



2010-2011 Annual Report

2011 finds Friends of the North Fork of the Shenandoah River embarking on our 23rd 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.

Education, advocacy and monitoring are the backbone of our river and water protection efforts throughout the North Fork Shenandoah River watershed. Friends is excelling in each of these areas as we increase river and water knowledge via teacher and student-focused programs, presentations to civic groups, training of volunteer monitors and use of monitor-derived data, and through interacting with our local and state officials. Friends may be a small organization but we're a group of dedicated and passionate people doing an incredible amount of work, centered on moving toward healthy water that we can enjoy, rather than fear.

Healthy water is not a luxury it is a necessity for life. Our board, volunteers and staff devote hours and hours of their time to enhancing and protecting the River not only because the river holds a special place in our hearts, but because we know the importance of this water to our future and that of generations to come. We work from a solid foundation created by the founders of this organization and we are grateful for their vision and perseverance. We thank our members and volunteers for their 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 the Friends' organization, mission and protection efforts.

Thank You!





Year in Review: 2010-2011

Growth and impact: those words best describe this past year for Friends of the North Fork. Organizational and programmatic growth occurred, but most importantly, the impact of our water health and river protection messages and efforts on the North Fork watershed community significantly increased. Below is a quick summary of some of the year's highlights followed by a more detailed explanation of our activities.

Monitoring:

- Began YSI Foundation funded Lake Laura E. coli, Nutrient and Benthic Monitoring Project - 3 year effort to document lake and tributary water quality.
- Completed a basin-wide E. coli project and expanded our benthic monitoring program.
- Created and distributed a Drinking Water Informational Brochure.
- Participated in the Smith Creek Showcase Watershed Partnership Monitoring Project.
- Continued our surface water monitoring partnership with Friends of the Shenandoah River.
- Reviewed and restructured well depth monitoring project and partnership with the Shenandoah Water Resources Advisory Committee (WRAC).

Education:

- Maintained MARPAT funding for essential Education Coordinator (EC) position.
- Designed and implemented the North Fork Exploration - Professional Development Opportunity for Teachers.
- Sponsored a teacher's attendance at Chesapeake Bay Foundation's River to Bay class.
- Virginia Naturally Environmental Education Conference attendance.
- Presented "The North Fork: My River, My Community, My Choice" to 1500 adults.
- Friends held four water related workshops.
- Friends cosponsored two National Drug Take Back Days with the Sheriff's Office.
- Friend's EC and volunteers taught a river ecology class to the 2010 and 2011 Shenandoah Chapter Master Naturalists class.
- EC presented programs and interacted with 1300 students.

Advocacy:

- Friends and partners rallied more than 100 written comments and more oral comments against permitting sewage sludge spreading in Shenandoah County.
- Friends successfully worked with partners to encourage Rockingham County Supervisors to delay action related to a Marcellus natural gas hydrofracturing site in the headwaters of the North Fork.



Cleanups:

- Friends' volunteers pulled more than 3100 lbs. of trash from riverbanks.

Organization:

- Board members completed a review and revision of our Strategic Plan.
- Board members updated our original organizational By-laws.
- Friends welcomed Wendy Yarnold, our new office volunteer, who is giving 8-10 hours a week of her time to Friends.



Monitoring and Science:

Under the leadership of Committee Chair John Holmes, Friends' monitoring and science programs continue to guide our efforts to educate and advocate for river protection. Volunteers are eager to get their hands wet to aid in the effort to better understand impacts on water health.

- **Lake Laura Monitoring Project:**

In April of 2010, Friends was awarded a three year \$25,000 Minding the Planet grant from the YSI Foundation to support E. coli, nutrient and turbidity monitoring in Lake Laura and its tributaries. As of spring 2011, we hope to add Chlorophyll A analysis and macroinvertebrate monitoring to our efforts, which will give us a more complete picture of the water quality in the Lake and its tributaries. Chemical and bacterial analyses are being completed at Friends of the Shenandoah River's laboratory at Shenandoah University.

- **E. coli and Expanded Benthic Monitoring Programs:**

Our E. coli and benthic project began in 2009 as a joint effort among Friends of the North Fork, Friends of the Shenandoah River (FOSR) and Shenandoah University (SU). The equipment needed to carry out automated large scale analyses of water samples for E. coli were installed at the FOSR water quality lab, and lab certification from the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) now includes E. coli analysis. At the height of the program, more than 15 trained and certified volunteers regularly collected samples from 25 sites on Cedar Creek, Smith Creek and points of interest along the North Fork.

