important environmental alerts. Using the system, you can send an e-mail or a fax (even if you don't own a fax machine) to your elected officials with a click or two of your mouse.

Signing up for the Virginia Action Network is as easy as 1-2-3!

1. Go to our web site: <http://virginia.sierraclubaction.org>
2. Click on "sign up" at the top of the page
3. Enter your name, residential address, and e-mail address.

Once you're signed up, we will send you occasional alerts by e-mail that you can respond to with a couple clicks of your mouse. Don't delay, sign up today!

Hybla Valley Opportunities and Call to Action!

by *John Allens, MVG Member*
johnallens@mindspring.com

I wanted to share a number of concerns I have about the environment in my neighborhood, Hybla Valley, which is located midway between Alexandria and Mt. Vernon.

I have six main concerns:

- in spite of numerous plans to develop the economic infrastructure of the Route 1 corridor no comprehensive plan has been enacted to protect green areas from

development and designate areas as parks;

- Extend the Yellow Metrorail line, which now terminates at Huntington, down Route 1

- Expand Huntley Meadows park by purchasing the property between South Meadows condominiums and Huntley Meadows park and encourage Fairfax County

to dredge its drainage canal (also referred to as a drainage easement) running along the property and behind the Mt. Vernon Plaza Shopping Center and South Valley Shopping Center

- Stop Safeway from building a grocery store at the intersection of Arlington Road and Route 1

- Designate the green area at the intersection of Dart and Route 1 permanently as a park and develop the empty lot at the intersection of Boswell and Route 1 as a park

- Purchase a glass-strewn and pothole-ridden alley between Fordson Road and Route 1 (between the 7-11 at 7330 Richmond Highway and Mt. Vernon Honda at 7434 Richmond Highway) and currently blocked off from traffic on either side by yellow bollards to protect pedestrians from cars using the alley as a shortcut, then turn it into a small "greenway" for pedestrians and kids to play in

Unfortunately for Hybla Valley and the Route 1 corridor, a unified vision for the area is lacking because it defines the boundary between different districts in Fairfax County: an unfortunate political designation that transforms it into a line of division. Dana Kauffman, the Lee District member of the Fairfax County board of supervisors, nevertheless has taken a real interest in the corridor, promoting its development and calling for better bus service and the eventual extension of the Metrorail down Route 1. The extension of Metrorail down Route 1 would accomplish numerous objectives: encourage smart growth, provide more equitable mass transit, ease traffic on one of the main commuting arteries in the area, eventually link the proposed station at Ft. Belvoir with Huntington, stimulate greater use of mass transit in an extremely congested area. The extension of the Yellow Line needs to be a priority sooner rather than later. Other board members with jurisdiction along the highway such as Mt. Vernon District Supervisor Gerry Hyland have been far less

proactive. Kauffman can only do so much since his jurisdiction is only west of the highway, and was scaled back in the recent redistricting. Because it is politically defined as a boundary rather than an area unto itself, long-term plans for Hybla Valley and the Route 1 corridor have been piecemeal. Hybla Valley's environment up to this point has barely been on the map; it's high time that the community's environmental health be front and center. A playing field in front of the Mt. Vernon Apartments at the intersection of Dart and Route 1 currently is a visually appealing expanse of green along the highway, a place where kids meet to play soccer. Now, a sign from Safeway advertises the imminent replacement of this field with yet another grocery store and presumably, asphalt parking lot. This is not going to do anything to improve the looks of the Hybla Valley area. Kauffman's response to a letter of mine asking him to help stop this project, pointed out that he represents the other side of the highway. He also commented that the best way to encourage adult video stores to move away (another concern of mine) is to "push forward the revitalization projects that are popping up throughout the highway corridor. If we can improve the image of the highway by redeveloping and making those types of uses feel out of place, we can encourage them to be squeezed out of the area." I strongly disagree. His response does not address the needless loss of yet another green space: a field that kids will no longer be able to use. An e-mail sent to Hyland expressing similar concerns received a reply thanking me for communicating with the office.

The land at Dart and Route 1, is known as "North Hill," Kauffman informed me. It is just south of St. Louis Catholic Church and was the site of an old trailer park that was moved from the site years ago and had been planned for residential development. Now, after a citizen task force along the highway (highlighting priority properties for green space) recommended the site be made a public park, its future looks brighter. Kauffman also is working on purchasing property along Pole Road for ballfields and creating a new urban park off Lockheed..

