



Courier

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The Fish Story at Difficult Run

The section of the Difficult Run stream outside Reston looks positively bucolic on a beautiful autumn day earlier this month. After a short trek through a meadow and down a trail, one side of the stream is dense with trees and green, although on the other side a house is visible 50 yards away. Six smallmouth bass dart after a school of minnows in the stream and birds call out from the overhanging trees.

It's a naturally beautiful, eco-friendly sight, but looks can be deceiving. Ecologists from the Stormwater Planning Division of the Department of Public Works and Environmental Services (DPWES) are visiting this particular section of Difficult Run to survey the diversity and abundance of fish.

The fish will tell them a lot about the health of the stream's ecosystem and the watershed that feeds into it.

Staff on this survey include ecologists **LeAnne Astin, Takisha Cannon, Shannon Curtis, Chad Grupe, Chris Mueller, Danielle Wynne** and engineer **Russ Smith**.

Upon arriving at the site, these scientists quickly start noting the erosion of the stream banks, the several inches of gunky sediment on the bottom of the stream and the low water level. Everyone puts on waders (waterproof overalls) and Curtis and Grupe put on big, bulky backpacks reminiscent of "Ghostbusters," with a dangling wire cord, batteries, lights and strange noises



Shannon Curtis (left) "zaps" the water searching for fish while Russ Smith has a net handy. Takisha Cannon is behind them with the collection bucket.

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From DHR – Emergency Administrative Leave Policy Changes

After emergency administrative leave was declared last winter, the Department of Human Resources (DHR) received feedback from several departments asking that the county's emergency administrative leave policy be clarified and that some provisions be updated. After a thorough review, DHR recommended several modifications. The following changes have been discussed with the Employee Advisory Council and

approved by the county executive, and are effective immediately:

▶ For purposes of implementation, emergency administrative leave will be in effect for a specific time period (such as 6 a.m. until 10 a.m.) rather than for a specific duration (such as a two-hour delayed opening).

▶ Employees on personal leave are not eligible to receive emergency administrative leave.

▶ Currently, only registered teleworkers are authorized to work at home during inclement weather, if it is their regularly scheduled telework day. DHR recognizes that jobs not suitable for telework on a recurring basis might accommodate the employee working at home occasionally, such as when inclement weather is forecast.

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Therefore, the policy is being revised to allow employees who are not registered as teleworkers and/or who do not regularly telework to arrange with their supervisor in advance to work at an alternate work site (such as their home) if emergency weather conditions develop. Employees who work at home will not be eligible for emergency administrative leave.

There is no change in the policy that persons scheduled to telework on a given day are not eligible for emergency administrative leave should it be declared, since adverse weather is not an impediment for teleworkers or employees approved to work at home for the day. It is the responsibility of each employee and his/her supervisor to ensure that the employee has sufficient work to fill the work day, independent of the office

being open. A scheduled teleworker who chooses not to work or who has insufficient work will be required to use personal leave.

Personnel/Payroll Administration Policies and Procedures Memorandum 31 is being revised to reflect the changes, and will be available on Infoweb soon. ■

Tips for Pedestrian Safety

There are significant numbers of pedestrian injuries and fatalities on state highways within the county, according to the Fairfax County Department of Transportation (FCDOT). Each year, the county averages 10 to 20 pedestrian fatalities.

To increase awareness, the Board of Supervisors proclaimed October as Pedestrian Safety Month at its Oct. 15 meeting.

“Pedestrian safety and mobility are a priority for the county all year long,” explained **Chris Wells**, pedestrian program manager for FCDOT.

“October is a good time to raise awareness because the days are getting shorter and kids are back in school, requiring more vigilance on the roads and watching out for each other.”

Employees are encouraged to follow these tips for pedestrian safety:

For Drivers:

- ▶ Yield to pedestrians at crosswalks and intersections – it’s the law.
- ▶ Take extra care around schools, playgrounds, neighborhoods and parking lots.
- ▶ Look out for pedestrians before making a right turn on a red light.

