



The Dragon's Tale

PO Box 882
Gloucester, VA 23061

Volume XXXV
Number III
September 6, 2018

Friends of Dragon Run, Inc. is a nonprofit corporation dedicated to the preservation, protection, and encouragement of wise use of the Dragon Run and its watershed.

September 26, 2018 General Meeting



Empress of the Dragon to Speak to Members September 26, 2018

Have you been down the Dragon lately? It's still the same, but yet, it's different. Long periods of drought, then huge amounts of rain, have served to subtly change this timeless environment that we cherish so much. Since Teta stepped down from the position of paddle master and is now the naturalist interpreter for the kayak trips, she's had time to find and photograph many of the exciting and beautiful moments she has encountered on the river lately. Not only are there exciting things to see, but the timeless beauty of the river is captured in her many photographs of this special waterway. Please join us at the Gloucester Library on September 26, 2018, at 7 pm and share Teta's excellent photography and her enchanting stories of the magic that is the Dragon.



Flower pictures by Anne Atkins

Inside this issue:

<i>Fall Paddle Season & Kayak Storage</i>	Page 2
<i>President's Letter</i>	Page 3
<i>Fall Paddle Crew Needed</i>	Page 4
<i>Beavers—Our Friends?</i>	Page 5
<i>Bulman Tract Update</i>	Page 6
<i>Spring Paddle Season Results</i>	Page 7
<i>Spring Paddle Crew Picture</i>	Page 8
<i>Kayaks for Sale</i>	Page 9
<i>In Memoria—Gibson and Stone</i>	Page 10
<i>Officers and Committee Chairs</i>	Page 11

Roadside Trash Pickup September 29th 9AM

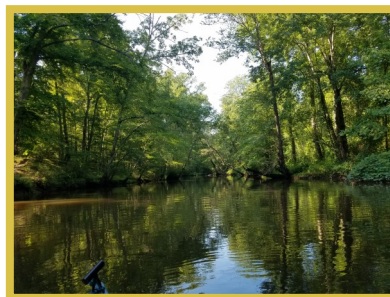
Meet in the parking lot of
Rappahannock Community
College in Glenss. For more
information, contact
Hugh Markham at
hughr.markham@gmail.com



The 2018 Fall Paddle Season

Due to uncertain weather conditions and likely water levels, the 2018 fall paddle season will commence Friday, October 19, 2018, running every day (weather permitting) and will end on Saturday, 3 November. We will once again explore the old canal as shown in the photo below. And we thank Robert Gibson and the trustees of his lands who have given us permission once again to use his farm in King & Queen County as a takeout point for our paddles.

Registration will open on Monday, September 10 at 12:01 a.m. We always have quite a rush of sign-ups in the first 24 hours, so it would be wise to get your request in as early as possible to reserve the date you prefer to paddle. Please use caution if you are reserving more than one seat. Please be sure that you have the people to fill those seats before you deprive others from a trip down the Dragon and deprive FODR from the donations.



To register, go to our website, www.dragonrun.org and click on the SignUpGenius tab. The meeting place for all the paddlers is the Food Lion on Route 17 in Saluda, Virginia. The suggested donation will once again be \$50 per person, which may be donated in advance using Paypal and our website, and we'll be selling our T-shirts, hats, and other items, with all proceeds benefiting FODR. We look forward to showing you our beautiful river. It will be an unforgettable experience.

Let There Be Storage!

In our February 2018 Dragon's Tale, you read about the CONEX box that FODR purchased and placed down the short road from our kayak launch site at Big Island. After our fleet of kayaks and other equipment were all washed after the Spring Paddle Season, we planned to store them inside the CONEX box for the summer. Our Founding Member, past President, past Secretary, past Treasurer, and current Board member, Davis Rhodes volunteered to trick out the CONEX box interior with storage racks, lines, and even an office so that everything will have a place to stay safe and dry. See photo that shows the interior with some of the kayaks on the storage racks. Don't you love it when a plan comes together! Thanks so much, Davis, for making this dream a reality!



PRESIDENT'S LETTER

A Great Year for FODR



Our organization is striving to make 2018 a great year to honor the memories of two valuable members who have died this year. Robert Gibson and Kearfott Stone were wonderful volunteers for about four decades, and their loss saddens everyone who was lucky enough to know them.

