



Fall 2023 Newsletter

“When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect.” - Aldo Leopold

CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

With the hottest days of summer behind us, we find ourselves in a time of endings and beginnings. Many of our citizen science projects are wrapping up for this year! I'm honored to have the support of dedicated volunteers who braved the heat to check in on baby bluebirds, search for caterpillars, and count leaves.

Fall brings us into a new school year, and homeschool programs are starting up again at Leopold's Preserve. Visitation is increasing as cooler days abound. Of course, our biggest "beginning" this season is our Fall Festival, the first of what we hope will be an annual community event. I hope to see many of you there!

I'd also like to highlight a few of the nonprofit partnerships that we are focusing on this season. WHFF is proud to be supporting two great organizations by sponsoring their annual fundraising galas - the American Horticultural Society and the Potomac Riverkeeper Network. We recently hosted an outreach event in partnership with PRKN, advancing our mission to share knowledge of local ecosystems.

Our calendar is packed with events this month, but between programs I'd like you to keep in mind that fall is election season. I encourage you to consider important environmental issues while researching your local candidates!

- Scott C. Plein, WHFF Board Chairman



Shenandoah Riverkeeper Mark Frondorf delivers his keynote speech.

SHENANDOAH LOW DOWN

One of our major focus areas is protection of the Shenandoah watershed, the home of our namesake White House Farm. On September 9th, we hosted the "Shenandoah Low Down" at the Farm to help local residents learn more about the Potomac Riverkeeper Network's mission in the region. Mark Frondorf, Shenandoah Riverkeeper, gave a compelling keynote speech that addressed the critical role of community partnerships in protecting the watershed.

After lunch, participants enjoyed guided tours of our riparian buffer area along the South Fork of the Shenandoah River. Full of native trees, grasses, and wildflowers, this 52-acre strip protects the river and provides high quality habitat for local wildlife. WHFF Chairman Scott Plein led a tour focused on the Farm's rich history, and Eric Sours of the White House Natives nursery introduced guests to sustainable horticultural practices. In all, we empowered more than 50 participants with knowledge of local watershed issues!

On the following page, you can learn more about current issues impacting watersheds nationwide in a guest article authored by the Potomac Riverkeeper Network's Legal Director.



WHAT'S HAPPENING AT LEOPOLD'S

Updates from the Preserve

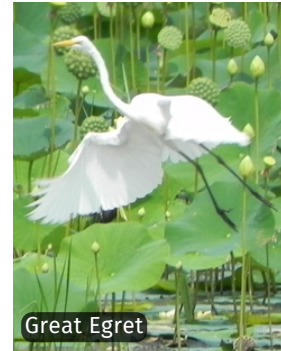
Fall Festival at Leopold's Preserve

We are in the midst of preparations for the Fall Festival at Leopold's Preserve on Saturday, September 23! The event will feature outreach tables for dozens of local environmental organizations. Plus, enjoy guided nature hikes, take your chances in a raffle for environmental products, and bring the kids for free face painting. Don't miss out!

Accessible Birding

We have recently completed several accessibility improvements on the west side of the Preserve. Our observation deck has been redesigned to include cable railings and built-in seating, allowing guests to stop and observe wildlife at their leisure. We also extended our ADA-compliant paved trail to a second accessible viewing spot!

"We are thrilled that a grant from our Get Outdoors Fund has enabled the White House Farm Foundation to make Leopold's Preserve more accessible to visitors with mobility challenges," says Brett Glymph, VOF's Executive Director. "It exemplifies the fund's mission of increasing safe access to the outdoors for all Virginians."



Seasonal Observations

- Tickseed
- Sunflowers
- Ironweed
- Great Egret
- Indigo Bunting

THE SACKETT DECISION - WHAT IT MEANS FOR OUR WETLANDS

Guest article by Bob Dreher: Legal Director, Potomac Riverkeeper Network



The Clean Water Act was enacted by Congress in 1972 to provide a comprehensive solution to the widespread pollution of the nation's waters. Unfortunately, the United States Supreme Court has just drastically narrowed the scope of the federal clean water program, leaving the fate of many rivers, streams and wetlands uncertain.

On May 25, 2023, the Court issued its most consequential decision for clean water and wetlands in a generation, Sackett v. EPA. The case involved an effort by landowners to fill wetlands on their property to build a lake home in Idaho. The United States Environmental Protection Agency ordered the Sacketts to remove the fill, and the Sacketts appealed.

