

Friends of the North Fork of the Shenandoah River

PO Box 746 Woodstock, VA 22664
www.FNFSR.org 540.459.8550



Annual Report

22nd Annual Membership Meeting



Woodstock, VA

May 22, 2010



2009-2010 Annual Report

2010 finds Friends of the North Fork of the Shenandoah River embarking on our 22nd year of river protection and conservation in the North Fork of the Shenandoah River watershed. Since 1988, dedicated volunteers have worked to enhance and protect the health and flow of the North Fork through monitoring, education, and advocacy. Beginning with our founding in 1988, by Garland Hudgins and Robert Kranich, Friends has served as a "Voice for the River," representing the ecological as well as human health interests of all who live in the watershed and love the North Fork of the Shenandoah River.

2009-2010 was a banner year across the board for Friends of the North Fork. Membership and support significantly increased, foundation support for organizational funding as well as project implementation was very strong, we had more volunteers and volunteer hours, our program work expanded greatly and partnerships flourished with organizations throughout the watershed.

We are especially excited about the growth and popularity of our education program. Our strategic plan describes an increased focus on the teacher and student citizens of the North Fork watershed. Cindy Frenzel, our Education Coordinator, began visiting schools and teachers in late 2009 and her calendar is currently filled to overflowing with requests for our river related programs. We are most excited about the North Fork Exploration in which teachers will join Friends for a three-day workshop that will orient these individuals to the natural teaching resource in their own backyards.

As we continue to fight for the river on which we all depend for bodily and mental nourishment we thank our founders for their vision and perseverance, our members for your continued care and unwavering support, our partner organizations for their willingness to work together to protect our water resources and our funders for their belief in Friends' organization and mission.

Thank You!



Year in Review: 2009-2010

Challenges to the health of the North Fork continued to mount and Friends continued our struggle to enhance and protect the beauty, purity and flow of the North Fork in 2009-2010. Major efforts focused on our core programs including monitoring, education, and advocacy, hosting volunteer river cleanups and following up on river health related emergencies. Friends also worked to strengthen our organization so that we can continue to be the "Voice of the River" long into the future.

Additionally, Friends experienced great benefits from the continued and generous support of our members, from sustainability and capacity building grants provided by the Agua Fund and Chesapeake Bay Funders Group (CBFG), and significant funding from the MARPAT Foundation to support our education efforts. Support from both the Agua Fund and CBFG has included funding, but importantly, it has also included training and individual consultation for both staff and board members. The integration of funding with on the ground workshops is helping Friends to maintain a well-managed and highly effective voice for water resource conservation.

Our "on the ground" and "in the class room" presence has grown dramatically. Water monitoring efforts have expanded throughout the watershed and now include monitoring aquatic life as well as grabbing water samples. Our education efforts are now watershed wide and are touching elementary and middle school students and teachers as well as adults.

Partnerships for water protection have grown and prospered during the past year, increasing the effectiveness of our monitoring, education and advocacy efforts throughout the North Fork watershed. Our partner groups range from fellow watershed organizations to government and quasi government entities but importantly they include individuals and businesses in the North Fork watershed. Lynne Phillips, owner of Natural Art Garden Center near Toms Brook, Gayle and Steve Shaffer, owners of Blue Canoe Crew in Woodstock, and Rodney Shepherd of Woodbury Financial Services in Mt. Jackson, stand out as exceptional supporters and promoters of Friends of the North Fork and our efforts to protect and enhance the health of the North Fork watershed. It is only with community action and support that the North Fork will ever be the clean and healthy river that we all desire.

Thanks to the support outlined above and to the involvement of our committed volunteers, Friends made significant progress toward a healthier North Fork over the last year. Highlights of our achievements and activities of the last year are summarized in the following pages.



Monitoring and Science:

- **Minding the Planet Grant from the YSI Foundation:**

We recently received funding to expand our monitoring program to include Lake Laura at Basye as well as the North Fork tributaries above and below the lake. We will be gathering data for three years that will help define any water quality issues that might exist and can be used to develop water quality improvement strategies. We are now embarking on baseline monitoring. As with our other monitoring, we are pleased to have the involvement support of FNFSR members from the area.

