

Friends of the Appomattox River
2015 Annual Report
Report compiled by Al Lookofsky, President

REPORTS FROM OFFICERS

President – Al Lookofsky

This meeting marks the end of my three-year term on the board of directors and two years as president of FAR. It has really been a pleasure to work with these folks! They are so talented and so willing to volunteer to do what it takes to get the work/play of FAR done. Whether it is redoing the web site or planning a blue moon rising paddle, everyone is willing to do their part. They made it easy on me and I thank them!

- Introduction of directors and election of new directors.
- Balloting and vote counting. The nominees to the board for the 2016-2018 term, Gene Donovan, Joe McCutchen, and Mel Smith, were approved by the membership.

Vice-President – Joe McCutchen

Committee organization (Signup and Leadership) for 2015

Secretary – Robin Sedgwick

The secretary apologized that minutes of board meetings have not been circulated to the membership in 2015. This lapse was due to delays in securing timely approval of the minutes and will be rectified in 2016.

Treasurer's Annual Report 2015 – Lee Woodruff

Beginning Balance		\$2,974.09*
<u>INCOME</u>		\$1,579.00
Dues	765.00	
Fundraising		
Sale of FAR Items	539.00	
Donation to Gift Fund (Blueway talks		

by D. Fehrer to Nora Lancaster Garden Club and Garden Study Club)	50.00	
Sale of Bluebird Houses to Redbud Garden Club	225.00	
<u>EXPENSES</u>		\$1,225.68
Operating		
Penn National Liability Insur.	250.00	
SCC Incorporation Fee	25.00	
Kinex: Domain Name & Web host	119.40	
Annual P.O. Box Rental	58.00	
Activities		
Katie Martin Bear Talk (2 dinners)	29.50	
Taylor Forbes (Chain Saw Work & New Chain)	82.41	
Refreshment Supplies (M. Dorrill & S. Heinemann)	34.90	
Screws for Bluebird Houses (A. Lookofsky)	31.47	
Outreach		
HOV Booth Fee	35.00	
Farmville Printing – Brochures (500 FAR & 1,000 Blueway)	560.00	
Ending Balance		\$3,327.41
* Includes Gift Fund of \$400.00		

Communications Coordinator – Sandy Willcox

As the FAR Communications Coordinator, I successfully delegated all the publicity efforts to Betsy Lookofsky who did an excellent job of posting the news of our field trips and projects. In addition, I observed with great appreciation the work that John Watson and Damien Fehrer did to revise our website. John continues to edit and update the site so it is both attractive and full of useful information.

According to the bylaws, another part of the Communications Coordinator position was to publish a newsletter. My understanding is that this was deemed no longer necessary since we have a website and Facebook page.

So what did I actually do this year? I met with the Board where, among other things, we tried to redefine the Communications Coordinator position. Then, Robin Sedgwick and I reviewed and edited the bylaws for the Board's consideration. If passed, they will clarify the duties of the various directors, and I will continue to appreciate the work that Betsy and John do!

Membership – Marianne Dennison

2015 Membership report

Family $22 \times 2 = 44$

Single 6

Life 4

Honorary 1 (Town of Farmville)

Year by year 2 (for use of Mill Building)

New Single $1 \times 2 = 2$

New Family $5 \times 2 = 10$

Total 69

REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES

2015 FAR Stewardship Committee Annual Report – Lee Woodruff

During 2015, the Friends of the Appomattox River participated in three scheduled stream/lake cleanup efforts. The focus of the cleanups included the Appomattox River, Buffalo Creek, Gross's Creek, Briery Creek Reservoir, Sandy River Reservoir, and Wilck's Lake.

The Spring cleanup on April 11, 2015, had eight volunteers who collected approximately 505 lbs. of trash from selected locations of the above list. Then on June 6, several FAR members helped clean trash from a section of Gross's Creek that runs through town. This effort was coordinated by Clean Virginia Waterways and High Bridge State Park.

