



# Rock Creek CURRENT

SPRING 2010

## Join Us for the 2010 Rock Creek EXTREME Cleanup

ON APRIL 10, VOLUNTEERS will once again take to the woods to haul out trash that has accumulated in the creek and adjoining parkland. There will be cleanups at over 40 locations, with a site near every neighborhood along Rock Creek. Most of the cleanups are scheduled for Saturday, April 10, from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm. Please check the FORCE website, [friendsofrockcreek.org](http://friendsofrockcreek.org), for a cleanup location near you.

Cleaning up the park with a group is surprisingly satisfying. It takes you to places you might not otherwise go and forces you to slow down, examine your surroundings, and reflect on American cultural artifacts. Children have the chance to have fun, while learning about environmental responsibility. Many of you pick up trash on your own, but participating with a FORCE group in your own neighborhood gives you an opportunity to build ties with your community.

Last year, with the help of FORCE outreach funded by REI, nearly 2,000 volunteers hauled 58,000 pounds of trash from the parkland along Rock Creek. Working together, we can make a real difference.

Bring your friends or families, join your neighbors, and help clean up your section of park this April!



*The next generation of volunteers is ready to work.*

## Stream Teams: Neighbors Working Together



*Volunteers cut English ivy strangling trees in Rock Creek Park.*

FORCE is now working to build Stream Teams to serve as stewards for Rock Creek and each of its 30 tributaries. On Martin Luther King Day, FORCE mobilized neighbors in DC and Montgomery County for projects on two Rock Creek tributaries. New Stream Team Leader **Tania Gerich** and **Ed Murtagh** recruited over 30 people to clean up a side stream of Turkey Branch in Aspen Hill. In DC, more than 100 people turned out to free trees from the chokehold of invasive English ivy. The Woodland Normanstone Neighborhood Association worked with FORCE, the National Park Service, and the Embassy of Belgium to cut ivy from trees along Normanstone Creek, a DC tributary of Rock Creek.

Please contact FORCE Program Coordinator, **Eric Durland** at [eric@friendsofrockcreek.org](mailto:eric@friendsofrockcreek.org), if you are interested in serving as the leader of a Stream Team in your neighborhood.

# Crunch Time in Annapolis

By Steve Dryden  
FORCE Board Member

JUST AS MARYLAND began moving forward with strong requirements to protect Rock Creek and the Chesapeake Bay, some developers have gone to Annapolis to try and weaken this initiative. These developers are threatening to stop "Smart Growth" investment in our existing communities to avoid the cost of managing the water pollution they create. What they aren't telling our legislators is that delaying installation of environmentally smart technologies will lead to even greater long-term costs, which will raise taxes for everyone.

Most urban areas in Montgomery County and the rest of the state that were built before the 1980s lack appropriate stormwater controls. Just a half-inch rain falling on a one-acre parking lot will send about 12,000 gallons of stormwater, polluted with dirt, bacteria, toxins, and trash, gushing into the nearest creek. Stormwater causes stream bank erosion, which topples trees and destroys fish and wildlife habitat. Stormwater-related flash flooding also damages roads, bridges, and sewer pipes. The Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission estimates it may have to spend as much as \$45 million to repair stormwater-damaged sewer pipes.

We now know better, and Maryland's Stormwater Management Act of 2007 would help address these problems by requiring that both new developments and redevelopments include solutions, such as underground bioretention, landscaping infiltration, and green roofs. These solutions, known as "Environmental Site Design" or ESD techniques help rainfall soak in near where it falls, which reduces pollution and erosion in our creeks. This is in sharp contrast with the

**Act Now!**

FORCE and other members of the Maryland Stormwater Consortium are fighting back against attempts to weaken the 2007 Stormwater Act. Maryland residents: If you haven't already done so, please email your legislators today to oppose any rollbacks to the 2007 Stormwater Management Act. Also, please send a copy to Diane Cameron, ANS Conservation Program Director, at [dcameron@audubonnaturalist.org](mailto:dcameron@audubonnaturalist.org), who will compile your letters and bring copies of them on lobbying visits.

outdated practice of piping runoff to the nearest stream as quickly as possible.

After three full years of preparation, regulations to implement this law go into effect this May. Though the development community supported the 2007 Stormwater Act, some developers and municipal governments now want to avoid investing in the best new-generation solutions. Unless the state's new stormwater regulations take effect now and are strengthened over time, developers will be allowed to increase pollution and continue to shift costs to the public. Moreover, stormwater causes significant pollution in the Chesapeake Bay. Only if we reduce polluted runoff from streams like Rock Creek can we make cleanup of the Chesapeake Bay a reality.

## Rock Creek and the Bag Legislation

IN LAST YEAR'S ROCK CREEK EXTREME CLEANUP, volunteers pulled out approximately 7,000 plastic bags from the creek and adjoining parkland. Fortunately, the new DC bag fee will help reduce plastic bag pollution in Rock Creek. Although media coverage has focused on the Anacostia River, which is in a neighboring drainage basin, Rock Creek will receive all of the same trash reduction benefits. In addition, thanks to FORCE lobbying efforts, Rock Creek is eligible for cleanup funds generated by the fee.