Please join us at our next member meeting on September 26 at 7 pm in the Gloucester Library. If you have already seen any of Teta's photos about Dragon Run, you definitely need to come to this meeting, because this presentation is brand new and full of new photos and new stories!

While our annual picnic has been cancelled, I hope to see many of our members, old and new, during our fall paddle season – October 19 through November 3, every day, weather permitting. More information is included in this newsletter and on our website.

If you visit FODR's property at Big Island, you might notice that the forest that borders our road looks much prettier with all the sunlight shining through the trees. That's because the trees on those tracts have been thinned, as recommended in the Forest Stewardship Management Plan for the Revere tracts. We weren't sure how much revenue to expect from the thinning, and we were pleased to receive more than \$30,000 for our treasury. You'll read in this Newsletter about the timber activity planned under the new FSMP for the Bulman tract. All of the issues raised by these activities were addressed during Northern Neck Area Forester and FODR Board member, David Milby's presentation to our members at our September 2017 meeting.

You will recall that we've received many offers from hunters to lease our properties for hunting activities. I appointed a Hunting Committee (David Milby, chair; Jeff Wright, Vice President; Roger Weakley, Treasurer; John Elkin, FODR member; and I as ex officio member) earlier this year. After working all summer and meeting with interested parties, the committee recommended leasing the Big Island properties to Shabu Hunt club, whose members hunted those properties for many years before FODR purchased them. The Board authorized me to sign a lease with Shabu, beginning in September, 2018, and ending June 30, 2019. The lease revenue will cover FODR's real estate taxes on all our properties, assure that we have additional help maintaining our trails, and assure protection against poaching. We will be posting additional details about clearing any conflicts between hunt club activities and FODR activities, so stay tuned.

Finally, I'm happy to announce the appointment of a new FODR board member. In accordance with our by-laws, I asked Marsha Carlton to serve for the remainder of Robert Gibson's term on the FODR board. Marsha has supported FODR for several years and served many days on the spring paddle season crew often at only 1 hour advance notice. You'll hear more about her before our annual meeting November 14th, where she will stand for election to a two year term.

Be sure to keep track of what's going on with the Fall paddle season and other activities by checking our website <http://www.dragonrun.org/> frequently. Remember that you can now pay your membership dues and also order and pay for our new Dragon Run tee shirts, long-sleeved performance shirts, and new hats using our website and PayPal. And follow us on Facebook, especially if you want to paddle with us during the fall paddle season!

Don't forget to send me an email at President@dragonrun.org, call me (703-217-0610), write me a letter (P.O. Box 247, Deltaville, VA 23043), or post a comment on our Facebook page and let me know what you are thinking. I hope to see or hear from you very soon!

PADDLE CREW WANTED FOR FALL 2018 SEASON

Our Fall Paddle Season will begin October 19, 2018 and end November 3, 2018. We will launch at Mascot and follow the trail down the old canal, as shown in the photo on page 2. We will offer to take paddlers every day, weather permitting. Would you be interested in serving as a crewmember on those trips? If so, you will need to complete a questionnaire and indicate which days you are available to serve, which days you cannot serve, and whether you can fill in on short notice for someone who has an emergency.

We will have two orientation/training sessions on Sunday, October 14 to acquaint you with the trail, how the trips are run, and what we expect of crewmembers. Attending one of the training sessions on October 14 is mandatory, even if you attended training in April 2018, or October 2018. The reason for mandatory training, in a word, is safety. The training covers a lot of things but mainly: EMS procedures, first aid procedures, take-out points and bottom of the Dragon Run characteristics, dams, dam procedures, low and very low water procedures, safety areas for emphasis with guests, features of the route, water characteristics in the part of the Dragon Run being paddled, support to the trail guide's narrative.

There are a few things to consider about the crew duties before you sign up. You should be in good health, able to get in and out of a kayak on your own, agile and experienced enough to adjust boats to suit participants, provide assistance to those needing help maneuvering their craft and helping them through obstructions when necessary. You should also be in good enough physical shape to help with loading and transporting kayaks and equipment. Not everyone is expected to load kayaks on the trailer, but other jobs like cleaning out the boats, rescuing a paddler who falls in the water, and helping participants get in and out of the kayaks are some of the aspects of the job that you should consider. If you would prefer to help with the kayaks and the logistics, rather than paddle with our guests, just let us know because we need volunteers for that, too.

