

**Safe Landing**  
**Elizabeth Hartwell's Role in Protecting**  
**Mason Neck, Virginia, and Its Eagles**

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## **Safe Landing**

### **Elizabeth Hartwell's Role in Protecting Mason Neck, Virginia, and Its Eagles**

**Elizabeth Rieben**

#### **ABSTRACT**

This is the story of a citizen effort led by Virginia housewife and activist Elizabeth S. Hartwell 40 years ago that resulted in permanent protection of more than 5,000 acres on Mason Neck, Virginia, an 8,000-acre peninsula of the Potomac River in southern Fairfax County, only 18 miles south of Washington, D.C. (Today, more than 6,600 acres are protected.) The drama unfolds against the backdrop of the 1960s, a decade characterized by unprecedented environmental activism, a national focus on cleaning up polluted rivers and a State-led push to create a vast network of new parks and open space for a growing middle class. The timeline of this paper generally follows the period between the day Hartwell first learned of pending development plans for much of her beloved Mason Neck in 1965 until the last of three protected areas was announced in 1969.

During those four years, Hartwell led an unwavering citizen battle to wrestle private lands from a developer and convince federal, state and local officials to set aside more than 5,000 acres for public benefit in the form of Pohick Bay and Potomac Shoreline Regional Parks, Mason Neck State Park and the Mason Neck National Wildlife Refuge, recently renamed the Elizabeth S. Hartwell National Wildlife Refuge.

Through the auspices of the Mason Neck Conservation Committee, Hartwell and her colleagues rallied citizens to become involved; kept key decision makers informed through a series of telegrams, "Urgent Notices" and "Action Alerts," along with hundreds of letters and phone calls; coordinated testimony at all relevant hearings and joined every conservation and social group in the Washington Metropolitan area that could help, in order to make sure Mason Neck was number one on everyone's priority list. The campaign was waged on three levels of government – county, state and federal, and all were successful, despite strong protests from developers and a few individual Mason Neck landowners. Success against all odds was due to many factors, including fortunate timing, an active citizenry and a brilliant strategy. Victory also had a lot to do with the strong personalities at play, particularly that of Elizabeth Hartwell herself.

Given changed land acquisition policies, diminishing federal grant money, and a transient and overworked local citizenry, it is doubtful this kind of sweeping change in land use allocation would be possible to achieve today. Developers have always held immense political power and the shoestring budgets of opposition leaders have always posed a challenge. But the grass-roots fire critical for success 40 years ago has perhaps flamed out in many local conservation circles today, where dollars are tight, land prices are great, and the potential cohort of strong women activists is preoccupied in an unforgiving workplace environment.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to recognize a few of the many individuals who were integral to this project. Robert Hartwell provided unique insight into his mother's special qualities and pointed me to the people who could either confirm or question that information, which made my research all that much more rigorous, and interesting. Mr. Paul Gilbert, executive director, along with his staff at the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority headquarters, made Elizabeth Hartwell's personal scrapbooks available to me both during and after office hours, on weekends and evenings, over a six month period. Danielle Beres, weekend supervisor at Meadowlark Botanic Gardens and temporary caretaker of the scrapbooks, was extremely pleasant as I invaded her space every weekend. What a lovely place I was given to do my research! Greg Weiler, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service manager of the Potomac River Refuges Complex, and his staff in Woodbridge, Virginia, graciously opened their files to me so I could nail down the details concerning the establishment of the national wildlife refuge. Linda Rodeffer of the Fairfax County Planning Commission was extremely helpful (and nonjudgmental at my lack of understanding) as she took me through the basic workings of planning commissions in general and Fairfax County in particular. She helped me locate the minutes from the 1960s and didn't charge me for copies! Barbara Cline at the Johnson Presidential Library in Austin, Texas, located letters, speeches and documents easily and cheerfully. Gary Waugh of the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, did the same. An anonymous researcher at the Fairfax County Land Office showed me how to use the Grantor Indexes and associated computers to look up Mason Neck land transactions. His generosity made up for the "that's not my job" attitude of the paid employees. David Pfeiffer of the National Archives helped me locate in a warehouse of millions of documents, the four relevant boxes containing the Interior Department papers related to Project Potomac - a needle in a haystack to my untrained competency. Ellen Paul encouraged me always, as did the rest of my committee and my family (particularly Craig, Sarah, Ann, Margaret and Alice). Patricia Limerick, noted historian and author, gave me 45 minutes of indispensable advice on the art and practice of writing history, as we ran the empty streets of Santa Fe, New Mexico one early April morning in 2007. The Mason Neck community is inspirational. Linwood Gorham and Janet Cole made time to talk with me and help with small details. Others who cared about Mason Neck helped this story unfold. For all of these special people, I am very grateful.

Notes on terminology:

Mason Neck, historically known as Dogue's Neck after the Dogue Indians, was more recently called Mason's Neck, after George Mason IV whose estate, Gunston Hall, is located there. In recent decades, the possessive was dropped so that today, the peninsula is known simply as Mason Neck. When quoting from original sources, Mason's Neck is used, but in all other references, it is written as Mason Neck. Elizabeth Hartwell is referred to as simply Hartwell in most references. Her husband, therefore, is referred to in the text as Mr. Hartwell, for clarity.

Notes on the research:

Elizabeth Hartwell kept a series of scrapbooks which documented her work from 1965 - 1974 and beyond. She also typed several chronologies of her work on Mason Neck. I used this information to help create an outline of the story as it unfolded. I then confirmed this information and filled in the gaps with additional research, focusing on original sources where possible. I quoted extensively from the letters she put into the scrapbooks. She made carbon copies of letters she wrote and I made the assumption they were sent. (In many cases, she included replies, which confirms this assumption; in other cases, I found her original letters and the replies in more official locations, such as the National Archives in College Park, Maryland, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service files.) Hartwell also placed original copies of the letters she received from others into the scrapbooks.

Where there is official primary-source documentation (such as county planning or supervisor meeting minutes, land records, or other official government documents), Hartwell's information checked out accurately in every instance. (This was not always true of other sources I consulted, such as William Durland's *The Battle to Save Mason Neck*, the contents of which he admits on page one were taken from memory.) Confirmation, where possible, of Hartwell's notes gave me a high comfort level where, in a few instances, I had nothing more to rely on than her personal notes and letters. In some cases, I also relied more extensively than I would have preferred on newspaper articles, particularly for quotes from people no longer alive, or available for interview, or in cases where original sources were either proprietary (as in the records of Wills and Van Metre, Inc.) or otherwise difficult to locate.

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Figure 1: Mason Neck Satellite Image, 2001.  
Courtesy of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

## PART ONE: HOW MASON NECK CAME TO BE PRESERVED

### ***Introduction***

On a map it is easy to locate the large boot-shaped land mass that protrudes into the Potomac River just below Washington, D.C., in Fairfax County, Virginia. When Captain John Smith sailed past it in 1608 on his journey upriver, its wild nature probably did not stand out among the miles of seemingly endless wilderness he encountered.

Today, however, the rural nature of the mostly wooded peninsula seems strangely out of place in crowded Fairfax County which is home to more people than any other county in the entire Washington metropolitan region.<sup>1</sup> The quiet almost jumps out to announce a deliberate and hard fought victory over the ever encroaching high density urban sprawl that has crept from the north to cover all points south, east and west, curiously skipping right over this little green gem only 18 miles south of the Nation's Capital.

Mason Neck provides refuge to more than 60 bald eagles, one of the largest great blue heron rookeries in the mid-Atlantic and hundreds of additional species of plants and animals. Thousands of weekend visitors are drawn to its beaches and wooded trails for swimming, boating, birding or simply being.

It is no accident that Mason Neck is protected today, nor that its extensive network of public lands is managed by three different levels of government. To understand how this all came about, one has to go back to 1965, when a certain resident learned that her neighborhood, and bucolic way of life, were about to change, and did something to stop it.

## Potomac Sunrises

On March 2, 1965 a young housewife rose before dawn to put her boys on the school bus, taking note of her remarkable surroundings. The sun coming up over the Potomac River from her vantage point on Mason Neck was “breath taking” and “awe inspiring” each time she saw it, and she saw it almost every day.<sup>2</sup> On this particular morning, however, she probably did not stop to contemplate the sunrise. Elizabeth S. Hartwell was on a mission.

Some 35 miles away, invited guests of a VIP bus tour of the Potomac River shoreline were gathering at 9:30 a.m. at Great Falls, Virginia. Leading the group of federal, regional and local officials on this special fact finding field trip was Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall who had recently been assigned by President Lyndon B. Johnson to work with state, local, District of Columbia and other federal government agencies to “clean up the [Potomac] river, and keep it clean” so it would be a “model of scenic and recreation values for the entire country.”<sup>3</sup> The goal of the chartered bus tour was to look at shoreline sites with an eye toward establishment of parks and other conservation areas.

Elizabeth Hartwell was not on the official invitation list. Yet, bringing up the rear in her own private car, there she was, tagging along, an unlikely guest, a self described suburban housewife, and an expert on Potomac River sunrises. She had taken her movie camera along to document the occasion, to a point. When Udall led the others up a hillside to see a view of the Falls, she could not follow, noting “I had not contemplated a hike and my heels were spike.”<sup>4</sup> She did, however, manage to rejoin the group down the

road, and spent the rest of the day following them, documenting each stop, and writing about the experience for the local paper.

Over the next several decades, Hartwell and her team of supporters would wage a fierce battle for the conservation of a unique piece of the Potomac shoreline that was not even a part of Udall's tour that day, but would soon become a top acquisition priority for federal, state and local governments. That area was Mason Neck, Virginia, where today, 6,600 of 8,000 acres are permanently protected in the form of a national wildlife refuge, a state park, a regional park, an historic park and a special recreation area. When the history of the local, state and regional parks is traced back to the 1960s, one will find the unmistakable signature of Ms. Elizabeth Hartwell, the spiked-heeled housewife who had "crashed" Udall's bus tour on that late winter day in 1965.

## **Early Years**

Elizabeth Speer Hartwell was born in 1924 in Danville, Virginia – about as far south as one can drive down Route 29 and still be in Virginia. As it happened, she would never live in any other state, and her Virginia heritage served as a sort of anchor, at least as evidenced in her letters and appeals to state and federal officials for protection of Mason Neck. "I am a native Virginian," she would write, as if to say, this is not just anyone pleading for this land to be protected, certainly not a typical transient from Northern Virginia, but a true Virginian!

As a child, Hartwell was a bit of a tomboy. Her father, who had three daughters, took her with him on hunting and fishing trips. Although she disdained hunting as an

adult, her early outdoor experiences no doubt imbued in her a sense of wonder for the natural world that would remain with her for the rest of her life.<sup>5</sup>

Hartwell attended Mary Washington College in Fredericksburg, which at that time was the women's counterpart to the all-male University of Virginia. Like many women of her generation, she did not finish her degree, but took a more practical route. After a year's typing instruction in Lynchburg, Virginia, she headed to Washington D.C. in 1944 to help with the war effort. There, she took a job as a typist for the Army and met Maj. Stephen Hartwell, an information officer from Mount Vernon, Virginia. They were married 2 years later. She devoted the early years of the marriage, again true to her generation, to raising her young children at home.

Hartwell moved to Mason Neck in 1960 with her husband, by then a Fairfax County Planning Commissioner, and their two small sons. They bought a low slung waterfront home on River Drive with a spectacular view of the Potomac River. It was a rural setting, to be sure (River Drive was not even paved), and one that must have suited her fine, as she would live on the peninsula for the next 10 years.

For half of that time, she was happy gardening, raising her children, and boating. She was an officer of the Hallowing Point Garden Club and, according to her son Robert, she took great pride in flower arranging. She became equally passionate about growing the roses and other blossoms that would be used to create the stunning bouquets.

During the hours spent gardening outdoors, Hartwell came to know a certain bald eagle that would roost in a tree on her property.<sup>6</sup> "An eagle used to fish from his tree perch in the front yard of my riverside home in Mason Neck," she recalled in 1974. "A

mature eagle I called ‘Old Granddad’ was nearly always perched on the same limb on the same tree at the edge of the Great Marsh.”<sup>7</sup>

This was in the 1960s when Dichloro-diphenyl-trichloroethane (DDT) was a widely recommended and commonly used pesticide. Rachel Carson’s book *Silent Spring* was published in 1962, sounding the initial alarm about the widespread use of DDT, but Hartwell had her own personal experience with the chemical. Her senses were jolted into awareness one day when she discovered a dead scarlet tanager in her yard and feared she may have accidentally poisoned the small bird with the popular DDT, recommended by virtually all of the gardening books of the day.<sup>8</sup> This caused her to throw out the chemical, never to use it again. But another event was the true spark that ignited the passionate environmental activism for which she would later become known. In January of 1965, she learned about a plan that would change the peninsula forever.

### ***Kings Landing Rezoning Application of 1965***

At that time, most of Mason Neck was still rural, with only about 200 residents, although Fairfax County was growing at a fast clip. The county’s population had more than doubled from 1950 - 1956<sup>9</sup> and would grow by another 73% during the 1960s – from 261,417 in 1960 to 454,275 in 1970.<sup>10</sup> This created intense housing pressure, vast opportunities for housing developers, and strong incentives for landowners, particularly those with large tracts, to sell.

Two Mason Neck landowners, half-brothers Ludlow King and John Hull, did just that. In 1964, they quietly agreed to sell 1,800 acres to Wills and Van Metre, a

development company, for the sum of about \$3 million.<sup>11</sup> The developer envisioned a large planned community to house 20,000 residents similar to one recently built 30 miles away in Reston, Virginia. They dubbed the proposed community “Kings Landing” and advertised it as all of the following: a “Living Williamsburg,” a “model colonial city” and a “La Jolla on the Potomac,” with a “mixture of townhouses and apartments, a golf course and marina, houses, shopping and light industry.”<sup>12</sup> The property included what was known as the Great Marsh, 500 acres of wetlands and adjacent uplands supporting countless species of birds, amphibians, plants, mammals and fish. Development plans were to protect only about 150 (undevelopable) acres.

An application was filed with State Water Control Board in late 1964 requesting approval to build a sewer treatment plant that would make the development possible. (Later, on September 24, 1965, an application would be filed with the Fairfax County Planning Office requesting rezoning of the parcels for residential, commercial and industrial development, in contrast to the existing 2-acre residential zoning.) Elizabeth Hartwell heard about these plans not from her husband, the planning commissioner, but from her friend, Mrs. Stanley (Mary) Scott, fellow garden club member and wife of the Army’s Commanding Officer of nearby Fort Belvoir.<sup>13</sup>

The telephone call came in January 1965. The commander’s wife worried aloud about what would happen to the eagles if the planned development were to go through. Hartwell decided right then and there that the development must be stopped. “I knew that the satellite city had to be defeated and decided that along with this goal, as much of Mason Neck as possible should be preserved. Mason Neck’s eagles would be the key to the preservation effort.”<sup>14</sup>

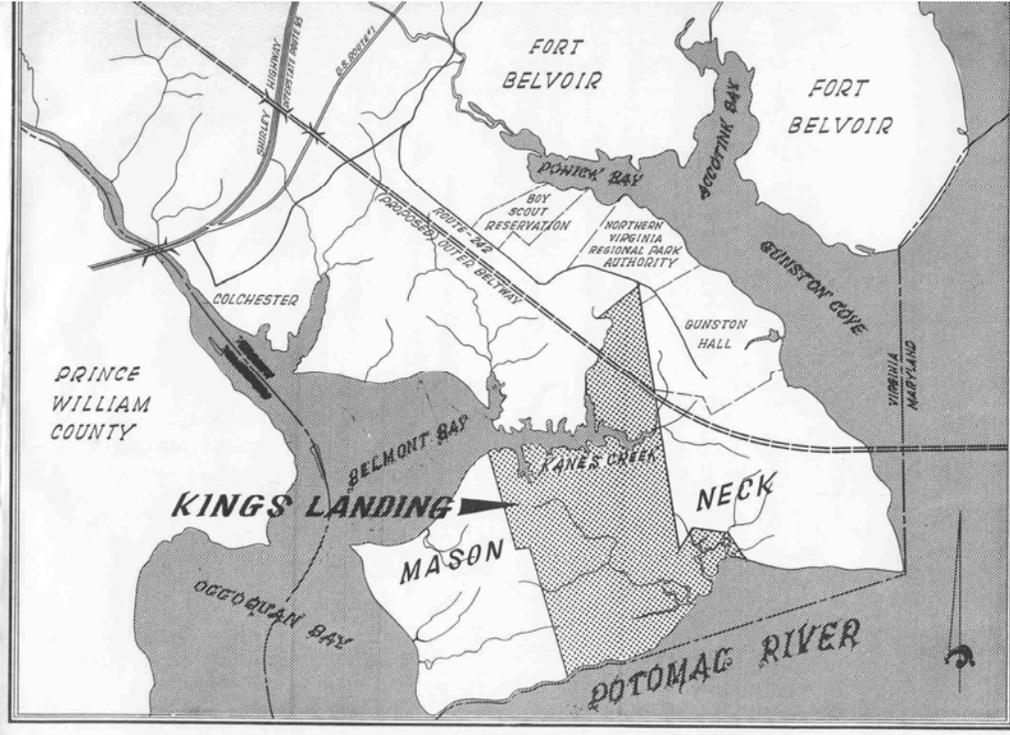


Figure 2: Kings Landing Development Proposal



Figure 3: Kings Landing Development Proposal on Mason Neck.  
 Note proposed outer beltway in Figure 2 above.  
 Both images from Kings Landing Master Plan, L-K-H, Inc., 1965.

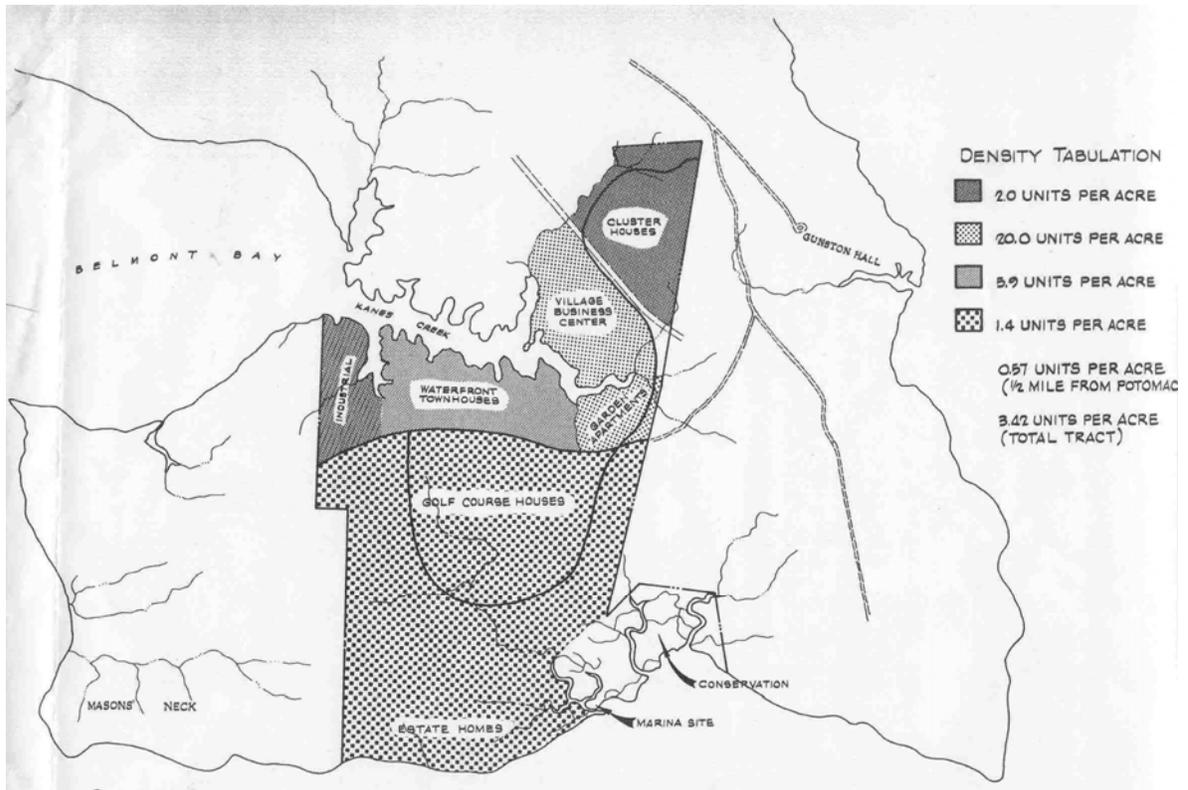


Figure 4: Kings Landing Development Proposal on Mason Neck.  
 Images from King's Landing Master Plan, L-K-H, Inc., 1965.

There were only 96 productive bald eagle nests in the entire Southeast in 1965.<sup>15</sup> Two of these would be located on Mason Neck in April of that year.<sup>16</sup> But Hartwell already knew of the importance of the peninsula to the bald eagle. In 1963, she counted more than 30 bald eagles at one time in Mason Neck's Great Marsh.<sup>17</sup>

Her first move was to begin an intensive letter writing campaign, targeting the editors of local newspapers and key leaders at the local, state and federal level. But she would not be content merely to write about it; she wanted action and her timing in the mid-1960s could not have been better.

### ***The Environmental Wave of the 1960s***

The decade would see a wave of environmental legislation not seen in America before or since.<sup>18</sup> It was a period of impassioned calls for other types of change as well – the civil rights, anti-war, feminist and youth culture movements. Calls for peace were punctuated by loud protests, violent outbursts and horrific assassinations. “The times,” as sung by Bob Dylan, they were “a changin.”

