



Leaves, Float, and Water

Photo by David Winer

The Sycamore Islander

December 2005

Volume 84 No. 12

President's Message

The December meeting is always a special occasion. It is our Annual meeting, the most important meeting of the year. The new officers will be elected, and the budget for the coming year will be approved. The budget and slate of officers were reviewed at the November meeting, and so they're not likely to be controversial. Hopefully, the business portion of the meeting should end very quickly.

Then the fun begins. The Annual meeting is transformed into the social event of the Club season, one of the few times that Islanders come together during the winter months. Everyone brings something to share; appetizers, cookies, other goodies, even wine. This actually is the one Club event where alcoholic beverages can be served, since it is not held on the Island. Because of the possibility of bad weather, including ice in the river preventing the use of the ferry, the winter meetings are held off the Island. This one will be held at the home of Johnna Robinson. Johnna lives 5421 Wehawken Road in Glen Echo Heights. Telephone: 301 229-5421. Johnna writes that her home is at the "intersection of Walhonding Road, Tuscarawas Road and Wehawken Road. Enter sliding door off driveway."

I hope to see you there at 8:00 p.m. on Wednesday, December 14, where we can all share some seasonal good cheer.

— Ann Marie Cunningham

The Sycamore Islander is a monthly newsletter of the Montgomery Sycamore Island Club. Articles, photographic essays, drawings, announcements, letters to the editors—any materials of interest to the membership and waiting list—are welcome and should be sent to the Editor, Norman Metzger, 638 G Street, SE, Washington, DC 20003-2724 or by fax to 202/544-6027. Text and graphics may be sent as email attachments to normanmetzger@verizon.net. Telephone: 202/544-6027 or 202/445-5436 (cell). **Note to submitters of announcements, articles, or letters: The deadline for the January issue is receipt by the Editor by Wednesday, December 28th.**

Minutes of the November 9, 2005 Membership Meeting

Present: Gerry Barton, Bill Bays, Ann Marie Cunningham, Jim Drew, Bill Eichbaum, Joe Hage, Jeff Komarow, Carl Linden, Norman Metzger, Whitney Pinger, Johnna Robinson, Peggy Thompson, David Winer,

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 8:11 p.m. by President Ann Marie Cunningham. The minutes of the October meeting were approved.

Treasurer's Report: Alan Gelb, our Treasurer, presently in Singapore, submitted his 2005 budget report in writing to the meeting. We are in the process of complying with IRS reporting requirements for a non-profit organization. Previously, our revenue did not reach the level where filing a report to the IRS and the state was required. Now it has become necessary. Our lawyer, Ed Coleman, is fully acquainted with the process and the IRS requirements and is capably handling our compliance submissions.

Our income through September was \$64,764. Earned interest on assets totaled \$1603. Total spending amounted to \$45,662 and was well below our budget of \$67,095. Our budget outturn by year's end will likely be around sixty four to sixty five thousand taking into account construction project expenditures and lawyer's and other costs. We should, therefore, spend less than our budget but close to our income.

The likely 2006 budget contemplates spending about \$69,400 or about 3% above the 2005 budget and is in line with expected inflation. Two uncertainties need to be taken into account—an allowance for large but still indeterminate expenditures on the construction project. Secondly, there will be some costs in the compliance process which cannot be precisely gauged at this point but a \$3,000 contingency allocation seems prudent thus taking the total 2006 budget to \$72,400. We enter 2006 with a reserve of about \$60,000 which means dues and other charges may need to undergo no more than a modest increase of about three percent. [See the Treasurer's report on pages five and six.]

Captain's Report: In Tryon Wells' absence, Joe Hage reported on the replacement of the lighting system on the trail above the Sycamore Island bridge. The old system had shorted out. With the new system the trail is now well lit along this steep section of trail. [More on page nine.]

Work Fest: Members were reminded that the fall Workfest is this coming Sunday. Some of the tasks to be carried out were briefly outlined including work to be done on the canoe racks adding additional space for canoe storage.

Nominating Committee Report: Carl Linden reported on the list of nominees for officers and supervisors for the coming year. Many of our current officers and supervisors have agreed to serve again. Jeff Komarow is our nominee for President. Larry Heilman and John Stapko are on the slate to serve as Deputy Captains to assist Tryon Wells. Carl was pleased to report that Lisa Kliefoth is willing to continue as our Financial Secretary and that George and Shelley Malusky are ready to serve again as our Entertainment Supervisors. George and Shelley lead busy lives and will need the help of volunteers to assist at our entertainment events. Maxine Hattery is ready to serve as our Supervisor for scheduling Relief Caretaking, another important club function. At this point nominees for the posts of Vice President and Recording Secretary are still be-

ing sought. Suggestions on who might serve in these important posts will be most welcome.