- **Ongoing E. coli and Benthic Monitoring Program:**


Over the last year, we have expanded the monitoring program to include the bacteria known as E. coli as well as macroinvertebrates. E. coli is an indicator of water quality important to the safe use of the river for recreation. Excess levels of E. coli can be due to run off from livestock fields, leaky septic systems or inadequate treatment by sewage treatment plants. Samples for E. coli analysis are taken monthly by six volunteers at 25 sites. We have shared the initial set of data with the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality and the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. They will be using the results to determine where problems exist and develop plans to improve water quality. We are specifically monitoring areas where farming practices are being upgraded and hope that we can demonstrate the benefits of measures designed to keep animal waste out of the river. This project is a 2-3 year joint effort carried out with the Friends of the Shenandoah River (FOSR) and Shenandoah University.

Macroinvertebrates are the nymphs, worms, snails and bugs that live under and around the rocks on the bottom of the river. Because some of these creatures only survive in clean water, the mix of macroinvertebrates in a section of the river is a good indicator of the longterm health of that stretch of the river. With the assistance of Shenandoah University, we have recently certified eight new volunteers for quarterly sampling of the river and its tributaries. Sampling has begun this month. As with the E. coli sampling, the results will be used by state agencies to select areas of the river for focused cleanup efforts.

Private donors and foundations including the Norcross Foundation, the Shenandoah Community Foundation and the Virginia Environmental Endowment funded the expansion of our monitoring program.

- **Drinking Water Efforts:**

Building on our sampling for trace organics in the river several years ago, over the last year we have been investigating the potential for those organics to be present in drinking water in the Valley. We are concluding that work and will be distributing a brochure on the potential for these chemicals to appear in water supplies and what members can do to address this issue. In addition to the brochure we have already provided extensive



literature through our website and we will be posting technical papers in support of the findings in the brochure.

- **Smith Creek Watershed Partnership:**

Friends continues to partner with numerous state agencies and private landowners to implement a watershed management plan for Smith Creek, which is designed to remove the stream from Virginia's impaired waters list. The Smith Creek watershed has also been identified as a Chesapeake Showcase Watershed by the United States Department of Agriculture. This has been an extended process, however there is great local enthusiasm and the potential for substantial funding to support the effort with this new designation. Friends looks forward to a positive outcome for Smith Creek.

- **Surface Water Monitoring:**

22 volunteers monitored surface water in the North Fork and its major tributaries at 31 sites and submitted approximately 744 water samples for analysis to the FOSR laboratory. This equates to more than 1000 volunteers hours during 2009 and 2010. Thanks to our lead monitor Roger Bolland for his leadership!

- **Well Depth Monitoring in Shenandoah County:**

Friends continued its partnership with the Shenandoah County Water Resources Advisory Committee to collect monthly well depth information on six wells located throughout the county. Thanks to Lee Dieter and John Kreitzburg for monitoring these wells and working to expand this program.


Education:

Friends of the North Fork continues to fill a need for environmental education in the Shenandoah Valley. Our river-oriented focus helps residents of all ages find a reason to learn more about their environment, and to embrace positive change in their lives. As our program grows, we will continue to look for consistent funding for programs and activities.

Leslie and Cindy would like to thank the many volunteers who help with our education efforts in presenting school programs, teaching groups, planning activities, developing new brochures, creating a new fish costume, representing Friends at events and the many other activities that make our education program successful! Of course new volunteers are welcome and needed so come join the fun!

- **Education Committee**

- In 2009, Barbara Halvorson and Gayle Shaffer became co-chairs of the Education Committee. A 2010 Education Work Plan was developed for Friends of the North Fork.

- 
- On October 20, 2009 a planning meeting was held at Peter Muhlenburg Middle School to start developing what our youth oriented education efforts will look like. Local teachers and conservation educators attended. As a result of the meeting, the committee decided to focus on teacher professional development in 2010 and curriculum development in 2011. We are also available for teacher requests of classroom and outdoor environmental education programs.

- **Teacher Professional Development:**

- The **North Fork Exploration** for up to 20 Shenandoah County teachers is scheduled for June 22-24, 2010, and includes a canoe trip, field trips to a farm, the landfill and a waste treatment facility, a fish shocking demonstration and classroom demonstrations and lesson development. Gayle Shaffer and Thad Hockman have also scheduled a **Summer Enrichment Academy** for Shenandoah County students at W.W. Robinson Elementary School that will coincide with the North Fork Exploration. Friends of the North Fork will give presentations for them on June 21.
- **Virginia Naturally Environmental Education Conference**, September 15-16, 2010 – Our goal is to someday sponsor local teachers to attend this Conference if funding becomes available.

- **Adult Education Programs:**

Since this time last year, 21 programs were given to approximately 850 people, including church groups, Rotary Clubs, Ruritan Clubs, women's groups, garden clubs, Kiwanis Clubs, Master Gardeners and Master Naturalist. We are always looking to find new groups and audiences.

