



THE MOUNT VERNON

SIERRAN

The Newsletter of the Mount Vernon Group of the Virginia Chapter of the Sierra Club February / March 2003

Upcoming Events/Meetings/Actions

GROUP MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS. MVG membership meetings are held at the National Rural Electrical Cooperation Association (NRECA) Building, 4301 Wilson Blvd, Ballston, Arlington, within walking distance of the Ballston metro or free underground parking is available in the building. (Take a parking ticket when entering the garage. When you leave, write "Sierra Club meeting" on back of the ticket and hand it to the attendant.) The meetings run from 7:30 pm to 9:00 pm with refreshments provided starting around 7:00 pm. The meetings are open to the public at no charge, and reservations are not required to attend. Please bring a guest. For more information on these meetings, contact Terri Lamb, Programs Chair, at terri.lamb@cox.net, or 703/538-6065.

February 11, Tuesday, 7:30 to 9:00 p.m.
TOPIC: UPDATE ON SPRAWL IN METRO DC.

LAURA OLSEN OF THE COALITION FOR SMARTER GROWTH WILL PRESENT A "BLUEPRINT FOR A BETTER REGION," an integrated land use and transportation approach to regional growth and traffic problems developed by the Coalition for Smarter Growth, the Piedmont Environmental Council, and the Surface Transportation Policy Project. The Blueprint encourages re-investment in existing inner-suburban and urban communities and the development of mixed-use communities centered at existing transit stations and historic town centers in surrounding counties.

March 11, Tuesday, 7:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.
TOPIC: TREE STEWARDS.

JUST IN TIME FOR SPRING! Here's your chance for an introduction to basic tree growth and development, tree planting and maintenance, tree identification, pruning, and other topics presented by Arlington/Alexandria Tree Stewards. The Tree Stewards are trained volunteer citizens dedicated to the planting and protection of trees and the growth of the "urban forest" in Arlington and Alexandria. In an effort to get the message of

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The Basics on Metro Washington's Air Quality

by *Melanie Mayock*

Every Washington-area resident who has been through at least one summer here is familiar with the "Code Red" air quality alerts on local TV and radio, urging children and the elderly to stay indoors because of air pollution. Clearly, something's wrong with our air quality, but what's causing it, how bad is it, and what can we do to clean it up? Here is a basic primer on the air quality situation in Washington.

WHAT IS SMOG?

Washington's major air pollution problem is with ground-level ozone, also known as smog. (There are several other pollutants regulated by the Clean Air Act, such as Sulfur Dioxide, particulates, etc., but ozone is the biggest problem in the Washington area.) Ground-level ozone is formed when two pollutants, Nitro-

gen Oxides (NOx) and Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) combine on a hot, sunny day.

Health Impacts of Smog Ground-level ozone is a severe lung irritant, and can cause shortness of breath, chest pain, wheezing, and coughing. Prolonged exposure can cause reductions in lung function, inflammation of the lung lining, and respiratory discomfort. A 1999 study by Abt Associates found that ozone in the Washington area contributed to 130,000 asthma attacks and 2,400 hospital visits in a typical summer.

Sources of ozone pollution in Metro DC. EPA breaks down the many sources of NOx and VOCs air pollution into four categories: mobile (transportation); stationary (power plants and factories); area (small industries

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The Final Word on the 2002 Silent Auction

by *Cheryl Zebrowski, Fundraising Chair*

THE NASTY WEATHER did not deter members of the Mount Vernon Group of the Sierra Club from enjoying a festive evening at the annual Holiday Silent Auction on December 11, 2002. Leslie and Andrew Nicholls kept hors d'oeuvres, tempting entrees, and a variety of desserts pouring from the kitchen as local Sierrans gathered for a drink and a delicious dinner. And on top of this,

everyone went home with great deals, knowing that they were supporting their local Sierra Club group, where the grassroots' work really gets done!

Bidding was fierce on several of the 55 donated items, especially for the private cooking lesson donated by Robyn Webb, a beach house vacation donated by Andrea Walker, and original artwork donated by the group's own artists, Peggy Parker and Mark Van Bergh. Over

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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'Homme dieu (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'Homme dieu 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: <http://virginia.sierraclub.org/mvg>. 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.