So far, all our crewmembers have loved their jobs. They get to meet many people, they can usually paddle as often as they want, and they have the satisfaction of showing the Dragon to our guest paddlers. Most of all, they just enjoy the experience of being on the river and observing the subtle changes that take place on the water and along the shores each day. There is no better place to be than the Dragon in the fall.

If you would like to sign up or get more information, **contact Janice Moore no later than September 8, 2018**, by email at President@dragonrun.org. You will receive a questionnaire to complete and return as soon as possible. If you cannot attend one of the mandatory training sessions on October 14, let us know and we will make every effort to schedule a makeup training session.



BEAVERS: OUR NEW BEST FRIEND? By Anne Atkins

If you've paddled down the Dragon, you've witnessed FODR guides pulling the beaver gates and heard Teta Kain describe Dragon Run beavers (*Castor canadensis*) as residents of "gated communities." Kain speculates that the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) may have started relocating beavers to the Dragon around 2006.

It's understandable that beavers and VDOT might be adversaries. Beaver dams can clog drainage ditches and culverts, flood roads and felled trees can damage property, all requiring VDOT workers to clean up the mess. But whether or not beavers arrived on the Dragon thanks to VDOT, they are critical to the health of Dragon Run in ways we are just beginning to understand.

In short, beavers can reduce flooding and drought, help retain groundwater, and improve the growth of trees and vegetation all of which increases the health and diversity of wildlife including insects, amphibians, birds, reptiles, fish, and mammals.

Extensive land development, deforestation, use of fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides, and monoculture farming have stripped much of our soil of the plants, microbes, insects and animals that once held it in place leaving the ground compacted and hard. As a result, instead of seeping slowly into the ground and replenishing aquifers, rain water rolls over the ground sweeping away more soil and nutrients, gouging out gullies, ponding on roads and hard surfaces, and causing flooding. Without sufficient water, streams, lakes, and rivers run dry and drought follows. Subsequent heavy rains cause floods.

Beavers don't create water, but their activities help manage it in a beneficial way by slowing its movement. Rather than coursing downstream, beaver dams capture rain water creating reservoirs and ecosystems that support fish, amphibians, insects, and plants. At the same time, sedimentation occurs and water slowly seeps into the ground, refreshing aquifers and keeping the soil moist and nourished.

Ponds created by beaver dams are one way beavers slow the water flow; but, the placement of their dams also slows water flow and captures and holds organic sediment. Think back to the kayak path down Dragon Run. It turns, curves, and snakes through the swamp. The water rarely flows in a straight line. By meandering, the water is further slowed, allowing more opportunities for it to soak into ground, enriching the soil, and supporting plant and animal life.

As an added bonus, beavers help modify the effects of climate change by reducing the amount of nitrogen in water. Excessive use of fertilizers for farming has loaded the soil with nitrates that wash into streams, rivers, and ponds. High levels of nitrates lead to algae blooms. Algae cover the water surface depriving fish and other organisms of oxygen. During the process of building dams and creating ponds, beavers increase the interaction of water with soil and plant matter. Bacteria in the soil and organic material turn nitrates into nitrogen gas which escapes back into the air. Studies show that beavers can reduce nitrogen levels between 5% and 45%.

This 40-pound, buck-tooth rodent, long considered a pest, is actually a powerful ally in preserving pristine environments like the Dragon. The beaver may also be a powerful ally as we all cope with the effects of soil depletion, water loss, and climate change everywhere on the planet.

If you would like to learn more about beavers and the role they play in ecology, check out *Eager—The Surprising Secret Life of Beavers and Why They Matter*, by Ben Goldfarb, 2018.

FOREST STEWARDSHIP MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR BULMAN TRACT By Anne Atkins

Stands of trees, like other organisms and communities, have life cycles. As a forest or stand of trees ages, it outcompetes other plant species for water and nutrients. The trees become overcrowded, leading to stunted growth, disease, and pests. The forest canopy expands, blocking sunlight on the forest floor and retarding growth of herbaceous plants as well as new trees. Poor tree health and stunted undergrowth deprive woodland fauna—mammals, birds, insects, amphibians, reptiles—of cover, nesting areas, and nourishment. In short, a mature forest that has become overcrowded becomes weak and this weakness travels through the plant community and down the food chain.