For Pedestrians:

- ▶ Cross the street at marked crosswalks and intersections whenever possible.
- ▶ Before crossing, look left, right, then left again, and over your shoulder for turning vehicles.
- ▶ Use sidewalks. If there are none, walk facing traffic so you see vehicles and drivers see you.
- ▶ More information on the county’s pedestrian safety program and a link to the Pedestrian Task Force Report can be found at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/fcdot/pedestrian.htm. ■



The Board of Supervisors proclaimed October as Pedestrian Safety Month at its Oct. 15 meeting. Chairman of the Board of Supervisors Gerald E. Connolly (center) presented the proclamation to Pedestrian Program Manager Chris Wells (left of Connolly). The Board of Supervisors is standing behind several representatives of county and state agencies involved in pedestrian safety, including the Fairfax County Department of Transportation, Virginia Department of Transportation, Police Department, Department of Public Works and Environmental Services and Department of Planning and Zoning.

Park Authority Hikes Toward National Accreditation

By *Bethany Timmes*,
Accreditation Project Coordinator,
Park Authority
Reprinted from *ResOURces*

Accreditation. A big word that means people who know what they're talking about believe you know what you're doing. Universities are accredited to assure students and the public their education offerings are high quality.

The Park Authority is working toward becoming an accredited park and recreation agency. Out of 3,000 park and recreation agencies nationwide, 66 have earned this distinction from the Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA, www.nrpa.org).

Accreditation is one way to assure Fairfax County residents that their Park Authority is an efficient and effective steward of county resources.

Accreditation is not entirely new to the Park Authority. Several sites meet the standards and best practices of the museum profession in all their operations, from interpretative programming to financial practices to stewardship of the collections. Sully Historic Site, Colvin Run Mill and Green Spring Gardens – all managed by the Resource Management Division (RMD) – are accredited by the American Association of Museums.

Colvin Run Mill Historic Site Manager **Mike Henry** has been through accreditation before. "The accreditation



The Park Authority's accreditation steering committee includes (standing, left to right) Cindy Walsh, Michael McDonnell, Judy Pedersen, Ed Richardson, Lori Bassford, Tawny Hammond, Dan Sutherland, (seated, left to right) Bethany Timmes, Patty Paczan, Jenny Pate, Linda Crone, Shashi Dua and Andi Dorlester. Photo provided by Park Authority.

process is ultimately a guided journey of self-discovery," he said. "The scrutiny of the self-examination during the application process is where the greatest value lies. It requires us all to re-examine not only the 'whats' and 'wheres' of our jobs, but also the bigger questions of 'how' and 'why'."

Accreditation is a "seal of approval" for the museum profession and a commitment to excellence. RMD Collections Manager **Jeanne Niccolls** said that "perhaps its greatest value is that the process gives the institution an opportunity to review its accomplishments and see what challenges and opportunities lie ahead, always seeking to improve its operations."

In order to be accredited by CAPRA, an agency must meet 155 standards

spanning the varied fields of parks and recreation (maintenance, planning, resource management and safety, to name just a few). A standard is a statement of desirable practice set forth by experienced and recognized professionals and developed for national accreditation. The agency has to show documentation that it complies with each of the standards.

The Park Authority plans to meet those 155 standards in timely fashion and will learn from CAPRA if it becomes an accredited park and recreation agency in October 2008.

For more information about the Park Authority's accreditation effort, visit <http://infoweb/parks/accreditation/default.htm> or send an e-mail to bethany.timmes@fairfaxcounty.gov. ■

Open Enrollment For 2008 Benefits Oct. 15 – Nov. 9

To review or make changes to your benefit elections, go to www.fairfaxcountybenefits.benelogic.com.

Flex participants are reminded that they must re-enroll to continue participation in 2008.

For more information, visit <http://infoweb/hr/benefits>.

For assistance, call HR Central at 703-324-4900, TTY 703-222-7314.



Ecologists (left to right) Shannon Curtis, Danielle Wynne (behind Curtis), Chris Mueller, Tanner Peacock-Clark, LeAnne Astin and Chad Grupe methodically look for fish in Difficult Run.

emitting from them. The backpacks are used to lightly zap the water with an electrical current, slightly stunning the fish, which are quickly nabbed with nets and placed into buckets. After setting up a block net at the upstream marker, the group returns to the downstream marker and begins methodically wading upstream, collecting fish over the 100 meter sample area.

It takes almost two hours to cover the area, seeking out the fish that are often hiding under fallen logs and in leaf covered niches along the stream bank. All the caught fish are put into a “live well” (a kind of holding pen) in the water and the ecologists gather to identify and tally the fish. The Latin genus and species names are rapidly called out as the fish are identified, counted and released back into the stream, quickly swimming away.

