

# Friends of the Powhatan Creek Watershed



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## What Our Watershed Plan + JCC's Comprehensive Plan = Is up to You!

The real work of implementing the Powhatan Creek Watershed Management Plan is at hand. A yearlong review of the county's Comprehensive Plan began in July. If ever there was a time for public input, it is now! Will the recommendations in the Watershed Management Plan unanimously adopted by the Board of Supervisors in February, 2002 be included in the newly drafted Comprehensive Plan? For example, the watershed plan calls for an annual 300 acres of land to be conserved in sensitive main stem areas through 2007. The question is how best to incorporate the 8 major watershed management goals into the revised 2002 draft of the Comprehensive Plan. The answer will have a direct impact on quality of life issues for not only watershed residents, but all County residents.

Will the Board of Supervisors support the public's wishes as expressed in the current Compre-

hensive Plan? An excerpt:

*The most often communicated viewpoint was that the County should have strong growth management policies... More than 80 percent of respondents agreed with the activity of controlling the rate of residential growth, yet less than 20 percent were satisfied with County efforts geared toward that end. . A clear majority of 68 percent also desired a slower growth rate than what has been experienced in the past decade... Finally, nearly ALL of the respondents agreed with the goals of preserving natural resources, maintaining open*

*(Continued on page 2)*

## Help the Friends Clean Virginia's Waterways September 21, 2002

On the third Saturday of September each year, volunteers across Virginia and DC gather along the shorelines of bays, lakes, and ponds, walk along paths and under bridges adjacent to waterways, or canoe down creeks and rivers to pick up trash and to complete "International Coastal Cleanup Data Cards" for The Ocean Conservancy. These data translate into valuable information about the amounts, types and sources of debris found along Virginia's waterways. The International Coastal Cleanup is the world's largest volunteer data collection effort devoted to the marine environment and the preventable problem of litter. In Virginia, the "Clean Virginia Waterways" group organizes and fundraises for cleanup support. This year the Friends are joining in the 2002 effort to commemorate "The Year of Clean Water," a celebration of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the passage of The Clean Water Act.

Due to the events of September 11<sup>th</sup>, many

cleanup events had to be cancelled last year and many sites, especially military, have not been cleaned in two years. Even so, the 2001 volunteer effort was the biggest ever in Virginia in terms of tires, bottles and cigarette butts gathered. In all, 3800 volunteers removed 182,818 pounds of trash.

As the official "Adopt-A-Stream" organization for Powhatan Creek, we have completed site assessments and have a cleanup plan in place for the historically "dirtiest" locations along the creek. However, with new construction sites along the creek's shoreline and along Longhill Swamp, a team will be needed to do a walking tour to assess other areas where trash makes its way into the creek.

Interested? Contact Ann Hewitt, coordinating Site Captain at 229-5637 or [annjhewitt@cox.net](mailto:annjhewitt@cox.net). Meet at the Powhatan Creek Public Canoe Access parking lot for assignments at 8:30 AM. Transportation to and from pre-selected sites will be pro-

# Williamsburg Hosts October 2002 Virginia Environmental Assembly

Mark your calendars to attend the annual Virginia Environmental Assembly "Preserving Our Natural Resources- Our Link to the Past and Bridge to the Future" to be held in Williamsburg on Saturday, October 5. The assembly is sponsored by the Virginia Conservation Network which is comprised of 100 member organizations (including the Friends) all committed to protecting Virginia's natural resources. The VCN keeps member organizations and citizens up-to-date on legislative and regulatory matters that affect their families and communities.

The Environmental Assembly, held every four years, will be hosted by the Williamsburg Land Conservancy and the William & Mary Student Environmental Action Coalition (SEAC) affording us a unique opportunity to network, attend workshops, learn strategies to influence public policy, and meet with local and state officials about environmental issues

Save the date, October 5<sup>th</sup>, for the 2002 Virginia Environmental Assembly: Whether it's water, land, or air quality, waste, transportation, or smart growth; you'll find it at this most important event. For infor-

## Web-Wise

A free service for those with limited time, but a desire to make a difference on environmental issues. **Conservation e-Action Virginia!** (CAV) uses e-mail to put you in touch with key decision-makers on issues like clean water and air, sprawl, growth management, toxins, historic preservation, and others. The CAV coalition produces and sends out environmental alerts to members of an e-mail action network. After you

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*space, and preserving farmland and forested land. (p. 79). The County's recently instituted Purchase of Development Rights Program and its adoption of the Watershed Management Plan speak to its commitment and responsiveness to the public. Some developers want to expand their communities to areas within and along side lands in the Powhatan Creek Watershed. Large tracts of upland forests that serve as nature's "sponges" are at risk. The pressures to expand the Primary Service Area into these areas will be great. When asked to what extent they agreed with the strategy of trying to concentrate growth in the Primary Service Area, 75 percent agreed or strongly agreed. (p.79)*

The 1997 Comprehensive Plan states:

*The Primary Service Area (PSA) is the principal tool used by the County to manage growth.... A long-standing key concept of the Land Use Plan is the coordination of development with the capacity and availability of public facilities and ser-*

