



## Creating a Forest Plan for the George Washington National Forest: The Time is Now

Forest planning for the George Washington National Forest (GWNF) is underway. After two false starts due to Bush-era changes to planning regulations, which were ultimately found to violate federal law, planning has resumed and is moving ahead quickly.

The original 1982 planning regulations will be used to develop the Forest Plan. A Notice of Intent to resume planning was published in the Federal Register on March 10. The Forest Service has conducted six public meetings since then to gather public comments on how the GWNF should be managed. This information will be compiled and added to the data and public comment gathered in the two earlier planning periods.

The 1982 regulations follow National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) steps, and the Forest Service must cover a “full spectrum of alternatives” as they develop a range of potential plans to consider for the GWNF. A strong conservation plan must be part of the mix. With our forest conservation partner Heartwood, we submitted a “Conservation Alternative” for consideration as the new management plan.

Wild Virginia also recently submitted updated comments on drinking water resources and watershed protection in the GWNF. These documents are viewable on our website, along with the four comment documents we submitted in July 2009. The data and information generated by the socio-economic and

environmental analysis of the conservation alternative and our other comments will be of great benefit as discussions on the Forest Plan continue and decisions are ultimately made.

Since our 2009 comments, several more organizations have adopted resolutions calling for stronger protection of drinking water resources in the new Forest Plan. A total of forty organizations have now adopted a resolution, including 16 localities (cities, towns



Laurel Fork - Special Management Area in the George Washington National Forest

and counties), two regional planning districts, two soil & water conservation districts, three public service authorities, and a county water quality committee. The list of organizations and many resolutions are viewable on our website.

Numerous Wild Virginia members and many other interested citizens have submitted comments on the forest plan. We are very grateful to everyone who gets involved in this public process, and expresses ideas about how our public lands should be managed. Management plans for our national forests are typically in place for 10 to 15 years, so it is critically important to produce

the best plan possible. The Forest Service continues to accept public comment on the plan, and we encourage everyone to communicate with them. Contact information is at the end of this article.

Forest Service staff is beginning to develop alternative plans for the GWNF. There may be one or two public meetings in early summer to review alternatives. Public meetings in August are tentatively planned to review a preliminary draft plan. A draft Forest Plan and EIS are scheduled for release in early 2011, followed by a 90 day formal comment period. GWNF staff hopes to have a completed Forest Plan in late 2011.

Again, we hope you will participate in developing a sound and appropriate management plan for the GWNF. Wild Virginia will remain heavily involved in the process. Communicating your ideas to the Forest Service, via email, letter, phone calls, etc., is critical. As the planning process continues, please visit our website and use our email messages to assist you.

Comments on the Forest Plan can be sent via:

**Mail:** Maureen Hyzer, Forest Supervisor  
George Washington National Forest  
5162 Valleypointe Parkway  
Roanoke, VA 24019-3050

**Email:** [comments-southern-george-washington-jefferson@fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-southern-george-washington-jefferson@fs.fed.us).  
(Please write “Comment on George Washington Plan Revision” in the subject line.)

**Fax:** (540) 265-5145, (540) 265-5109

**Phone:** (888) 265-0019, (540) 265-5100

## Wild Virginia Update

Letter from our Conservation Director, David Hannah

As you can see from the pages of this newsletter, it has been a very busy winter and spring for everyone at Wild Virginia. Given the importance of creating a new forest plan for the GWNF, efforts on that front have been our highest priority in recent weeks. The Species Spotlight article (p. 5) provides some insight on how the planning process can affect individuals, and even an entire species of primate.

However, we always try to have a good time while working on our conservation goals. The Wild & Scenic Environmental Festival and the 5% Day at Whole Foods (p. 4) were loads of fun, in addition to being successful events for the organization. We were able to meet many new conservation-oriented people and renew relationships with many members and long-time friends while relying on a cadre of volunteers to help us carry off the events. Wild Virginia is particularly pleased to have made some new friends and acquaintances in Staunton and the Shenandoah Valley.