The ecologists find 19 species of fish, which is good news. However, the bad news is that they don’t find many species that are sensitive to “stressors” including chemical pollutants (such as pesticides and fertilizers) and excess sediment. The group also makes a visual assessment of the habitat, assessing the width of the

riparian buffer (the land adjacent to the stream where the vegetation is influenced by the presence of water), the type of water (deep/shallow/fast/slow) and the sediment disposition. An electronic water quality meter is used to measure several factors including the amount of dissolved oxygen and the pH (the measure of acidity or alkalinity).

Back at the DPWES office in the Government Center, the numbers and kinds of fish are used

A largemouth bass (*Micropterus salmoides*) was one of the 19 species identified during the Difficult Run survey.



to calculate a biological health indicator called the “Fish Index of Biotic Integrity” and a score is generated for the stream. The section of Difficult Run that looks healthy and natural to a lay person only gets a fair rating in the county’s ranking system of excellent, good, fair, poor and very poor. The baseline for the ranking is Quantico Creek in Prince William Forest National Park, one of the largest parcels of undeveloped land in the region, according to the National Park Service.

Every summer and early fall, the county’s ecologists follow the same process, surveying fish in about 20 randomly selected stream sites. (Unfortunately, this summer several sites could not be sampled because they were dry from the drought conditions.) In the early spring, they also do a survey of aquatic invertebrates at 40 sites, wading in the streams to find and assess the number and diversity of invertebrates such as dragonfly and mayfly larvae.

According to Curtis, aquatic insects and invertebrates give an even better picture of the health of the water since they are more sedentary and unlike fish, don’t migrate away from pollution and erosion.

These biological assessments are part of the county’s Stream Protection Strategy Program that was initiated in 1998 to assess stream water quality in major



Danielle Wynne (above and inset) tallies the fish as they are identified by the other ecologists (left to right) Tanner Peacock-Clark, LeAnne Astin, Takisha Cannon, Shannon Curtis, Chad Grupe and Chris Mueller.



streams and tributaries. The program enables the county to better understand the impact of development, pollution and other stressors on the county's natural water resources; develop ways to fix or stabilize the health of streams; prioritize areas with the greatest needs; and recommend targeted stream preservation and restoration.

According to Stormwater Planning Division Director **Randy Bartlett**, the monitoring and protection of the county's streams is essential for many reasons.

It has a tremendous impact on the quality of life in Fairfax County, affecting drinking water, the health of people and animals, the values of homes, and tourism, among other factors.

Education and public involvement are two key strategies that DPWES is using to protect and improve county streams.

"We need to provide residents, businesses and developers with the information to help them to become stakeholders in protecting this vital natural resource," explained Bartlett.

"This can't be government working by itself, everyone must be involved." Including, apparently, the fish.

► For more information on the Stream Protection Strategy Program and other related DPWES programs, visit <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpwes/environmental/water.htm>. ■



An American eel (*Anguilla rostrata*) peeks out of the net before heading back into the water.

Focus on Benefits and Training

Inova Employee Assistance Services Can Make Life Easier

Fairfax County general merit employees and their household members are eligible to receive helpful convenience services through Inova Employee Assistance (IEA). IEA offers a work/life benefit that alleviates the time-consuming and often frustrating effort needed to locate resources such as:

- ◆ Child or elder care.
- ◆ Pet care.
- ◆ Educational resources.
- ◆ Services that promote health and

well-being, such as nutrition counselors or personal trainers.

- ◆ Identity theft recovery.
- ◆ Legal referral services.

IEA also offers a service that can locate anything from home maintenance or real estate professionals to theater or sporting event tickets.

To request one of these services, call the Inova Employee Assistance and Work Life Referral Service at 800-346-0110, TTY 877-845-6465.

► For more information visit the Inova Employee Assistance Web site at www.inova.org/workplacehealth/iea_and_work_life_services/index.jsp. ■

HR Central

HR Central has benefit information.

► Call 703-324-4900

TTY 703-222-7314

► Visit <http://infoweb/hr/benefits>

Fairfax County Employee University Launches Today

The Fairfax County Employee University (EmployeeU), a centralized “one-stop shopping” Web page for training and learning opportunities is being launched today at <http://infoweb/EmployeeU>.

