

Friends of Huntley Meadows Park

Spring 2019

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



Please Join Us!

The Friends of Huntley Meadows Park (FOHMP) Annual Meeting will be held on Sunday, June 2, 2019 from 3-5pm in Huntley's Norma Hoffman Visitor Center (3701 Lockheed Blvd, Alexandria, VA 22306).

Anyone interested is encouraged to join us to learn what FOHMP has accomplished in FY18-19. Members are eligible to vote for next year's board members. The meeting will be followed by a walk through the wetlands.

President's Message

Your voices matter! In earlier newsletters I have mentioned this and here we have an important specific reinforcing example.



Attendees and speakers at the February 5, 2019 Fairfax County Board of Supervisors meeting wearing shirts indicating support for Huntley Meadows Park.

Led by Lee District Supervisor Jeff McKay, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors (BOS) voted **unanimously** on February 5, 2019 to remove the two conceptual paved bike trails from the County's Bicycle Master Plan and Comprehensive Plan. The success of this effort was grounded in joining our voices together and expressing to the BOS that removal should be a priority.

Your voices, along with those of four organizations (Friends of Historic Huntley, Audubon Society of Northern Virginia, Virginia Native Plant Society-Potowmack Chapter, and Hayfield Citizens Association), delivered more than 6,500 expressions of support for these Plan Amendments to remove the two

bike trails from the County's plans. The BOS unanimous vote tells an important story: Our voices are strong and represent a critical mass of opinion when they are joined together. The Friends of Huntley Meadows Park (FOHMP) Board extends a heartfelt THANK YOU to all our members and to the organizations who supported this effort.

This BOS decision to remove the two conceptual paved bike trails from the County's Bicycle Master Plan and Comprehensive Plan ensures that Huntley Meadows Park's natural and cultural resources (including those that are rare, threatened and globally significant) and habitats are protected from adverse environmental and cultural impacts. Until this action was taken, these trails could have been built at any time, despite any legal

'President's Message Continued on page 5

How Is Your Money Being Spent?

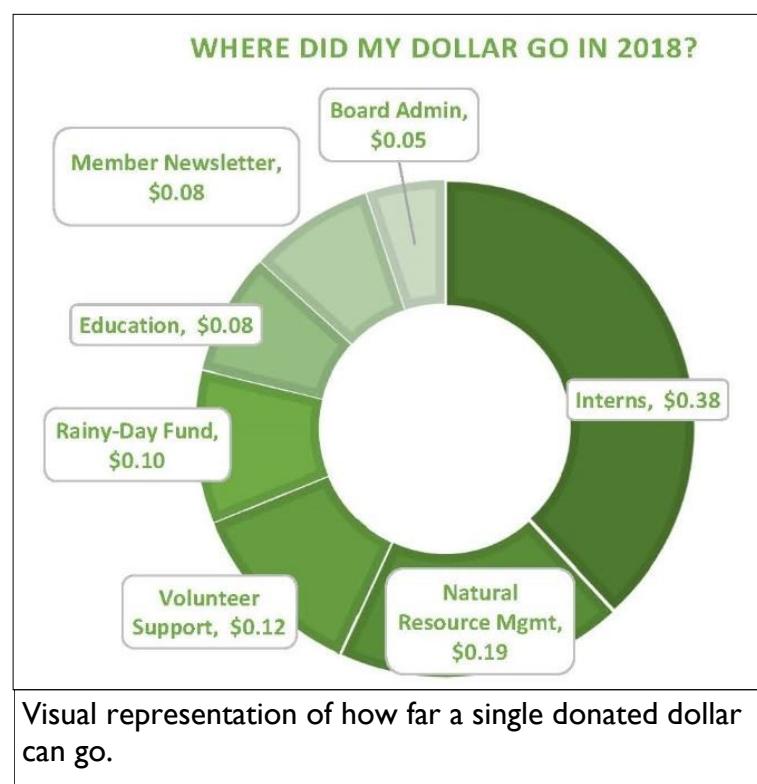
The Friends of Huntley Meadows Park (FOHMP) uses your membership dues and donations to support a wide range of activities at Huntley Meadows Park (HMP). Our efforts fall broadly into seven categories: interns, natural resource management, education, volunteer support, member benefits (newsletter), board administration, and a rainy-day fund. In the 2018 fiscal year (July 1, 2017 – June 30, 2018), FOHMP raised \$5,035.92 in membership dues, and \$21,761.71 in unrestricted donations*. We spent \$22,610.67 of these funds, with the balance going into our rainy-day fund. The accompanying chart shows how many cents out of each membership and donation dollar were spent in each category.

