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From The Chair ...

by Sam White

These are precarious times for Western Maryland, as suburban growth has reached the outer limits of Allegany County. We have all seen sprawl lurching towards Sideling Hill as we travel down state. Frederick and Washington Counties have had enough, imposing certain restrictions on development that has lowered the quality of life and finances of those two counties.

As a result, developers are looking to Allegany County, further into West Virginia, and the Cumberland Valley of Pennsylvania. How do we react? Do we want to see our children, siblings, and friends move away due to a lack of jobs? Of course not. Instead, we need to promote smart growth: growth in districts identified by the state as having the infrastructure to support new homes and businesses.

So, let's 1) I identify the districts and neighborhoods in Allegany and Garrett Counties that have the basic services to handle growth. 2) Recognize the special places we must preserve to maintain a quality of life that is known in our part of the state. These include the headwaters of regional streams, family farms, public parks and forests, and various other special places. 3) Analyze how our planning codes can be strengthened to promote smart growth and finally 4) Engage our public officials and educate them on the values of smart growth. If they are unconcerned, we'll replace them through voter education.

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Sprawl Hits Home?

You have likely heard by now of the contentious potential for the construction of Terrapin Run, a proposed housing community in eastern Allegany county, to contain several thousand single-family dwellings. Final approval of this project will epitomize the arrival of sprawl into otherwise agrarian eastern Allegany County. The Western Maryland Group of the Sierra Club will host a free public program on the topic of Sprawl/Smart Growth on Tuesday, November 15th at the Frostburg Public Library on Main Street at 7:30 PM.

Our featured speaker will be Betsy Johnson, Chair of the Sierra Club's Maryland Chapter and a member of the steering committee of the Sierra Club's *Metro DC Challenge to Sprawl* campaign. Betsy has many years of volunteer experience in fighting sprawl in the Washington, D.C. area. We will discuss ideas to keep this unsustainable growth out of Western Maryland, and how to promote growth within existing local infrastructure.

FREE PUBLIC PROGRAM

Tuesday, November 15, 2005 – 7:30 PM
Frostburg Public Library – Main Street

Please Join Us For An Informative Discussion
Relating To Local "Smart Growth" Issues

At 6 PM on this same day we'll host an informal, dutch-treat style, get-acquainted dinner at El Canelo's in Frostburg for anyone interested in becoming more active with local environmental issues. We are looking for individuals willing to donate a small amount of time in our efforts to preserve Western Maryland's environment for our families, for our future. We'll need a dinner head count, so please let us know if you will attend dinner by e-mailing Sam White at cedarrockcsa@yahoo.com (or call 301-264-4162) by Monday, Nov. 14. Please feel free to forward this announcement to other interested persons. All are welcome to attend!

From The Chair ... continued from page 1

Please join us at our public program on Tuesday, November 15, 2005 at 7:30 PM in the Frostburg Public Library to discuss this important issue.

Sprawl will continue to be the cancer upon the land as long as there is a cheap fuel to power the personal and commercial vehicle fleet in the U.S. The end of this cheap fuel may or may not be at hand in the next decade. For now, the only hope we have will be from those who volunteer their time to preserve Western Maryland's open spaces, for our families, for our future.

S.O.S. ... Calling All Volunteers

Your hard-working local Executive Committee (ExCom) is tired. Can you help, please? We are looking for volunteers to serve on the ExCom. Already too busy? We understand completely. Would you consider serving for an abbreviated 6-month term? If this is then good for you, we openly welcome your continuance on a typical two-year term. Or not. We're pretty easy-going - it's completely up to you.