Old Business: None.

New Business: David Winer presented a motion to the meeting concerning the protection of park lands. The motion was seconded, discussed and debated in detail. A motion by Norman Metzger to postpone a vote to a future meeting when members with different views on the issue could be present was voted down. The question was called and the motion was passed. The motion is to the following effect:

The Sycamore Island Club endorses campaigns to protect our National Parks from developments contrary to the public interest. The Club desires to be included in the Defenders of Potomac River Parkland, and further, should be listed with the group of organizations that support preparation, by the National Park Service, of Environmental Impact Statements for 1) the proposed private boathouse in the C&O Canal National Historical Park, and 2) for development of the Georgetown Waterfront Park.

In introducing the motion David Winer listed the organizations which are currently members of the Defenders of Potomac River Parkland, namely; American Canoe Association, American Hiking Society, American Whitewater Association, Audubon Naturalist Society, Canoe Cruisers Association, Citizens Committee to Save Laurel Lakes, C&O Canal Association, Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail, DuPont Circle Conservancy, Friends of the Earth, League of Women Voters of DC, National Parks Conservation Association, Potomac Appalachian Trail Club, Potomac Conservancy, Potomac Pedalers Touring Club, Sierra Club, DC Chapter, Washington Canoe Club. [See the Letter to the Editor below.]

The Annual Meeting: Johnna Robinson has kindly agreed to host the annual meeting, on December 14th. The meeting's main business is to elect the slate of officers and supervisors and to approve the budget. The December meeting is also a festive occasion. Pot luck contributions of refreshments, cookies, desserts and other delectables are most welcome.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:00 p.m.

-- Carl Linden, Recording Secretary

14 November 2005

Letter to the Editor:

I was surprised to learn from Ann Marie Cunningham that Sycamore Island Club supported a political action statement on the proposed Georgetown University boathouse at its monthly meeting on November 9th.

This is an important policy matter for the club as it raises the question as to whether the club is to take positions on environmental, political, or other issues which do not directly affect the club. As there was no prior notice that this controversial matter would be on the agenda for the meeting, it seems to me that this topic should be brought up at a future meeting so that a conclusive policy can be established.

Sincerely,

s/ Ann Satterthwaite

Montgomery Sycamore Island Club Nominations for 2006 Officers & Supervisors

Officers

President	Jeff Komarow
Vice President	Stephen Wolk
Recording Secretary	Sherry Pettie
Treasurer	Alan & Caroline Gelb
Financial Secretary	Lisa Kliefoth
Membership Secretary	Tamara & Joseph Belden
Editor	Norman Metzger
Archivist	Holly Syrrakos
Captain	Tryon Wells
Deputy Captains	Larry Heilman & John Stapko

Supervisors

Finance	Bill Eichbaum
Law	Maurice Tobin
Grounds	Penny Doolittle
Painting/Carpentry	Charles Pill
Website	Tryon Wells
Entertainment	George & Shelley Malusky
Camping/Parties	John Noble
Canoeing	Jim Drew
Swimming	Larry Heilman
Relief Caretaking Scheduling	Maxine Hattery
Clubhouse	Karl Kosok



George Malusky cooking up.....



Photo credits on page 10

Update on 2005 Spending and the Budget Estimate for 2006

During the last few months the Club has been preparing its financial information for 1040 filing. Though time-consuming, this has impelled us to get a fully consolidated picture of incomes and spending for 2002, 2003, 2004 and the first nine months of 2005. Our income in these periods has been as follows:

	Member dues	Bequests	Interest	Total
2002	61404	1577	1289	64270
2003	63118	600	1193	64912
2004	67958	470	633	69061
2005-end September	64991	165	1603	66759

Bearing in mind that inflation has averaged about 3% over the period, this shows that our income has been rising at roughly a comparable rate. However, we did not raise dues in 2004.

Our budget for 2005 was \$67,095. Through end-September total spending was \$45,662. This would normally result in a full year spending of about \$61,500, well below our budget. But taking into account certain recent expenditures on the construction plans and filing and lawyers' costs due to the compliance process, our budget outturn is likely to be about \$ 64,000 - 65,000 for the entire year. We are therefore likely to end up spending less than our budget but close to our income for the year.