Created by a 24-person multi-agency training advisory group, EmployeeU provides links to and information on:

- ◆ Types of training.
- ◆ Course catalog.
- ◆ Training locations.
- ◆ Self-enrollment process.
- ◆ Policies and procedures.

EmployeeU was developed to catalog all training courses within the county, promote available countywide training options, increase access to learning opportunities and act as an information resource.

“I am responsible for leading the learning process of our organization and support allowing all employees access to these opportunities,” noted County Executive **Anthony H. Griffin**. “By promoting continuous learning, we are effectively responding to the ever-changing demands of our customers, technology shifts and new

skill requirements. I am excited about this creative new resource and I believe EmployeeU provides the gateway to opportunities for our staff to learn and grow.

“I want to thank the advisory group for their excellent work. After the launch of EmployeeU, the input of all employees will be invaluable and I encourage your suggestions, ideas and feedback,” he said.

Employees can e-mail feedback to COEXEC-EmployeeUTeam@fairfaxcounty.gov, or use the link on the EmployeeU Web page.

Members of the training advisory group include:

Cheryl Bland, Purchasing and Supply Management.

Linda Busdiecker, Information Technology.

William Cooper, Sheriff’s Office.

Jeannie Dickson, Equity Programs.

David Graham, Information Technology.

Michael Guditus, Emergency Management.

Sharon Hackett, Organizational

Development and Training.

Robin Hardy, Planning Commission.

Ursula Koerner, Organizational Development and Training.

Judy Lynch, Organizational Development and Training.

Steve Malo, Information Technology.

Robyn McCoy, Public Works and Environmental Services.

Fran Millhouser, Library (retired).

Tyrone Morrow, Police (retired).

George Murray, Police (retired).

Stephanie Neuman, Information Technology.

Lane Poe, Information Technology.

Janet Rahman, Park Authority.

Anita Rao, Information Technology.

Laura Schmitt, Community Services Board.

Tana Suter, Organizational Training and Development.

Catherine Wetherby, Family Services.

Linda Williams, Community Services Board.

Bill Yake, Management and Budget. ■

Briefs

County Earns Certificate of Distinction From ICMA

Fairfax County was presented with a Certificate of Distinction on Oct. 7 by the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) at its annual conference in Pittsburgh, Pa. The county is one of only 24 jurisdictions to achieve this level of recognition among more than 200 communities participating in ICMA's Center for Performance Measurement.

The county received the certificate for collecting and using performance data from 14 government service areas (such as police, fire and rescue, libraries, etc.) and applying that information to training, data verification, public reporting, planning and decision-making, networking and accountability.

"This recognition demonstrates Fairfax County's commitment to high performance, accountability and transparency in managing our government services," said County Executive **Anthony H. Griffin**. "A number of these benchmarking comparisons are included in the annual budget, which shows how Fairfax County's performance ranks in relation to other similarly sized jurisdictions, as well as other participating Virginia localities."

Fairfax City Library Closes for Move

The Fairfax City Regional Library will close on Sunday, Nov. 25, at 6 p.m. and will reopen on Saturday, Jan. 26 at its new location at Old Lee Highway and North Street. Please note that the Virginia Room will close a week earlier on Nov. 19.

► For questions or more information call 703-293-6227, TTY 711.

Vote on Tuesday, Nov. 6

Fairfax County voters will vote on two bond issues and a slate of officials on Tuesday, Nov. 6.

► For more information on the 2007 election go to www.fairfaxcounty.gov/eb.



Attendees at the Progreso Hispano award presentation included (left to right) Battalion Chief Robert E. Rhea, Capt. Charles "Pete" Pullen, Assistant Chief of Operations David L. Rohr, honoree and Public Information Officer Lt. Raúl G. Castillo, Progreso Hispano Chair Tom Gerard and Progreso Hispano Executive Director Cristina Schoendorf. Photo provided by Castillo.

FRD's Castillo Receives Honor

Lt. **Raúl Castillo**, Fire and Rescue Department, was presented with the Dr. Richard Fallert Award on Oct. 13 at the 2007 Progreso Hispano Dinner. Castillo was honored for his "kind and compassionate service to the immigrant community of the Route One Corridor."

Progreso Hispano is a nonprofit volunteer community development organization that supports the Route One south corridor Hispanic community.

