



THE MOUNT VERNON

# SIERRAN

The Newsletter of the Mount Vernon Group of the Virginia Chapter of the Sierra Club November / December 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 and hand it to the attendant.) The meetings run from 7:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. Refreshments will be provided starting around 7:00. 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 programs, contact Andrew Nicholls, Programs Chair, at 703-536-5047, [aknicholls@cox.net](mailto:aknicholls@cox.net).

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## Holiday Party and Silent Auction

Tuesday, December 9

7:00 p.m. - 9:15 p.m.

Fairlington Village Community Center

3005 S. Abingdon St., Arlington, VA

Admission: \$10

Children 5-12: \$5; under 5: free

Directions: From I-395, exit King Street West. Make an immediate right onto S. 30th Street (approx. 1 block after the I-395 overpass). Follow S. 30th Street to S. Abingdon Street (3 blocks, second stop sign). The Community Center is across the street to the right. From King Street going east: Make a left onto S. 28th Street. Go about 100 feet and bear right at the fork. This is S. 29th Street. Turn right at the stop sign onto S. Abingdon Street. The Community Center is the second building on the left. Park in the lot adjacent to the Center or on Abingdon Street.

## Telecommuting: Another Tool in the Air Quality Toolbox

by **Andrew Nicholls**, Conservation Chair  
[aknicholls@cox.net](mailto:aknicholls@cox.net)

THE WASHINGTON AREA IS IN "SEVERE" VIOLATION of the Clean Air Act air quality standards for ground level ozone. Ozone, sometimes affectionately called smog, is formed when emissions of nitrogen oxides and volatile organic compounds combine under strong sunlight in hot weather and is distinctly a summer-season phenomenon. A major source of the problem is motor vehicle exhaust. According to EPA scientific studies, ozone poses serious health risks to four groups: children; people with respiratory diseases; adults who are active outdoors, such as joggers; and people with unusual susceptibility to ozone.

### Mount Vernon Group Goals

Improving our region's air quality, and thereby reducing health risks, is the number one conservation priority of the Mount Vernon

Group. Improving air quality necessarily involves serious, sustained, and intelligent transportation planning on many fronts. To that end, MVG has identified four specific, and measurable, short-term objectives: 1) Convert the entire nonemergency vehicle fleet owned by the City of Alexandria to alternative fuel/low-emission vehicles by 2010; 2) Encourage telecommuting and proximate commuting options among employers in the metropolitan area; 3) Make Metrobus route information more available to the public; and 4) Eliminate excessive particulate emissions from school and other buses by ending unnecessary idling.

Let us look at objective #2, telecommuting. The underlying concept is simple. Smog-forming emissions can be substantially reduced by eliminating altogether, or sharply reducing, commutes to work, especially on hot summer days in June, July, and August when Code Orange and Code Red days

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## HOT Lanes Are on the Fast Track in Northern Virginia

by **Kim Novick**, Sierra Club staff member

THE VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION and the Fluor Daniel Company want to widen the Beltway in Northern Virginia with four new "HOT lanes," High-Occupancy/Toll lanes that single-occupant vehicles must pay to use but that carpools and buses may use for free. The HOT lanes are proposed for construction along a 14-mile segment of the Beltway from the American Legion Bridge to I-495. The proposal is quickly making its way to be included in the Capital Beltway Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

The Beltway EIS, which is due out next year, was commissioned to find ways to alleviate congestion on the Beltway. But studies have shown that simply adding more lanes does not solve the problem. Instead, the new lanes fill up with traffic as more people switch to driving, change their typical driving route, and move farther away from population and job centers. A wider Beltway would also encroach on local neighborhoods, increase sprawl development, and further degrade our region's air. Many questions about the feasibility of HOT lanes have not been answered, and similar projects around the country have run into financial difficulties.

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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](http://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



AS SOME OF YOU MAY RECALL, in our last newsletter we had an ad for a volunteer newsletter editor to edit our articles. In responding to the almost one dozen inquiries from members offering their services, I realized how much editorial talent and interest we have among our members. Facing the prospect of picking one person, I also wanted to see if any of the members not selected for the editing position would be willing to volunteer in other areas. As one of my fellow ExCom members noted, the challenge I faced was how to match volunteer interests with Group needs.