As stewards, it's up to FODR to manage the Dragon's woodlands to ensure they remain vital and healthy. In support of our management efforts, FODR asked the Virginia Department of Forestry (DOF) to create a Forest Stewardship Management Plan (FSMP) to identify recommended actions to manage each FODR property in a responsible and sustainable way. Each FSMP has the DOF recommendations for managing the specific property during the next 10 years. The FSMPs for most of FODR's properties were completed 10 years ago, so the FODR Board asked DOF last year to begin updating all the FSMPs, beginning with the Bulman Tract. To date, FSMPs have been updated for the Bulman and Powcan tracts. The FSMPs for FODR's other properties are in progress.

These plans assess the age and health of the wood stands on each property and identify soil type, wildlife species, and threats such as overcrowding, fire risk, and invasive species. Based on these findings, each FSMP makes recommendations that address potential risks and that will also further FODR's goals for the property.

The Bulman tract is just off Route 610 and is adjacent to the Williams tract, so it appears to be part of the 400+ acreage that can be seen from the Revere parcel and the kayak launch area at Big Island. Bulman encompasses about 60 acres. Stand A of the tract covers 30± acres and is populated by mature loblolly pines and various hardwoods, such as yellow poplar, sweetgum, American holly, American beech, oaks, red maple, and black cherry. It was last harvested in the mid 1970s and replanted in loblolly pine. The tree quality is fair; however, it is overcrowded, has a growth rate of less than 2% per year, and high tree mortality.

The remainder of The Bulman Tract consists of a mixture of upland and bottomland hardwoods. Species include red and white oaks, yellow poplars and American beech on the dryer sites. As you move towards the Dragon, the tract consists of bottomland species such as black gum, green ash, and bald cypress. These bottomland species tolerate seasonal flooding.

The updated FSMP for Bulman recommends clearcutting Stand A of the Bulman tract due to overcrowding, stand age, and high tree mortality. Clearcutting is a forestry practice which removes most or all of the trees on a piece of property. It is not at all the same thing as deforestation even though some people confuse the two activities. While controversial in the minds of some people, clearcutting offers many benefits, particularly for a stand like this part of Bulman which currently suffers from high tree mortality. Clearcutting removes dead and diseased trees preventing damage to trees in nearby wood stands and reducing fire risk. Clearcutting encourages growth of new plant species that require high amounts of sunlight. It regenerates the forest with healthy trees and herbaceous plants and thus provides new wildlife habitat.

Clearcutting changes wildlife habitat and in some cases may reduce underground fungi, bacteria, and other invertebrates which enrich the soil and nourish plants. At the same time, it encourages the growth of trees and herbaceous plants that were unable to grow in a shaded environment. This new growth increases the diversity of both plants and wildlife.

Clearcutting may reduce an area's capacity to retain water, resulting in increased flooding and leaching of nutrients from the soil. Steps will be taken to ensure that any harvesting operation is in accordance with Virginia Best Management Practices for timber harvesting to minimize runoff. According to researchers, nutrient loss peaks around year two and returns to pre-clearcutting levels by year four. Other researchers note that by removing trees, water in the soil and streams increases and makes water available for wildlife and supports regeneration of the wood stand.

After careful consideration, the FODR board awarded a contract to Mike Gibson & Sons Logging, Inc. of King & Queen to clearcut Stand A of the Bulman tract. Revenue generated from the timber sales can be used for future forest management projects on FODR lands as well as other land purchases. Throughout the clearcutting process, FODR will work closely with DOF and the Virginia Outdoors Foundation which holds a conservation easement on the Bulman tract. After the clearcutting, FODR will wait a year to identify the species growing on the tract. If the new species are not desirable, FODR will clear the tract with a controlled burn or herbicide. Then, following the recommendation in the FSMP, the tract will be replanted with pine. Clearcutting is scheduled for this fall, perhaps as early as September.

