

A Publication of  
WILD VIRGINIA

# Ancient Mountain Sentinel



Range after range  
of mountains.  
Year after year  
after year.  
I am still in love.  
-Gary Snyder

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Protecting your favorite wild places

Spring 2007

## George Washington National Forest Plan Revision: Chaos and Complicity

When George Washington National Forest Supervisor Maureen Hyzer announced the initiation of the revision of the George Washington Forest Plan in February 2007, Wild Virginia reacted quickly to be involved every step of the way. Wild Virginia immediately pointed out that the proposed Forest Plan revision process was against the law! On March 30th of this year a Federal Court Judge agreed and her ruling has sent GW planners back to the drawing board.

In her ruling, Judge Phyllis J. Hamilton of Federal District Court in San Francisco said the Forest Service violated several laws in 2005 when it changed the rules Forest Service staff must follow when creating a Forest Plan. The new rules eliminated the requirement for substantive public participation in the planning. The rules also released the Forest Service from its legal requirements to create an Environmental Impact Statement, which documents the potential effects of the plan "in the forest". The rules also eliminated mandatory consultation with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service regarding rare, threatened and endangered species. Judge Hamilton issued an injunction forbidding the Forest Service from using their revised rules to make decisions about national forests, including Virginia's George Washington National Forest.

The GW Forest Plan provides

direction for management activities on the more than one million acres that make up the George Washington National Forest. A forest plan basically outlines what activities are permissible in the forest and where they are allowed. Among other things, the activities include logging, prescribed burning, road building and herbicide spraying. The plan also sets aside areas for special types of protection, such as Special Biological Areas.



*The fate of places like the Little River Roadless Area will be decided in the revised Forest Plan. Photo by Mike Kruse.*

In early March, the George Washington Forest planners held seven public meetings in different locations around the forest to allow the public to raise "issues of concern." The very first question raised by Wild Virginia was "What is going to happen when the courts rule that this process is illegal and complicit?" No one knew then and still no one knows as of this writing (May 1). The planning process is "on hold" as we await word from the Forest

Service on how they will proceed.

An interesting part of the public meetings was the consensus among participants for the Forest Service to do a better job protecting sensitive habitat, water quality and old growth. The public clearly wants logging more tightly monitored and more areas protected as Special Biological Areas and Wilderness. If the George Washington NF staff eventually translates all they heard at these meetings into an honest and legal plan, it will bode well for our forests, as they are in need of restoration and protection.

No matter what happens next, you can be sure Wild Virginia will be there. You can follow the process by checking the Wild Virginia website for updates at [www.wildvirginia.org](http://www.wildvirginia.org) and the George Washington National Forest website at [www.fs.fed.us/r8/gwj/forestplan/revision/](http://www.fs.fed.us/r8/gwj/forestplan/revision/)

[index.shtml](#). You can also subscribe to Wild Virginia's announcement listserv to receive updates about the Forest Plan, as well as brief notices on our monthly outings and other relevant events. Go to <http://lists.waldo.net/mailman/listinfo/wildva> and follow the simple instructions for subscribing. Please contact us if you have any questions or would like to get more involved!

## Wild Virginia Update

### Letter from our President, Eric Gilchrist

Presently my wife Deborah and I are camping and hiking for two weeks in the Sante Fe National Forest. One of our good friends is to be married in Sante Fe. We feel if we have to suffer through the maze of air transportation to get across our country, we'll take the opportunity of experiencing another beautiful place!

We are envious of what people have here in New Mexico: six national forests and 19 separate wilderness areas. This state's wilderness areas total over 522,000 acres!

In Virginia, only about 5% of our two national forests are designated wilderness area. Our politicians, backed by community understanding and pressure, could easily increase Virginia's wilderness areas to 10% of the national forests with very little harm to loggers or other extractive industries. More Virginia wilderness area would entice people from our major eastern population centers to visit our beautiful wild areas and increase tourism revenue—a much more environmentally friendly way to make money off the forest.

Here at Wild Virginia, we continue to work to protect special forest ecosystems and your support

has greatly helped us. David Hannah, our Conservation Director, is constantly speaking to groups, tabling at events and generally getting the word out about the GWNF. We're also about to add our eighth volunteer board member. For the first time, we had four local businesses become major donor members. They like what we do and we think their businesses deserve our community support.

Wild Virginia co-hosted the Treehuggers Ball with The Living Education Center for Ecology and the Arts and about 300 guests attended to celebrate nature and support us in protecting it. Lithic Construction, a wonderful "green home builder," and Crutchfield, a locally-owned business with a tremendous recycling program, were major sponsors of the Ball.

