



## PIEDMONT ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL

*For Immediate Release*

### **Volunteers Needed for Tree Planting Project to Improve Leesburg's Environment**

**Saturday, June 6, 2009, 9 AM**

***Piedmont Environmental Council, Center for Watershed Protection, Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy, Loudoun Soil & Water Conservation District, Chesapeake Bay Restoration Fund, Virginia Department of Forestry, Village Lanes Bowling Alley and Town of Leesburg announce tree planting***

LEESBURG, Va., May 19 — Dozens of volunteers will be planting more than 200 trees and other plants to improve water quality for both Leesburg and the Chesapeake Bay on Saturday, June 6th, starting at 9 a.m. The highly visible project will showcase ongoing efforts by the project partners to reduce stormwater pollution and damaging erosion. This is the latest in a series of many upcoming community projects aimed at tackling water quality challenges in Leesburg in partnerships with the Piedmont Environmental Council (PEC), the Center for Watershed Protection (Center), the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy, the Loudoun Soil and Water Conservation District and the Town of Leesburg's Environmental Advisory Commission/Watershed Committee with funding from The Chesapeake Bay Restoration Fund and the Water Quality Improvement Fund of the Virginia Department of Forestry.

“In November, the partners worked with almost 100 volunteers to plant trees in an HOA stormwater pond. Now we're planting trees and shrubs next to Town Branch in the heart of Leesburg. We want residents of Leesburg and surrounding areas to better understand the vital role that trees and shrubs play as natural tools for improving water quality. Village Lanes Bowling Center owner Bill Presley has given us the opportunity to showcase the project in a very publicly visible space,” said Gem Bingol, a field officer with the PEC, which has led several successful projects to improve water quality in the Goose Creek Watershed and elsewhere in Loudoun.

Stormwater flows over roads, parking lots, rooftops and fertilized lawns, where it picks up pollutants and delivers them straight to local streams .Leesburg and similar urbanized areas in Loudoun have high percentages of such impervious, polluted surfaces, which are key contributors to pollution in the Bay. Even more important for local residents, it means that area wildlife habitat and streams that contribute to our drinking water sources are degraded.

An earlier partnership in 2006 between PEC, the Center, and the Town of Leesburg resulted in a report by the Center, which analyzed the Tuscarora watershed and made a series of recommendations. The Leesburg Town Council launched the Leesburg Watershed Committee under the direction of the Environmental Advisory Commission to set goals and coordinate efforts for reaching them.

The June tree planting is the second type of project recommended to improve the water quality of local streams through better stormwater management. Plantings along stream banks, known as “riparian plantings,” reduce the amount of stormwater that enters our streams because trees soak up and hold large quantities of water. The tree planting project also helps Leesburg meet its tree canopy goals, capture greenhouse gases and other airborne pollutants, create urban wildlife habitat, and beautify the area.

Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy President Joe Coleman said , “Riparian buffers are the single most effective means of protecting water resources. We are pleased to participate in this project as one of many that we have undertaken to improve local wildlife habitat throughout Loudoun. Wildlife can exist peacefully in urban areas and our lives are richer for it.”

The public is invited to join in planting the trees, which will be planted along Harrison Street on the south side of Catoctin Circle. A willingness to spend an hour or more getting your hands dirty to help improve Leesburg’s environment is all that’s required. The meet-up location will be by the Village Lanes parking lot next to the stream on Saturday, June 6th, starting at 9 a.m. [In case of a gully washer only, rain date is Sunday, June 7th at 1 p.m.] Volunteers should wear boots and bring some work gloves. **Individuals, families and groups wishing to volunteer should contact Gem Bingol at [gbingol@pecva.org](mailto:gbingol@pecva.org) or (703) 431-6941.**

“The Leesburg Watershed Committee has been actively working toward watershed improvements in the Town of Leesburg, and we’re lucky to have strong support from their great staff, including Engineer Charles Mumaw, Town Arborist Jay Banks, and Senior Planner Irish Grandfield,” said Neely Law, chair of the Watershed Committee. “We’re excited by the public participation and interest to date, and look forward to continuing to involve the public in creating a healthier community for everyone.”

Added Jay Frankenfield from the Loudoun Soil and Water Conservation District, “As individuals learn about various ways to improve water quality, we expect that people will start making improvements to their home environment as well. That will noticeably multiply the benefits to our soil and water.”

For more information on other Leesburg Environmental Advisory Commission/Watershed Committee efforts, go to [www.leesburgva.gov/environment](http://www.leesburgva.gov/environment) <<http://www.leesburgva.gov/environment>> .