

Friends of Huntley Meadows Park



Winter 2018

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

Once Again, It's EMBARK Time!

By Cathy Ledec, President

We are lucky, indeed, to live in Fairfax County, Virginia. Federal (where applicable), state, and local government processes give us the opportunity to provide public input on development projects that come to our area, and on the processes and regulations that prescribe how this work gets done. How can you find out about these requests for public input? Signing up for and reading nongovernmental organization (NGO) newsletters and “friending” your favorite NGOs on Facebook will give you access notices. Useful NGO’s could include groups like Friends of Huntley Meadows Park (FOHMP), Friends of Historic Huntley (FOHH), Friends of Dyke Marsh, Audubon Society of Northern Virginia, Friends of Little Hunting Creek, Friends of Lake Accotink Park and others, where one or all of us is responding to a public comment/input request. It is up to each of us to take the initiative to respond with ideas and comments to improve these proposed projects and processes. My experiences with these public input processes tell me that our elected officials, who represent our interests, actively seek out our input through their Facebook pages or regular e-newsletters.

Action Item: Comments are needed now on the EMBARK Richmond Highway project from the general public - that means YOU! Comments can be submitted any time between now and the public hearing on

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Reducing Hazards in the Park

As many of you have probably noticed, there were a lot of trees along our trails marked with an orange X and a number back in November. Huntley staff identified trees that posed potential hazards along the trails and requested a walkthrough with the Park Authority Forestry Department. The Forestry staff came out to walk the site with Huntley staff and assessed trees along all the trails and roadways and around all buildings. Any tree that Forestry deemed a hazard was marked with an X and a number. The number was the tree’s Diameter at Breast Height (DBH). The DBH is recorded in case contractors are required to remove the tree, because the tree removal contract breaks down costs by tree DBH. Fortunately for the Park Authority, the Forestry Crew was able to cut all the marked trees, saving many thousands of dollars in contractor fees. Thank you all for your patience and understanding as the Forestry Crew spent almost two weeks cutting trees along our Park trails. Over 40 trees were marked and cut along six miles of trail and roadway due to the potential hazard they created for the public or Park infrastructure. Huntley staff will continue to monitor for potentially hazardous trees along our trails. If you see a tree in danger of falling along Park trails or roads, please let Visitor Center staff know about it.



One of many marked and cut trees.

A Note from Park Manager Karen Sheffield

I was recently talking with a visitor who regularly visited Huntley Meadows Park when her children were young. She commented that this was the first visit after a long period of time but after her walk today, she wanted to find the time to return more often. This kind woman commented on regaining feelings of peace, connection, and revitalization. Perhaps you're thinking it was you I was talking with. Maybe it was. Comments and conversations like these are becoming more common at Huntley. A greater number of people are realizing the benefits of visiting parks even after their children are grown.

In recent years studies show the benefits of spending time outdoors in nature. Numerous studies report that people can feel more energetic, may be able to decrease their heart rate and levels of cortisol, and may reduce stress, anxiety and depression by spending time in the natural environment.

I thank everyone for sharing their experiences at Huntley Meadows. I'd like to share some of the feedback received in 2017:

“This island of nature in a sea of development is a quiet treasure and a spot that will feed your soul.”

“Always good for a little walk/exercise, and a great place to clear your mind.”

“The Huntley Meadows [Park] is where you can safely do forest bathing or you can just be with other lovers of nature.”

Forest bathing is a relatively new concept in the U.S. It's the practice of spending just a short time in nature, sitting or walking. It is believed forest bathing produces calming and rejuvenating effects as well as medical benefits. The practice focuses on mindfully breathing and gaining awareness of the sounds, sights and feeling of nature. The practice originated in Japan, and there are numerous studies and information regarding forest bathing on the internet.

For the most peaceful experience, I recommend visiting before 10am or after 1pm on weekdays.

Take a walk at Huntley. Reconnect. I hope your experience is a positive one.

