



CORPORATE HABITAT PROGRAM Reaches 10-Year Milestone

by Carol A. Heiser

This spring, the Department celebrates its 10-year anniversary of the Habitat Partners® Corporate Habitat program. This program assists with the planning of new conservation projects on commercial or industrial properties and recognizes such efforts and results.

Department staff can schedule a site visit to provide guidance and recommend appropriate native plant choices and habitat improvement methods. A habitat education program or training may also be arranged for company employees. The

business then implements the project on its own timeline using its own resources. When the project is successfully completed and meets the program criteria, it is eligible for a Habitat Partners® certificate and sign. There is no fee to participate in the program.

Four different companies whose projects illustrate a variety of habitat conservation practices are showcased here. Of course, every company has its own unique needs and site parameters or constraints, but what they all have in common is a desire to improve the work environment for their employees, restore balanced wildlife



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The Capital One meadow planting (L) and planting bed above feature native plants that attract wildlife.

habitats, and reduce long-term maintenance costs. Go to www.dgif.virginia.gov/habitat to see streaming video of each of these projects and learn more about Habitat Partners®.

Boxley Quarry–Amherst County:

For 10 years the folks at Boxley’s Piney River Quarry have worked with Mike Hayslett, a local naturalist, to restore pocket wetlands and vernal pools on the non-active portions of their property. These pools provide invaluable habitat for frogs, salamanders, and other amphibians that need moist areas to breed and live out their life cycles. The commitment to preserve the unique natural heritage on the Boxley site includes an education component, as they frequently host school field trips for children to experience nature firsthand.

Capital One, West Creek Campus–Goochland County:

This 100-plus acre site features ongoing grounds maintenance with an eye towards sustainable best practices. Capital One’s conservation and ‘be green’ efforts include no-mow zones, a campus tree farm, a blue bird nest box trail, native plantings and a new meadow garden along a wooded edge that attracts butterflies and birds. A Green Team of about 200 Capital One associates have assisted with over a dozen projects.

Wetland Studies and Solutions, Inc.–Prince William County:

WSSI has raised the bar in setting the industry standard for low-impact development (LID). Although their site is barely four acres, it boasts a green roof, a rainwater

containment system with 8,000 gallon cistern for irrigation, permeable paving with gravel detention, a centralized rain garden, and conservation landscaping with native plants throughout. Not only is the property a wildlife habitat oasis in a major urban area, but its design also ensures that any stormwater passing through the site is either intercepted or filtered in some way to improve water quality, before the remaining runoff enters a nearby stream. WSSI provides wetland restoration services and offers LID seminars and trainings for professionals in the region.

Pfizer Consumer Health Care–City of Richmond:

Small habitat “islands” have been installed in several parts of this property to break up the large expanse of lawn that’s so typical around office buildings. A perennial pollinator garden graces the front entrance, and many shrubs and trees are now part of a nature trail for employees. A rain garden has also been strategically placed to capture runoff from one of the parking areas. The company’s



Lou Verner



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Left, students explore nature around a constructed wetland at Boxley Quarry. Critical habitat has been created for declining amphibians like this female wood frog. Top, a drainage swale of native vegetation forms a buffer to capture runoff from the parking area at Wetland Studies and Solutions.



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Wildlife Habitat Committee meets regularly to discuss conservation matters, and each year they hold an Earth Day event for employees and their families to learn more about the outdoors. ☘

Carol A. Heiser is a wildlife habitat education coordinator at the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries.

The rain garden at Pfizer Consumer Health Care (above) collects runoff from the lawn and paved areas. Visitors to the WSSI green roof (L) routinely see butterflies, bees, and other insects drawn to flowering plants.