



NAPS News

Northumberland Association for Progressive Stewardship
Helping preserve the "Northumberland way of life"

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NAPS Flotilla Cleans Up Cockrells Creek



With clear skies and calm seas, 48 volunteers helped to remove trash from Cockrells Creek during the 2022 NAPS Creek Cleanup, Sunday, October 9, hosted by the Northumberland Association for Progressive Stewardship (NAPS) with essential support from Omega Protein and Smith Point Sea Rescue. The event was originally planned for Sunday Oct. 2 but was postponed due to the forecast of bad weather from the remnants of Hurricane Ian.

The land base of operations was the "Stack" at Omega Protein in Reedville. After a lunch for all participants at noon, six skiffs of cleanup teams set out to comb 20-plus miles of shoreline and return to the land base with boatloads of trash. As a safety precaution, a 3-man volunteer crew from Smith Point Sea Rescue – Captains Charlie Staker, Bill Turville, and Bruce Witkowski – stood watch aboard the *Rescue 1*.

A trash sorting crew at the "Stack" documented the haul and pulled out material that could be recycled or reused. The trash was disposed of in two dumpsters provided by Omega Protein, and the recyclable, reusable, and oversized items were placed in a large trailer. "Even the trailer was loaded to the top," said Mike Ahart, NAPS Creek Cleanup team leader.

An estimated 3,500 pounds of refuse was removed from the waterways and shoreline including hundreds of bottles and cans, several tires, furniture, *(continued on pg. 4)*

In This Issue:

NAPS Highway Cleanup Clears 18+ Bags of Trash - Pg. 2

NAPS Calendar: Earth Day Fest, Apr. 15, Highway Cleanup, Apr. 29, etc... - Pg. 2

Forest Clear-Cutting Discussed at NAPS Special Program/Annual Meeting- Pg. 3,6-7

In Memoriam: Lee Allain - Pg. 8

Highway Cleanup Clears 18+ Bags of Trash

A crew of 15 volunteers cleared the roadsides and gullies during the Fall 2022 NAPS Highway Cleanup, Sunday, Oct. 16th. Eighteen large bags of trash plus several oversized items were disposed of or recycled from Route 200 between Wicomico Church and Tipers Bridge.

"It was a good crew," said team leader Alice Imbur, noting that two of the teams filled 5 bags each and recovered several pounds of scrap metal to recycle.

Roadside trash is not just an eyesore. If not removed from the roadsides, it eventually is washed down into our creeks and rivers, adversely affecting wildlife and the water quality of the Chesapeake Bay and tributaries.

Join the crew for the next NAPS highway cleanup, Sun. April 23, 2 p.m. – contact Alice Imbur at 580-4922 or donandally@gmail.com. We meet at the Wicomico Parish Church parking lot, and we're done by about 3:30 p.m..

To adopt a roadway, contact Stacy Messenger at 333-7930 or Stacy.Messenger@vdot.virginia.gov.



Highway cleanup volunteers (from left): Gena McKinley, KJ Ball, Emileah Weatherford, Ashton Burns, Quinton Jones, Karen Baker, James Baker, Alice Imbur, Don Imbur, Mary Martha Stewart, Sandy Hedlund, Janice Mahoney, John Hedlund, Bonnie Reif, and Mike Ahart.

NAPS Calendar

NAPS board meetings are usually held monthly, however a new regular schedule is being determined. All members are welcome to participate – please submit agenda items to Stewardship@NAPSva.org – and please us know if you want to attend so we can provide the date/time.

- Apr. 15, Sat. **NAPS Earth Day Festival**, Tavern Grounds, Heathsville 9am-1pm
- Apr 22, Sat. **Hazardous/Electronic Waste Collection**, Northumb. Middle School, 9am-2pm
- Apr 23, Sun. **NAPS Highway Cleanup**, Wicomico Church, 2pm-3:30pm (see article above)
- Apr. 29, Sat. **Tire Disposal Event**, Northumberland Middle School, 9am-noon
- May 22, Mon. ... **Scholarship Presentation**, Northumberland High School, 6pm
- May 27, Sat.. **Strawberry Festival**, St. Stephen's Episcopal, Heathsville, 8:30am-2:30pm
- June 17, Sat.. ... **Juneteenth Celebration**, Tavern Grounds, Heathsville 4pm-7pm
- Aug. 1, Tue..... **National Night Out**, Tavern Grounds, Heathsville 5pm-7pm

Forest Clear-Cutting Discussed at NAPS Special Program & Annual Meeting

More than forty people attended the "Timber Harvesting in the Northern Neck" informational program hosted by the Northumberland Association for Progressive Stewardship (NAPS) on Sunday, August 21, 2022, in the Tavern Meeting Building at Rice's Hotel/Hughlett's Tavern in Heathsville, and online via video conference.