Introducing Interpreter Sam

Hello Friends of Huntley Meadows Park! My name is Samantha Scullen, and I am the new Naturalist at Huntley Meadows Park (HMP). HMP is a very special place to me because I've been in awe of its beauty ever since I used to visit as a child. I have vivid memories of seeing muskrats and beavers swimming in the wetlands, watching red-winged blackbirds land on the cattails, and marveling at water snakes slithering through the mud. I loved every minute of it. It was that love of the outdoors that inspired me to become a trip leader for George Mason University's outdoor adventure program while I was a student there. I led hikes, backpacking trips, canoeing outings, and rock climbing camps for students who enjoyed spending time outside as much as I did. After I graduated and saw that HMP was hiring, I knew that the Naturalist position would be the perfect fit for me. Now, thanks to HMP, I have the opportunity to share my passion for nature with others. I am excited to be working with a team that cares so much about preserving our wonderful wetland. I look forward to seeing all of you around the Park!



Samantha Scullen

Historic Huntley Discovery Day

Saturday, April 14
1:00-4:00PM

FREE - donations accepted

Experience first-hand some of the things that make Huntley and its history special. Churn butter or crank home-made ice cream to assimilate Huntley's farming past. Take a photo with our Huntley the Cow mascot. See historical artifacts, maps and documents. There will also be ways you might be able to add to our historical knowledge.

Board Member Karla Wins Award

On December 28, 2017, Friends of Huntley Meadows Park Board Member and Huntley Meadows Park Volunteer Karla Jamir was recognized by the Points of Light Foundation. Points of Light is a national organization that mobilizes volunteers and seeks to help, support, and create a culture of volunteerism and celebrate all forms of service. The Daily Point of Light Award is given out to "changemakers who are donating their time and talent to better their communities." The award was established by George H.W. Bush to highlight volunteers across the country. Over 6000 volunteers have been recognized as Daily Points of Light. Karla's dedication and hard work have earned her this national honor. Please be sure to check out her Daily Point of Light page at <http://www.pointsoflight.org/programs/recognition/dpol/awards/6163>.



Karla filling out ID cards for a new addition to the herbarium collection.

Meet Apprentice Jennah

Hi, I am Jennah McDonald, the current Natural Resource Management Apprentice at Huntley Meadows Park (HMP). Before starting my apprenticeship, I had visited HMP a handful of times, and was awestruck by the natural beauty and wonder here. Looking back, it's hard to imagine that I once didn't know where all the different trails led or that I once failed to notice the amazing diversity of life present here. Now, I feel like I

know the Park intimately, as a second home, and have come to see it as a sanctuary and place of comfort just as I do my own home. On top of the obvious natural beauty provided by the Park, I have also come to love the people that work and volunteer here; a group of people with diverse backgrounds and interests who have come together as a community bonded by their love and appreciation for learning about and preserving the natural world. When I accepted this apprenticeship, I had just graduated with a BS in Biology from American University. This apprenticeship finally allowed me to work out in the field amongst great biological diversity and to witness the ecology of a well-maintained wetland habitat that somehow persists in the middle of a Northern Virginia suburb.



Jennah McDonald and Dave Lawlor working in the central wetland.

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.

Support the Friends of Huntley Meadows Park 22nd Annual Bird-a-thon

Every year on an early morning in the beginning of May, Park staff and volunteers spread out across Huntley Meadows Park (HMP) to count birds. In 1997, an annual survey evolved into an event to remember and honor two exceptional men: Ken Howard and Ed Weigel. Both were volunteers who shared their love of nature with any Park visitor lucky enough to chat with them, inspiring visitors, volunteers and staff. Their work continues to this day through the Park's Resource Management Internship (RM Intern) funded by the HMP Bird-a-thon. This internship provides a young person with the opportunity to begin a career in conservation and to get hands-on experience in this wonderful Park. Over the years, many on the Board of Friends of Huntley Meadows Park (FOHMP) have had the privilege of interacting with the interns, and we all believe this opportunity has a positive impact on their future endeavors as the next generation of stewards of our parks and green spaces.

Here is what some of the past years' interns have said about their experiences:

"I got to see the multifaceted nature of wetland management, which has strengthened my passion and knowledge in my field."

"I have learned [to identify] countless forest, meadow and wetland plant species, and I've learned about invasive plant management and herbicides."

About performing water samples and collecting and identifying macroinvertebrates, "The diversity and amount of organisms I've gathered have really surprised me. Seeing the dedication of Huntley's staff and volunteers continues to inspire me to work harder."