Other examples of outreach include:

- Mary Gessner helped Friends partner with the Lord Fairfax Soil and Water Conservation District to recognize farmers that have implemented multiple best management practices to protect the North Fork or its tributaries.
- Susie Wilburn is creating a new "Stoneroller" fish costume for use in local parades and events.
- We have partnered with the Master Naturalist Program at Blandy Arboretum. April Moore and Cindy Blugerman completed the program and as a part of their certification are making a list of fish and animals that people might see at the river. Mary Gessner and Bud Griswold presented Ichthyology Presentations for the Master Naturalist Training Session at Andy Guest State Park.
- Cindy Frenzel and Stephanie Bushong attended a Green Church Workshop in Richmond. As a volunteer at her church, Cindy then started a "Green Church" committee, partly to set an example for other churches in the valley and introduce environmental concepts to a new audience.



- **Youth Education Programs:**

Youth education has blossomed this year, as we follow our strategic plan for including youth in our 2010 education efforts. We were able to work with 12 schools or groups, presenting indoor and outdoor programs for approximate 1200 people. This included 4-H groups, public and private schools, library programs, a summer enrichment academy and a nature camp.

Two examples of programs given include:

- Participation in the Big Give Community Service Project at Peter Muhlenburg Middle School where students made 29 rain barrels to sell as a fundraiser for Friends of the North Fork. Barrels are for sale at Natural Art Garden Center in Toms Brook.
- Presentation of education programs about surface and groundwater for 5th graders with Nancy Carr from the Virginia Rural Water Association.

- **Events and Workshops:**

- We continue to look for new ways to inform our community about Friends and river issues. With volunteer help we were able to attend 8 events including the Broadway Kids Fishing Day, Master Gardeners Event at Belle Grove Plantation, Antique Tractor Show, Rt. 11 Yard Crawl, Broadway Fall Festival, Edinburg Old Time Festival, Shenandoah Uncorked, and the Shenandoah County Fair! We promoted green cleaning products with a display and free recipes, had displays of river critters and watershed maps and raffled a rain barrel.
- Spring workshops continue to be a success, bringing in new members and providing unique educational opportunities. We held two rain barrel workshops in 2009 for 100 participants and a Healthy Home Products Workshop that lead to Friends having a display on the topic and a workshop for kids at Fort Valley Library. In April, 2010 we held a Rain Garden Workshop, and we have five more workshops planned through November on Composting, Making Rain Barrels and Making Healthy Home Products. Volunteers are needed and welcome.
- We want to thank Fort Valley Nursery in Woodstock, Natural Art Garden Center in Toms Brook, the Towns of Mt. Jackson and New Market and Peter Muhlenburg Middle School for hosting workshops; Rodney Shepherd of Woodbury Financial Services in Mt. Jackson for his generous support of the 2010 rain barrel workshop series.

Advocacy:

We are the “voice” for the North Fork. You will find Friends defending the river before local, state and Federal government lawmakers and regulators. We advocate decisions by government that protect the river, its watershed, and all of us who depend on a clean, healthy river. We advocate at the local, state and occasionally the Federal level as




outlined below:

Commonwealth of Virginia

- We supported Delegate. Gilbert's bill in the General Assembly to allow localities in regions with karst geology (much of the Valley) to prohibit sludge application. The bill was not acted on and has been carried over to the 2011 legislative session.
- We have consistently supported the state's efforts to regulate stormwater runoff from new construction. In early 2010, the new governor suspended regulations adopted late last year by the previous administration. We have offered to work with the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) on revised regulations which according to a bill passed by the General Assembly must be in place by December 2011. We urged DCR to start with the substance of the regulations developed by the Department in the beginning of this process. One amendment adopted by Virginia reverted to an existing water quality standard that is not sufficient to protect the streams and rivers of the Commonwealth.
- We supported the state's proposed amendments to regulate the end-users of poultry waste and to place stricter guidelines on the storage of litter related to streams and runoff.

