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Editorial: Open Featherstone

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Posted: Wednesday, July 28, 2010 4:52 am

Jonathan Hunley | 0 comments

A few years ago, a columnist at The Free Lance-Star newspaper in Fredericksburg described Prince William as the ugliest county in Virginia, what with all our asphalt and myriad strip malls.

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He must never have gone fishing at Leesylvania State Park or been to Stoney Lonesome Farm, a rural enclave amid the busyness of Gainesville. Those would have changed his mind.

As would the Featherstone National Wildlife Refuge, the Woodbridge home to birds, crickets, cicadas and butterflies with names such as duskywing and zabulon skipper.

That newspaperman surely hasn't been to Featherstone, though, because its 325 acres have been closed to the public since the 1970s when the

federal government began acquiring land for the refuge. Meanwhile, the nearby Occoquan Bay and Elizabeth Hartwell Mason Neck refuges welcome about 50,000 nature-lovers each year.

A visitor on a tour of the site Saturday with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service made a good point in that restricting access to the refuge allows it to stay preserved.

But the potential effects of trampling feet and litterbugs aren't enough to merit the land's continued closure. And keeping the property spotless could necessitate the creation of jobs -- not of the six-figure variety, mind you, but anything's good in this economy -- or at least projects for schoolchildren and Eagle Scouts.

MANASSAS, VA

CURRENT CONDITIONS

Clear Humidity: 34%
Winds: SSW at 6mph
Feels Like: 50°

YOUR EXTENDED FORECAST

Thursday High 49°/Low 24° Sunny	Tomorrow High 50°/Low 27° Sunny
Saturday High 51°/Low 27° Partly Cloudy	Sunday High 59°/Low 43° Light Rain

[7 Day Forecast](#)

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The folks at Fish and Wildlife say they're ready to open Featherstone -- but only after they've resolved issues including where visitors would park and how to provide safe access over the CSX railroad tracks in the area.

That's not good enough for Rep. Gerald E. "Gerry" Connolly, who seems to have gotten a case of Featherstone Fever.

"This refuge is owned by all Americans, and they should have access to it now," he wrote to a Fish and Wildlife official and to Interior Secretary Ken Salazar.

The congressman, who represents most of Prince William, is right. His office notes that Fish and Wildlife plans to release later this summer a draft conservation plan for the refuge. It will be available for public review and comment, so check it out and make your voice heard about how this land, your land, should be used.

Because after all, what's the use of having a jewel if no one can see it?

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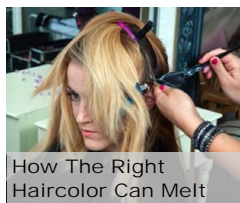
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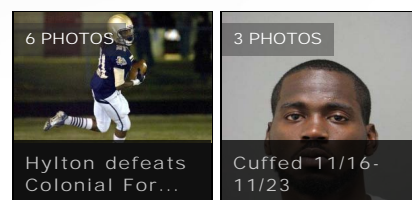
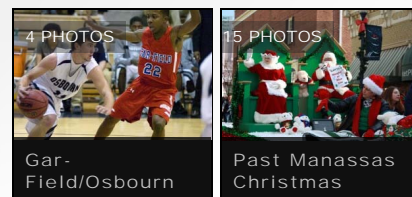
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November 2012

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
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