Recently clear-cut tract off US 360 in Heathsville.

The program featured Nelson Hillyer and Bryant Bays of the Virginia Department of Forestry, and Jim Russell and Kevin Howe of Northern Neck Land Conservancy, with an introduction by Mike Ahart of NAPS. The presentations were followed by a question & answer session. After the program concluded, NAPS held its Annual Meeting.

NAPS members greeted attendees at the door with a complimentary reusable NAPS grocery bag and event program. Complimentary refreshments and informational materials were offered on tables in the back of the hall.

Ahart opened the program by thanking the attendees, and the Tavern for providing the venue. He also thanked Friends of the Rappahannock for setting up the Zoom meeting for remote attendees.

After a brief update on upcoming NAPS projects, Ahart introduced the special program with a roadside view of a recent clear-cut in the area. "That's an eyesore," he said, but then stated that timber harvesting is normal land use in the area. "It's like farmland that's harvested once a generation or so," and landowners pay taxes year after year. Ahart said the practice of clear-cutting in the area is unlikely to stop, but that it should be done in a way that best protects the environment and watershed, "and maybe we can come up with ways to mitigate the aesthetic problem" by recommending roadside buffer areas and encouraging tree-planting.

Ahart also explained the difference between timber harvesting and deforestation. "Deforestation happens when forests are destroyed and converted into something else, like a housing development, a farm field, or even a solar farm," said Ahart, adding that most of the land where timber is harvested in this area will regrow as forest. He also showed a satellite photo timeline of a 2013 clear cut near his home that had been immediately replanted, and by 2015 had filled in completely with small trees.

Hillyer began his presentation by agreeing with the eyesore problem, saying that the clear-cut shown on the initial slide could have been cleaned up better. He followed with an overview of the Virginia Department of Forestry's mission and specifics about its Water Resources Program. He also introduced Bryant Bays, Regional Forester for the Eastern Region, who coordinates the programs and help the foresters learn new technology and best practices.

The water quality program started in the late 1980s, according to Hillyer. "Our state forester back then said that the number one product that comes out of the forestland is clean water," he added.

(continued on pg. 6)

NAPS Creek Cleanup *(continued from pg. 1)*

abandoned oyster floats, scrap metal, parts of a kitchen range, and a wide array of other items. NAPS awarded prizes to the teams with the largest total haul, largest/heaviest single item, and most unusual item.

The “Largest Total Haul” and “Largest/Heaviest Object” prizes were awarded to the crew of Captain Deihl’s skiff: Lyrac Bea, Jaden Bundy, Tory Jett, Taliaferro Pearson, Landon Shirilla and Luke Sisk. The team’s haul included a fully-intact waterlogged Adirondack chair and several tires, including a truck tire full of silt and live oysters. The team also dredged out two full oyster floats that had been reported as abandoned.



Lunch time at The Stack

Members of the volunteer trash crews were Becca Baker, James Baker, KJ Ball, Lyrac Bea, Jaden Bundy, Ashton Burns, Haleigh Burrell, Gracey Dameron, Eleysia Downing, William Downing, Tory Jett, Quinton Jones, Amiya Lee, Karmen Lucas, Regan Lucas, Brady Mullins, Taliaferro Pearson, Ann Rice, Cason Rogers, Landon Shirilla, Parker Shirilla, Camdin Sisk, Luke Sisk, and Emileah Weatherford.



Smith Point Sea Rescue Volunteers

The “Most Unusual Item” prize was awarded to the crew of Captain Hall’s skiff, Haleigh Burrell and Amiya Lee, who recovered a message in a bottle that read “You should look around you.”

Part of an earthenware liquor jug circa 1890 labeled “S. Stansberg, Importer and Wholesale Liquor Dealer, South West Corner of Pratt and Sharp Streets, Baltimore, MD” was another interesting item recovered.

Each registered participant was awarded a NAPS “Trash Crab” T-shirt and offered a reusable grocery bag.

One of the Smith Point Sea Rescue skiffs with its crew of trash pickers made a rescue during the event, towing a disabled jet ski back to the Shell Landing boat ramp before getting back to trash picking.

The volunteer skiffs captains and mates were Dan Benjamin, Heather Cockrell, Mary Deihl, Monty Deihl, Robert Gwaltney, Andy Hall, Terry McLaughlin, Pete Ortiz, Kendra Simpson, Buddy Sylvia, and Shannon Wilkins.

A land-based support crew organized the effort, set up lunch, helped unload the boats returning with their “catch,” and sorted the trash: Mike



All hands on deck



Message in a bottle

venue, dumpsters, and two of the skiffs with captains

and mate. Special thanks to Smith Point Sea Rescue for providing a safety boat and crew, two additional Sea Rescue skiffs with captains/mates, an additional skiff/captain/mate privately owned by a Sea Rescue member, and additional land base help.