Positions include: Chair, Vice-chair, Programs, Conservation, Membership, Outings, Fundraising, and Political, to name a few. Regardless of your interest(s), we have room for you! Following are some of the activities and special interests with current Western Maryland Group ExCom member involvement:

- National Sierra Club Agriculture Issues Committee
- National Sierra Club ATV / ORV Policy Committee
- Savage River State Forest (SRSF) Citizens Advisory Board
- Green Ridge State Forest (GRSF) Citizens Advisory Board
- DNR Wildlife Diversity Advisory Committee

Other areas in need of attention include:

- Web site maintenance
- Hike leaders
- Newsletter editor
- Newsletter article contributors
- Membership
- Education / Media
- Public Programs
- Issue Champions / Subject Matter Experts
 - Wind
 - Sprawl
 - Recycling
 - You Name It

We really do need your help, however large or small. Please contact any ExCom member via the contact information on page 6. S.O.S ... Thank YOU!!

Grass-Fed Beef

Wholesale and Retail

Cedar Rock Farm, Mount Savage, MD
301-264-4162 or visit cedarrockfarm.org

The State Forests They Are A Changin'

by Mark Diehl - Conservation Chair

Serving on the Savage River State Forest's (SRSF) Citizens Advisory Board as the conservation representative since 1997 has been an interesting, educational and rewarding experience. The depth and breadth of issues are nothing short of exceptional. And you'd think that it was just a bunch of trees. There are so many competing interests for this special Maryland treasure that I am sometimes left wondering what its future will be. One thing is for sure though, under the current state administration, timber interests are once again king. Add to this mix the fact that DNR recently reorganized wherein Parks and Forests are now under separate management structures. Also, all DNR rangers were transferred to DNR Natural Resources Police. Gone are the familiar park rangers, with whom the public has developed a special relationship over the years. DNR hasn't seen a re-org of this magnitude for many years. How this all translates on the ground remains to be seen.

Non-extractive activities are taking a lower priority on our state forests. It has already been made known that maintenance of the 17-mile Big Savage Mountain hiking trail will cease. It's up to volunteers now. Apparently existing SRSF resources vis-à-vis priorities simply do not exist to continue maintaining this and other trails.

Recent timber harvests are at all-time highs in SRSF, with DNR's fiscal year 2007 target set at ~2.5 million board feet. There is now a two-year back-log of approved timber sales on the books. All DNR has to do to ratchet up the harvest levels is to simply issue the order. Garrett County gets twenty-five cents on every dollar earned within the Savage River/New Germany complex (payment in lieu of taxes). This translates to approximately \$400,00 per year (or about 1% of Garrett County's annual operating budget), depending on the value of timber in a given year. DNR keeps the rest.

There's gold in them thar trees - easy money with relatively little overhead incurred. DNR's portion of timber sale profit goes into the Forest and Park Reserve Fund - a special fund which DNR maintains separate from appropriations made by the

legislature. Translated: these monies are used discretionarily across DNR; they do not remain within the operating budget of the local forest unit itself. Pity, because if SRSF operated as a profit center, miracles could be worked, including improvements in habitat conservation. Forest recreation opportunities would be fantastic. The laundry list is long; boat launching facilities; hiking trail maintenance; creation of designated ORV trails; expansion of cross-country skiing and mountain biking trail systems; maintenance/improvement of camping facilities; wildland boundary signage; interpretive educational signage; expansion of wildlands system; invasive species removal, just to name a few. These recreational and conservation goals are simply now not a priority in the management of our state forests, despite the fact that repeated studies show a markedly larger income for the local economies from non-extractive activities than that generated from timber sales. The timber industry is a well-established and well-funded voice. Recreational interests tend to be more individual-oriented, hence their voices are not cohesive and heard -- they are simply the silent majority.

Again, non-extractive activities are taking a lower priority, and how this all translates on the ground remains to be seen. The current DNR management philosophy, as influenced strongly by the current state government administration, has shifted to an approach wherein DNR land units are re-focusing on the expertise of the land unit's historical primary intent. In the case of our state forests, this appears to be silviculture (i.e., fundamentally managing trees for profit, not for ecosystem and recreational services).

I could write volumes, but the space of this newsletter medium simply does not permit it. However, my passion for the natural wonder of SRSF runs deep, and I am always available for lengthy discussions with anyone with any viewpoint. Call anytime. If we don't have our voices heard on the myriad issues facing our state forests, they may soon turn into glorified tree farms, replete with new, intrusive roads and the concomitant trash dumping, invasive exotic species and motorized abuses that will invariably follow them. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sierra Club Convention ...