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Notes from The Chair

by Pat Soriano



JUST FOUR DAYS INTO THE NEW YEAR, your volunteer group leaders on the Executive Committee, or ExCom, met early on a Saturday morning for our annual planning meeting. First, we welcomed three re-elected members to the ExCom: Andrew Nicholls, Terri Lamb, and Bruce Parker. As per our by-laws, we also voted to appoint Faith Teitelbaum to the ExCom to fill a vacant position for a full two-year term. (Faith has been an active member in New Jersey, and on the Sustainable Development Committee at the national level.) So, at nine members, the Mount Vernon Group ExCom is complete since as you will recall our ballot in December had only three candidates for four open positions.

We then selected our Group positions, most of which stayed the same as you can see from the leadership listing on this page. One key change is that Pat Eddington, who was appointed to the ExCom last year to fill a vacancy, agreed to be our Political Chair, which has been open since Shannon Sullivan moved away late last year. We are very happy to welcome Pat as Political Chair due to his interest and experience in this important aspect of our Group activities.

The majority of the meeting was devoted to selecting our 2003-05 priorities. After much discussion, the Mount Vernon Group ExCom adopted the following priorities for the 2003-05 period, two of which are conservation goals and one is a process goal:

- Improving the air quality in the metro area.
- Promoting comprehensive transportation planning that includes smarter land use policies and more funding of transit, bike, and pedestrian facilities (especially since the defeat of the sales tax referendum last fall).
- Expanding our base of committed and dedicated volunteer activists.

Our next step is to develop a campaign of select goals to achieve these priorities. We would welcome and appreciate your involvement in this process at our next ExCom meeting on February 6th. (See the calendar section for information on the time and place of this meeting.) If you can't make the meet-

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EPA Recognizes Arlington's "Smart Growth"

by John Koch, Membership Chair

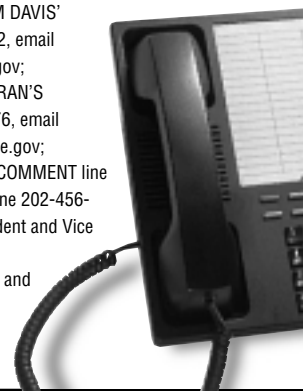
Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Christie Todd Whitman recently announced the four winners of the first EPA National Awards for Smart Growth Achievement at the National Building Museum in Washington, D.C. Awards were given for four distinct achievements: "Built Projects," Town of Breckenridge, Colorado Planning Department; "Policies and Regulations," City/County Association of Governments of San Mateo County, California; "Community Outreach and Education," Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs; and, of greatest significance locally, "Overall Excellence in Smart Growth," the Rosslyn-Ballston Metro Corridor of Arlington County, Virginia. Arlington will receive \$15,000 in EPA consulting services to promote smart growth as part of the award.

In presenting the award, Administrator Whitman explained that growth along the five stops of the Rosslyn-Ballston Corridor has been smart because Arlington's "approach in this corridor focuses growth within a walking radius of the stations, and preserves established neighborhoods and natural areas. The transit successes and corresponding environmental performance are impressive.

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Important Contact Information

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AQPAC Slowly and With Quiet Persistence Helps to Improve Air Quality

by Julie Crenshaw, MVG Air Quality Chair

While you have heard and read little about me, I do most of my air quality work at the regional level with a committee called AQPAC.

The Air Quality Public Advisory Committee (AQPAC) represents Metro Washington (e.g., Southern Maryland, the District of Columbia, and Northern Virginia) at the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG). A regional organization of Washington area local governments founded in 1957, COG is an independent, nonprofit association composed of 17 local governments surrounding our nation's capital, plus area members of the Maryland and Virginia legislatures, the U.S. Senate, and the U.S. House of Representatives.

Our (AQPAC) mission is to review and discuss air quality planning, policies and programs, assist with local education about air quality activities, assist obtaining ideas about air quality from the Metro Washington public, and recommend and advise about all of the above to the Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee (MWAQC). The MWAQC is the regional group of politicians who make decisions on air quality for this region in compliance with federal and state law.

The AQPAC also provides information on occasion to the Transportation Planning Board (TPB), not by mission, but by choice. TPB is another committee at COG that makes decisions on regional transportation. Two years ago AQPAC was notified of the new Joint Technical Working Group (JTWG) formed to look at transportation to include already

identified components of transportation planning and to discuss other necessary components. [AQPAC has offered ideas on air quality, land use planning, travel demand and the forms of travel, clustering of employment centers, water quality protection from impervious surface impacts, and how these will enhance communities and improve regional mobility.

