



FAIRFAX COUNTY PARK AUTHORITY

M E M O R A N D U M



TO: Chairman and Members
Park Authority Board

VIA: Michael A. Kane, Director

FROM: Cindy Messinger, Director
Resource Management Division

DATE: November 3, 2006

Agenda

Resource Management Committee
Wednesday, November 8, 2006 – 6:30 p.m.
Board Room – Herrity Building
Chairman: Frank S. Vajda

1. Prescribed Meadow Burn at Three Park Locations - Information*
2. Approval to Apply to the Chesapeake Bay Restoration Fund Program for Watershed Education Trail Signs - Action* *[This item will go to the full Board for action on 11/8/06]*
3. Approval to Apply to the Museums for America Program for Frying Pan Farm Park Collections - Action* *[This item will go to the full Board for action on 11/8/06]*
4. Corporate Farm Olympics - Presentation*

*Enclosures

cc: Timothy K. White
Leadership Team

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INFORMATION

Prescribed Meadow Burn at Three Park Locations (Sully, Dranesville and Lee Districts)

In January and February 2007, Park Authority staff, in partnership with the Virginia Department of Forestry and Fairfax County Fire and Rescue, will conduct prescribed (controlled) burns at up to three different park locations: Sully Woodlands (west side of Pleasant Valley Road), Riverbend Park (Jeffrey Road meadow) and Huntley Meadows Park (several small meadows west of the wetland complex) (see Attachments 1-3). The burns are intended to reduce invasive plant species, remove accumulated dead grass material (duff) that is inhibiting native plant establishment and poses a wildfire risk, and promote healthy native meadow which will support sensitive plant and animal species. Three prescribed meadow burns were successfully conducted at Riverbend (1998), Ellanor C. Lawrence Park (1999) and Sully Woodlands (2006).

These prescribed burns are intended to be part of an on-going resource management program to preserve and enhance healthy meadow complexes on park land, and are consistent with resource management recommendations for the park sites. Prescribed burns are conducted regularly throughout Virginia and across the United States and are considered the single best way to preserve and enhance fire adapted meadow ecosystems. Whether a burn occurs is heavily dependent on weather (wind, humidity and precipitation), site conditions (damp ground conditions) and sufficient staff and equipment support.

All burns will be conducted in accordance with applicable state and county laws and ordinances. Permits will be obtained from the Fairfax County Fire Marshal's Office. The Riverbend burn may be conducted by Fairfax County Fire and Rescue as a training exercise. Staff will notify neighbors by letter (see attachment 4) prior to the events and will work with the Park Authority's Public Information Office to notify the media prior to each burn and conduct public education about the resource benefits of a prescribed burn program. A question and answer document has been drafted to help with this process (see attachment 5).

Unless otherwise directed, staff will proceed with the prescribed burn program as planned.

Board Agenda Item
December 13, 2006

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is a one time permitting fee of \$100 from the Fairfax County Fire Marshal's Office for each site, funded through the Natural Resource Management and Protection General Fund budget allocation.

ENCLOSED DOCUMENTS:

Attachment 1: Map of Sully Woodlands Burn Site

Attachment 2: Map of Riverbend Burn Site

Attachment 3: Map of Huntley Meadows Burn Site

Attachment 4: Sample Dear Neighbor Letter

Attachment 5: Prescribed Burn Questions and Answers

STAFF:

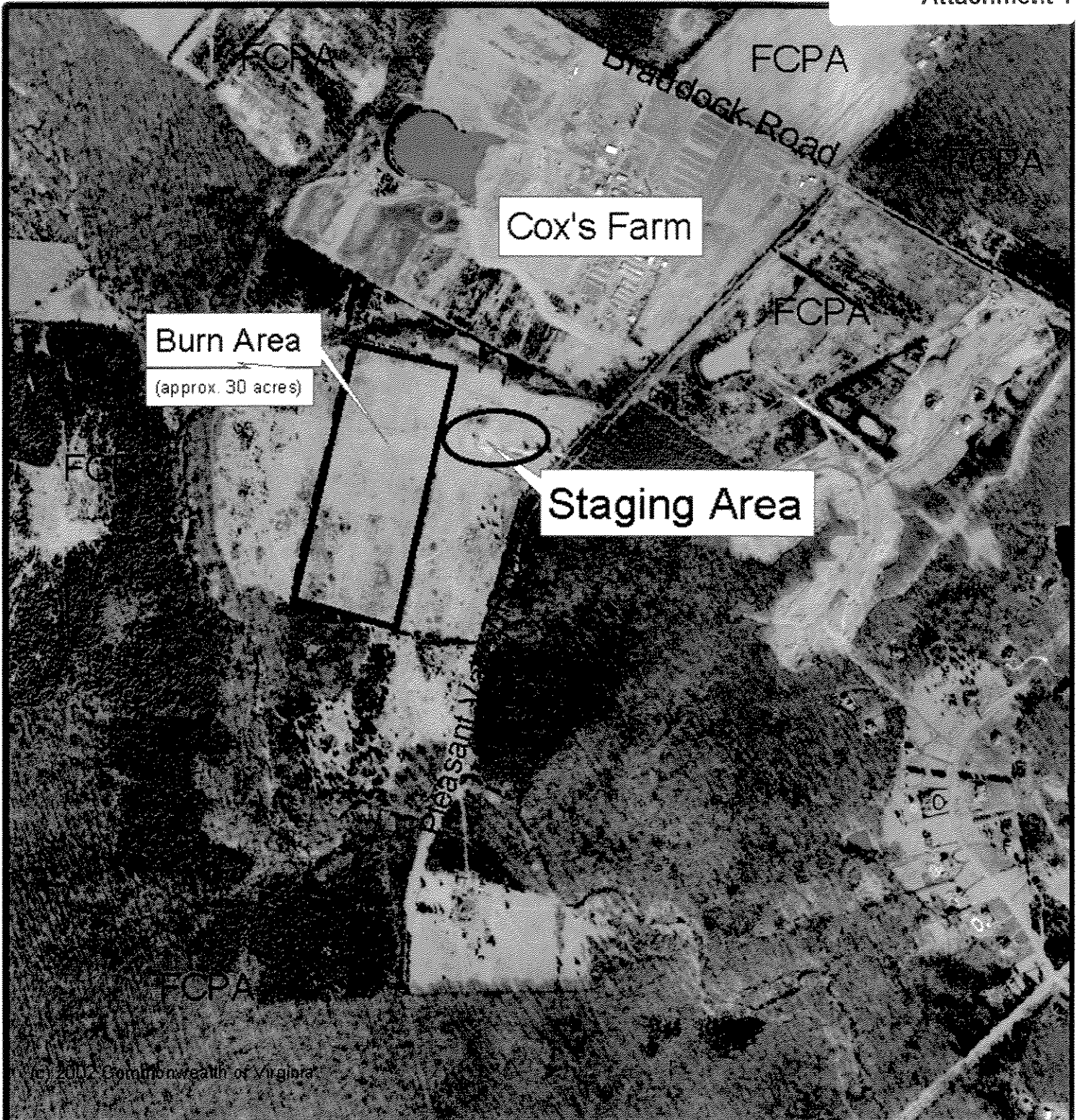
Michael A Kane, Director

Timothy K. White, Chief Operating Officer

Cindy Messinger, Director, Resource Management Division

Todd Johnson, Director, Park Operations Division

Judy Pedersen, Public Information Officer



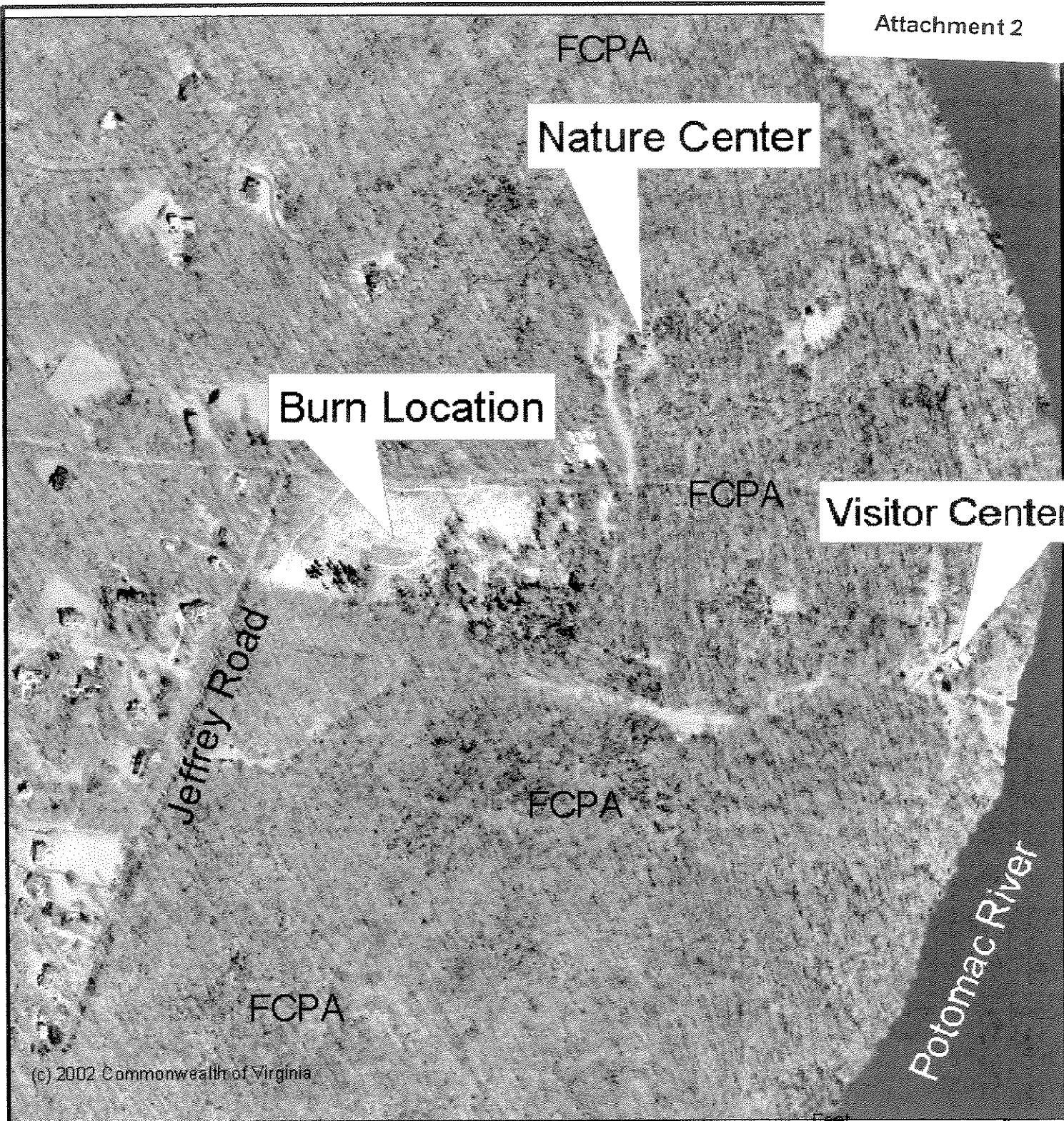
Sully Woodlands Meadow Burn Location



Prepared by:
Fairfax County Park Authority
November 2006

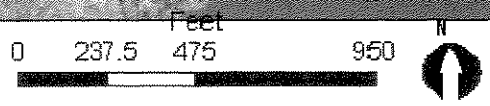


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(c) 2002 Commonwealth of Virginia

Riverbend Park Meadow Burn Location



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Fairfax County Park Authority
November 2006



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Lee District Park

Telegraph Road

FCPA

Area 3 and Park Maintenance Compound

Nature Center

Burn Location

FCPA

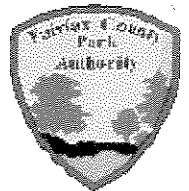
FCPA

(c) 2002 Commonwealth of Virginia

Huntley Meadows Park Meadow Burn Location



Prepared by:
Fairfax County Park Authority
 November 2006



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FAIRFAX COUNTY PARK AUTHORITY

12055 Government Center Parkway, Suite 927
Fairfax, VA 22035-1118



January 23, 2006

Subject: Meadow Management West of Pleasant Valley Road

Dear Park Neighbor:

You are receiving this letter because you live near Fairfax County Park Authority's Sully Woodlands Park. This natural area is unique in Fairfax County for its size and diversity of habitats. A portion of this park located west of Pleasant Valley Road about one half mile south of Braddock Road contains a large meadow complex. As part of a long-term plan to properly maintain this thriving meadow complex, the Park Authority is planning to conduct a controlled burn of about 20 acres in early to mid February. It is anticipated that some portion of this meadow complex may be burned every year.

The meadow complex hosts significant natural resources to include at least one state threatened plant species and several rare animal species. In meadow ecosystems, fire is the single best method for promoting good quality native habitat, limiting or eliminating invasive plant species and reducing the risk of unplanned fires. This meadow complex is well removed from homes and businesses, and a controlled burn should have little to no impact on the park neighbors.