Looking back over the year, some items have cost less than we budgeted and some have cost more. We have been fortunate in spending less than projected on repairs and supplies, and also less on capital improvements, even taking into account the costs of a new roof. We have not spent much on entertainment. The costs of the Newsletter are also being well contained.

However, property taxes have gone up, as our Island has been revalued in line with local trends. Utility prices have also risen and will rise a good deal more. The outlook for insurance costs is not clear. I wonder if recent events will boost the costs of our flood insurance, but have not budgeted an increase because we built in a considerable increase last year.

Reserve: In 2004 we underran our budget by a considerable margin, enabling us to boost our reserve to about \$60,000. We shall not be quite so fortunate in 2005. However, even as we enter 2006 with a healthy reserve, we should recall that costs continue to increase, so that \$50,000 in 2006 will not pay for the same amount of emergency spending as \$50,000 in 2002. We need to gradually increase our reserve, though we may wish to draw it down for a year or so to cushion a construction project.

Proposed 2006 Budget

Inflation, October 04 to October 05, has been about 4.5% according to the US CPI. In the past years we have used this as a benchmark in deciding on budget and spending levels. This means that we can expect our budget to be about 5% higher than in 2005, assuming that we do not actively cut Club activities. If we are lucky again, we will be able to hold down spending on repairs and non-project capital costs to below the budgeted level. However, to be prudent, we must continue to budget these items. Allowing especially for higher utility bills, the proposed budget will come in at about 5.4% above that for 2005. There are uncertainties in several areas, including insurance and taxes. And, there are two additional sources of uncertainty for 2006.

First, this estimate does not include allowance for large expenditures on the construction project, since we do not have firm estimates or indications of timing.

Second, it is likely that we will face some costs associated with the compliance process. In 2005 these will be about \$1,500, to cover the filing fee and consultant charges. I cannot forecast the 2006 charges well, but it seems prudent to anticipate a possible contingency of about \$3,000 for consultant fees and possible tax payments.

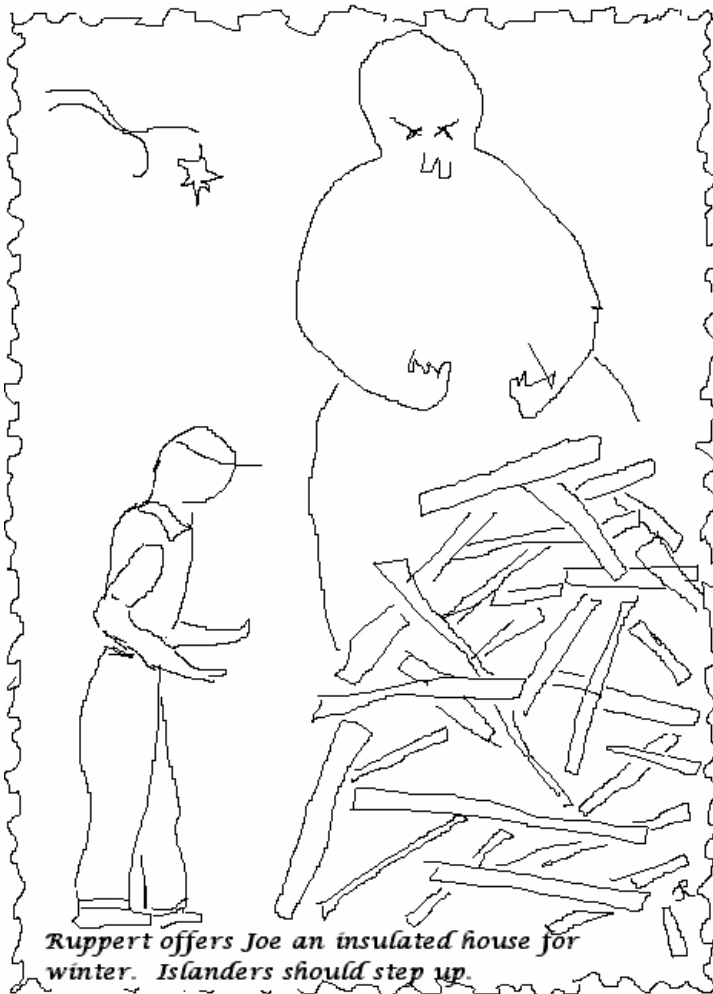
As both of these are "one-off" expenditures, they will be separated from the regular budget, as was done in the past for major construction.

