



Looking Towards 2020

The end of a decade makes us stop and think about what we've done in the past and what changes we face in the future. MPRA's board recently reviewed our current focus and activities. We discussed ways to cope with how volunteers are different than ten years ago, and how to recruit younger leaders to our organization. We tried a few logistical changes to our traditional activities like River Stewardship Day the past few years. I'm sure there will be more adjustments in the future.

People just don't "RSVP" like they used to. It's increasingly difficult to get people to commit to activities ahead of time and almost impossible to plan how much food we need for an event.

Several MPRA members have lead activities and served our organization for decades. These dedicated folks are now mostly retired or employed in professions where they help as part of their jobs. It takes a lot of energy to spend three days outdoors with 40 kids when it's 90 degrees outside. It's getting more difficult for some of us to gracefully get in and out of a kayak. But, we're still committed to doing it after more than 25 years.

We have added activities that attract members who aren't as physically ac-

continued



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Annual meeting & Pot Luck dinner is Jan. 24

Bring a dish and a friend to the Annual Meeting and Pot Luck Dinner at the King William Ruritan Building. Social time is at 6 PM, followed by dinner at 6:30, and election of the 2019 board. April Deacy from the Pamunkey Indian Tribe will present a program about her summer sturgeon tagging project.

The following slate of officers and board members will be nominated: President—Dawn Shank, Vice-President—Dave Slack, Secretary—Audrey Mitchell, Treasurer—Steve Mitchell, Board members: Mary Shipman, April Deacy, Tanner Lipscomb, Brad & Ethan Davis, Adele & Bob Smith, Lou Verner, Elizabeth Christeller, Sally Mills, Mike Greenwood, Christina Ruszczyk-Murray, Armistead Saffer, Eugene Rivara, Amanda Walker and Kim Cook Taylor.

tive, like the pontoon river history boat cruises. We tried new formats for River Stewardship Day. Volunteers picked up trash on their own schedules, rather than a large meeting on one day. We held the volunteer picnic separately from the clean up, and asked people to bring a dish and their personal reusable utensils and cups. This reinforces our commitment to reduce waste and helps with food offerings. We distributed trash bags and made assignments at the picnic, rather than having people call a designated volunteer for an assignment ahead of time.

Considering people's busy holiday schedules, we opted for a November Sunday afternoon hike and tail-gate party, rather than asking a member to host a holiday party. It was a cold afternoon, but those that braved the weather enjoyed the hike led by Dave Slack, as well as the food and fellowship.



River Camp included a kayak paddle this year.

2019 activities included River Camp at Sandy Point State Forest, which again was at full capacity after the third day of registration. The spring and River Month paddles were well attended and will continue to be an MPRA focus. Getting people connected to the rivers is important to getting them to care about them.

We see increasing value in River Camp as kids spend more time looking at digital screens than the sky outdoors. Our natural resource agency partners willingly run station activities each day. But, it is getting more difficult to find volunteers who can commit to



Spring paddle & crab cake lunch at the Pamunkey Reservation

three days as group leaders. The future of camp may be more one-day workshops partnering with 4-H. Tina Vincel and Christina Ruszcyk-Murray at VA Cooperative Extension have been instrumental in the logistics of River Camp, as well as Dave Slack and the VA Dept. of Forestry's willingness to host camp at Sandy Point. Camp wouldn't have happened without Dave, Christina and MPRA volunteers Brad Davis, Mary Shipman, Sally Mills, April Deacy, Dawn Shank and new recruits Sandy Cristman and Lynn Shope. Thanks, volunteers and sponsors for the time and commitment to one of our most successful

achievements. Audrey Mitchell retired from Hamilton-Holmes last June, but that didn't stop her from organizing the Hamilton-Holmes River Day. We've been coordinating this field trip for sixth graders for more than 15 years. We look forward to the new decade as we continue to our goals of river conservation, education and recreation.



180 6th graders participated in River Day in October



Many MPRA members celebrated the 10th anniversary of the defeat of the Newport News Reservoir Project (right).