Like most volunteer organizations today, we have more to do than we have active volunteers. As I explained to one member, having so many volunteers call about one position has never happened before. In trying to reach out to this member, I noted that among the Group's numerous opportunities, we have one-time events, such as our newsletter-labeling parties or spending a couple of hours at a tabling event such as the Fall for Fairfax event. We also offer letter-writing nights, which we see as very easy and productive ways to make a difference. For example, at our last one on October 7, four members, all new—Vicki, Susan, Anna, and Seth—contributed toward sending out about 20 letters on the Arctic Refuge, national forests, HOT lanes, and Amtrak funding.

We also have longer-term opportunities, which are mostly related to our Political and Conservation Committee work. As was explained in our last newsletter, we have five conservation campaigns that could use any number of volunteers to develop and carry out initiatives. We also are involved in a regional sprawl campaign with Sierra Club groups/chapters from the D.C. metropolitan area, and others of us are working on a campaign to stop the widening of I-66. We also need to reach out to local politicians to get their active support in improving our region's air quality.

While you might not get the one volunteer position you most wanted in terms of your specific skills, volunteering can be a means of expanding beyond the work you get paid for. The work brings rewards on its own terms, not to mention the reward of meeting other dedicated people who may become lifelong friends. ☺

## Sierra Club Conservation Campaigns—Local and National

by Faith Teitelbaum, MVG ExCom member

EVER WONDER WHERE YOU FIT IN THE SIERRA CLUB STRUCTURE? Over more than 100 years, the Club's structure has become very complex. It has four different levels of organization, with the grassroots chapter and group level, the level at which most people are involved, as the foundation of the Club. The other levels are the board of directors, the national staff, and the national volunteer committees and teams, with the Conservation Governance Committee (CGC), which oversees the Sierra Club's national conservation work, as the overarching committee.

This article will briefly describe one of the national volunteer teams and its committees. The Sustainable Planet Strategy Team (SPST) is a team of five people who, along with other duties, act as liaisons to seven national committees, which implement four priority programs. Each liaison participates in most of his or her committee's undertakings and provides feedback to the SPST Chair. The SPST Chair reports to the CGC, which reports to the Sierra Club board of directors.

The all-volunteer committees that report to the SPST are the Agriculture Committee, the Sustainable Consumption Committee, the Genetic Engineering Committee, and the International Committee. A description of each follows:

The **Agriculture Committee** takes the lead in promoting the Club's views regarding national farm bills and assists chapters and groups in their work on farm bills. It also educates Club activists and the public on

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## 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](http://www.sierraclub.org)

**ADDRESS CHANGES:** Sierra Club Member Services, P.O. Box 52968, Boulder, CO 80328-2968

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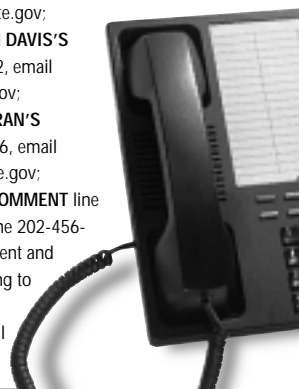
2461, email the President and

Vice President by going to

[www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov)

and following the email

prompts.



# "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 9 may sound far away, we have to start planning now to make this annual celebration and fundraiser a success. So mark your calendars!

## Getting to Know You

After a whole year of activism—learning about local environmental issues through the chapter and state newsletters, responding to e-mailed calls to action, and attending monthly meetings—make sure you take some time to get to know your fellow Sierrans. Reward yourself with a relaxing evening of food, fun, and great bargains. This is one of the few chances during the year to kick back and relax with those who share your respect for the environment.

In addition to finding great deals on auction items, you can enjoy delicious appetizers, a full dinner, a variety of desserts, and a wide array of drinks, including beer and wine. Plus you'll have the opportunity to bid on a scrumptious array of home-baked goodies. Last year, treats like roasted nuts, fudge, beer, brownies, and cookies tempted palates all around. See the front page for directions and details of the event.

## Support the Mount Vernon Group, Too

But this party isn't *just* for fun. The Silent Auction also raises much-needed funds for local chapter activities. It's the biggest single fundraiser of the year, and we need everyone's help to make it a success. Come bid on restaurant gift certificates, massages, outdoor apparel, meals personally prepared by professional chefs, tickets to local concerts and sporting events, delicious gift baskets, custom works of art, and more. Donated by local businesses and members, 100% of the proceeds go to support our local chapter.