Implication for 2006 Dues

We will enter 2006 with a reserve of about \$60,000. This is quite healthy, but, taking into account inflation and the value of having a good reserve to help cushion possible construction costs, the reserve level is not too high. We did not raise dues last year, and were lucky in not having to pay for major repairs. However, if we are to hold to the pattern of a series of small dues adjustments, it will be necessary to raise all dues and charges by a minimum of 5%, that is, 5% rounded up to the next dollar. This would enable our likely income to about equal our regular budget.

We could raise dues by more to further cushion the uncertain items, but given that we do not have good ideas of their magnitudes, we may be better off with a modest increase for now, leaving open the possibility of an exceptional charge if needed later in the year or of recovering any expenditures on our filing costs and taxes in 2007.

-- Alan Gelb, Treasurer



Ruppert Returns!

*—Created by
Johnna Robinson*

From Holly Syrrakos, Archivist: 75 Years Ago At Sycamore Island Selections from the December 1930 *Sycamore Islander*

Activity on Sycamore Island never seemed to slow down, even with winter approaching.

To raise funds...

“Sycamore Benefit Card Party to be Held at Collins’ Residence”

“Mrs. Hayden Collins is sponsoring a bridge party to be held at the Collins’ residence. The proceeds of the affair will go into the Club treasury and we hope that every member of the Club will ‘take’ a table and will attend in a party of at least four persons. The charge will be seventy-five cents per person. Sycamore needs the money to bring our funds—depleted to bring the new clubroom into being for your enjoyment—back to normal and but little effort on your part will help tremendously.”

Working away...

“Happy Hours with the New Logsaw”

“Our new logsaw was assembled and put into operation at the Island last Sunday and went through the available timber as though it was built just for sawing timber, which the instruction book says it was. The river between Sycamore and the canal bank was covered with ice half and inch thick and from where we worked there at the river’s edge it looked like a mighty uncomfortable day in the dead of winter. The fellows swinging the sledge hammers were glad to keep moving and those of us who were running the saw thoroughly enjoyed the warmth of the cloud of steam which arose from the boiling water in the water jacket of the saw engine.”

Not without a little canoeing fun...

“The Height of Something Else: Island Gentlemen Make Nocturnal Trip to Stubblefield and Return”

“...That Saturday [Nov. 8] afternoon was mildly cool but when the sun set at 4.51 (actual figures taken from the Hagerstown Almanac hanging on the coal bin in our editorial sanctum) the temperature dropped and by that time seven of our Islanders had talked themselves into going up to Bear Island for the night. You know how those things start—everyone privately thinks it’s too cold to go up the river but doesn’t want to be razzed for a timid soul so keeps his ideas to himself.

“...Well, the lads pulled away from the Island at 5.45, at which time it was just about dark. They poled their way up through the rapids to Cabin John Riffle and by that time the full moon was up and it wasn’t bad from there up to Stubblefields and they all felt pretty warm working the rapids and discarded their coats and sweaters. Arrived at Stubblefield’s they went up the hill to the canal to find out about getting the canoes in the canal. Right there, the expedition hit a snag because the Canal Company forgot to leave the stopper in the bathtub and there was no water in the canal.

“...With the full moon there was a good light for coming down the rapids although if you’ve ever tried it you may have noticed that because of the blackness of the wooded shores you can’t gauge the speed of the canoe and the rocks seem to rush toward you, instead of you rushing toward them. Every time anyone hammed on a rock the rest piled up against him because all seven boats were sticking close together in the mad race to get back to Sycamore and warmth. At Cabin John Riffle the retreat became a mad dash when they ran into a zone permeated with the scent of the gentle wood pussy...

“At 9:15 they reached Sycamore; dashed to the stove; Dick cooked some steaks and they were glad to fall in Bed. Next morning the sun rose at 6.38, but they let it rise.”

And in 1930 the *Islander* prints the same sentiment that we wish you today...

“Here’s Christmas again and once again we’re the first to wish you a very Merry Christmas. Our wish is early, but it holds good right through Christmas Day.”

In Touch With Joe....

