

Friends of Huntley Meadows Park



Spring 2018

Website: www.friendsofhuntleymeadows.org
Facebook: www.facebook.com/friendsofhuntleymeadowspark

Our Voices Really Matter

By Cathy Ledec, President

This article is intended to inspire you to use your voice to advocate for environmental improvements, including protections for our natural resources. We need all voices to speak up for our environment. When I am standing at the podium in front of the County's Planning Commission or the Board of Supervisors--ready to launch into public testimony in defense of our environment, natural resources and Huntley Meadows Park (HMP)--I am always feeling nervous about being on TV (Channel 16) or speaking in front of our elected officials. Then I take a moment to remind myself that nature has no voice at the decision-making table, so I must be that voice. That is enough to put me on solid ground and forget about being nervous. I realize that if I don't speak up, these issues may not be heard nor prioritized.

I want to share with you what I learned from recent experiences where I advocated for environmental improvements and natural resources protections, so that we can all be better prepared for future efforts like this. Since our elected officials actively seek input from citizens to inform their work, we can't sit back and not respond--we must provide that input. These requests for input are noted on officials' Facebook pages, at town hall meetings, or at public meetings for specific projects that occur throughout the year. Using our voices to remind decision-makers that our natural resources, our environment and its biodiversity (including our native wildlife) is key to us living a healthy life and that this is important to us, are key points to express as often as possible. **This really matters.**

The EMBARK Richmond Highway Project is a good example of a successful team effort to use our voices. Of course, no project like this is ever truly finished, and the EMBARK project is not completed. There are still ongoing process improvements that we hope to influence. But I want to reflect on lessons learned in the hope to inspire you to use your voice.

First, I want to thank Friends of Huntley Meadows Parks (FOHMP) members who attended EMBARK meetings and provided oral and written comments. At times, I admit, it was tough to rally the team to attend the 30+ meetings over the last two years. These monthly meetings seemed to go on and on and on. And while the process was going on, we wondered if our recommendations were being heard. Throughout, the team members held each other up, and we kept going. We continued to provide suggestions and recommendations and more at each public meeting. When I finally saw the proposed Plan Amendment language, I realized that the County staff and the EMBARK team had heard us. I am pleased to report that the EMBARK Plan Amendment approved by the Board of Supervisors on March 20, 2018 includes as part of its overarching vision (and throughout the document) the celebration of the natural and historic resources in the Lee and Mount Vernon Districts. These elements were not part of the original vision, nor were they as extensively included in earlier versions of the Comprehensive Plan for this area. This is an important accomplishment and the FOHMP and Friends of Historic Huntley (FOHH) team deserves a good pat on the back for this

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Meet Your Treasurer

My name is **Katie Baker**, the newest Friends of Huntley Meadows Park Treasurer, elected in January 2018, and I am thrilled to be serving in this position. I have lived in Alexandria since 2007 with my husband Will, and our son Rowan joined us in 2014. I have always enjoyed the outdoors and find connecting with nature to be the most relaxing way to spend my time.

Since discovering Huntley Meadows (HMP) in the spring of 2017, I have come to the Park with my family nearly every weekend. I love watching the animals and enjoy the serenity and solitude I can find there. It's been magical to explore the Park with my three-year-old and see his love of nature emerge and grow each week.

In my other life, I am the Director of Education & Training at the National Health Care Anti-Fraud Association (NHCAA). In this position, I oversee in-person, webinar, and on demand programming that helps health



From left to right Will, Rowan, and Katie enjoying a walk at HMP, February 2018.

care fraud investigators learn to detect and investigate fraud, waste, and abuse in the health care system. In addition to developing content, I project annual revenue and budget goals as well as manage resources and expenditures to ensure each of our programs is relevant to our members as well as fiscally sound for the association.

I look forward to putting my love of nature and HMP together with my experiences at NHCAA to help preserve and improve the Park for both the Northern Virginia community as well as the flora and fauna that rely on the Park for survival.

See you on the trails!

Fairfax County's Two Champion Swamp Chestnut Oaks

By Carolyn Gamble, Friends of Historic Huntley (FOHH)



County Swamp Chestnut Oak Champion. Called "Grandmother Oak" by the kids at Frog Pond Early Learning Center. FOHH member Robbie McNeil providing scale.

These two Swamp Chestnut Oaks started life sometime between 1824-1844, according to Mike Knapp of the Fairfax County Urban Forestry Department. In 1982, the Fairfax County Big Tree Registry designated them Champion trees. They are "witness trees" growing amidst a changing landscape for two centuries. The stories they could tell!

Location: Northern boundary of Huntley Meadows Park near Lockheed Boulevard entrance

Species: *Quercus michauxii*

Circumference: Approximately 18 feet dbh (17 feet in 2003)

Age: 175-195

Condition: In 2004, Friends of Huntley Meadows Park and FOHH hired Bartlett and Growing Earth tree companies to trim away dead wood, inspect for disease and insect infestation and remove

surrounding understory saplings. A grant from the Virginia Department of Forestry made this possible.