Volunteers also monitored a number of sites in the South Fork Shenandoah River watershed. We accumulated more than a year's worth of data for most of these sites and those data have been presented to the DEQ and will be used in the reassessment of impaired stream segments starting this year. In

addition, the data are being used to benchmark cleanup measures in Smith Creek, a USDA Showcase Watershed, and the data were used to assess the impact of the upgrade of a trailer park septic system, as well as to address and correct E. coli contamination of spring water that is sold for public consumption.

Our benthic macroinvertebrate monitoring program is in full swing this year and growing. Ten volunteers were trained and certified in the late Spring of 2010 and began their monitoring efforts in June of 2010. We have almost a year's worth of data from 10 sites in Cedar Creek, Smith Creek, points along the North Fork and in the South Fork Shenandoah watershed as well. There continues to be great interest in this program and we are holding additional training and certification sessions this spring for five additional volunteers that will help with existing monitoring sites and additional sites in Ft. Valley and on Stoney Creek.



Our webmaster, Susie Wilburn, created a fantastic macroinvertebrate informational section on our website this year, as well. Pictures and critter information abound at <http://www.fnfsr.org/science/benthicmonitoring.html>. Check it out!

Finally, in concert with this project, Dr. Woodward Bousquet at SU has become a certified instructor in the Virginia Save Our Streams (VA SOS) benthic macro-invertebrate monitoring protocol. Dr. Bousquet is a fantastic resource for help with this training and certification process.

Thanks to the private donors and foundations, including the Norcross Foundation, the Shenandoah Community Foundation and the Virginia Environmental Endowment, for funding the expansion of our monitoring program in 2010 and 2011.

- **Drinking Water Brochure and Membership Recruitment:**

Building on our sampling for trace organics in the river several years ago, during the last year we have been investigating the potential for those organics to be present in drinking water in the Valley. Friends produced an informative brochure on the potential for these chemicals to appear in water supplies and what individuals 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.


We completed a mass mailing of these brochures to residents of towns that pull their drinking water from the North Fork: Broadway, Woodstock and Strasburg. We paired this informational opportunity with a membership building campaign that resulted in more than 50 new members.

- **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 improve water quality to the point that Smith Creek can be removed 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. Friends' volunteers, along with staff from the Friends of the Shenandoah River are currently collecting E. coli samples from the headwaters of Smith Creek to the central section of Smith Creek in locations that will be receiving some type of agricultural best management practice (BMP). We hope to track improvements in water quality after implementation of BMPs including fencing livestock out of the creek, stabilizing stream banks and restoring vegetated buffers.

- **Surface Water Monitoring:**

We trained and certified six new volunteer monitors this year for a total of 29



volunteers who help monitor 31 sites in the North Fork and its major tributaries. Volunteers collected approximately 700 water samples for analysis at the FOSR laboratory. This equates to more than 1000 volunteers hours during 2010 and 2011. Thanks to our lead monitor Roger Bolland for his leadership and coordination of this project!

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

Friends continued its 5th year of partnership with the Shenandoah County Water Resources Advisory Committee (WRAC) in 2010, to collect monthly well depth information on six wells located throughout the county. Thanks to Lee Dieter and John Kreitzburg for monitoring these wells for this program.

Building on this program, the WRAC and Friends have decided to work with the DEQ to locate abandoned wells that can house real time well monitoring equipment. This equipment would provide real time water level data and possibly other parameters that would be uploaded to a satellite and available on the internet. Friends is working with the WRAC and a representative from Trout Unlimited to locate wells and to develop funding for this effort.

Education:

Our water health education efforts continue to grow and prosper under the leadership of our education committee co-chairs, Barbara Halvorson and Gayle Shaffer and the efforts of our education coordinator, Cindy Frenzel.


- **Education Coordinator and Committees:**

Support from the MARPAT Foundation allowed Friends to continue employment of our part-time education coordinator. Cindy brings great enthusiasm to her job and is an extremely effective communicator with adults, teachers and students. She continues to expand upon a solid educational program employing presentations, workshops and event appearances to convey our water resources protection message.

Our Education Committee grew this year and expanded into subcommittees for teacher professional development, workshop development, curriculum development and event coordination.

- **Teacher Professional Development:**

- **The North Fork Exploration** - Friends developed and implemented the "North Fork Exploration," a watershed-related professional development opportunity for K-12 teachers in Shenandoah County. This was a four day workshop in which 12 teachers participated in a canoe trip led by the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, visited sites having an impact on the North Fork,



and discussed and created VA SOL related lesson plans for the coming school year. FNFSR will meet with participants in May 2011 to evaluate their efforts.