You might think that we are pretty isolated down here surrounded by water. In some ways that is very true; but in other ways I feel less isolated here than I did living in our rambler in Silver Spring. It's true we don't have any next-door neighbors that we can visit; but we do have neighbors up the hill and, since we live by the river, the great thing is that our neighbors come to us. We've met so many nice people -- from the joggers that greet us as we walk up the hill to the bus stop in the pre-dawn light to the Olympic kayakers that sometimes take their boats out at our landing. We have bicyclists and hikers and dog-walkers all stopping to say hello. Back at the cul-de-sac it seemed we only saw our neighbors when it was time to rake the leaves. It's interesting to see all the different people that are drawn to the river and all the different reasons that they come here. Once, early last spring, I watched as an old couple sprinkled the remains of a loved one into the river and then unceremoniously walked back up the hill. Coincidentally, or magically, the very next day a bagpipe player showed up in his kilt and played his bagpipes along that same stretch of river. We've seen backpackers and marathon runners and more than once I've seen patients or families of patients from Sibley hospital stopping here for a respite from their problems. And of course we have all the great members of Sycamore Island who know better than anyone the many reasons to come down to the river and the C&O Canal.



Photo by David Winer

It's been another super month down here and as we look forward to the Winter Solstice. I just can't get over how wonderful this autumn weather has been. There have been so many warm and sunny days and, more importantly, the river has been forgiving and has remained within its banks (of course the river is supposed to rise to eight feet as I write this). I learned early on to never take a gentle river for granted.

We had great weather for the Workfest. Even though the need to rake the leaves from the field was questioned I think the workfests are important, if for no other reason than to get the members together for at least two days out of the year. The perfect weather allowed me to take a small group of young campers for an overnight on Offutt Island, a trip I highly recommend. It made me feel like one of those hearty Sycamore Islanders from 75 years ago (*Sycamore Islander* October 2005).

There is a bit of breaking news. The new bell that you read about last month has been broken. A tree, floating by on the rising waters grabbed the bell rope and pulled the whole thing down. The ground hogs have undone all the work I did on the floor in the screen porch; they never give up, do they? Some exciting bird sightings this past month. We've seen cedar wax-wings, winter wrens, bald eagles (courting and in nest) and a loon.

New Lights on the Path to the Island

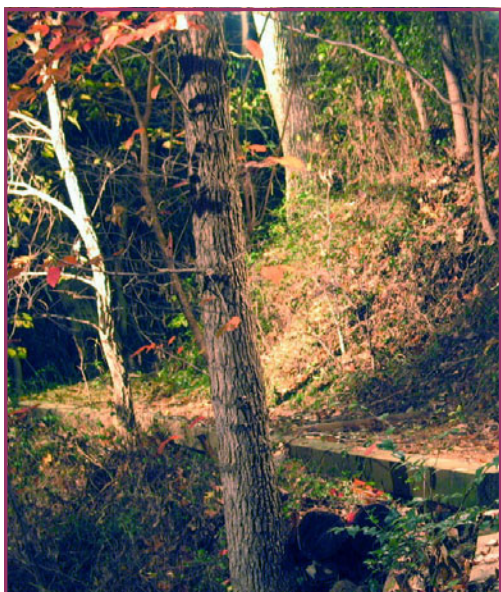
Photos by David Winer



It all started with just another routine message on the answering machine: Caretaker Joe Hage telling me that the lights on the path down to Sycamore weren't working. Hadn't been working for a while apparently. His parting shot: "...well, after all, you are the Captain."

Little did he know how dissatisfied this Captain had been about the lights for years. Five or more years ago, he had spent a day on ladders fixing the lights with (then) caretaker Doc Taliaferro. Then a tree came down and they had to be fixed again. Outside help was hired (for too much \$\$, some grumbled) and new lights went up. These were not placed as well as previously and in a few places the lights shone into people's eyes as they came down the hill. Then Hurricane Isabel knocked down more trees and shortly thereafter, the Park Service came down (wonder of wonders)

and cut down several more dead trees along the path. Joe hastily put up a pair of lights, just to have something, but these really blasted people in the eyes.



Poor Joe. Little did he realize that the Captain was "going to do it right" this time. No more hastily installed fixtures. The lights would be high above the trail and shine down on it, illuminating the path without glare, and there would be four or five new lights.

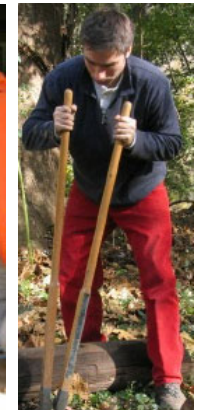
Things started badly as we re-wired the same two boxes on the towpath several times before finally deciding it wasn't our poor wiring that didn't work – it must be the length of wire connecting them that had a break. That turned out to be the case as we replaced the wire with a new one and finally were rewarded with a successful test – the light bulb worked! (After four hours standing on ladders, this really was a big deal.)

