



The Arlington ENVIRONMENT

www.arlingtonenvironment.org

Voluntary Pollution Reduction Program Benefits the Watershed

Regional Businesses Work To Reduce Contamination of the Bay

The 2004 State of the Chesapeake Bay report released in November gave the Bay's health a score of 27 out of 100. With such a dismal report, it is now more critical than ever that everyone within the Chesapeake Bay watershed do his or her part to help with restoration.

Addressing how one population in the watershed—businesses—can do their part is a program called Businesses for the Bay (B4B). B4B is a voluntary program created in 1996 by the Chesapeake Bay Program in which member companies commit to implementing pollution prevention in daily operations. The focus of the program is reducing the release of waste contaminants, addressing toxics chemicals and nutrients from both point source and nonpoint sources into the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries.

The program emphasizes support for the companies in the watershed interested in improving their pollution prevention efforts. The B4B program offers an annual meeting, workshops, and a mentoring program.

With more than 600 members

throughout the region, the collective efforts of the companies are impressive. Cost savings are an added bonus. "B4B members have reduced or recycled more than 7.8 billion pounds and saved more than \$509 million," said Mary Lynn Wilhere, the Businesses for the Bay Coordinator.

Each business addresses pollution specific to its industry. Areas that companies work on include energy efficiency, spill prevention and cleanup, waste and

materials storage, vehicle fueling, vehicle maintenance and washing, pesticide use, and landscape installation and use.

If companies are looking for guidance, they can access the B4B mentor list. The list contains the names and contact information for all of the B4B members who are willing to share their expertise. Each contact lists the specific areas for which that company can offer help. A wide variety of topics are

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Warren R. Standley



Scouts in Cub Pack 149 collected tulip poplar seeds at Potomac Overlook Regional Park as part of the Growing Native project in October.



Reducing Your Greenhouse Gas Contributions

The average American is responsible for 23.66 tons of carbon dioxide emissions per year. This carbon footprint, or representation of personal impact on the atmosphere through production of greenhouse gases, tallies direct and indirect personal contributions, including those from heating and powering your home, driving, flying, and even purchasing manufactured products.

A new, all volunteer organization, Carbonfund.org, allows people to make contributions to offset their carbon footprint. With the mission of buying carbon and retiring it, Carbonfund.org provides a means for interested individuals, businesses, schools, and organizations to more easily offset their carbon dioxide emissions.

According to Co-Presidents, Eric and Lesley Carlson, "We started Carbonfund.org while living overseas and seeing the environmental destruction and health problems in many developing countries throughout the

former Soviet Union. We felt we had to do something about the growing threat of climate change that is affecting the planet and tens of millions of people around the world." The couple recently moved to Silver Spring, Maryland and is now working on strategic planning for the project.

The Carbonfund.org Web site



was launched in the spring of 2004. The site has an online calculator that quickly estimates personal contributions of carbon dioxide, provides both an annual and monthly cost to offset those tons of carbon dioxide, and then allows the user to make a contribution. The user can either enter actual data about household energy use, driving, and flying, or use the calculator's averages on energy use from the U.S. Department of Energy. All donors receive a certificate recognizing their purchase.

Through a database of global brokers interested in selling credits, Carbonfund.org periodically seeks bids from these companies and purchases reductions. Carbonfund.org vows not to use or resell the carbon emissions they purchase. They plan to publish all of the carbon credits purchased in an online purchase history registry.

Carbonfund.org also emphasizes energy efficiency, the best way to reduce your carbon footprint. The Web site links to a list of organizations that have information about reducing energy use.

Since its creation, several dozen people have donated to Carbonfund.org. Eric Carlson is seeking partners and is excited about future opportunities. "The world does not need hundreds of different offset programs, nor would they be cost effective, but hundreds of environmental organizations or business groups should be promoting carbon offsets."

For more information visit www.carbonfund.org. ♠

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Businesses for the Bay Improve Water Quality

(continued from page 1)

addressed, many quite specific such as pollution prevention in a printing facility or solvent disposal.

Here in Arlington, there are two companies taking part in the program: ERG, a consulting firm, and Custom Print, Inc.

ERG was recently awarded the 2004 Businesses for the Bay Environmental Excellence Award for Outstanding Achievement for Pollution Prevention, Small Facility. ERG, who received this award just two years after joining B4B, has an Arlington office staffing 47 people.