Amidst this flurry of activity, I have to report some sad news. Dr. John Bergstrom, our economic resource consultant, was diagnosed this past winter with a life-threatening illness. In order to deal with this important personal battle, he had to stop his work on the Shenandoah Mountain Economic Analysis. We fully support his decision and wish him a complete recovery. We are planning a different strategy

that may involve original research and data collection.

Summarizing on a positive note, in late March a federal judge ruled that the US Forest Service violated laws such as the Endangered Species Act and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), by eliminating the public comment period and formal consultation when doing the Forest Plan Revision (see article on Page 1). Up until that ruling, the George Washington National Forest staff held seven meetings open to the public throughout western Virginia. They wanted citizens, through small breakout groups, to voice their opinions on what they liked about the GWNF and what they wanted to see changed.

Ernie Reed, Wild Virginia's Vice President, traveled over 700 miles to attend all the meetings! I was fortunate to be able to attend three of them and admit to having a very good time. It felt patriotic to speak and discuss my opinions within diverse groups comprised of citizens who were loggers, hunters, mountain bikers, ATV enthusiasts and other environmentalists who share my views. Anytime you get a chance to be part of a public and orderly democratic process, please jump on it. It's fun and empowering!

## Party On, Wild Virginia !

Where else can you rock-n-roll and discuss key issues facing the George Washington National Forest than at Wild Virginia's annual member appreciation party? Our most recent party proved to be no exception. In the fall, members from all over Virginia gathered at the Community Design Center on the Downtown Mall in Charlottesville to meet one another face-to-face, welcome Wild Virginia's new Conservation Director, David Hannah, and to celebrate and discuss another year of forest protection work in Virginia. Highlights of the evening included amazing Appalachian music by the talented Bud Branch and Anne O'Brien of Applejack Jam, lots of great donated food and drink from local stores and dedicated members, and a connection with Tom Graham of WMRA. Tom later interviewed Wild Virginia on his fantastic show, *Insight*. The night was full of merriment, passionate discourse, and camaraderie. A good time was had by all. We'd like to extend a big thank you to everyone that helped us host a great party and to all of those who attended. We hope to see you and meet our new members at the party this year!



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WILD VIRGINIA



Protecting Your Favorite Wild Places

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## Wild Virginia Hikes and Outings

All hike info also available on our website: <http://wildvirginia.org/programsRecreation.html>

### A Full Outings Calendar : COME JOIN US!

#### Sunday, May 20th Tour de Cut

Wild Virginia's May 2007 Outing will feature Tour de Cut hikes and visits within the North River District. We'll be joining up with members from Virginia Forest Watch and the Sierra Club. In the morning we will go to the site of a large timber sale that is over 200 acres in size. Our second stop will be a hike from the Todd Lake Recreation Area onto the Little Skidmore Trail connecting to the Wild Oak National Recreation Trail—all within the 27,000 acre Little River Roadless Area. If time and weather permit, we may be able to summit Little Bald Knob, which peaks at 4351 ft. For information on the Wild Oak National Recreation Trail visit: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r8/gwj/dryriver/recreation/hiking/>.

To wrap-up our day, we will drive by the site of the proposed Big Run timber sale just north of Hearthstone Lake. Information on the proposed timber sale can be found at: <http://www.virginiaforestwatch.org/northriver.shtml>.

We will leave at 8:30am from Java Java (2214 Ivy Rd.) in Charlottesville and leave at approx. 9:15am from the Holiday Inn parking lot north of Staunton (Exit 225). Sierra Club members may carpool from either location. See <http://virginia.sierraclub.org> for further details. Bring water, a lunch, rain gear, and sturdy hiking shoes or boots. Total hiking distance during the day will be from 6 to 9 miles. Call Sherman Bamford (540) 343-6359, [bamford2@verizon.net](mailto:bamford2@verizon.net) or Eric Gilchrist at (434) 293-8039 with any questions.

#### Saturday, June 9th — Birding at Augusta Springs Wetlands

Join us as we look and listen for birds and other critters at this birding "hot spot" in the GWNF. All are welcome on this very easy hike. Greg Moyers of the Rockingham Bird Club will be our guide. We will follow the 2/3 mile loop trail & boardwalk through the wetlands area and will walk through the woods as well. Bring binoculars, water and lunch. The breeding season for many migratory songbirds will be in full swing and we may see some late migrants too!

We will leave at 7:15am from Java Java (2214 Ivy Road) in Charlottesville. Or, you can meet the group at the Augusta Springs parking area at 8:30am. From Staunton, take Rte 254 west 8 miles to Buffalo Gap (254 becomes Rte 42). Continue on Rte 42 for approximately 7 miles to the parking area for Augusta Springs Wetlands. Call David at 434-971-1553 or 434-244-2878 with any questions.