A Fall cleanup took place on September 19 (a rain date) and involved 14 participants collecting 20 bags of trash and 10 tires totaling approximately 605 lbs. The group cleaned roughly 3.4 miles of shoreline and was part of the International River Cleanup and Clean Virginia Waterways effort.

Field Trip Committee – Ron Heinemann, chairman

We had three “paddles” in 2015—in May, July, and October. In May we paddled on the Slate River in Buckingham County. Seven FAR members were on the float. The Slate is a lovely river with high embankments and we look forward to traveling on another section of the river in 2016.

In July, approximately 22 members took a “blue moon sunset-moonrise” cruise on the Sandy River Reservoir. All remarked on how beautiful the setting was.



Finally in October we paddled the lower level of our own Blueway on a misty Saturday morning. Six members participated, thanks to the work of Lee Woodruff, who cleared portions of the river so we could paddle with few obstructions.

We anticipate having 3-4 paddles in 2016. If you have suggestions about waterways you would like to travel, please let committee members know.

Programs Committee – Robin Sedgwick, chair

Through the inactivity of the chair, in 2015 the Program Committee did not convene. A single talk, suggested by board president Al Lookofsky, constituted the program offering for the year. What the offering lacked in quantity was made up in quality. Katie Martin, District Wildlife Biologist for the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, gave a lively illustrated lecture about black bears in our area. Katie’s passion for her subject was very evident, and the audience came away from the evening enthusiastic and well informed. The meeting room of the Farmville–Prince Edward Community Library provided an excellent setting. Light refreshments, organized by the committee, followed the talk.

Publicity included an email circulated to the membership as well as a few flyers posted around town.

Social Committee

FAR Social Committee Annual Report 2015 – Sandy Heinemann, chair

The members of the FAR Social Committee met initially with Marianne Dennison, the liaison to the FAR Board of Directors. Present were: BA Klein, Sherry Swinson and Sandy Heinemann. Sandy volunteered to chair the committee. Beth Woodruff spoke to the group about the committee's responsibilities, reimbursement of expenses, etc.

The two major events for which the committee was responsible were the annual group picnic traditionally held the last Friday in August and the annual holiday party the first Friday in December. The picnic was held at the home of Ann and Woodfin Ligon and was attended by approximately 35 members and potential members. The committee provided water, lemonade, and ice tea as well as paper products and utensils. Attendees contributed to a pot luck dinner.

The holiday party was held at the home of Marty and Bill Dorrill at 6:30 pm and was described as a "Tapas Fiesta." Members brought "finger food" and their choice of beverage. The committee and the hosts provided plates, napkins, hot cider and water. Approximately 40 attended.

The committee also provided tea, lemonade and water for the annual "bird house build" at the home of John and Judy Jamieson. Attendees brought potluck lunch items.

The committee received a request from the Program Committee to provide refreshments after a FAR-sponsored lecture on October 15. Since the committee had dwindled to only the chair, who was out of town that week, the Program Committee took responsibility for the refreshments.

Many thanks to Betsy Lookofsky who volunteered to join the Social Committee.

The issue of the responsibilities of the Social Committee arose during the year. The By-Laws state that the duty of the Social Committee is to "plan social events." The two social events that have traditionally been held are the August Picnic and the annual Holiday Party. All other events sponsored by FAR such as meetings and programs are not "social events." The Board should clarify the role of the Social Committee. It is awkward to be asked to provide food for a non-social event.

Community Outreach Committee

Historical Society Program Damien Fehrer prepared and presented a power point program about the Farmville Blueway to the Prince Edward County Historical Society, the Longwood Garden Club, the Nora Lancaster Garden Club, the Garden Study Club, and the Woodland independent living residents. Requests for a repeat of this presentation have been made by several other organizations in the area.

Heart of Virginia The Heart of Virginia event is a major draw of people to the area featuring a variety of music, artists, food, exhibits and souvenir vendors. A tent with display was staffed to feature the Blueway and other activities of FAR. This has also become a major money making activity for the group to sell Bluebird houses, t-shirts, river maps and bandanas.