2018 SPRING PADDLE SEASON—SUCCESS

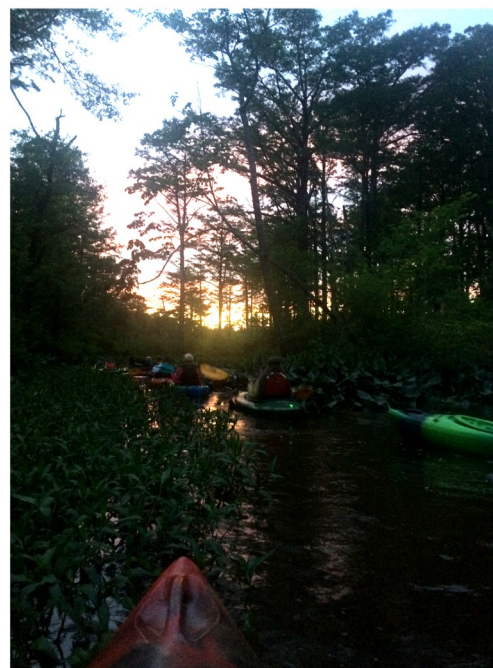
The 2017 paddle season was a great success in so many ways. Many thanks to Teta Kain, who returned as Empress of the Dragon and trail interpreter. And we couldn't have done any of it without our 26 volunteer crew members and over 300 guests who paddled with us down the Dragon from April 14, running every day (weather permitting) through Sunday, May 20.

The “weather permitting” caution always applies to our activities because safety is always paramount. It took on special significance this spring, however, when we had to cancel more than 7 days of paddling because of thunderstorms (with lightning) – real or threatened - during our paddle window.

Thanks to the generosity of our paddler guests, we received over \$17,000 in donations, and we sold over \$2,000 worth of t-shirts and hats. The paddlers were rewarded with beautiful scenery, lots of interesting tales from Teta, and some really good exercise on the days when the water level was low, as the smartweed had kept up its rapid growth rate and threatened to clog our trail.

Our stalwart volunteer crew members, many of whom had also volunteered in the past, drove thousands of miles – without reimbursement – to arrive on time at their assigned locations. Our new crew members included Jan Towne, Phil Robinson, Kati Rubis, Andrea Mitman, Debbie Rollins, Marsha Carlton, and Molly Broderson. Special thanks to Davis Rhodes and Roger Weakley, who once again provided logistics support and prepared the kayaks and other equipment and helped us launch from Big Island every morning. They then met us at the Mascot takeout, helped everyone out of their kayaks, loaded all the kayaks and equipment and hauled it all back to Big Island so it would be ready for the next morning. We are especially grateful to Jeff Wright (FODR Vice President) and Kevin Howe for designing our crew training program and splashing around in the VERY cold water in early April to put our crew member trainees through the rescue drills.

At the end of the Spring paddle season, as a special “Thank you,” Teta guided the crew members down the Dragon on an evening paddle. See the photos for a sunset like you’ve never seen before. If this makes you want to serve as a crew volunteer for our fall paddle season, see the article in this newsletter about crew duties and how to sign up. We can’t promise another moonlight paddle, but there will be plenty of gratitude coming your way for your volunteer efforts.



Hope to see you on the Dragon soon!

THE 2018 PADDLE SEASON



Thanks for "crewing" in 2018 to save a Dragon!
Spring 2018 Night Paddle

FRIENDS OF DRAGON RUN



Contact Deb at:
debcrollins@gmail.com to
receive your copy via email today!

EQUIPMENT NEEDED AND KAYAKS FOR SALE!!

As you can see in the photos of the CONEX box, we have some new kayaks. We have learned that the new Perception 9.5 kayaks are the perfect size for any paddler and the twisted trails on the Dragon. Thanks to some generous donations, and some price breaks obtained from Dicks Sporting Goods, we were able to purchase 4 new kayaks to replace some older kayaks in our fleet with broken seats that can no longer be repaired. We are still in need of new or gently used paddles, life vests, paddling gloves, and kayaks (10 feet long maximum) in good condition, so that we can continue to provide all the equipment for our members and guests who paddle down the Dragon with us. We have a few 12-foot kayaks that are in great condition but, alas, are too long to be useful on the Dragon. The prices for these kayaks range between \$200 and \$300 and up on various websites. See the photos and make an offer!! If you have anything that might be useful or wish to make an offer to buy one of the kayaks pictured, please contact our President, Janice Moore, at 703-217-0610 or President@Dragonrun.org. Of course, we would also welcome cash donations so that we can purchase equipment to replace items that are no longer useful. You can send us a check or donate online by clicking the "Donate" button.



