



THE MOUNT VERNON

SIERRAN

The Newsletter of the Mount Vernon Group of the Virginia Chapter of the Sierra Club September / October 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., in Arlington, within walking distance of the Ballston metro. Free underground parking is available in the building. (Just take a parking ticket when you enter the garage, and when you leave, write "Sierra Club meeting" on back of the ticket continued on page 7

"It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year"

Well, yes, the song does *typically* refer to the holiday season. But this year it might just be foreshadowing the excitement of the upcoming Mount Vernon Group Silent Auction and Holiday Party. Though December 9th may sound far away, we have to start planning now to make this annual celebration and fundraiser a success.

The Silent Auction raises much-needed funds for local group activities. It's the biggest single fundraiser of the year, and we need everyone's help to make it a success. In order to celebrate with your fellow Sierrans, volunteers just like you dedicate many of hours of work collecting donations and organizing the event. The support of all members is appreciated. What can you do to help out, you ask?

- **Ask businesses in your neighborhood** and those you frequent to donate to the event. A packet of information from Silent Auction Chairperson, Cheryl Zebrowski can help make this task easier.
- **Own your own business?** Have a special talent? Perform services? Donate your special skills.
- **Have extra tickets to a game or performance?** Think about donating them.
- **Received a gift that's not quite you?** Re-gift it to the silent auction (New items only please)
- **Like to cook?** We always need help planning, preparing, and cooking the dinner.
- **Help organize the event** - join the Silent Auction Committee. Our first meeting will be in September.

If you have any questions or are interested in volunteering, just contact: Cheryl Zebrowski jpzebrowski@worldnet.att.net 703-824-3676 ☺

Air Quality and Transportation Planning: Priority #1 for the Mount Vernon Group

by **Andrew Nicholls**, Conservation Chair
aknicholls@cox.net

EARLIER IN THE YEAR, MOUNT VERNON GROUP DETERMINED that improving the air quality of the Washington Metro area is our number one environmental priority for the next several years, and that the solution lies in intelligent transportation planning, including using our existing infrastructure more efficiently. Since determining this overarching priority, MVG's leadership and many energetic volunteers have been working to make this general goal much more specific and measurable. We have been working to translate a general goal into very specific objectives that we can conduct focused campaigns around.

Why should the Mount Vernon Group be focusing on air quality?

Because our air quality is terrible and because it affects human health, including the health of children, bike riders, joggers, and asthmatics.

As of June 23, 2003, the Environmental Protection Agency characterizes the metropolitan Washington area, including northern Virginia, as being in "severe" violation of the Clean Air Act air quality standards for ground level ozone.

Ozone, while critical in the upper atmosphere to protect us from ultraviolet rays, is another thing at ground level if you are breathing it. Ozone, "smog", is formed when emissions of nitrogen oxides and volatile organic compounds combine under strong sunlight and in hot weather and is a summer season phenomenon. Major sources of ozone include motor vehicle exhaust, industrial emissions, gasoline vapors, and chemical solvents (including from dry cleaners). Also important are emissions from fossil-fired power plants when winds carry them hundreds of miles from their original sources, such as the Ohio Valley's coal plants. In the DC metro area, about 35% of the ozone problem is attributable to cars, SUVs, and trucks. This is the largest and most direct source of ozone emissions on which we have direct influence.

As evidence of the problem, last summer (from late June to mid September) the Washington Metro area had 9 Code Red days, and 19 Code Orange days.# The Code Red designation means that the air is "unhealthy," while Orange denotes that the air is "unhealthy for sensitive groups." (Code Red essentially means, "unhealthy for everyone.") So, in 2000, there were 28 days when

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Fall Political Preview

by **Patrick G. Eddington**, Political Chair

In Northern Virginia, elected officials are constantly faced with difficult choices, and this year is no different. As we have noted in previous newsletters, Arlington County is a leader in transit oriented development. Currently at the helm is Board Chairman Paul Ferguson—an undisputed environmental leader among northern Virginia politicians. Just this year, Ferguson helped lead the Arlington County Board to make the difficult decision of rejecting a costly, traffic and pollution-inducing baseball stadium in Arlington. He took a lot of heat from the pro-sta-

dium, development-oriented big business community, and Club members should show their appreciation of Paul's leadership, by emailing him at countyboard@co.arlington.va.us. Be sure to also let your friend's and neighbors in Arlington know of Paul's leadership on environmental issues both in Arlington and throughout the region. Remember: our friends in government need to know that we appreciate their positive actions in favor of the environment!

In Fairfax County, candidates running for office in the Board of Supervisors this fall are facing questions yet again on the continuing growth and related traffic challenges in our region, which too often come down to continued on page 8

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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: <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



GRASSROOTS ACTION MAKES THE SIERRA CLUB WHAT IT IS TODAY: the premier national organization working for and winning environmental reforms in our communities, our nation, and our planet. Here in northern Virginia, Group activists have been busy this summer developing a conservation campaign centered on the biggest issues in our region: transportation and air quality. We need your grassroots involvement to realize the goals of this campaign. By combining hard work and fun to achieve our goals, Mount Vernon Group members write letters, pass out brochures at metro stops, testify at public hearings, contact and work with local officials, serve on local environmental boards, create displays for information booths, mail action alerts, write articles for our newsletter, and solicit donations for our annual fundraiser, the year-end Silent Auction. With your help, we could more of this and a lot more more – including reaching out to other like-minded groups in our community – to get out our fundamental message that smart transportation planning and development is inextricably linked to improving the quality of the air we breathe.