#### Saturday, July 21st Hike at Skidmore Fork

Join Wild Virginia on a hike in the Dry River ranger district of GWNF at Skidmore Fork. This beautiful area includes many special species of biological interest and areas of old growth forest. The hike will follow Skidmore Fork stream and include some elevation gain. Further details of the hike (including mileage) will be posted on our website closer to the date.

Meet at 8:30am at Java Java, 2214 Ivy Rd (by Sneak Reviews) in Charlottesville. Bring lunch, water, and solid hiking boots. Call Jason at 434-923-0107 for info and rain date information.

**Con't on page 4**

## Legislative Update: New Action on the National Forest Roadless Area Conservation Act of 2007

With each issue of the our newsletter, there seems to be a new development in the campaign to protect roadless areas in our National Forests. Fortunately, the recent updates have been **great** news for the forests, such as the overturning of the Bush Administration rule by Judge Laporte in September 2006 and the continued drive by both parties in the House of Representatives to codify the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule into law.

The original "Dear Colleague" letter was sent out on January 26, 2007, asking representatives to co-sponsor the **National Forest**

**Roadless Area Conservation Act of 2007.** Roadless leaders in the House of Representatives continued their co-sponsorship drive to reintroduce the Roadless Area Conservation Act until mid April. Representatives Jay Inslee (D-WA) and Jim Ramstad (R-MN) will soon introduce the bill into Congress. This long awaited bill would put into law protections for our treasured and undeveloped National Forest roadless areas (including 394,000 acres in Virginia), protecting wildlife habitat, clean air and water and more.

There is also encouraging news from the Senate. Virginia's Senator John Warner, along with Maria Cantwell (D-WA), sent a "Dear Col-

league" letter on April 25 seeking cosponsors for the bill in the Senate.

Wild Virginia will alert our members once the bill is introduced via our website ([www.wildvirginia.org](http://www.wildvirginia.org)) and email listserv. Please be on the look-out for these alerts. Once the bill is introduced, it will be as important as ever to call your Representatives urging them to support the National Forest Roadless Area Conservation Act of 2007. The Roadless Rule has garnered widespread public support since 2001, including ten times more public comments than any federal rule in history, and now is the time for Congress to turn the rule into law!

## Appeal & Resolution of the Great Little Timber Sale

In 2005, the Forest Service announced the proposed Great Little Timber Sale in the Lee Ranger District. The project area is adjacent to the Big Schloss Roadless Area. Twelve cutting units totaling 280 acres were identified for harvest. The proposal called for: (1) 280 acres of modified shelterwood logging and (2) an undisclosed amount of logging road, skid trail and other logging infrastructure construction.

Wild Virginia commented on the project at that time and again earlier this year after an Environmental Assessment was released. Our biggest concerns were impacts to water quality, wood turtle habitat, and impacts seen from ridge-line trails along Big Schloss and Little Schloss (Little Sluice). Little Stony Creek, a native brook trout stream, lies in the middle of the project and is listed as an "impaired waterway" by VA Dept. of Environmental Quality. We were concerned about the steep slopes in several cutting units as

well as the proximity to Little Stony Creek.

When the Forest Service decided in January to proceed with the timber sale, Wild Virginia joined Virginia Forest Watch and the Sierra Club in appealing the decision. A meeting was held with Forest Service staff in April. The staff agreed to drop one of the cutting units, which eliminated the need for roughly 2000 ft of temporary road construction. They also agreed to extra measures when closing another temporary road at project completion. These measures will minimize erosion and illegal access on the road.

Though the appeal was resolved based on the changes to the project, we were not completely satisfied with the results. Some of our requests (e.g., dropping more cutting units, wider buffer zones along streams) were not granted. Continuing with the appeal contained some risks though, since the project as originally designed could have been reinstated. We will continue to monitor projects on the George Washington and appeal them when necessary.

Call 202-224-3121 to reach your Representative, or look up your member of Congress at:

[www.congress.org](http://www.congress.org). **Thank you for contacting your representative in support of full protection of our last wild places.**

## Wild VA Outings (continued from page 3)

### August 19th- Riprap Trail

Beat the Heat! The summer sun should still be fierce so we'll escape the heat with a trek down Cold Spring Hollow along the Riprap trail in Shenandoah National Park. A nice wading pool in the middle section of Meadow Run will be the perfect spot for lunch before heading back up Wildcat Ridge to Skyline Drive.