In order to celebrate with your fellow Sierrans, volunteers just like you dedicate many hours of work to 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 Chair Cheryl Zebrowski can help make the task easier.
- Own your own business? Have a special talent? Perform services? Donate your special skills.
- Bring homemade goodies ready for sale! These delicious homemade treats bring an

extra boost to our bottom line.

- Help out the evening of the event by setting up, cleaning up, and keeping the auction running smoothly.
- Come and bid away. Join the crowd and take advantage of the special offers.

*If you have any questions or are interested in volunteering, just contact Cheryl Zebrowski at [jpzebrowski@worldnet.att.com](mailto:jpzebrowski@worldnet.att.com), 703-824-3676. We'll see you there!@*

## Taking the Bus to Arlington's Columbia Pike Gets Easier

by **Melanie Mayock**, Conservation Organizer  
[melanie.mayock@sierraclub.org](mailto:melanie.mayock@sierraclub.org)



When you go to work, run errands, or go out to dinner, do you consider taking the bus? Would you know which bus to take? If you're traveling to or from Arlington's Columbia Pike corridor, figuring out the bus system has recently become much easier.

In early September, Arlington County launched the Pike Ride Initiative, a combination of expanded bus service and information along Columbia Pike, already the most heavily used bus corridor in Virginia. The Sierra Club has praised the county for the new bus information as an important way to promote bus ridership and reduce pollution.

The expanded information includes a new Pike Ride map showing all Metrobus and Arlington Transit (ART) routes on Columbia Pike, as well as connecting routes. The map is now displayed at bus stops along Columbia Pike, and was also mailed to local households and hand-delivered to local businesses.

As was noted in the last newsletter, the Sierra Club believes the bus system in the Washington area is a mystery for many residents and visitors. Whereas information about Metrorail is relatively easy to come by, figuring out where buses go is much more challenging.

The Sierra Club has initiated a campaign to persuade Metro to improve bus information

throughout the region. To learn more about the campaign, go to [www.sierraclub.org/dc/sprawl](http://www.sierraclub.org/dc/sprawl), or contact Melanie Mayock at 703-312-0533 x110; [melanie.mayock@sierraclub.org](mailto:melanie.mayock@sierraclub.org).

• Want to check out the bus service on Columbia Pike? Find bus schedules and maps at <http://www.commuterpage.com/PikeRide/>, or call 703-228-RIDE.

• Need a bus schedule or map for the Arlington area? Arlington provides FREE bus schedules and maps for individuals, businesses, and residential complexes. To order, go to [www.commuterpage.com](http://www.commuterpage.com), or call 703-228-RIDE.☺

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## Telecommuting, *from page 1*

occur. This can be accomplished either by telecommuting or by proximate commuting, a lesser-known concept, which will be discussed in a future newsletter article. (*Telecommuting* is the use of information technology and telecommunications to replace work-related travel. Simply put, it means working at home or closer to home, say in a "telework center" or even in your local coffee shop.)

How common is telecommuting in the metropolitan area? Fortunately, we have some information to help answer this question, courtesy of a 2002 Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG) report. The report was a random-sample survey of 7,200 employed persons in the Washington region on awareness and attitudes toward transportation options and commute-assistance programs. What does this report say about telecommuting?

- **About 15% of the survey respondents said they telecommuted at least occasionally.** This was an increase over the 12% who responded to a survey made in 1998.

- **Respondents telecommuted about 1.49 times per week on average.**

- **An additional 18% of commuters "would and could" telecommute if given the opportunity.** About 25% of these respondents said they would like to telecommute "regularly," while 43% would like to telecommute "occasionally."

- Telecommuters were statistically more likely to be male, white, with an income greater than \$60,000, and with a commute of more than 30 miles.

- Telecommuters were also statistically more likely to be either employees of nonprofit private organizations or of very small (fewer than 25 employees) or midsize organizations (251 to 999 employees), and employed in sales, professional, executive/managerial, or technical occupations.

- The potential for additional telecommuting seems to be primarily among those groups who already telecommute. **But high potential does exist in two sizable groups in which the incidence of telecommuting is now under the average: workers in federal agencies (26% could and would telecommute) and employees working for very large (1,000+ employees) organizations (28% could and would telecommute).**

- The overwhelming majority of

telecommuters (88%) telecommuted exclusively from home. The remaining 12% telecommuted from a client site/other office, a satellite office provided by an employer, a telework center, or from both home and another location.

