



Northumberland Association for Progressive Stewardship

"Northumberland is going to grow. Let's help it grow with order and beauty."

NAPS News

Summer 2009

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Nature Trails Upgraded by Eagle Scouts

By MIKE AHART

Eagle Scout Troop 250 expanded and upgraded the nature trail system connected to the new Northumberland school campus. It has expanded the system by connecting new trails from the schools to the established trails, adding signs at trail heads and intersections, and building educational boxes on the trail to teach students and hikers about the natural environment. The troop has also rehabilitated an existing trail that had become overgrown. The trail system is maintained by Troop 250 and the high school cross-country team.

In addition to educational benefits, the expanded trail system will allow a better training ground for the cross-country team, including an official course joining the high school track oval. The expansion and upgrades were recently completed and ready for the new school year.

NAPS donated \$500 to cover the cost of the education boxes, which were installed at several spots along the trail as an Eagle Scout Project led by Ryan Parker. One side of the box presents information about the environment of the area

surrounding the trail, and the other side will be used by teachers to post papers or projects for their classes.

The trail system also includes the outdoor classroom built last year by volunteers from NAPS and the Lions Club, plus trails and bridges built by Troop 250 over the past five years. *



Educational Boxes were installed on the nature trails behind the school complex by Eagle Scout Troop 250, with help from a donation from NAPS.

NAPS Plants Marsh Grass at 19 Shoreline Sites

By LYNTON LAND

NAPS received another grant from the Chesapeake Bay Restoration Fund for 2009. With it we purchased 56 flats of marsh grass (3 species) for a total of 2800 plants. Most of the 19 sites where the grass was planted were beaches or shorelines where the goal was to stabilize the shoreline and reduce erosion. A few sites where Phragmites had been sprayed the previous fall were planted in order to "jump start" recovery of the marsh. Since 2002, a total of 103 sites have received grass, with varying success. In some cases lush marshes now exist along shorelines or where the marsh was just a stand of Phrag-

mites. In other cases, especially those where the absentee owner was unable to "nurture" the young plants, we had little or no success. This spring was characterized by anomalously high tides for nearly six weeks after the grass was planted, so we may see high mortality at some sites.

There are now 113 sites on the list to be sprayed for Phragmites this September. They range from new, dense stands, to many sites where there are only scattered plants remaining. Once a site reaches the state where only scattered plants remain, it seems that little headway is made each year, probably because the rhizomes are not being killed by the herbicide because

the plants are so small. This year a different chemical, also approved for wetland use, will be tried on some of these sites to determine whether or not actual elimination of the plants can be achieved.

It is not too late to get on the Phragmites list for this fall or on the marsh grass list for next spring (Northumberland County only, please), as we plan to submit another grant to the Restoration Fund. Contact Lynton Land at 453-6605 or JandL@nwnwi.com. The Chesapeake Bay Restoration Fund's revenue is from the sale of license plates, so please consider this the next time you renew. In my experience, they use the money wisely. *

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Zoning Will Enhance Future Growth

By LEE ALLAIN

Our county staff, our Planning Commission and our Board of Supervisors are all struggling with how to make necessary changes in land use in a way that will positively affect all of us in the future. As they alter zoning regulations, they must be visionaries – able to see into the future and adjust land use to improve the utility, quality of life, wealth, and sense-of-place for all residents.

Recognizing the importance of zoning to future land use, Northumberland's Planning Commission is currently devoting a large fraction of its time toward upgrading zoning regulations. To have sustaining community value, the zoning reform process must be thoughtful, logical and cognizant of community values. Regulations with long-term implications must be developed carefully using examples from other communities, advice from community development experts, local trend analysis, a clear idea of intended results and, of course, representative public input. The Planning Commission needs your help.

Zoning can be thought of as a set of rules for land use that allow people to live together in harmony – in much the same way as we live together on the roads with use of our vehicles. We are taught early on to stay on the right side of the road. We stop at stop signs and red lights. We obey speed limits. On two lane roads, we only pass on the left and when there is a dotted line. Occasionally there is an accident, but these very simple rules (in spite of what some may perceive as a loss of rights) serve to allow generally safe auto transportation use for all. In similar fashion, zoning regulations are crafted toward land

use that maximizes benefits and minimizes imposition for all in the community.