Here are the highlights of what your generous donations and membership dues supported in FY 2018:

- FOHMP sponsors three naturalist interns and one natural resource intern who run summer educational camps and assist with wetland maintenance and monitoring. These interns provide essential support to the staff and bring funds into the Park through the camps they help facilitate.
- Natural resource management encompasses a broad range of purchases that help maintain the Park and help staff do their jobs more effectively and efficiently. Last year we assisted with repairing fencing, purchasing storage for sensitive equipment, conducting maintenance on the central wetlands weather station, investing in software for natural resource mapping, and providing bird seed for the visitor center feeders.
- Education encompasses supplies to assist with classes, community outreach, and staff training. Each year we are a sponsor for Wetlands Awareness Day (held the first Sunday in May) and donate funds to the Raptor Conservancy to educate visitors during this event. Last year we also purchased microscopes to support the interpretive and child-education programs, including the Norma Hoffman Financial Assistance Program (NHFAP). We also provided funds to support the NHFAP, which offset the cost for students to visit the Park. Children are our very best ambassadors, and many who experience HMP through these field trips come back to share the magic with their families.
- HMP has dedicated volunteer staff that help the Park run smoothly. We support them by purchasing supplies, subsidizing any necessary training, and funding events recognizing their contributions.
- FOHMP quarterly newsletters keep our nearly 500 members up to date on what is going on at the Park.
- The FOHMP Board has a few necessary expenses such as filing fees, insurance, supplies, and hosting an Annual Meeting. We work hard to keep these annual expenses to a minimum, so your monetary support goes directly to HMP.
- We maintain a rainy-day fund because expenses vary from year to year based on the requests we receive from HMP staff, and we need to have reserves to ensure the organization will thrive for years to come.

Thank you for supporting FOHMP through your membership and donations.

*We also receive restricted donations and grants. These funds go directly to the specified program, event, purchase, or intern and are not included in the numbers outlined in this article.



Celebrating the 5th Anniversary of the Central Wetland Project

It is amazing how quickly time flies. The Central Wetland Restoration Project at Huntley Meadows Park is celebrating its fifth anniversary on May 10, 2019. The restoration project increased the size and depth of the wetland, installed berms and provided management ability to hold back or release water from the wetland. After project completion, the Park's Natural Resource Manager Dave Lawlor and staff began active management of the wetland. Five years later, the wetland is showing some noteworthy improvements, including increased biodiversity and healthy ecological function.

Wetland management decisions are based on scientific data. Dave uses data collected from the wetland, including water levels, wetland plant communities and survey results to make informed decisions. A weather station in the wetland provides invaluable data by recording over 20 parameters every 15 minutes, such as water levels, gate levels and rainfall. Staff conduct annual vegetation surveys, including aerial photo analysis and ground vegetation surveys in the wetland to determine plant diversity and trends in the plant communities. The weather station data and vegetation surveys are critical elements required to make science based wetland management decisions and achieve established goals for future wetland management. In addition to data management, the wetland requires significant maintenance to ensure quality data collection as well as proper performance and longevity of the wetland infrastructure. The weather station requires regular cleaning, calibration and repair, and the integrity of the berm must be properly maintained to reduce the chance of large scale maintenance issues due to flooding and erosion. Native vegetation is monitored and enhanced annually on the berm to maintain stable soil conditions, quickly negated by foot traffic.

The central wetland is also the focus of many scientific research projects. These projects are critical to understanding the impacts our management plans have on the state of the wetland. Bird surveys are conducted weekly to track bird diversity and abundance. Red-headed Woodpeckers and Prothonotary Warblers have become more common since they started breeding in the wetland over the past five years. Marsh birds, including Rails and Bitterns, are of particular interest. Spring breeding bird surveys are conducted and in 2015, Virginia Rails bred in the central wetland for the first time in almost 20 years. Frog call surveys are conducted every year to monitor populations. Management goals also incorporate managing invasive plants and animals including the Northern Snakehead fish (*Channa argus*), a naturalized invasive fish. Most of these surveys could not be conducted without the help and generous support of our volunteers. The surveys, projects and weather station data collected provide vital information used to guide future wetland management plans and decisions.

'5 Year Anniversary' Continued on page 4

Park Manager Karen Sheffield's Message

Recently, I've received many questions regarding Fairfax County's funding for the Park's day to day operations, or operational budget. Since April is the time Fairfax County's Board of Supervisors discusses, takes residents' input and approves next year's budget, it tends to be the time people think more about what their tax money supports.