County Swamp Chestnut Oak Runner-up. This tree lost part of a large lower branch during this winter's storms.

Thank You from Park Manager Karen Sheffield

I thank you so much for being a Friend of Huntley Meadows Park (FOHMP). Your membership makes a significant difference here at Huntley. For this, I am truly grateful to you.

Over the past several years with your support, FOHMP has been able to expand the Huntley summer intern program providing more college students with relevant experience in environmental education and natural resource field work. These students, regardless of their final career choices, will carry with them environmental understanding and the value of parks. Because the summer intern program has grown, Huntley Meadows is able to expand summer camps so that more children can experience Huntley Meadows in a meaningful way. The new microscope funded by you will be a great addition to summer camp and other environmental education programs throughout the year!

FOHMP also provides financial aid for elementary-age students to visit during the school year, so that all school children have an equal opportunity to attend our naturalist-led science and nature based programs. This is much appreciated!

FOHMP supports natural resource management through enhancements to the wetland and forest restoration of native vegetation. Most recently Dave Lawlor, Huntley's Natural Resource Manager, has noticed an increase in oak and other canopy tree seedlings growing in the forest. Thanks to you, we've been able to create small tree fencing rings that are too small for deer to enter. Active resource management is essential to maintaining and enhancing the Park, and your support has helped to make this possible at Huntley.

This year, as a member of FOHMP, you have provided \$24,550 in support and consistently provide over \$20,000 yearly. I thank you for on-going support, and I'm happy that you consider Huntley Meadows an important place in our community.

Thank you Friends!

Support the Annual Bird-a-thon

Support the Friends of Huntley Meadows Park (FOHMP) 22nd Bird-a-thon. Donations can be mailed using the form below or through PayPal. Each year, funds raised from the Bird-a-thon support Huntley's Resource Management Summer Intern. Your generous donation will help us reach our 2018 goal of \$3,000.

Bird counting occurs in the second week of May, but you can still continue to donate to the cause. The Board of FOHMP thanks you for supporting this annual event.

The Board, Friends of Huntley Meadows Park

2018 BIRD-A-THON DONATION FORM

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Donation Amount: _____

Please make checks payable to FOHMP, and mail this form with your check to:
Huntley Meadows Park - Bird-a-thon / 3701 Lockheed Blvd. / Alexandria, VA 22306



Alternatively you can use our PayPal feature on the Membership page of our website
<http://friendsofhuntleymeadows.org/membership.html>. Click on the button for "Make a tax deductible donation".

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work. There were other voices speaking with ours, and we thank them for standing strong with us. We also thank the County staff and the EMBARK team for hearing our recommendations and including them in the Plan Amendment.

Now, what have we learned from this complex process? Was it worth it? Yes, it was worth it. Was it hard work? Yes, it was hard work. Would we do it again? Yes, we would do it again. We know now that as development and re-development occurs in area Community Business Centers, environmental and historic resources are to be prioritized. Does this really matter? Yes, this **really matters**. These elements are the key reasons why many of us chose to live here; this is also a core reason for why future residents and businesses will come here in the future. And now, we know that for many years in the future, these guiding vision elements will be key drivers in the development and re-development of this area.

I look forward to hearing any comments you have on using our voices efforts and encourage each of you to use your voice to improve environmental conditions and natural resources protections, especially for HMP. We are lucky that the EMBARK Comprehensive Plan now includes this celebration of our historic and ecological resources. This is not the case in other parts of the County, although I hope that this model can be replicated in other areas. Our voices are still needed to advocate for this environmentally focused approach at a much more detailed level, one project at a time. Will you use your voice? I can tell you that your voice is needed out there advocating for a healthier environment, for balanced growth that protects natural resources for all of us. I also ask that you consider volunteering with your community’s homeowner’s association (HOA). If you live in the Mount Vernon District, ask your HOA to join the Mount Vernon Council of Citizens’ Associations (www.mycca.org) where they advocate for improved environmental conditions with development projects and generally for reduced environmental impact of these projects. Or, if you live in the Lee District, consider asking your HOA to join the Lee District Land Use Committee (email: leedis-tract@fairfaxcounty.gov) or the Lee District Association of Citizens’ Associations (www.ldacova.org) These groups are actively engaged in working to reduce the environmental impact of development projects and to improve environmental conditions for all of us.

I look forward to seeing you and hearing your voice out there!

Merchandise



Pictured, t-shirt, used books, cinch bag, and car magnets.

Visit the Norma Hoffman Visitor Center gift shop for Friends of Huntley Meadows Park (FOHMP) pins, cinch bags, long and short sleeve t-shirts with heron image printed on the front, and hats, including ball caps. In addition, staff has cultivated a diverse collection of nature and history related items as well as new and used books for sale.

All proceeds from logo items and used book sales go to the FOHMP and Friends of Historic Huntley to support Park activities.

Go Green with Paperless Newsletter

If you wish to receive the quarterly newsletter via email please notify us at: friendsofhmp@gmail.com.



