



Fall 2009 calendar

**Dec. 5, 6 PM - Holiday
Rent Party** at Chip & Vicki
Underwood's house
**Jan. 29, Annual meeting,
6 PM**, KW Fire & Rescue
Squad Bldg., Aylett

You're Invited

Come meet old and new river friends at the Holiday Rent Party on Sat., Dec. 5. Chip and Vicki Underwood are hosting the get-together at their home on Pole Green Rd., Mechanicsville. (For directions, see page 4 or the MPRA website.) The fun begins at 6 PM.

Bring your favorite beverage and some festive food to share. We'll spend a little time updating everyone on what's been going on, sharing opportunities to volunteer, planning some boat trips or bragging about recent fishing trips and other adventures. If you haven't been to a rent party before, it's an excuse to get members together and raise a few dollars for the cause. We all bring food, drink and \$5 to help "pay the rent."



Mattaponi and Pamunkey Rivers Association newsletter

The fat lady sings

After more than twenty years, the fight against the Newport News reservoir project is over. Thanks to many MPRA members who attended hearings, wrote letters, talked to legislators and took active roles to oppose the project alongside the Alliance to Save the Mattaponi, Sierra Club and the Chesapeake Bay Foundation. Lawyers at the Southern Environmental Law Center, Institute for Public Representation, Pamunkey and Mattaponi Indian Tribes, Glen Bessa, Kelly Place, Tyla Matteson, Harvey Morgan, Albert Pollard, Jo Ann Davis, Chris Peace, Rob Wittman, Ryan McDougle, Don Phillips, Mike Siegel, VIMS, Garrie Rouse, Billy Mills and others were crucial to this outcome. The Alliance to Save the Mattaponi website has links to news articles and information about the project.

Former MPRA Executive Director Billy Mills dies at age 58.

For ten years, Billy Mills was MPRA's executive director. Around the time the KW Reservoir project was being hatched, it was Billy's idea to create an organization to protect local rivers. At the time, Billy worked for the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay (ACB) and encouraged people in the watershed to begin monitoring the rivers' water quality and to think about how local land uses could affect the river. He helped organize a series of meetings for counties, organizations and VIMS in the York River basin, resulting in creating a set of Geographic Informational System maps for the watershed, a cutting-edge planning tool at the time.



"Billy was a visionary and a salesman," said Dawn Shank, MPRA board member. "He had so many ideas. Some of his best came to fruition because he could get other people excited and talk them into accomplishing them. He was a master wordsmith and grant writer. He knew exactly what to write or say to get people onboard a project." Billy's former profession as a landscaper led him to create the Bayscapes Program with Virginia Cooperative Extension and the ACB. This conservation landscaping program is now widely known on the east coast.

Along with Kitty Cox, Billy organized river clean ups on the Mattaponi and Pamunkey Rivers, later known as River Stewardship Day; this June will mark MPRA's 20th. The Algonquin Trace Water Trail was his idea. MPRA installed kiosks on the Mattaponi and Pamunkey Rivers and offers maps and information about the trail. Recently, MPRA signed *Memoranda of Agreement* with the National Park Service to make the water trail an official part of the Captain John Smith Water Trail and the Chesapeake Gateways Trail.

Billy left his position as MPRA's Executive Director several years ago to become a realtor for Twin Rivers Realty and was active in the Middle Peninsula Land Trust. He died peacefully at home on October 15 at age 58. He is survived by his wife, Sally, daughter Elizabeth and son Jake.



Prothonatory Warbler Project update

Brad Davis and crew (left to right: Chip Underwood, Phil Rose, Brad and Brian Hepper) have put up and taken GPS readings on the locations of more than 24 bird boxes. This fall Boy Scouts have been working with MPRA on the project. Adam Rellick has taken on building boxes as part of his Eagle Scout project.

The goal is to have 100 up by the next breeding season. If you are interested in helping place boxes, have property adjacent to the river where boxes could be installed or would like to help monitor the boxes during breeding season, contact Brad Davis at PDavis@hanover.k12.va.us.

Annual Meeting set for January 29, 2010

Mark your calendars for the Annual MPRA Membership Pot Luck at the KW Fire and Rescue Squad Building in Aylett. Bring a dish. MPRA will provide beverages, including beer and wine for the social from 6:00 - 6:30. Dinner is at 6:30, followed by a program of our accomplishments this year and election of officers.



If you are interested in serving on the board or would like to nominate someone as an officer or board member, please contact Dawn Shank at dshank@msn.com The board usually meets once each month. We're also looking for members to volunteer on projects. Active projects are: Schools of Shad (environmental education), Fund Raising, Prothonatory Warbler/Bird Project, Sojourns/River Trips, Sandy Point State Forest, River Stewardship Day and the Water Trail. We're always willing to listen to ideas for any of these or new ones you might like to begin. We're looking for new blood (and sweat) to infuse into our organization.