Part of the rationale for this initiative was ERG's commitment to the local and global community, as well as an interest in practicing what they preach. "Part of ERG's environmental consulting work is supporting voluntary compliance programs. We wanted to see what pollution prevention measures we could apply to our operations," said Ronald Vance, a Senior Manager at ERG and the company's B4B contact person.

To start, ERG formed a Green

Team of volunteer staff interested in reducing pollution at their facility. They did an assessment of their operations and examined which Bay priorities lined up with their facility's pollution.

ERG developed programs for recycling, energy efficiency, commuter benefits, environmentally friendly purchasing, office supply reuse, employee education, and charity donations.

ERG's programs have been very successful. In 2003, the company recycled 6,197 pounds of materials, an increase in the amount of materials recycled in 2002 by more than 200%. ERG recycles a long list of materials, including the typical paper, glass, and plastic, but also computers, CDs and plastic bags.

Other ERG programs focus on changing staff practices to reduce waste. The commuter program encourages employees to take Metro, walk or bike to work, carpool, or telecommute. About 80% of employees take part in the program. ERG also maintains an

office supply reuse area where items can be returned and stored for reuse. ERG staff participate in regular donation programs, collecting clothing, cell phones, and even paper for an area school.

"Another benefit of participating in the B4B program is networking," continued Vance. "You can find out what other companies and organizations are doing." Since all companies are in the Chesapeake Bay watershed, there's a common focus among members.

Vance also shares advice for companies who are starting pollution prevention programs. "If a company is just getting started, the most important thing to do is form a team. Having a team really helps to get buy in and employee support."

For more information about the Businesses for the Bay program visit www.chesapeakebay.net/b4bay.htm. To find out more about ERG's activities, contact Ron Vance at 703-841-2154 or ronald.vance@erg.com. ♠

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The Nature of Arlington

Answers to Questions About Annoying, Bizarre, and Fascinating Happenings in Nature

by Sue Eisenfeld

Q: Are the black squirrels in Arlington a different species from the gray squirrels?

A: No.

Eastern gray squirrels (*Sciurus carolinensis*) commonly occur in two colors, gray and black, which leads people to think—mistakenly—that there are two different species. Eastern gray squirrels range from southern Canada down to Florida, from the East Coast to Texas. Although black ones are almost nonexistent in the southern United States (that is, North Carolina and south), they are more common farther north in Canada. In fact, black is often the dominant color in Ontario and Quebec. Some scientists believe that

this color difference based on latitude could indicate that the gene responsible for black coloration has some cold-weather adaptation associated with it. Albino eastern gray squirrels also occur in the United States, and there are rare instances of a reddish color (not to be confused with the red squirrel, *Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*, however). Some gray squirrels may also have a combination of colors. In fact, the overall gray color of the gray squirrel results from hairs having bands of brown, black, and white, or a “salt and pepper” appearance. Some sources note that gray squirrels from Maryland and the western

parts of Virginia and North Carolina are slightly darker and larger than those from eastern Virginia and most of the Carolinas. ♠



Greg Zell

A black squirrel enjoys a snack at Long Branch Nature Center.

Four Mile Run Watershed Cleanup

Please join ACE and the Arlington County Park Rangers for the annual Four Mile Run watershed cleanup. The cleanup will take place on Saturday, March 12 from 9 a.m. to noon. The cleanup is done in preparation of the March release of trout into Four Mile Run, with a kids only fishing day scheduled for Saturday, March 19.



Locations for the cleanup include Bluemont Park, Glencarlyn Park, Arlington Mill Community Center, Barcroft Park, and Shirlington Park. For

more information, or to register, please call the Park Ranger office at 703-525-0168. ♠

Green Home Choice Program

Arlington has developed the Green Home Choice program as an incentive for homebuilders to build and



remodel green. Builders who participate in the program are offered front-of-the-line plan review and free publicity.

Starting in January, Arlington County is presenting a Green Home Choice Program speaker series. Please visit www.arlingtonva.us for more information on the series or call Stella Tarnay at 703-228-4792. ♠



A Clean Solution for Dry Cleaning

by Jacob Phillips

With a growing trend of environmentally conscious consumers comes an environmentally friendly solution from an industry previously known for its substantive use of toxic chemicals.

In the 1930s, the dry cleaning industry began using perchlorethylene, or *perc* for short. Perc is today used by more than 85% of dry cleaners around the world.