To make a real dent in the Rock Creek plastic bag pollution, Maryland will need bag legislation too. A large portion of the bags come from upstream, as nearly 80% of the land area that drains into Rock Creek is located in Montgomery County.

**What You Can Do**

- Volunteer for the Rock Creek Extreme Cleanup on April 10
- Re-use and recycle your plastic bags
- Use tote bags or back packs to carry your purchases
- Tell Maryland legislators that you support a bag fee



### Rock Creek *CURRENT*

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**friendsofrockcreek.org**      Mailing Address:  
PO Box 42680  
Washington, DC 20015

Contact us at:  
202-237-8866, or  
[force@friendsofrockcreek.org](mailto:force@friendsofrockcreek.org)

*The mission of FORCE, a non-profit organization, is to promote a healthy and sustainable Rock Creek watershed through conservation, education, and restoration.*

**FORCE Board**

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# American Beech – *Fagus grandifolia*

By *Mary Rollefson*  
**FORCE Board Member**

WHAT IS THAT TREE that stands out in the winter woodland? The one with the golden bronze leaves hanging on, in sharp contrast to its darker and barren neighbors? It's the American beech, *Fagus grandifolia*. The American Beech is native to eastern North America, ranging from the Maritime Provinces to Ontario and south to



Florida and Texas., It's also known for its smooth silver gray bark, which on mature trees can look like an elephant leg. You may notice it by another common characteristic:

*The golden leaves of the American beech.*

a heart with two sets of initials carved into the bark.

The mature American beech is 50 to 70 feet high with about an equal spread, producing a dense shade that prevents undergrowth. It has alternate leaves that are glossy, dark green, toothed, about 2 to 5 inches long, and taper to a point. The nuts, in 3-winged prickly enclosures, are edible and support numerous birds, squirrels, foxes, porcupine, deer, and bear.

The native American beech outgrows and outperforms the European beech and is a great choice for a large landscape. It is a climax tree and one to be planted for posterity. One plant expert noted, "If the word noble had to be applied to only one kind of tree, the honor would probably go to the [American] beech (C.U. Crockett. *Manual of Woody Landscape Plants*, Michael A. Dirr, 1998)." The next time you are enjoying Rock Creek, see if you can identify this magnificent tree.

# FORCE Welcomes New Board Members

Four new people have joined the FORCE Board of Directors. The new directors each bring a wealth of experience and commitment to protecting Rock Creek. **Ellen Athas**, a District resident, is an environmental attorney with experience in clean water, sewage overflows, and ecosystems protection. **Clif Grandy**, also a DC resident and attorney, has organized events in the Fenwick and Portal Branch sections of Rock Creek Park. **Barry Lemley** lives across from the Meadowbrook section of park and is a consultant active in numerous local and international organizations, including Bethesda Green. **Elin Quigley** is a community activist in Garrett Park. Clif, Barry, and Elin have each organized Rock Creek trash cleanups for several years.



*New FORCE Board Members (left to right): Clif Grandy, Elin Quigley, Ellen Athas, Barry Lemley*

**Stay More Current!**  
 FORCE sends out monthly online newsletters and occasional action alerts. Go to [friendsofrockcreek.org](http://friendsofrockcreek.org) and sign up to receive email updates on FORCE programs, volunteer opportunities, and how you can make a difference.

## YES, I WANT TO SUPPORT FORCE!

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Please return this form to: Friends of Rock Creek's Environment  
 PO Box 42680, Washington, DC 20015  
 or donate online at [friendsofrockcreek.org](http://friendsofrockcreek.org)

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- \$35 Individual Membership
- \$50 Family Membership
- \$100 Water Penny
- \$250 Dragonfly
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- \$1000 Kingfisher

# History in the Watershed

*By Barbara Elkus*  
**FORCE Board Member**

Situated on 410 acres along Rock Creek in Derwood, Maryland, is Montgomery County's Agricultural Farm Park. The park complex includes a farmhouse, barn, assorted farm buildings and activity center. Protected to interpret past farming practices in Montgomery County, 70 acres have been set aside as a historic area. The farmhouse is furnished to



*Learn about farming along Rock Creek at the Montgomery County Agricultural History Farm Park.*

reflect the home of an average turn-of-the-century farm family. There are several trails, which are an integral link in the Upper Rock Creek Trail Corridor Plan. The park is one of three Montgomery County compost demonstration areas.

Special events at the park depict life on a farm in one of the nation's early agricultural counties. Activities include hay rides, sheep dog exhibitions, sheep shearing, turn of the century crafts, and baby farm animals.

The park, located at 18400 Muncaster Road, is open seven days a week. For information, call (301) 948-5053. For more information on park events, call (301) 670-4661.



**FORCE**  
PO Box 42680  
Washington, DC 20015

# New FORCE Supporters

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## Did You Know?

ROCK CREEK MEANDERS 33 miles through Montgomery County and Washington, DC, before it flows into the Potomac River between Thompson Boat Center and the Watergate Complex. The last quarter mile is affected by the tides and is therefore technically part of the Chesapeake Bay.



*Rock Creek joins the Potomac River.*