But there also was what Secretary Udall called a “quiet crisis” at work regarding the state of the environment. Against the backdrop of all the noise, there was, barely discernable, a slow but steady destruction of forests, grasslands, and shorelines, as more and more land was turned into housing developments, strip malls, and industrial parks to support a burgeoning middle class.<sup>19</sup> President Johnson wanted to raise the public's

awareness of this “quiet crisis,” and to do something about it when he addressed the Congress on the subject of conservation and natural beauty February 8, 1965.<sup>20</sup>

*A growing population is swallowing up areas of natural beauty with its demands for living space, and is placing increased demand on our overburdened areas of recreation and pleasure. ....Cities themselves reach out into the countryside, destroying streams and trees and meadows as they go....And people move out from the city to get closer to nature only to find that nature has moved farther from them.*

He had a similar message when he delivered the State of the Union Address, the previous month:

*For over three centuries the beauty of America has sustained our spirit and has enlarged our vision. We must act now to protect this heritage. In a fruitful new partnership with the States and the cities the next decade should be a conservation milestone. We must make a massive effort to save the countryside and to establish—as a green legacy for tomorrow—more large and small parks, more seashores and open spaces than have been created during any other period in our national history....*

## **Emphasis on the Potomac River**

Included in the President’s speeches that year was the challenge presented by the sad state of the Potomac River, which in 1965 he famously called a “national disgrace.”<sup>21</sup> Like many rivers of the day, the Potomac was a victim of industrialization, economic growth and apathy. In the D.C. area, the Potomac and its estuaries were polluted by acid mine drainage upstream as well as untreated city sewage, industrial runoff, heavy silt

loads, invasive plants and fish and frequent algae blooms downstream.<sup>22</sup> It was popularly described as “too thick to drink and too thin to plow.”<sup>23</sup>

In his State of the Union Address, President Johnson said he wanted to “make the Potomac a model of beauty.”<sup>24</sup> He tasked Interior Secretary Stewart Udall to develop a plan to clean up and preserve the Potomac River Basin, and in response, Udall embarked on a massive federal campaign to fulfill the President’s wishes. He enlisted officials of the Potomac Basin States and the District of Columbia to work with the federal agencies to propose a program that would not only restore and protect the river’s natural beauty but also provide adequate water supplies and flood control as well as offer recreational opportunities for the growing metropolitan region.<sup>25</sup> The Potomac was not only threatened by pollution, it was also facing uncoordinated development among the various governing entities and lax water quality regulations. Udall’s charge was to fix that too.

He asked the American Institute of Architects to convene a blue ribbon panel of specialists, including landscape architects and engineers, to advise him and his colleagues on a vision for the future. He also formed “Project Potomac,” an interdepartmental federal task force comprised of the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture along with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Health Education and Welfare Department, which at that time housed the Federal Water Pollution Control Administration. At the same time, the governors of the four basin states (Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania and West Virginia) and the District of Columbia, worked through the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin (created in 1940) to form, in 1965, a Potomac River Basin Advisory Committee to work with the federal task force on this issue.<sup>26</sup>

But Udall also took a personal interest in his charge. On February 20, 1965, he sent a memo to the Regional Director of the National Park Service's National Capital Region directing him to lead a concerted effort by the Department to learn about and become involved in all local county zoning cases that could impact the Potomac River in the National Capital region. He wrote:

*“Perhaps no greater threat to the scenic character of the Potomac River Basin currently exists than the widespread pressure to rezone lands for high density development in the counties constituting the greater capitol area....There is every indication that the number of petitions for the rezoning of land in the proximity of the Potomac River will increase as pressures mount for more suburban development. Unfortunately, every petition for high density development that is granted today threatens a change in the character of an area sufficient to justify further rezoning tomorrow. Such a chain of events is at once insidious and alarming.”<sup>27</sup>*

### ***From Autos and Busses to Helicopters and Boats: The Campaign Advances***

There is no evidence that Hartwell was aware of this internal directive on local zoning applications, yet she connected the dots nonetheless. A Presidential pledge backed by action to clean up polluted rivers, to make the Potomac a model of beauty, to create new parks and preserve open spaces, and to provide for recreation contained all of the ingredients, if properly mixed and applied, to save Mason Neck from the developers' shovels.

The first order of business was to highlight the natural and recreational values of Mason Neck and connect those directly to the President's priorities for natural beauty in general and for the Potomac River in particular. This would help bring the federal government's weight to bear on local decision making concerning the future of Mason Neck. In addition, connecting the dismal plight of the Nation's symbol, the vanishing bald eagle, to its habitat on Mason Neck would be the icing on the cake. No doubt feeling a sense of urgency, on March 2, 1965, Hartwell "crashed" the bus tour described earlier, hoping to call attention to the fact that Mason Neck faced imminent threat of irreversible loss and federal intervention was needed soon.

It must have worked, because, according to Hartwell's notes, Mrs. Scott called again in late March to ask if Hartwell would be willing to escort top Interior officials on a "drive" through Mason Neck's Great Marsh. Hartwell knew a drive through the Marsh would be impossible, (it was a marsh, after all, and there were no roads through it!) so she quickly arranged to put together a helicopter tour instead.<sup>28</sup> She worked with officials from Fort Belvoir, aided by Mrs. Scott and also by Lt. Col. Jackson Abbott, a retired Army officer, civilian employee, and amateur yet well respected local naturalist. At the time, he was leading the Chesapeake Bay area bald eagle survey for the Audubon Naturalist Society, doing much of the work using Ft. Belvoir helicopters.<sup>29</sup>

It was on this March 26, 1965, helicopter trip that Hartwell met top Interior officials for the second time, including representatives from the U.S. Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife (then a part of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) and the National Park Service. Also joining Hartwell were Abbott and local officials from the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority, the Fairfax County Park Authority, Fairfax County

Planning Commission and The Nature Conservancy.<sup>30</sup> Hartwell also wisely invited a reporter from the Washington Evening Star, a move which resulted in a story the following week.<sup>31</sup> The goal was to find the two eagles' nests from the helicopter, and they were successful. It seems by then that Hartwell was becoming the "go to" person for all things Mason Neck.

During the spring of 1965, Hartwell continued her campaign, and enlisted others into the cause. She started at the top, contacting key leaders by telegram, including Interior Secretary Udall and Virginia Governor Albertis Harrison, asking for their help and official support.

Her friend Mrs. Scott also pitched in, and wrote to First Lady Mrs. Lyndon B. "Lady Bird" Johnson. She received a response dated April 3, 1965:

*"I am so glad to know of your devotion to the marshlands of Mason's Neck in Fairfax County and the rare bald eagle habitat there. As you know, the Secretary of the Interior is developing a long range plan of wise land use for the Potomac Valley and I assure you that Mason's Neck will be receiving his thoughtful attention in the weeks ahead..."*

It is difficult to pinpoint exactly when Mason Neck captured the attention of national leaders, but in the short time between the March 2 bus tour and this April 3 letter, the peninsula was squarely on the national radar screen. This was only the beginning, however, of a long drawn out fight for protection of the area, particularly at the county and state levels, where federal intrusion would not be greeted with enthusiasm.



Figure 5: Mason Neck Helicopter Tour, March 26, 2007. Davison Air Field, Fort Belvoir, Virginia. The pilot and co-pilot are standing. Seated to the right of them (the photo's left side) is (next to the pilot) Gale Monson, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and several other participants including Walter Mess, Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority and Janet Cole, Hallowing Point Garden Club. Seated to the pilots' left (right side of photo) are Jackson Abbott; Mary Scott, wife of the base commander; Dr. John Aldrich, Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife; and John Kauffman, National Park Service. Participants not pictured are Herbert Hiller, The Nature Conservancy; Jane Robinson, regional and county park authorities; Elly Doyle, chairman of the Fairfax County Park Authority; Joe Brown, National Park Service and former director of the Fairfax County Park Authority; Craven Hughes, Fairfax Planning Commission; Ben Rue, reporter with the Washington Star and Elizabeth Hartwell. Photo courtesy of the Hartwell family.

## Lights, Camera, Action!

In June, Hartwell started to shoot her own home movie documenting the natural history and values of Mason Neck, which she would show at dozens of events in the months to follow. The film is mentioned in numerous pieces of correspondence through 1966. She continued to splice and edit it as she captured new footage of the plants and animals of Mason Neck – a snapping turtle, a heron. She rented and went up in a small plane to capture aerial footage. Audiences ran the gamut from local garden clubs to federal task forces. When the National Capital Garden Club League included an article about the film in its newsletter in 1966, Hartwell was flooded with invitations. She later wrote, “Every group that saw the movie became hooked and helped immeasurably when a crisis arose, about once a month, by writing letters, testifying at hearings, etc..”<sup>32</sup>

She also began conducting regular boat tours of the area in her 14-foot shallow draft Boston Whaler. During the summer of 1965, she took at least 15 tour groups to the marsh.<sup>33</sup> (She bought a canoe to inaugurate the summer of 1966 so she could tow it behind the Whaler to provide even greater access into the far reaches of the marsh.<sup>34</sup>) At the drop of a hat she would take yet another group out - federal, state and local officials, journalists, conservation leaders, neighbors or anyone else who wanted to go. According to her son Robert, on one of her early tours, the engine failed mid-marsh. This was before the days of cell phones, and there was no radio, so she jumped overboard and dragged the boat back to her dock, wading through the muck with a dry suit and tie-clad tour group in tow. “She was late and I was worried,” said Robert, remembering that he, a young pre-teen, was expecting her home by dinnertime, which had come and gone.

## **Additional Threats**

While the Kings Landing development proposal was seen as the greatest threat to Mason Neck by the local activists and the rallying point for greater citizen action, it certainly was not the only threat to the peninsula. There already was an application pending to create a deep sea port on Belmont Bay for ocean going vessels, another zoning application for a smaller development, Crestwood, and plans for an outer beltway to run right through the marsh.

Some of these threats were revealed to Secretary Udall on August 13, 1965, when the Interior Department's Regional Solicitor's office submitted the list of all county zoning applications that might affect the Potomac River in the Washington metropolitan area. Mason Neck figures prominently in two of only three cases listed for Fairfax County. The first case involved the proposed seaport on Belmont Bay, about which the Solicitor wrote "This proposal could be contrary to future Park Service proposals." The second case involved the Crestwood corporation rezoning of 300 acres, which had been approved in June of 1965, and to which the Solicitors voiced no objection. The Kings Landing project is not mentioned. The application would not officially be filed until the next month.

Hartwell and others on the Neck feared what would happen should all of this be approved. Yet, as land values steadily rose, other landowners (although certainly not the majority) had no problem with these impending changes; they wanted to cash in. Ultimately, it was a few of those who owned an interest in Mason Neck property who would be the loudest protesters of its protection.<sup>35</sup>

## Hartwell and Udall

Hartwell ramped up her efforts during the summer of 1965. She wrote to Secretary Udall and heard back. In a May 25, 1965, telegram, Hartwell and a friend and neighbor Frances Cap wrote: “Please help us preserve the National wonderland of Mason Neck, Fairfax County, VA, and its bald eagles, the only ones inhabiting this area.” Udall responded in a July 8, 1965 letter: “Studies in progress on the Potomac River Basin by the National Park Service and the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife have re-emphasized the open space and wildlife habitat values of Masons Neck. This land is one of the finest remaining tracts in the Virginia portion of the Washington Metropolitan Area.”

He referred her request for preservation of Mason Neck to the Task Force Chairman of the Interior Department’s Project Potomac. (This was Kenneth Holum, Assistant Secretary of the Interior.) Subsequently, Robert M. Paul, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Interior and Chairman of the Recreation and Landscape Sub-Task Force of Project Potomac, would become a champion of Mason Neck throughout the effort. He had his direction from the Secretary – become involved in local planning actions.<sup>36</sup> He also came to develop a close personal friendship with Elizabeth Hartwell as well. (In a report in National Parks Magazine, she described Paul’s interest: “Mr. Paul waded into the Mason Neck marshes, hiked through the woods, and came out exhausted but convinced.”<sup>37</sup> and in a July 11, 1967 letter to Paul, she wrote, “I like you, I really do!” )

Hartwell sent another telegram with friend and fellow activist Joyce Wilkinson on July 9 regarding a sewer permit on a tract of land slated to be part of the Kings Landing development. This concerned the State of Virginia’s Water Control Board’s pending

extension of a temporary approval given in 1964. On July 30, 1965, Udall responded, “We are looking into this situation with the State of Virginia.”

And indeed they were. In a letter to Virginia Governor Albertis Harrison, also dated July 30, 1965, Kenneth Holum, signing for the Secretary of the Interior, wrote:

*One of the key areas in the Potomac River Basin and in Virginia, which has been identified as a potential open space and conservation area, is a protrusion into the Potomac estuary known as Masons Neck.....Masons Neck possesses many outstanding historical, natural and recreational values and is acclaimed by many to be the finest remaining open space in the Washington Metropolitan Area. It is known to be the nesting area of bald eagles, our national bird, which is now on the endangered species list....I am sure that you are aware that unless adequate measures are taken, and taken soon, this area will become intensively developed.* <sup>38</sup>

The letter went on to describe the petition before the Water Control Board for the 1,800-acre development’s treatment plant, and references a discussion he had with the Fairfax Board of Supervisors on January 31 on the need for each agency to “play its part” in preserving “important natural resources.”

*I therefore urge that your Water Board recommend denial of all applications for sewer treatment plants on the Masons Neck peninsula until our joint and mutual Potomac River Basin comprehensive plans are formulated.*

One might assume the strong federal support behind Mason Neck protection proposals and against the Mason Neck development projects, and the resulting pressure being exerted on state and local officials, would have made the grass-roots work of local citizens superfluous. But that would be wrong, as evidenced by the fact that the Virginia Water Control Board ultimately approved the permit for the sewage treatment plant in the Great Marsh on Mason Neck, despite the Secretary's request. (This came after several hearings, a year later, in July of 1966.)<sup>39</sup>

### **Hartwell Presses On**

Meanwhile, the Interior-led Interdepartmental Task Force, to which Hartwell's May 25, 1965, letter had been referred by Udall, met in July with regional and local planning officials, and Hartwell was invited to attend. Officials at that meeting suggested that she outline, in writing to the Task Force, exactly why Mason Neck should be preserved. This material was also to include a description of Mason Neck's assets – historic, biologic, and recreational. She delivered the requested material and John Bright, Chief of the Land Task Force of Project Potomac, wrote July 27 to thank her.<sup>40</sup> Two months later, on September 16, the Interior Department announced Mason Neck as a top acquisition priority. The announcement concluded a session of the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin held in Winchester, Virginia.<sup>41</sup> Hartwell was also advised in July that one more piece was essential - a citizen organization focused on preserving Mason Neck.<sup>42</sup>

## The Importance of Community Involvement

On a national level, the federal government had actively encouraged citizen action and the formation of advisory committees since the Eisenhower administration.<sup>43</sup> In the case of the Potomac project, Interior officials also knew that local citizens would hold the greatest sway in influencing the local zoning decisions that would determine the fate of the Potomac River Basin. Udall understood this at the onset. “The success of the effort” to clean up the Potomac “depends to a large extent on the goodwill, effort and interest of local government, business and private citizens” he was quoted as saying, adding that the President’s call will “give new impetus to the many conservation and civic groups in the area fighting for zoning and other measures to arrest creeping ugliness.”<sup>44</sup>

A memo from Interior’s F. T. Christy, Jr. (Chairman of the Potomac Valley Conservation and Recreation Council) to Judge Russell Train, Frank Gregg, and Sydney Howe, concerning the Potomac River and dated May 3, 1965, underscores this understanding. It solicits ideas “on the organization of private citizens’ groups” saying “the need for communication between public and private groups and for a partnership in planning is acute.” The government should “encourage and facilitate private groups to take a more active role in the public decisions that affect their natural environment.”

Thus, the federal task force message to Hartwell about the necessity of a citizens group to protect Mason Neck fit into the framework the administration had established for success in the Potomac Basin.

## Formation of the Mason Neck Conservation Committee

It was not difficult for Hartwell to establish a new citizens group because during the summer of 1965, a number of local citizens were equally alarmed about the plans for Mason Neck development and wanted to do something about it. Joyce Wilkinson and William Durland, of Alexandria and Springfield respectively, were among early activists working to deter these development plans. Wilkinson had already made a name for herself by dressing up as an eagle to attract attention outside of local grocery stores and she had worked with Hartwell on a sporadic basis. Durland was a politician, running for the Virginia General Assembly. He wrote he had been warned not to get mixed up with these “two crazy women” but chose to ignore the warnings. Instead, he joined them and together, they formed the Mason Neck Conservation Committee.<sup>45</sup> Durland went on to win election to the Virginia General Assembly and would be the one most likely to publicly testify on behalf of the Committee at various hearings and meetings.

They held a first meeting August 3 and elected officers. Durland was elected chairman; Hartwell and Charles Majer shared the vice-chairmanship. Wilkinson was named secretary-treasurer. Additional members included Melvin Siegel and David Cobey, architects; Noman Cole; Albert Scartz; Clive Duvall II, a soon-to-be-elected Delegate and later State Senator of Virginia; James Dillard, later elected a State Delegate; and Mrs. George Robinson. Bill Lightsey, Executive Director of the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority and a State Senator, served as consultant.<sup>46</sup>

With officers elected, they immediately got down to business and decided on a strategic letter writing and telephoning campaign concentrated during a set time period and targeted to key leaders. This kept them busy over the next several months.

The Committee decided to focus their message on one thing: encouraging state and federal attention on preserving Mason Neck's recreational and wildlife values, according to Charles Majer, counselor to the Committee.<sup>47</sup> They already had a major ally, thanks to the previous work of Hartwell and her relationship with Robert Paul. In addition, DuVall had a close relationship with Secretary Udall and they had reliable contacts with the State of Virginia through Durland, DuVall and Dillard.<sup>48</sup> They also soon had a master planning document developed by the Conservation Committee's two architects, Siegel and Cobey.

The first order of business was to send Durland to ask the Fairfax Board of Supervisors to delay any rezoning decision on Mason Neck until the committee could be heard. The Board of Supervisors did not want to interfere with the Planning Commission's schedule, but they assured Durland that the Commission was so far behind schedule, a presentation by the Mason Neck Conservation Committee to the Board in November would easily precede any decision on the matter.<sup>49</sup>

On November 17, 1965, the Conservation Committee held its first and only public meeting to prepare its case to be presented to the Board of Supervisors on November 24. One of their arguments was that the area needed a comprehensive master plan before a development of such massive scale as the Kings Landing proposal should be considered. The Committee's plan, presented as an alternative to the King's Landing proposal, restricted further development to only a quarter of available land and called for a wildlife sanctuary, protection of Kane's Creek and the Great Marsh, as well as numerous park areas to include beaches, playing fields, bridle paths and nature trails.<sup>50</sup>

## Interior Supports Committee, Buys Time

The Interior Department was very much interested in the work of the Conservation Committee and the outcome of the November 24<sup>th</sup> hearing. Robert Paul attended the Committee's November 17 meeting to offer encouragement, and noted that the Committee's plans developed by the architects ran parallel with the Interior Department's proposals. <sup>51</sup>

Secretary Udall wrote to Fairfax County's Director of Planning, Robert M. Leary, November 19, to express his concern, and included these words:

*Mason Neck has long been of concern to this Department because of its inherent recreation, wildlife, natural and scenic values. It is, indeed, the finest open space land remaining in the Washington metropolitan area. ... Mason Neck is recognized as a key area in the plans being formulated for the [Potomac] Basin. ....We therefore recommend to your Planning Commission that this proposed change in zoning be denied and that the three levels of government involved – Federal, State and local – cooperate toward the establishment of a major recreation, wildlife, and historic park on Mason's Neck....”* <sup>52</sup>

On December 1, the Fairfax Board of Supervisors passed a resolution deferring consideration of the zoning application, and all other applications for change on Mason Neck, until a comprehensive master plan for the Lower Potomac River could be developed. This job was tasked to the Fairfax Planning Commission and given a deadline of June 1966. (On hearing this, Ed Pritchard, representing the developer, said, “it is un-American to be told we are to be put off for six months without ever being heard.” The

Board clarified that a hearing could be held during the six-month delay, but any action would be deferred.)<sup>53</sup>

This was a major accomplishment in that it bought precious time needed to hold off developers until federal, state and county commitments could solidify. But there was still much work to be done.

### ***Interim Report to the President***

Meanwhile, upriver in the Nation's Capital, recommendations to protect Mason Neck were being incorporated into the very first official report following from the 1965 Presidential mandate to develop a "model conservation plan" for the Potomac basin. The Potomac Interim Report to the President prepared by the Departmental Interdepartmental Task Force was transmitted from Secretary Udall to the President in January of 1966.

In the transmittal letter to the President, Secretary Udall wrote, "...this [Potomac] river basin is distinctive in that its people are more conservation minded than most, and we have found uncommon interest and support for the 'new Conservation' approach to planning which was inherent in your assignment."<sup>54</sup> The Interior Department's interim report also represented consensus between the federal task force and the advisory committee representing the basin states, with only one exception (having to do with future water supply) and thus represented an important beginning for the comprehensive Potomac River Basin planning effort, which, according to the report's introduction, also involved "a group of distinguished architects and ... and numerous other persons and

groups representing state agencies, local governments and private citizens' associations."<sup>55</sup>

The report's recommendations are characterized as "only an initial part of an overall action that will be needed in the long run.....though they are not temporary stopgaps, ...they are short range actions designed to deal with needs which are *clear and urgent*" (emphasis added).<sup>56</sup>

The report summarizes eight major recommendations of the Task Force, listing as number seven, "that Mason Neck on the Upper Potomac estuary be preserved by the federal government and the State of Virginia as a unique recreation-conservation area." (Recommendation number eight is "that the George Washington Memorial Parkway be extended from Mount Vernon to Yorktown." This was never realized, but the proposed route would have traversed Mason Neck and plays a role in the fate of Mason Neck protection efforts as detailed later.)<sup>57</sup>

The report describes the recreation and conservation resources on Mason Neck as being in "imminent danger of irrevocable encroachment," and recommends that the "Federal government and the State of Virginia act together to promptly take such steps as may be necessary for the complete preservation of this area against further development and for its dedication for public use."<sup>58</sup>

Its description of Mason Neck, written in layman's terms, was likely influenced by materials provided by Elizabeth Hartwell, who had promptly answered the task force's specific request for such a description in July of 1965. Here is what the Interim Report says:

*“No more typical, historic, and scenic a piece of upper estuary shoreline exists than Mason Neck. It combines all the main values desirable in a major conservation area. It has 12 miles of river front, and 6,500 acres of undeveloped land and is 18 miles from the center of Washington. It possesses a varying landscape – high and low, wooded and clear, with magnificent forests and swamps which shelter and nourish birds and other wildlife, including eagles. Its qualities are such that presently impending development of its land into subdivisions, as planned, would constitute an irreparable public loss. Action on Mason Neck is urgently needed.”*<sup>59</sup>

But, as expressed in “A Potomac Report” a year later, the recommendations of the task force in the Interim Report regarding Mason Neck were “heartening words. Yet they were only words, mere proposals. At the level of practical politics, the fate of Mason Neck appeared uncertain indeed.”<sup>60</sup>

## ***The County View***

It should be noted that the natural and recreational qualities of Mason Neck were not unknown to local county officials, and had been recognized for quite some time. In the 1950s, there was an acute awareness of Fairfax County’s explosive population growth projections and the recreation needs that would follow.<sup>61</sup> In 1957, The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors commissioned the National Recreation Association to study this situation and report back. The resulting report provided a framework for future county decision-making, and included a recommendation to create a series of parks of varying

scale, from local community recreation centers to large reservations described as “large tracts of land with scenic value where people may go to get completely away from urban areas and enjoy the beauties of nature.”<sup>62</sup> The report intentionally did not map these reservations, making the point that their location should be determined through a “comprehensively planned system for the entire Washington region.”<sup>63</sup> The report also pointed to the growing need for more camping and boating facilities – all of which would ultimately be provided on Mason Neck.