GreenEarth Cleaning® is an environmentally safe dry cleaning process which uses a non-toxic silicone based solvent as an alternative to perc. The silicone based solvent is odorless and safe on all exposure levels, oral, dermal, and inhalation.

Furthermore, it does an excel-

lent job cleaning your clothes – “it’s like your clothes have been in a mineral bath” stated Buddy Gritz, president of Presto Valet of Virginia, located in Alexandria. “Most importantly, it’s safe for everybody, the customers, employees, garments, and the environment.”

The EPA has fully recognized the GreenEarth Cleaning® process as an environmentally safe process. This means that GreenEarth dry cleaners do not have to register for Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) permits, previously needed for the perc based solvents.

There are roughly 250 dry cleaners nationwide that have begun to use this environmentally safe alternative. According to their Web site, there are eight dry cleaners using the GreenEarth Cleaning® process in the Northern Virginia area.

Please visit www.greeneearthcleaning.org for a list of local cleaners and more information on the GreenEarth Cleaning® process. ♠

Science of Our Living Planet

The Gaia theory is a beautiful and compelling scientific idea of our Earth as a living system. For those looking to learn more about this theory, Martin Ogle, Chief Naturalist with the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority, is offering a multimedia presentation on Wednesday, March 16 at 7:00 p.m. at Arlington Central Library auditorium, 1015 N. Quincy Street.

The Gaia theory posits that the organic and inorganic components of Planet Earth operate together as a single living system that is self-generating and self-regulating. It suggests that this living system has automatically controlled global temperature, atmospheric content, ocean salinity, and other factors to ensure its own survival. In this respect, the living system of Earth can be thought of analogous to the workings of any individual organism that regulates body temperature, blood salinity, etc. This presentation is for scientists and non-scientists alike.

This free program is co-sponsored by the Arlington Retirement Learning Institute and ACE. More information: 703-528-5406. ♠

Help protect Arlington's streams and the Chesapeake Bay!

Report Stream Pollution: 703-558-2222
 Be a Stream Volunteer! 703-228-3610
 Household Hazardous Waste: 703-228-6832

www.arlingtonva.us

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A Challenge for Arlington's Neighborhoods

A team of Arlingtonians is challenging *your* neighborhood to become the most wildlife-friendly in Arlington County. The challenge is part of the Arlington Community Wildlife Habitat (ACWH) project, a three-year initiative to educate and assist Arlingtonians in the creation of wildlife habitats to benefit its people, plants and wildlife.

Through the Wildlife Habitat Neighborhood Challenge, the ACWH team hopes to reach its goal to become the third community in Virginia certified by the National Wildlife Federation, and the first certified County in the nation.

The Wildlife Habitat Neighborhood Challenge will take place from January through September of 2005. In addition to boasting rights of being the most wildlife-friendly neighborhood in Arlington, all civic associations that certify at least five new properties by September 30, 2005 will be recognized by the Arlington County Board. Prizes will also be awarded to civic associations certifying the most properties.

All over the County, people have already discovered the fun and fascination of creating habitats that attract songbirds, butterflies and other wildlife. Creating wildlife habitat offers a host of potential environmental benefits including helping to increase the tree canopy and reducing water runoff and the spread of invasive plants; all the while making the County a more relaxing, beautiful and educational place to be.

And it's easy - many yards already contain the four required

elements (food, water, shelter and places to raise young) to become a certified habitat.

"I've enjoyed creating a wildlife habitat in my yard tremendously," said Janine Finnell, one of the chairs of the ACWH team. "Not only is it a beautiful setting, but we have reduced our lawn mowing time from 90 to 20 minutes!"

Upon hearing about the positive impact to the community, County Board members Jay Fiset and Chris Zimmerman have also certified their own yards. They hope their actions will encourage other Arlingtonians to join in and get certified too.

The ACWH project is sponsored by citizens, the Department of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources, Arlingtonians for a Clean Environment, and the Virginia Native Plant Society. The ACWH team has been working with the National Wildlife Federation on becoming a certified community since 2002 and hopes to complete the project in 2005. Project goals include educating the community about protecting and creating wildlife habitat and creating wildlife friendly sites in backyards, schoolyards, parks, places of worship and workplaces.