The AQPAC membership has organization or individual representation from four areas: Environment and Health, Business and Industry, Community and Civic, and Education and Science. Currently we have fourteen members. As an active member of the AQPAC since 1993, representing Sierra Club as an organization in the Environment and Health area, I begin my third year as AQPAC chair in 2003.

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2002 Silent Auction

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\$2,000 was raised to support the group's environmental efforts.

The support of both merchants and individuals was invaluable, whether they donated items or time. During a year when so many companies cut – or even eliminated – their donations, we are even more appreciative of those who stepped forward to provide auction items and make this event possible. All our members join in thanking you.

Listed below are the companies and individuals who donated goods, services or time to make this event a success. The members of the Mount Vernon Group of the Sierra Club thank you for your support.

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English Ivy, A Noxious Weed!

by Paul Kovenock and Dean Amel

Legislation declaring English ivy a noxious weed is being sponsored by Senator Mary-Margaret Whipple in the current Virginia General Assembly. This action follows a unanimous vote last month by the Arlington County Board to include an English ivy quarantine in its 2003 legislative package.

Responding to the decline of Arlington's tree canopy, this anti-ivy vine proposal is part of a larger "Tree Initiative" led by 2002 Arlington County Board Chair, Chris Zimmerman. Approved last year were: Arlington's first Tree Preservation Ordinance, new site plan tree planting standards, and new budgetary support for citizen tree planting, invasive exotic plant removal work, and an Urban Forest Master Plan. Arlington's Parks division joined the efforts of volunteer ivy pullers last year to begin to battle the English ivy that threatens the lives of trees and shrubs and wildlife in Arlington's few remaining remnants of natural woodlands.

If approved in Richmond, the "English ivy as noxious weed" listing could result in a quarantine on the sale and transport of English ivy.

The following is the language of Arlington County's proposal:

"Declare English ivy a Noxious Weed. The National Park Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service report that English ivy is one of the most abundant and insidious invasive plants, as it threatens all vegetation levels of forested and open areas, growing along the ground and into the tree canopy. On the ground, English ivy prevents growth of seedlings and herbs while also reducing tree and plant vigor by competing for water and soil nutrients. English ivy affects trees by blocking sunlight and adding weight to branches, which makes trees more susceptible to breakage during storms. English ivy has also been confirmed as a reservoir for bacterial leaf scorch, a harmful plant pathogen that affects a wide variety of native and ornamental trees. Reports in Arlington indicate that English ivy appears to increase the susceptibility of trees to fungal disease and bark damage by holding moisture next to the bark of trees.

"Proposal: Listing English ivy as a noxious weed in Virginia could result in a quarantine and regulations governing sale and transport of English ivy that will provide Arlington long term savings in costs associated with tree loss/replacement and loss/replacement of native plants. Arlington County seeks legislation that declares English ivy a noxious plant and provides the Board and the Commissioner of the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, respectively, the authority to regulate English ivy as a noxious weed." ☺

Where Are We Growing?

by Patrick G. Eddington, Political Chair

Unless land use and development patterns are changed, Virginians face a future of still greater sprawl, pollution, and resultant degradation of quality of life, according to a Southern Environmental Law Center (SELC) monograph entitled "*Where Are We Growing?*"

The statistics it offers are both telling and frightening:

- Absent the implementation of reasoned, "smart growth" initiatives, by the year 2040, Virginia will develop over 2.7 million additional acres of land, an area slightly larger than all of the land currently developed in Virginia.
- Road construction has outpaced population growth statewide, with the Washington area witnessing a 31% population increase between 1982 and 2000, while freeway lane miles increased more than 53% in the same period.
- The radical increase in single-occupant vehicle traffic in the Washington metro area has garnered the nation's capital the dubious distinction of being in violation of the Clean Air Act for excessive ground-level ozone pollution, a major public health menace.
- Major national treasures—including the Shenandoah National Park and historic Civil War battlefields—are facing the twin threats of damage from pollution and destruction from runaway development.

On the bright side, the SELC monograph notes that a May 2001 poll commissioned by the League of Conservation Voters Education Fund found that nearly 9 out of 10 Virginia voters rank environmental issues as an important factor when deciding how to vote. Effective means of containing sprawl and preserv-

ing farmland and other green space do exist and have been effectively implemented. The SELC monograph lauds Arlington County as "...a national leader in the effort to revamp its zoning provisions and to offer incentives to create mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented development surrounding transit stations. Today, virtually all of the office space and about two-thirds of the county's retail space is within walking distance of transit. As a result, the county enjoys the highest rates of transit ridership in the Commonwealth. The state currently provides few incentives to encourage development of transit-oriented communities."