After the harsh winter weather, resuming our schedule of

monthly hikes has been fantastic. Spending time outdoors truly can be a salve for the soul, as it has been for some of our hikers (and me). I particularly enjoy observing the spring migration of birds, which of course cannot be separated from the emergence of fresh green vegetation making its way up the slopes of our mountains. Or the sweet smells of fresh blossoms in the air. Or the constantly changing wind and weather patterns. All of these and other changes that come with spring make it impossible not to feel renewed and rejuvenated – as long as we pause from time to time to take it all in.

Unfortunately, there are always occasional reminders of the need to remain vigilant in protecting the planet. News accounts and images this week document the arrival of crude oil in the marshes of Louisiana – a result of the BP oil rig explosion and subsequent oil gush. This reinforces the need to monitor some looming energy-related threats to the GWNF: oil and gas leasing, hydrofracking of Marcellus shale, wind energy projects, and woody biomass as a renewable energy source.

It also reminds us of the need to continue our day to day work to protect our national forests, and to launch into the two projects planned for 2010: a survey of non-native invasive plants in Ramsey's Draft Wilderness and an analysis of forest roads on Shenandoah Mountain.

Now that we've had a breath of fresh, spring air, we can rededicate ourselves to our mission and our work. And we should also pledge to continue to pause for fresh air and rejuvenation, to enjoy our unique location and great natural resources, at every opportunity.



## Volunteer Spotlight - Ron Fandetti, Outings Coordinator

Ron Fandetti recently became Volunteer Outings Coordinator for Wild Virginia. In this position, Ron hopes to help Wild Virginia in its mission to protect Virginia's remaining wild places.

While his professional career focuses on organizational improvement and people development, his passion for the outdoors has Ron exploring the mountains and forests as much as possible. An avid hiker and backpacker, Ron is an instructor, and former Director, for the Appalachian Mountain Club's Mountain Leadership School based

in Bretton Woods, NH and a former field instructor for The Mountain Institute's Spruce Knob Mountain Center in WV. He is certified in Wilderness First Aid and is in the process of completing the requirements to be certified as a Virginia Master Naturalist.

The owner/facilitator of Green Fire Associates, Ron also helps to outfit others for their outdoor adventures by working part-time at Blue Ridge Mountain Sports in Charlottesville. He lives in rural Nelson County close to the Rockfish River just outside of Schuyler.



Ron's favorite forest quote: *"In the woods, a man casts off his years, as the snake his slough, and at what period so ever of life is always a child"* – Ralph Waldo Emerson

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## Wild Virginia Hikes and Outings

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

### A Full Outings Calendar : COME JOIN US!

#### Sunday, June 6 Three Ridges Wilderness

Join us for an early summer, fairly long and mountainous hike, exploring the beauty and ruggedness of Three Ridges Wilderness. There are some excellent views of the Rockfish Valley to the east, The Priest Wilderness to the southwest, and the crest of Saint Mary's Wilderness and Torrey Ridge to the northwest.

Our hike begins at Reeds Gap on the Blue Ridge Parkway, 13 miles south of Afton Mountain and will follow the Appalachian Trail south. This is a "moderately challenging" "up and back" 9 mile hike (total) along rolling, and sometimes moderately steep (3) ridges. There are lots of "ups and downs" and we will be passing by Maupin Field Shelter, and likely pass a few "through hikers", which will give you an excellent idea of what longer treks on the AT can be like.

Hikers should be in good shape, pack lunch and snacks and carry sufficient water for 6 hours on the trail in what can be very warm and dry conditions--or not as afternoon thunderstorms are common. Please check weather conditions before packing for the day.

Hikers should plan to rendezvous at Reeds Gap Parking Area at the junction of Rt. 664 and the Blue Ridge Parkway at 9:00 am. Charlottesville carpoolers will meet at Shenandoah Joe's (2214 Ivy Road, by Sneak Reviews) at 8:00am for an 8:10 departure. Contact Ernie Reed, hike leader, if you are coming or if you have any questions: 434-971-1647 or [lec@wildvirginia.org](mailto:lec@wildvirginia.org).

#### Sunday, July 18 Ramsey's Draft Wilderness

There aren't many places left where you can experience what the Appalachians might have been like before human sprawl. The Ramsey's Draft Wilderness is one of those special places. This easy to moderate 6.7 mile hike combines 3 trails to give a ridgeline to valley wilderness experience. The hike will require the spotting cars to shuttle back to the starting point.