- **Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF), River to the Bay** - Friends sponsored the participation of one elementary school teacher in the CBF's week long river to Bay expedition. During this experience, teachers trace the path of a raindrop as it enters the North Fork Shenandoah River and travels to the Chesapeake Bay. It is a life changing opportunity that breeds an excitement about rivers, the Bay and water health that teachers then pass on to their students.

- **Virginia Naturally Environmental Education Conference**, September 15-16, 2010 - Our Education Coordinator and one Education Committee co-chair attended this two-day conference in Richmond. This was a fantastic opportunity to learn new water education ideas and network with fellow water oriented educators.

- **Adult Education Programs:**


Cindy Frenzel, our one woman educational power house, informed and interacted with church groups, Rotary Clubs, Ruritan Clubs, women's groups, garden clubs, Kiwanis Clubs, Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists throughout the North Fork Shenandoah River watershed and beyond. Cindy is a talented and dynamic teacher and Friends and the River benefit from her abilities to effectively communicate our water protection messages.

- We refined and continued to improve our 20-minute Power Point Presentation ("The North Fork: My River, My Community, My Choice") in order to convey a concise and action-oriented water protection message. Our education coordinator conducted 26 adult education programs touching more than 1500 adults in 2010 and 2011.

- MARPAT support and donations from members enabled Friends to broaden our original workshop series with Friends hosting 4 workshops with more than 90 participants.

- FNFSR worked with the Shenandoah County Sheriff's office to sponsor a local site for the Drug Enforcement Association's National Prescription Drug Take Back day in September of 2010 and April 2011. This is an effort to keep drugs out of our waterways and also out of the hands of children. This was a unique and successful partnership, combining social and environmental concerns, a partnership which has been renewed for 2012. Seventy pounds of pharmaceuticals were collected in 2010 and 45 pounds in 2011.

- Cindy and Friends' volunteers worked together to teach a macroinvertebrate and fish biology class to the Shenandoah Valley Chapter of the Master Naturalists. We hope to partner with this organization to bring a Master Naturalist opportunity to the North Fork Watershed. A highlight of this partnership was the creation by two class participants and FNFSR members of



"A Quick Guide to the North Fork" for use by river users. This guide is now available for a three-dollar donation.

- **Youth Education Programs:**

Friends' education coordinator presented 17 different watershed programs to more than 1350 students throughout the North Fork watershed. These included classroom presentations as well as summer camps and field days in which the students partake in Meaningful Watershed Experiences. Significantly, we continued to assist with the "Plant a Seed" program held by Harrisonburg, VA City Schools and also with a local Soil and Water Conservation District sponsored Envirothon. This included 4-H groups, public and private schools, library programs, a summer enrichment academy and a nature camp.

Three examples of programs given include:

- Presenting a macroinvertebrate program for hundreds of students from the North Fork Middle School during their two day watershed learning opportunity held at Caroline Furnace in Ft. Valley.
- Participation in the Big Give Community Service Project at Peter Muhlenburg Middle School (PMMS) where Derek Ritenour's Agriculture students helped prep barrels for use in our April compost barrel making workshop held at PMMS.
- Presentation of education programs about surface and groundwater for Rockingham County 5th graders with Nancy Carr from the Virginia Rural Water Association.

- **Events:**

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, Broadway Fall Festival, Edinburg Old Time Festival, and the Shenandoah County Fair! Our latest displays focus on the quality of our drinking water and the questions that are coming up for us locally as well as nationwide regarding its safety. We've incorporated several of Cameron Davidson's aerial photographs of the North Fork that he generously allowed Friends to utilize.

Friends also continued our partnership with the Loud Fairfax Soil and Water Conservation District (LFSWCD) on a project to promote agricultural best management practices (BMPs) by displaying signs that commend farmers who take significant steps to protect the North Fork and its tributaries.



Advocacy:

Friends serves as a “Voice” for the North Fork. You will find Friends defending the river before local, state and Federal government lawmakers and regulators. Led by co-chairs Mary Gessner and Margaret Lorenz, Friends advocate decisions by government that protect the river, its watershed, and all of us who depend on a clean, healthy river. We have been busy advocating at the local, state and occasionally the Federal level as outlined below:

- **Commonwealth of Virginia:**


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 to minimize runoff and protect our streams.