The controlled burn will be conducted under the supervision of the Virginia Department of Forestry and in coordination with the Fairfax County Health Department and Fire Marshal's Office. The Virginia Department of Forestry Burn Crew supervises over 100 controlled burns every year throughout the state of Virginia. The burn will be conducted on a weekday in the morning or afternoon and geared to avoid peak traffic times. Controlled burns can only be conducted if site and weather conditions fall within tight state guidelines.

If you have any questions about this letter or the planned controlled burn, please call me at 703-324-8555.

Sincerely,

Charles Smith
Senior Natural Resource Specialist

703-324-8700 • TTY: 703-324-3988 • ONLINE: www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks • E-MAIL: parkmail@fairfaxcounty.gov



If accommodations and/or alternative formats are needed, please call (703) 324-8563, at least 10 working days in advance of the registration deadline or event. TTY (703) 803-3354

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Prescribed Meadow Burn Questions and Answers

- Question:** What is a prescribed burn?
Answer: Prescribed burns are controlled burns conducted according a prescription just like a doctor's prescription for medicine. The prescription is written to promote the health of an ecosystem just like a doctor writes a prescription to promote human health.
- Question:** Why is fire beneficial to an ecosystem?
Answer: Most ecosystems in our regional are fire adapted – they evolved with fire as part of the lifecycle of the plants that are the backbone of the ecosystem. Burning promotes plant health and seed germination, removes build-up of fuels that can lead to unplanned fires, and may inhibit non-native invasive plant species which are not adapted to fire.
- Question:** Aren't animals hurt by the burning?
Answer: Large animals and birds will leave the area before the burn begins because of the presence of humans and equipment. Cold-blooded animals like turtles and snakes are sleeping for the winter below ground and won't be harmed. Small mammals like meadow voles and mice that live in the field evolved with fire and stay low and move as much as possible. Some may be harmed, but far fewer will be harmed than if you mowed the field with heavy tractor mowers. Ultimately, the healthier meadow promoted by the fire will support more animals.
- Question:** How is burning a meadow better than mowing it?
Answer: Besides potentially harming fewer animals, burning removes much more of the old plant material, or duff. This allows seeds to get to the soil, and the soil to properly heat and cool which promotes seed germination. The burned duff also provides important nutrients to help plants grow. Burning may also directly harm non-native plant species which did not evolve with fire as part of their life cycle. Mowing simply chops the material up in place, so it stays there still preventing seeds from getting to the ground, insulating the soil and providing few nutrients. This insulating duff layer may benefit invasive plant species.
- Question:** Isn't burning dangerous?
Answer: Controlled burns are just that – Controlled! The burn is carefully planned through the prescription and coordinated with the State Department of Forestry, and County Fire and Police Departments. Special permits are obtained from the County Health Department and Fire Marshall's Office. Neighbors are notified, and the site carefully prepared to prevent the fire from getting out of control. The burn is conducted and overseen by specially trained staff that have the proper equipment to contain and guide the burn according to the plan.
- Question:** Won't there be a lot of smoke?
Answer: Smoke is the part that will affect people the most. In fact, the Smoke Plan is one of the most important parts of the burn prescription. It accounts for

wind direction and speed. The burn can only be conducted if all weather conditions cooperate so that the smoke will lift and leave the area properly and have minimal effect on homes, businesses, airports, schools or other sensitive locations. The burn will be conducted in the middle of the day and during a weekday to ensure maximum smoke removal and minimal impact on people.

Question: Will you burn all of the time?

Answer: No. Meadow burns are usually done in the late winter while the fuels are dry, after the animals have gotten to eat most of the seeds and before spring green-up occurs. You only burn a field every two or three years. This allows plants to grow and mature and minimizes disruption to animals. However, you may burn an adjacent field the next year. This gives your meadow a patchwork pattern that provides the most wildlife benefit.

Question: What will the meadow look like after the burn?

Answer: The area will appear black and gray from the burnt plant material. This will slowly fade with rain and weathering and then disappear during the spring and summer as the field “greens-up” with new plant growth. The goal is to develop a more diverse meadow system of native grasses and wildflowers.

Board Agenda Item
November 8, 2006

ACTION

Approval to Apply to the Chesapeake Bay Restoration Fund Program for Watershed Education Trail Signs

ISSUE:

Approval to apply to the Chesapeake Bay Restoration Fund program in the amount of \$15,000 for the watershed education trail signs in parks throughout the County.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Park Authority Director recommends approval to apply for grant funds in the amount of \$15,000 from the Chesapeake Bay Restoration Fund for watershed education trail signs.