*vices. Previous plans and existing zoning did not always adequately strike a balance because they permitted significantly more development than could be accommodated in some locations. Hence there are limits on the ability of existing public facilities and services to serve such areas adequately. There are also limits on the County's capacity to absorb land use changes if growth is to be adequately managed and a high quality of life maintained. (p. 75).*

Finding the "land-use balance" is the major issue facing James City County. The 8 goals adopted in the Powhatan Creek Watershed Management Plan address parts of this issue with the recommendations for the 5,000 acres that comprise the watershed. The challenge of refining, integrating and implementing these two important documents to serve the entire county depends on our willingness to express our opinions to and work with County officials. To quote from the Forward of the 1997 Comprehensive Plan

*The James City County government considers that it has a clear mandate to manage the resi-*

# Continuing Our Environmental Education

Spring and summer were busy seasons for many Friends. We continued to educate ourselves by attending as many workshops relating to watershed issues as we could squeeze into our schedules. Here's a brief recap of our learning experiences.

In April, Boots Johnson, our Water Quality Monitoring Program Director, attended a JCC-sponsored workshop, "Tools for Implementation of a Watershed Management Plan". This was a Mid-Atlantic Region workshop and the Powhatan Creek Watershed Management Plan was the featured event. Our presence sent a message about our commitment to our role as stakeholder in the management plan.

In May, Friends attended a JCC-sponsored workshop, "Get Your Feet Wet" put on by the Alliance for Chesapeake Bay. Attendees were introduced to native plants who like "wet feet". Participants worked in a six hundred square foot mud bed and planted close

to six hundred plants in a restoration area adjacent to the James City County Community Center.

Also in May, four Friends attended a Citizen Monitoring Training Session sponsored by the Alliance for Chesapeake Bay. As part of our expanding water quality testing program, participants were trained in fecal coliform bacteria monitoring. Since Powhatan Creek has been designated as "impaired" due to high fecal coliform levels, we feel that testing in this area is a necessary part of our program. The two major sources of human activities generally responsible for high fecal coliform loads in surface waters are human sewage and agricultural waste.

Participants learned to use the Coliscan method for detection of fecal coliform which is technically very simple to perform and requires

## *Native Plants Workshop*

**"Landscaping with Native Plants," Michael Sawyer, President, John Clayton Chapter, Virginia Native Plant Society, Saturday, August 17, 10 a.m. - 11 a.m. Melissa's Meadow, McCormick-Nagelson Tennis Center, Henry Street, Williamsburg. Contact Lisa Meddin, JCC Water Conservation Coordinator, 253-6859.**

## "Paddle" a Success!

The First Annual Powhatan Creek Paddle was a rousing success! Twenty people enjoyed a breezy, sunny Sunday canoe ride that took them up Powhatan Creek to flooded forests and down creek through marshland and cypress lined shores. Participants did a watershed map identification activity before departing to get an idea of the interconnectedness of watersheds. The Powhatan Creek Watershed flows into the James River watershed which flows into the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

At pre-selected sites down creek, Karen and David Fuss, trip leaders, talked about the functions of watersheds and marshes. Folks took part in activities such as "Marsh Metaphors" and "Food Webs" which used a hands-on approach to teach the environmental significance of marshes and forested wetlands.

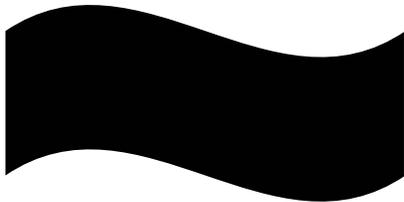
Boots Johnson, Water Quality Monitoring Director for the Friends, demonstrated water testing techniques, and explained the meanings of the chemical tests, for example: dissolved oxygen, nitrates, nitrites, and salinity, that the Friends perform monthly along seven selected sites along the creek.

After refreshments and conversation, the parade of ten red canoes made its way up creek in silence. All participants expressed their sense of wonder at the beauty that is Powhatan Creek. The Friends hope to sponsor more than annual canoe trips due to popular demand. Notice of future trips will be forthcoming.

We would like to extend our sincere thanks to James City County Parks and Recreation for use



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## **Things to do for the Powhatan Creek !**

Plan to attend our next meeting

Sign up for “Clean Virginia Waterways” Sat., Sept. 21, (contact Ann Hewitt at 229-5637 or [annjhewitt@cox.net](mailto:annjhewitt@cox.net))

Register for the Virginia Environmental Assembly to be held Sat., Oct. 5th in Williamsburg. For information, contact [ellenshepard@yahoo.com](mailto:ellenshepard@yahoo.com) or [www.vcnva.org](http://www.vcnva.org).

Learn the Coliscan technique to help monitor our creek! Contact Boots Johnson at 229-5279 or [johnsondr@whro.net](mailto:johnsondr@whro.net)

Make a donation to help with our water quality monitoring program by sending your tax-deductible check to FOPCW, Box 5112, Williamsburg, VA 23188.

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