Considering these findings, it is easy to see that telecommuting could become a powerful tool to improve the region's air quality, especially given that an additional 18% (nearly one fifth!) of commuters *would and could* telecommute if given the opportunity.

## A Thought Experiment

Consider the summer of 2003. According to MWCOG data, during this time we had three Code Red days and four Code Orange days. ("Code Red" means the air quality is unhealthy; "Code Orange" means the air quality is unhealthy for sensitive groups, such as children.) Take the horrendous week of June 23. June 24 was a Code Orange day, and June 25 and June 26 were back-to-back Code Red days. Because bad air quality is strongly correlated with hot days, and weather forecasts are becoming more and more reliable, MWCOG can forecast upcoming severe ozone days. It usually issues "ozone action forecasts" prior to such days, and encourages residents to limit driving and to use public transportation.

Now suppose, following an ozone action forecast, that literally tens of thousands of workers had been able to work at home for some of these days, and had even been encouraged by their government and large private employers to do so. Such flexibility would certainly help the region improve its air quality simply by encouraging residents to stay at home and work. Such an approach does not pretend to be the only answer to a complex problem, but it does provide one important option. And importantly, it does not require large capital outlays on infrastructure; it can be brought about simply as a matter of policy by employers.

## Strategy to Make It Happen

The objective is twofold. First, we want to greatly increase the number of employers who allow telecommuting as an option for workers. Second, we want employers to strongly encourage the use of that option in the summer, when MWCOG issues ozone action day forecasts. (In 2002, for example, MWCOG issued 15 such alerts.)

To proceed, the Mount Vernon Group must begin by identifying public- and private-sector employers (with large numbers of professional white-collar workers) that do not currently offer telecommuting as an option, as well as some that do. Those that do offer the option should be publicly commended by the Sierra Club, especially those encouraging its use for impending Code Red days. Those that do not should be evaluated both in terms of potential impact (number of employees, length of commute) and likelihood of change (public-relations sensitivity, alleged environmental ethos, whether the organization is public or private, etc.). The Mount Vernon Group can then selectively target specific employers to encourage their adoption of a flexible telecommuting policy. One way to do that is simply to provide some educational material on the severe ozone pollution in the area. Putting telecommuting in the context of improving air quality can be a "win-win" if it also improves worker morale.

Further specifics on the telecommuting campaign are being developed. If you have specific suggestions or ideas, please send them to Andrew at [aknicholls@cox.net](mailto:aknicholls@cox.net).

## Campaigns, *from page 2*

sustainable agricultural practices and standards and on the links between environmental and agricultural issues.

The **Sustainable Consumption Committee (SCC)** works to encourage people to think about the environmental impacts of their consumption choices and to provide them with specific information that will enable them to make thoughtful choices as consumers.

The SCC has begun its work in earnest and, because its activities are broad-reaching, has many opportunities for volunteers. Please log on to [www.sierraclub.org/consumption](http://www.sierraclub.org/consumption) to find out what we're doing and how you can help the effort.

The **Genetic Engineering Committee** is concerned with genetic contamination of crops, with an emphasis on farmed fish and farmed trees.

The **International Committee** monitors and submits responses to critical actions of international organizations in cooperation with the Joint U.S.-Canada International Committee; responds to requests for information and assistance from foreign nongovernmental organizations; hosts foreign visitors; works with chapters and groups on their international networking and related activities; and advises the Sierra Club on environmental security issues.

The Sierra Club has four priority campaigns and four priority programs. The four campaigns are

**Challenge to Sprawl** [www.sierraclub.org/sprawl](http://www.sierraclub.org/sprawl), for which [Melanie.maycock@sierraclub.org](mailto:Melanie.maycock@sierraclub.org) is our Mid-Atlantic representative.

**Wildlands** [www.sierraclub.org/wildlands](http://www.sierraclub.org/wildlands)

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Hot Lanes, *from page 1*

There are better ways to solve our transportation problems. A new transit line in the Beltway corridor to connect major commercial and residential centers could carry as many as 70,000 riders a day. Combining transit with compact neighborhoods that are safe for cyclists and pedestrians is a better solution. Read on to find out the reasons why the Sierra Club opposes Beltway HOT lanes, and what we view as the real solution to our region's transportation challenges.