For more than 20 years, the FOHMP Board has sponsored the Bird-a-thon - that's more than 20 RM Interns! All who participate in the count thoroughly enjoy their involvement with this fundraiser. Many are repeat volunteers for the event, and some have participated every year! They have counted birds in all kinds of conditions, from cold and rainy, to downright hot. Each year brings a new experience and new numbers, like sighting the all-time high of 108 species in 2004 or searching for one house sparrow to boost our numbers to 90 species. But no matter what happens, the feeling is that it's always such a treat to be in the Park.

The FOHMP Board requests donations (see donation form on page 5) to support this annual event, which funds the yearly RM Intern. Your generous donation will help us reach our 2018 goal of \$3,000.

Thank you for your continued support,
The Board, Friends of Huntley Meadows Park



Bird-a-thon participants strain to catch a glimpse of a bird they have identified by song.

2018 BIRD-A-THON DONATION FORM

Please submit form by May 1, 2018

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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EMBARC at the Board of Supervisors meeting on March 20, 2018. Comments can be sent by email to: dpz-richmondhighway@fairfaxcounty.gov.

Here are some statements that you could incorporate within your own comments as you choose:

Environmental:

- ◆ The entire network of multi-use pathways proposed with the EMBARK Plan Amendment (PA) needs to remain conceptual, even when other parts of the PA may be approved by the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors (this is noted in the staff report and confirmed by the Fairfax County Department of Transportation). Creation of trails is encouraged where space and environmental conditions allow, but these should not impinge upon or compromise Environment Quality Corridors (EQC), Resource Protection Areas (RPA), or Floodplains (FP).
- ◆ All Community Business Centers (CBC) should be designated as Green Development Zones and/or Local Enterprise Zones, as described in Virginia General Assembly's reenacted and amended legislation §58.1-3245-12 from February 2017.
- ◆ More parks, open spaces, and natural areas are needed throughout the Richmond Highway corridor. All should be connected by green corridors and include improved streetscapes with native trees and shrub plantings. The goal should be to establish a large network of interconnected spaces and natural areas, thereby improving the environmental conditions for us and our native wildlife.
- ◆ Friends of Huntley Meadows Park objects to re-zoning or adding residential as an option to any land parcel designated as an EQC, RPA, or with land area in the FP, especially in the Dogue Creek Wildlife corridor between the Potomac River and Huntley Meadows Park and Little Hunting Creek.
- ◆ All utilities along Richmond Highway should be undergrounded along the entirety of the highway using the VDOT Road Widening Project construction as the ideal time to do this. Partial funding for the undergrounding work should come from partnerships with the utility companies, which will earn significant new revenue when increased density is realized.
- ◆ Streams should be day-lighted wherever possible. New buildings should be tiered lower towards the streams to enable sunlight to reach the stream corridors, resulting in a healthier and more diverse restored ecosystem.
- ◆ VDOT and Fairfax County should take effective steps to capture and prevent trash generated along Route 1 from getting into local streams, including at Little Hunting Creek and Dogue Creek crossings.
- ◆ Storm water management ponds should never be placed in or near EQCs, RPAs, or in FPs, so as not to

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damage these environmentally sensitive areas.

- ◆ Native trees and shrubs should be planted for (i) noise abatement instead of using concrete sound walls and (ii) alongside all trails to provide shade and encourage year-round use.

Historic Resources:

- ◆ Additional historic viewshed analysis must be required for redevelopment of ALL land units in the Hybla Valley CBC (proposed PA requires this for Woodlawn CBC only).
- ◆ In both the Woodlawn and Hybla Valley CBCs, the PA language must require that building materials be non-reflective and a dark color to blend in with the viewshed background. This will reduce adverse impacts upon the Historic Huntley viewshed; it should be required for all historic viewsheds.
- ◆ Historic educational signage should be added throughout the corridor to honor ecological resources, historic events, buildings, and locations where the physical structures may no longer exist (e.g., Old Potomac Path).

These comments have been developed by FOHMP after more than two years of public meetings with Fairfax County Staff and the EMBARK Advisory Group. Including these items in the proposed PA and implementing them as part of the core vision of the CBCs will improve environmental conditions along the Richmond Highway corridor, for all of us today and for many years into the future. I look forward to joining FOHMP's comments with yours in contributing to the vision for a healthier environment to support those of us who live, work, and play along the Richmond Highway corridor.