TIMING:

Board action is requested on November 8, 2006. The grant application has already been submitted, as the deadline was October 2, 2006. If the Board does not approve the submission of the application, it will be withdrawn.

BACKGROUND:

The Chesapeake Bay Restoration Fund holds the proceeds collected from the sale of the special Chesapeake Bay automobile license plates in Virginia. The fund's advisory committee is comprised of three Virginia General Assembly members from Chesapeake, Gloucester and Hampton, and four citizen members. The fund provides grants for environmental education and action-oriented conservation and restoration projects within Virginia's Chesapeake Bay watershed.

The watershed education trail sign project is an excellent candidate for this grant program. The project directly addresses the grant program's goal to increase public awareness and knowledge about the Bay resulting in behavioral change. The funding would be used to purchase 25 interpretive signs using the existing designs - Watershed Connection and Ribbons of Green Protect our Streams.

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FISCAL IMPACT:

The total project cost is estimated at \$15,000. The Park Authority is applying for \$15,000 in grant funds. Matching funds are not required for this program. Upon receipt of funds, they will be allocated to Project 474604, Cross County Trail, in Fund 370.

ENCLOSED DOCUMENTS:

None

STAFF:

Michael A. Kane, Director

Timothy K. White, Chief Operating Officer

Cindy Messinger, Director, Resource Management Division

Michael Rierson, Manager, Resource Stewardship Branch

Meghan Fellows, Natural Resource Specialist, Resource Stewardship Branch

Jenny Pate, Trails Coordinator, Planning and Development Division

Nancy Russo, Grants Coordinator

Board Agenda Item
November 8, 2006

ACTION

Approval to Apply to the Museums for America Program for Frying Pan Farm Park's Collections (Hunter Mill District)

ISSUE:

Approval to apply for grant funds up to \$14,000 from the Museums for America program for collections management at Frying Pan Farm Park.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Park Authority Director recommends approval to apply for grant funds up to \$14,000 from the Museums for America program for collections management at Frying Pan Farm Park.

TIMING:

Board action is requested on November 8, 2006, as the submission deadline for this grant application is November 15, 2006.

BACKGROUND:

Museums for America is a grant program administered by the Institute for Museum and Library Services, a federal government agency. The Museums for America grant program provides funding to strengthen a museum's ability to serve the public more effectively by supporting high-priority activities that advance the recipient's mission and strategic goals.

Frying Pan Farm Park's collections management project is an excellent candidate for this grant program. The project directly addresses the grant program's goal to sustain cultural heritage through operational improvements to management of collections. The funding would be used to catalog Frying Pan Farm Park's approximately 1000-piece collection of items used by the people in the farming village, such as household furnishings, agricultural tools, and blacksmith materials.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The Park Authority is applying for up to \$14,000 in grant funds. The balance of the funds required for this project will be provided by in-kind match from staff salaries and operating costs associated with the project.

Board Agenda Item
November 8, 2006

ENCLOSED DOCUMENTS:

None

STAFF:

Michael A. Kane, Director

Timothy K. White, Chief Operating Officer

Cindy Messinger, Director, Resource Management Division

Cindy Walsh, Manager, Site Operations, Resource Management Division

Todd Brown, Manager, Frying Pan Farm Park

Nancy Russo, Grants Coordinator

Committee Agenda Item
November 8, 2006

PRESENTATION - 1

Corporate Farm Olympics

Staff from Frying Pan Farm Park, Resource Management Division and the Park Foundation will conduct a presentation on the inaugural Corporate Farm Olympics event held at Frying Pan Farm Park on October 19, 2006. The presentation will highlight this dynamic team building event that was attended by ten corporate teams and one team from the Park Authority. Accountants, technology experts, consultants and other professionals faced off in farm-themed challenges such as a Hay Stacking Competition, Fence Building Challenge, and Rural Treasures Scavenger Hunt. Office workers of all abilities competed in an entertaining series of challenges that demanded team effort, problem solving and organizational skills – valuable talents in the workplace too. The event, created and led by Frying Pan Farm Park, was a joint effort with the Park Foundation with support from the Park Services Division and the Friends of Frying Pan Farm Park.

ENCLOSED DOCUMENTS:

None

STAFF:

Michael A. Kane, Director
Timothy K. White, Chief Operating Officer
Charles Bittenbring, Director, Park Services
Bob Brennan, Director, Park Foundation
Cindy Messinger, Director, Resource Management Division
Cindy Walsh, Operations Branch Manager, Resource Management Division
Todd Brown, Manager, Frying Pan Farm Park

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