NAPS also thanks the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service for providing no-cost accident insurance for registered participants, Friends of the Rappahannock for providing trash grabbers, and Virginia Clean Waterways for providing gloves, trash bags and other support.

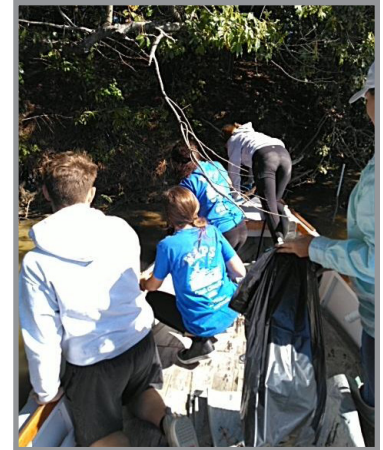
“It’s always inspiring to see the students working together and having fun while cleaning our creeks,” said Gena

McKinley, NAPS president.

NAPS has held Creek Cleanup events since 1993, covering each of the county’s major creeks and rivers. To participate in the next Creek Cleanup as a volunteer or sponsor, email Stewardship@NAPSva.org.



Teams returning with their “catch”



Clearing the shoreline



Old liquor jug



NAPS Special Program/Annual Meeting *(continued from pg. 3)*



Nelson Hillyer of the Virginia Dept. of Forestry describes the forest cover in Virginia and the Northern Neck.

Timber harvesting in Virginia is a \$21 billion industry annually, \$388 million goes to the landowners, and Virginia receives over \$6 billion in environmental benefits, said Hillyer.

Through its harvest inspection program, the Virginia Dept. of Forestry enforces the Chesapeake Bay Act's 50-foot no-cut buffer along waterways, including intermittent streams, according to Hillyer, adding that it also inspects roads

and portable bridges that loggers use to transport timber through the tract so that erosion is controlled. Each of the logging companies have a copy of the Best Management Practices manual and must adhere to the Silviculture Water Quality laws. "We do an inspection every 45 days after the initial inspection" on each of the tracts, he added. When a problem is identified, the logging company has ten days to remedy the issue.

The Chesapeake Bay Act is enforced by the county, and forest harvesting is allowed a 50-foot buffer rather than the 100-foot building buffer.

Loggers must notify the Forestry Department within 3 days of starting a job. If they fail to give notification, "sooner or later we're going to find them," said Hillyer.

In 1989 when the new water quality laws were enacted, "we trained over 1,900 loggers and foresters, including all of us in Water Quality," said Hillyer. The "Sharp Logger" program is offered through Virginia Tech's Extension Program, allowing regular certification of training on best practices.

"Last year, we did 240 audits statewide.... Three of those tracts had significant risk, but only one tract of out of the three actually had sediment entering the stream," said Hillyer. Most of the problems are at stream crossings, and because of sandy soils and gullies, timber tracts in the Northern Neck require extra care when installing temporary bridges and erosion control for logging roads. Hillyer presented a photo slideshow of typical issues and explained the remedies presented to the loggers. He also showed examples of well-managed tracts.

In 2019, the Virginia Assembly gave the Forestry Department the right to investigate timber theft crimes against landowners, said Hillyer, adding that most of these crimes are by unscrupulous loggers who make a deal with a landowner, harvest the timber, then either severely lowball the amount harvested or don't pay at all. Hillyer advised the group to be wary of unsolicited offers to harvest timber on their land.

Although loggers/landowners are not required to replant after harvest, the Dept. of Forestry recommends replanting and provides 30 to 40 million seedlings a year. A properly replanted and maintained tract will yield a larger crop, and much sooner than leaving a forest to grow naturally.

After Hillyer's presentation, Jim Russell and Kevin Howe introduced the Northern Neck Land Conservancy and its mission of helping landowners place property into permanent conservation easements.

"A 50-foot buffer is only as good as what's between there and the stream," said Howe, adding that a larger buffer placed into conservation would benefit the environment and wildlife.

Clear-cutting is economical, but the cavity-nesting birds, much of the underground fungi, and all of the salamanders are lost, Howe said, adding "there are benefits" since we all use wood, paper and cardboard.

Russell explained that tax breaks can be substantial for land placed into conservation. Russell and Howe invited the crowd to learn more by attending the Northern Neck Land Conservancy Boots & Barbecue annual event scheduled for Sept. 17, 2022, at Waterloo Farm in King George, Virginia.

After Northern Neck Land Conservancy's presentation, the meeting was open for a question-and-answer session. An audience member asked if deciduous trees can be planted rather than pine. Bays answered that, although usually not planted, many hardwoods will naturally come back, and thinning out pines can encourage hardwoods. "You can't stop trees from growing in Virginia," said Hillyer. Howe pointed out that the trees must be thinned regularly in order for the regrowth to be marketable timber.