**WHY THE SIERRA CLUB OPPOSES HOT LANES ON THE BELTWAY**

**HOT lanes will NOT alleviate traffic congestion.** New lanes attract new traffic as people switch to driving and move farther away from population and job centers. HOT lanes are priced to keep traffic moving, but the "free" lanes will quickly fill up again. Soon after HOT lanes opened in Orange County, California, the non-express-lane commute was again one of the worst in the state.

**HOT lanes will not improve air quality.** The D.C. area is in an air quality crisis. The region is currently in a "severe nonattainment" category according to federal air quality standards, and pollution from automobiles is a major contributor to the smog and soot that causes over 100,000 asthma attacks in the region every year. Building more Beltway lanes will only bring more drivers to the road. We need more choices, not more lanes, if we want to breathe easier.

**A private company may not be able to successfully run HOT lanes, and taxpayers may end up footing the bill.** The Route 91 HOT lanes in Orange County did not make a profit until tolls had been raised three times and new charges for carpools were instituted. In 2002, amid complaints about non-express-lane conditions and rising toll costs, the Orange County Transportation Authority spent over \$200 million to purchase the lanes and regain control of the highway. Fluor Daniel, the company proposing to build the Beltway HOT lanes, built the Pocahontas Parkway, a toll road south of Richmond that has failed to meet profit expectations. To protect itself from financial risk on the Beltway project, Fluor Daniel may ask the state for tax-exempt loans, amounting to a taxpayer subsidy.

**The HOT Lanes proposal provides little support for metropolitan-area transit.** Proponents argue that faster-moving lanes make express bus service possible, and that toll revenues

will pay for it. Many questions remain, however, about how express bus service would work and how much money would be available for transit services. Consider the following:

• **Would revenue from HOT lanes fund transit initiatives?** San Diego is used an example of how HOT lanes fund transit, but in that case, a public agency used federal dollars to convert existing HOV lanes to HOT lanes, which is much less expensive than new construction. Much less federal funding should be expected on the Beltway project. Furthermore, if VDOT does not require Fluor Daniel to devote a percentage of its profits to bus service operation, there's no assurance that any buses would use the HOT lanes. And if the company fails to profit, as was the case in Orange County, it is likely that no money would go to bus service.

• **How would buses access HOT lanes?** In the Fluor Daniel proposal, only three locations will have an on/off ramp directly to the HOT lanes. Buses will otherwise have to cross four congested lanes of traffic to get onto the HOT lanes. This would either slow down the bus service intolerably or require that buses strictly limit stops along the Beltway.

• **How would passengers access bus service?** Most major development centers in Northern Virginia, such as Falls Church and Annandale, are not located next to the Beltway. If bus stops are located adjacent to the Beltway, it is unclear how riders would access these stations.

**A BETTER SOLUTION: BELTWAY CORRIDOR RAIL AND LAND-USE CHANGES**

Rail in the Beltway corridor combined with compact development at the stations will improve transportation choice and livability. A 2001 study by the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation found that a Beltway rail line would attract some 70,000 riders a day and significantly improve mobility. The public showed strong support for Beltway rail during the public-comment period for the Beltway Environmental Impact Statement in 2002: VDOT received over 800 comments supporting the inclusion of a rail alternative in the study, and dozens of residents spoke in support of rail at the public hearings. VDOT has ignored this overwhelming public sentiment and focused only on adding lanes. This is a breach of the public trust, and it's time that our elected leaders heard from you!

**MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD!**

Governor Warner will make the final decision on the HOT lanes proposal, but your local county supervisor could also play an important role. Write to both of them today and urge them to take HOT lanes off the fast track and include a rail and land-use alternative in the Capital Beltway Environmental Impact Statement. Write to Governor Mark Warner; State Capitol, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor; Richmond, VA 23219. Fax: 804-371-6351.

For more information about this campaign, or for information about how to contact your county supervisor, contact Kim Novick at 703-312-0533x108, or e-mail [Kim.Novick@sierraclub.org](mailto:Kim.Novick@sierraclub.org).

**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 \_\_\_\_\_

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# Annual Election of the Mount Vernon Group Executive Committee

The MVG Executive Committee (ExCom) is composed of nine members—all volunteers—who serve two-year terms managing the affairs and activities of the Group. Below are the candidate statements from the six MVG members who are running for the ExCom. This year, the terms of five members are expiring. In addition, one member, who has one year left in her term of office, is resigning early. Per our bylaws, the five candidates receiving the highest number of votes will serve terms of two years, and the candidate with the least votes will serve a term of one year—all starting in January 2004. Therefore, it is important that you review the candidate statement, cast your votes, and mail in your ballot as instructed below by December 15.

