



Forest Planning Set to Resume for the George Washington NF

The process of revising the Forest Plan for the George Washington National Forest (GWNF) appears ready to resume. Though no dates or schedules are yet in place, the GWNF website (www.fs.fed.us/r8/gwj/forestplan/revision) indicates that public meetings will be held in early summer. Forest Plans dictate how national forests are managed for 10 to 15 years at a time, so it is extremely important that interested citizens make their opinions known about how the GWNF should be managed. The current GWNF plan was finalized in 1993. Attending public meetings is one of the best ways to be heard. Comments via letters, emails, phone calls and faxes will also be critical.

Many readers are aware that the process of revising the GWNF Plan

began in early 2007, with five public meetings in Virginia plus one in West Virginia. When planning regulations established by the Forest Service in 2005 were ruled to be in violation of federal law by a federal appeals court judge last year, planning was put "on hold." Since then, the Forest Service has completed an Environmental Im-



Ramsey's Draft Addition Roadless Area.

pact Statement for their new planning regulation, and on April 21, 2008 put new regulations back in place. Two lawsuits have already been filed that challenge these newest regulations. Despite these challenges and the prospect of additional ones, the Forest Service wants to move forward with planning on the GWNF and other national forests.

Wild Virginia will be among the many groups that will be heavily involved in this process and we encourage everyone to participate. Our website (www.wildvirginia.org) will keep you informed and provide information about public meetings and how to communicate with the Forest Service about the Plan. We can add you to our email list also, which will keep **con't page 4**

Citizen Rights on Trial at the Supreme Court

One of the most interesting, exciting and important events that will determine the future of forest protection nation-wide will be happening in Washington DC this coming fall. That's when the United States Supreme Court will be deciding whether to uphold existing citizen rights to participate in agency decisions on projects in all national forests or whether to significantly reduce them.

The case is known as *Summers v. Earth Island Institute*. The Federal District Court and 9th Circuit Court of Appeals have already upheld litigation, first successfully argued by *Heartwood* (a coalition group of

which Wild Virginia is a member), that challenged the Forest Service's tendency to exempt significant projects from environmental review under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) through the issuing of "categorical exclusions" or CEs.

In national forests all over the country, Forest Service administrators have claimed that a wide range of timber sales, burning projects, off-road vehicle trails, road construction and special use permits don't have to be analyzed for environmental impacts because their negative impacts are "insignificant". In addition, they asserted that the public have no legal process (which is guaranteed by NEPA) to have their concerns re-

corded and addressed. Well, so far, the courts have ruled otherwise. But the Federal Government is appealing to the highest court of the land to overrule these lower court rulings and slam the door on our federal rights that have been in place for decades.

This case applies directly to the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests and to all Virginia residents. The GW is the closest national forest to Washington DC. Those who regularly visit Virginia's national forests live closer to our nation's capital than all the other national forests. This ruling has the potential to affect virtually every forest project **con't page 4**

Wild Virginia Update

Letter from our President, Eric Gilchrist — Lessons from the Other Side of Our Planet

Early this spring, Deborah and I were fortunate enough to visit India, the most fascinating country I have ever seen. It presents a whole different and wonderful experience. We learned so much and would be delighted to return.

We did not see many trees. This does not mean that trees and forest are not important to the people of India. Their reverence for trees dates back centuries. Around 300 BC, wise and benevolent rulers of India issued orders to protect wild animals and forests and also created tree planting programs.

However, later episodes in their history point to conflicts over trees. Most famously, scores of people from a Bishnoi village were killed in 1730 AD as they clung to the trees that were being axed. A local ruler at the time needed wood for the lime kiln for his new palace. Led by the women, the villagers attempted to resist by hugging and encircling the trees. But the Maharaja's soldiers were determined to follow orders. Over time, and tree by tree, 363 Bishnois gave up their lives. Drawn by their actions and news, the Maharaja came to the scene of the massacre. Honoring the courage of the community, he ordered that the tree cutting be halted. Today, a small temple marks the place and 363 khejri trees commemorate the martyrs.

When the British started ruling India in the mid-1800's, they saw the forests as an economic resource (timber) and issued state control over them. However, the forest dependent communities treasured the forests for food, medicinals, fuel and fodder and understood the critical relationship they had with them. This is still true today. It is amazing to see how the villagers use their forests for many purposes without killing live trees.

In 1906, there was a conflict in the hilly region called Chipko. As forest clearing was expanding, again it was the women who came to the rescue first. They physically hugged the trees to prevent their being cut down, giving rise to what is now called the [Chipko movement](#). Having healthy forests was a survival matter for local people. Their act was a nonviolent resistance movement. Women were more directly affected by environmental degradation and deforestation, and thus connected the issues most easily. However, both female and male activists played pivotal roles in the movement.