Therein lays the challenge before every concerned citizen in Northern Virginia. Club members must demand that the Governor and the General Assembly create the necessary incentives to maximize "smart growth" and pollution-reducing initiatives to protect public health and to get people, not traffic, moving. "*Where Are We Growing?*" provides a well-reasoned blueprint for achieving that vision. You can view the full report at <http://www.southernenvironment.org>. ☺

Measuring Sprawl and Its Impact

by John Koch, ExCom Member

Smart Growth America, a nationwide coalition of over 80 national and regional organizations devoted to improving development planning, recently published the most comprehensive study ever undertaken of the characteristics and consequences of urban sprawl in the United States. "Measuring Sprawl and Its Impact," authored by faculty members of Cornell and Rutgers Universities, ranks sprawl in U.S. metropolitan areas based on four factors: residential density; strength of activity centers and "down town" areas; the mix of homes, jobs and services; and accessibility of street network. The study defined sprawl as "the process in which the spread of development across the landscape outpaces population growth."

Of the twenty-five largest metropolitan areas in the United States, the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area of nearly six million people was determined to be the fifth most sprawling after Atlanta, Dallas-Ft. Worth, Detroit and Tampa. New York City, San Francisco and Boston were calculated to be the least sprawling

of the largest 25. The study highlighted the fact that sprawl is not only limited to metropolitan areas in the sunbelt such as Charlotte, Houston, Sacramento, and Phoenix that have recently experienced explosive population growth. Large cities in the east and midwest such as Kansas City, Cleveland, St. Louis and Philadelphia are also among the most sprawling because so many people have abandoned an urban core for life in the distant suburbs of the same metropolitan area.

The authors analyzed 22 measurable components. The landscape sprawl creates has four primary dimensions: a widely dispersed population; rigidly separated homes, shops and workplaces; a network of roads marked by huge blocks and poor access; and a lack of well-defined, thriving activity centers. Because of these characteristics, sprawl produces a lack of transportation choices, a relative uniformity of housing options and a difficulty of going anywhere on foot.

The most obvious measure of sprawl is determining the number of people residing per square mile of space devoted entirely to residential use. Obviously, large amounts of space per person tends to equal sprawl but it is not the only determining factor. Among other indicators, the study also measured the percentage of population living more than ten miles from a central business district. The further people live from their work the more likely they are to drive those distances at least twice daily. Perhaps not quite so obviously, the more likely these people are to have no alternative but to drive to work because public transportation is very expensive to provide in sprawling communities. In addition, the distances between homes and employment are so great that walking or bicycling are prohibitive even in those rare situations in which space or facilities have been devoted to non-vehicular forms of transportation. People tend not to walk in the absence of sidewalks and crosswalks.

The authors measured the percentage of residents that live within a block of any business or public institution. Again, the smaller the percentage of such residents, the more dependent those people are on their cars. The study also determined the size of an average city block and compared that distance to blocks provided in residential communities. The authors concluded that the longer the average block, the less likely residents are to walk.

The Washington, D.C., area fared particu-

larly poorly in the measurements revealing the neighborhood mix of homes, shops and offices. These sorts of jobs / housing and shopping / housing imbalances are clearly seen in the more distant, recently built suburbs and mean that workers cannot find housing close to their place of work, even if they want to, because it simply doesn't exist. Every trip a household member takes, whether it is simply to buy a quart of milk, pick up dry cleaning, go to church, return a library book or locate a place for outdoor recreation, has to be made by automobile. It seems rather odd, but due to the separation of homes from the other integral elements of a community, some people have to drive to a fitness center to walk on a treadmill if they want to get any exercise. Because of this time and effort requirement, other studies have associated obesity with sprawl because residents of areas afflicted with sprawl are less likely to have the time and facilities for exercise.

The study found that the three primary consequences of sprawl are:

1) people spend far more of their life in their automobiles than if they lived in less sprawling areas. The daily distance driven per person both for passengers and drivers is 10 miles more in the most sprawling communities than the least.

2) sprawl produces more traffic fatalities. The 10 most sprawling metro areas average 36 traffic deaths for every 100,000 people, while the least sprawling average 23 deaths for the same population.

