

OWC NEWSLETTER

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Issue Nr 11, October 2000

**OWC General
Membership
Meeting
Nov12, 2000**

**The Occoquan
Watershed
Coalition Gen-
eral Member-
ship Meeting
will be held on
Sunday,
November 12,
2000 at 7:30
PM (and end-
ing by 9 PM)
in the Clifton
Community
Hall in Clifton.
This short
meeting will
also include a
brief update
on matters
followed by
your OWC
representa-
tives. Mark
your calendar
and be certain
your Associa-
tion is repre-
sented.**

*Al Akers
President*

Your OWC Web Site is Up & Running - www.owccoalition.org

by Al Akers, President

This is not a one page Site! It is an extensive, elaborate Site, professionally organized and developed, and is user friendly. It includes both Home Page and Current Issues Page, background pages about the OWC to include its By-Laws, biographies of most of your 20 Member Board of Directors and 8 Directors-at-Large, 50 Links to other Web Sites, a growing Archives

section, and much more.

Your Site is current and at the same time a repository of key, historical papers addressing the need to protect your Watershed and the Region's Drinking water.

Your Watershed, down zoned by The Board of Supervisors in 1982, is different from others and is protected, having withstood over 40 legal challenges. To learn more about your Watershed, sign out the 30 minute Video, hosted by Supervisor McConnell. It is timeless,

perfect for Association meetings--Call her office at (703) 451-8873 to borrow a copy.

This Newsletter addresses only some of the variety of current activities in which the OWC is involved. But it is on Your Web Site where you find all the details.

One final point.....if you or your association have not renewed your membership for year 2000, please do so now.

Trail Planning in the County & In The OWC Area

by Jim Chesley & Charlie Smith, Directors

The Countywide Trails Committee is appointed by Fairfax County for the purpose of providing citizen input and oversight to the planning and development of a Countywide Trails System. In establishing this committee, the FFC Board recognized the desirability of coordinating the development of a trail and sidewalk network to serve pedestrians, bicyclists, and equestrians.

Some of the operations of the Trails Committee include: (1) the development and revision of the Countywide Trails Plan, (2) the development of an annual non-park trail construction program, and, (3) the review of requests for trail construction waivers. At question is the designation of bicycle/equestrian trails as shown in the current Countywide trails plan that are contained within the Occoquan

Watershed Area of the Springfield District. These trails are also referred to as Tandem Biking and Equestrian Trails and are defined as "Suitable for equestrian use, hiking and all-terrain bicycle use in low density areas" and which requires ten feet of right-of-way. As all of you are aware, the land within the Watershed is uniquely different from most of the built-up areas of the County. It consists of rural, winding country roads with little or no current shoulders within which to build any type of trails without the condemnation by the County of private land. Unlike other districts in the County, with the exception of Dranesville District, horses are prevalent in our area and are part of our daily life. Tandem trails for bicycles and equestrians are

at odds with one another. They are not compatible and co-located, side-by-side, on the same side of the road is unacceptable. There is no question that trails are needed - to serve ALL modes of transportation - but putting horses, bicycles and joggers on the same path is an invitation to disaster. Separate paths located on opposite sides of the road is one solution, but also a realization that in some areas there is no space to build trails must be acknowledged. Since there is little or no method for the county to be able to build many of the trails, alternative locations, such as a bike trail adjacent to the railroad tracks from Burke to Manassas Park should be pursued.

www.owccoalition.org

Traffic Congestion &

Telecommuting *by Eric Thiel, Director*

The new millennium opened on a positive note as the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors (BOS) unanimously reaffirmed its longtime stand against a central crossing of the Occoquan River. (Full details at www.owccoalition.org/archives/OccResBM1-00.htm). However, as the local economic expansion continues there will be those who will see new roadways as the only solution to traffic congestion.

There are really four options to reduce traffic congestion; more roads, enhancing existing roads, restructuring/behavior changes, and alternative transportation. All of these approaches have merit, but most are expensive and Fairfax County is both "built out" and has multiple employment centers making many of these options difficult.

Telecommuting is the one form of alternative transportation (It brings the "Office to the worker") that can make significant improvements in traffic flow at low cost. Telecommuting reduces traffic demand, facilitates behavior changes and achieves the traffic goals of restructuring, and works regardless of employment center location. If 1 in 5 commuters used telecommuting one day every other week, a 10% reduction in traffic demand would occur. Congestion starts when small increases in the number of cars cause sudden large drops in traffic flow. Thus, even small traffic reductions can have large benefits. Further, telecommuting is funded via business and consumer demand so it uses few tax dollars.