This newsletter is packed full of specific volunteer opportunities and ideas, so please contact us at mountvernon@verizon.net or call me at 703-671-3129 to let us know how you'd like to get involved. This fall, we want to give you the opportunity to do something good for the environment. And after doing good, join your new friends in some good times as each activity generally includes a meal or other social activity. We want you to join in the fun and excitement. If you have never done anything with the Sierra Club in northern Virginia, then this is your best

April Potomac River Cleanup in Arlington.



opportunity to try us out. The volunteers leading the Mount Vernon Group are dedicated to making this world a better place. Join us this Fall and I think you will agree with me that you will never meet a better group of people and just possibly make some friends for life. ☺

Volunteers Needed.

Do you have editing skills and a desire to become a bit more active with the Club? Now is your chance: the MVG Sierra Club is looking for a volunteer to review and edit articles submitted to our newsletter, and work with our excellent and very talented layout editor. The Mount Vernon Sierran is published four times per year, and we need a volunteer with a keen editorial eye and an interest if not knowledge of the environment. If you are interested in helping us out with this important position, please contact Pat Soriano, Chair, at patemail@verizon.net or 703/671-3129.

Do you have strong organizational skills that are yearning to be put to the test? If so, the MVG Sierra Club is looking for a volunteer to coordinate our newsletter labelings. Four times a year, a devoted group of experienced and new volunteers get together for pizza, beverages, great conversation, and 4500 tabs and address labels. We are in search of a volunteer that will lead us in this challenging enterprise, ordering the labels from San Francisco, dividing up the labels by zip code, ensuring that tabbed and labeled newsletters are carefully boxed in USPS boxes, and delivering the newsletters for bulk mail postage at the Merrifield Post Office. Sound exciting? Want to learn more? If so, please contact George Lamb, current Newsletter Labeling Coordinator, at 703-538-6065, or gwl@cox.net. ☺

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

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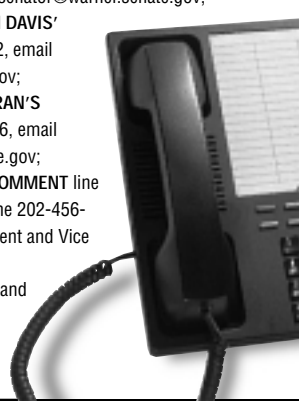
2461, email the President and Vice

President by going to

www.whitehouse.gov and

following the email

prompts.



Proposed Maintenance And Monitoring Staff For Fairfax County Parks

by Rick Rio, Sierra Club member

ON APRIL 9, 2003, THE SIERRA CLUB PRESENTED a proposal to the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors regarding the issue of maintenance of natural areas in Fairfax County Parks. Park maintenance services are devoted exclusively to the maintenance of recreational facilities; currently the entire maintenance budget of about \$12,000,000 is designated exclusively for facilities maintenance. None of the budget is used for the protection of natural areas in the Parks. Park maintenance staff has stated that it does not intend to perform any maintenance in natural areas in the future, despite our repeated requests that they do so. The elimination of the Park Police Force in the early 1990's resulted in an enforcement vacuum within the Park system which aggravated the problem.

Serious environmental and law enforcement problems exist within our County Parks. Erosion from Parklands into Chesapeake Bay Watershed streams have caused many to be declared "impaired" streams by the State Department of Environmental Quality. Parks have experienced an increase in crime, vandalism, motorized vehicles in parks, dumping, illegal construction of trails, draining of wetlands, unauthorized commercial activities in Parks, even the cutting of trees in Parks for firewood by private individuals. Park maintenance staff is failing to stop these activities despite years of protests.

Given current budget realities, Sierra Club recognizes the impracticality of requesting new appropriations at this time. Instead, we requested that the County specifically designate 10% of the existing Park Authority maintenance budget for the maintenance and monitoring of natural areas within Parks. Given the sometimes poor record of the general maintenance staff, we believe that responsibility for the maintenance of natural areas should be given to the Office of Natural Resource Protection. We request that the earmarked funds be used to create a Park maintenance and monitoring staff, to do light maintenance of natural areas; to monitor and enforce, along with the Police, Park regulations; and to coordinate with the County Police when illegal activities are observed. This staff would serve as the eyes and ears of the Police in the Parks, and would create an "official presence" in natural areas which is presently lacking.

We propose a minimum of one full-time and one part-time position in each of the 9 smaller maintenance districts, and 2 full-time and 2 part-time positions in the larger districts. These could easily be staffed and equipped with the requested funds

Support of Sierra Club members (in Fairfax County) for this proposal is critical to pressure the Board of Supervisors and the Park Authority Board to designate these funds.