These studies were commissioned to support a comprehensive planning effort which would ultimately culminate in Fairfax County’s Comprehensive Plan, finally adopted, after several revisions, in 1975.<sup>64</sup> As part of this effort, the Master Planning section of the Fairfax County Planning Division published a number of smaller plans on specific topics such as Open Space, Residential Development, and Industrial Development. One such document was the 1960 Plan of Public Facilities, which included a section on Parks and Recreation Areas. Only two areas on Mason Neck are recommended as parks in this document, and both already existed: Pohick Bay Regional Park, (470 acres) where 200 acres had already been purchased by The Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority, and the 566-acre Gunston Hall plantation, home of George Mason and owned by the State of Virginia.<sup>65</sup>

### ***1966 – Much more to be done***

The year of 1966 was characterized by a growing sense of urgency on all sides as plans for state, federal and local acquisitions were being formulated at the same time as

the Lower Potomac Master Plan was being developed and the zoning application for Kings Landing development deferred multiple times. There would be 14 county hearings on Mason Neck in 1966 and at times, the situation would reach the “crisis” stage.<sup>66</sup> Much was held in the balance. It was a race against time.

The County Planning Commission was not banned from conducting hearings on zoning applications during the six-month moratorium; it simply could not act on them. Consequently, a hearing on Kings Landing was held February 7, 1966.<sup>67</sup> It is interesting to note that Elizabeth Hartwell did not testify at these hearings. (One could speculate this was due to her husband’s role on the planning commission.) Hartwell instead spent her time behind the scenes, directing others, writing testimony and encouraging the participation of key leaders.

The hearing opened with yet another letter from the Interior Department officially read into the record. This letter, dated February 7, 1966, was hand-carried by Robert Paul to Stephen Hartwell, by then, Chairman of the Fairfax Planning Commission. It was signed by Assistant Secretary Kenneth Holum, acting for Secretary Udall, and stated “Mason Neck has long been of concern to this Department because of its inherent recreational, wildlife, historic and scenic values. There is probably no other area of comparable size within the metropolitan area of Washington which contains all of these qualities in greater abundance than is possessed by Mason Neck.....It is indeed the finest remaining open space land in the Washington metropolitan area.” The letter goes on to recommend the commission follow the Board of Supervisors recommendation and defer any major change in land use until the federal, state and local interests could complete their plans.

Ed Pritchard, attorney for the developer, expressing the frustration that was being felt by some of the landowners, summed up the dilemma at the hearing, as seen by the other side. He listed eight different ongoing plans for Mason Neck, from local to state to federal, representing proposals for parks as small as a few hundred acres (The Great Marsh) to others advocating that the entire Mason Neck be protected. “There is no legislation pending to appropriate funds in the federal or state legislatures to acquire this property.”<sup>68</sup> In other words, parks may have been proposed, but no money was available to back up the proposals.<sup>69</sup>

Robert Paul conceded they had not finished their plans, did not know what size of park they would propose, and would work with local and state agencies to “come up with something all can support.”

Park proposals with no funding commitments is a theme that will pop up again and again, including when the proposed Master Plan is presented in June and throughout several more hearings on the plan.<sup>70</sup>

### ***Master Plan Presented***

In June of 1966, the Fairfax Planning Commission met the 6-month deadline and presented the draft Master Plan to the Board of Supervisors. It proposed adding 4,695 acres to the existing 913 acres of park land on Mason Neck in new or expanded federal, state and regional parks for a total of 5,608 acres of protected lands.<sup>71</sup> [Expanded acres included Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority 1,043 acres; state 1,400 acres; and federal 2,252 acres. Existing by 1966 were 357 acres of Northern Virginia Regional Park

Authority lands and 556 acres in Gunston Hall.] According to the Washington Post, “great sweeps” of Mason Neck were “painted green.”<sup>72</sup> The plan also did away with the deep sea port proposal and recommended limited rezonings because of a lack of sewer systems to handle more intense development.<sup>73</sup>

The plan recognized the potential and intent of the unfunded state and federal proposals saying, “In keeping with precedence with proposed land uses for Mason Neck, the staff recognizes that premium open space resources must be preserved. This, coupled with federal, state and local interests in the Mason Neck area makes it conclusive that a conservation, park-type usage is still in the best interest of the county and the general metropolitan area.”<sup>74</sup>

In order to allow time for county officials to study the plan, the zoning decision was delayed another 4 months, until October 1966, and another hearing on the Potomac Master Plan was held August 1. It was noted that Secretary Udall had sent a letter commending the Planning Commission on the Master Plan and Robert Paul, who was present, read a letter from Kenneth Holum, Assistant Secretary of Interior, also commending the Fairfax Planning staff for its work. He added, however, that “the federal government at present lacks legislative authority to become directly involved in Mason Neck conservation but hopes to acquire the balance of potential parklands not protected through State and regional projects.”<sup>75</sup> The idea was that Interior would try to fill in the gaps later.

Representatives from the State, the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority and Gunston Hall all agreed at the hearing that the proposed Master Plan was compatible with their proposals for open space and park lands. But there were objections too. John

Hull, whose land would have been developed in Kings Landing, objected to “having his land frozen by being shown on the plan as park, that it was taking private citizen’s land without compensation.”<sup>76</sup> There was discussion of the property’s value, with Hull putting it at \$3,000 per acre and the Planning Commission putting it at \$1,500, midway between the County’s Department of Assessments range of \$1,000 to \$2,000. Mr. Hartwell agreed that it seemed unfair to add the land to the plan if those who must acquire it cannot come up with the money “within a reasonable time.”<sup>77</sup>

Another public hearing on the Lower Potomac Master Plan was held December 19, 1966; this one focused on zoning densities and sewer treatment plants. Any new residential development proposals hinged on bringing sewers into the area because much of the land on Mason Neck would not percolate, making a sewer system a requirement in those areas that could not accommodate a septic tank. (A septic tank requires soil that will filter water so that liquids from the sewage will drain, or percolate. This fact alone had largely protected Mason Neck from high density development up to this point. Even areas that had been zoned for ½ acre development “for years” had not been developed for lack of sewerage on land that would not percolate.<sup>78</sup>)

The discussion fell along predictable lines. Those owning land and wanting to develop it (Tom Newton, Dr. Elizabeth Parker) wanted sewer options while those who did not favor high density development (various citizen associations representing current residents and Jameson Parker of Gunston Hall, for example) were against sewer proposals. At one point, Noman Cole of the Mason Neck Citizens Association thanked the Belmont Bay Citizens Association for “not being willing to sell their souls for a sewage plant.” Discussion also concerned the advantage of higher housing densities to

the tax rolls, but it was pointed out that in light of the greater county services needed to support more residents, tax revenue was not a good reason to zone for high density housing.

The Master Plan would be discussed at several more hearings and ultimately finalized in April of 1967.<sup>79</sup> Josiah Ferris, Mason Neck resident and regional park authority board member, did not like it, saying there still was not enough money to acquire planned parks and “landowners would suffer unnecessarily because their property had been earmarked for parks.”

By the time the Fairfax Planning Commission presented the plan to the Board of Supervisors September 6, 1967, state funding had been announced and The Nature Conservancy had stepped in to buy some of the lands slated for regional and federal parks (as explained later in this paper). Philip Yates, associate planner of the Fairfax planning staff, presented the plan, calling it a “bold recreation and conservation program,” adding, “the most important single recommendation in the plan is for a combined federal, state and regional park authority park program to encompass a total of 5,608 acres, 4,695 acres in addition to the holdings which exist today.”<sup>80</sup>

On October 25 1967, the Board of Supervisors adopted the plan, and removed the outer beltway from the county document although it remained on the planning maps of the Virginia State Highway Department.<sup>81</sup> Nonetheless, this was a major victory for Mason Neck residents and conservationists. The outer beltway would have run right through the heart of Mason Neck and was not favored locally, except for by the developers and others who stood to make a fortune if the route were to materialize.<sup>82</sup>

## ***Virginia's "Common Wealth"***

While the local zoning issue was being resolved at the county level, the state government was focusing their attention on a comprehensive planning effort to meet growing and future recreation needs state-wide. Virginia's close coordination with the federal Potomac Project through ongoing participation in the States' Advisory Committee would figure prominently in the ultimate decision to create an 1,800-acre state park on Mason Neck. But back in 1965, this was not even contemplated.

It is no surprise, however, that Virginia's planning reports would acknowledge these federal efforts. On November 1, 1965, the Chairman of the Virginia Outdoor Recreation Study Commission, FitzGerald Bemiss, presented the long range recreation plan for Virginia (called "Virginia's Commonwealth" but popularly known as the Bemiss Report) to Governor Mills E. Godwin, writing "especially urgent is the need for a program of land acquisition for major enlargement of our state park system, which now falls far short of meeting the demand of our own citizens and of visitors to Virginia." The report recognized the federal interest in the Potomac River, citing the Potomac Basin federal planning effort, and urged cooperation between the state and the federal Government.<sup>83</sup>

Also at play was a strong *federal* interest in expanding recreational opportunities, parks and open spaces nation-wide. Congress created the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Committee in 1958 to recommend ways to meet increased public demand for outdoor recreation for the next 40 years. Laurance Rockefeller chaired the committee which sent 50 recommendations to Congress in a report, "Outdoor Recreation for America," in 1962. Creation of the Land and Water Conservation Fund in 1964 was one

outcome of this effort which spanned the Eisenhower to Johnson administrations and called on citizen involvement through the Citizens Committee for Outdoor Recreation, also chaired by Rockefeller.<sup>84</sup> A report on the National Capital Region indicated in 1966, the region was short 30,000 acres in parks, based on the population of 2.6 million.<sup>85</sup>

Taking a regional approach, the Bemiss report describes “Region I,” northern Virginia from Fredericksburg to Washington, as the state’s fastest growing region – with a population increase from 404,000 in 1950 to 683,000 in 1960 and a predicted 1.4 million in 1980 and 4.3 million in 2020. “In Fairfax County alone,” the report states, “4 square miles of open space go to single family dwellings each year,” creating a “serious shortage of outdoor recreation opportunities.”<sup>86</sup> The report points to the fact that there is no state park in the entire region. It describes facilities of the Northern Virginia Regional and Fairfax County Park Authorities as “good but limited.” The report recommends acquiring and developing sites, particularly along the Potomac River, but only proposes the “Widewater area on the Potomac below Washington,” (i.e. Aquia Creek near Stafford) for development as a state park.<sup>87</sup> Mason Neck appears on the proposals for Regional Parks, the idea being to enlarge the existing Pohick Bay Park already owned by the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority in coordination with the state and federal government. But the Bemiss report of 1965 contained no proposal for a state park on Mason Neck. Yet in less than a year, an 1,800-acre state park on Mason Neck would be approved.

## Mason Neck State Park Jumps to Top State Priority

The story of what happened to cause state officials to propel Mason Neck to the top of the list of new state park priorities is another important part of the story of Elizabeth Hartwell and the Mason Neck Conservation Committee.

It started with inquiries to state officials once word got out that money would be available to fund state park proposals coming out of the Bemiss report. The Land and Water Conservation Fund was in its infancy, and money was starting to flow in. Members of the Mason Neck Conservation Committee and William Lightsey, director of the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority, met informally with state officials in February and March to discuss funding opportunities. They learned that if Mason Neck were selected as a priority by the state, a combination of state and federal matching funds could very well be made available for acquisition.<sup>88</sup> The merits of Mason Neck over other northern Virginia locations were spelled out by Lightsey: its close proximity to dense population areas and its potential for both water and land recreation.<sup>89</sup>

Hartwell organized a campaign that caused a great number of key leaders in the Northern Virginia and national conservation community to send letters to Virginia Governor Godwin. She listed some of these in an April 14, 1966 letter to Kenward Harris, Chairman of the Citizens Council for a Clean Potomac, thanking him for the letter *he* had sent to the Governor. Her list included the Audubon Naturalist Society, National Wildlife Federation, Wilderness Society, National Parks Association, Gunston Hall, Izaak Walton League, Committee of 100 on the Federal City, and the Mined-Land Conservation Conference. She noted that the Conservation Fund and the Conservation Chapter of the Garden Club of Virginia (with 43 member clubs) offered assistance as

well. Hartwell also wisely included the Fairfax Board of Supervisors in her mailings. They subsequently voted to request that the Governor support a state park in Fairfax County, with Mason Neck identified as top priority.<sup>90</sup>

Representatives of the Mason Neck Conservation Committee then traveled to Richmond to meet with Governor Godwin on April 12, 1966. William Durland, William Lightsey, and other members of the Committee, including Elizabeth Hartwell, were in attendance. The Governor suggested they present their case to the State Board of Conservation and Economic Development at an April 21 meeting.

The delegation went home to prepare a convincing argument and then traveled back to Richmond on April 21<sup>st</sup> to make their pitch. William Durland's statement to the Board included the following.

*I appear before you today on behalf of present and future generations of Virginians, who, in the coming years will be greatly affected by the decision you will make here today – the decision whether to take the first public step to preserve for all time the great conservation area of Mason Neck, Virginia, and in so doing, provide Northern Virginia with its first State Park.*

He described federal interests in preserving Mason Neck, then continued, with a sense of urgency (and a bit of drama):

*I am sure there is no doubt in your mind of the conclusive evidence for preservation of Mason Neck. If this were our only concern, we would not take your time today....*

*But, Gentlemen, there is a cloud in the sky. The future, if left alone, may not find Mason Neck preserved. We are here, today, because Virginia must take action on Mason Neck now, or forever cede it to private residential and industrial development. Mason Neck is under immediate threat from these interests.*

He went on to present the ongoing timing dilemma, pointing out that the 6-month moratorium on rezoning would expire in June, before the Virginia Outdoor Recreation Commission would have had time to act in July.

*It is possible that ... Fairfax County may conclude that neither the state nor the federal government is sufficiently interested in Mason Neck for preservation unless this Board speaks out today...*

*...Mason Neck must be preserved in perpetuity and the first public step hopefully will be taken today, this very hour, by Virginians for Virginia.*

The Board was convinced and immediately, and unanimously, designated an 1,800-acre Mason Neck State Park as the state's new top priority, citing imminent danger of it being lost to development and the fact that Northern Virginia did not have a state park.<sup>91</sup>

This was a major victory for the Mason Neck Conservation Committee but, like all of their victories so far, it did not come with any assurances. The State Conservation Board's role did not include appropriations; rather, it was limited to selecting sites for

new parks. The state's new Outdoor Recreation Commission would have to provide the funding for any new state park, and the federal government would have to match that. In addition, the zoning question was still awaiting resolution by the Fairfax County supervisors.

### ***Funding a Major Issue***

By June of 1966, three parks were proposed (regional, state and federal) yet no funding had been positively committed for any one them. The Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority was preparing a park bond referendum for the Fall that would fund expansion of the regional park; the state had committed on paper to a new state park on Mason Neck; and the federal government had proposed protection of Mason Neck, but could not commit funds without Congressional legislation. There was still very much a feeling of racing against time.

“I am very much disturbed by the budget cuts within the Interior Department,” wrote Elizabeth Hartwell in February of 1966. “We have only until June 30 to determine whether Mason Neck will be preserved or lost to development.”<sup>92</sup> That is when the 6-month moratorium on Mason Neck rezoning (granted by Fairfax Board of Supervisors in December on the Mason Neck Conservation Committee's request) would expire; state funds for acquisition would not be made available until after July 1. The Bemiss report called for a \$5 million acquisition budget for the first year, but this would have to go before the General Assembly. Bills, and thus funds, implementing the Bemiss report would not be effective until mid-July.<sup>93</sup>

And in May, the problem persisted. “We had hoped to get money from the State Parks Commission but this fell through,” Harwell wrote. “I have heard by the grapevine that we will get only \$½ million from the Outdoor Recreation Commission; matching funds will make a total of \$1 million. Our minimum requirement is \$3.5 million. We’ll have to approach a foundation.”<sup>94</sup> (All of the park proposals on Mason Neck were estimated to cost \$7 million, and land values were increasing rapidly.<sup>95</sup>) In another letter, she wrote that the moratorium would expire in June, and “if funds are not appropriated by that time, I am afraid we will have failed.”<sup>96</sup>

## **Fall Brings Relief**

The fall of 1966 brought some relief on the funding issues. In August, the Virginia Commission on Outdoor Recreation approved a \$1.5 million park grant and released proposed boundaries of an 1,800-acre state park on Mason Neck. (About 1,200 acres were part of the Wills and Van Metre holdings.)<sup>97</sup> The state would put up half the money, to be matched by the federal government.<sup>98</sup> That announcement came in October, when Interior Secretary Udall made available the federal share of \$750,000, granted to Virginia from the Land and Water Conservation Fund.<sup>99</sup> With that, the state park seemed assured.

Ben Bolen, Virginia Parks Commissioner, personally wrote to Elizabeth Hartwell to inform her of this in a letter dated October 14, 1966: “We have advised the Fairfax County Executive and the Chairman of the Board of Supervisors of the state’s plans in connection with Mason Neck, and that \$1,500,000 is now available for that purpose.”

In addition, an \$18 million bond referendum for new parks in Fairfax County was coming up in November of 1966. If the measure passed, the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority would get \$3 million. The Authority communicated to voters their intent to use some of it to expand the existing Pohick Bay park on Mason Neck by 571 acres and to add 1,085 acres to protect the Great Marsh and Potomac shoreline.<sup>100</sup> The Mason Neck Conservation Committee, once again, applied its formula to rally voters county-wide. On Nov. 8, 1966, Fairfax voters approved the park bond referendum by more than 2 to 1.<sup>101</sup>

On the federal front, more good news came on October 15, 1966, when President Johnson signed the Endangered Species Preservation Act. This gave the Interior Secretary authority to establish refuges for endangered species – another tool to justify federal land acquisitions that will come into play in the protection of Mason Neck.

### **End of 1966: Battle Not Over**

The year of 1966 saw great accomplishments toward protection of Mason Neck on many fronts, and Hartwell and the Mason Neck Conservation Committee fought for every victory, yet, as Hartwell wrote, “The battle is not over. More land is needed, especially in reference to the wildlife refuge. The outer beltway is shown on planning maps as traversing the entire length of Mason Neck. This is completely incompatible with the concepts of parks, open space, and wildlife. The Committee is prepared to fight another year – and more.”<sup>102</sup>

## Easement Not an Option

The developers were equally committed to continuing the fight into 1967. With their original plans thwarted, Wills and Van Metre officials were not to be dissuaded from trying to reverse what looked like impending loss – the opportunity to develop the Mason Neck property they had acquired. There was simply too much at stake.

They joined other landowners in a new proposal which they presented to the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority at a January 5, 1967, meeting as an alternate to the proposal for a park that the Park Authority had presented in July to justify the bond referendum. The new developer-backed proposal would create scenic easements extending inland for a half mile along the Potomac shoreline. A 156-acre tract in the Great Marsh would be donated by Wills and Van Metre to the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority as part of the deal.<sup>103</sup> In return, the landowners would be able to develop the remaining acres in their ownership under low density single residences – a significant scaling down of their originally proposed densities.

This seemed reasonable in the Park Authorities' view. It would meet the protection goals for Mason Neck at no cost; and for this reason, they were inclined to accept it, even though the voters had approved the bond referendum explicitly for purchase of the land. The Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority approved the developer's alternative in principle (a unanimous decision), but waited to give formal approval until their next meeting February 8.<sup>104</sup> William Lightsey, executive director of the Authority, went public with the proposal at a January 9 hearing of the Fairfax Planning Commission.

The Mason Neck Conservation Committee had other ideas, however, and mounted an aggressive campaign to defeat this notion. Elizabeth Hartwell led the charge by firing off a telegram to Secretary Udall January 11, 1967. “Inconceivable plans of Regional Park Authority regarding Great Marsh Mason Neck would result in destruction of everything many dedicated people have worked long and hard for. Respectfully appeal to you for help in halting this desecration.” The Interior Department, as stated in a subsequent news article, began “following the latest developments very closely.”<sup>105</sup>

Hartwell also wrote, on January 10, to Ned Bright, editor of the newsletter of the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin: “The enclosed is what can happen to the Great Marsh unless we can find a way to stop it – but quick. The Great Marsh and Bull Run were the two top priorities presented by the Regional Park Authority in its drive to get the bond referendum approved. All the people who worked for this and voted for the referendum were ‘taken.’ One day I’ll tell you the real story of the Battle to Preserve Mason Neck.”<sup>106</sup>

Bright took this information and ran with it. In his January 1967 issue, he included an article titled “Bald Eagle Understandably Bald” deriding the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority’s consideration of the proposal and pointing out that at least 500 acres were needed to protect the Great Marsh (not 156) and that the sewage treatment plant, which had already been approved by the State Water Control Board to support the extra housing, would be built right in the marsh.<sup>107</sup>

Bright had become a close ally to Hartwell and her Mason Neck efforts. Another comrade in the battle was the new director of Gunston Hall, Jameson Parker, who made himself readily available to testify and write letters, often under Hartwell’s direction.

On January 11, Hartwell wrote to Parker, “My Dear Jameson, as a result of last night’s meeting, your assignments are as follows.” She went on to list nine tasks, including requesting an appearance before the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority Board, calling others to do the same, having lunch with and/or calling Interior Department Officials (“Bob Paul Tuesday at 12:15”), calling The Nature Conservancy for support in testifying, notifying the press of the February 8 meeting and appearing before the Potomac Valley Conservation and Recreation Council at their next meeting. She mentioned that she had assurances from Thomas Kimball, executive vice president of the National Wildlife Federation, to help “in any way.”<sup>108</sup>

The next order of business was to write an “Urgent Notice” for the Press. Dated February 2, 1967 and signed by Elizabeth Hartwell, the two-page missive spelled out the situation, emphasizing that the park bond was unanimously authorized by the Board of County Supervisors on September 8 and approved by the voters November 8. Hartwell then focused on the outcome should the development be approved and the sewage treatment plant follow. “The location of this plant in this vital area will completely destroy all conservation values of the Great Marsh, and the 156-acre gift would be one of lifeless, malodorous waterways of sewage effluent washing back and forth with the tide.”<sup>109</sup> Reading this, one can almost smell the outcome as Hartwell envisioned it. She followed with information on the date, time and location of the February 8 Park Authority public meeting and urged citizen participation.