3) areas characterized as most sprawl-

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ing have worse air than their more compact counterparts. Ozone pollution levels are as much as 41 parts per billion higher in the most sprawling areas causing these areas to have far more "code red" days than normal, not to mention higher incidences of respiratory afflictions such as asthma.

Interestingly, areas of greatest sprawl were not characterized by less vehicle congestion and traffic-related delay. Because areas of greatest sprawl tend to also have fewer alternatives in travel routes and modes, congestion and delay were often worse than in more compact communities where more people can take public transportation or walk or bike.

The authors made the following policy recommendations aimed at reducing the amount of time people spend in their vehicles, reducing the number of automobile deaths

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AQPAC, continued

such as bakeries and printer, and consumer products); and non-road engine (construction equipment, marine engines, etc.).

The Air Pollution-Sprawl Connection.


Cars and trucks produce about 35% of NOx emissions in the area. Although cars have gotten much cleaner over the past two decades (due to national regulations), vehicles are still a major source of pollution, for several reasons. First, we're driving more often and more miles than we used to, because of sprawl development. (In fact, the number of miles driven in our region has increased at nearly three times the rate of population growth over the past twenty years.) Second, we're buying more SUVs, which are less fuel-efficient and so emit more pollutants per mile.

Air Quality Status of Metro Washington: Under the 1990 amendments to the Clean Air Act (signed into law by President George Bush the first), the Washington area was designated a "serious" nonattainment area for ozone, and given a deadline of 1999 for meeting the federal ozone standard. The states of Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia were directed to write a plan for meeting the ozone standard through the Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee (MWAQC).

However, 1999 came and went, with Washington still in violation of ozone standards. EPA then decided to give the region a six-year extension of the clean air deadline, to 2005. This would have been allowed under the Clean Air Act, if the EPA had also downgraded DC's air quality status, to "severe" ozone nonattainment (which requires stricter control measures). But EPA required no additional action to improve air quality.

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SALES AND LEASING

Sierra Club brought suit against EPA for this action, and a federal court ruled in July, 2002 that EPA's deadline extension was illegal, and that other aspects of the region's clean air plan were inadequate. EPA is now in the process of re-classifying the Washington area to a "severe" nonattainment area, while MWAQC is drafting a new, stricter clean air plan.

Improving Our Air Quality. Cleaning up our air requires action at both the local and national level. Unfortunately, we are unlikely to get a lot of help in this area from the Bush Administration or our new Congress. In a major blow to public health, the EPA recently moved to exempt power plants from requirements to install new anti-pollution equipment when they modernize. Furthermore, although requiring SUVs to get better fuel mileage would greatly help improve air quality, Congress blocked attempts to raise fuel economy standards last session.

At the local level, a major way to improve our air quality is through smart growth poli-

cies. As long as housing and jobs continue to sprawl further out, people will have to drive longer distances to get to work. Furthermore, many new developments (and many older developments) are accessible only by car. If local and state governments start controlling sprawl, putting more development at Metro stops, and investing in alternative transportation, we can get more people out of their cars and improve our air quality.

Another important way to improve our air quality is through better regulation of power plants by the state of Virginia. For more information on this issue, contact Pamela Irwin, Sierra Club Virginia Chapter Clean Air Coordinator, at (804) 225-9113.

Melanie Mayock is Conservation Organizer for Sierra Club's Metro DC Challenge to Sprawl Campaign and works out of the Sierra Club Mid-Atlantic Office in Arlington, VA. She can be reached at (703) 312-0533x110 and melanie.mayock@sierraclub.org.

EPA Award, continued from page 2

Metro ridership doubled in the corridor between 1991 and 2002. Nearly 50% of corridor residents use transit to commute. By one estimate, if the development in the two square mile corridor were built at typical suburban densities, it would consume 14 square miles of open space."