At its height in the early 1970's, Chipko gained widespread attention from the international [environmental movement](#) that was making major headway in drawing global attention to ecological concerns. The tactic of tree hugging also inspired

the imagination of activists in the West.

Finally, in 1976 and under pressure, the governance and forest plans of the forest came under two objectives. 'Development without destruction' and 'forests for survival' were the themes of their next two five-year plans, aiming at increasing wildlife reserves and linking forest development with the tribal economy. However, still with global market pressures increasing, the conflicts are not over.

I admire the heroics of Chipko activists and Bishnois. Today we can hug trees in a different way. We have the right to let our legislators know personally by mail and by phone how important the passage of enforceable laws is to achieving real national forest protection. We also have opportunities to write to the media, to educate others about the value of healthy Virginia forests, and to support Wild Virginia programs.

These are the critical actions you can take today. Please take a moment to let your voice be heard so that future generations can enjoy our native forests. Chipko saying:

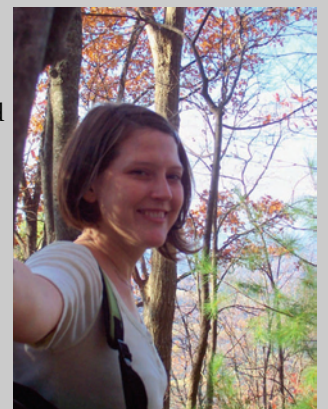
"Ecology is permanent economy."



Meet New Board Member, Jennifer Johnson

Wild Virginia is pleased to welcome Jennifer Johnson as its newest board member. Jennifer is an environmental data analyst for a consulting firm in Charlottesville. She graduated from the University of Virginia in 2002 and decided to stay in Charlottesville largely because of the beautiful natural environment that we are so lucky to enjoy here in central Virginia. She volunteers for several organizations in Charlottesville, and is currently fighting the construction of a coal-fired power plant near her hometown in southwest Virginia. In the words of the great environmentalist Ed Abbey, she is a "part-time crusader" who loves the outdoors and feels compelled to do everything she can to protect it while saving time to enjoy it!

WELCOME Jennifer!



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WILD VIRGINIA



Protecting Your Favorite Wild Places

David Hannah
Conservation Director
PO Box 1065
Charlottesville, VA 22902
(434) 971-1553
<http://www.wildvirginia.org>
dhannah@wildvirginia.org

Board of Directors

Eric Gilchrist—President
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Kristin Taverna—Secretary
Nathan Van Hooser—Treasurer
Chris Bowlen
Jen Creasy
Jason Halbert
Cynthia Hurst
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Outings Coordinator—Heather Horn

Layout Design—Kristin Taverna

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Wild Virginia Hikes and Outings

All hike info also available on our website: <http://wildvirginia.org/programsRecreation.html>

A Full Outings Calendar : COME JOIN US!

Saturday, June 7th **Trail Work Day in** **Ramsey's Draft Wilderness**

June 7 is National Trails Day. Join Wild Virginia as we team with the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club (PATC) and Virginia Wilderness Committee to clean and clear a section of the Bald Ridge Trail in the beautiful Ramsey's Draft Wilderness in the George Washington National Forest. Women, men and teenagers are all invited to have fun with us. A number of trees have blown down across the trail. Bring work gloves, water, lunch and sturdy boots. Please also bring crosscut saws if you have them. Loppers, wedges, axes and other hand tools are welcome too. No chainsaws may be used in a wilderness area.

To carpool from Charlottesville, meet at JavaJava, 2214 Ivy Road (by Sneak Reviews) at 7:30 am. You can also meet us at Mountain House Picnic Area (the trailhead for Ramsey's Draft trail) on Route 250 west of Staunton at 9:00 am. Contact Eric at 434-293-8039 or ericg@ntelos.net with questions about the outing. The work leader is Al Dahler of PATC, 540-943-6369 or aadahler@ntelos.net.

Saturday, July 19th **Wildlife Center of Virginia**

Join us for a family fun hike on the trails around the Wildlife Center of Virginia in Waynesboro. Bring your kids, in your baby backpack or on little feet, to explore 2 miles of forest and field trails in the George Washington National Forest followed by a short tour of the center to see the wildlife animals that have been rescued and are non-releasable. There will be na-

ture walk games for the older kids. Bring a snack, water and sturdy walking shoes. Meet at the Wildlife Center of Virginia (phone number 540-942-9453) at noon or JavaJava, 2214 Ivy Road (by Sneak Reviews) in Charlottesville at 11:30 am. Contact Heather at 703-732-3419 for more info.