Dress appropriately for summer and come prepared for numerous stream crossings. Bring lunch, snacks and plenty of water. The hike starts at 9:00 a.m. from the Confederate Breastworks parking lot on US 250 (Shenandoah Mountain Trail).

Contact Ron Fandetti at [fan-jet50@gmail.com](mailto:fan-jet50@gmail.com) or (434) 831-2193 to reserve a spot and for other information including car pooling arrangements. As wilderness regulations limit group size, please reserve early.

#### Sunday, August 29 Elliot Knob Lookout

Cool off at the higher elevations on a 10 mile hike of moderate difficulty. We will hike along the Great North Mountain Trail from Dry Branch Gap **Cont'd on page 4**



Group photo from May hike at Cole Mountain, Mt. Pleasant National Scenic Area

## Environmental Film Festival in C'ville and Staunton a big Success!

On March 24 and 25, Wild Virginia presented two evenings of fabulous and exciting cinema in Charlottesville and Staunton at the 2010 Wild and Scenic Environmental Film Festival. If you were there, there you were and you know what we're talking about. If you missed it, you really missed it. But you will have



Board President Nathan VanHooser, addressing the audience at the Staunton film festival.



Board members greeting attendees at the Charlottesville film festival.

another chance next year as we will be presenting an entire new slate of films in spring, 2011.

We wish to thank everyone who came out on those early spring nights and to all of those who took up the challenge and became new Wild Virginia members. Grateful kudos also go out to all of the volunteers who helped us make this happen, to Paul Wagner, Bruce Dorries and Steve Grande our gracious Masters of Ceremonies and to all of the sponsors who contributed to creating these two

magical evenings: Blue Ridge Mountain Sports, Patagonia, Sierra Nevada Brewing, Clif Bars, Nutiva, Tom's of Maine, Osprey Packs, Whole Foods, Lithic Construction, Integral Yoga Natural Foods, Albe-marle Baking Company, Mint Spring Frame Shop and Blue Ridge Outdoors Magazine. Catch the beauty and the energy with all of us again next spring!



Wild VA volunteers helping out at the Staunton film festival.

## Wild Virginia Sets Record at Whole Foods

Where were you on Earth Day? If you were at Whole Foods Market in Charlottesville, you were a piece of history. As Wild Virginia volunteers bagged groceries and talked with shoppers about our mission and our work, the cash registers kept ringing. When it was all over, the day was one of the biggest fundraisers in the history of Wild Virginia. As the recipient of Whole Food's "5% Day" Wild Virginia not only raised almost \$5000 for our forest protection work, but we also helped Whole Foods have its most successful 5% Day ever.

Thanks to everyone who came out to support us, to those who became new Wild Virginia members, to all of our volunteers and, especially,



Wild Virginia volunteer, Deborah Caudle, bagging groceries at Whole Foods

to Whole Foods for making this perhaps the best Earth Day ever!

## Hikes (from page 3)

to the fire tower at Elliot Knob. The 360 degree view from the Knob is spectacular. This is an out and back hike.

The trail starts in chestnut oak/hickory forest and ascends consistently for 5 miles to the summit. Good views to the west are common along the trail. Bring your lunch, a good supply of water and your binoculars for this rewarding hike.

Please notify trip leader Chris Bowlen if you plan to come. 540-289-6801; [bowlenchris@comcast.net](mailto:bowlenchris@comcast.net)

Chris can email directions if you plan to drive separately. To carpool from Charlottesville, meet at 8:15AM at Shenandoah Joe's (2214 Ivy Road, by Sneak Reviews).

## Species Spotlight - *Homo forestplannicus*

Article by Ernie Reed

**Editor's Note:** There are currently two very important projects that the United States Forest Service is undertaking, which together may change the way National Forests are managed nation-wide and specifically here in Virginia. As readers of the *Ancient Mountain Sentinel* are aware, the George Washington National Forest is in the process of creating a new Land Management Plan that will guide the direction of projects for the next 10-15 years. Nationally, the Forest Service is simultaneously in the process of creating New Planning Regulations that will govern how all subsequent Forest Plans will be created. A new rule is projected to be ready on November 11, 2011.