Many parks, schools, and private homes throughout the County have already been

certified. The ACWH team is continuing to promote the creation of wildlife habitat in all types of settings but is focusing on recruiting more homeowners to complete the certification for their yards.

For more information on the Arlington Community Wildlife Habitat project and the Wildlife Habitat Neighborhood Challenge, please visit www.arlingtonenvironment.org. ♠

Wildlife Habitat Open House

If you're ready or thinking about getting your property certified, drop by the Wildlife Habitat Open House on Sunday, February 6 from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. at Long Branch Nature Center, 625 S. Carlin Springs Rd., Arlington. Enjoy light refreshments as you talk to the experts, explore displays and pick up free resources. There will be volunteers available to help you complete your backyard certification so bring your plant lists and photos. To RSVP, contact the ACE office at 703-228-6427 or office@arlingtonenvironment.org.

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The Potomac River Watershed: An Interactive Forum

The Potomac River has been billed as the wildest river running through a metropolitan setting anywhere in the world. The river offers tremendous value as a recreational resource, through its beautiful scenery, and as habitat for many species of wildlife.

For our 2005 annual meeting, ACE is taking a closer look at the Potomac River. Please join us on Wednesday, March 9 for a panel presentation and discussion on issues facing the Potomac River watershed.

By some measures, the Potomac has made a tremendous comeback. Shad populations are returning and aquatic grass populations are up. However, other indicators aren't so positive. There are safety recommendations about eating some species of fish from the Potomac and water quality tests indicate coliform bacteria pollution. A recent algal bloom closed many Potomac River beaches.

The March 9 panel participants will provide their perspective on the watershed, touching on Potomac River history, water quality, watershed management, and volunteer engagement. The program will also include time for questions and discussion.

The panelists include:

- **Matthew Logan**, Executive Director of the Potomac Conservancy based in Silver Spring, Maryland (www.potomac.org).
- **Jim Connolly**, Executive Director of the Anacostia Watershed Society based in Washington, DC (www.anacostiaws.org).
- **Jim Cummins**, Director of Living Resources with the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin (www.potomacriver.org).

The forum is scheduled for Wednesday, March 9 from 7:00 to 9:30 p.m. at NRECA, 4301 Wilson Blvd., Arlington. In addition to the Potomac River program, the evening will include elections for the 2005-2006 ACE board of directors, announcements of upcoming programs and volunteer projects, and refreshments.

The NRECA building is accessible via the Ballston Metro. Parking is also available in the Ballston Mall parking lot or in the NRECA building parking lot after 8:00 p.m.

For more information, contact the ACE office at 703-228-6427 or office@arlingtonenvironment.org. ♠

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mark Your Calendar for Our Spring Events

To register for any of these events, contact ACE at 703-228-6427 or volunteer@arlingtonenvironment.org.

Wildlife Habitat Open House, Sunday, February 6, 1 to 4 p.m. Long Branch Nature Center, 625 S. Carlin Springs Road. Learn how to get your property certified as a wildlife habitat. (See p. 6 for more details.)

Water Stewardship Leader Training, Sunday, February 13, noon to 6 p.m. Fairlington Community Center, 3308 S. Stafford Street. Join residents of Arlington, Falls Church, and Alexandria in an exciting neighborhood program to protect local streams.

Invasive Plant Removal, Saturday, February 19, 10 a.m. to noon. Meet at Lubber Run amphitheater, North Columbus Street and 2nd Street North. Help remove invasive species from one of Arlington's parks. Bring work gloves and pruning shears.

The Potomac River Watershed: An Interactive Forum, Wednesday, March 9, 7 to 9:30 p.m. Organized in conjunction with the ACE annual meeting, NRECA, 4301 Wilson Blvd. Learn about issues facing the Potomac River in an interactive presentation. Find out how you can get more involved in ACE. (See p. 7 for more details.)

Four Mile Run Watershed Cleanup, Saturday, March 12, 9 a.m. to noon. Join ACE at Arlington Mill Community Center, Barcroft Park, and Shirlington Park. The event is organized by the Arlington County Park Rangers. Please wear sturdy water-proof shoes and bring work or dishwashing gloves.

Potomac Watershed Cleanup, Saturday, April 2, 9 a.m. to noon. Join ACE and the Potomac Conservancy at the Chain Bridge site located at the intersection of Glebe and Chain Bridge Roads. More sites across the region: www.fergusonfoundation.org.

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