It worked. Fifteen people showed up at the meeting to oppose the proposal; an additional fourteen wrote letters of opposition. One of the voices was the Fairfax County

Federation of Citizens Association which passed a resolution on Mason Neck in response to the proposal, urging the Park Authority to acquire the land in fee simple.<sup>110</sup>

As a result, the Park Authority decided to study the issue further, reasoning that the details of the proposal were only recently made available and there existed a possibility that the federal government may buy the Great Marsh. The fact is, the Authority was reluctant to give up plans to buy the Potomac shoreline, even though there were no reasonable assurances that the money would be available any time soon.<sup>111</sup>

### ***Regional Parks Become a Reality***

Several meetings of the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority followed to consider the easement and other acquisition options. Josiah Ferris figures prominently in these hearings. A member of the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority Board, he was very vocal in his opposition to expanded parks on Mason Neck. In an April Board Meeting, for example, he stated that the land was “too valuable to be used as parkland. ...I opposed it from the beginning, still oppose it, and would continue to oppose it.”<sup>112</sup> He further explained that he and his wife did not wish to live near a park and as soon as he felt he could get a “fair price for his property,” he would consider selling it. (Perhaps the real reason for his opposition was the profit motive.)

Another board member, Mrs. Hackman, felt Ferris should disqualify himself from voting on the easement issue, given his status as a landowner on Mason Neck. Ferris disagreed, saying that his land was more than 2 miles from the area being considered.

In the end, however, Ferris did abstain and on April 5, 1967, the easement proposal lost by a vote of 4 to 1. The Board voted that (1) the 5-year acquisition plan for the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority be amended to first, recognize federal plans to acquire the Great Marsh and adjacent areas as a wildlife refuge, and second, to identify the entire Potomac shoreline lying south of the proposed state park and west of the proposed wildlife refuge as a planned acquisition area and (2) that Wills and Van Metre be advised that their easement and marsh donation offer is unacceptable.<sup>113</sup>

In order to move on spending the \$3 million from the bond referendum, the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority held a public meeting October 25, 1967, at Annandale Elementary School to discuss park acquisition priorities and the 5-year capital improvement program. Leaving nothing to chance, Hartwell organized her friends and colleagues to turn out in force at this hearing. The result was an “overwhelming endorsement for immediate land acquisition,” with Mason Neck the top priority.<sup>114</sup>

Hartwell’s involvement is evidenced in the text of a letter sent to members of the Northern Virginia Conservation Council from Doris Kidder, Council President, that contained these sections taken from a draft supplied by Elizabeth Hartwell:<sup>115</sup> “The Northern Virginia Conservation Council wishes to call your attention to the possible jeopardy of some key parts of the five-year program, which was approved by the Fairfax county voters in a bond referendum last fall....It has become apparent in the past 6 months that the Fairfax County Planning Commission and the Fairfax Board of County Supervisors believe that, unless the regional park authority takes immediate acquisition steps, these lands [on Mason Neck] should be removed as parks from the Lower Potomac District public facilities map.”<sup>116</sup>

About 50 citizens showed up, and the 15 speakers and five letters read urged park officials to put land acquisition first over developing existing properties.<sup>117</sup> This included \$1.4 million for 570 acres in two tracts that would expand the existing holdings on Pohick Bay, and \$2 million for about 1,000 acres known as the Potomac shoreline area adjacent to the proposed state park on the north and the proposed wildlife refuge on the east.<sup>118</sup>

Regarding expanding Pohick Bay park, one owner was anxious to sell to the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority, and the other was not. The Wilson Boy Scout Camp was owned by the National Capital Boy Scout Council which wanted to sell in order to raise funds needed to expand the Goshen camp in southwestern Virginia. On the other hand, the owner of the second tract, Dr. Elizabeth Parker, was not anxious to sell her land to the Park Authority, but planned to sell it instead to the Edward Carr company.<sup>119</sup> This was the historic estate known as Lebanon.

Ultimately, the voters won and the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority would buy both of these tracts, as well as 790 acres (of the 1,000-acre proposed parcel) to protect the Potomac shoreline on the southern side, acquiring various parcels over a period of years through 1974.<sup>120</sup> Today, the expanded Pohick Bay Regional Park, on the north side of Mason Neck, offers developed recreation, including a marina, swimming beaches, campgrounds, and a golf course. The 790 acres along the Potomac shoreline on the south side is leased to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as part of the bald eagle refuge. (A remaining 355-acre tract of Potomac shoreline would become the focus of yet another campaign, as explained later.)

## ***The Nature Conservancy Steps In***

Hartwell had not given up on the idea of enlisting a foundation for help, and she had kept The Nature Conservancy informed of the Mason Neck situation, starting with that early helicopter trip in 1965.

In a handwritten 1966 note to Hartwell, Mrs. Robert (Leona) Rienow wrote “I believe The Nature Conservancy can help you. My professor husband is a national director. The organization works closely with Udall (a member) and Governors of the States. Do you know about it?”<sup>121</sup> Hartwell’s reply, dated February 24, 1966, indicates that she’s already on the case. Herbert S. Hiller, an assistant director of The Nature Conservancy, had joined the Mason Neck Conservation Committee and was well aware of the situation. (He participated in the helicopter tour of 1965.) In addition, the Secretary of The Nature Conservancy, Elting Arnold, was on Hartwell’s mailing list of key contacts to use when crises arose.<sup>122</sup>

On June 7, 1966, Arnold wrote to John Gottschalk, Director of the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, to transmit a resolution on Mason Neck adopted by the Conservancy’s Board of Governors commending the Service’s efforts to protect Mason Neck and offering the Conservancy’s services, “consistent with the fact that *our own resources are at present fully committed.*” (emphasis added)

But a year later, by summer of 1967, rumors were growing that The Nature Conservancy was going to step in, in a big way.<sup>123</sup> On July 11, 1967, Hartwell wrote to Robert Paul, “I’ve heard all sorts of wild tales about The Nature Conservancy’s heightened interest in Mason Neck, but they haven’t told me a thing. Can it really be?”

The official announcement came on July 31. The Nature Conservancy would acquire two major conservation tracts at Mason Neck at a cost of \$3.94 million. This included the King's Landing property. Albert G. Van Metre was quoted in a news story the next day, saying he "didn't feel too good about it," calling it the "end of a dream community" and explaining that he decided to sell only because of the "threat of condemnation from three directions – federal, state and local."<sup>124</sup>

According to the Conservancy's press release, the acreage would be made available to the Virginia Division of Parks and the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority. In addition, a 600-acre tract would be held in anticipation that Congress would establish a bald eagle national wildlife refuge, as proposed by Interior. "Preservation of the Potomac," said Conservancy President Charles H.W. Foster, "is a matter of truly national concern."<sup>125</sup>

This victory was crowned August 2, 1967 when the rezoning application for Kings Landing was officially withdrawn because The Nature Conservancy's action "negated the possibility of a planned residential community" according to the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors.<sup>126</sup>

In the end, The Nature Conservancy would invest a total of more than \$6 million on Mason Neck, through a number of smaller land purchases in addition to the Wills and Van Metre purchase, making the project one of the largest acquisitions in the Conservancy's then 20-year history.<sup>127</sup> Later in 1967, the State of Virginia would buy 1,120 of these acres to establish Mason Neck State Park and the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority would purchase 220 acres – all part of the Wills and Van Metre Kings Landing tract. The rest would be held for federal acquisition. This was the

Conservancy's first large cooperative federal government program (today known as a government co-op), and would become a model for the many that would follow.<sup>128</sup>

## ***Federal National Wildlife Refuge***

With acquisition of a state and regional park on Mason Neck well underway, there remained the issue of a national wildlife refuge. The Interior Department was committed in principle to establishing a refuge to protect the Great Marsh and adjoining habitat. In fact, this was the stated plan as early as 1966 and a specific recommendation of the Recreation and Landscape Sub Task Force in 1968.<sup>129</sup> But getting the authorization and the money from Congress was another matter altogether and it turned out to be a long and complicated ordeal.

Hartwell's frustration is revealed as early as May 16, 1966. "The Interior Department is pretending at the moment that it never heard of Mason Neck," she wrote in a letter to James Deane. "They've gone into hiding."<sup>130</sup>

The Mason Neck Conservation Committee had been active in advocating for federal acquisition from the beginning. Hartwell also enlisted national organizations such as the National Wildlife Federation, Defenders of Wildlife and the National Audubon Society to help exert pressure starting in 1966. In a not so subtle plea to Sydney Howe, a board member of the National Audubon Society, in December of 1966, she wrote to congratulate him on his election and added, "as a member of the board, how about persuading the Society to pressure Interior to utilize the Endangered Species Act re: bald eagles on Mason Neck?"<sup>131</sup>

In early 1967, Hartwell sent yet another telegram to Secretary Udall, this time to express concern over the refuge program for Mason Neck. Theodore Swem, assistant director of the Fish and Wildlife Service, answered for the Secretary, writing February 27 that the Service was appraising both the biology and the realty of the area and that acquisition would begin as soon as funds were available.

In addition to pressure from local groups, something else occurred that spurred the Fish and Wildlife Service into action. Legislation to create the George Washington Country Parkway that had been proposed as part of Project Potomac failed to pass.<sup>132</sup> The Interior Department had hoped to use that legislation to acquire some of the land that had not been incorporated in the state or regional park. (In fact, it had not been incorporated precisely because maps showed those acres as being part of the National Park Service's proposed Country Parkway planned to traverse Mason Neck and to contain ½ mile buffers on each side.) The Interior Department suddenly needed another mechanism by which to acquire land abutting the state and regional parks, and aggregating about 950 acres.<sup>133</sup>

The Fish and Wildlife Service enlisted the regional director in Atlanta to devise a plan. In a January 6, 1967 memo from the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife Director to the Atlanta Regional Director, the situation was laid out and the order given. "Please furnish us a report on the realty and engineering aspects of the Great Marsh and necessary upland to be acquired under the Migratory Bird Conservation Act using Duck Stamp funds. A report should also be submitted on an adjacent eagle roosting area to be acquired under the Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956, using Land and Water Conservation

Fund monies. The total cost, including overhead, cannot exceed \$750,000 under existing legislation...This is a priority request...”

When it came to refuge acquisition, the Service tended to fall back to its traditional roots – creating waterfowl refuges. So it is no surprise that Mason Neck was first evaluated for its importance to waterfowl. By Spring of 1967, however, the Fish and Wildlife Service had concluded, based on field studies, that the observed level of waterfowl use in the Mason Neck area would not justify a land acquisition under the Migratory Bird Conservation Act. The other option would be to acquire the 950 acres for the bald eagle.

But, according to an April 4, 1967 memo from the Service to the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority, the best way to justify this purchase would be through a commitment between the Service, the state and the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority to manage the entire area – all three contiguous parks – for “a total program of eagle preservation on Mason Neck.”<sup>134</sup> (According to William C. “Bill” Ashe, a deputy regional director at the time, this was because there actually were no bald eagles on the property to be acquired by the Service!<sup>135</sup>) In addition, since the cost of acquiring the 950 acres would exceed the statutory limit of \$750,000 under the Endangered Species Preservation Act, Congressional authorization would be needed.

By March of 1968, still nothing had been acquired, and Hartwell continued to push against the thick walls of federal bureaucracy, this time focusing on the Congress, in whose hands the decision now rested. She and other activists wrote letters to key Congressmen and Senators, relating the commitments already made by the state and the Regional Park Authority. “At this point the federal government has the opportunity to

make its contribution to something which could be a superlative example to the nation of what can be accomplished through governmental cooperation.”<sup>136</sup>

Congress finally relented, and the Service got a portion of the money for the Mason Neck refuge in 1968. In July however, the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee withdrew half of the \$750,000 to put toward the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center in Maryland. Mason Neck was left with \$375,000.<sup>137</sup> The plan, then, was to acquire about 240 acres, including 200 acres of marsh and 40 acres of upland.<sup>138</sup>

The Interior Department’s final report on the Potomac Project, “The Nation’s River,” released in October of 1968, made clear Mason Neck was still a top priority for the Administration. “Action should be taken as soon as possible to acquire the national wildlife refuge on Mason Neck.” And it was.<sup>139</sup>

In February 1969, the refuge was officially established through an initial purchase of the first 252 acres bought for \$365,415. This was followed by a second purchase in October of that year (which was calendar year 1969, but, significantly, fiscal year 1970, when new money was available). That purchase consisted of 145 acres for \$362,500. The largest single purchase was made in August 1970 when the Service bought 494 acres for a sum of \$1.3 million. These three purchases were all made with endangered species funds. It was the first national wildlife refuge acquired specifically to protect the bald eagle.<sup>140</sup> The first refuge manager arrived in October 1970 and in 1971, the final purchase using endangered species funds was made – 59 acres for \$300,000.<sup>141</sup>

From 1975 - 1979, the Service used Land and Water Conservation Funds to buy seven additional tracts totaling 180.69 acres for \$589,095. Five years would elapse before

the next purchases would be made, and in those years, another crisis was brewing, putting Hartwell again at the helm of yet another campaign.

As early as 1978, Hartwell began contacting the Fish and Wildlife Service about an issue that was about to threaten the integrity of the entire new national wildlife refuge.<sup>142</sup> By 1982, she had activated a major campaign to stop it. On June 12, 1982, she wrote, “We are faced with another serious threat to Mason Neck,” and called for a “concerted effort by citizens” to “prevent irreversible damage to this area of distinctive environmental and historic values which we have labored for many years to protect.”<sup>143</sup>

At issue were three tracts aggregating 355 acres proposed for acquisition by the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority in the 1960s.<sup>144</sup> The Regional Park Authority had applied for Land and Water Conservation Fund matching grants several times over the ensuing 15 years but their requests were consistently denied by the Virginia Commission on Outdoor Recreation. The Commission maintained that funds were for recreation purposes and could not be used to support endangered species or habitat protection.<sup>145</sup> Thus, the lands were never purchased. A sense of urgency was created in 1982 by the owner of 296 acres, the largest of the three tracts. No doubt running out of patience at having held his land for more than ten years, he put it on the market and threatened to sell it to developers.

Hartwell directed concerned citizens to send letters to Representative Sidney R. Yates, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Interior Appropriations. John S. Gottschalk, counsel to the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and former Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service had already contacted Yates. In a May 25, 1982 letter urging appropriations for immediate acquisition of all three tracts, Gottschalk

of course emphasized the importance of maintaining the ecological integrity of the refuge (noting that eagles do not “countenance human disturbance”). But he also warned that the integrity of the federal government itself was at stake, relating that the landowners “are having to continue to pay taxes on their property, their land values are less than they would be if there were no refuge in the area, and they have patiently waited for promised government action.” He continues, “I believe they have a right to feel aggrieved by this dilatory treatment”<sup>146</sup>

The ensuing victory for Mason Neck was achieved over several years when Congress appropriated a total of \$4.3 million for the Service to buy the 355 acres in four separate transactions from 1984 - 1987, using money from the Land and Water Conservation Fund. The Fish and Wildlife Service virtually doubled the size of the refuge area with the additional 355-acre acquisition combined with 790 acres leased from the Northern Virginia Park Authority as part of the deal.

Today, the wildlife refuge consists of 2,277 acres and contains the largest fresh water marsh in Northern Virginia. It supports one of the largest great blue heron rookeries in the Mid-Atlantic, with more than 1,400 nests and is a designated “wetland of international importance,”<sup>147</sup> hosting more than 200 species of birds, 31 mammal species and 44 species of reptiles and amphibians. It also is one of the top ten bald eagle viewing sites in the country, hosting from 30 eagles in summer to more than 60 in winter.

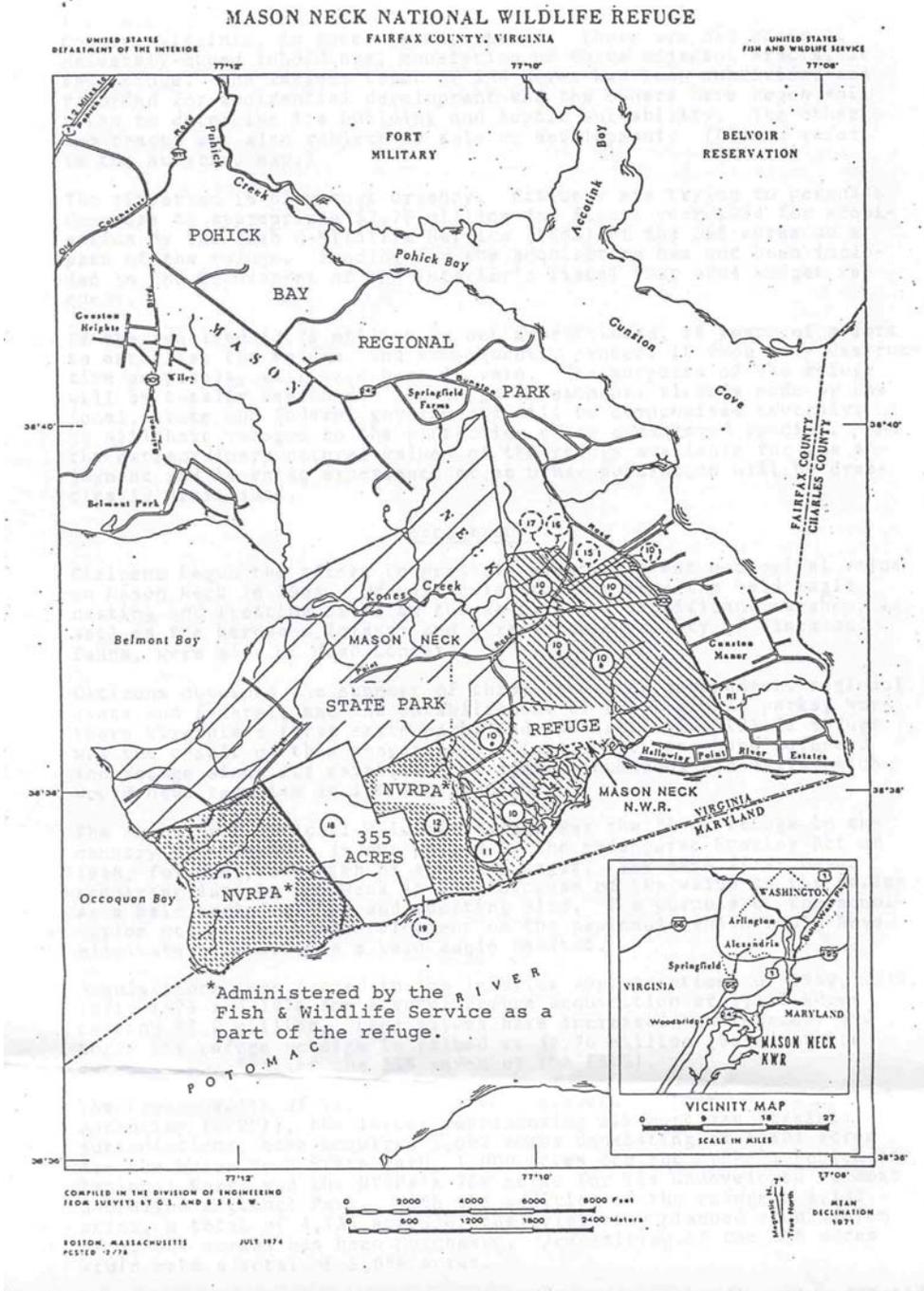


Figure 6: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service). Mason Neck National Wildlife Refuge map, showing the 355 acres of private inholdings surrounded by parcels owned by the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority but managed by the Service.

## ***The Opposition to Protection***

Throughout the ordeal to create three permanently protected areas on Mason Neck, there was, of course, strong opposition. It is not surprising that the landowners who stood to lose the most financially were the ones who opposed protection the loudest.<sup>148</sup> John Hull and Ludlow King had the most at stake and they fought for their plans for several years. In a September 1967 Planning Commission hearing on regional park proposals, Ludlow King was still angry. He said he “did not think the hardship and injustice done to them [the three landowners of Kings Landing] had been considered enough, or was realized.” He felt the Commission’s actions had contributed to the destruction of the value of their property and for that reason, there should be some obligation to the affected landowners.

Noting that the landowners had already been paid for their land (The Nature Conservancy bought out the developer who had already paid the landowners \$3 million), planning commissioner Sahr asked him what damage had been done to him. King responded that he sold his property because he could no longer afford the taxes on it, which he claimed had gone up 500% in 6 years. He added that he sold with the understanding he and Hull would retain a half-interest in the proposed development, which would have meant \$5 million (a \$2 million lost opportunity).<sup>149</sup>

But Hull, King and Van Metre were not the only losers in this battle. Tom Newton was another vocal opponent of conservation. He published a letter in the local Free Press May 12, 1966, “Mason Neck Park Seen as a Waste,” in which he advocated for development, citing its potential tax base for the county, and suggesting Leesylvania as an appropriate alternative site for protection. (Leesylvania was later created as a state

park in addition to Mason Neck). He summed up his views in this paragraph: “It seems to me to be a waste to have money producing lands which can strengthen the economy, given up to parks and wildlife – these two headings are secondary and to be fitted in, they are not the main course.” Of course, these views were likely influenced by his stature as a landowner – he owned 100 acres on Mason Neck (but did not reside there). This came out at a public hearing when he read his letter objecting to the proposed parks and favoring the Kings Landing development. He “wanted to do something with his property before he lost it;” he “favored the Kings Landing type development as it would bring in the sewer.”<sup>150</sup>

Another story of an opposing landowner is that of Dr. Elizabeth Parker, a medical doctor whose late husband, Dr. Paul Bartsch, was a noted Smithsonian scientist. She lived on the historic Lebanon Estate and with her husband had converted it into a locally famous, fantastic garden of exotic ferns from all over the world. She wrote, “Lebanon has been cherished by families of people as a home site for many decades. I and my husband have cherished and sought always to conserve it.”<sup>151</sup> Her loving care of the land, as it turned out, helped seal its fate because over her initial objections, the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority annexed it to their Pohick Bay Regional Park. When asked by Parker’s representative what made the land so special above other tracts, in addition to the historic structure on the property (it had recently been learned that part of the house was built in 1732), the Regional Park Authority responded that it “was good parkland because of the state in which it had been maintained,” not to mention it was adjacent to land already owned by the Regional Park Authority.<sup>152</sup>

Parker had another use for the land in mind – to sell the property to the Edward Carr development company and turn her beautiful gardens into high end residences, with ½-acre density zoning, creating a tidy profit for herself.<sup>153</sup> The Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority ultimately bought her land for less than she thought it was worth. It had been sitting on the county park plan since 1958, which had lowered its value.<sup>154</sup>

## **Conclusion**

To be sure, the landowners of Mason Neck had every right to want to profit from their holdings. After all, land had made many an American wealthy since Colonial days; land speculation was then, and is now, an American tradition. Private land ownership is something this country was founded on; people have fought and died for the right to own it. The landowners of Mason Neck had much to gain from development.