The largest barriers to telecommuting have been the rate of installation of fast communications and management acceptance. Hopefully, the planned improvements to local cable and other systems will soon encourage more telecommuting. The October 24th Washington Area Conference on Telework at Fairfax County Government Center should help begin the process of encouraging management to experiment with teleworking. For information on the conference please visit:

www.wacot.org.

Check out OWC Web Site at:

www.owccoalition.org

Capital Beltway Rail

Feasibility Study

by Susan Borinsky, Director

The Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (VDRPT) is studying the feasibility of constructing rail between Springfield and Tysons Corner and into Maryland. The Capital Beltway Major Investment Study (1997) recommended more lanes to reduce Beltway congestion, but urged that there be a separate study on rail in the vicinity of the Beltway. At the initiative of Delegate David Albo (42nd District), with support from Governor James Gilmore, the Virginia Assembly provided about \$1 million for this study.

Three alignments near the Beltway and four technologies (heavy rail, light rail, monorail and bus rapid transit) are being considered. The study is exploring using power line easements for part of the right-of-way. The new system would connect with Metro, Virginia Rail Express and Dulles Corridor transit.

A Policy Advisory Committee of elected officials and citizens is contributing to the study. There is also a Technical Advisory Committee of transportation professionals from the U.S, Virginia, Maryland and Fairfax County governments and representatives of the Washington Area Metropolitan Transit Authority and Virginia Power. HNTB Corporation is the consultant. Additional information is available at www.beltway.org.

VRE Station Study

*- by Rae Tyson,
Director*

A host of environmental concerns, including watershed protection, have all but derailed a new western Fairfax County commuter rail station. The committee has been reviewing a host of potential sites between Colchester Road and Union Mill Road. It is the latest in a series of attempts by the county to find a suitable location to serve the growing Virginia Railway Express (VRE). Chaired by Pete Murphy, chairman of the county Planning Commission, the committee evaluated the need for a new station, based on ridership projections from VRE. But the prospect of finding a suitable location dimmed considerably following an August presentation by the staff of the county Department of Planning and Zoning. Most of the potential sites were deemed unsuitable because of potential environmental damage. Among

the concerns: Chesapeake Bay protection along with the likelihood of negative impact on wetlands and the Occoquan Watershed.

As expected, the VRE Task Force voted not to recommend any of the potential sites for a new VRE station at their meeting on September 26. Their recommendation is expected to go to the Board of Supervisors in November.

Region Facing New Challenges to Keep the Watershed Clean

*by Greg Evans, Director Northern Virginia
Soil & Water Conservation District*

In 1992, Chesapeake Bay program members – including Virginia agreed to develop nutrient reduction strategies for waterways flowing into the Chesapeake Bay. Our Potomac Watershed in 1996, became the first in Virginia to complete a strategy, one calling for a 40 percent reduction goal by 2001. The good news is we are on track to reach that. However, in June, Virginia signed an agreement that calls for "capping" the level of nutrient loadings that can be discharged into waterways while developing new reduction goals to remove the Chesapeake Bay from EPA's "impaired waters list" by 2010.

A nutrient cap represents a major concern to local officials, wastewater treatment plant operators, and the development community. They are concerned about cost and that the cap may stifle growth. Virginia is promoting a voluntary approach to meeting the cap but could be subject to a federally mandated reduction plan..

Public involvement is essential to create and implement a good plan. A new regional Potomac Watershed Roundtable is being created to coordinate efforts and public hearings are planned this fall.

Year 2000 Membership

- You or your homeowner's association, as members of the OWC, have helped swell our past paid membership to over 5,000 voters. Because we had sufficient funds to support OWC mailings and operations, we did not collect membership fees in 1998 or 1999. This year (2000), it was necessary for us to replenish our reserves. We ask all individual and association members to renew their membership. If you have not renewed your individual or association membership please show your interest in what is happening in the Watershed by doing it now!
Please renew by November 1, 2000.

The "New" Lorton: From Old Dumps & Prisons to New Residential, Cultural and Commercial Ventures

by Neal McBride, At Large Director

D.C. Prison's closure is being expedited. GSA has agreed to transfer many prison buildings and acres of land for use as cultural, governmental, recreational, park and natural resource areas. Local groups have asked to adopt several former prison athletic facilities for area youth.

Negotiations continue between the Govt. and the Lynch Family for a land swap. The County has made an offer that could accelerate both the trade and the development of the 1,100-unit residential area on Laurel Hill in the new Lorton.

Elsewhere in Greater Lorton the pace of public and private infrastructure reconstruction and expansion has also picked up. In addition to the new 17 residential communities with 2,500 units in active construction or site development, there are 10 other subdivisions with 1,360 homes awaiting site planning or rezoning approval. Four new public schools are being proposed to educate the 3,200 new students expected. A new Fire/Rescue Station, new Catholic Church and new Post Office are also being pursued.