Sunday, August 10th **St. Mary's Wilderness**

A reclaimed, old iron ore mining area, St. Mary's Wilderness has an abundance of diverse scenery from waterfalls to fern forests, open meadows, valley vistas and high mountain wetlands. Bring plenty of water, lunch, snacks and sturdy hiking boots for a challenging 10-mile hike. This will be a strenuous but fun excursion into the largest wilderness area in Virginia's national forests.

We will start on the Blue Ridge Parkway and descend down the Mine Bank Trail, then go back up the Saint Mary's River Trail to Green Pond before walking a more level trail back to the parking area. To carpool from Charlottesville, meet at JavaJava, 2214 Ivy Road (by Sneak Reviews) at 9:00 am. You may also meet at the trailhead, just south of Bald Mountain Overlook (Milepost 23 on the BRP) at 10:00 am. Contact Heather at 703-732-3419 for more info.



Enjoying lunch—always a favorite activity—on the March hike to Trimble Mountain.

Public Drinking Water Resources in the GWNF

Water quality concerns have been in the national news during the past several months. Gallup's annual Environment Survey was conducted in early March of 2008. Of the 12 environmental concerns listed in the survey, the four top concerns of people taking the survey related to water quality. Pollution of drinking water was the number one concern.

Only a few days later, an Associated Press story surprised many Americans by revealing that large numbers of pharmaceutical products had been found in the drinking water supplies of at least 41 million U.S. residents. Though the concentrations were tiny, the products were worrisome and included antibiotics, anti-convulsants, mood stabilizers and sex hormones.

While we certainly don't expect such a discovery locally, Wild Virginia is undertaking a project to collect and examine information related to public

drinking water resources in the George Washington National Forest (GWNF). With work on the GWNF's Forest Plan scheduled to resume this summer, it is important to have as much information as possible in hand and to provide maximum protection to these resources.

As many as fourteen municipalities may draw at least a portion of their drinking water from the GWNF. Wild Virginia is working to determine the exact number. Reservoirs within the forest currently provide drinking water to the localities of Harrisonburg, Staunton, Lynchburg, Clifton Forge, and southern Augusta County. Other reservoirs serve as potential backup sources of water, including some that have provided drinking water in the past. Many communities obtain drinking water from intake points in area rivers, such as the Middle River and North Fork of the Shenandoah

River. These and other drinking water sources have large portions of their watersheds contained within the GWNF.

Wild Virginia's focus on the GWNF makes it an organization poised to conduct this survey during this time of rising concerns about drinking water safety and availability. We will keep you posted on the progress of this project.



The Pedlar Reservoir provides drinking water to the City of Lynchburg.

Forest Planning (from page I)

you totally up-to-date (contact David Hannah at 434-971-1553 or dhannah@wildvirginia.org). A four-page report, *Forests for the Future*, is available on our website. Wild Virginia and eight other forest conservation organizations developed the report, which includes management priorities for the GWNF that should be included in the revised Plan.

We encourage you to become involved in the management of **your** national forest. At more than a million acres in size, a source of drinking water for many thousands of area residents, and home to an incredible diversity of wildlife and natural communities, the GWNF is a tremendous resource that must be managed wisely. Issues such as roadless areas, watershed protection, creation of Special Biological Areas, old growth inventories, and more must be fully addressed. Please take part in securing the future of **our** public lands!

Citizen Rights (from page I)

considered in Virginia and even the upcoming George Washington National Forest Plan. Should the Supreme Court fail to uphold our existing rights, we could see significant increases in destructive timber sales, mining operations and projects. And, in the absence of new legislation, our ability to question the integrity and effects of these will be eliminated.

Wild Virginia is paying close attention to this case and is alerting federal, state and local officials to its importance. Keep in touch and visit the Heartwood webpage (www.heartwood.org) for updates. Wild Virginia will inform you as soon as the date for the oral arguments is set. We invite you to join your Wild Virginia and Heartwood colleagues in the courtroom. The future of our public lands on that day will be in the hands of 9 judges whose integrity will determine the

Want to Save Paper ?

If you prefer an electronic version (.pdf file) of the newsletter to a paper copy delivered by mail, please email David Hannah at dhannah@wildvirginia.org.

Are You on Our Email List ?

You should be, so that you receive notice of outings and other events, as well as news pertinent to Virginia's national forests. Email David to be added.

Want to Volunteer With Us ?

Put your skills to work and help us protect our national forests. Newsletter and outreach coordinators, forest watch monitor, and event planner are just some of the possibilities. Email Eric Gilchrest at ericg@ntelos.net to learn more.

future condition of all of our national forests. Whatever the outcome, our favorite areas of the George Washington National Forest will remain *ours* to protect, to defend and to enjoy. And that we will continue to do!