TAKE ACTION: Please contact Ms. Winnie Shapiro, Chairperson of the Park Authority Board, with your comments. A brief statement that you support the Sierra Club's proposal to create maintenance and monitoring staff for the natural areas in County Parks is sufficient. E-mail is parkmail@fairfaxcountry.va.us. (Please address your letter directly to Ms. Shapiro.) You may also write her directly at Fairfax County Park Authority, 12055 Government Cntr. Pkwy. Suite 927, Fairfax, Virginia 22035-1118; FAX (703)324-3989. Please send a copy to your local Fairfax County District supervisor. For further information, call Rick Rio at (703)280-1524. ☺

The Mystery of MetroBus, and How To Solve It

by *Melanie Mayock*, Mid-Atlantic Sierra Club Conservation and Metro DC Challenge to Sprawl Organizer



"THERE ARE THREE BUSES THAT GO BY MY HOUSE. I have no idea where they come from, or where they go to." —Dan Tangherlini, DC Transportation Director

Have you ever seen a bus stop and wondered exactly where the bus went? Have you ever thought about taking the bus to get somewhere, but gave up because it was too hard to figure out which bus to take?

Many local residents and visitors fall prey to the MetroBus Mystery and don't use the bus because they don't know where the bus goes, which route to take, or where to find bus information.

Many of us don't know that Metro produces bus system maps, which show all the routes in the region and can be very helpful for planning a trip. Unfortunately, they are not widely available, and Metro charges \$1.50 for them. Furthermore, many bus stops lack route numbers, maps, and schedule information. Metro recently conducted a survey of non-bus riders and found that top reason for not taking the bus was a lack of information.

Sierra Club, led by DC activist and bus-rider Dennis Jaffe, has recently begun a campaign to improve bus information and "Get MetroBus on the Map." We believe that better bus information is the simplest, easiest way to increase transit ridership, thereby improving transportation choices for local residents and reducing pollution.

Get MetroBus on the Map:

1. Provide free printed bus system maps. Stop charging \$1.50; secure sponsors for some ads to defray the cost. Widely distribute and promote them.

2. Display bus system maps: at bus shelters; on buses and trains; inside and near bus and train stations; and at highly visible locations.

3. Improve information at bus stops. Every bus stop should provide route numbers, destinations, and schedules.

4. Integrate our transit system. Place bus and rail information in both systems; enlist Metro staff to inform riders about bus and rail connections; and get local businesses and groups to post the relevant bus and train routes to events and offices.

Since receiving Sierra Club's proposal in October of 2002, Metro has added an online bus system map at www.WMATA.com/MetroBus/Maps/DC.pdf and agreed to distribute 200,000 free bus system maps in 2004. We need to continue this change in our mindset to provide the public with a more useful, truly integrated transit system.

Take Action:

1. Endorse: To demonstrate public support for better bus information, we are looking for individuals and organizations to endorse the Get MetroBus on the Map proposal. To sign on, or for more information, check: www.sierraclub.org/dc/sprawl.

2. Raise Awareness: Increasing awareness about the bus system is something we can all help with. For example, if you're organizing a party, meeting or event, consider providing directions by bus. Or ask your workplace or apartment/condo building management to post local bus schedules in the lobby. Bus schedules and route information can be found on the metro website, www.wmata.com, or by calling Metro at (202) 237-6000. Bus information is also available at the commuter stores in Northern Virginia — check www.commuterpage.com for store locations and hours.

3. Volunteer: To get involved with Sierra Club's campaign for better bus information, contact Sierra Club volunteer Cathy Carter, send cathymail@yahoo.com, 703.549.0852. ☺

Call for ExCom Candidates

Are you interested in becoming more involved in the Sierra Club? Then consider running for the MVG Executive Committee. Interested candidates should contact Pat Soriano, Chair, at 703-671-3129 or patemail@verizon.net.

Making a Difference in Westgrove Park

by Tony Morris, Friends of Westgrove Park

IN APRIL OF 2002, THE ARBORIST RESPONSIBLE for the 600 trees of the 26 acre River Towers

Condominium Association advised the Landscape and Grounds Committee that the Fairfax County Park Authority (FCPA) would soon be starting their master plan process for Westgrove Park, an adjoining county park off Fort Hunt Road, just south of Alexandria. He advised them that the FCPA had a wide range of options for the park, and that if they wanted to influence the decision they better jump in with both feet.

Three members of the River Towers community: Bill Detweiler, chair of the Landscape and Grounds Committee; Kelly Fitzpatrick, a naturalist who drove the effort to implement a bluebird trail and secure the National Wildlife Federation's Backyard Wildlife Habitat certification for River Towers; and Tony Morris, President of their Board of Directors and environmental activist, formed a three-member committee to consider the options.

Westgrove Park, while only 21 acres, is a pristine, undeveloped natural area of standing forest and meadowlands that sits just up the hill from River Towers and Dyke Marsh Wildlife Preserve, the unique 380 acre fresh water tidal marsh and swamp forest that is part of the George Washington Memorial Parkway. What happens in Westgrove Park in the way of development impacts everything down-stream from Dyke Marsh, the Potomac River and ultimately the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

We three quickly learned that the Fairfax County Park Authority's Master Plan process would take a comprehensive approach to evaluating the property, looking at park and recreation needs for the local area, and, most importantly, seeking the input of the local community. It also became apparent that to influence the outcome in Westgrove Park they needed to expand their group to include as many of the adjoining neighborhood associations and surrounding environmental and government organizations as possible. And that is just what they have done.