Why not think bigger? Long-term, more green spaces will raise the value of our area and make it healthier. I believe all of my proposals could help accomplish this, and am bringing them, as well as Kauffman's responses to MVG's attention to help ensure that the Sierra Club and its membership are active in this community's future. In addition, the stretch of land between South Meadows, and Huntley Meadows park currently is filled with wildlife: deer, red foxes and cranes live there. Residential development has

been proposed but I recently heard from a South Meadows board member that development has been delayed because the land did not meet soil tests. It looks like there is a real window of opportunity here that could be seized to keep this land *green*. As for the drainage canal (or easement) running along this property's edge and along the private property between South Meadows and Huntley Meadows, it is regularly jam packed with old shopping carts from adjacent shopping centers, creating a real environmental nuisance. Repeated calls by various property owners to the county have not resulted in the canal being regularly cleaned.

Yes, green spaces can provide a refuge for homeless people. And some homeless people in this private property between Huntley Meadows and South Meadows have littered quite a bit as well. Surely the Sierra Club has encountered this problem elsewhere in the country. How has it been addressed elsewhere? Simply getting out and cleaning up some of the debris left behind by the homeless people?

More innovative thinking could transform Hybla Valley in a positive way that could be a "win-win" for everyone: smart growth and preserved, even expanded, green spaces.

The Mt. Vernon bike trail is the result of two Alexandria neighbors taking the initiative and following up on their idea. The same could be true for Hybla Valley. A little vision, planning...and energy, is all that we need. ☺

The material contained herein represents the views of the author and not necessarily those of the MVG Sierra Club.

DESIGN AND LAYOUT OF *THE SIERRAN*

DESIGN SENSE

PRINT AND ELECTRONIC MARKETING SOLUTIONS

4013 NORTH 18TH ROAD

ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA

22207-3005

VOICE: 703.527.4690

FAX: 703.807.0512

EMAIL: LHOMMECOM2@AOL.COM

The Gift of Trees

by **Andrea Ceisler**, Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District



*One generation plants the trees;
another gets the shade.*

- Chinese proverb

In urban regions around the world, improving the health and vigor of urban forests can yield great economic and environmental benefits for both today and tomorrow. From the street trees in front of a downtown store to the large trees found in many parks and greenways, the urban forest is a critical part of the landscape.

Trees buffer the “wind tunnels” created by buildings and streets, while adding a living element to the concrete, steel, and glass. Trees shade streets, sidewalks, and buildings to reduce the impact of the sun’s rays and the buildup of urban heat. Trees release water back into the air, working as natural air conditioning systems. Trees reduce noise pollution by absorbing unpleasant sounds such as those generated from traffic and construction. Trees in the community filter dirt and chemicals from the air.

In addition to improving air quality, trees are valuable in protecting water quality. Society’s existence depends on fresh, clean water from rivers, streams and groundwater. Unfortunately, unhealthy conditions are common in America’s streams and rivers today due in part to the loss of forest cover.

Stream management has changed in recent years, and restoring stream integrity is now one of the nation’s highest conservation priorities. Formerly, people thought that the way to manage streams was to rework them into more

efficient systems to hold and deliver water according to people’s needs and desires. Rivers were dammed and great levees were built to contain floods. Some rivers and streams were

cleared and straightened so water could run through faster, and vegetation was often removed to allow farming and development up to the streams’ edges. Where those efforts were accomplished, the landscape was greatly altered, as people built communities, irrigated deserts, and drained wetlands in areas now protected from flooding. Where engineering projects failed, however, the alterations often served to make flooding even worse.

Today’s thinking about stream management focuses on understanding the variable nature of a watershed and its streams and designing management approaches that build upon and take advantage of the stream’s inherent tendencies. Much of what needs to be done to restore the stream’s integrity needs to happen on the land around it.

The riparian area—that area alongside the stream that connects the stream banks to the surrounding uplands—is often the most important management area. If it can be maintained in permanent grass or forest cover, the protection afforded the stream increases significantly. Riparian areas play several roles, but none are more crucial than the trapping of soil and filtering of nutrients as they wash down from the uplands. Caught in the riparian zone, nutrients nourish the vegetation instead of adding to stream pollution. Where trees grow on stream banks, strong root systems help to provide stability and prevent the bank from washing away. Less runoff and

erosion allows more recharging of the groundwater supply. Shade keeps water temperatures cool to hold more dissolved oxygen, which is important for maintaining freshwater fish. Leaves fall into the water, where they provide food for aquatic insects and other organisms. Even when a stream bank tree dies and falls into the stream, it forms an important part of the stream structure as shelter and a source of food for stream insects, fish and other animals. Thus, the trees become an important part of maintaining healthy stream communities that help maintain clean water.