The term "smart growth" does not have a simple, generally accepted definition. Even the most environmentally irresponsible developer will insist his development has merit, is in fact "smart." As the term is used, certain characteristics have become integral factors to the term smart growth. Several of these characteristics were identified by Administrator Whitman in her recognition of the Rosslyn-Ballston Corridor and help give meaning to the term. Ms. Whitman indicated that Arlington's smart growth was achieved because of a comprehensive plan as opposed to the allowing random, haphazard growth. Along the recognized Metro corridor, development has been based on a General Land Use Plan that from the very beginning involved partnerships of citizens and businesses in nearly all public and private development and policy decisions. Substantial development in this corridor has occurred while the County has managed to retain the integral mixed-use

communities that have experienced the growth. Rosslyn, Court House, Clarendon, Virginia Square and Ballston are neighborhoods that have their own unique attributes and allow people to live, work, or go to school and shop within a several square block area. Perhaps most importantly, Arlington's plan was based on considerations other than mobility by automobile. Unlike almost all the areas in the Washington, D.C. metro area that have experienced significant development in the past twenty years, people along the Orange Line in Arlington are not compelled to resort to several lengthy daily automobile trips simply to achieve the necessities of life. Arlington has maintained the network of sidewalks and crosswalks that allow people to move safely and efficiently about by foot and has worked hard to implement bicycle trails in the County. Arlington has also taken steps to preserve public open space and maintain its trees.

The Washington, D.C. area was recently ranked the fifth most sprawling in the nation. Recent studies have shown that automobile congestion in the area is second only to that occurring in Los Angeles. Obviously, one factor has produced the other. Although it may seem counter intuiti-

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**Upcoming
Events/Meetings/Actions**
continued from page 1

proper tree care to the "grassroots," Tree Stewards have developed a speakers' bureau to make presentations at community groups such as the Sierra Club. Perhaps they can entice you to join one of their numerous volunteer projects including inventorying trees in historic Fort Ward Park in Alexandria and the removal of invasive English ivy and other vegetation from mature trees in Arlington parks. We look forward to seeing you!

April 8, Tuesday, 7:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.
TOPIC: PRINCE WILLIAM FOREST. Details will be forthcoming in our next newsletter concerning ExCom Meetings. We often get calls from members asking for our assistance in addressing an issue in their neighborhoods, involving perhaps a new mega-store development or to protect a local park. If you have an issue that you would like the group to address, we invite you to attend the Group ExCom meetings to discuss your issue with us, your volunteer group leaders. While we can't promise you that we will take up your issue (due to limitations on resources, time, and our own priorities), we are of course only as strong as our volunteer base. With your time and involvement, we can be more potent forces in northern Virginia to address the fundamental environmental issues in our community. For more information about these meetings, contact Pat Soriano, Chair, at 703/671-3129, or by email at psoriano79@hotmail.com.

Excon Meeting – February 6, Thursday, 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.
In addition to discussing routine group business, we will be further developing our conservation strategy to address the priorities we selected at our January planning meeting: air quality and transportation planning. (See the "Notes from the Chair article" for additional information.) Rob Swennes is the host for this meeting. If you wish to attend, please call Rob to RSVP and for directions at 703/532-6101 or by email at robert.swennes@hotmail.com.

Excon Meeting – March 27, Thursday, 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.
Pat Eddington is the host for this meeting. If you wish to attend, please call Pat to RSVP and for directions at 703/535-8778 or by email at eddington@mindspring.com.

Excom Meeting – May 1, Thursday, 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.
Andrew Nicholls is the host for this meeting. If you wish to attend, please call Andrew to

RSVP and for directions at 703/536-5047, or by email at aknicholls@cox.net

Group Conservation/Political Meetings
For more information about these meetings, including dates/times of the upcoming meetings, please contact Andrew Nicholls, Vice Chair and Conservation Chair, at 703/536-5047 or by email at aknicholls@cox.net, or Pat Eddington, Political Chair, at 703/535-8778 or by email at eddington@mindspring.com.

Letter Writing Nights
For more information about these events, including dates/times of upcoming events, please contact Andrew Nicholls, Vice Chair and Conservation Chair, at aknicholls@cox.net.

February 20, Thursday, 6:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. SCRIBIN' SOCIAL. New members or newly active members are especially invited to participate in the first of several after-work conservation socials that will be held this year – continuing a now-established Mount Vernon Group tradition. We will write a few short letters and postcards urging protection of our air quality, sound transportation planning, and preservation of wilderness areas (sample letter "templates" will be provided and you choose which issues interest you). Dinner and spirits provided. If you want to help this overloaded planet, but cannot seem to find the time, it doesn't get much easier than this! To RSVP and for directions, call Andrew at 703/536-5047, or by email at aknicholls@cox.net.