Hillyer presented a slide demonstrating why clear-cutting is better for regrowth than leaving select trees. The trees left in place will branch out too much to be ideal for lumber, and the new trees will bend away to seek sunlight making them uneven and thus less marketable. An audience member asked if the area is losing hardwood to pine forest. Bays answered that most of the forest in the Northern Neck is hardwood. Howe noted that even though the mix may be about the same as decades ago, what is missing now are the 300-year-old oaks and 100-year-old poplars.

Hillyer stated that the new genetically-engineered loblolly pine tracts are so productive that much less acreage needs to be cut to provide the wood and fiber we need.

Trash and equipment left on logging sites was another concern brought up by audience members. Hillyer suggested that citizens call the Dept. of Forestry with any issues and the loggers will be notified to clean it up.

NAPS Annual Meeting

Immediately following the program, NAPS held its Annual Meeting with members and other interested attendees. Ahart reviewed NAPS' accomplishments in 2022 and ideas for 2023.

"Despite COVID, we've maintained almost all of our programs and outreach this year and last, other than canceling the Fall Social and delaying the Annual Meeting until today," said Ahart. "We hosted a successful creek cleanup last fall, a successful Earth Day Festival in April, awarded four \$1,500 college scholarships, had a successful Highway Trash Pickup on a very, very hot day in May, helped several homeowners with questions about solar installation, invasive plants, bayscaping, and other environmental questions, and reached out to the public" at many events, Ahart added.

Treasurer Roger Gruben presented NAPS' Financial and Membership Reports, noting that NAPS is on a solid financial footing and membership has already reached last year's level with a few months still left in the year.

Ahart then thanked retiring board members Janice Mahoney, Shauna McCranie & Rita Johnson for their service to NAPS and the community. Ahart has also served the maximum six consecutive years on the board, but as immediate past-president, he chose continue as a non-voting ex-officio board member for one year as allowed by NAPS by-laws.

Lesley Newman, Anna Pridgen, and Katie Wilkins were each elected unanimously to the NAPS Board of Directors for their first terms. Nine NAPS board members each serve terms of three years, staggered so that three expire each year. Board members are eligible to serve only two consecutive terms but would be eligible again after two years.

In Memoriam: Lee Allain

We are sad to learn that long-time NAPS member, leader, and community supporter Lee Allain passed away in February, 2023.

Lee and his wife Wonda “retired” to Northumberland County in 1998. Lee began volunteering with NAPS, Northumberland’s Economic Development Commission (EDC), the Lions Club, the Northern Neck Master Gardeners and Heathsville United Methodist Church. Some of his first work with NAPS involved winning grants, three years in succession, from NOAA/Fish America for renovating natural marsh areas in local waterways.

With the EDC he was instrumental in providing “how to” information regarding oyster aquaculture to local watermen. He led the Lions World Service effort by designing and setting a team in place to construct home entry ramps for more than a half dozen people confined to wheelchairs. At his church, he led the Long Range Planning Committee, which resulted in construction of the Fellowship Hall that NAPS has often used for its special programs and annual meetings.

During composition of the 2006 Northumberland County Comprehensive Plan, he formed “Vision 2048” – a group of people dedicated to providing input to the county plan within the NAPS definition of appropriate land use.

Through NAPS, Lee spearheaded and led Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) programs and projects within the local school system with the goal of increasing student science and math participation. For one of the projects, high school students constructed a solar array from raw solar cells and wiring which, after completion, the students used as a cell phone charging station. He also won two grants from River Counties Community Foundation for STEM Boost, a project at both the elementary and middle schools, to start students thinking and planning in three dimensions as they construct LEGO buildings and bridges – like engineers. In addition, he arranged and chaperoned eco-tours of area waterways with local certified watermen/captains for students and Boy Scouts. Lee was awarded NAPS’ Northumberland Distinguished Citizen Award in 2015. Lee also served many years on the NAPS Board of Directors, and as NAPS co-president from 2016-2017.

Lee was active on the County Economic Development Commission and attended most Planning Commission and Board of Supervisor meetings. He also sat on Rep. Rob Wittman’s Environmental Advisory Council to provide his insights while representing Northumberland County.

Lee grew up in Maine enjoying lobstering, gardening and building houses with his parents. He received a MS in Electrical Engineering from Villanova University, and a BS in Physics from the University of Maine. His career, which began in the aftermath of Russia’s first-in-space satellite, Sputnik, was primarily involved with development of advanced US satellite electronic control and communications systems. In addition to his many civic activities after retirement, he enjoyed fishing, gardening and traveling.

Lee Allain’s contributions to NAPS and the Northern Neck community will be sorely missed.



Lee Allain accepting the Northumberland Distinguished Citizen Award in 2015