Armed with a vision that Westgrove Park should be developed as a "protected natural area," not unlike the successful Fairfax County Huntley Meadows Park, and used as a "wildlife and environmental educational opportunity" for Fairfax County residents of all ages, they met with leaders of a number of local community associations, environmental groups and government representatives. Much to their pleasure they found that their vision was shared by many concerned associations and citizens. In the process, their core group was expanded to include Jeb Byrne of the Friends of Dyke

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Flexcar and Zipcar: Urban Driving Freedom in the 21st Century

by Rob Swennes, MVG Secretary

MILLIONS HAVE LONG LAMENTED THEIR LOVE-HATE RELATIONSHIP with their personal automobiles. The advantages of owning our own cars are many, but we pay a high price not only in terms of personal costs per year but also costs to society. Many of these negatives have now been overcome in metropolitan areas like Washington, D.C. by shifting to car sharing.

Just like personal residential costs can be substantially reduced by sharing a dwelling with one or more other people, so too can vehicle costs. Two national car-sharing companies are now competing in the Washington area to put you behind the wheel of a sleek little car that you can use with a minimum of inconvenience and at only a small fraction of the cost of owning your own car (or owning a second car). Most adult drivers are aware that the costs of owning and operating a personal car range from a minimum of \$3000 per year up to \$8000 or more annually. This can take a hefty bite out of a person's post-tax income. But for many people living in or near the Nation's capital, this annual out-of-pocket cost can be reduced up to 90% (or more) by use of a shared vehicle network.

Flexcar (<http://www.flexcar.com/>) and Zipcar (<http://www.zipcar.com/>) offer competing systems of car sharing in the local area. Both are carefully integrated with the Metrorail system. Most of their vehicles are parked within a block or two of key Metro stations. For those who take Metro on a daily basis, a membership in one of these car-share clubs could mean that you have a nearby car available for your use while at work on those infrequent occasions when you need it. Or becoming a Flexcar or Zipcar member could mean that you could now take Metro rather than driving each day because you now have a vehicle available for you near work whenever you may need it.

There are subtle differences between the two car-share programs that you would want to consider in selecting one. From my review of their web sites, the Zipcar per-hour rates appear to be slightly higher than those of Flexcar, but Zipcar has the advantage of allowing car reservation to be arranged on line. Flexcar intends to move to on-line reservation in the near future but requires dial-up reservation of a vehicle at present. Both companies have a host of additional charges that may apply under special circumstances, but these charges are primarily intended to ensure that the club's customers act in a responsible manner when utilizing the club's

vehicles. Both companies are making broad use of internet technology to ensure the quality, speed and convenience of the car-share experience.

Both Flexcar and Zipcar have enjoyed substantial membership growth in the two years that they have been operational in the area. Each has approximately 2200- 2500 members signed up to use their vehicles.

There has to be a sense of power and privilege felt when a Flexcar or Zipcar driver exits at a particular busy Metrorail station and locates his reserved vehicle in a premier parking spot close to the station. It's at times like these that a shared car user realizes that he or she has another advantage over the personally-owned vehicle owner who must creep in heavy traffic to a parking garage blocks away. For savvy urban residents, a shared car membership offers a new and important facet to the individual's travel options, which include walking, biking, and taxi hire.

If you are a candidate for membership in Flexcar or Zipcar, after you join, keep a tally of the rental costs of the vehicles used over the first year as compared to the cost of paying for and upkeep on the one or more personally owned automobiles. You'll be surprised at the difference. With annual savings of \$2000 or more, you can plan an extra vacation or save more money toward the down payment on a home. If you are living in an apartment complex with very restricted tenant parking, that is no longer a big issue. Indeed, you may find the growing car-sharing systems so convenient and economical that you can sell your current privately-owned vehicle and sublet your garage parking space to someone else.

Clearly, by living in close proximity to Washington-area rail mass transit and by judicious use of an urban car-sharing network, you can make the region's multi-modal transportation network work well for you, save dollars, and minimize the environmental impact of your transportation choices. The choices are there for us to realize. ☺

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:
NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2003
Submission Deadline is October 5th.**

An Inspiring Weekend

by Faith Teitelbaum, MVG ExCom Member

Ever drive over a low water bridge or walk across a river on a swinging bridge? Have you seen the Shenandoah Mountains or the North Fork of the Shenandoah River lately? Did you ever sit in a room full of people and actually feel the energy being generated? Those were some of my experiences this



weekend when I had the opportunity to attend a Sierra Club Conservation Governance Committee (CGC) quarterly meeting. I giggled to myself when I thought that I was in the presence of some of the most dynamic environmental activist leaders in the country. Larry Fahn, our new Sierra Club president, and Chuck McGrady, our Sierra Club Vice President and Chair of the CGC, were both there along with two new members of the Board of Directors and our Conservation Director Bruce Hamilton. The other members of the committee are long time club leaders.



This two-day meeting was held to review how the Club's conservation campaigns are going and to talk about the health of the environment during these difficult Bush administration years. One of the main themes was how so much of the legislation that the environmental community has worked so hard to establish; clean air, clean water, forest protection are being dismantled by the present administration. I read a funny article the other day entitled, "Bush Does Away with the Environment" and I thought it was real for a second. We talked about the vehicles to use to save our environment; voter education, more grassroots participation and greater Club alignment between National committees, group, and Chapters.