## STEVE BERETZKY

Although I am new to the Mount Vernon Group, I am not new to the Sierra Club. Before I came to the Washington, D.C., area from Michigan seven years ago, I was active in the SE Michigan Group, where I chaired the Population Committee. I am interested in working to establish a Sierra Club presence at Fairfax County meetings to promote the Group's short-term and long-term goals, and in consonance with this, I am also interested in working on the Political Committee. I think the Sierra Club is one of the last bastions of environmental protection where people can join in the company of like-minded people in working to make a difference in the environment and also in experiencing the wonder of the great outdoors. With this idea in mind, I am also interested in working to empower more of our membership and increase the number of active members in MVG. We have a base of approximately 4,600 members, yet only 10 to 20 active members. I think we might do better and would like to see that number at least double.

## MARY HALNON

In my professional life, first as a high-school teacher, and now working at an edu-

cational nonprofit, I have seen how education can change individuals and, by extension, their communities. I believe that many people lack the information they need to be effective, impassioned environmental advocates. I think the Sierra Club has the public trust and the means to provide this type of information to the public—information that will help people understand the simple changes they can make in their everyday routines to improve environmental quality in our area.

Second, I think that the next task of the Sierra Club should be to pursue change on a larger scale—with local governments, employers, and other community groups who can institute policies that will have a profound impact on our area's air quality, transportation, green space, and more. To do both of these things, I think the Mount Vernon Group needs to think strategically when setting its priorities so that its volunteers can achieve maximum impact. It also needs effective partnerships with like-minded groups in the Northern Virginia area. Although I am relatively new to the Mount Vernon Group, I am extremely interested in bringing my knowledge and experience to the Group's Executive Committee in support of the goals I've outlined here.

## PATRICK G. EDDINGTON

I serve as Political Chair of the Mount Vernon Group, and if elected to another term would like to continue in that capacity. We have made much progress on the political front this past term. Among other things, we succeeded in getting four Sierra Club-endorsed candidates elected to the Alexandria City Council in May. My recent appointment to the Alexandria Environmental Policy Commission, marking the first time a Sierra Club representative has been appointed to that body in years, has further strengthened the Club's influence on Alexandria's environmental policy.

One of my top priorities is reconnecting the Sierra Club with local civic organizations that share our goals. To that end, I have developed a relationship with Alexandrians for Sensible Growth. I hope to create other partnerships between MVG and like-minded civic organizations that will further our aims of limiting growth and improving air quality, thereby improving the quality of life for all Alexandrians.

This fall, working with both my MVG and my Great Falls colleagues, I helped coordinate our endorsement process for the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors race and Virginia state candidates. As we approach the November elections, I'll be working with fellow Club members to elect candidates who share both our specific concerns for the region and our environmental vision. I am asking you for the opportunity to continue this critical work for 2004 and beyond. Thank you for your support and for your commitment to the Sierra Club!

## JOHN KOCH

For the past three years I have served on the Mount Vernon Group's Executive Committee. In that time, I have encouraged efforts to have the Group become active in local conservation and environmental issues. I think these efforts are beginning to have a positive effect in activities undertaken by the Group and in local political activities. My primary goal if re-elected is to motivate the Group's leadership, me included, to find ways to encourage the over 4,600 Group members to become even more involved in an effort to improve the environmental quality of life in our region.

## PATRICIA (PAT) SORIANO

This year has been one of revitalization for the Mount Vernon Group. The Group leadership has established a defined set of short-to long-term conservation goals, become newly active on the political front, and just as important, has been successful in bringing in some new volunteers. I would like to continue serving on the MVG ExCom to help us carry the accomplishments we have made this year even farther. I am very excited that we can make a tangible difference toward improving our air quality and promoting transit, telecommuting, and proximate commuting along with better land-use planning.

Going forward in 2004, we must convince our local leaders and the broader community that the drive to build new roads, whether in the guise of HOT lanes or using scare tactics about the need for emergency evacuation routes, is not the answer. I would appreciate your vote and your support in carrying the Sierra Club banner in Alexandria,

Arlington, Fairfax, and Prince William Counties. If you have any suggestions or questions about the direction or actions of the Mount Vernon Group—or wish to get involved—please contact me at 703-671-3129.