FOHMP does not share our email list with any other organizations.

Huntley Meadows Park Nature and History Programs

Find the full list of programs with detailed descriptions, locations, costs, and registration codes at <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/huntley-meadows/classes-camps>; or call 703-222-4664 to register.

MAY

10 Thursday - **House Detective** (Adults) 1-2pm. \$5
 11 Friday - **Twilight Tour of Historic Huntley** (Adults) 7:30-8:30pm. \$5
 11 Friday - **Symphony of Frogs** (Adults) 7:45-9:15pm. \$9
 12 Saturday - **Toys at Historic Huntley** (Family) 10-11am. \$7
 12 Saturday - **Pollinator Power** (Family) 12-2pm. \$12
 12 Saturday - **Twilight Boardwalk** (Family) 7:45-9:45pm. \$9
 13 Sunday - **Birds Sketch Hike** (Adults) 1-3pm. \$9
 14 Monday - **Mason Tea** (Adults) 1:30-3pm. \$15
 24 Thursday - **Huntley in the 20th Century** (Adults) 1-2:30pm. \$7
 26 Saturday - **Delicious Dairy** (Family) 11am-12pm. \$8
 26 Saturday - **Wetland at Dusk** (Adults) 8-10pm. \$9
 27 Sunday - **Get Ready for Dragonflies** (Adults) 11am-2pm. \$10

JUNE

2 Saturday - **Catch a Critter** (Family) 12-2pm. \$12
 2 Saturday - **Bread & Butter Tea** (Family) 3-4:30pm. \$8
 3 Sunday - **Birding for Beginners** (12-Adults) 8-11am. \$10
 6 Wednesday **Birth of a Wetland** (Adults) 10-12pm. \$9
 7 Thursday - **The Women of Historic Huntley** (Adults) 1-2pm. \$5
 8 Friday - **Twilight Tour of Historic Huntley** (Adults) 8-9pm. \$5
 9 Saturday - **Vernal Pools Sketch Hike** (12-Adults) 10am-12pm. \$9
 9 Saturday - **Walk like an Animal** (Family) 12-1:30pm. \$8
 9 Saturday - **Ice Cream at Historic Huntley** (Family) 2-3pm. \$8
 16 Saturday - **Wetland at Dusk** (Adults) 8-10pm. \$9

17 Sunday - **Ancient Plants Sketch Hike** (13-Adults) 1-3pm. \$9
 24 Sunday - **Birding for Beginners** (12-Adults) 8-11am. \$10
 30 Saturday - **Delicious Dairy** (Family) 11am-12pm. \$8
 30 Saturday - **Firefly Walk** (Family) 8-10pm. \$9

JULY

1 Sunday - **Upside-Down Tour** (Family) 11-12pm. \$5
 7 Saturday - **Firefly Walk** (Family) 8-10pm. \$9
 8 Saturday - **Ice Cream at Historic Huntley** (Family) 2:30-3:30pm. \$8
 20 Friday - **Twilight Hilltop Tour** (Adults) 8-9pm. \$5
 21 Saturday - **Lichens Hike & Sketch** (Family) 10-12pm. \$9
 28 Saturday - **Twilight Boardwalk** (Family) 8-10pm. \$9
 29 Sunday - **Birding for Beginners** (12-Adults) 8-11am. \$10

AUGUST

11 Saturday - **Boardwalk Astronomy** (Family) 8-10pm. \$9
 12 Sunday - **How to Draw Your Dragon(fly)** (Family) 1-3pm. \$9
 12 Sunday - **Dragonflies** (Adults) 8-11am. \$10
 18 Saturday - **Make Old Fashioned Toys at Huntley** (Family) 11-12pm. \$7
 20-22 Monday/Tuesday/Wednesday - **Wildflower Inspect & Sketch** (Family) 10-12pm. \$45
 25 Saturday - **Ice Cream at Historic Huntley** (Family) 11-12pm. \$8
 25 Saturday - **Wetland at Dusk** (Adults) 7:15-9:15pm. \$9
 26 Sunday - **Upside-Down Tour** (Family) 2-3pm. \$5
 31 Friday - **Twilight Hilltop Tour** (Adults) 8-9pm. \$5

**Friends of Huntley Meadows Park
Membership and Renewal Form**

Please support Huntley Meadows Park by joining our Friends group. Dues contribute toward funding new initiatives and programs, and your membership support will help us to be stronger advocates for the Park.

Fill out this form and mail the application to:

Dues information (Annual):

- \$15 Individual
- \$20 Family
- \$10 Student/Senior
- \$150 Lifetime Membership
- Donation

**Friends of Huntley Meadows Park
3701 Lockheed Blvd.
Alexandria, VA 22306**

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Telephone: _____



Alternatively you can use our PayPal feature on the Membership page of our website <http://www.friendsofhuntleymeadows.org/membership.html>.



**Friends of Huntley
Meadows Park**
3701 Lockheed Blvd.
Alexandria, VA 22306