The issue the Sacketts raised – the extent to which wetlands are protected under the Clean Water Act – had divided the Court for decades. The new conservative majority on the Supreme Court put that question to rest. Discarding decades of interpretation by the EPA and by the Court's own previous opinions, the Court held that the Clean Water Act only protects wetlands that are contiguous with and connected by surface flows to traditionally navigable waters or tributaries that have "relatively permanent" flows.

The Court's decision leaves more than half of the nation's wetlands unprotected under federal law. Many of those wetlands have no state protection. Even more sweeping, the Court's opinion casts into doubt federal protection for ephemeral and intermittent streams that make up as much as 70% of the nation's rivers and streams.

What can those of us who care about protecting our nation's wetlands and rivers do in response to this damaging decision? First, we can work to ensure that our states step up to fill the gap left in wetlands protection by the Sackett decision. Although many states lack independent wetlands protections, both Virginia and Maryland have broad laws protecting wetlands. Both states will require additional funding and support from their legislatures, however, to take over the role the EPA and the federal Army Corps of Engineers played in protecting wetlands now stripped of federal protections. And development interests in both states will lobby state authorities not to protect wetlands, so we will need to speak out to press for strong state action. Finally, we need to continue to educate the public and our legislators about the value of wetlands and the critical role they play in protecting water quality and sustaining wildlife.

VOLUNTEER HIGHLIGHT: FRANK JAWORSKI

With a deep-rooted agrarian background, Frank Jaworski feels that volunteering at Leopold's Preserve ties into his affinity for working the land. He came to us this spring with a generous offer to share his farm equipment, including a tractor, brushcutters, chainsaws, and more. Since then, Frank has become an indispensable part of our core group of volunteers.

Frank holds a strong passion for ecology and wildlife management. He enjoys the opportunity to support Park Manager Nick to advance these causes, and often volunteers his time to research new strategies of habitat restoration. "Leopold's reminds us that we're creatures of the environment", he says. "It's a reminder of what Prince William County once was". Frank's commitment also extends to his personal life. He manages his own six-acre property, which he calls a "mini-Leopold's", to enhance wildlife habitat and improve water quality.



Frank uses his tractor to clear overgrown vegetation in the Thoroughfare Meadow.



Deer frequently visit Frank's six-acre property.

Besides supporting our mission at Leopold's Preserve, Frank offers a long list of reasons why he enjoys volunteering with us. He praises the benefits of manual labor on both physical and mental health, describing outdoor work as a key part of vitality. He also enjoys sharing his knowledge of machinery, increasing the efficiency of volunteer projects, and discovering historic artifacts. "It's a chance to play in the dirt," he jokes.

Like many of our volunteers, Frank is eager to see more people helping out at Leopold's. You can join Frank and the rest of our Conservation Corps volunteers on any Friday morning to "play in the dirt" and improve the Preserve. We rely on your help! Please register in advance at www.leopoldspreserve.com/calendar.

JOIN US: UPCOMING EVENTS

Virginia's Amazing Vultures

Saturday, September 16, 10:00 AM
Leopold's Preserve

Learn about vultures and their role in our ecosystems from a wildlife rehabilitator and her ambassador turkey vulture.

Birds & Blooms

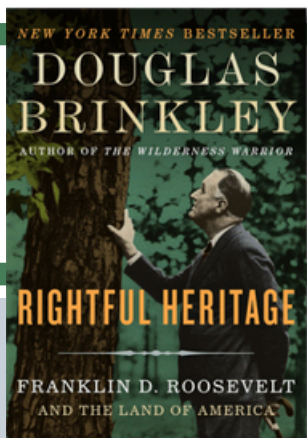
Sunday, September 17, 10:00 AM
Leopold's Preserve

Join us to enjoy and learn about the fall bird migration and early fall blooms! Guided walk led by a professional naturalist.

Spotted Lanternfly Workshop

Wednesday, September 27, 4:00 PM
Leopold's Preserve

VCE staff will teach us to identify and manage invasive spotted lanternflies. We'll observe these insects and their impacts on our native landscapes.



Rightful Heritage: Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Land of America

By Douglas Brinkley

This illuminating biography focuses on President Roosevelt's passion for conservation. Brinkley outlines FDR's monumental policies which protected millions of acres of land and continue to inspire our environmental movements.

What We've Been Reading



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