## ROBERT SWENNES

I am completing my first two-year term as a member of the Executive Committee of the Mount Vernon Group. I applaud the many hours of work that some people put in to ensure that the Group functions well and has a positive impact on environmental issues in Northern Virginia. In my present position as Secretary of the ExCom, I have succeeded in getting an announcement Listserv (electronic mailing list) established so that all our 4,000-plus members will have better knowledge of upcoming meetings and Sierra Club-related events.

I am a long-standing Arlington resident and am active in cycling advocacy in the Washington area. I serve on the county's Transportation Commission and on its Bicycle Advisory Committee. I spend significant time working with the county's Neighborhood Conservation Advisory Committee, which helps to fund improvements on public property in single-family neighborhoods and thus to preserve them for future generations. I am also pressing for a rollback in excessive residential development rights in Arlington so that future home construction will be carried out in an environmentally sensitive manner. ☺

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## Upcoming Events/Meetings/Actions

**Nov. 11, 2003, Tuesday, 7:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.**  
**TOPIC: GILDED AGE SERVICE, 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 nonprofit corporation dedicated to its stewardship and its use for educational and interpretative purposes through tours and residential programs.

**Dec. 9, 2003, Tuesday, 7:00 p.m. to 9:15 p.m.**  
**2003 SILENT AUCTION AND HOLIDAY PARTY** at the Fairlington Village Community Center at the intersection of South 30th and Abingdon streets 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 [jpezrowski@worldnet.att.com](mailto:jpzebrowski@worldnet.att.com).

**Jan. 13, 2004, Tuesday, 7:00 p.m. to 9 p.m.**  
**TOPIC: FACTORY FARMING, OUR ECOSYSTEM, AND OUR HEALTH**

Did you ever think that the best way to protect the environment and your health is by your choice of food? Our demand for animal products at the lowest possible price has resulted in giant factory farms whose techniques of mass production, including the overuse of antibiotics to keep farmed animals healthy in filthy, cramped conditions, are contaminating our land and water and are viewed as a leading cause of many of our modern killer diseases. Join Bruce Friedrich, leading authority on factory-farm practices, to learn how your daily choice about

what you eat affects the planet and our interconnected web of life. Bruce's past accomplishments include leading the national campaign against McDonald's cruel factory-farming and slaughter practices, forcing it to become the first corporation in U.S. history to adopt farmed-animal welfare policies.

### Group ExCom Meetings

**Jan. 10, 2004, Saturday, 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.** (2004 ExCom planning meeting)  
 This meeting will take place at the Sierra Club Mid-Atlantic Office, 200 N. Glebe Street, Suite 905, in Arlington. For more information, including meeting agenda information and to RSVP, please contact Pat Soriano at 703-671-3129 or by e-mail at [patemail@verizon.net](mailto:patemail@verizon.net).

### Group Committee Meetings

#### POLITICAL MEETING

**Nov. 22, 2003, Saturday, 3 p.m. to 5 p.m.**  
*Location:* 2900 Cameron Mills Road, Alexandria, VA 22302. The meeting will review past activities and outcomes from the last cycle as well as provide a look ahead at the upcoming General Assembly session. 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. Please RSVP no later than November 21 via e-mail at [eddington@mindspring.com](mailto:eddington@mindspring.com) or by phone to 703-535-8778.

#### CONSERVATION MEETINGS

**The MVG Conservation Committee now meets the third Thursday of every month** (except December) at the Sierra Club Mid-Atlantic Office, 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](mailto:aknicholls@cox.net), 703/536-5047, or Melanie Mayock, Conservation Organizer, at [melanie.mayock@sierraclub.org](mailto:melanie.mayock@sierraclub.org). Light dinner and refreshments are offered.  
**Dates of upcoming meetings are Nov. 20, 2003,** Thursday, 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.; **Jan. 15, 2004,** Thursday, 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. *continued on page 8*

**MVG Web site address:**  
<http://virginia.sierraclub.org/>

## MVG Executive Committee Ballot

PLEASE VOTE FOR NO MORE THAN FIVE CANDIDATES. If you have a joint membership, please use both columns—one for each member voting. After marking your votes, please cut out the ballot, which has your mailing label on the reverse. Please do not remove the label or cross out your membership number or you will invalidate your ballot. Please mail your ballot by December 15, 2003 to Terri Lamb, MVG Elections Chair, 2818 Summerfield Rd., Falls Church, VA 22042-2035.