EAC Fall Craft Bazaar Is Nov. 9

The Employees Advisory Council is holding the annual Fall Craft Bazaar on Friday, Nov. 9, on the first floor of the Government Center.

This event has been a large attraction for employees to purchase crafts, jewelry, books, baked goods and many other items just in time for holiday gift giving. The vendors are county employees, retirees and their family members.

The funds raised from the Craft Bazaar are used by the EAC to purchase items such as microwaves for offices, or breast pumps to support the mothers' rooms in county buildings. Support your fellow employees and have fun shopping!

► For more information on the EAC, visit www.fceac.org.

South County Celebrates Cultures

On Thursday, Oct. 18, the South County Government Center held a celebration of the cultures represented by the employees who work there. Employees and residents had the opportunity to visit booths with information, photos, food, costumes and jewelry from several countries and regions including Afghanistan, Peru, Germany, Congo and Puerto Rico, among others.

The successful first-time event was coordinated by **Aleida Garit**, Department of Family Services, who noted that it will be an annual celebration.



South County Government Center staff celebrating the culture of Afghanistan included (left to right) Department of Family Services employees Fouzia Lafarree and Pashtoon Aria. Photo by Crystal Numan, Office of Public Affairs.

Tech Tips and News From DIT

Geographic Information Systems (GIS), a division of the Department of Information Technology, is hosting the annual GIS Day celebration on Nov. 14 in the Government Center's North Atrium, 9 a.m. - 2 p.m. Employees will have the opportunity to learn more about GIS, see dozens of unique Fairfax County maps, win prizes and support county colleagues at the GIS Excellence Awards ceremony.

[Agency Exhibitors - Demonstrations, Presentations, Maps and Project Displays](#)

More than 700 county employees from more than 30 agencies use GIS services. Several of these users will demonstrate how their agency utilizes GIS to improve business processes, aid customer



services and provide value-added analyses and products.

[Drawings for GIS Day T-shirts and Hats](#)

Visit the welcome table to register to win a prize. Drawings will be held on the hour between 9 a.m. - 2 p.m.

[Gallery of Maps](#)

All map submissions for the GIS

Excellence Awards competition will be on display. County employees can vote for the winner of the People's Choice Award.

[GIS Excellence Awards](#)

The GIS Excellence Awards recognize individual county employees, teams and departments that have demonstrated exceptional utilization of GIS services. Board of Supervisors Chairman **Gerald E. Connolly** and DIT Director **Wanda Gibson** will present the awards at 11 a.m. in Conference Room 120C.

► For more information on GIS Day go to <http://infoweb/DIT/ESD/GIS/gisday.htm>. To learn about GIS services, visit <http://infoweb/DIT/ESD/GIS/>. ■

Charitable Campaign Runs to Nov. 16

Dare to Share – Participate in the FCECC

United Way of the National Capital Area (UWNCA) has been awarded a one-year contract to assist the county in the management of the 2007 Fairfax County Employees Charitable Campaign (FCECC). As noted in the Oct. 12 issue of Courier, the county issued a request for proposal (RFP) this summer to select a vendor to administer the 2007 FCECC. Although UWNCA had been a longtime vendor for the county's charitable campaign, this process ensured that other vendor options were explored, according to FCECC Chair **Cheryl Orr**, Department of Human Resources.

UWNCA coordinates one of the largest annual fundraising campaigns in the country, dispersing millions of dollars to almost 900 nonprofit organizations that provide health and human services programs to Fairfax County and Washington area residents. The campaign also includes nine Community Impact Funds, which work to solve complex social issues by directing funds to the most critical areas of need.

This year during the FCECC, employees will be able to make pledges electronically through E-Pledge. Paper forms will still be available, but employees will be able to access E-Pledge at any time of the day or night to determine how they want to give and to select one or more charities of their choice. Employees should have received an e-mail this week providing them with the link to E-Pledge. The e-mail includes your username and a generic password. Once you log in for the first time with the information provided, you will be prompted to change your password to one of your choosing. If you encounter any difficulties with logging in or throughout the pledge process, call the United Way eBusiness Help Line at 202-488-2100, TTY 711.

The FCECC began on Monday, Oct. 22 and runs to Friday, Nov. 16.

► For more information about FCECC, E-Pledge and your agency's KEY Employee Team contact visit <http://infoweb/opa/unitedway/> or send e-mail to charitable.campaign@Fairfaxcounty.gov. ■

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