Several days later, we attacked the hill. Here things went much more smoothly despite difficulty threading wire through high tree branches and even cutting down a dead tree in the way. By the following morning all the new lights were finally installed – just in time for the November meeting. While we were working on our chore we were visited by several members. Gerry Barton and David Winer pitched in here and there and Richard Doolittle always had an encouraging word. Heck, by the end we were pretty tired, but we had fun.

-- Tryon Wells, Captain

Recent Work by the Fall 05 Workfest Photo Cooperative

Renee Dunham
Jeff Komarow
Judy Lentz
David and Jane Winer



Saturday Relief Caretakers December — February

December 3, 2005	11:00 a.m. - dark	John & Susanna Membrino	301-229-1154
December 10, 2005	11:00 a.m. - dark	Jeffrey Jay & Molly Peter	301-229-2933
December 17, 2005	11:00 a.m. - dark	Terence & Patricia Murphy	301-263-9766
December 24, 2005	11:00 a.m. - dark	Barbara Kraft and Peter Winkler	301-320-2285
December 31, 2005	11:00 a.m. - dark	Brigit Anne and Brian Waidmann	703-536-3168
January 7, 2005	11:00 a.m. - dark	Joe McBride	301-564-0235
January 14, 2005	11:00 a.m. - dark	Leslie Lipschitz	301-656-6403
January 21, 2005	11:00 a.m. - dark	David and Jane Winer	
January 28, 2005	11:00 a.m. - dark		
February 4, 2005	11:00 a.m. - dark	Jeremy Symington	301-229-1058
February 11, 2005	11:00 a.m. - dark		
February 18, 2005	11:00 a.m. - dark		
February 25, 2005	11:00 a.m. - dark		

**** Caretaker Volunteers ****

To volunteer, Maxine Hattery at 202-362-1361 or hattery@aol.com

A quiet time at the Island, splendid views, maybe some hot apple cider and just-baked cupcakes—Bliss! Contact Maxine! Help the Island!

Large Parties

Alison Levine (301-320-4353) will host a kids' party, from 12 to 5 on December 11th. About 20 people expected. Cecily Abram (301-229-0440) will bring 20 to 30 friends and musicians (!) to the Island on December 18, 1 p.m. to dusk.

**A large party application form may be printed from the Club's web page at
<http://www.sycamoreisland.org/systems.htm>**

**To request a form through the mail, call the Supervisor of Parties, John Noble
e-mail: jnoble@shs.net, phone: 240- 747-4810, fax: 301-320-4216**



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Internet, go to:
<http://www.sycamoreisland.org/Karlsruhe/islander.htm>

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Upcoming Sycamore Events

December Meeting, Wednesday, December 14, 8 p.m., at Johnna Robinson's home, 5421 Wehawken Road in Glen Echo Heights. Telephone: 301 229-5421

January Meeting, Wednesday, January 11, 8 p.m. (location tbd)

N.B. Monthly meetings are held on the second Wednesday of the month.

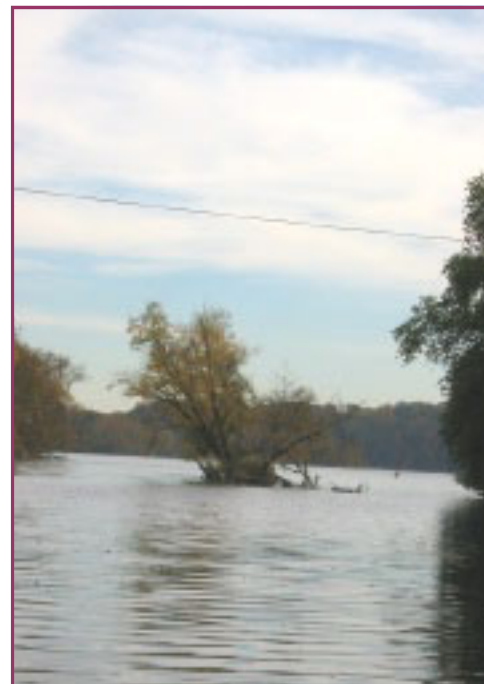


Photo by Joe Hage