	SINGLE MEMBERSHIP	JOINT MEMBERSHIP		SINGLE MEMBERSHIP	JOINT MEMBERSHIP
Steve Beretzky	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	John Koch	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mary Halnon	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Patricia (Pat) Soriano	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Patrick G. Eddington	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Robert Swennes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Upcoming Events/Meetings/Actions

continued from page 7

**LETTER WRITING SOCIAL, Jan. 27, 2004, Tuesday, 6:30 p.m. to 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 on preservation of open space, the Chesapeake Bay, and other issues. Sample letter templates, stamps, and postcards will all be provided. If you want to help this overloaded planet but cannot seem to find the time, it doesn't 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](mailto:aknicholls@cox.net), or Melanie at [melanie.mayock@sierraclub.org](mailto: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, Jan. 22, 2004, 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 4,000 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 Andrew Nicholls, Newsletter Labeling Coordinator, at 703-536-5047, [aknicholls@cox.net](mailto:aknicholls@cox.net). To RSVP and for

**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](mailto: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.

directions, you may also call Gordon at 703-548-5784.

**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 Sierra Club offers various alternative outings and social events as described above. For information on any additional offerings, please see our website at <http://virginia.sierraclub.org/mvg/>.

### Campaigns, from page 4

**Clean Water** [www.sierraclub.org/water](http://www.sierraclub.org/water)

**National Forest Protection and Restoration**

[www.sierraclub.org/logging](http://www.sierraclub.org/logging), for which [David.Muhly@sierraclub.org](mailto:David.Muhly@sierraclub.org) is our Appalachian Region representative.

The four priority programs are

**Human Rights and the Environment**

[www.sierraclub.org/humanrights](http://www.sierraclub.org/humanrights)

**Responsible Trade** [www.sierraclub.org/trade](http://www.sierraclub.org/trade)

**Global Population and the Environment**

[www.sierraclub.org/population](http://www.sierraclub.org/population)

**Global Warming and Energy**

[www.sierraclub.org/warming](http://www.sierraclub.org/warming)

The priorities for Mount Vernon Group fall under the Challenge to Sprawl Campaign and Global Warming and Energy. The MVG ExCom determined that improving the air quality of the Washington metropolitan area will be its 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. As discussed in our last newsletter, we have divided our efforts into a long-term goal and four shorter-term goals.

The long-term goal is to support significant increases in funding for Metrorail to provide both more trains and more rail (the circumferential "Purple" line and extensions to Tysons Corner). The shorter-term goals are 1) to convert the nonemergency vehicle fleet owned by the City of Alexandria to alternative fuel/low-emission vehicles by 2010; 2) to encourage telecommuting, teleworking, and proximate commuting; 3) to make

Metrobus route information more available to the public; and 4) to eliminate excessive particulate emissions from school and other buses by ending unnecessary idling. (See related article, "Telecommuting: Another Tool in the Air Quality Toolbox," in this issue.)

If you like what you see either on the national websites or in our MVG local campaigns and think you might like to get involved, contact Andrew Nicholls, Conservation Chair, [aknicholls@cox.net](mailto:aknicholls@cox.net).

### Volunteers Needed to Attend City and County Government Meetings.

The Mount Vernon Group is looking for volunteers to attend local city and county meetings in our region, which includes the City of Alexandria, the City of Falls Church, Arlington County, Fairfax County, and Prince William County. The purpose of attending these meetings is to keep us informed of key issues and decisions relating to environmental issues, especially those affecting regional air quality, transit, new roads, and the like. If you have any interest in this respect, please contact Pat Soriano at [patemail@verizon.net](mailto:patemail@verizon.net).

### Join Our New Listserv

The Mount Vernon Group has a new Listserv (electronic mailing list). Any member of the Sierra Club is welcome to subscribe. We will be using this list to distribute time-sensitive news or alerts of local Sierra Club issues and activities. To subscribe to the MVG Listserv, please either (a) send an e-mail to [LISTSERV@LISTS.SIERRACLUB.ORG](mailto:LISTSERV@LISTS.SIERRACLUB.ORG) and type in as the body of the message: subscribe virginia-mvg-news OR (b) go online to <http://lists.sierraclub.org/archives/VIRGINIA-MVG-NEWS.html> and click on "Join or leave the list." Follow the instructions.

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