Farmville Food Day FAR was invited to set up a table at the Farmville Food Day on October 24th from 9 to 1 PM. The event was designed to help people to eat healthier and to take advantage of the recreation opportunities in the area. FAR volunteers Robin Sedgwick, John Watson, and Betsy and Al Lookofsky set up a table exhibit featuring the Blueway.

Special Projects Committee

Navy Explosive Ordnance Disposal – Alecia Daves-Johnson

The EOD team comprised of multiple branches of military professionals and coordinated by the US Navy Detachment Yorktown scheduled another week of inland waterway training on the Appomattox River during the week of September 28 – October 2, 2015. The area designated for their attention included the section from Route 608 in Prospect to Route 15, a first for this section of the river. Unfortunately, at the last minute, their attention was called away from this training evolution for other assignments. In retrospect, this was a good shift because the local area experienced such significant rainfall that it would have hindered the performance of the training mission. The FAR and the EOD team respect the private property access points provided for these training missions and would not have wanted to cause damage to them due to the wet weather conditions. The training is expected to be rescheduled.

Blueway Committee – Damien Fehrer

The Farmville Blueway Project has been completed. The Blueway Committee, consisting of Damien Fehrer, Chair; Chuck Green; Faye Green; and Jim Davis, has:

- Updated the FAR website with the latest Blueway brochure and map.
- Worked with the Town of Farmville and Prince Edward County to provide information on the Farmville Blueway and post links to our updated website.
- Made presentations on the Farmville Blueway to several organizations in the community.

The Town of Farmville website features the Farmville Blueway and Friends of the Appomattox River prominently on the main page with links to a printable Blueway brochure and the Friends website. In addition, there is a description on the Blueway paddle trail under the Parks and Recreation section on the website and narrative on the historic features of the trail under the History and Culture section of the website.

ADDITIONAL PROJECTS

New FAR Website – Damien Fehrer and John Watson

2015 was a banner year for FAR's Internet presence.

During the first half of the year, Damien Fehrer and John Watson developed FAR's new web site that features a consistent look and feel. After the new web site was approved, the old web site was taken down, the hosting service for the web site was switched to Kinex, and the new web site was uploaded. The new fifteen-page web site features a counter for the number of visits and, as of the first week in January 2016, the new web site has had almost 1,100 visits.

The web presence of FAR now features the new web site with the same web address (www.far-va.org) cross linked with a Social Media page on Facebook (Friends of the Appomattox River). The web site is used to present the face of FAR to the world and the Facebook page is used to post pictures and comments concerning current events.

The first thing the design team did was set the design criteria for the web site:

- A unified look and feel
- Pleasing to look at
- Easy to navigate
- Easy to support
- Provide a 'Contact Us' page

Once the design criteria were set, Damien developed the content and John performed the programming and technical work. Developing content is no easy task; Damien sorted through dozens of documents and hundreds of photos. John commented that as exacting as the technical work was, Damien had the harder job of getting the verbiage right and the pictures pretty.

Through ten iterations of review and revisions, the development team held fast to the principle that the web site was "the face of FAR" and had to look good and attract attention. At key stages in the development cycle, Damien and John asked the Board

of Directors to view the prototype and provide input. Photographs were solicited from the membership and narrative was sent to some members for review. The development team wishes to express their gratitude to all those who provided photos and reviewed the narrative. With help from the Board, and the membership, the Friends now have a new and improved website.

Intern to Develop Natural History Brochure for Blueway – Sandy Willcox, board liaison

Alecia Daves-Johnson facilitated a connection between FAR and the Obsidian Solutions Group to sponsor an intern for a project that supports the FAR mission. I volunteered to be a liaison among all the parties. We are fortunate to have Evan Spears be our intern for the project of identifying and photographing the flora and fauna along the Blueway. The plan is to create a resource of the information on our website and also have Evan make a public presentation of his work. Depending on funds, etc., we may expand the project to include a hard copy publication and some collaboration with other organizations such as the Bird Club, Master Gardeners, and Master Naturalists.