Zoning is one of the few ways the county has to guide land use. As pointed out in the Comprehensive Plan, our goals are to:

- Maintain our county's strong sense-of-place.
- Minimize contention between distinctly different uses – farm, residential, business and industrial use.
- Maintain rural/agricultural county roadside appearance.
- Minimize congestion on our primary roads and in our communities.
- Improve the long-term value of all Northumberland property.

Northumberland County, in a land use sense, is like a blank slate. The current state of development is sparse and the zoning regulations are very loose. Guiding land use with updated zoning regulation is one way to assure meeting realistic goals as we move into the future. We have the opportunity today to set the stage for tomorrow.

Since 1974, when current zoning was first initiated, the blend of farming and residential properties has changed significantly. Still, the goal is to allow inevitable community development and growth while maintaining our unique Northumberland "sense-of-place" – a tranquil bayside community with a strong farming and fishing heritage. As the blend of farm and residential densities change, accommodation must be made to encourage farmers to continue to farm while better protecting residential communities from incompatible land uses. While farmland and farmers need protection, some A-1 uses that were acceptable in 1974 need revision and repositioning into areas designated for business or industrial use.

Primary routes, Rt. 360 and Rt. 200, must be protected from congestion, since they are our only emergency routes. Uncontrolled roadside business growth could ultimately clog traffic from Callao to Reedville. A highway protection overlay is important to protect our access portals.

Another means of controlling congestion is the use of "Cluster Housing" within

the county at relatively low density. This development concept entails setting aside significant protected open land areas adjacent to housing and is a way to maintain county population density at levels consistent with country living.

Protection of the overall appearance of both roadways and villages is also important. Appearance may seem like a trivial factor, but neat appearance leads to stronger economics for all.

Maintaining our sense of place, safeguarding both farmers and our increasing residential population, controlling the levels of congestion and traffic, maintaining our peaceful country appearance – these are all important Northumberland quality-of-life values that we should pass on to our grandchildren.

There are several strategic approaches prescribed by the Comprehensive Plan that start us in the right direction. Simply stated, moving land uses to appropriate zoning districts and focusing business development into our villages takes some of the pressure off our primary access roads. The certainty of higher fuel prices in the future is another reason to concentrate businesses in a few village centers rather than disseminating them throughout the county. A properly structured highway overlay can focus on appropriate development along our primary road infrastructure. Let's work together to retain the "feel" of our county while encouraging business development.

Whatever zoning approaches are adopted *will affect you*. It may affect you personally with a neighbor's land use issue. It will certainly affect your quality of life, the level of traffic congestion you face daily, and your property's worth. Now is the time to construct appropriate rules for future land use. The Planning Commission is currently engaged in Zoning Ordinance re-write. Although some meetings are specifically held to gather public input, you are welcome at *all* meetings – even work sessions of the Planning Commission. Watch the papers for the advertised public hearings that are normally held on the third Thursday at the new courthouse. Get up to speed on the issues at the county website, www.co.northumberland.va.us, or with the information available at the library. Get involved – understand the various issues and contribute with your voice at Planning Commission and Board of Supervisor meetings. *

NAPS Calendar

NAPS Board Meetings are held on the 2nd Tuesday of each month, at 9 a.m. at the Northern Neck State Bank in Burgess. NAPS members and prospective members are always welcome.

September 8, Tue. NAPS Board Meeting
 October 3, Sat. NAPS Fall Social
 October 13, Tue. NAPS Board Meeting
 October 26, Mon. Adopt-A-Highway
 November 10, Tue. NAPS Board Meeting
 December 8, Tue. NAPS Board Meeting
 January 12, Tue. NAPS Board Meeting

Join NAPS' Adopt-A-Highway Team - Monday Oct. 26

By ANNE BÉLANGER

You're right...it has been a long time since we did a roadside trash pick-up. The last one, in fact, was March 2008! I had organized and was going to supervise (from a sitting position) a pick-up for the fall of that year, but VDOT beat us to the punch and did their pick-up the very week we were scheduled, so I cancelled ours. Little knowing that events in my life would take me

to New Mexico for most of last winter/spring (most often with no advance warning), the spring trash pick up never materialized this year.