What did Elizabeth Hartwell stand to gain? According to Secretary Stewart Udall, her gain was much bigger than personal wealth. “Each generation has its own rendezvous with the land, for despite our fee titles and claims of ownership, we are all brief tenants on this planet. By choice, or by default, we will carve out a land legacy for our heirs. We can misuse the land and diminish the usefulness of resources, or we can create a world in which physical affluence and affluence of the spirit go hand in hand.”<sup>155</sup>

Brief tenant Elizabeth Hartwell, who died December 14, 2000 at age 76, left a land legacy from that place of spiritual affluence Udall describes.<sup>156</sup> Working with her friends (and adversaries, some who ultimately came to thank her), she left this legacy not only for the eagles, but for her children and her grandchildren, and all the children and grandchildren of the world to come.

## PART TWO: INGREDIENTS FOR SUCCESS: ARE THEY AVAILABLE TODAY?

The citizen effort to convince local, state and federal officials to acquire park and refuge lands on Mason Neck took place over the relatively short period between 1965, when Mason Neck residents became aware of the Kings Landing development plan, and 1969, when the national wildlife refuge was officially established.<sup>157</sup> When one analyzes the primary ingredients that made for success in the “battle to preserve Mason Neck,” it is difficult to imagine a similar outcome in today’s political climate, for a number of reasons.

They say “timing is everything,” and timing certainly played a pivotal role in this case. It is not mere coincidence that Hartwell’s work occurred during the environmental movement of the 1960s. It was a decade of vast change in environmental policy and Hartwell was no doubt swept up in the momentum, as were many other free thinkers of her time. A significant number of environmental laws were enacted during the decade, including The Wilderness Act (1964), Clean Air Act (1963), Land and Water Conservation Act (1964), Water Quality Act (1965), Endangered Species Preservation Act (1966), Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (1968) and National Environmental Policy Act (1969). This body of legislation was a reflection of a national environmental movement endorsed and enhanced by the President himself. President Johnson’s brand of conservation recognized the importance of the environment not only for practical reasons, but for intrinsic values as well. He often spoke about quality of life and simple beauty. It resonated to a broad audience.

New environmental organizations sprung up in the 1960s, including the Environmental Defense Fund, World Wildlife Fund, and Friends of the Earth. Popular books of the decade included Secretary Stewart Udall's *The Quiet Crisis*, Paul Ehrlich's *The Population Bomb*, Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* and Edward Abbey's *Desert Solitaire*. It was the decade when the Sierra Club took out full page ads promoting environmental action (and as a result, lost its tax exempt status).

In addition to the well known advocates of the time, such as David Brower, Howard Zahniser, and Rachel Carson, there was a groundswell of citizen action rising up from local communities across the country in the 1960s. A case in point is the story of Helen C. Fenske of Green Village, New Jersey, whose story bears a striking resemblance to Hartwell's and played out at about the same time.<sup>158</sup> When a proposed regional jetport threatened the Great Swamp of coastal New Jersey, Fenske, a housewife, embarked on a grassroots campaign that raised enough money (more than \$1 million) to buy the 3,000 acres needed to protect the swamp. The land was donated to the Interior Department in 1964 and is now the Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge. (Fenske did not stop there. Like Hartwell, she continued her advocacy for wetlands and wildlife preservation throughout the rest of her life.)

There are many examples of individual citizens leading community action to protect the environment during the 1960s.<sup>159</sup> In that regard, Hartwell can be seen as a product of her time. But other more locally-driven timing issues also emerged to influence her success in Northern Virginia. In fact, she found herself in the middle of a kind of "perfect storm," where crucial decision points at the federal, state and local level all converged into an unparalleled opportunity to influence the major land use allocations

of three levels of government within a short period of a few years. During the 1960s, the state was delineating a vast system of new parks, the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority was finalizing a 5-year plan of acquisitions, and the federal government was deciding how to protect the Potomac River Basin.

### ***Federal Land Acquisition Policy***

Federal land acquisition policies were much different in the 1960s than they are today. The focus of the Mason Neck citizens' campaign was to pressure local officials to put lands away in the form of permanently protected, publicly owned areas. It was an era when land acquisition was the conservation approach of choice and federal money was used to support the majority of purchases, either directly or through grants to states.<sup>160</sup> In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, with vastly different land policies, it is doubtful this approach would succeed.

Given today's increased land costs and tight federal budgets, the Interior Department generally moves away from outright acquisition of land and toward other, less costly, means of conservation such as easements or landowner compacts. These often are agreed to through what the Department calls "cooperative conservation."<sup>161</sup> The idea is that because the federal government cannot possibly afford to buy all the land needed for conservation, it should instead spend its limited resources on working with landowners to institute voluntary conservation measures on important habitat that crosses public and private boundaries.<sup>162</sup>

As a result of this change of thinking, the willingness to spend federal money on land acquisition has plummeted in recent years. Consider these quotes regarding the Land and Water Conservation Fund from two presidents.

*“The Nation needs a land acquisition program to preserve both prime Federal and State areas for outdoor recreation purposes...In addition to the enhancement of spiritual, cultural and physical values resulting from the preservation of these resources, the expenditures for their preservation are a sound financial investment.”* – President John F. Kennedy, on draft legislation for the Land and Water Conservation Fund. February, 1963

*"You know, it's interesting, the money it costs to buy a single acre of park land, a state could encourage environmental protection over many, many acres of land by working with private property owners.....I believe trusting local people to make local decisions is the right public policy."* – President George W. Bush, remarks on the Land and Water Conservation Fund, June 2001

## **The Land and Water Conservation Fund**

More than forty years ago, federal, state and local recreational need reports, combined with population and leisure time projections that showed a serious lack of open space, led to an unprecedented focus on buying lands for parks and wildlife in the 1960s.<sup>163</sup> The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), enacted in 1964, provided a substantial pool of money to fund not only federal acquisitions, but state and local parks

as well, through a matching grant program. Since 1964, more than \$14 billion has been made available for these acquisitions.

While the LWCF remains the principal funding source for land acquisitions today, authorizations for funds have steadily declined since 2001, and appropriations for “other uses” (i.e. payments in lieu of taxes, historic preservation grants) have increased. In contrast to the early years when the states received the largest portion of LWCF funds, states have been virtually cut out of the program in recent years. The Bush Administration request for the state grant acquisition program was zeroed out in FY 2006, 2007, and 2008, the justification being a growing federal deficit and a need to focus on core federal programs. (Congress did restore nominal funding each year.) Reduced federal support for parks has shifted the burden to already strapped state and local governments. There also has been a shift in *public sentiment* since the 1960s as well, from buying land for new parks to developing the parks that exist. As early as 1978, a Fish and Wildlife Service memo expressed frustration that “changing times with a more city-oriented constituency have made it more difficult for the [Park] Authority to obtain funds for land acquisition and have increased pressure for more intensive recreational development.”<sup>164</sup>

Land acquisition backlogs at Interior exceeded \$5 billion in 2000<sup>165</sup> and since then, the Administration has advocated selling federal lands, rather than buying more land, in an effort to reduce the federal deficit.<sup>166</sup>

## ***Strong Federal Backing***

In the 1960s, the citizen effort to protect Mason Neck had the weight of the federal government squarely behind it. Once citizens convinced key federal leaders of the unique natural and recreational values of Mason Neck, virtually every report produced for the Potomac Project identified Mason Neck as a priority for protection. In addition, Interior Secretary Udall and his staff became very actively involved in local planning decisions, speaking or writing letters on every major action concerning Mason Neck during that time period.

Current Interior policy (as of 2007) recognizes that private landowners and state and local governments do not necessarily want the federal government involved in buying land, removing it from the local tax base, and limiting opportunities to manage, or profit, from it.

It is interesting to note that the sentiment against federal interference in local decision making that exists today also existed 40 years ago. But with strong federal policy and Interior Department backing, Hartwell and the Mason Neck Conservation Committee could strategically work around it. In a letter to James Deane, Committee of 100 on the Federal City, January 28, 1966, Hartwell wrote, “There is a touchy subject...a number of local officials are not at all reticent about expressing their views in reference to interference in local affairs by governments and organizations outside their own jurisdiction.....I have found one way to get around this touchy subject is to get word to some of the more conservation-minded planners, in a subtle way of course....this leads the county to making the first approach, and the outcome has been more successful.”

## Cooperative Conservation and Local Decision-making

There has been another fundamental change in Interior policy as well – from one of confronting local officials (when necessary) in the 1960s to one of partnership, consensus and cooperation today. In 1964, Secretary Udall, for example, publicly criticized Fairfax County officials for a zoning variance that would have permitted high rise apartments at Merrywood, an estate on the Potomac River upstream from Washington. Udall was forced to spend federal money buying the easements that would protect the river view, to make up for “the costly blunder” of the County Supervisors, and those easements did not come cheap.<sup>167</sup> Today, Interior defers to local governments to make local planning decisions.

Interior’s current policy for consensus and deference to local government is evidenced in changes in 2005 to the Interior Department’s policy regarding implementation of the National Environmental Policy Act to include a *requirement* for Interior agencies to invite local governments to become involved as “Cooperating Agencies” in all Interior planning efforts.<sup>168</sup> (Hence, instead of federal involvement in local planning decisions, this is an invitation for increased local government involvement in federal decision making.) This happens before the public at large has an opportunity to engage. The thinking is that the public, defined as the local community, is already represented through their local elected officials.

In the 1960s in Fairfax County, however, at least a few of the local elected officials did not have the public’s best interests in mind when it came to zoning decisions. There was a lot of money to be made in development, and some Fairfax county officials in positions of authority stood to benefit financially. In September of 1966, 15 people

were indicted for bribery in county zoning cases, including a number of area builders and several county supervisors, three of whom would ultimately be convicted.<sup>169</sup>

Helen Dewar of *The Washington Post* at the time wrote, “Like gold in California in the 1840s and railroads at the turn of the century, land in today’s rapidly expanding suburbs is the source of extraordinary influence and wealth.... A zoning vote can make one man rich and leave another with a million dollars worth of disappointment.”<sup>170</sup> In 1965, land values in Fairfax County had more than quadrupled since 1955.<sup>171</sup> Even where there was nothing illegal going on, there was the appearance of complicity. Fairfax City Mayor Ed Prichard, for example, doubled as the private attorney for Wills and Van Metre, the developer of the proposed 1,800 Kings Landing tract.

John Parrish, a Fairfax County Supervisor, was among those indicted for tax evasion and accepting bribes in land deals.<sup>172</sup> It was Parrish who appointed sugar lobbyist Josiah Ferris to the board of the Northern Virginia Park Authority. Ferris was hardly an unbiased board member. He owned land on Mason Neck and so he stood to profit from the proposed development. He also was a close friend of the developer. When asked by a Washington Post reporter if he had lobbied for the developer’s proposal, he replied “I’m a registered lobbyist. I am supposed to be one of those skunks at the picnic,” but went on to state he had done nothing inappropriate.<sup>173</sup>

In the end, these ulterior motives would be kept in check by a vigilant citizenry activated by tireless leaders, such as Hartwell on the Mason Neck front, who had the time, the passion, and the courage to devote long hours to the task and to stand up to powerful interests backed, in some cases, by elected officials of dubious character.<sup>174</sup>

## ***Shoestring Budgets, Time as Capital***

In these days of million dollar public relations campaigns, it is refreshing to note that the Mason Neck outreach campaign was run at minimal cost. Hartwell ran it on a shoestring budget and relied mostly on the limited dollars and copious hours she and her active partners contributed. The fee to belong to the Mason Neck Conservation Committee was \$2 per year; some people could not even afford that, so they contributed their time instead. Hartwell also came to rely on a few dedicated local reporters who could be counted on to publicize her progress.

Hers was a time consuming endeavor. Before the days of word processing, she hand typed each and every letter (and there were many) perfectly; she had no administrative assistants; she was her own secretarial pool. She was a volunteer, receiving no compensation for taking on this “full time” job. What she did have was the freedom of answering to no boss, punching no time-clock, and being able to chart her own course.

This investment of time was a significant factor in Hartwell’s success. What many women of Hartwell’s generation had plenty of was time, according to Janet Cole of Mason Neck. She was describing the life of a 1960s housewife who had great curiosity, unstructured mid-days, yet a commitment to be home before and after school. These smart women welcomed a challenge, one that would fill their free hours with intellectually stimulating work yet not interfere with their duties to children and husband. Today, most of these women are at work, paying someone else to watch the children. There simply is no longer a large cadre of women with free time on their hands to take up

causes important to them. Today, *time* is scarce; 40 years ago, *money* was the limiting factor.

Hartwell personally joined numerous conservation groups in order to get the word out about Mason Neck, paying the dues with her own money.<sup>175</sup> She wrote frequently that she was running short of funds, spending her own resources when donations ran out. She hid the gas cans kept full for her boat tours to lessen the temptation for her teenage son to “borrow” the precious fuel. She worked out of her bedroom, which she described in a September 6, 1967, letter to Ned Bright of the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin:

*“Two large boxes under the bed, the rest of the room furnished with a typewriter, 8 file cases, a bird’s nest, a safe, a stereo-record player, 2 full 6-gallon marine gas tanks, (my teenage son has been known to siphon my boat gas into his Austin-Healy), a telephone, desk, copier, guitar and rolls of maps in every corner.”*

## **Access to a Man’s World**

Hartwell’s good looks and southern drawl were put to strategic advantage when needed; they coated a steel-like core of stubbornness and determination, all of which helped open the doors to powerful people, who, in the 1960s, were mostly men. In Secretary Udall’s words, describing the political climate of the 1960s, “It was truly a man’s world” and Hartwell learned to negotiate that world with aplomb.<sup>176</sup> She was asked to chair, lead or serve on dozens of committees, including winning an election to

chair the all-male board of the prestigious Citizens Council for a Clean Potomac. (From her letters, it is evident she waged a very active campaign to cinch that election, including arm twisting and pleading for support, which, as always, she got.)

It is doubtful this type of access would be granted today. Tight security, past violent antics of eco-terrorists and the sheer numbers of “conservationists” clamoring for access at the national level makes competition for a place at the table for “ordinary” citizens tight. In addition, women are no longer in the minority among decision makers. Hartwell surely stood out in her “spike” heels as she attended male dominated meetings and walked the halls of government buildings in the 1960s. Today, she would more easily blend in with the work-a-day world made up of, more or less, equal parts men and women.

Many of the socioeconomic and political factors that enabled Hartwell and her conservation partners to succeed – strong federal environmental policy, aggressive and well funded land acquisition policies, abundance of housewives as activists – are simply not found in today’s world.



Figure 7: Elizabeth S. Hartwell, August 16, 1965



Figure 8: A Man's World. From left: Charles Majer, Elizabeth Hartwell and William Durland, officers of the Mason Neck Conservation Committee, August 3, 1965. Both photos courtesy of the Hartwell family.

## ***Hartwell's Role: How Important Was It?***

It is difficult to separate out and quantify Hartwell's singular role in the decisions to preserve Mason Neck, but there is no doubt that her influence was significant. There were many people at the national, regional, state and local levels who wanted Mason Neck to be protected, including the Secretary of the Interior. These individuals were not well organized, however, and did not appear to have a single driving force to offer cohesion between the numerous groups and agencies involved. Hartwell helped provide that.

Hartwell became involved when many said it was already too late to stop the Kings Landing development proposal.<sup>177</sup> Land had been delineated, agreements struck, preliminary approvals given. The developer was well known and well connected. The Virginia State Water Control Board had already given preliminary approval, pending the county rezoning decision, which was considered all but assured. Furthermore, all of the lands in question were *private, not public*, lands. Interior's interest may have been strong, but so was the American notion of the sanctity of private property rights.

No one would disagree that some additional parcels of Mason Neck would have been set aside for permanent protection in the 1960s, with or without Hartwell's influence. The area had been prominent on the county radar screen for some time.<sup>178</sup> But an examination of Hartwell's strong personality and unrelenting strategy lends weight to the argument that, were it not for her determination to fight the odds stacked against it, Mason Neck would not be protected to the extent that it is today.

## Politics of Personality

Personality played a significant role in the conservation movement of the 1960s. Added to the popular conservation “personalities” of the day, (i.e. David Brower, outspoken leader of the Sierra Club, or popular authors Edward Abbey and Paul Erlich), there was the powerful voice of Interior Secretary Stewart Udall. His statements reveal a conviction and commitment that transcended the politics of “cooperation.” He did not mind making the news (as evidenced in the Merrywood case) when he knew he was “right,” and the opposition was “wrong.” In that sense, it was a black and white world. By contrast, strong personas in the conservation field at the national level today appear either absent or drowned out by the constant chatter of Internet blogs, streaming video, and endless media outlets.

Udall’s vocal convictions on the national scene were equally matched by Hartwell’s on the local scene. Her strong personality would not take “no” for an answer. Compromise, consensus and, cooperation -- these were not part of her lexicon. She favored terms like battle, win, lose -- fighting words. The lines were drawn; it was an all or nothing game. For example, she was adamant that the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority not accept easements; permanent protection was what she was after, and ultimately, that is what she got.

In her game, no one was off limits. Hartwell, on more than one occasion, publicly conflicted with her husband, a Fairfax County Planning Commissioner. <sup>179</sup> “They (Mr. and Mrs. Hartwell) did not talk about work much at home,” says son Robert Hartwell. “They learned early on that it wasn’t a good idea.” In reading minutes of commission meetings, many held late into the night, an image of Mr. Hartwell emerges of a

reasonable man who tended to take the middle ground, such as a willingness to consider compromise to allow some development along with increased conservation on the Kings Landing project area. This certainly was not the stance of his wife, Elizabeth, for whom the concepts “middle ground” or “good enough” did not exist.<sup>180</sup>

Hartwell also faced the wrath of developers, whose profits she was diminishing. In an informal note to “Liz,” a friend named “Owen” described eavesdropping on businessmen talking at a meeting. “ ‘Who’s Hartwell?’ one of them asked. ‘Oh, she’s some busy body down on Mason Neck who killed the development for the sake of a lousy swamp and some damn fool birds.’”<sup>181</sup>

She showed great strength and determination in the face of relentless pressure to back off. Developers literally stood to lose millions in potential income with the loss of the outer beltway and lands for development, but she stood her ground. She later recalled, “The developers flapped their arms like wings at me in the halls, and made eagle noises. It never did get me down, because I knew I was going to win.”<sup>182</sup> She also knew she had some prominent allies.

## **Smart Strategist**

Hartwell was not only confident, she was smart and persistent. She put her excellent communication and strategic planning skills to work unceasingly for more than three decades.

Her strategy was deliberate and brilliant. For one, she started at the top. “Don’t be shy,” she once wrote, “Contact top decision-makers.”<sup>183</sup> Not bound to a chain-of-command approach that a paid position might entail, she was free to approach the

Secretary of the Interior, crash in on bus tours, use her charm to borrow helicopters from the Army, take officials through the muck of the marsh, and get herself invited and elected to any major organization that could make a difference.

Hartwell also enlisted the support of others, many being key leaders, and she had the support of virtually the entire Mason Neck community behind her. In other words, she did not work alone, and that was a deliberate decision. In organizing the Mason Neck Conservation Committee, she encouraged William Durland to take the lead. She was offered that position, but wisely declined, “believing that if one of the *candidates* were elected, we’d have a good ‘in’ with the State legislature.” (emphasis added)<sup>184</sup> It also helped that Durland was a *man* in addition to being a well-known politician. Durland later wrote, “Women were not readily accepted, at least in Virginia, as publicly knowledgeable...”<sup>185</sup> No doubt aware of this reality, Hartwell initially took a back seat publicly, but was very much active behind the scenes. She took no back seat with respect to keeping federal officials informed, however. She sent numerous telegrams and letters to Interior Secretary Udall and they were answered.

Hartwell was persistent over many years. As the acquisition of the Mason Neck National Wildlife Refuge dragged on over decades, Hartwell made personal visits to Interior, across administrations.<sup>186</sup> So during the Nixon Administration, there she was, cruising through the Interior Department’s hallways with Assistant Secretary Nat Reed, rearranging the Fish and Wildlife Service’s land acquisition priorities. She made sure they pushed Mason Neck back up to the top of the list where, in her opinion, it belonged (when in fact, their priorities at the time were focused on endangered desert pupfish protection in Nevada).<sup>187</sup> Earl Basinger, acting chief of the endangered species office of

the Fish and Wildlife Service in the late 1960s and approver of all endangered species land acquisitions at the time, admitted that, had Hartwell come to his office alone to discuss refuge acquisition on Mason Neck, “we would have had a nice cup of coffee and an interesting discussion,” but since she was accompanied by an Assistant Secretary of the Interior, he admitted, “before they left, we had rethought this thing.” He added, “She had a forceful personality and was not intimidated by Washington bureaucrats.”

She also was very much involved in the internal workings of the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority, and when the potential conflict of interest of Board Member Josiah Ferris was raised, she rallied community support for replacing him with Jameson Parker, to give the “pro Mason Neck vote the needed majority of 5.”<sup>188</sup> This worked, and is one reason why the regional park plan succeeded. (Hartwell herself would finally agree to sit on this very Board years later, after initially turning down the offer.)

She used a similar strategy for state officials, and one wonders how she could keep all those lines of communication and correspondence open, with federal, state and regional officials, enlisting one to back the other and vice versa. An example is her letter to Virginia State Parks Commissioner Ben Bolen of October 11, 1966, where she wrote, “It is presumptuous of me to suggest possible action for you to take, however I believe that a congratulatory note from the Park Commissioner to the Planning Commissioner in reference to the motion banning any multifamily zoning within ½ mile of either side of the George Washington Country Parkway would be an effective means of making a reconsideration of this motion most difficult.”

In her later work to keep Mason Neck protected, Hartwell emerged from behind the scenes to testify on her own. Her arguments are logically conceived and delivered

with a sharp wit and an uncompromising point of view, with facts to back her up. There are numerous examples. Here is one, in her own words, regarding a proposal to turn a small one-acre island into a 24-acre resort in waters near Mason Neck.

*“I testified at the hearing and called attention to the fact that though the island originally comprised 23.4 acres when the Commonwealth of Virginia first granted title to a private owner in 1916, it since had eroded away and now only a few acres are permanently above water. The Department of the Interior said that only ½ to 1 acre of the island remained emerged at high tide. I then asked two Socratic questions. If a riparian owner can automatically gain title to land added to his property by natural accretion, in the same manner, cannot a riparian owner lose title to land which has naturally eroded away? Has not the submerged land at Conrad Island below mean low tide reverted back to the state? The assistant commonwealth’s attorney ruled that these situations were in fact true. The state eventually granted the permit with the provision that the owner ‘erase the property lines as shown on his application and make them conform with the mean low water mark.’ The owner actually dropped his plans because he went to the hearing with a 23-acre island, and left it with only a one-acre island.”<sup>189</sup>*

## **Enlists Others Who Shared Her Passion**

As stated earlier, Elizabeth Hartwell was not the only citizen who was working hard to save Mason Neck. In fact, most of the peninsula’s residents were involved by attending meetings and signing petitions at a minimum. Hartwell realized the importance of these allies, and although she alienated them at times, she also valued them, and knew that if she worked alone, success would be elusive.