IN MEMORIAM

**FODR lost two valued members this year-
Robert Gibson and Kearfott Stone.**

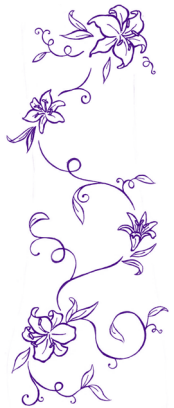
Robert Gibson was a FODR member and served on FODR's board of directors for many years. We have thanked him many times for his generosity in many ways, most recently for allowing us to use his farm in King and Queen County as a takeout point for our 2017 fall paddle season. Here is Robert's memoriam that we posted on our website:

Robert E. Gibson, 82, of Mattaponi, VA went to be with his Lord and Savior May 15, 2018. Robert was a long-time member of FODR and a valued FODR board member for many years and gave generously of his time and wisdom and use of his lands.

He was born January 7, 1936 to the late Samuel and Virginia Gibson. Robert worked over forty years for St. Laurent (West Rock) and retired in December 1998. Robert was a life-long member of Lower King & Queen (Wares) Church where he taught Sunday school, was a trustee and served as a Deacon for many years. He also served in the National Guard. His love for farming and land clearing brought him years of happiness.

Kearfott Stone was a Founding Member of FODR and volunteered in countless ways over more than 30 years. We have thanked him for his generosity in many ways, most recently for serving as a crew member during the Spring 2018 Paddle season. Here is a summary of Kearfott's memoriam that we posted on our website:

Kearfott McCaull Stone, of Gloucester, died Friday, August 3 at VCU's Medical Respiratory Critical Care Unit after a brief illness. He was eleven days short of his seventy-third birthday. Born in Roanoke in 1945, Dr. Stone graduated from Patrick Henry High School '63, Hampden-Sydney College '67 and the University Of Virginia School Of Medicine '71. He completed his medical internship at Mercy Hospital, San Diego and his ophthalmic residency at Emory University; additionally, Kearfott served as a Major in the Army Medical Corps at Fort Campbell, Kentucky from 1975 -77. A practicing ophthalmologist for thirty-six years, Dr. Stone was a founding physician at Riverside Walter Reed Hospital and Gloucester Ophthalmic Associates. He also served as president of the Walter Reed medical staff. Active in his field, Dr. Stone was a past board member of the Virginia Society of Eye Professions and Surgeons and active with the Middle Peninsula Tidewater Medical Society. He loved practicing general ophthalmology, especially serving families; and he was known for having an entertaining collection of toys in his examination rooms for children of all ages. While he will be missed for so many reasons, Kearfott was particularly beloved for his kindness, hospitality, compassion and sense of humor.



In lieu of flowers, please consider contributions in his memory to the Arena Stone Scholarship (Gloucester High School Counseling Department 6680 Short Lane Gloucester, VA 23061); Friends of the Dragon Run (P.O. Box 882 Gloucester, VA 23061); or Gloucester Mathews Care Clinic (GMCC PO Box 684 Gloucester, VA 23061).

IMPORTANT CONTACTS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Janice Moore	President	703-217-0610	jrmooore27@gmail.com
Jeff Wright	Vice President	703-801-0239	pec11908@me.com
Adrienne Frank	Secretary	757-566-4009	aduceyortiz@earthlink.net
Roger Weakley	Treasurer	804-241-4223	
Teta Kain	Paddle Trip Program, Nominating Committee	804-693-5246	tkdragonrun7@gmail.com
John Jensen	Property Manager	804-769-1565	hopesdadjohn@aol.com
Christine Tombleson	Facebook, Speaker Program	804-815-0172	christine@vims.edu
Anne Atkins	Membership	804-502-8262	annecatkins@yahoo.com
Terry DuRose	Merchandise	804-693-7862	chesapeakebay_mgr@equitylifestyle.com
Davis Rhodes	Fundraising, Safety Program, Community Service Coordinator	757-651-2260	s.d.rhodes@verizon.net
Sherrie Hill	Newsletter Editor	804-514-4639	sherriehill@live.com
Rebecca Day	Publicity	804-339-3528	rebeccaday@aol.com
Hugh Markham	Roadside Cleanup	804-443-3571	hughr.markham@gmail.com
Debbie Rollins	Webmaster	804-725-0401	debcrollins@gmail.com