... a trip report from Sam White

The first Sierra Club Summit, held September 8-11 in San Francisco, was a resounding success for the Club and its attendees. I went as a member of the Sierra Club's Sustainable Agriculture Committee. Our committee is comprised of seven members with agriculture concerns / backgrounds, and our purpose is to advise the Club on agriculture issues. It was great to meet like-minded folks from throughout the country, and to hear their stories on environmental / agriculture issues.

The summit itself was a great learning experience. Although I did not have the time to sit in on most of the sessions, I was able to catch "Ten Consumer Choices That Can Change the World".

Fred Kirshenmann, Director of the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, Iowa State University gave a speech about locally grown food and its importance in a sustainable world. All of us have murmured to ourselves, while shopping, "I wish they had that product". Fred explained that it takes 15 people in one week to go to a store manager and request a product in order to create a demand for that store to carry that product. Of course, that product must sell for it to continue its existence in that store. So, we need to go to our local supermarkets, whether it is Martin's in Cumberland or the Grantsville Foodland, and ask for locally grown food.

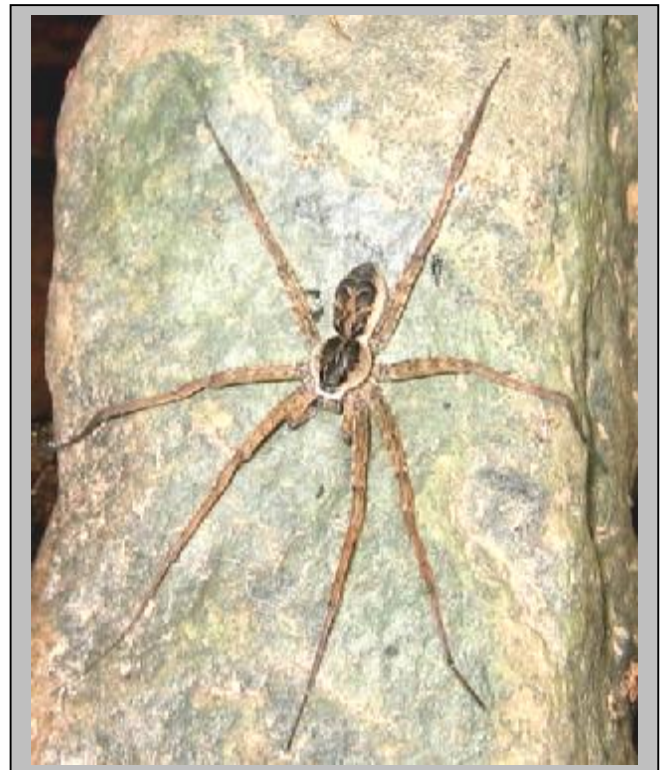
Whether it be Higson's corn, Miltenberger's tomatoes, Dubansky's lettuce, or DeBerry's peppers, their agriculture practices are sustainable. Food that travels 2,500 miles to our dinner table is not. Look to a program next year on where our food comes from.

The highlight of the summit was, by far, attending a speech by Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. RFK, Jr. was, to put it bluntly, on fire. He spoke of the environmental laws that have been rewritten since George W. Bush took office; that clean air and clean water are inalienable rights given to all Americans; and religion and wilderness. Here is a direct quote

from his speech, which can be found at the Sierra Club's Summit website:
<http://www.sierrasummit2005.org>:

"We don't know Michelangelo by reading his biography. We know him by looking at the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. And we know our creator best by immersing ourselves in creation. And particularly wilderness, which is the undiluted work of the Creator. [applause] And you know if you look at every one of the great religious traditions throughout the history of mankind, the central epiphany always occurs in the wilderness. Buddha had to go to the wilderness to experience self realization and nirvana. Mohammad had to go to a cave in the wilderness. Moses had to go to the wilderness of Mt. Sinai for 40 days alone to get the Commandments. The Jews had to spend 40 years wandering the wilderness to purge themselves of 400 years of slavery in Egypt. Christ had to go into the wilderness for 40 days to discover his divinity for the first time."