By the way, just what does the CGC do?

It functions as the oversight for all conservation priority campaigns (Clean Water, End Commercial Logging, Stop Sprawl and Wild lands) and all other non-priority conservation campaigns. The appointed members of the committee act as liaisons to several entities in the Club:

1. The Strategy Teams (Sustainable Planet Strategy Team (SPST), Environmental Quality Strat-

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Sustainable Food Choices

Source: Grassroots Newsletter

JUST AS THERE IS AN ETHIC to growing food there is also an ethic to eating. As we continue to be more aware of what we are eating, we must also think about how we eat. The ritual of coming together to break bread was once the basis of community; yet with the onset of instant dinners and television, fewer and fewer meals are eaten together; more often than not we now consume our food alone and 'on the run.' This disrespects food and us. Let us reclaim the family and community meal where values are taught and senses are heightened.

—Alice Waters of Chez Panisse

Bonnie Lane Webber, founder of grass-roots, spoke at the CGC meeting (see "An Inspiring Weekend") about Sustainable Food Choices. After receiving her Masters in Nutrition from Columbia Teachers College in 1978, Bonnie did nutrition counseling and ran a school lunch program, cooking food "from scratch" with as many ingredients as possible bought from local farmers' markets. Eight years ago she helped to start the Carnegie Hill/Yorkville CSA. The Sierra Club defines sustainable consumption as the use of goods and services that satisfy basic needs and improve quality of life while minimizing the usage of irreplaceable natural resources and the by-products of toxic materials, waste and pollution.

Bonnie loves food, but wants us to consciously think about our food choices in terms of sustainability. We must realize the effect that our buying purchases make. Large food companies do. They spend as much money to influence our food choices as is spent to influence tobacco sales.

- Eat the greatest variety of the least processed food and eat less of it.

- Buy organic food or food that is grown under IPM (Integrated Pest Management) but, equally important, buy food that is grown locally. Food starts to deteriorate nutritionally as soon as it is picked, and food that is shipped great distances (as is much of our organic food) produces 'transportation pollution.' And be aware that some food from overseas is often grown with pesticides, fungicides, and fertilizers that are not allowed in the U.S. Shop at farmers' markets. Join a CSA. Check www.JustFood.org.

- Eat less meat. Buy grass-fed, free range, or "local" meat.

- Eat fish that is sustainable. Carry the Audubon Seafood Wallet card (http://www.oceanjourney.org/safe_seafood/) with you and consult it when you go to restaurants or grocery stores in order to make selections from healthy, thriving sources. Avoid farm raised salmon. And do not buy bill fish. Their stocks are dangerously depleted.

- Or become a vegetarian. Eating lower on the food chain conserves habitats and avoids pollution problems. Raising grain and vegetables for human consumption requires far less acreage than is required for raising cattle. This leaves more habitat for wild animals. Also, environmental harm caused by CAFOs (Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations) is enormous. The untreated animal waste is typically dumped into 'lagoons' which can overflow. In 1997 heavy rains in NC caused the waste pits from huge pig farms to overflow, resulting in the death of 450,000 fish. Animals in the CAFOs need antibiotics to keep them healthy in their confined areas. In fact, 70% of all antibiotics in the US are used for this purpose.

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YES! I want to join the Sierra Club and help safeguard our nation's precious environmental heritage!

New member's name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____ If this is a gift, giver's name _____

Membership category _____ Check enclosed Charge my VISA Mastercard

Exp. date ____/____/____ Cardholder name _____

Card number _____ Signature _____

Membership Categories	Indvid	Joint
Introductory	\$25	—
Regular	39	\$47
Supporting	75	100
Contributing	150	175
Life	1000	1250
Senior	24	32
Student	24	32
Limited	24	32

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Air Quality, from page 1

the air was far from ideal. And since there were 105 days from June 1 to Sept 13 (when the summer ozone season ended) that means that on one-quarter of all summer days, the air was Code Orange or Code Red. For the capital of the most powerful nation on Earth, this is not exemplary environmental performance.

The key word here is "unhealthy." As the American Lung Association states:

"The evidence about the damaging health effects of ozone continues to mount... Research on the effects of prolonged exposure to relatively low levels of ozone has found reductions in lung function, inflammation of the lung lining and breathing discomfort... A new study increases evidence that ozone negatively affects the growth of lung function in children. The four-year study followed 1,600 southern California children enrolled as fourth graders in 1996. These researchers found that the children's exposure to ozone was correlated with reduced growth in peak flow rate—the ability to push air out of the lungs, which is an indicator of growth in lung function."

Four groups particularly suffer when ground-level ozone levels rise, and that is inherent to the Code Yellow definition of "unhealthy for sensitive groups." According to EPA, there are four such groups#:

- **Children.** Active children are the group at highest risk from ozone exposure. Such children often spend a large part of their summer vacation outdoors, engaged in vigorous activities either in their neighborhood or at summer camp. Children are also more likely to have asthma or other respiratory illnesses.

- **Adults who are active outdoors.** Healthy adults of all ages who exercise or work vigorously outdoors are considered a "sensitive group" because they have a higher level of exposure to ozone than people who are less active outdoors.