MPRA Annual Meeting & Pot Luck Dinner is Jan. 29, 2010

Wood Duck boxes installed by Scouts at Sandy Point State Forest.



Scouts from Troop 400 (right) met at Sandy Point State Forest, installed and GPS-located six wood duck boxes as part of David Austin's Eagle Scout project. Chris Henicheck, Chip Underwood and new members Tom Inness and Phillip Innes assisted.

Chris has done an outstanding job working with scout troops for the past few years getting them involved with renovations of buildings and creating trails at Sandy Point State Forest. His tireless dedication is an inspiration to those who work with him. We appreciate you, Chris!



October River Day was “a real field trip”

In September, 160 sixth-graders from Hamilton-Holmes Middle School arrived at Sandy Point State Forest for River Day, part of MPRA’s Schools of Shad project. Students rotated through stations to learn about watersheds and river ecology. Dawn Shank, Audrey Mitchell and Lindsay Davis coordinated the project.

At two stations, students learned how to use GPS units to find specific locations, relating to map skills. HHMS teacher Lew Phillips and Westmoreland State Park interpreter/MPRA board member Ryan Evers manned the station.

Wearing her Three Rivers Soil and Water Conservation District hat, MPRA volunteer Dawn Shank demonstrated how different land uses affect runoff pollution by using an EnviroScape model. Students also used maps to determine whether they lived in the Mattaponi or Pamunkey watershed. MPRA volunteer Marion Jones assisted.



Mike Embrey, KW Public Schools Technology Coordinator worked with students to test water quality using several types of equipment. MPRA volunteers Betty and John Jensen taught the students how to fish.

Virginia Cooperative Extension 4-H agent Catherine Short, along with MPRA officers Chip Underwood and Chris Henicheck helped the kids use seine nets and explore bugs.



Randy Shank and Dept. of Forestry’s Dennis Gaston led students on a forestry hike. MPRA volunteer, Brad Davis talked to students about wildlife and showed them his live hawk. Lindsay Davis, HHMS teacher, led the student’s in Macroinvertebrate Mayhem, an environmental education tag game.

“Now this is a **real** field trip,” said one of the sixth-graders as he picked a fresh water shrimp out of the net and placed it in a bucket. River Day was also registered as part of *National Get Outside and Play Day*.

“Sandy Point is the perfect place to get the kids outdoors to learn about the rivers, said Audrey Mitchell. “Hands on learning helps them make a real connection to what they learn in the classroom. I’ll bet they won’t forget River Day. They literally got into it!”



We're raffling off this boat for \$1 a chance

Twin Rivers Realty donated a sailing canoe for MPRA to raffle as a fund raiser. You may have seen the boat at King William's Spring Festival, River Stewardship Day, the Locust Grove Wine and Art Festival, the West Point Crab Carnival or the King William High School Homecoming Parade.



The beautifully hand-crafted antique, wooden boat was constructed by a man in New England. The trailer is also included.

We will continue to sell tickets for \$1 each or 6 for \$5 at our Annual Meeting in January and at other events until June. The drawing will be June 5 at River Stewardship Day. If you'd like to buy some tickets or can help sell some for the organization, contact Dawn Shank at 769-2968 or dshank51@msn.com.

Directions to the Holiday Rent Party at the Underwood's house - 7022 Pole Green Rd.

From King William, take 360 West towards Richmond. Take a right on Lee Davis Rd. As you turn, Lee Davis High School will be on your left. Go 3 miles to the light at Pole Green Rd. Go through the light 100 yards and make a left between the split rail fences. There is a green mailbox with 7022. Underwood's phone is 804-746-9701.

MPRA website: www.mpra.org

Water Trail update

In November, President Chris Henicheck and Dawn Shank met with Bob Campbell, coordinator of the Chesapeake Gateways Trail to sign two Memoranda of Agreement between MPRA and the National Park Service. The agreement makes the Upper York Water Trail an official part of the Chesapeake Gateways Network and the Captain John Smith Water Trail. The Park Service is working to create a new national park that encompasses the Chesapeake Bay. The idea is slightly different from a traditional national park that has land borders, but still maintains traditional goals of protecting the natural and historical resources of a unique and special area, the Chesapeake Bay. The Gateways Network is a system of more than 160 parks, refuges, museums, historic communities and water trails in the Bay watershed. For more information about the Gateways network, visit www.gateways.net.

below: Mr. Todkill (Willie Balderson) has been MPRA's honored guest and educator at our Annual Meeting, River Stewardship Day, River Days and other events. Mr. Todkill tells stories of his adventures with Captain John Smith on the Chesapeake.



Invite a friend to join. MPRA - \$15 year for individual or family, \$50 Business/organization. Include your name, address, phone, email address and send to: **MPRA, P.O. Box 157, Walkerton, VA 23177**



The Mattaponi and Pamunkey Rivers Association is an all-volunteer 501(c)3 charitable non-profit organization dedicated to the protection and stewardship of the resources of the Mattaponi and Pamunkey Rivers.