In addition to your EMBARK comments to the Department of Planning and Zoning, please consider testifying and/or submitting written comments for the Board of Supervisors public hearing. Your participation will be very helpful in relaying our vision and hope for the future of the Richmond Highway corridor, including Huntley Meadows Park.

Thanks for all you do helping to protect Huntley Meadows from external development threats, including those that could emerge from the Richmond Highway corridor. See you on the trails!

Join Us for Wetlands Awareness Day!

Sunday, May 6th, Noon-4:00PM
FREE

Bring the entire family to the Park to enjoy an active, colorful afternoon with live animals, Park history presentations, nature activities, and family fun. Learn all about wetland ecology, local natural history, and the importance of our wetlands.

Do You Need a Receipt?

The 2017 tax season is here! If you paid membership dues or made a monetary donation to FOHMP in 2017, these contributions may be tax deductible.

If you would like a letter of receipt, please send your request to friendsofhmp@gmail.com, and we'll be happy to provide one.

Merchandise

Visit the Norma Hoffman Visitor Center gift shop for Friends of Huntley Meadows Park pins, cinch bags, long and short sleeve t-shirts with heron image printed on the front, ball caps and many winter cap styles. 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.



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.

FEBRUARY

12 Monday - **Nature Drawing Class Series** (13-Adult) 4 Monday classes from 4-4:55pm. \$41 total.
 18 Sunday - **Winter Birding** (Adult) 8-11am. \$10
 24 Saturday - **Live Owl Prowl** (Adult) 12-1pm. \$10
 24 Saturday - **Evening Woodcock Walk** (Adult) 5:30-7:00pm. \$7

MARCH

3 Saturday - **Sketch Hike: Winter Trees and Landscapes** (12-Adult) 10am-12pm. \$8
 3 Saturday - **Family Woodcock Walk** (8-Adult) 5:30-7pm. \$7
 3 Saturday - **On Mason's Land** (Family) 1-2pm. \$7
 10 Saturday - **Festival of Owls** (Family) 12-2pm. \$12
 10 Saturday - **Evening Woodcock Walk** (Adult) 5:45-7:15pm. \$7
 17 Saturday - **The Art of the Book: Bindings** (12-Adult) 10-11am. \$7
 17 Saturday - **Family Woodcock Walk** (8-Adult) 6:45-8:15am. \$7
 19 Monday - **Nature Drawing Class Series** (13-Adult) 4 Monday classes from 4-4:55pm. \$41 total.
 24 Saturday - **Corn Grinding & Clay Pottery** (Family) 12-2pm. \$10
 24 Saturday - **Evening Woodcock Walk** (Adult) 7-8:30pm. \$7
 31 Saturday - **Spring Ephemerals Sketch Hike** (12-Adult) 10am-12pm. \$9

APRIL

7 Saturday - **Catch a Critter** (Family) 12-2pm. \$12
 7 Saturday - **Twilight Boardwalk** (Family) 7-9pm. \$9
 12 Thursday - **Huntley in the 20th Century** (Adults) 1-2:30pm. \$7
 14 Saturday - **Discovery Day** (All Ages) 1-4pm. FREE!
 15 Sunday - **Use Your Senses - Sensory Nature Walk** (Adult) 12-1:30pm. \$8
 20 Friday - **Symphony of Frogs** (Family) 7-9pm. \$9
 21 Saturday - **Wetland Spring Life Sketch Hike** (10-Adult) 10am-12pm. \$9
 21 Saturday - **Wetland at Dusk** (Adults) 7:30-9:30pm. \$9
 22 Sunday - **Get Ready for Warbler Migration** (Adults) 8-10am. \$10
 26 Thursday - **The Women of Historic Huntley** (Adult) 1-2pm. \$5

27 Friday - **Twilight Tour of Historic Huntley** (Adults) 7:30-8:30pm. \$5

MAY

4 Friday - **Family Owl Outing** (Family) 7-8:30pm. \$8
 5 Saturday - **Animal Skull & Bone Stories** (Family) 12-2pm. \$12
 5 Saturday - **History Discussions** (Adult) 3-4pm. \$5
 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** (Adult) 8-10pm. \$9
 27 Sunday - **Get Ready for Dragonflies** (Adult) 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-Adult) 8-11am. \$10
 6 Wednesday **Birth of a Wetland** (Adults) 10-12pm. \$9
 7 Thursday - **The Women of Historic Huntley** (Adult) 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

**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