



Friends of the North Fork of the Shenandoah River

Dedicated to protecting and enhancing the purity, beauty and natural flow of the North Fork.

Volume 18, Number 3

Fall 2007

Friends' 3rd Annual Fish Fry - Sunday, October 14, 2007 in Deer Rapids, near Strasburg, VA!

Friends' 3rd Annual Fish Fry from 2-5pm on Sunday, October 14, is destined to be the best yet, according to our event organizers Diane Gould and Susie Wilburn. The annual Fish Fry is our biggest fundraising event for the year and we're pulling out all of the stops - Steve and Wendy Pieper are hosting the Fry at their beautiful home along the North Fork, Michael Cash and his friends are providing the entertainment, Shaffer's will be frying up catfish and grilling chicken, and last, but not least, our auctioneer returns to lead us through an exciting afternoon of raising funds to help the North Fork of the Shenandoah River! Please call the Friends office at 459-8550 if you would like tickets to the Fish Fry or you can purchase tickets at the door.



State Candidates' Forum on Water Issues Facing the Shenandoah River Watershed - October 17, 2007 in Woodstock, VA

Friends of the North Fork is co-sponsoring a candidates' forum in the northern portion of the Shenandoah River watershed. Our co-sponsors include Friends of the Shenandoah River, the National Parks Conservation Association, the Page County Water Quality Advisory

Committee, The Potomac Conservancy, the Shenandoah Basin Project, and the Shenandoah Valley Pure Water Forum. Candidates and incumbents for the Virginia House of Delegates and the Senate have been invited to participate in a moderated question and answer session focused on water issues facing the Shenandoah River. All candidates are being asked to address water issues that include business and residential growth and water resources, reduction of non-point sources of pollution, and ongoing fish kills in the Shenandoah River and its tributaries. Initial questions that

candidates have been requested to address in writing include:

Question 1:

The Shenandoah River has experienced serious, unexplained fish kills documented since 2004. The Shenandoah River fish kills have had a significant, adverse impact on the economy of the Shenandoah Valley and have prompted serious public health concerns about the water. More than 1,300 miles of rivers and streams in the Shenandoah watershed fail to meet federal and state water quality standards. The (continued on page 2)

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Shenandoah River is clearly a river under stress. What specific actions will you take in the General Assembly to address the downward trend in the health of this important river and advance public-private efforts to determine the cause(s) of the fish kills?

Question 2:

As our population increases, demand on water resources is becoming a major concern in the Shenandoah Valley. Current water withdrawals and requests by municipalities, companies, and agriculture are rising but the supply of water is limited & variable. What specific actions will you take in the General Assembly to ensure local governments use their planning and zoning powers to assume a greater role to support Shenandoah Valley wide cooperation on water use so that there is enough water for everyone now and in the future?

Question 3:

The Shenandoah Valley is home to a dedicated network of water monitoring volunteers and citizens working with nonprofit organizations that are diligently addressing water issues including the fish kills, point and non-point source pollution, and Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) development. These groups provide a direct link between local communities and government agencies and elected officials on water issues. How will you specifically support their efforts in the General Assembly?

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During the forum the public will be given the opportunity to pose questions about these and other related water quality and quantity concerns to the candidates. This is YOUR chance to learn from the candidates, first hand, about their positions on water issues and their plans for restoring the health of the Shenandoah River.

Where and When????

The northern forum will take place in Woodstock, at Peter Muhlenberg Middle School, on October 17, from 7:00 to 8:30 pm. Light refreshments will be served as well. Please call Leslie Watson at the Friends office if you have any questions or would like further information: 540-459-8457.

Exciting Developments at Friends: Leslie Mitchell-Watson Promoted to Executive Director and Cindy Frenzel Hired as Education Coordinator!

The Board of Directors of Friends of the North Fork promoted Leslie Mitchell-Watson to Executive Director and hired Cindy Frenzel as our new Education Coordinator in August of 2007. Leslie has a long history with Friends, volunteering since 1998 as a water monitor, chairing the Cleanup Committee since 2002, serving one year on the Friends' Board, and as staff and program manager since 2006. Cindy's education and outreach position is supported by a grant that Friends attained from the MARPAT Foundation, for the

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purpose of developing an outreach and education program to touch a large cross-section of the North Fork watershed community. Cindy's background in public education with the National Park Service and the VA Department of Forestry, among others, will greatly enhance Friends' communication with residents of the watershed concerning the challenges facing the North Fork. *Cindy and Leslie introduce themselves below:*

Cindy near Boulder, CO



Julia Davis wrote in her 1945 book The Shenandoah, "The Shenandoah is a short river, a narrow river, a shallow river. No commerce rides the often muddy waters, no cities break the willow fringe along the bank. Yet to thousands who have never seen it the Shenandoah is music, the Shenandoah is romance."