Several major transportation projects have begun: Telegraph Road, Pohick Road-East, Lorton Railroad Underpass and Alban/Rolling Road Intersection. Improvements to Richmond Highway, Route 123, Rolling Road, Hooes Road, Pohick Road-West and Lorton Road are all funded and scheduled to begin during the next two-three years. For more details check out this subject on the Current Issues page of the OWC Web Site.

It's obviously not your father's Lorton anymore!

Infill & Residential Development Study

by David W. Schnare, Director

Citizens on the Watershed will soon have an opportunity to lend their voices on the debate about how best to use and redevelop land in the county, and specifically on the recommendations in the "Infill and Residential Development Study." Here's what the study found and what the task force recommends.

In 1998 we had 343,500 housing units in use. In the past 25 years home size has grown by 30 percent, while lot sizes have shrunk. Developers no longer build only at the edges of suburbia. Today they demolish existing homes and build larger ones; they subdivide existing lots; they develop undeveloped sites within existing neighborhoods, they redevelop existing subdivisions; and, they develop large subdivisions surrounded by other recently developed subdivisions. The County considers each of these "infill."

Citizens have identified four important "infill" issues: infill has not been compatible with existing homes; infill increases traffic congestion and cut-through traffic; infill destroys trees, forests and neighborhood open space; and, infill increases storm drainage and soil erosion. To deal with these problems, the Task Force recommended 34 changes to County regulations. They propose policies intended to ensure compatibility with the existing community; a road system that increases extension of roads through communities, including opening cul de sac's as through streets; increase awareness of tree preservation and require a practice that might better protect trees; and, new regulations to control sediment run-off.

We encourage citizens on the watershed to read the infill study - available on the internet at:

www.co.fairfax.va.us/GOV/ocp/

To provide your comments, at:

www.infill@co.fairfax.va.us

Fire & Rescue in the OWC

by Larry Hensle, Director

The Fairfax Station area is a safe and lovely place to live until you have an accident, medical or fire emergency. At that point you are living in one of the most isolated areas in Fairfax County. The fire and rescue stations that do answer your call for help have primary responsibility for large adjacent communities, from which distance and congestion make timely availability an issue.

Supervisor Elaine McConnell has made the construction of a facility to meet the fire and medical emergency needs of Fairfax Station one of her seven highest priorities for her four year term. The County has a fire emergency

real time goal of five minutes or less. The response from current and future adjacent area stations, into Fairfax Station, can easily be two to four times the five minutes, provided the equipment and personnel are not already committed to operations in their primary coverage areas.

Given the upcoming bond referenda, and the three-year pipeline that a project travels from planning to completion, the time to revisit this need is now.

Union Middle School

by Charlie Smith, Director

Construction of a new middle school located within the watershed area on Union Mill Road is about to begin. Less than half of the 75 acre site will be used for the school. A portion of the remaining land will be designated as a Conservation Area in order to protect it from future development. The school is planned to open September 2002.

Occoquan Watershed Signs

by Susan Borinsky, Director

As proposed by the OWC, Fairfax County Supervisors recently voted to install signs to increase public awareness about the importance of the Occoquan Watershed as the catch basin for the drinking water of almost a million Northern Virginians. Signs will be posted along roads at entry points to the Watershed and along the Occoquan Reservoir in Fairfax County by late 2000.

See the OWC Web Site www.owccoalition.org

Messages from Supervisor

McConnell & Al Akers

About OWC - List of Directors,

their Tel #'s, OWC Bylaws

Current Issues

Newsletters

Archives

Over 50 possible Links including:

Springfield District Home Page

Fairfax County Home Page

Bd of Supervisors Home Page

Commonwealth of VA &

VDOT

Deer Management in FFC

VA Soil & Water Conservation

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Occoquan Watershed Coalition
11533 Lakewood Lane
Fairfax Station, VA 22039

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**Yes, we (I) want to join or renew membership in the
Occoquan Watershed Coalition!**

YEAR 2000 MEMBERSHIP Dues

\$5 - Individual,
\$15 - Homeowner Associations - 1-15 Owners
\$25 - Homeowner Associations - 16 or more Owners

\$ _____ **Special Donation for Support of OWC Activities**

Name of Homeowners Assn _____ Nr Owners _____
Your Name _____ Title _____
Address _____ Home Tel _____
City/State _____ Zip Code _____ Ofc Tel _____
Talents, Experience and Support I/We can provide to OWC _____ Fax _____
E-mail _____

***Please renew your membership by Nov. 1, 2000. Make checks payable to the
Occoquan Watershed and mail to 12101 Wolf Valley Drive, Clifton, VA 20124***