For parks, the FY20 proposed general fund (operating) budget is \$27.5 million, or 0.6% of the Fairfax County General Fund Budget (\$4.4b). This \$27.5 million funds approximately 30% of the Fairfax County Park Authority's operating budget. The other 70% of the operating budget comes from park fees and charges, like program fees, rentals and gift shop sales. This surprises many people. In part, this is due to the changes that have taken place in funding over the past 30 years when the balance of park funding was reversed, to primarily tax supported funding.

'Manager's Message' Continued on Page 7

Get Ready for the 2019 Photo Contest

We're preparing to announce the 2019 Friends of Huntley Meadows Park Photo Contest details in the next newsletter, but it's never too early to start planning your submissions. As in years past, everyone will be limited to three submissions, and all pictures must be taken at Huntley Meadows Park. New this year, we are also requesting that your photographs have been taken in 2018 or 2019. This will help us display as many entries as possible.

Parents, need a summer project? Kids are welcome to enter! We have a youth category for those in high school or younger, and there is no entry fee for this category. Work with your youngsters to find the angles, light, and subject matter that appeal to them.

We look forward to seeing your photo contest entries in the fall!



*Egret Moon by Paul Lebras,
2018 FOHMP Photo Contest first place winner.*

Earn Money for Us by Shopping!

Did you know you can earn money for Friends of Huntley Meadows Park (FOHMP) while you shop? FOHMP is one of the non-profits that participates in the AmazonSmile program. It's a simple and automatic way for you to support FOHMP every time you shop, at no cost to you.

When you shop at smile.amazon.com, you'll find the exact same low prices, vast selection, and convenient shopping experience as at Amazon.com, with the added bonus that Amazon will donate a portion of the purchase price to your designated charitable organization. To set or change your charity to FOHMP, use this link: <https://smile.amazon.com/ch/54-1338505>, and thank you for choosing FOHMP as your charity of choice through Amazon Smile.



AmazonSmile and the AmazonSmile logo are trademarks of Amazon.com, Inc. or its affiliates.

'5 Year Anniversary' Continued from page 3

Wetland management plans require flexibility since the wetland is completely dependent on stormwater for its water lifeline. Staff can drop wetland water levels by opening gates (installed during the restoration project) to release water. However, raising water levels requires rainfall and stormwater (the source of Huntley's wetland water) flowing from East Barnyard Run. The typical annual water regime in the wetland follows the natural hydrologic cycle, high water in winter, dropping water levels in the spring, low water in the summer and rising water levels in the fall. However, it is important to fluctuate the timing and elevation of seasonal water levels in the wetland each year to prevent "patterns" potentially favoring specific species over diversity. This "controlled" erratic cycle leads to an amazing diversity of vegetation and wildlife in the wetland. The wetland vegetation and wildlife is responding very well to the new hydrologic cycles as evidenced by our annual vegetation surveys.

Over the past five years, the Wetland Restoration Project has received more than ten awards ranging from the American Council of Engineering Companies Engineering Excellence Award in 2014 to the prestigious Virginia Governors Gold Medal Environmental Excellence Award in 2017.

Staff will continue to manage Huntley's wetland water levels and plant communities in an attempt to create the best habitat for a diverse array of wildlife species in the Park. We are seeing many positive results in the vegetation and wildlife to date but anticipate the best is yet to come. Come on out and see the results for yourself!

Go Green (and save us \$\$) with Paperless Newsletter

If you wish to receive the quarterly newsletter via email please notify us at: friendsofhmp@gmail.com. Doing so helps to reduce our printing and mailing costs. In addition the electronic version is in full color, so you can enjoy the many wonderful photos in their original format.

We do not share our email list with any other organizations.

'President's Message Continued from page 1

or budgetary hurdles that would need to be overcome. This threat is gone for now and we pledge to remain vigilant to ensure that Huntley Meadows Park remains protected for us and for future generations to enjoy! I know that our dear friend Norma Hoffman was guiding me (and us) every step of the way on this project. Thank you dear Norma for being our guiding light.