The hike will cover about 8 miles over varied terrain - rocky slopes, stream crossings, and deep woods trail. Bring lots of drinking water and lunch! Meet 9:00am at Java Java, 2214 Ivy Road (near Sneak Review Video) in Charlottesville. Call Nathan at 434-989-3929 for more information.

## Species Spotlight : Common Green Darner (*Anax junius*)

Article & photos by Lyt Wood

The Canada Goose, *Branta canadensis*, is a different critter than the bird I remember from my younger days. Though I didn't hunt geese, I was a hunter and a watcher of birds. I used to marvel, as I still do, at the huge, noisy, strung-out flocks of geese winging their way north in spring or south every fall.

Here in Virginia, we have two populations of Canada Geese that are separate and distinct--at least much more so than formerly. All hunters and wildlife managers know this well. In addition to migrant Canada Geese, most of which breed in areas far north of here (hence their common name), we have year-round residents who use the marshes, lakes and ponds of Virginia as their breeding grounds.

At this point, lest the reader think the title of this "Species Spotlight" is in error, I will say that the Canada Goose has something in common with a very conspicuous and well-known dragonfly of our area. It is for this reason that the Green Darner, *Anax junius*, is one of the most fascinating of all of Virginia's 135 or so dragonfly species.

Have you ever wondered where dragonflies go in winter? Some of

them, notably the Saddlebags (*Tramea* spp.) and Meadowhawks (*Sympetrum* spp.), do migrate to some extent, but most of them simply die. The only dragonflies we have here in winter are out of sight in their watery habitats. They are in their larval forms, which may last up to two years or more. After they emerge as adults, resident dragonflies will live only a few weeks before they die of cold, exhaustion or predation. Many of them starve, due to lack of smaller flying insects that are their prey.

Green Darners are unique among dragonflies in that they, like Canada Geese, have two distinct populations--migratory and resident--in the northern parts of their range. Resident Green Darners will breed in June or July. Larvae hatch almost immediately and live in their underwater habitats for about 11 months. Then they emerge as colorful, fearsome masters of the air and the breeding cycle begins again.

By contrast, during the months of March and April, migratory Green Darners are on their way north. This year, I noted the arrival of a male Green Darner on March 30 at my home in the northern Virginia Piedmont.

Egg-laying commences in April. The larvae of migrant Green Darners develop incredibly rapidly. They emerge as adults in early fall and migrate to southern breeding grounds. They often travel in large swarms which, like many birds, follow ridges and coastlines. Their offspring, produced in still waterways of the far southern states, will fly northward to breed in the spring. Thus there are two generations per year in the migratory population. All of the adults, whether migrant or resident, north or south, die soon after breeding.

The egg-laying behavior of *Anax junius* is unusual in two respects. This is the only



species in the Darner family (Aeshnidae) to commonly lay eggs in tandem. Using claspers at the tip of his abdomen, the male jealously holds the female by her eyes (sic!), even during flight and during the actual process of egg-laying. Secondly, the Aeshnidae comprise the only group of dragonflies with functional ovipositors--eggs are laid directly in plant tissue.

Green Darners are large and powerful, yet quick and agile in flight. This enables them to take a variety of prey. They may lap up many hundreds of tiny insects in a day of foraging, and also occasionally take large butterflies and even other dragonflies!

So these very common and familiar dragonflies are worthy of special notice. Unlike their fellow travelers the Canada Geese, they are silent. But I eagerly await their arrival each spring, and thrill at the swirling migratory swarms every fall.

Lyt Wood is an arborist and nature enthusiast living in Rappahannock County, Va.



## 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Treehugger's Ball a Success!

Thank You to our Sponsors



I'm not going to lie, some of us had superstitious fears about hosting a fundraising event on the inauspicious date, Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> of April. Thankfully, the stars must have been aligned because the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Treehugger's Ball, held in partnership with the Living Education Center for Ecology and the Arts, was a complete success!

During the course of the evening, about 300 adults and children became 'treehuggers' enjoying massages, face painting, a chocolate buffet, silent auction, a raffle drawing, a skit by the founding fathers, and music by The Corn Hog Association, Danny Dollinger and the Wrinkle Neck Mules. The atmosphere was full of merriment as face painted wood nymphs and superheroes waltzed and boogied to the live music. In total, the Ball raised more than \$8,000 for Wild Virginia's and LEC's programs. It's exciting to think about all of the positive changes that these funds will help create! We would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to our event sponsors, Lithic Construction and Crutchfield, to all those who donated silent auction items, and to all the volunteers who helped make the event so smooth. **We hope to see you again next year!**

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