This was made clear in correspondence between Hartwell and Maxine Rock, friend and editor of National Parks Magazine. In a June 26, 1966 letter to Rock, Hartwell wrote, “An effort [to stop development on Mason Neck] had been made once before a few years ago by a resident of Hallowing Point; however, he tried to do it by himself and didn’t bother letting anyone know, so he lost out right away.”

Some residents were more active than others of course. Noman Cole, an engineer, Mason Neck resident, and Hartwell's neighbor, began working in the 1950s to find ways to clean up the Potomac River, which was heavily polluted. He was quoted in the local paper: "I remember one guy from WSSC [Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission] who told me that the Potomac is a sewer, always has been and always will be..... I said, 'Get out of my way.'"<sup>190</sup> His wife, Janet Cole, was also involved in Hartwell's campaign.

Former State Senator Joseph V. Gartlan Jr. who retired on Mason Neck in the 1980s, says he found in the residents, "A community that's very, very protective of the area and will fight tooth and nail to keep it that way .... If I were a developer's lawyer; I'd tell him he's grabbing a ... hornet's nest if he wants to develop down here."<sup>191</sup>

People residing outside of Mason Neck were equally committed, and among them were Jameson Parker, William Durland, Joyce Wilkinson, and Clive DuVall, a State Senator who lived in McLean but had a special fondness for Mason Neck. <sup>192</sup> At one point, he offered to personally raise up to \$50,000 to help fund the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority's purchase. The offer was turned down but the point was made.<sup>193</sup>

Hartwell was a registered Republican, yet she welcomed all who shared her passion; they came from all political persuasions and worked in a bipartisan fashion to achieve their goals. Her work no doubt inspired the strong anti-development culture among Mason Neck residents that Gartlan referred to, and which is still very much prevalent today.

## Well Versed in Natural Resources

Although Hartwell never finished her formal college education, she was well versed in natural resources issues, having trained herself along the way. This was critically important. She could hold her own in debates about the merits of her proposals, from an ecological, biological, and social perspective.<sup>194</sup> “Deal with facts, only facts,” she wrote. “Establish credibility and maintain it. Never allow your integrity to be questioned.”<sup>195</sup>

She knew how to translate her passion and knowledge into convincing op-eds that would resonate with county readers. “The largest contributor to contamination of the Potomac River is effluent from sewage treatment plants,” she wrote in 1965. “Subdivision development entails numerous small private sewage treatment plants” and these result in “serious contamination by the nutrients of such plants. The second largest contaminant is siltation resulting largely from land stripped and left bare...by developers. ... Subdivision development also contributes immeasurably to the disappearance of ... wildlife by destroying its native habitat.” And in case the threat of increased water pollution posed by developers was lost on readers, she threw in a bit of American history and patriotism to cinch her case, noting that the “still standing structures of colonial days,” on Mason Neck are “concrete evidence of our nation’s beginnings, and much more forceful reminders of our country’s past and continuing greatness than any history books.”<sup>196</sup>

Hartwell embarked on her self-directed natural resources education first by observing the birds and other wildlife in her yard and, later, on exploratory trips by boat and canoe through the marshes of Mason Neck. She later recalled, “In order to study the eagles close at hand in their natural habitat, I usually put my boat in the water in April and didn’t take it out until October or November.”<sup>197</sup> She had an adventurous spirit and an unquenchable thirst for learning about wildlife, water quality, and other environmental issues that affected her beloved bald eagles. She also understood the value of sharing her knowledge with decision makers. “The local powers that be nearly always make their decisions without actually having seen the lands under siege,” she wrote. “Take them there, in person, and show them....”<sup>198</sup> And she did.

“I took 15 different groups on the tour last summer, besides going out myself at least twice a week,” she wrote to her friend James Deane. “So I know where the birds are plus the other wildlife....I’m a born swamp rat and go out every chance I get.”<sup>199</sup>

In another letter to Deane, she wrote, “I skipped two dates Sunday afternoon – a formal dedication and an open house, and went into the marsh by boat for the first time this year. Saw eight bald eagles as soon as I got in – six mature and two immature; it’s always a thrilling experience. Chris Rothery caught two enormous snapping turtles in the marsh the weekend before last. One weighed 40 pounds, the other 15. Naturally I took movies and will splice them in.”<sup>200</sup>

Hers were not form letters to be sure. Her passion and wit effuses in her letters and she seems helpless to stop it. “Today I bought a canoe so the next time you visit we can go way back in the marsh and ... get quite close to the eagles that way. Or you could

go alone if you like, and not be encumbered by an excitable female who could easily upset said canoe by going into hysterics at the sight of a green heron.”<sup>201</sup>

She had a fondness for Greek Mythology. In a letter to Thomas Love of the Northern Virginia Sun, April 27, 1966, she refers to Mason Neck as the “Elysian Fields” and in another letter, she elicits Charon, the ferryman of the dead.<sup>202</sup>

To Love, she also wrote: “I’ll take you in my boat for a glimpse of what so many people have never seen, or will never see; what others couldn’t see if they tried; and what others have seen but have forgotten existed.”

## **It Took a Toll**

By May of 1966, Hartwell started to become disillusioned with the politics. She wrote to her friend James Deane, “I use to be of a very trusting nature, grew up in a town where you always left the keys in the car when you parked it downtown and never locked your front door, but in the last year I’ve become just plain suspicious, and find it hard to trust or believe anybody.”<sup>203</sup> A year later, and more than two years into the battle, there was a sense of growing isolation in her letters. The once blue-ribbon winner of the garden club set wrote to her friend Mrs. Stephen Snowden of the Kings Park Four Seasons Garden Club in Springfield May 7, 1967. “Dear Marge, thank you for the kind note of March 17. Such are the little things that count. *Written words of encouragement are few and far between...*” After filling her in on progress to date, she hinted that she may call upon her club’s assistance again for a “massive letter writing campaign” for Congressional appropriations when the time is right. “It’s good to feel that in times of

crisis there are some dependable supporters, *especially after being practically alone for so long.*” (emphasis added)

Hartwell was sometimes as hard on her allies as she was on her foes, and this no doubt added to her sense of isolation. She alienated members of the Mason Neck Conservation Committee, which, she observed later, only met five times.<sup>204</sup> William Durland went so far as to self publish a book in 1999 in order to give credit to “members of the Conservation Committee for Mason Neck and all those volunteer Virginia citizens who together made the preservation of Mason Neck possible.” He wrote, the story of Mason Neck is “the story of many people and not just one.”<sup>205</sup>

For her part, Hartwell felt her hard work deserved accurate credit. For example, she questioned the citation used in an award presented to neighbor Joe Flakne by the Izaak Walton League, and she wrote a letter to the Executive Director to draw attention to the list of accomplishments used to justify the honor. She felt the citation reflected her actions rather than his, which also were significant but not accurately described. The organization stood by its decision in the end.

Her activism took a personal toll. Hartwell would eventually separate from her husband and move to Alexandria where she would live out the rest of her days, continuing to fight for conservation, and for her health, which was failing.

She found it difficult to find paid employment. Her outspoken style suited her volunteer activism perfectly but it may have intimidated future employers who would have to channel and perhaps contain her legendary out flowing of passion and energy. Her friends, and those she supported politically, tended to distance themselves when the subject arose. In an ironic twist, her wild success was part of her failure to fit into that

suiting and salaried world that existed outside of the muck of the marsh, the fight of the hearing room. She had made her mark and it was indelible. Her once-husband Stephen Hartwell would continue to support her for the rest of her life.

## **She Continues the Fight**

Once the three protected areas had been assured, and Hartwell had successfully fought off the deep water sea port, the sewer treatment plant in the marsh and the outer beltway, as well as the 1,800 acre development, one might think her job had been done. But in fact, Hartwell devoted her life to protecting Mason Neck. For decades, she led battles to run off a number of additional proposals for Mason Neck, including the following: a Science and Industrial Exposition Center that would have eaten up 500 acres of waterfront (1967); an Army-proposed 100-foot aluminum tower in the eagle nest site to be used for experimenting with chemical aerosol spraying (!) (1968); a federal and state program to apply the pesticide dieldrin, a derivative of DDT, on Mason Neck lands to fight a so-called white fringe beetle infestation (which Hartwell researched and learned consisted of exactly one beetle found nearby, but outside of, Mason Neck) (1969); a 20-year Corps of Engineers dredging project that would have removed 5 million tons of soil from waters adjacent to the refuge (1970) [This case spurred Maryland to pass a law against dredging in Charles County's tidal waters. Maryland has jurisdiction over the Potomac River waters near Mason Neck. The sand and gravel company sued all the way to the Supreme Court, with Maryland's environmental friendly law resulting in a winning verdict for the State of Maryland and the environmentalists who joined as *amicus curiae*,

friends of the court.]; a rather nutty proposal by John Ringle, a Fairfax County resident, to enlarge his one-acre Conrad Island in Belmont Bay to 24 acres and create a heavily developed island resort he planned to call “Bajamas,” (1972); a natural gas pipeline, (1974) and a proposed airport to be built at nearby Fort Belvoir, which Hartwell called “the worst threat yet,” as small planes would travel right over eagle nests, (1973); this threat resulted in Hartwell reconstituting the Mason Neck Conservation Committee and they pulled out all stops to successfully fight it.<sup>206</sup>

In many of these cases, the threat to the bald eagle was used as an effective justification for halting the proposal, but in every single case, Hartwell activated her network of supporters, her key Congressional and Administration contacts, her locally-famous series of “Urgent Notices” (later called “Action Alerts”) and other sharply honed PR and writing approaches, which together fed a boundless energy to effectively derail any notion that Mason Neck would be used for any purpose other than rural residences and bald eagle protection.

One action is of particular note in that it led to creation of yet another federal wildlife refuge. In 1968, a pending Congressional bill would have authorized Prince William County to buy 350 acres owned by the D.C. government and use it to create a new landfill and sewage treatment plant. The problem? The location was a productive marsh located directly across Belmont Bay from Mason Neck. The legislation was buried in a larger bill and thus escaped notice when it passed the Senate. But before it reached the House floor, Hartwell was alerted. She knew whom to call and Republican John Saylor of Pennsylvania made sure it did not survive. When the same proposal was introduced a year later, Hartwell’s army was ready. The bill that ultimately passed in its

place created the Featherstone National Wildlife Refuge.<sup>207</sup> Today it is one of three national wildlife refuges protecting Potomac River marshes in the Mason Neck area; the other two are the Occoquan Bay National Wildlife Refuge and the refuge on Mason Neck.

### ***Her Legacy Lives On: Elizabeth Hartwell National Wildlife Refuge***

Hartwell has been widely recognized for her work over the years, was a favored speaker at high school graduations and other community and regional events and remains a local legend. Her work was featured in virtually every Northern Virginia newspaper of the day. Carl Bernstein is one of a number of reporters who wrote about her in the *Washington Post*.<sup>208</sup> She was featured in national magazines as well, including *Southern Living*.<sup>209</sup> Odom Fanning devoted an entire section on Hartwell in his book, *Man and His Environment: Citizen Action*. The section on Hartwell is included in the Chapter, “Cases of Local Action,” of which there are ten described, illustrating the point that local environmental activists were working in other parts of the country as well.

Hartwell remained active in conservation throughout the rest of her life. Three Virginia governors appointed her to various conservation positions over the years. Governor Linwood Holton appointed her to the State Board of Agriculture and Commerce; Governor Charles Robb appointed her to the Northern Virginia Potomac River Basin Committee; she was reappointed by Governor Gerald Baliles. Additional government appointments include Fairfax County representative to the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority, three 4-year terms; appointed by the Department of Defense to judge the Department of Defense Natural Resources Conservation Award; and appointed

by the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors to serve on the Fairfax County Potomac River Basin Advisory Committee, Fairfax County Goals Committee, the Fairfax County Wetlands board (she served as Chairman for seven years of her nine-year membership), and the County Sewer Committee.

Hartwell also was invited to serve on numerous boards. She was chairman of the Board of Directors for the Citizens Council for a Clean Potomac, 1966 - 1969, and a member for 10 years; member of the Committee of 100 on the Federal City, 1967 - 1975; vice president, 1970, Board of Directors, 1967 - 1974, Northern Virginia Conservation Council; vice president, 1972, Board of Directors, 1969 - 1975 Conservation Council of Virginia; Board of Directors, Audubon Naturalist Society of the Central Atlantic States, 1973 - 1975; Board of Directors, Potomac Valley Conservation and Recreation Council, 1970 - 1973; vice chairman, Fairfax County Citizens for Parks, 1971.

The conservation community also honored Hartwell for her work. Among awards given to her are the Conservation Award of the National Capital Area Federation of Garden Clubs, 1967; Conservation Award of the District of Columbia chapter of the Soil Conservation Society of America; the Washington Star Trophy as Fairfax County's Citizen of the Year, 1971; and the Virginia Wildlife Federation Wildlife Conservationist of the Year award, 1976.<sup>210</sup> She also was awarded the Fairfax Park Authority's 1990 Elly Doyle Service Award. In addition, the Fairfax County Heritage Resources Branch named the historic archaeological Tauxenent Indian site, visited by Captain John Smith in 1608, the "Hartwell Site."<sup>211</sup>

The ultimate honor required Congressional legislation, passed in 2006, to rename Mason Neck National Wildlife Refuge the Elizabeth S. Hartwell National Wildlife

Refuge. The idea of naming a park after her had been broached more than 40 years before when Thomas Love wrote an article, “How About Hartwell Park?” referring to her influence in creation of the state park.<sup>212</sup> The fact is, she was instrumental in establishing all three parks on Mason Neck – regional, state, and federal.

The dedication of the new refuge name was held on April 21, 2007 on the grounds of Mason Neck State Park. (Coincidentally, this was exactly 40 years, to the day, from when the State of Virginia named Mason Neck State Park its number one priority). The celebration brought together many friends, family members, and the wider Northern Virginia community of wildlife and nature lovers to commemorate her accomplishments. Had she been alive to witness this celebration, she may not have felt totally comfortable in the limelight. When asked about her work, Hartwell once remarked, humbly, “The eagles won the battle for Mason Neck. I was simply their spokesman.”<sup>213</sup>

Today, in large part because of the tireless work of their self appointed “spokesperson,” bald eagles are thriving on Mason Neck. Between four – six nests, and 30 summering and 60 wintering bald eagles have been reported in recent years.<sup>214</sup> (This is part of a larger national story, as the bald eagle was officially delisted on August 8, 2007.) More than 6,600 acres are now protected on Mason Neck; the 800-acre Meadowood property was acquired in 2000 through a complex land exchange, and is managed by the Department of the Interior’s Bureau of Land Management.<sup>215</sup> The latest additions to Mason Neck park areas are two historic sites recently purchased by the Fairfax Park Authority: a 140-acre tract acquired March 23, 2007 and a 31.5-acre tract acquired May 3, 2007.<sup>216</sup>

**Protected Areas on Mason Neck**

<b>Property (Manager)</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>When Established</b>
Gunston Hall (Foundation)	556	1949 – Deeded to State
Pohick Bay Regional Park (Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority)	1,002	1950s, opened in 1972
Potomac Shoreline (Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority)	(790 managed as part of refuge)	1968
Elizabeth S. Hartwell National Wildlife Refuge (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service)	2,277 (includes 790 acres)	1969
Mason Neck State Park (Virginia)	1,804	1966
Meadowood Recreation Area (BLM)	800	2000
Old Colchester Park and Preserve (Fairfax County)	140	2007
Mason Neck West (Fairfax County)	31.5	2007
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>6,610.5</b>	



**Mason Neck Protected Areas. Courtesy of Fairfax County**



Note the significance of the contiguous blocks of protected lands on Mason Neck as compared to the rest of Fairfax County. (Mason Neck is the southernmost piece of land, the peninsula, on bottom right).

## PART THREE: THE BATTLE CONTINUES

The citizen-led battle to preserve Mason Neck was fought with a passion and energy unequaled in today's local conservation efforts. Those who fought for Mason Neck protection 40 years ago prevailed. However, there is no one moment in time where victory can be declared in the effort to stop the rolling out of new subdivisions disconnected from nature. David Brower, Stewart Udall and other conservationists pointed this truth out more than 40 years ago. Hartwell also knew this fact of modern life. "The battle is not over," she would say again and again. It is never over, for once a conservation battle is won, the winnings must continue to be protected.

Today the lower Potomac River Basin is still undergoing major alterations. The population of Northern Virginia continues to expand. Fairfax County alone houses close to one million people,<sup>217</sup> and there still is little comprehensive, coordinated regional planning taking place that deals with the environmental consequences of unfettered development.<sup>218</sup>

Land continues to be "gobbled up." An ambitious development, National Harbor, is being built across and upriver from Mason Neck, on the Maryland side, dwarfing the proposed 1965 "Kings Landing" development. National Harbor will have four hotels, three executive office buildings, residential buildings, numerous restaurants, and include high rises, a full marina, and more than 4,000 parking spaces.<sup>219</sup>

Counties to the south of Fairfax now represent the new frontiers for intense development and suburban sprawl. Developments such as Belmont Bay and Cherry Hill in Prince William County were approved despite community protest. The locally popular

“Crows Nest” peninsula overlooking the Potomac River in Stafford County is home to a large 600-nest heron rookery as well as bald eagles and a host of other plants and animals. A mitigation deal protects the 70-acre rookery, but the larger 3,500-acre wooded property is owned by a developer and efforts to buy it for conservation, involving many partners, have been unsuccessful to date.<sup>220</sup>

Small skirmishes offer small hope. The 302-acre Merrimac Farm abutting Quantico Marine Base in Prince William County, Virginia, will be protected as a wildlife management area through an \$820,000 grant from the Virginia Land Conservation Foundation, thanks to the dedication and patience of the private land owner and the activism of the small but vocal Prince William Conservation Alliance. The Alliance will use the grant to match funds already committed by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. The Alliance also hopes to arrange an easement with the U.S. Marine Corps to protect a buffer zone where the two properties meet.<sup>221</sup>

A plan in western Prince William County will display what the option for easements looks like. Here, the Toll Brothers development company has donated a small 230-acre lake property to Prince William County in exchange for permission to add 420 new homes to a subdivision that already exists there.<sup>222</sup> Compare that to Hartwell’s campaign in 1967 that resulted in an outright, outraged rejection of a similar offer concerning an easement on Mason Neck. Today developers often have the backing of local elected officials, a too-busy citizenry to put up much of a fight, and a silent federal government.<sup>223</sup>

*“The Potomac River is suffering a death from a thousand cuts. What we are dealing with is development in all its different aspects from new roads, new houses, new shopping malls. It doesn't happen in one place. It's happening throughout the watershed,”* says Matthew Logan, President of the Potomac Conservancy.<sup>224</sup>

Elizabeth Hartwell's story is a case study of one woman's influence in engaging and directing community action to overcome immense odds in order to secure permanent protection for a piece of the natural landscape facing the prospect of intense development. Although it played out 40 years ago, its theme is very much relevant today. It is a story of what can happen when a person persists even when it seems, for all practical purposes, already to be too late. It is a story of hope.

*“Few of us can hope to leave a poem or a work of art to posterity; but working together or apart, we can yet save meadows, marshes, strips of seashore, and stream valleys as a green legacy for the centuries.”* Stewart Udall.<sup>225</sup>

*“If you would find yourself, look to the land, from which you came and to which you go.”*  
Henry Thoreau.<sup>226</sup>

*“Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no place that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth!”* Isaiah 5:8

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## **INTERVIEWS**

Mr. Herbert Harris, Fairfax County Supervisor, 1968 - 1974. U.S. House of Representatives, 1975 - 1981. August 2, 2007.

Ms. Glenda Booth. Chairman, Fairfax County Wetlands Board. August 2, 2007.

Mr. Robert Hartwell. Elizabeth Hartwell's son. April 15, 2007.

Mr. Linwood Gorham. Mason Neck resident and advocate. July 29, 2007.

Mr. Earl Basinger. Former Chief of the Endangered Species Office of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, currently part-time employee of Mason Neck State Park. March 11, 2007.

Ms. Janet Cole. Neighbor to the Hartwell's on Mason Neck, and wife of Noman Cole, engineer. July 31, 2007.

Several requests for an interview with Mr. Albert Van Metre, made through his assistant, went unanswered.

## VITA: Elizabeth Townsend Rieben

### Employment History

- 2004 – present      Special Assistant (BLM Liaison) to the Assistant Secretary, Land and Minerals Management, Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. *Speechwriter, policy advisor, communication strategist.*
- 1995 - 2004          Education Specialist, Bureau of Land Management, Environmental Education and Volunteers Group, Washington, D.C. *Wrote and implemented national education strategy for public land management.*
- 1991 - 1995          Public Affairs Specialist, Bureau of Land Management, Office of Public Affairs, Washington, D.C. *Spokesperson, speechwriter, strategist.*
- 1986 - 1991          Public Affairs Specialist, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of Public Affairs, Washington, D.C. *Spokesperson, speechwriter, strategist.*
- 1985 - 1986          Public Relations/Media Coordinator, National Building Museum, Washington, D.C.
- 1983 - 1985          Media Specialist, Kadena Air Force Base, Okinawa, Japan.
- 1982 - 1983          Writer/Producer, Armed Forces Radio and Television, Okinawa, Japan.
- 1981 - 1982          Media Specialist, Alamo Heights School District, San Antonio, Texas.

### Education

- 2007                  Candidate, Master of Natural Resources, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Campus of the National Capital Region, Falls Church, Virginia.
- 1981                  Master's Degree, Communications and Education, specializing in Instructional Design. Auburn University, Alabama.
- 1977                  Bachelor of Arts, French Literature and Art, University of the South, Sewanee, Tennessee.

### Service

- Friends of Potomac River Refuges (2002 – 2004), Board member.  
Project Learning Tree Education Operating Committee (2000 – 2004), Board member.  
National Association of Conservation District's Education Committee (1998 – 2004).

## END NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Fairfax County Division of Planning and Zoning, "Fairfax County in Context," *Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan*, 7.

<http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpz/comprehensiveplan/policyplan/preface.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Elizabeth Hartwell, "Potomac Journey with Udall," *Fairfax County Sun Echo*, March 11, 1965, A-1.

<sup>3</sup> Lyndon B. Johnson, Special Message to the Congress on Conservation and Restoration of Natural Beauty, February 8, 1965.

<sup>4</sup> Elizabeth Hartwell, "Potomac Journey with Udall," A-1.