- **People with respiratory diseases,** such as asthma. There is no evidence that ozone causes

asthma or other chronic respiratory disease, but these diseases do make the lungs more vulnerable to the effects of ozone.

- **People with unusual susceptibility to ozone.** Scientists don't yet know why, but some healthy people are simply more sensitive to ozone than others. These individuals may experience more health effects from ozone exposure than the average person.

With all of this as context, our longer-term "vision" for air quality is actually simple to state: The Mount Group envisions the metropolitan area to be in attainment with the Clean Air Act standards for ground level ozone in the next ten to fifteen years. # We envision the end of Code Red and Code Orange days altogether. We would no longer hear radio and TV announcements that "today will be a Code Red day; children are advised to stay indoors." We would all be able to breathe our summer air, freely, without concern.

How do we get there? We have to start somewhere, and we have to recognize that this is a long-term challenge that will require DC, Virginia, and Maryland to work together on intelligent transportation planning that makes air quality better, not worse. Without offering mass transit and other alternatives to commuters, our air quality will only worsen as this area expands in population. But the magnitude of the challenge should not daunt us, either, and is no excuse for inaction.

The Mount Vernon Group developed one-long term "big" campaign goal and four shorter-term campaign goals to help get us to such a future:

- **LONG-TERM GOAL:** Support significant increases in funding for our Metrorail system, both to increase the capacity of the existing system (more trains) and to expand it (a circumferential "Purple" line and extensions to Tysons Corner).

SHORT-TERM GOALS:

- Convert the entire non-emergency vehicle fleet owned by the City of Alexandria to alternative fuel/low emission vehicles by the year 2010.
- Encourage telecommuting, teleworking, and proximate commuting by employers in the metropolitan area.
- Getting Metrobus route information and brochures more easily to the public and available in more places. (See the article in this newsletter on this campaign by Melanie Mayock.)
- Eliminate excessive particulate emissions from school (and other) buses by ending unnecessary idling.

Given current restrictive budget realities at the local and state level, we had a definite rationale for these choices. We wanted some goals that were relatively low or no-cost to realize and that utilized our existing public transportation systems and roads more efficiently and with less environmental impact. Goals 2, 3 and 4 above fit these criteria, for example. If people are more informed about what Metrobus can do, then more of us can

avail ourselves of this alternative. If more employers offer "virtual" working options, then fewer of us will need to fire up our cars to drive in to work. And turning the ignition off on buses when they are not moving does not cost money; in fact, it saves on fuel costs.

We also wanted one goal with a strong educational component, one that helps teach the connection between air quality and human health, and that is why we selected Goal 4, with its focus on school buses. Although I have focused on ozone until now, particulates from diesel emissions are also another serious health hazard. Particulates are of concern, again to quote the EPA, because "Batteries of scientific studies have linked particulate matter, especially fine particles (alone or in combination with other air pollutants), with a series of significant health problems, including: premature death; respiratory related hospital admissions and emergency room visits; aggravated asthma; decreased lung function that can be experienced as shortness of breath; and work and school absences."# As with ozone, children are a high-risk group in part because children breathe 50% more air per pound of body weight than adults.

Finally, in selecting our goals, we strove for some jurisdictional resolution. Many of our group members live in Arlington and Alexandria. While most of Arlington's new ART buses operate on natural gas, which is a much less polluting fuel than diesel, Alexandria has not followed suit. Our goal is to get the City of Alexandria to convert its fleet of buses and other non-emergency city vehicles to low-emission and alternative fueled vehicles by 2010.

The long-term goal, the goal of expanding Metro, obviously crosses jurisdictions. But our particular campaign focus will be Fairfax County, because Fairfax is where Metro expansion is needed most. Also, Fairfax County has nearly one million residents, while Arlington County has about 200,000 and the City of Alexandria around 130,000. Expanding Metro will obviously take significant capital, and without the very active support of the Fairfax Board of Supervisors, this will not happen.

Although the critical summer season is ending, it's always a good time to make air quality, human health and the expansion of Metrorail part of the local dialog. No matter where you live, tell your officials you think our air quality is a serious issue, you expect them to act to improve it, and you expect them to support Metrorail expansions.

In subsequent newsletters, the Mount Vernon Group will "translate" each of these goals into very specific campaigns, identifying the core message, the audiences we wish to reach, and the targets we need to influence. (For Goal 2, this has been done; see The Mystery of MetroBus, and How To Solve It in this issue,)

If you would like to help, contact either Andrew (aknicholls@cox.net; 703/536-5047) or Melanie (melanie.mayock@sierraclub.org; 703-312-0533, ext 110) ☺

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SALES AND LEASING

Upcoming Events/Meetings/Actions

continued from page 1

and hand it to the attendant.) The meetings run from 7:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. with refreshments provided starting around 7:00 p.m. 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.

September 9, Tuesday, 7:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.
TOPIC: FRIENDS OF PRINCE WILLIAM FOREST.