Biosolids, a.k.a. sewage sludge was and continues to be an issue high on our advocacy agenda. Shenandoah County has been spared from out of state import of sewage sludge and Friends and our members and partners presented strong and convincing oral arguments and over 100 written arguments against a local sludge spreading permit. However, our efforts and arguments went unheard by the State Water Control Board and a permit was granted. Yet Friends' members and partners are continuing to pursue more stringent requirements related to the environmental and potential health impacts of sludge spreading locally and statewide.

- **Towns and Counties:**

Friends continues to work with our partners to oppose the permitting of a Marcellus Shale well drilling (hydrofracturing) site that is located within the floodplain of two streams forming the headwaters of the North Fork in Rockingham County, VA. The Virginia Department of Mines Minerals and Energy has issued a permit, but development of the site requires a special use permit from the County. Fortunately, the Rockingham County Board of Supervisors responded to a large outpouring of public concern regarding the threat to local streams and drinking water and tabled the permit request pending receipt of additional information. 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 work closely with Shenandoah County efforts to develop zoning ordinances that would more effectively achieve the goals of the County's Comprehensive Plan. The Plan places high priority on preserving the County's rural character and protecting natural resources. Changes to the zoning



ordinances are positive and place a high priority on land conservation. Unfortunately, there was less emphasis on natural resources.

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 continued our participation in Virginia Tech's North Fork Shenandoah Decisions project, which is designed to develop and assess a practical decision tool for watershed nutrient planning. It is hoped that this model will be helpful in developing the local portion of Watershed Implementation Plans required under the Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL).

Although local construction activities are limited due to the economy and housing market, we continue to monitor local permitting and zoning actions and comment as appropriate. As always, we could use more volunteer assistance to monitor activities in the towns throughout the watershed.

- **Federal Government:**

Friends wrote numerous letters to the editor and editorial columns in support of federal funding to cleanup the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries.


Friends is a member of the Choose Clean Water Coalition and had the opportunity to add our support to a number of letter writing campaigns.

We provided comments and worked with partner organization to ensure that water protection and drinking watershed protection, in particular, are high priorities in the new management plan for the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests.

Cleanups:

Jack Chapman lead Friend's volunteers in another year of fun and cleanups 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 Potomac Conservancy. Thanks to ALL!

– Friends hosted two cleanups in 2010 and 2011 gathering more than 3100 lbs. of trash, including 48 tires and lots of metal and other junk. 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 Stewardship Virginia, Shenandoah County's 2011 Litter Cleanup competition and the Alice Ferguson Foundation's Potomac River Watershed Clean Up effort.

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 strong organizational foundation. Maintaining our capacity to work effectively in the watershed is a daily challenge.

- Volunteers helped Friends raise more than \$20,000 during our spectacular 6th Annual Fish Fry. Dennis Fowler and John Coleman constructed beautiful wooden benches that volunteer artists painted and decorated in extraordinary renditions of river magic. We thank our individual donors, business sponsors and all that were involved in making this event the best Fish Fry yet. These creations and our auctioneer Joe Foltz made 2010's Fish Fry a big hit.
- Friend's members contributed more than \$9,000 during our 2010 year end fundraising effort. THANK YOU!
- Staff and Board members completed a review and revision of our strategic plan with assistance from River Network.
 - Board and staff reviewed and restructured our original organizational By-laws to better reflect our current organizational structures and goals.
 - Friends is delighted to have a volunteer office assistant, Wendy Yarnold, who is making life much easier for our Executive Director by handling office tasks for 8-10 hours per week.
 - We would also like to thank Judy and Jenny Beavers for their envelop stuffing efforts! They are tried and true volunteers we can count on with only a "minute's notice". Thanks!



Partnerships:

- Blue Canoe Crew
- 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
- PJ Designs
- Potomac Conservancy
- Potomac Riverkeeper
- Shenandoah County Schools and Agriculture Teacher Derek Ritenour
- Shenandoah County Water Resources Advisory Committee
- Shenandoah Forum
- Shenandoah Resource, Conservation and Development Council
- Shenandoah Riverkeeper
- Shenandoah University and Woodward Bousquet
- Shenandoah Valley Network
- Shenandoah Valley Pure Water Forum
- Smith Creek Watershed Partnership
- Town of New Market - Mike Ritchie
- United States Forest Service
- Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation
- Virginia Department of Environmental Quality
- Virginia Department of Forestry
- Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries




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2010-2011 Funders - Thank You!

Lake Laura Monitoring Project:

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

Capacity Building/Organizational Support:

Agua Fund - \$10,000

Chesapeake Bay Funders Group - \$750

MARPAT Foundation - \$15,000

Monitoring/General Support:

Shenandoah County Government - \$2,000