<sup>5</sup> For example, here is what she wrote about hunters in a letter to Dr. John Aldrich of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, November 9, 1966. "I am extremely worried about them (2 eagles). Too many hunters will shoot at anything. This I know to be true of the Mason Neck 'natives' and also of the several of the supposedly 'better educated' members of the Neck's affluent inhabitants. The former, for example, if they feel like having wood duck for dinner, get wood duck for dinner, even in nesting season."

<sup>6</sup> Interview with Robert Hartwell, April 15, 2007.

<sup>7</sup> Elizabeth Hartwell, Testimony, Public Hearing of the Fairfax Planning Commission, October 22, 1974 (Concerning Columbia LNG Corporation natural gas pipeline proposal).

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* On DDT recommendations, see for example, *Better Homes and Gardens, New Garden Book*, 1961 (De Moines: Meredith Publishing), which contains numerous references to DDT's use in the garden.

<sup>9</sup> Leslie Lynch, *Playfield-Park Plan* (New York: National Recreation Association, 1958) 20-15

<sup>10</sup> CensusScope, "Fairfax County Population Growth," [http://www.censusscope.org/us/s51/c59/chart\\_popl.html](http://www.censusscope.org/us/s51/c59/chart_popl.html).

<sup>11</sup> This agreement was well known in early 1965, but the sale apparently was not completed until late 1965, according to the Fairfax County land records. The sewer permit application in 1964, however, was the mechanism that started the community "buzz." Fairfax County Deed Book 2713, Page 371, December 20, 1965, shows Wills and Van Metre payment to King and Hull at \$2.76 million. Another deed (2713, page 377) also dated December 20, 1965 shows that Wills and Van Metre paid John Aylor \$350,000 for 400 additional acres of adjacent property, which brought the total to more than \$3 million. See also, "Hopes Are High But So Too The Land Prices," Newsletter, Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin, May 1966.

<sup>12</sup> Marvin J. Gerstin, Press Release, "King-Hull Family Announces Plan for Model Colonial City on Masons Neck, VA."

<sup>13</sup> Elizabeth Hartwell, *Chronology of the Battle to Preserve Mason Neck*, 1967.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> "Secretary Udall Orders New Steps to Protect Bald Eagle," U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Press Release, January 27, 1966. This cites a 1963 study which reports 230 active nests in the Southeast, with only 96 having reproductive success. The total bald eagle

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population in the 48 contiguous states was 5,000, but the eagle was considered “rare” in the Southeast.

<sup>16</sup> “Two Bald Eagle Nests Located in Fairfax,” *Washington Post Times Herald*, April 6, 1965, C-1.

<sup>17</sup> According to her son, Robert Hartwell.

<sup>18</sup> Almost every significant piece of environmental legislation on the books today is rooted in the decade of the 1960s, including The Wilderness Act (1964), the Clean Air Act (1963), the Land and Water Conservation Fund (1964), the Water Quality Act (1965), the Endangered Species Preservation Act (1966), the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (1968) and the National Environmental Policy Act (1969).

<sup>19</sup> American Institute of Architects, “The Potomac, A Report of the Potomac Planning Task Force,” 1967, calls for public access along the Potomac and for public swimming.

<sup>20</sup> President Lyndon B. Johnson's Special Message to the Congress on Conservation and Restoration of Natural Beauty, February 8, 1965.

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<sup>21</sup> President Lyndon B. Johnson. “Remarks at a Meeting of the Water Emergency Conference,” August 11, 1965. President Johnson addressed this White House conference of the Governors of drought-stricken Northeastern states.

<sup>22</sup> Richard Stanton, “Healing a River 1940 – 1990,” in *Potomac Journey* (Washington D.C., Smithsonian Institution, 1993) 188 – 197. Also, Claudia Levy, “Cruising Down the Potomac: Waste, Acid, Pesticide,” *The Washington Post*, November 17, 1969, B-1.

<sup>23</sup> “Potomac Cleanup Plan is Proposed,” *New York Times*, January 9, 1966. 48. Note: The pollution of the Potomac River in the 1960s is particularly sad when one hears from Louis Harley, a 5<sup>th</sup> generation waterman on Mason Neck, who recalled an abundance of shad, catfish, striped bass, blue crab and native aquatic grasses thriving in the river’s clear waters that supported generations of fishermen before post-World War Two industrialization. From Cynthia Rufty, “Of Time and the River,” in *Mason Neck News*, March 2000.

<sup>24</sup> President Johnson. “The Beauty of America,” *State of the Union Address*, January 4, 1965.

<sup>25</sup> Stewart Udall, *Potomac Interim Report to the President*, p. iii.

<sup>26</sup> Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin,

[http://www.potomacriver.org/about\\_ICPRB/about\\_us.htm](http://www.potomacriver.org/about_ICPRB/about_us.htm) accessed May 12, 2007.

<sup>27</sup> Stewart Udall, Memorandum to the Regional Director, National Park Service, National Capital Region, through the Director, National Park Service. Subject, “Organization and Coordination of Departmental Participation in Local Zoning and Planning Procedures in the National Capital Region,” February 20, 1965.

<sup>28</sup> Elizabeth Hartwell, *Chronology of the Battle to Preserve Mason Neck*, 1967, p. 1.

<sup>29</sup> Jackson Abbott, “The Chesapeake Bald Eagles, Summary Report – 1936; 1955 – 1965,” *Atlantic Naturalist* (22:1) 21.

<sup>30</sup> Ms. Janet Cole of Mason Neck provided this list of passengers: Mr. Jackson Abbott; Mr. Gale Monson, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; Mr. John Kauffman, National Park Service; Dr. Jon Aldrich, Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, Fish and Wildlife Service; Mr. Walter Mess, Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority; Mr. Herbert Hiller, Acting Assistant Director, The Nature Conservancy; Mrs. Jane Robinson,

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Regional and Fairfax Park Authorities; Mrs. Doyle, Chairman, Fairfax County Park Authority; Mr. Joe Brown, National Park Service and former Director of the Fairfax Park Authority; Mr. Craven Hughes, Fairfax County Planning Commission; Mr. Ben Ruhe, Reporter, Washington Star; Janet Cole, of the Hallowing Point Garden Club; Elizabeth Hartwell and Mrs. Stanley (Mary) Scott.

<sup>31</sup> “Fate of 2 Eagle Nests Has Citizens Brooding,” *Washington Evening Star*, April 5, 1965. B-3.

<sup>32</sup> Elizabeth Hartwell, letter to Mr. John V. Dennis of The Nature Conservancy, August 12, 1967.

<sup>33</sup> Elizabeth Hartwell, letter to James Deane, May 17, 1966.

<sup>34</sup> Elizabeth Hartwell, letter to James Deane, June 1, 1966.

<sup>35</sup> Fairfax Planning Minutes, December 19, 1966 and Sept. 25, 1967, among others. See section “The Opposition to Protection” in this paper.

<sup>36</sup> Robert Paul also indicated in a June 10, 1965 memo to the sub task force a need for early identification and more detailed study of potential federal recreation areas and wildlife refuges to be acquired in the Potomac River Basin. This helps explain his active interest in Mason Neck. By August 5, Mason Neck was included in Paul’s lists of sites under study.

<sup>37</sup> Elizabeth Hartwell, “The Battle at Mason Neck,” *National Parks Magazine*, December 1965, p. 21.

<sup>38</sup> Kenneth Holum, letter to Virginia Governor, July 30, 1965. The surname sheet indicates the letter originated on June 29, 1965 from the office of John Bright of the National Park Service and head of the Recreation Task Force.

<sup>39</sup> Elizabeth Hartwell, *Chronology of the Battle to Preserve Mason Neck*, 1967, p. 9

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.* p. 3.

<sup>41</sup> Elizabeth Hartwell attended this meeting, as did her son, Robert, who was only 9 years old at the time. Interview with Robert Hartwell.

<sup>42</sup> Elizabeth Hartwell, *Volunteer Environmental Work*, p. 2

<sup>43</sup> Odom Fanning, *Man and His Environment: Citizen Action*, p. 62.

<sup>44</sup> Wolf VonEckardt, “Potomac Cleanup Urged on Congress by Johnson,” *The Washington Post*, February 9, 1965, A-8.

<sup>45</sup> William Durland, *The Battle to Save Mason Neck*, 3.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.* 4.

<sup>47</sup> “Mason Neck Fauna Have Protectors,” *The Washington Post*, Nov. 11, 1965, K-1. And letter from Charles Majer to the Fairfax County Planning Commission dated February 7, 1966. He wrote “The Conservation Committee for Mason Neck does not intend to comment upon the relative merits or demerits of the proposed zoning application, but to encourage acquisition of portions of Mason Neck for public use.”

<sup>48</sup> William Durland, *The Battle to Save Mason Neck*, 2.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.* p. 5

<sup>50</sup> “Mason Neck Fauna Have Protectors,” *The Washington Post*, Nov. 11, 1965, K-1.

<sup>51</sup> Carol Griffiee, “Zoning Moratorium Sought to Preserve Mason Neck,” *Washington Evening Star*, November 18, B-2.

<sup>52</sup> Stewart Udall, Secretary, Department of the Interior, letter to Mr. Robert M. Leary, Director of Planning, Fairfax County. Nov. 19, 1965.

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- <sup>53</sup> William Durland, *The Battle to Save Mason Neck*, 6.
- <sup>54</sup> Stewart Udall, *Potomac Interim Report to the President*, U.S. Department of the Interior, 1966. p. iii
- <sup>55</sup> Ibid. p. 3
- <sup>56</sup> Ibid. p. 1
- <sup>57</sup> Ibid. p. iv
- <sup>58</sup> Ibid. p. 2
- <sup>59</sup> Ibid. p. 17
- <sup>60</sup> Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin, *A Potomac Report for the Calendar Year 1966*.
- <sup>61</sup> Leslie G. Lynch, *Playfield-Park Plan* (New York: National Recreation Association, 1958), 20. Lynch notes a doubling of the population from 98,557 in 1950 to 185,000 in 1956
- <sup>62</sup> Ibid. 20-24.
- <sup>63</sup> Ibid. 20-25.
- <sup>64</sup> Fairfax County Division of Planning and Zoning, *Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan*, “History of Comprehensive Planning in Fairfax County,” 15  
<http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpz/comprehensiveplan/policyplan/preface.pdf>
- <sup>65</sup> Fairfax County Planning Division, *1960 Plan of Public Facilities*, 37. It is interesting to note that Fairfax planners had cautioned against a laissez faire attitude toward the need for parks in more rural areas, noting that many developments in the outer suburbs abutted undeveloped tracts of wooded land, lending a sense of “uninhabited open space...This is not a substitute for an organized recreation system, but it does produce a general attitude of aloofness toward the need of a recreation system.”
- <sup>66</sup> Elizabeth Hartwell, “Conservation Committee for Mason Neck” *A Potomac Report for the Calendar Year 1966*. Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin. 10
- <sup>67</sup> Public Hearing on Application B-266. Fairfax Planning Commission Minutes, February 7, 1966.
- <sup>68</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>69</sup> Ibid. In addition, the Kings Landing proposal was altered to include more open space in light of objections. Mr. Roy Saunders, the project’s architect, made a pitch for the development centered on a commitment to protect the Great Marsh and to leave 1,000 acres in open space. He described the proposed development as “taking its key from Gunston Hall with village greens, and a great deal of open space.”
- <sup>70</sup> The theme of too much proposed parkland affecting landowners’ ability to sell appeared in numerous Fairfax County planning commission hearings, including December 19, 1966 and again April 10, 1967 when the *Potomac Master Plan* was approved by the Fairfax Planning Commission and it was decided that proposed parks should be reviewed every three years. In a September 26, 1967, hearing on proposed regional parks, it came up again.
- <sup>71</sup> Fairfax County Planning Division, *Lower Potomac Planning District: A Preliminary Comprehensive Plan*. (June 1966) 37.
- <sup>72</sup> Jane Robinson, “Park Plan Backers Breathing Easier,” *The Washington Post*, June 12, 1966, I-9.
- <sup>73</sup> Ibid.

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<sup>74</sup> Fairfax County Planning Division, *Lower Potomac Planning District: A Preliminary Comprehensive Plan*, June 1966, 7.

<sup>75</sup> Public Hearing on “The Lower Potomac Plan,” Fairfax County Planning Commission, Minutes, August 1, 1966. “Mr. Bell [of Interior] agreed that the Department would have to take the steps in the early part of next year to have something concrete to go on although it had been indicated they would try to fill the gap between State and regional acquisitions.”

<sup>76</sup> Hull and King held onto some parcels on Mason Neck and retained an interest in the larger parcels sold for development. Fairfax County Deed Book 2713, Page 368.

<sup>77</sup> Public Hearing on “The Lower Potomac Plan,” Fairfax County Planning Commission, Minutes, August 1, 1966.

<sup>78</sup> Public Hearing on “The Lower Potomac Plan,” Fairfax County Planning Commission, Minutes, December 19, 1966.

<sup>79</sup> “Plans Group Vote Boosts Mason Neck,” *The Washington Post*, April 12, 1967, B2; Ferris’ remarks from the Minutes of the Fairfax Planning Commission Public Hearing, Lower Potomac Plan, Further Consideration and Decision, April 10, 1967. Josiah Ferris, board member of the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority, feared there was not enough money and that “landowners would suffer unnecessarily because their property had been earmarked for parks.”

<sup>80</sup> Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, Minutes, Sept. 6, 1967.

<sup>81</sup> The outer beltway proposal was another topic of intense local interest and Hartwell had rallied her colleagues against this as well. According to the minutes of a December 12, 1966 Fairfax Planning Commission meeting, Hartwell’s friends, James Deane, representing the Committee of 100; Mrs. Minerva Andrews, representing the Northern Virginia Conservation Committee; Mr. Scott Crampton representing the Mason Neck Citizens Association; Mr. Jameson Parker of Gunston Hall and others expressed opposition to it. Mr. Tom Newton, a landowner, favored the development proposals as he sought to profit from them. Enough questions were raised at this hearing that a decision was put off.

<sup>82</sup> Letter from Jameson Parker, executive director of Gunston Hall, to Dr. S. Dillon Ripley II, secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, November 29, 1966. Parker wrote, “The public proponents [of the outer beltway] are the two congeries of builders and developers who are endeavoring to have Mason Neck rezoned for high-density residential and commercial use.” August 2, 2007 interview with Herbert Harris confirms this.

<sup>83</sup> FitzGerald Bemiss, *Virginia’s Commonwealth, Report of the Virginia Outdoor Recreation Study Commission*, Commonwealth of Virginia, 1965, 1.

<sup>84</sup> Odom Fanning, *Man and His Environment: Citizen Action*, 62.

<sup>85</sup> National Capital Regional Planning Council, *Recreation and Open Space Priorities for the National Capital Region National Capital Open Space Program, Planning Report #2*, (Washington, D.C., Oct. 1966) 17.

<sup>86</sup> Bemiss, 24.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.* 25.

<sup>88</sup> Elizabeth Hartwell, “Conservation Committee for Mason Neck” *A Potomac Report for the Calendar Year 1966*, Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin, 10.

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- <sup>89</sup> William Lightsey, Memorandum to Members of Regional Group Discussing Mason Neck Master Plan, *Report of Richmond Conferences on March 30, 1966*, April 1, 1966.
- <sup>90</sup> Elizabeth Hartwell, *Chronology of the Battle to Preserve Mason Neck*, 1967, p. 7.
- <sup>91</sup> William Durland, Mason Neck Conservation Committee, *Statement before the Virginia Department of Conservation and Economic Development*, April 21, 1966, Richmond, Virginia.
- <sup>92</sup> Elizabeth Hartwell, Letter to John Bright, Land Task Force, *Project Potomac*, Department of the Interior, February 1, 1966.
- <sup>93</sup> Elizabeth Hartwell, "Conservation Committee for Mason Neck," *A Potomac Report for the Calendar Year 1966*, 10.
- <sup>94</sup> Elizabeth Hartwell, Letter to Mr. G. Don Sullivan (a neighbor and supporter), May 7, 1966.
- <sup>95</sup> National Capital Regional Planning Council, *Recreation and Open Space Priorities for the National Capital Region, Planning Report #2*, 19.
- <sup>96</sup> Elizabeth Hartwell, Letter to Mrs. Robert Reinow, February 24, 1966. Harwell suggested contacting Congressional leaders and Secretary Udall concerning funding.
- <sup>97</sup> William C. Ashe, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Internal Memorandum to Regional Director, "Endangered Species Acquisition at Mason Neck," October 23, 1968.
- <sup>98</sup> "\$1.5 Million Mason Neck Park Grant approved by Virginia Commission on Outdoor Recreation," *Northern Virginia Sun*, August 5, 1966. A-1.
- <sup>99</sup> "Good Day for Parks," *The Washington Post*, October 19, 1966, A 20.
- <sup>100</sup> Fairfax County, *Park Bond Referendum Facts*, 1966, 3.
- <sup>101</sup> Elizabeth Hartwell, Notes taken from the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority Minutes, 1967.
- <sup>102</sup> Elizabeth Hartwell, "Conservation Committee for Mason Neck," *A Potomac Report for the Calendar Year 1966*. 10 – 11
- <sup>103</sup> Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority, Minutes, January 5, 1967; and Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority Press Release, January 9, 1967.
- <sup>104</sup> Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority Press Release, January 9, 1967.
- <sup>105</sup> "Park Plan Shift Stirs New Battle on Last Bald Eagle Refuge Area," *Sunday Evening Star*, January 15, 1967.
- <sup>106</sup> Elizabeth Hartwell, Letter to Mr. Ned Bright, Newsletter Editor, Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin, January 10, 1967.
- <sup>107</sup> Ned Bright, "Mason Eagle Understandably Bald," *Newsletter of the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin (23:1)* January, 1967, 2
- <sup>108</sup> Elizabeth Hartwell, Letter to Jameson Parker, January 11, 1967.
- <sup>109</sup> Elizabeth Hartwell, *Urgent Notice. Mason Neck Crisis*, February 2, 1967.
- <sup>110</sup> Dated February, 1967, it read: "The Recreation and Landscape Subtask Force on the Potomac called Mason Neck the most significant remaining open space in the Washington Metropolitan region. Serious efforts to preserve Mason Neck began over two years ago, with formation of the Mason Neck Conservation Committee. The Lower Potomac Master Plan calls for 3,500 acres of parkland in the boot shaped lower half of Mason Neck. The Regional Park Authority 5-year capital improvement program which proposes acquisition of 1,085 in the boot was approved by voters last November. The Presidential Task Force proposed the entire peninsula be acquired as a park. In June

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1966, Secretary of the Interior Udall pledged Federal matching funds to the State for a park and Virginia is now finalizing their plans for a \$1.5 million, 1,800-acre acquisition adjoining the proposed regional park site on the boot. Just last month Interior recommended federal acquisition of the Great Marsh and expressed hope that the regional park authority would acquire the adjoining land to the west between the great Marsh and the State Park. A system of parks for the entire toe of the boot of Mason Neck seemed assured until the Regional Park Authority voted at their January 5 meeting to accept scenic easements and a contribution of 156 acres of the 500-acre Great Marsh in place of fee simple title to a 1,085 acre park as proposed in the bond referendum. Resolution urging the Park Authority to acquire the land in fee simple.”

<sup>111</sup> William Lightsey, Executive Director, Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority, “Memo to Those Persons and Groups Interested,” February 27, 1967.

<sup>112</sup> Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority Board Meeting, April 5, 1967, as reported by Elizabeth Hartwell in *Notes taken from the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority Minutes*, 1967.

<sup>113</sup> Ira Gabrielson, Chairman, Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority, *Memorandum to the Fairfax County Planning Commission*, “Report on Land Acquisition Plans for Mason Neck,” April 10, 1967.

<sup>114</sup> Beth Sundquist, *Report of the Public Meeting*, Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority, November 2, 1967.

<sup>115</sup> Draft with a hand written notation from Hartwell’s scrap book, “to be sent by Doris Kidder.”

<sup>116</sup> Doris Kidder, Council President, Letter to the Northern Virginia Conservation Council, October 18, 1967.

<sup>117</sup> Beth Sundquist, 1967.

<sup>118</sup> “Mason Neck Parks Eyed for Priority,” *Northern Virginia Sun*, Oct. 26, 1967, 1.

<sup>119</sup> Public Hearing, “Proposed Regional Park Located on Mason Neck,” Fairfax Planning Commission Minutes, September 26, 1967.

<sup>120</sup> Thompson, Greenspon and Co. Certified Public Accountants, *General Fixed Assets Group of Accounts: Schedules of Capitol Improvements and Land Acquisitions by Facility*, Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority, June 30, 1985, p. 56.

<sup>121</sup> Robert and Leona Rienow authored several books on the environment, including *Moment in the Sun, A Report on the Deteriorating Quality of the American Environment*, published by Dial Press in 1967.

<sup>122</sup> This was one of the tasks Hartwell assigned to Jameson Parker in rallying support to defeat the easement proposal: “Call Jim Deane; ask him to consult with Elting Arnold of The Nature Conservancy.” From Elizabeth Hartwell’s January 11, 1967, letter to Parker.

<sup>123</sup> According to the unabridged draft article, “Mason Neck Virginia,” by Washington Post writer Bill Curry, dated May 1971, and provided by Mason Neck resident Janet Cole, The Nature Conservancy’s financial picture was brighter a year later because “by Spring of 1967, the Conservancy had established a \$3 million line of credit with the State Bank of Albany in New York and a \$6 million credit with the Ford Foundation.” p. 17.

<sup>124</sup> “Nature Group Buys Kings Landing Site,” *Northern Virginia Sun*, August 1, 1967, 1.

<sup>125</sup> The Nature Conservancy, *Press Release*, July 31, 1967.

<sup>126</sup> Fairfax Board Supervisors, Minutes of Sept. 6, 1967.

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<sup>127</sup> The other record-breaking acquisition was an 8,000-acre tract of California redwoods. *Northern Virginia Sun*, August 1, 1967, A-1. The \$6 million figure not only reflects total acquisition costs, but includes the considerable costs associated with holding land, such as taxes and interest payments.

<sup>128</sup> William C. Ashe, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, *Internal Memorandum to Regional Director*, "Endangered Species Acquisition at Mason Neck," October 23, 1968. The Nature Conservancy's acquisitions on Mason Neck were as follows: July 31, 1967 – 1,712 acres for \$3.5 million; Wills and Van Metre property; September 27, 1967 – 22 acres for \$440,286; February 16, 1968 – Newton property – 100 acres for \$200,000; and Jan 1, 1968 – 203 acres for \$406,000.