Forested riparian buffers are also critical wildlife habitat areas. Because of their nearness to water, these buffers are the most biologically rich areas on any landscape. Maintaining a healthy forest cover, avoiding soil damage by careful machine operations, and controlled use of any chemicals can ensure that we have highly productive forests, clean water, and abundant wildlife.

Good land managers can maintain the quality of streams and rivers and, where those streams and rivers have been damaged in the past, restore watershed function. Trees planted to help maintain stream stability can create a long-term, environmental benefit for everyone who uses water.

The gifts of trees are many. Birds and insects will live and nest in its branches. Its roots will penetrate deeply into the soil, building soil structure and quality as they die and re-grow. The tree’s trunk will thicken with wood that represents tons of carbon dioxide that has been taken out of the air and placed into “carbon storage,” where it is doing its part against the threat of global climate change.

The rain will hit its leaves and trickle gently to the ground to nourish the tree and the other plant life under it, instead of pounding on unprotected soil to create erosion and pollution. The air that moves through its branches will be purified as pollutants are trapped on leaf surfaces, chemicals are absorbed, and carbon dioxide is taken in to provide a basic building block for the tree’s growth.

Give the generations that follow you the gift of trees. ☺

In April, look for the film, **Ansel Adams**, to air on PBS’s **The American Experience** series Sunday evenings at 9. The documentary, directed by Ric Burns and co-produced by Steeplechase Films and Sierra Club Productions, will explore Adam’s life and work and examine his artistic and environmental legacy. The national broadcast date is **April 21**, but check your local listings at www.pbs.org.

De-regulation, continued from page 1

ing health standards for air quality, particularly ozone. The emissions of greatest concern are nitrogen oxides (NOx) and volatile organic compounds (VOCs), both pollutants that form ozone. Ozone has been identified by the US EPA as a major health threat causing damage to lung tissue, and is considered responsible for the growing number of asthma cases throughout the United States.

While emphasizing the use of natural gas as a fuel source, a comparatively low-pollution fuel, the power industry admits that most plants have the potential to operate on fuel oil (a dirtier fuel source with a more consumptive use of water).

Past experience indicates oil will be the likely fuel in 40-70 percent of operations for new plants. In any event, most plants represent a net increase in local and regional emissions.

The US EPA and state environmental regulators are not considering cumulative air quality impacts. Unfortunately, interpretation of federal and state environmental regulations allow some of these major emissions sources to be permitted as minor sources. In Virginia, the Department of Environmental Quality testified that each proposed plant is considered independently, not requiring cumulative impact analysis of multiple sites. This approach results in the conclusion that for regulatory purposes, the

total emissions of five plants in the same vicinity could be zero.

Impacts on water supplies and quality: These power plants are designed to operate using either natural gas or a fuel oil/water mixture to fire the combustion turbines. Most plants require millions of gallons of water when operating with a fuel oil/water mixture. Some of these plants receive their water from wells. According to experts, power plant water consumption can have detrimental impacts on neighboring landowners' wells and possible drawdown effects on nearby reservoirs, streams and ponds. Drought conditions impact drinking water aquifers, compounding the problem.

continued next page

MVG Member Interest Survey

Please take 10 minutes to rate the following list of items on the space provided using a scale of 0 to 3, which is defined below:

0: Not particularly important to me personally;

1: Important but not a priority;

2: Very important, clearly a priority but not something I would not be willing to invest a substantive amount of time pursuing;

3: Extremely important to me personally and something that I will commit substantive time to pursuing.

At the conclusion of the survey, please provide any comments on the options along with any suggestions for other goals and objectives. For every item rated Three (3), please provide a rough estimate of the number of hours a year that you would be willing to commit to that item.

1. Preservation of presently unprotected and relatively large tracts of land for open space, for parkland, especially in Fairfax and Prince William counties, where such preservation opportunities exist.
2. Preservation of relatively small tracts in current residential and commercial areas to provide open space, greenspace and park opportunities, e.g., a soccer field about to be lost to the construction of another grocery store.
3. Maintenance and upgrade of protected open space and parkland, e.g., improving and expanding hiking trails, tree planting along the GW Parkway, etc.
4. Cleanup of area protected space, parklands, streams and rivers.
5. Expand the local network of bike trails.
6. Protect stream habitats and improving local water quality in streams draining into the Potomac
7. Protect remaining green habitat along the Potomac River from development.
8. Work with local jurisdictions to encourage water conservation
9. Improve (or at least halt the decline) of air quality in the metropolitan area, including preventing large power plants from being located at the edge of the metropolitan area
10. Expand the Metro rail system, including development of a circumferential Purple Line
11. Encourage high-density development near public transportation corridors, especially Metro rail.
12. Widen the beltway, I-66 and other heavily traveled arteries to reduce air pollution and gridlock.
13. Oppose widening of the beltway, I-66 and other heavily traveled arteries to reduce sprawl.
14. Obtain support for short and medium distance rail services.
15. Increase urban tree cover by advocating street-side tree plantings.

