



The Sierra Log

Newsletter of the Anne Arundel County Group of the Sierra Club, Maryland Chapter

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Council Rejects Zoning Complaints Impediment

The County Council July 20 voted unanimously to reject legislation that would have required anyone who wanted to alert authorities to a possible violation of zoning laws to make his or her name and address public.

The measure had been offered by Councilman Ed Reilly in response to charges by a property owners group that they were being harassed by county inspectors and that they had a right to “face their accusers.” The accusers, in their view, would not be the public authorities actually investigating possible violations of the zoning laws, but rather the citizens who had brought possible zoning violations to the attention of the county.

The Sierra Club and other environmental and citizens’ groups had testified against the plan, arguing that it would discourage citizens from reporting possible threats to the environment. A danger, they said, is that a property owner who felt wronged might seek retribution against the citizen who initially raised the issue.

Group Chair David Prosten told the council: “If you want our laws upheld, if you want the people to honor those laws and stand behind your efforts by helping you to enforce them, then why on earth would you make some people fear to do so?”

About a dozen supporters of the proposal, wearing red T-shirts reading “Stop the Zoning Gestapo,” had come out to the public hearing on the measure.

When he cast his “no” vote against the plan, Councilman Josh Cohen noted that the role of the Nazi Gestapo was to subjugate the citizenry and quell dissent and free speech. In a democracy such as America’s, he said, the system supports the right of people to speak without the fear of retribution. He objected to county employees being likened to Gestapo agents.

Every council member voted against the proposal including Tricia Johnson, who a week earlier had been chosen by the council to fill out the unexpired term of Reilly, who had in turn been named to fill out the unexpired term of State Senator Janet Greenip (R).

Calendar of Events

Sierra Club Outings are open to all members and non-members.

All outings begin at the trailhead. In the interests of conservation and convenience, the Sierra Club encourages carpooling to outings from the meeting place. However, the carpool is not part of the actual outing, and the Sierra Club assumes no liability for it. Participants assume the risks associated with this travel. A modest driver reimbursement, if any, can be arranged between the driver and passengers.

Reservations are not necessary for outings unless so stated. In order to participate in one of the Sierra Club's outings, you will need to sign a liability waiver. If you would like to read a copy of the waiver prior to the outing, please call 415-977-5630 or see the website:

www.sierraclub.org/outings/chapter/forms/

For general information about the local club, call David Prosten at 410-263-6341.

Ex-Comm Meetings –

The Executive Committee meets on the second Thursday of every month, except August and December, in Room 114 at Calvary United Methodist Church on Rowe Blvd in Annapolis. 6:30 pm. All are welcome – bring a friend!

Newsletter Deadline – Friday, September 18

For the October/November issue. Call 410-224-3384 or email the editor, patchurch@comcast.net.

Saturday, September 12 – Eastern Shore Paddle Trip

See eagles and other shore birds at the Blackwater Wildlife Refuge. Contact Liz at liz2vh@olg.com or at 410-267-9009 if interested.

2009 Sojourn

Liz Vanden Heuvel

The Sojourn got off to an exciting and scary start on June 19th. The water level on the Patuxent was quite high due to all the rain, and fast-moving water. As we launched, the river rose another foot, later determined to be caused by a dam release in Laurel. A number of paddlers flipped their boats over and some were carried downstream without their boats. Some people got to land and walked out, some were stranded with no land access.

Emergency responders arrived first by helicopter and finally by boat. News helicopters were also overhead and at the 4H Center. No one was hurt, although several people were frightened and shaken up.

We proceeded by car and shuttle to Mt. Calvert where the trip resumed its normal pattern. There were educational and restoration programs plus contra dancing, a concert and a sing-a-long. The Sojourn ended after an owl prowl and night paddle on Mattponi Creek.

25 Attend Picnic for Volunteers

About 25 Anne Arundel club volunteers and volunteers-to-be turned out for a late June picnic to recognize the work of those giving some of their time to help the club operate and discuss opportunities with those thinking of getting more involved.



Over hotdogs, hamburgers, veggie burgers and all the trimmings, club leaders and members talked about the club's work on behalf of the environment. From staffing tables at public events to leading hikes to writing letters to the editor on environmental issues, the all-volunteer club is always looking for more membership involvement.

If *you'd* like to get more involved, call David Prosten at 410-263-6341 and learn more about the club's needs and opportunities.



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Chesapeake Bay Town Hall Meeting – August 11, Annapolis

President Obama has ordered federal agencies to draft plans by September 9 to clean up the Chesapeake Bay. A diverse group representing business, academic, faith, environmental and other interests will meet with a top official from the EPA to discuss specific steps the Administration must take.

The meeting will be from 6:30-8:00 pm at St. Philip's Episcopal Church, 30 Bestgate Road. Participants invited include Lisa Jackson, EPA Administrator, Chuck Fox, EPA Senior Advisor on the Chesapeake Bay, Dr. Don Boesch, President, University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science, Will Baker, President of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, and Tommy Landers, Policy Advocate, Environment Maryland. For more information, contact Alana Wase, Conservation Program Coordinator, MD Sierra Club 301-277-7111.

Electronic Newsletter Now Available!

Help us save paper, postage, labor – and ultimately a few trees – by opting to see our newsletter on the Web. Instead of mailing you a printed copy every two months we'll send you a notification via e-mail, containing a link to an electronic edition on our Club website.

Send an e-mail to JHoff2370@verizon.net, with "electronic newsletter" in the subject line, and your name and address in the body of the message (so we can remove you from the printed version mailing list).

We are developing a database exclusively for this project and will not share your e-mail address. This is not mandatory – if you do not respond, you will still receive a paper copy in the regular mail.