2018 Fairfax County Citizen of the Year!

On April 7, 2019 I was humbled, thrilled and honored to accept the 2018 Fairfax County Citizen of the Year Award at a banquet hosted by the Fairfax Federation of Citizens' Associations. To make the celebration even better, there were many colleagues at this celebration, including FOHMP Board members Harry Glasgow (2009 Special Recognition Award winner), George Ledec and Doug Mason, HMP's awesome staff leaders Karen Sheffield and Dave Lawlor, numerous elected and appointed officials for Fairfax County (Congressman Gerry Connolly, Delegate Mark Sickles, Supervisor Jeff McKay and Supervisor Dan Storck, Chairman Sharon Bulova and Supervisor Hudgins, Planning Commissioners Mary Cortina, Walter Clarke, and Jim Hart), and friends (including Betsy Martin and Paul Siegel of Friends of Little Hunting Creek, Eleanor Quigley former Tree Commissioner for the Mount Vernon District, and my BFF Paula Mahon d'Entremont from my high school days).



Supervisor Storck (left) and Supervisor McKay (right) look on as Cathy Ledec accepts the 2018 Fairfax County Citizen of the Year award.

It is a great honor to be recognized with this award. I am fortunate and thankful to have the support of my family, especially my husband George, in this work. For all of the members of the Friends of HMP, I am honored and humbled to lead this amazing group of citizens. See more here: <https://coveringthecorridor.com/2019/04/ledec-citizen-of-the-year/> and here: <https://forthuntherald.com/force-for-nature-cathy-ledec-honored-as-fairfax-county-citizen-of-the-year/>. Hooray!

I hope to see you soon on the trails at HMP, my favorite place in Fairfax County!



FOHMP logo ball caps.

Merchandise

Get your summer swag! Summer stylish ball caps and t-shirts with a Friends of Huntley Meadows Park (FOHMP) logo are available in the Norma Hoffman Visitor Center gift shop.

All FOHMP logo merchandise (pins, cinch bags, long and short sleeve t-shirts, ball caps, and a collection of used books) can be found at the gift shop, and proceeds are used by FOHMP to support Park activities. In addition, staff has cultivated a diverse collection of nature and history related books and other items.



From left to right FOHMP patch, pin, and magnet.

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, Friday - Family Owl Outing

(6-Adult) \$8, 7:30 - 9 pm, Code: A78.14F8

11, Saturday - Delicious Dairy at Historic Huntley

(2-Adult) \$8, 3 - 4 pm, Code: 66F.D040

- Flower Pots and Violets

(3-6 yrs. & Accompanying Adult) \$10, 1:30 - 2:30 pm, Code: 5A6.BAF2

- Wetland at Dusk Walk

(Adults) \$9, 7:45 - 9:45 pm, Code: F3C.E332

24, Friday - Symphony of Frogs-Families

(6-Adult) \$8, 7:45 - 9:15 pm, Code: 5D7.2226

25, Saturday - Vernal Pools Sketch Hike

(12-Adult) \$15, 10 am - 12 pm, Code: EA7.84F2

Meets at South Kings Hwy entrance.

26, Sunday - Corn Grinding & Clay Pottery

(4-Adult) \$12, 2 - 4 pm, Code: 147.33DC

- Birding for Beginners

(12-Adult) \$10, 8 - 11 am, Code: A4F.2BA6

JUNE

1, Saturday - Wetland at Dusk Walk

(Adults) \$9, 8 - 10 pm, Code: F3C.0E88

8, Saturday - Bread & Butter Tea at Historic Huntley

(4-Adult) \$8, 11 am - 12 pm, Code: F8A.A5DE

- Ancient Plants Sketch Hike

(13-Adult) \$15, 10 am - 12 pm, Code: 187.4D34

21, Friday - Summer Solstice Evening Stroll

(6-Adult) \$8, 8 - 9:30 pm, Code: F8C.5AEC

23, Sunday - Birding for Beginners

(12-Adult) \$12, 8 - 11 am, Code: A4F.0B18

29, Saturday - Firefly Walk

(5-Adult) \$9, 8 - 10 pm, Code: 4F1.A3F2

JULY

6, Saturday - Firefly Walk

(5-Adult) \$9, 8 - 10 pm, Code: 4F1.2E9E

7, Sunday - Ice Cream at Historic Huntley

(2-Adult), \$8, 2:30 - 3:30 pm, Code: 633.3D7E

20, Saturday - Lichens Hike & Sketch

(10-Adult) \$15, 10 am - 12 pm, Code: 830.5B45

21, Sunday - Children's Tour of Historic Huntley

(6-Adult) \$8, 1 - 2 pm, Code: 351.BBDA

28, Sunday - Delicious Dairy at Historic Huntley

(2-Adult) \$8, 1 - 2 pm, Code: 66F.D040

- Birding for Beginners

(12-Adult) \$12, 8 - 11 am, Code: A4F.F74E

AUGUST

10, Saturday - Boardwalk Astronomy

(12-Adult) \$9, 8 - 10 pm, Code: DC4.B43B

17, Saturday - Twilight Boardwalk Stroll

(6-Adult) \$9, 7:30 - 9:30 pm, Code: 343.CAAA

18, Sunday - Dragonflies

(Adults) \$10, 9 am - 12 pm, Code: 9F7.DC17

- How to Draw Your Dragon(fly)