But, here I am again, and I hope you are too!

Please mark your calendars now for a fall pick-up on Monday, October 26, with a rain date of Friday, October 30th .

Since it's been so long since we've gotten together I'm hopeful that our group remains intact. That said, we do need more folks to join our group. We have a fair number of names on our roster, but typically only a third of those people are available on a given trash pick-up day. And since I consider 10 to be a quorum – the least number of people needed to keep the effort and time of each individual to an enjoyable level – we really do need more people to become involved.

For those of you who aren't familiar with our project, here's some background information:

We are responsible for about 2 ½ miles along Route 200 (the Jessie Ball Dupont Memorial Highway) between Wicomico Church and the bridge over the Great Wicomico River. We've unofficially added the public boat landing to our assignment.

We schedule a roadside trash pick up twice a year – in the spring and in the fall. We've been doing it on a weekday morning, and always work in pairs. We start about 8:30 am and are generally all finished up by 11:30 am. Of course, the more people who show up, the less work for everyone and the less time spent "on the road."

So please, if you're interested in this "no-strings attached" way to help NAPS and our county, please email or call me (Anne Bélanger, 580-8905, blngr@kaballero.com). The more the merrier.

And if you're already a part of our group, but have changed your email address in the past year and a half, please let me know your new address as soon as possible.

I'll contact everyone in October to confirm our plans. Thanks for your support. *

Ready for High School

To prepare for school year 2009-2010, the NAPS Education Committee participated in two days of transitions briefing for rising ninth grade students at Northumberland High School in August.



High School Ninth Graders listen intently to NAPS Volunteer Joe Thompson as he explains the importance of academic achievement to their future success.

NAPS MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION



Please fill out application, cut page at dotted lines, place into No. 10 envelope with a check made out to "NAPS," and mail to:

NAPS
P.O. Box 567
Heathsville, VA 22473

(Please pass this application along to interested parties.)

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (____) _____ Fax (____) _____

E-mail _____

Membership Category* (check one):

- Individual \$15 Sustaining \$100
 Family \$25 Patron \$250
 Student \$1 Business \$ _____ (min. \$50)

* The Internal Revenue Service has determined that NAPS qualifies as a tax-exempt organization under section 501 (c) (3) of the code. As such, dues and contributions to NAPS may be deductible by donor for tax purposes.

I would like to participate in:

- _____ Adopt-A-Highway
 _____ Environmental Education
 _____ Finance
 _____ Fund Raising
 _____ Grass Planting
 _____ Monitoring County Boards
 _____ Membership
 _____ NAPS Exhibits
 _____ Phragmites Problems
 _____ Publicity and Newsletter
 _____ Special Events Coordination
 _____ Any Project Assignments
 _____ Other _____

NAPS ANNUAL FALL SOCIAL – SATURDAY, OCTOBER 3**Get Ready to Party!**

By SANDY HENBEST

Saturday, October 3, 2009 is the date for the NAPS Annual Fall Social. From 4:30 to 7:00 PM we plan to eat, drink, and converse with other NAPS members and our extra special guests, the volunteer members of Northumberland County's three rescue squads. What a great opportunity for us to meet them before we need them in an emergency, and show our appreciation for their training and commitment on our behalf. Our location is the same as previous years: the Transportation Museum Building at Rice's Hotel/Hughlett's Tavern in Heathsville. Watch

NAPS Seeks New Membership Chair

The Membership Chair position at NAPS is currently vacant. This volunteer position is one of the most important functions in the organization, yet requires only a few hours per month. Do you enjoy communicating with the NAPS membership? Do you have a computer, email, and some experience with Microsoft Excel? Do you have a few hours per month to spare at home? Are you convenient enough to Heathsville to check NAPS mail box weekly? If so, NAPS wants *you!* Please contact Mike Ahart at mikeahart@kaballero.com or 580-9289. *

for your invitation in the mail, during September. It will cover *all* the pertinent information. We look forward to your positive response!

We are still seeking volunteers to help set-up, break down, and serve food for this event. If you are willing to help or have questions, please contact Sandy Henbest at (804) 580-4975 or sahenbest@kaballero.com. *

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