Located in Prince William County, Virginia, Prince William Forest Park is the largest natural area in the metro Washington, D.C., region at over 17,000 acres. The park was created in August 1933, and today has one of the few remaining Piedmont forest ecosystems and protects the Quantico Creek watershed. This sanctuary for native plants and animals, offers a variety of recreational opportunities, including wildlife viewing, 37 miles of hiking trails and 21 miles of bicycle accessible roads and trails. At this meeting, Mike Walker, President of the Friends of Prince William Forest Park (www.fpwfr.org) will talk about the key goals of the Friends of Prince William Forest Park namely: preserving and enhancing the Park and its natural and cultural resources, monitoring any actions that affect the Park and its ecosystem, serving as a forum for citizens in decisions affecting the Park, and helping the community "explore" the Park and its natural and cultural resources.

October 14, Tuesday, 7:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.
TOPIC: FALL POLITICAL UPDATE

Patrick Eddington, Political Chair, will provide an overview of local political situation ending with a Q & A session.

November 11, Tuesday, 7:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.
TOPIC: GILDED AGE SERVICE TRIP, ADIRONDACK PARK, NEW YORK Pat Soriano will do a presentation on her September 2003 Sierra Club service trip creating and repairing trails and bridges at Great Camp Sagamore. The camp dates from the 1890s and was built as a private family resort in 1897 by W.W. Durant on a secluded lake in the center of a 1,526-acre estate. This epitome of the Gilded Age lifestyle and wealth was sold to Alfred G. Vanderbilt in 1901; thereafter, it was enhanced and enjoyed by his family until 1954. Today, 27 original buildings remain preserved on the site, the only Great Camp open to the public. It is operated by a non-profit corporation dedicated to its stewardship and its use for educational and interpretative purposes through tours and residential programs.

December 9, Tuesday, 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm. Silent Auction and Holiday Party at the Shirlington Community Center in Arlington. All members, friends and family are welcome to attend. If you would be interested in learning more or assisting in our Silent Auction, please contact Cheryl Zebrowski, Silent Auction

Chair at jpzebrowski@worldnet.att.com.

OTHER GROUP MEETINGS, EVENTS, AND OUTINGS

The **MVG Conservation Committee meets the third Thursday of every month** at the Sierra Club Mid-Atlantic Office, at 200 N. Glebe Street, Suite 905, in Arlington. For more information, including meeting agenda information and to RSVP, please contact Andrew Nicholls, Conservation Chair, at aknicholls@cox.net, 703/536-5047, or Melanie Mayock, Conservation Organizer, at Melanie.mayock@sierraclub.org.

Political Committee Meeting, Saturday, September 20, 3 p.m. to 5 p.m.

Location: 2900 Cameron Mills Road, Alexandria, VA 22302. Beverages and light snacks will be served. If you have any interest in getting involved politically with the Club, this is will be a great opportunity to start. For meeting information and to RSVP by no later than September 19, please contact Patrick Eddington, Political Chair, via email at eddingtion@mindspring.com or by phone to 703-535-8778.

The nine elected members of the **Mount Vernon Group Executive Committee (ExCom)** meet about every six weeks to conduct group business such as planning the newsletter as well as discussing and setting our environmental priorities. All Group members are welcome to attend these meetings. For more information, including dates and times of upcoming meetings, please contact Pat Soriano at psoriano79@hotmail.com. At this printing, meetings through year-end are tentatively scheduled for early October and mid to late November.

LETTER WRITING SOCIAL. October 7, Tuesday, 6:30 p.m.-9:00 p.m. In a low-key setting, with dinner provided by the Club, we will write a few short letters and postcards to elected officials urging action on clean air, as part of our ongoing campaign, as well as open space preservation, the Chesapeake and other issues. Sample letter templates, stamps and note cards will all be provided. If you want to help this overloaded planet, but cannot seem to find the time, it does not get much easier than this. We especially would like to invite new members and newly active members to join us. Please contact Andrew at 703/536-5047, aknicholls@cox.net or Melanie melanie.mayock@sierraclub.org to RSVP. This social will be held at the Sierra Club's office 200 N. Glebe Street, Suite 905, in Arlington.

NEWSLETTER LABELING PARTY. October 23, 2003, Thursday, 6:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m

Location: Home of Gordon Johnston and Karen

Helbrecht in the Del Ray neighborhood of Alexandria. Join us for some pizza, refreshments, and over 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, jandrko@comcast.net, or George Lamb, Newsletter Labeling Coordinator, at 703/538-6065, or gwl@cox.net. To RSVP and for directions, you may also call Gordon at 703/548-5784.

THE METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON REGIONAL OUTINGS PROGRAM (MWRP) 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 Sierra Club offers various alternative outings and social events as follows. For information on any additional offerings, please see our website at <http://virginia.sierraclub.org/mvg/> or contact Terri Lamb, Socials Chair, at terri.lamb@cox.net or 703/538-6065.

Westgrove Park, from page 4

Marsh; Betsy Willis, Board Member of the adjoining Westgrove Citizen's Association; Shawn Brunton, a teacher at the adjoining Belleview Elementary School; and Richard Wells, of River Towers, who took on the important assignment of leading the effort to develop the response to the master plan process. Today the Friends of Westgrove Park (FWGP) is a much expanded organization. They have received written endorsements from community associations such as the Hollin Hills Civic Association, Westgrove Community Association, and the River Towers Condominium Association. In addition, they have received endorsement letters from eleven supporting environmental organizations including the Sierra Club, National Park Service (George Washington Memorial Parkway), the Friends of Dyke Marsh, the Friends of Huntley Meadows Park, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, and the Fairfax Audubon Society.