Wild Virginia's Roving Reporters have been attending numerous meetings in different locations around the GWNF and also in Washington D.C. We have become aware of a rare and threatened (as opposed to threatening) species that has been busy writing and filing comments on behalf of *Wild Virginia*, attending meetings and public roundtables and even creating and submitting a *Conservation Forest Plan Alternative for the George Washington National Forest*. Ever alert and eager to please, these variably brained, opposable thumbed bipeds are this issue's featured *Species Spotlight*.

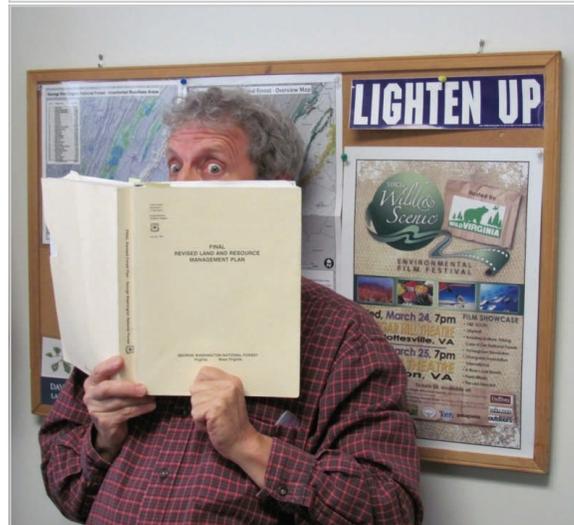
### *Homo forestplannicus*

Rare species, same genus as *Homo sapiens* but much more rare. Scattered individuals are found in Charlottesville, Staunton, Harrisonburg, Lexington, Roanoke and in

close proximity to the GWNF. Similar to locusts in that every 15 years, individuals emerge and spend many evenings in groups babbling about "goals, objectives, issues and management areas". Individuals have more than a passing awareness of the National Forest Management Act (and its 1982 Planning Regulations), National Envi-



Two different subspecies of *Homo forestplannicus*, sometimes know by their common names: David Hannah (above) and Ernie Reed (below).



ronmental Policy Act, and the Endangered Species Act. When in groups, individuals can often be heard chirping "NEPA,NFMA, E-S-A,...NEPA, NFMA, E-S-A" and other less intelligible anachronisms. *Homo forestplannicus* exhibits a wide range of behavior, from the confrontational to the collaborative.

Distinguishing characteristics: slightly flattened forehead (from banging head against the wall) and slightly glazed eyes from late nights drafting comments and traveling long miles to far and distant habitats for public meetings. Likely to be connected at the hand to either pencil and legal pad or laptop. Has been known to consume more than its share of fermented cereal and grape beverages. Aforementioned nocturnal behavior does not seem to be related to mating, which could be considered irregular at best.

Because it occurs in so few sites in Virginia in such miniscule populations, and since it is a significant disjunct species, this recent addition to our fauna should be listed as both rare and endangered. Forest Supervisors, Planners and District Rangers should be alerted to its presence and to the need for conserving and protecting the entire George Washington National Forest from road building, ill-conceived logging projects and dangerously permissive forest plans.

Please consider helping out all individuals of *H. forestplannicus* by contacting the Forest Service and voicing your opinion on the future management of the GWNF.

Such actions have been known to send *H. forestplannicus* individuals into brief and unexplainable (but genuine) fits of euphoria, which may be followed by any number of unpredictable behaviors. Individuals typically express gratitude for these helpful actions, usually in a socially appropriate manner. Unless safety issues arise, inappropriate behavior is best treated by completely ignoring it. After all, it only happens every 10-15 years.



## 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; [dhannah@wildvirginia.org](mailto: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. Signing up is easy - just visit our website: [www.wildvirginia.org](http://www.wildvirginia.org), or email David Hannah; [dhannah@wildvirginia.org](mailto:dhannah@wildvirginia.org).



## Want to Volunteer With Us ?

Put your skills to work and help us protect our national forests. We are currently seeking a Newsletter editor, and other opportunities are also available. To learn more, visit the Volunteer page of our website, [www.wildvirginia.org](http://www.wildvirginia.org), or email David Hannah; [dhannah@wildvirginia.org](mailto:dhannah@wildvirginia.org).



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