Comments / Suggestions _____

Please return your completed survey to MVG ExCom member:

John R. Powers

PO Box 25034

Alexandria, VA 22313

Thanks! We appreciate your participation.

Sprawl, continued from page 3

Our wetlands - nature's water filters - are also under attack. Each year more than 100,000 acres of wetlands are destroyed around the country, in large part to build sprawling new developments. Since wetlands can remove up to 90 percent of the pollutants in water, wetlands destruction leads directly to polluted water.

SMART GROWTH...

A Better Way to Live

Smart growth is well-planned development that channels growth into existing areas, provides good transportation choices, builds fast, clean, efficient public transportation systems, and preserves farmland and open space. Through better planning, smart growth reduces dependence on cars and alleviates congestion, thus reducing sprawl created burdens to our budgets and our environment.

Smart growth makes it possible to design homes and neighborhoods so that they are closer to jobs, shopping and transit. In combination with improved transit systems, more pedestrian and bicycle friendly design gives residents multi-modal transportation choices that significantly reduce emissions of NOx, VOC, and CO₂ into the air we all breathe.

By creating walkable, mix-use (jobs, shopping, schools, homes close to each other) communities, smart growth also allows towns to develop a strong sense of place, which many suburbs that isolate housing, retail centers and job sites fail to provide.

BENEFITS OF SMART GROWTH

- Placing new development within already built areas reduces VMT by as much as 61% and CO₂ emissions by 50%.
- Planning pedestrian-friendly development along with good, clean reliable transit systems would save the average household over \$2000 a year on transportation and save 40 million tons of

carbon emissions.

• If 25 million new units of housing built in the US over the next 25 years are placed in a more space efficient way, 3 million acres of land would be preserved., 3,000 fewer new miles of roads would be needed, and at least \$250 million would be saved.

• In another 50 years, implementing smart growth measures would save 200 million metric tons of carbon per year.

For more information about sprawl in the Metro DC region, visit www.sierraclub.org/dc/sprawl or contact neha.bhatt@sierraclub.org 703-312-0533.

To explore a virtual smart growth neighborhood visit www.national-geographic.com/earthpulse/sprawl

The Mount Vernon Sierran invites members to participate by submitting articles, photos and first person experiences for publication. Also, if you're willing to attend and report on relevant area events and political meetings, contact the Group Chair for assignments. The submission deadline for each issue is the first Tuesday of the month prior to publication.

**NEXT ISSUE: SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2002
DEADLINE IS AUGUST15TH.**

"ORGANIC" OPPORTUNITY

We are a group of people with a common belief in organic foods and a natural lifestyle. From the comfort of our homes, we distribute a line of natural and wild-crafted whole food supplements that consumers love. If you just want to stay healthy, or are looking for a part-time approach to creating income, you'll find we make good sense!

FREE info: 1-888-722-1426

De-regulation, continued from page 7

Influence on decision-makers and inconsistency with planning: In Virginia, power plants are being constructed and proposed for county-defined rural agricultural zones. Industrialization is inconsistent with most comprehensive plans. County officials have rushed to permit the power plants based on the revenue they will provide. However, it has been shown that up to 50 percent of that revenue could be lost in State funds to education and the County could be stuck for other expenses, like necessary emergency response vehicles for on-site accidents. Abbreviated public hearings, joint public hearings (Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors), and special use permits have become the means for rushing through permitting jobs. Local officials are rendering approval without considering the expert testimony of environmental consultants. Unusual joint public hearings have effectively eliminated one public hearing, cutting in half the number of days for public comment. Special use permitting is in effect de facto spot zoning, creating industrial property in the middle of agricultural and residentially zoned lands.

Conclusion: *The goal of deregulation should be the siting of a new generation of cleaner power plants, sited at existing power plant locations (coal-fired) or brownfield sites located close to the demand. There should be an overall reduction of emissions, with the natural gas technologies shutting down the older, dirtier coal plants. Unfortunately, there are no guarantees that coal technology will be replaced under a trumped up energy crisis. Therefore, we are left with the increased risk of an exacerbation of Virginia's overall air quality woes and the continued loss of prime agricultural, historic, and ecologically sensitive lands throughout the Commonwealth. ☺*

NON-Profit
Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Merrifield, Virginia
22116
Permit # 316

SIERRAN
THE MOUNT VERNON GROUP OF THE SIERRA CLUB
5405 Barrister Lane
Alexandria, Virginia 22304