<sup>129</sup> Robert M. Paul, *Land, People and Recreation in the Potomac River Basin: Final Report of the Recreation and Landscape Sub-Task Force, Project Potomac*. U.S. Department of the Interior, 1968, 29 - 30. The chapter on Mason Neck National Wildlife Refuge recognizes efforts of the State of Virginia and Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority to create two parks, totaling 2,900 acres, and recommends federal acquisition of 950 additional acres for a wildlife refuge in order to "place all of the eagle habitat on Mason Neck under public control."

<sup>130</sup> In a letter sent to Deane the very next day, she explained why; it is "the same old gremlin, politics." She wrote, "I just found out why Interior is so tight with its money right now and so subdued in its attitude. They just lost a big lawsuit involving a handsome sum of money. Seems the Park Service put only \$30,000 down on a very large acreage and went no further. The landowner was losing money hand over fist, sued and won." In another letter, to Jameson Parker, dated May 18, 1966, Hartwell added that the judge awarded the landowner \$1 million in that case.

<sup>131</sup> Elizabeth Hartwell, letter to Sydney Howe, National Audubon Society, Dec. 1, 1966.

<sup>132</sup> This was a National Park Service proposal. Fish and Wildlife Service biologists had reservations about it as evidenced in a December 15, 1966 memo from Donald Hankla, a Fish and Wildlife Service wildlife management biologist, to the chief of the office of endangered species. He wrote under the subject *Reconnaissance of Great Marsh on Mason Neck*, "I feel obligated to point out my concern over what is planned for the area. I believe that eagles will not tolerate automobiles and people and I strongly suspect that the eagles will leave Mason Neck when the bull dozers arrive to clear the right-of-way for the parkway."

<sup>133</sup> Secretary Stewart Udall, letter to Robert Leary, Fairfax County Director of Planning, Nov. 19, 1965. Udall states, "The specific federal interest in Mason Neck centers primarily around the proposed George Washington Country Parkway."

<sup>134</sup> A. V. Tunison, Acting Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior. Letter to William Lightsey, Executive Director, Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority, April 4, 1967.

<sup>135</sup> From Written Memoirs of William C "Bill" Ashe, Composed September 2, 2003, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Conservation Training Center Archives, Shepherdstown, West Virginia; and Internal Memorandum to the Fish and Wildlife Service Regional Director from the Deputy Regional Director (Ashe), "Mason Neck National Wildlife Refuge," January 27, 1982.

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<sup>136</sup> Elizabeth Hartwell, Letter to Chairman, Interior Appropriations Subcommittee, Committee on Appropriations, House of Representatives, Washington, D.C. March 4, 1968.

<sup>137</sup> Elizabeth Hartwell, *Compendium of unpublished information*, 1970.

<sup>138</sup> William C. Ashe, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, internal Memorandum to Regional Director, "Endangered Species Acquisition at Mason Neck," October 23, 1968. He also noted in the memo that because of varying survey information, the area to be acquired had recently changed from 240 acres to 251.8 acres, and that would need to be considered for acquisition.

<sup>139</sup> Elizabeth Hartwell, *Compendium of unpublished information*, 1970.

<sup>140</sup> Although the refuge was established to protect the bald eagle, most people agree with the local saying, "Mason Neck did not save the bald eagle, rather, the bald eagle saved Mason Neck."

<sup>141</sup> Figures on land purchases from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service files, Arlington, Virginia. *Fact Sheet*, "Mason Neck Tracts and their Funding Sources," May, 1991.

<sup>142</sup> U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Area Manager, Delmarva Area Office, Memo to the Regional Director, Region 5, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, August 8, 1978, "Proposed Addition to Mason Neck NWR." This memo states that Hartwell arranged a meeting of the Fish and Wildlife Service and the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority to discuss the issue.

<sup>143</sup> Elizabeth Hartwell, *Urgent Notice. To Friends of Mason Neck*. June 12, 1982.

<sup>144</sup> 44.63 acres owned by The Nature Conservancy and two parcels (14 acres and 296 acres) in private ownership, as described in a letter from John S. Gottschalk, Counsel to the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (and former Fish and Wildlife Service Director) to Congressman Sidney R. Yates, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Interior Appropriations, May 25, 1982.

<sup>145</sup> As explained in a Fish and Wildlife Service Memo from the Regional Director to the Director, *Additions to Mason Neck National Wildlife Refuge*, February 20, 1980.

<sup>146</sup> Gottschalk also points out that The Nature Conservancy is in a similar bind. The Nature Conservancy also sent a letter to express this concern. (Dated June 4, 1982, it was signed by The Nature Conservancy President William D. Blair, Jr.)

<sup>147</sup> Under the Convention on Wetlands, signed in Ramsar, Iran, in 1971, more than 1,670 sites around the world have been included in the "Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance." Mason Neck is one of them.

<sup>148</sup> There were 200 people living on Mason Neck in the 1960s, generally organized into two major homeowners associations, Hallowing Point and Gunston Cove, and they mostly supported protection of Mason Neck.

<sup>149</sup> According to Fairfax County land records, Hull and King retained an interest in the development of the 1,800 acres, dependent on its being successfully rezoned. As part of the deal, a disclaimer was added should the government condemn the land: (8) "In the event any Governmental authority condemns the above property.....each part shall be entitled only to awards as to his respective property then vested in his respective name and shall not be entitled to any award as to any other property not then vested in his name..." Hull and King had retained only 59 acres each, but were apparently hoping to

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reap financial reward from development of the entire 1,800 acres. (Fairfax County Deed Book 2713, Page 368).

<sup>150</sup> Fairfax Planning Commission minutes, August 1 1966. And do something he did – he sold his land to The Nature Conservancy February 16, 1968. (Fairfax County Deed Book 3004, Page 246).

<sup>151</sup> Elizabeth Parker, Letter to Josiah Ferris, August 14, 1966.

<sup>152</sup> Fairfax Planning Commission minutes, December 19, 1966; and Fairfax County Board of Supervisors minutes, September 6, 1967.

<sup>153</sup> Fairfax Planning Commission minutes, December 19, 1966.

<sup>154</sup> Fairfax County Board of Supervisors meeting minutes, October 25, 1967.

<sup>155</sup> Stewart Udall, *The Quiet Crisis*, xviii.

<sup>156</sup> The small piece of undeveloped property she held onto after she moved from Mason Neck was undevelopable. It would not percolate. Had plans for a sewer succeeded, her property's value would have skyrocketed. Her success in defeating the sewer left her with a valueless parcel.

<sup>157</sup> The battle to preserve Mason Neck is ongoing – today there are still development pressures on lands that are not secured in parks and refuges. In addition, the stages of land acquisition would extend for several years beyond 1969 regarding the state and regional park, and decades regarding the federal refuge. But the real push to *establish parks and refuges* happened between 1965 and 1969.

<sup>158</sup> The Fenske story is described in a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service press release dated August 10, 2007, *New Visitor Center Named in Honor of New Jersey Conservationist, Helen Fenske*.

<sup>159</sup> Odom Fanning, *Man and His Environment: Citizen Action*, contains a number of additional examples.

<sup>160</sup> In addition, there was a major push in the 1960s to buy waterfowl habitat (particularly wetlands and grasslands in the prairie pothole regions of the Midwest). These important land acquisitions were funded by Duck Stamp sales, through a 1958 amendment to the Duck Stamp Act. See <http://www.fws.gov/refuges/faqs/WPAs.html> (Accessed October 26, 2007).

<sup>161</sup> From the Interior Department Press Release dated February 4, 2002, *Interior Budget Emphasizes Citizen-Centered Conservation, Restoration, and Rebuilding*. “The Department’s land acquisition program augments this citizen-centered partnership approach by protecting unique natural and cultural resources in collaboration with local communities. The \$204.1 million request for FY 2003 federal land acquisition will support 99 projects in 33 states. To promote cooperative alliances, leave land on state tax roles, and make the most efficient use of this funding, the *request emphasizes innovative alternatives to fee title purchases*, such as conservation easements and land exchanges.” (emphasis added). <http://www.doi.gov/news/02042002.html> Accessed June 25, 2007. See also, the *Interior Budget in Brief FY 2006*, February 2005, DH-56. The section on the Land and Water Conservation Fund states, “LWCF has largely achieved its goals through land acquisition” and goes on to promote a shift in strategy to emphasize cooperative conservation over land acquisition.

<sup>162</sup> Carol Hardy Vincint, *Land and Water Conservation Fund: Overview, Funding, History, and Current Issues*, Congressional Research Service, July 10, 2006, CRS 9 – 10.

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It is interesting to note that even The Nature Conservancy, whose original focus was land acquisition, is moving in this direction as well.

<sup>163</sup> Such as the *Playfield Park Plan* by Leslie G. Lynch.

<sup>164</sup> Memo from Fish and Wildlife Service Delmarva Area Office to Regional Director, August 8, 1978. p. 3.

<sup>165</sup> From House Report 106-222, *Department of the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill, 2000*, “According to the Department of the Interior, there is a land acquisition backlog of more than \$5 billion for 4.5 million acres located within boundaries of park, refuge and recreation units. At 1998 land prices, allowing nothing for inflation, the existing backlog would take more than 30 years to purchase. There apparently are some Members of Congress who believe the federal government owns too much real estate already. However, there is a large and growing segment of the public that realizes how fragile and important our national parks, refuges, and forests are, and is willing to spend tax dollars to protect and preserve these holdings.” Accessed June 22, 2007. [http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/cpquery/?&sid=cp106D27x6&refer=&r\\_n=hr222.106&db\\_id=106&item=&sel=TOC\\_433154&](http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/cpquery/?&sid=cp106D27x6&refer=&r_n=hr222.106&db_id=106&item=&sel=TOC_433154&)

<sup>166</sup> For example, the Administration made this Legislative Proposal in the Bureau of Land Management’s Budget Request for Fiscal Year 2007: “To help reduce the Federal budget deficit while also providing a new source of funding for BLM operations, the Administration will propose legislation to amend BLM’s land sale authority under the Federal Land Transaction Facilitation Act. ...Under the Act, BLM ...makes the proceeds [from land disposals] available for the acquisition of other non-Federal lands within specially-designated areas such as national parks, refuges, and monuments. The 2007 budget proposes to amend FLTFA to: allow BLM to ... return 70 percent of the net proceeds from the sales to the Treasury; and cap receipt retention by the Department at \$60 million per year. This proposal will minimize the amount of Federal spending not subject to regular oversight through the appropriations process and will ensure that taxpayers directly benefit from these land sales.” Department of the Interior, *Fiscal Year 2007 Interior Budget in Brief* BH-5.

<http://www.doi.gov/budget/2007/07Hilites/BH05.pdf>. Accessed June 25, 2007.

<sup>167</sup> “Costly Blunder,” *The Washington Post*, September 30, 1964, A-16.

<sup>168</sup> This followed from a *Memorandum for the Heads of Federal Agencies* sent by James Connaughton, Chairman of the White House Council on Environmental Quality, January 30, 2002, on the subject of cooperating agency status, asking federal agencies to consider these designations in preparing NEPA documents.

<http://www.nepa.gov/nepa/regs/cooperating/cooperatingagenciesmemorandum.html>

Accessed June 27, 2007.

<sup>169</sup> Maurine McLaughlin, “2 More Guilty of Bribe In Fairfax Zone Cases,” *The Washington Post Times Herald*, Feb 25, 1967, A-1.

<sup>170</sup> Helen Dewar, “Zoning Reforms Asked in Wake Of Indictments,” *The Washington Post*. Oct 8, 1966. D1.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid*.

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<sup>172</sup> Maurine McLaughlin, “2 More Guilty of Bribe In Fairfax Zone Cases,” *The Washington Post*, Feb 25, 1967; A-1; and Hank Burchard, “Review Set In Fairfax Bribe Case,” *The Washington Post*, Sept. 22, 1966, B-1. (Note: It was John Parrish who was convicted, not to be confused with Stanford E. Parris, another county supervisor.)

<sup>173</sup> Kenneth M. Boyd, “Land-Owning Park Official Bucks Allies; Most Favor Parks,” *The Washington Post*, June 19, 1966, B1.

<sup>174</sup> James T Yenckel, “Honesty Is Top Campaign Issue,” *The Washington Post*. October 19, 1967, E1. Note: The citizens of Fairfax County voted in new members of the Board of Supervisors in the next election, including Hebert Harris, who served from 1968 – 1974 and then was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives, in part because of his commitments to insert honesty and transparency in government. (Interviews with Glenda Booth and Herbert Harris, August 2, 2007.)

<sup>175</sup> Thomas Love, “How About Hartwell Park?” *Northern Virginia Sun*, April 23, 1966.

<sup>176</sup> Secretary Udall reiterated this theme in a speech given to Bureau of Land Management (BLM) employees April 25, 2007 in Santa Fe, New Mexico, at a national BLM Communications Conference.

<sup>177</sup> Durland, p. 4.

<sup>178</sup> Pohick Bay Park acquisition had already begun in 1961.

<sup>179</sup> It is believed by some that Elizabeth Hartwell may have voted for her husband’s political opponent when Mr. Hartwell ran for a seat on the Board of Supervisors in 1967. She indicated to Herbert Harris that he (Harris) would get her vote. Harris won that election. Of course, no one knows what her ultimate decision was.

<sup>180</sup> For example, according to Planning Commission Meeting minutes of November 3, 1966, Mr. Hartwell commented that he had an open mind on the desirability of a federal park but that “wildlife areas have already been reserved and he agreed with Mr. Hughes (Planning Commissioner C. Craven Hughes) that it should be perhaps open for alternative private development, and would feel even more strongly if the Interior does not make an early request for funds.” Elizabeth Hartwell immediately followed this with a letter writing campaign stating that “Wildlife areas have not already been reserved.” Among recipients of her November 9, 1966, letter were Gunston Hall’s executive director Jameson Parker and John Kauffman of the National Park Service.

<sup>181</sup> This undated note is in Hartwell’s scrapbook accessed at the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority.

<sup>182</sup> Cynthia Rufty, “Liz Hartwell – Remembering Mason Neck’s Best Friend,” *Mason Neck News*. Spring 2001, Page 1.

<sup>183</sup> Quoted from “Liz’s blueprint for land survival: number 10,” *Naturalist News*, April 1990, p. 10.

<sup>184</sup> Elizabeth Hartwell, *Chronology of the Battle to Preserve Mason Neck*, 1967, 3.

<sup>185</sup> William Durland, *Battle to Save Mason Neck*. 3.

<sup>186</sup> Hartwell was a registered Republican, but worked well with the officials from the Democratic Johnson Administration.

<sup>187</sup> Interview with Earl Basinger, March 11, 2007.

<sup>188</sup> Letter from Elizabeth Hartwell October, 1967, alerting constituents of the situation.

<sup>189</sup> Odom Fanning, as quoted on 196- 197.

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<sup>190</sup> Peter Baker, “Mason Neck Stands Against the Tide,” *The Washington Times*, June 13, 1988, B-5.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> Dr. Ira Gabrielson, Chairman of the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority, former Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, member of the Virginia Outdoor Recreation Commission and well known conservationist was also a strong supporter of Mason Neck.

<sup>193</sup> April 13, 1966, “The Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority refused Clive DuVall’s offer of \$25,000 to \$50,000 as a base for matching funds to purchase Mason Neck lands. Unanimous approval to thank Mr. Duvall for his offer and refuse it ‘advising him that the Park Authority could not accept the offer with the restrictions limiting the area in which the land could be acquired.’” (from Elizabeth Hartwell, Notes taken from the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority Minutes, 1967.)

<sup>194</sup> Interview, Glenda Booth, who said several times, “She always did her homework.”

<sup>195</sup> Quoted from “Liz’s blueprint for land survival: number 12,” *Naturalist News*, April 1990, p. 10

<sup>196</sup> Elizabeth Hartwell, “Conserve Mason Neck Assets,” *Fairfax County Sun Echo Free Press*, November 11, 1965, 2.

<sup>197</sup> Elizabeth Hartwell, written Addendum to Testimony before the Fairfax Planning Commission, Public Hearing on Construction and Operation of a Natural Gas Pipeline, October 22, 1974.

<sup>198</sup> Quoted from “Liz’s blueprint for land survival: number 8,” *Naturalist News*, April 1990, p. 10.

<sup>199</sup> Elizabeth Hartwell, Letter to James Deane, May 17, 1966.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid. May 16, 1966.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid. June 1, 1966.

<sup>202</sup> In an April 14, 1966 letter to Kenward Harris, Chairman of the Citizens Council for a Clean Potomac, Hartwell wrote this whimsical piece:

*Deep appreciation for wonderfully gutsy letter to the Governor. Can’t thank you enough, except to say that if the:*

*Searing Committee wants to broil you, let me char;*

*Sneering Committee wants to ostracize you, I’ll be the outcast;*

*Shearing Committee wants to fleece you, let me be shorn instead;*

*Seering Committee wants to prophesy your death, I’ll ride with Charon;*

*Spearing Committee wants to impale you, let the shaft pierce me;*

*Smearing Committee wants to drag your name through mud, they may call me names instead;*

*Steering Committee wants to give you a lot of bull, I’ll answer them.*

<sup>203</sup> Elizabeth Hartwell, Letter to James Deane, May 16, 1966.

<sup>204</sup> On the last page (p. 15) of Hartwell’s typed list of her volunteer activities, 1965 – 1990, she wrote this: Note: “All of my actions in respect to the CMN (Conservation Committee for Mason Neck) were taken on my own initiative as a Vice Chairman and I paid all my expenses. The 11-member committee, organized on 3 August 1965, met only 5 times before its first and only public meeting of 17 November 1965. After this meeting, the committee was soon reduced to five active members, including myself and, to my knowledge, no further meetings of the officers and/or board were held. Infrequent communications were accomplished by a few letters and telephone conversations.”

<sup>205</sup> William Durland, *The Battle to Save Mason Neck*, 1.

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<sup>206</sup> Odom Fanning, 193 – 198.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid. 195.

<sup>208</sup> Carl Bernstein, “Commander in the War on Mason Neck,” *The Washington Post*, March 27, 1972, C-1.

<sup>209</sup> “This is Their South,” *Southern Living*, February, 1971, 53. The section on Hartwell closes with this: “Never underestimate the power of a woman with her feathers ruffled.”

<sup>210</sup> Elizabeth Hartwell, *Vita*, 1979.

<sup>211</sup> From *Elizabeth Hartwell Earth Day at Mason Neck*, April 21, 2001.

<http://www.hartwellfund.com/images/Brochure - Master Final Final 1.doc> Accessed July 10, 2007.

<sup>212</sup> Thomas Love, “How About Hartwell Park?” *Northern Virginia Sun*, April 23, 1966.

<sup>213</sup> Cynthia Rufty, “Liz Hartwell – Remembering Mason Neck’s Best Friend,” *Mason Neck News*, Spring 2001, 1.

<sup>214</sup> According to refuge manager Greg Weiler (email June 12, 2007). The bald eagle also is thriving nation-wide; delisting was announced June 28 (and completed August 8), 2007 as surveys show an increase in the lower 48 states from 400 nesting pairs in 1963 to 10,000 today. From “Bald Eagle Soars Off Endangered Species List. Secretary Kempthorne: The eagle has returned,” *Press Release*, Department of the Interior, June 28, 2007.

<sup>215</sup> The landowner obtained Lorton property, also in southern Fairfax County, in exchange for his 800-acre horse farm on Mason Neck. The landowner then sold the Lorton property for development and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) was given management authority of the Mason Neck property. Called Meadowood, it is managed by BLM as a Special Recreation Management Area. It is interesting to note that the National Park Service does not manage any land on Mason Neck.

<sup>216</sup> According to Mike Lambert of the Fairfax County Park Authority (Email August 10, 2007). The 140 acre-site, to be called Old Colchester Park and Preserve, is where the colonial town of Colchester was located and includes the remnants of the oldest church site in Fairfax County. The 31.5 acre tract is believed to contain a campsite of General Rochambeau, the French general assisting American troops during the Revolutionary War.

<sup>217</sup> Fairfax County Division of Planning and Zoning. “History of Comprehensive Planning in Fairfax County,” *Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan*, 7.

<http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpz/comprehensiveplan/policyplan/preface.pdf>,

<sup>218</sup> There are numerous regional commissions and committees to be sure, but little is actually being accomplished in terms of limiting, slowing or even managing development. This is in part a legal or jurisdictional issue – who has the authority to limit development? The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin, Northern Virginia Regional Commission, are among cross-jurisdictional groups grappling with such issues.

<sup>219</sup> Anita Huslin, “Grand Vision for National Harbor Takes Form,” *The Washington Post*, April 22, 2007, A-1.

<sup>220</sup> Save Crow’s Nest. <http://www.savecrownest.org/index.htm>. Accessed August 20, 2007.

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<sup>221</sup> Prince William Conservation Alliance website. “The Conservation of Merrimac Farm,” <http://www.pwconserve.org/issues/conservation/merrimacfarm/index.htm>.

<sup>222</sup> Prince William Conservation Alliance website. “Silver Lake,” <http://www.pwconserve.org/issues/conservation/silverlake/index.htm>. Accessed July 9, 2007.

<sup>223</sup> Although major progress in cleaning up the Potomac was made during the 1960s – 1980s, particularly regarding sewage treatment, today, the river is threatened with nutrient overloads caused by non-point sources and from agricultural runoff upstream, as well as increased siltation (from development) downstream. Raw sewage still overflows into the Potomac via the Anacostia River during heavy rains. Mysterious fish lesions, inter-sex fish and massive die-offs in the upper reaches have stumped scientists for several years. Downstream, algae blooms are returning, and oxygen depleted dead zones are growing in the river and in the Chesapeake Bay. See Carol Denny, “Destination Chesapeake: The Potomac,” *Save the Bay*, Spring 2007, 6 – 9. Also, from a report of the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin: “The Anacostia River [which drains into the Potomac River in D.C]...is plagued by a host of problems typical of our nation's urban rivers, including low summer dissolved oxygen levels, high sedimentation rates, high fecal coliform levels, and fish consumption advisories due to the presence of toxic chemicals.” [http://www.potomacriver.org/water\\_quality/tmdl-and-basin.htm](http://www.potomacriver.org/water_quality/tmdl-and-basin.htm). Accessed June 25, 2007.

<sup>224</sup> “Algal Blooms Already Turning Up in Potomac and Patuxent Rivers,” Transcript. WTOP, June 13, 2005, by Colline Kelleher and Mark Segreaves, WTOP. <http://www.wtopnews.com/index.php?nid=447&sid=530187> accessed June 26, 2007.

<sup>225</sup> Quote from “Land and Water Conservation Fund, an Assessment of its Past, Present and Future,” p. 5.

<sup>226</sup> As quoted by Stewart Udall in Roderick Nash, “Prospects for the Land,” *The American Environment, Readings in the History of Conservation* (Menlo Park: Addison-Wesley Publishing, 1968) 222.