Group Outings
The Metropolitan Washington Regional Outings Program (MWROP) at <http://mwrop.org/index.html> provides a wide range of mostly day hikes in our area led by experienced hike leaders. Instead of these traditional hikes, the Mount Vernon Group intermittently offers various group outings such as bird walks or nearby kayaking. For information on offerings, if not listed here, please see our website at <http://virginia.sierraclub.org/mvgo/> or contact Terri Lamb, Socials Chair, at terri.lamb@cox.net or 703/538-6065.

NEWSLETTER LABELING
March 20, Thursday, 6:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.
NEW LOCATION: Home of Gordon Johnston and Karen Helbrecht in Alexandria. Join us for some pizza, refreshments, and about 4000 labels! If you have the evening free, this is your opportunity for some easy volunteering on behalf of the group while also enjoying some friendly discussions on wide-ranging topics with your fellow members. For more information, contact John Koch, Volunteer Coordinator, 703/684-6849, jandrkoach@comcast.net, or Pat Soriano, Chair, at 703/671-3129, psoriano79@hotmail.com. To RSVP and directions, please call Gordon at 703/548-5784.

Also, mark your calendars! Following are the dates for the 2 other newsletter labeling parties for 2003: August 21, 2003, Thursday, 6:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. and October 23, 2003, Thursday, 6:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. Both parties will be hosted by Gordon and Karen as noted above. ☺

AQPAC continued from page 3

AQPAC does have an informational page on the Council of Governments website at <http://www.mwco.org/dep/air/aqpac.htm> where you may view our membership in the four areas mentioned above; our minutes which include discussions of air quality, health, and legislation; our published documents; and our links to useful air quality sites. I encourage you to have a look. ☺

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ADDRESS CHANGES

Member address changes: Sierra Club Member Services, P.O. Box 52968, Boulder, CO 80328-2968; send old and new addresses and a Sierra label; phone (415)977-5653; e-mail address.changes@sierraclub.org

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tive, sprawl creates congestion because it creates the necessity for more and longer automobile trips and, due to the greater expense, lessens the likelihood of transportation alternatives to driving. The air in our region is becoming increasingly unhealthy. Every day more people move to our region. While everybody is entitled to share the "American Dream" of a good job and a nice home, increasingly it is becoming apparent that unless growth is smart, that is, comparable to that accomplished by Arlington County, the health and welfare of everybody in our area will be detrimentally affected. ☺

Notes from the Chair, from page 2

ing, do continue to look for other opportunities in upcoming newsletters or on our website, <http://virginia.sierraclub.org/mvg/> to be involved in this process – and the implementation phases. And, feel free to contact me for more information about this and other MVG activities at psoriano79@hotmail.com. ☺

MVG Web site address changed to:
<http://virginia.sierraclub.org/mvg/>

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.

Next issue:

APRIL / MAY / JUNE 2003

Submission Deadline is March 10th.

Silent Auction, from page 3

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Cheryl and Joe Zebrowski

THANK YOU

We wish to thank the Silent Auction committee: Cheryl Zebrowski, chair; Terri Lamb, Anna Ellis, Andrew Nicholls, and Leslie Nicholls. We also would like to thank Bill L'Hommedieu, DesignSense, 703/527-4690, for producing the Auction Program graphics and layout. ☺

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Design and layout of *The Sierran*

Measuring Sprawl, continued from page 5

and injuries, and lowering the levels of hazardous air pollution: **1) Federal, state and local governments should reinvest in neglected communities and promote more housing opportunities in central areas.** Programs such as state and local low-income housing tax credits and the federal Community Reinvestment Act should be augmented. **2) Abandoned properties should be rehabilitated.** States such as New Jersey, Maryland and Rhode Island have successfully adopted rehabilitation as opposed to funding new construction. **3) New development should be encouraged in already built up areas.** Rather than expend public funds on the construction of new roads and other infrastructure, already existing facilities should be improved and maintained. **4) Efforts should be taken to create and support mixed-use centers of activity.** By concentrating mixed-income housing, shops and offices around train stations and bus stops and rezoning to permit multifamily housing in and around jobs rich "edge cities" such as Tysons Corner and Springfield, communities don't turn into little more than parking lots, become less dependent on automobile use and suffer far less congestion and air pollution. **5) Growth management strategies should be supported.** Two strategies that have proven successful in less sprawling areas and, according to the authors of the study, should be attempted more widely are, first, establishing a regional growth framework and managing it by an elected regional council responsive to local governments and, second, strategically preserving prime farmland, sensitive environmental lands, forests and other green space while planning for development in designated areas. ☺

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