Towns and Counties

- We continue to fight the spread of biosolids (sewage sludge) in environmentally sensitive areas in Shenandoah County. We provided extensive comments and mobilized our members to contact the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality to oppose a permit to apply the sludge on several properties adjacent to the river and to request a public hearing. DEQ has granted the request for a public hearing to be held in Shenandoah County on July 6, 2010.
- We are opposing a permit to allow hydrofracturing, to extract natural gas from the Marcellus Shale formation, in the floodplain of the headwaters of the North Fork. The state has issued a permit to the company, but the Rockingham County Board of Supervisors must approve a special use permit. The process injects high volumes of water, sand and undisclosed chemicals to break down the shale rock and release natural gas. Hydrofracturing operations in New York, Pennsylvania and West Virginia have resulted in contamination of ground water, surface water and drinking water. We are promoting a moratorium on issuing permits for hydrofracturing pending the development of a regulatory framework in Virginia that is designed to deal with the specifics of this type of drilling and that fully considers the effects on our water and other natural resources.
- We have provided input to Shenandoah County efforts to prepare the necessary amendments to the County's comprehensive plan and zoning/subdivision ordinances in order to achieve the vision of a predominantly rural county. Public



hearings will be held after the Community Planning Project Committee presents its recommendations to the Board of Supervisors.

- We continue to serve on the Shenandoah County Water Resources Advisory Committee to provide information on the quality and quantity status of the North Fork watershed, awareness and analysis of threats to the watershed, views and recommendations regarding regulatory and legislative actions relevant to the watershed, and to advocate for local ordinances and decisions that are protective of water quality and quantity.
- We participated in Virginia Tech's North Fork Shenandoah Decisions project, which is designed to develop and assess a practical decision tool for watershed nutrient planning.

Federal Government

- We supported Federal legislation to clean up the Chesapeake Bay and funding to conduct research on pollutants that can harm fish.
- We provided comments on proposals for management of the George Washington National Forest to ensure adequate consideration is given to water quality and quantity and aquatic resources.


Cleanups:

Jack Chapman continued his work as Friends' volunteer Cleanup Coordinator! Jack is working with fellow volunteers to enhance our cleanup program, create new partnerships and plan bigger and better cleanups for the future. We were very excited to have volunteers from Central High School, led by Meredith Bauserman, and also from Massanutten Military Academy, led by Joe Babcock. Thanks to ALL!

- Friends hosted 4 cleanups in the Timberville, New Market, and in the Edinburg and Mt. Jackson areas, removing more than 2,500 lbs. of trash and at least 60 tires from the river and riverbanks. These cleanups provide wonderful opportunities for community and member involvement in Friends' events. We had the most cleanup volunteers ever this year! THANKS EVERYONE!
- Friends participated in the 2009 International Coastal Cleanup, Stewardship Virginia and Shenandoah County's 2010 Litter Cleanup competition.

Organizational Sustainability:

Working to keep Friends a viable and sustainable organization is a high priority for the staff and board of Friends of the North Fork. All of our work to protect the North Fork



would not be possible without a firm organizational foundation. Maintaining our capacity to work effectively in the watershed is a daily challenge.

- Volunteers helped Friends raise more than \$16,000 during our spectacular 5th Annual Fish Fry. This year, local artists and volunteers painted fabulous floor cloths that were very popular. About 14 volunteer artists painted floor cloths and we received wonderful donations from local businesses. These creations and our superb auctioneer Hoyle Laughlin made 2009's Fish Fry a big hit.
- Friend's members contributed more than \$8,000 during our 2009-year end fundraising effort. THANK YOU!
- Staff and Board members attended the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Forum in 2009 and multiple training sessions focused on fundraising and board development that were sponsored by the Chesapeake Bay Funders Group and Agua Fund. These sessions provided excellent opportunities to learn from similar watershed organizations and create helpful learning relationships.

Partnerships:

- Friends of the Shenandoah River
- Lord Fairfax Soil and Water Conservation District
- Mid-Atlantic Highlands Action Program - Department of Conservation and Recreation
- Natural Art Garden Center in Toms Brook
- Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Potomac Conservancy
- Potomac Riverkeeper
- Shenandoah County Water Resources Advisory Committee
- Shenandoah Forum
- Shenandoah Resources and Development Council
- Shenandoah Riverkeeper
- Shenandoah University and Woodward Bousquet
- Shenandoah Valley Pure Water Forum
- Smith Creek Watershed Partnership
- US Forest Service
- United States Geological Society
- Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation
- Virginia Department of Environmental Quality
- Virginia Department of Forestry
- Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries
- Virginia Fish Kill Task Force



2009-2010 Grantors - Thank You!

Lake Laura Monitoring Project:

YSI Foundation Minding the Planet Grant - \$25,000

Capacity Building/Organizational Support:

Agua Fund - \$12,500

Chesapeake Bay Funders Network - \$22,500

MARPAT Foundation - \$15,000

Shenandoah Community Foundation - \$5,000

Monitoring Support:

Shenandoah County Government - \$4,000



**Dedicated to Protecting and Enhancing
the North Fork for over 20 Years.**

www.fnfsr.org or 540-459-8550