Most pleasing to the Friends of Westgrove Park effort is the support that they are getting from the supporting organizations who have offered their help in developing the proposal to the Fairfax County Park Authority. Today members from a number of these organizations are helping with an inventory of Westgrove Park that includes the identification of trees, plants, animals, birds, insects, and butterflies found in Westgrove Park as well as an environmental and stream quality analysis.

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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 For non-member subscription inquiries and address changes: call 1-800-765-7904 toll-free or write to Sierra, P.O. Box 52968, Boulder, CO 80328.

Westgrove Park, from page 4

A second group is helping with the development of an education strategy. The FWGP is following the Rachel Carson model in which exposure leads to curiosity, which leads to knowledge, and ultimately stewardship. Our children will be well served by a well thought out system of trails, kiosks, and teacher lesson-plans that will expose them to their local natural habitat and nurture them as responsible stewards.

The master plan process is now scheduled to start this fall. The Friends of Westgrove Park is pleased with the support they have received from the Sierra Club and other organizations. If you would like more information, or to become a member in the Friends of Westgrove Park organization, please contact Tony Morris at 703/721-1978 or ABMorris500@aol.com.

Join our new ListServe

The Mount Vernon Group is establishing a new list serve to inform interested members of late-breaking events, opportunities, and calls to action. If you are interested in joining the list serve, please send a message to mountvernon.sierraclub@verizon.net, and we will send you instructions on joining the list serve.

Inspiring, continued from page 5

egy Team (EQST) and Wildland Planet Strategy Team (WPST)) each have a liaison from the CGC.

2. The priority campaigns each have a liaison

3. The Regional Conservation Strategy Team (RCST) formerly Regional Conservation Committee (RCC) has a liaison.

The CGC also distributes the budget among the campaigns and committees. The CGC reports directly to the Board of Directors.

Political Preview, from page 1

road building or expansion. As this newsletter goes to press, the latest debate involves whether fees on the Dulles Toll Road should be increased to fund a new Metrorail line through Tysons Corner. All the while, in the race for the Chairman of the Board of Supervisors, Candidates Gerry Connolly (D) and Mychele Brickner (R) will likely set fundraising and spending records—approaching those for the 8th District Congressional contest. Club members in Fairfax are encouraged to contact all Board of Supervisors candidates about their positions on the environment, especially, traffic, sprawl, and air quality, and to share their responses with me (eddington@mindspring.com) — and your neighbors.

At the state level, some of our local Democratic elected officials still do not appear to be getting the message about smart growth. State Senator Linda “Toddy” Puller (D- 36th District) and Delegate Kristin J. Amundson (D - 44th District) continue to express support for sprawl-inducing projects such as the western and/or eastern bypasses and the techway. At the same, these state officials maintain their reservations about measures designed to allow communities to plan and budget growth under legislation such as Adequate Public Facilities Ordinances (APFOs).^{*} their positions in support of these development-related interestss—in the face of our current budget and traffic woes—are reflected in their Virginia League of Conservation Voters (VALCV) scores for the 2003 session of the General Assembly of 40% for Senator Puller and 71% for Delegate Amundsen.

Other democrates have gotten the message. Delegate Brian Moran (D-Alexndria) by contrast received a VALCV score of 100% for the 2003 session Brian deserves both our congratulations and our thanks for his commitment to environmental issues. You can express your thanks directly by emailing him at brianjmoran@comcast.net.

Hopefully, other Democrats (and Republicans) will begin to get the message as well: being pro-environment isn't simply the right thing to do ... it's smart politics as well.

If you have stories about encounters with local political leaders, I want to hear them. Email me at eddington@mindspring.com.

^{*}As noted in our Spring 2003 newsletter, APFOs would give our cash strapped local cities and counties the ability to manage such growth within their budgets. However, these bills were defeated during this year's session of the General Assembly. Consequently, localities must continue to approve subdivision plans even when they cannot afford to build the streets, sewers, and schools needed to support such rapid growth. More importantly to all of us as taxpayers, the localities have no choice but to pass these infrastructure costs on to us in the form of higher service fees and assessments.

Sustainable Food Choices, from page 5

- Become informed about sustainable choices. Go to Environmental Defense <http://www.greenadviser.org/focus.cfm?focus=2>.

- Support restaurants that use local farmers' products. Check out www.vergant.com/growing.htm for a list of these restaurants. Ask in restaurants and stores where the food is from. Encourage them to buy locally. Compliment them on the good things that they do carry. The manager of Pioneer said that if he gets two requests for a product, he will stock it. Our voices and dollars do count.

- Bring local and sustainable choices into schools. Introduce nutrition education. Encourage the buying of local fruit and vegetables.

- Learn to cook. Share recipes. Eat together often with family and friends. Share your knowledge of sustainable food choices.

The Friends of Prince William Forest are sponsoring a fundraiser, The Chopawamsic Cycle Challenge, on September 7, 2003, and are looking for riders and volunteers. If you can help in this worthwhile event, please contact Mike Walker at 703-551-0734 or visit the Friends website at www.fpwfp.org.

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