(12-Adult) \$15, 1 - 3 pm, Code: 707.E07E

24, Saturday - Ice Cream at Historic Huntley

(2-Adult) \$8, 11 am - 12 pm, Code: 633.AE21

31, Saturday - Twilight Hilltop Tour of Historic Huntley

(Adults) \$8, 7:30 - 8:30, Code: D3E.00A6

HUNTLEY SUMMER CAMPS

Huntley offers summer camps for ages 4-15, June 3 through August 16. The Park website has more information about all offered camps. An example is:

July 1-3 - *Grown-up & Me Camp: Art of Nature*

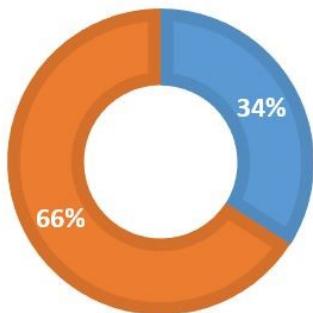
(5-11 plus one adult) Discover animals and plants that live in the Park. Through poems, stories, walking adventures and journaling, you will spend quality time together learning how to sketch, paint and observe the natural world. \$185 Fee for child only. 9am - 12pm. Code: 069.B195

DID YOU KNOW?

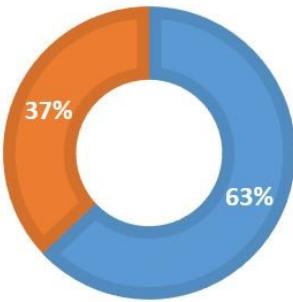
The Friends of Huntley Meadows Park hosts a weekly bird walk on Monday mornings, which all are invited to join. The Monday Morning Bird Walk has been a weekly event at Huntley Meadows Park since 1985. It takes place every week, rain or shine (except during electrical storms, strong winds, or icy trails), at 7AM (8AM November-March), is free of charge, requires no reservation, and is open to birders of all interest and identification levels. Birders meet in the parking lot at 3701 Lockheed Blvd, Alexandria, VA. Questions should be directed to Park staff during normal business hours at (703) 768-2525.

2018 FCPA OPERATING BUDGET

■ tax supported ■ fee based

**1988 FCPA OPERATING BUDGET**

■ tax supported ■ fee based



Comparison of funding for the 1988 Fairfax County Park Authority (FCPA) operating budget and the 2018 FCPA operating budget.

'Manager's Message' Continued from page 3

I thank you for supporting Huntley and continuing to visit this treasured Park. You support the Park in many ways:

- When you become a Friends of Huntley Meadows Park (FOHMP) member, a part of your membership fee goes to support Park operations, like equipment purchases for natural resources, microscopes and projecting lenses for environmental education programs, and financial assistance for students in need to attend naturalist-led school field trips.
- When you make a donation to FOHMP or Huntley, your funds go toward maintaining and/or improving Huntley Meadows grounds and trails, natural and cultural resources, and programs and services.
- By volunteering, you make a measurable and impactful difference to the Park and to visitors' enjoyment of the Park. Currently, Huntley has over 100 active volunteers working in more than 15 different roles. Thank you volunteers! We're always looking for more wonderful Park volunteers!
- When you attend Park programs, your fee goes toward supporting your naturalist program leader and other program costs. Your gift shop purchases and pavilion, auditorium or Historic Huntley rentals also support Park operations.
- When you enjoy the Park responsibly, disposing of trash in receptacles, picking up after your pet, etc., it allows more staff and volunteer time for improving the Park. Thank you!

May your next Park visit be a fantastic one!

2019 Bird-A-Thon

It's not too late to donate! There are two ways you can donate (see form below). All donations support the 2019 Resource Management Intern, a vital part of FOHMP's mission of education.

2019 BIRD-A-THON DONATION FORM

Please submit form by May 31, 2019

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Total 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 bottom of the Membership page of our website <http://friendsofhuntleymeadows.org/membership.html>. Click on the button for "Make a tax deductible donation".

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

44 years of Huntley Meadows 1975-2019

PRSR MKTG
POSTAGE & FEES PAID
FRIENDS OF HUNTER
MEADOWS PARK
PERMIT NO. 8199