As I sit next to the North Fork trying to get inspired to write this article, I hear its music: rippling green water, buzz saw insects, wind pushing the first leaves from the still-green trees, a noisy bird in one of those trees with a tall creaking trunk. Leaf boats float by, a rock rolls down the opposite bank to disrupt the ripples, butterflies explore the weedy wildflowers and a duck pair sunbathes nearby. WOW! I got all that in just a few minutes! But nature does (continued on page 3)

that for us, easily, especially when water is involved.

Wanting to share these inspirations of nature is just one of the reasons I gladly accepted the new position of Education Coordinator with the Friends of the North Fork. Previously, I worked for the Virginia Department of Forestry for 14 years as a fire prevention educator, and have worked for the Virginia State Parks, New Market Battlefield Historical Park and the National Park Service. I also have a B.S. in Forestry and Wildlife from Virginia Tech, so nature is my "thing", I suppose.

This fall, I will be working through an outreach grant with the MARPAT Foundation, to help expand the Friend's reach to help confront the growing challenges to the health of the North Fork of the Shenandoah River. We hope to inspire the involvement of more Shenandoah Valley citizens in the Friend's efforts, and to increase awareness of our river's health. As we know, increasing awareness is a first and vital step in promoting action and response to water quality and water quantity issues within our watershed.

As a part of the project, we are creating a Community Leadership Advisory Council, and developing a message to answer the question, "Why should I care?". In addition, Friends worked with Professor Pete Bsumek and students from James Madison University to develop a slide show that I will

present to diverse community groups throughout the Shenandoah Valley. The show will help our community understand what they can do as individuals to change the health of our river and hopefully become more concerned that the Shenandoah River was recently declared the fifth most endangered river in the country by the national conservation organization, American Rivers.

We are developing a presentation schedule so if your civic, government, church, community or other group is interested in improving the quality of the North Fork, please call the Friends' office at 540-459-8550 or email me at cindy.frenzel@fnfsr.org.

Leslie at 2005 Fish Fry



During a recent vacation, I had a disturbing conversation. While exchanging pleasantries with a fellow traveler, the subject of our employment came up and I proceeded to describe the work I do for Friends. This person then asked me if I spend a lot of time on the North Fork. Somewhat embarrassed, I said that I don't and I listed the reasons that dissuade me from boating, fishing, swimming in, and simply enjoying the River - recalling canoe trips through noxious smelling water

and air, worrying that the nearest waste water treatment plant has overflowed, thinking about foul and polluted runoff from parking lots and fields after the latest rain, floating by cows and sheep allowed to defecate along the riversides and in the river, seeing historic and more recent piles of trash and tires in and along the banks of the River - not to mention the fact that we don't know what is causing lesions and killing the smallmouth bass and red breast sunfish in the North Fork and elsewhere. How many of you have had the same thoughts when you or your children play in the river or more importantly drink the water in a town that takes its drinking water from the North Fork?

Well, he nodded and we talked some more and then parted ways, but as I thought about this encounter later, it occurred to me that this is a pathetic and highly unacceptable situation. Residents and visitors to this watershed should not have to ask if it's safe to swim in the river. Fishermen should not be afraid to eat their allowable catch, kayakers and canoeists should not have to track the latest overflows from wastewater treatment plants and all of us should not have to question the contents of our drinking water.

This brief conversation has ignited a stifled personal passion to ardently pursue the Friends' mission - "to protect and enhance the purity, beauty, and natural flow of the North Fork of the Shenandoah River." I intend to work hand in hand with the Board and to enlist the help of our membership in (continued on page 4)

challenging ourselves, our neighbors, and our elected officials to recognize and learn about these issues and act to protect our most precious historic and natural resource.

I would like to thank you for your continued support of Friends and assure you that your contributions help fuel the passion for improving the health of the North Fork held by the Friends' Board, active volunteers, Cindy, and myself. I look forward to talking with you at our upcoming Fish Fry.

!!And don't forget - we have a cleanup scheduled for October 27 in the morning. Call Leslie for details - 459-8550!!

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FNFSR
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Staff:

- Cindy Frenzel - Ed. Coordinator
- Leslie Mitchell-Watson - Ex. Director

Calendar of Events

- October 12-13 – EPA Region 3 Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring Conference Shenandoah University
- October 12-14 - CBF Watershed Forum
- October 14 – FNFSR Fish Fry
- October 17 - Candidates' Forum in Woodstock, 7-8:30pm
- October 27 - FNFSR Cleanup