Species Spotlight : American Sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*)

By Chris Bowlen, adapted from article by O.O. Wells and R.C. Schmidtling

Sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*) is a common tree and one of the largest in the eastern deciduous forests. Other names are American planetree, buttonwood, American sycamore, and buttonball-tree. It is a fast-growing and long-lived tree of lowlands and old fields. Sycamore is valuable for timber and is also widely planted as a shade tree because of its distinctive white, exfoliating bark and broad, dense crown. Recently, it has become a favored species for use in intensively cultured "biomass farms" in the South-eastern United States.

Sycamore grows in all States east of the Great Plains except Minnesota. Its native range extends from southwestern Maine west to New York, extreme southern Ontario, central Michigan, and southern Wisconsin; south in Iowa and eastern Nebraska to eastern Kansas, Oklahoma, and south-central Texas; east to northwestern Florida and southeastern Georgia. It is also found in the mountains of north-eastern Mexico.

Sycamore is most common and reaches its largest size on alluvial soils along streams and in bottom lands. In general, this tree grows best on sandy loams or loam with a



Geographic range of American sycamore.
Map Courtesy of VA Tech Dept. of Forestry.

good supply of ground water, typically on the edges of lakes and streams when the summer water table drops enough to permit good soil aeration during the growing season. Sycamore is relatively intolerant of flooding during the growing season and will die if the entire tree is inundated for more than 2 weeks.

Sycamore is monoecious; the male flower clusters grow on short stalks on branchlets of the previous year and the female flower clusters grow on short stalks on older branchlets. They appear in May in the North and as early as late March in the South. The fruit is a ball composed of many closely packed, long, narrow fruits that ripen by September or October and often remain on the tree over winter, breaking up or falling off the following spring. The seed is an achene with a light-brown, hairy, thin but hard seedcoat.

Plantation-or open-grown sycamore begins to bear seeds in 6 or 7 years. Dense natural stands begin to produce an appreciable number of seeds at about 25 years, with optimum production between 50 and 200 years. Generally, sycamore is not dependable for seed after the age of 250 years. The tree usually bears good seed crops every 1 or 2 years and some seeds are produced every year. Late spring frosts commonly kill the flowers, leaves, and even the twigs, reducing seed production.

Sycamore seeds average about 441,000/kg (200,000/lb) and are dispersed from February through May following ripening. As the seed balls break up, the seeds are released and float down slowly. The hairs act as parachutes and the seeds are widely scattered by the wind. Several birds feed on the seeds and also may disseminate them to a minor extent. Moreover, the seeds are carried by water and are often deposited on mudflats or sandbars where conditions are usually favorable for germination.

Sycamore is susceptible to a strain



American sycamore. Photo by Bruce Marlin,
www.cirrusimage.com.

of anthracnose, the same fungal disease that attacks oaks and other hardwoods. This fungus attacks in the spring and sometimes completely defoliates the trees. Severe attacks also kill twigs, and frequently cankers are formed up to 25 mm (1 in) in diameter. Usually, a second set of leaves is produced following defoliation and few trees die from an attack. Anthracnose may weaken a tree, however, making it susceptible to attack by other diseases. Heavy attacks by this disease also reduce radial and terminal growth. Systemic antifungal agents can be injected into the tree for control of the fungus. Injection involves drilling holes in the bark, which can lead to disease caused by other agents.

Weather damage and damage caused by insects and disease are commonly confused. For example, anthracnose attacks are often mistaken for frost damage. Although low winter temperature may injure the cork cambium and cause the outer bark to be sloughed off, the health of the tree is not affected. Late spring frosts may kill sycamore buds over a wide area, and where this occurs, the damaged trees characteristically have long dead twigs with bushy masses of leaves around their bases by midsummer.

Thank You for Making the Treehuggers Ball a Success !!

Wild Virginia and the Living Education Center for Ecology and the Arts thank everyone who came out and had a great time with us. It was a wonderful evening with a great spirit of fun & friendship all around. Whether dancing to the music of *Trees On Fire*, snacking on chocolate or other tasty treats, or enjoying a massage, face painting or tarot reading, there was something for everyone. Many thanks go to the volunteers who helped make the Ball happen, and to those who donated items for the Silent Auction. And a Special Thanks to our sponsors,



Biking can take you almost anywhere, and at the Treehuggers Ball we biked to blend fresh fruit smoothies! The fun music of *Trees On Fire* got many Treehuggers grooving on the dance floor.

Please join us again next year!



WILD VIRGINIA

Protecting your favorite wild places



P.O. Box 1065
Charlottesville, VA 22902
www.wildvirginia.org