All in all, a great time for the Sierra Club and conservationists around the country.



Fishing Spider on Savage River

Citizen's Forest Watch – A Good Idea

by Mark Diehl

Maryland's recent budget woes have reduced DNR's manpower levels to levels not seen in many years. There simply aren't enough DNR folks on the ground to cover all the bases, particularly on the larger acreages comprising our state forests. Enter the Citizens Forest Watch concept. Now more than ever DNR could use our assistance as additional eyes and ears on the ground. Our goal is to form a Forest Watch group for each state forest unit. If you are even an occasional visitor to state forests, then you are a candidate to volunteer. Simply being in a state forest is more than half the battle – the rest is easy. What are you seeing during your visits? Trash dumping? ORV/ATV abuse? Roadside timber theft? Illegal logging? Boundary infringements (e.g., illegal livestock grazing)? Poaching? Property defamation (e.g., signage, gates)? These are merely some of the examples of illegal activities that occur, and could benefit from their anonymous reporting. You will not become legally involved. Your help is needed. You can make a difference by simply participating informally. Can you identify erosion problems? Hiked a trail in which a certain section is in need of maintenance?

Not all Forest Watch participation involves contentious issues. Are you familiar with the Rare, Threatened and Endangered (RTE) Species reporting process? This is a process offered by DNR's Heritage Division, the folks responsible for identifying and working to protect Maryland's vanishing species. Our state forests are often the last bastions of habitat for many RTE species. Participation as a Forest Watch volunteer will provide you with an opportunity to become acquainted with persons possessing great knowledge of state forest flora and fauna. This is a wonderful and free opportunity. Become competent in identifying invasive exotic species, too. Where are you seeing them? We could even conduct occasional search-and-destroy outings for these unwelcome intruders. Learn to identify signs of the dreaded Woolly Hemlock Adelgid, or the Emerald Ash Borer. Have you encountered a rabid animal? Spot any rare neo-tropical migratory songbirds? What about Saw-Whet owls? Can you identify old growth forest? Are

you a hunter or fisherman? Plenty of opportunities abound for sharing what you see in the field. Is the turkey population healthy? See many bears? Seeing signs of deer overgrazing in particular areas?



Large Mud Pit Caused By ORV / ATV Abuse
In Savage Ravines Wildland

It is said that if one cannot report it, one cannot manage it. More data simply means better management. The value of your feedback from the field cannot be overstated. An added benefit of the Forest Watch concept to some is that it alleviates any misgivings or discomfort with reporting (especially illegal) observations to DNR directly. Some folks understandably simply do not wish to get involved in this manner. Regardless, please know that whatever you may report will be used with utmost discretion. At your request, you as the source of a given piece of information will not be revealed. This is a wonderful opportunity to better learn the state forest lands and their fabulous diversity, at the same time assisting with an improvement of their overall management and protection.

If you are an occasional or regular visitor to our state forests – for any reason – please contact me if you are interested in participating – at any level. Depending upon the level of interest received, I will organize a meeting wherein we will collectively decide how best and most efficiently to proceed. I may be reached at 301.724.6238. Thank you for your consideration of this request. I look forward to meeting you. Enjoy the woods!

Contact Information

Executive Committee (ExCom)			
NAME	POSITION	PHONE	E-MAIL
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Louis Bernstein	Vice Chair	301.697.2760	satya@aol.com
Mark Diehl	Conservation, Newsletter	301.724.6238	mad55@mindspring.com
Karen Krogh	Membership	-	ccaupp@mindspring.com
John Dunkle	Treasurer	301.689.5830	jdunkle@hereintown.net

Looking for Christmas gift ideas? Please consider giving a Sierra Club Membership - so easy! - see form on p.2