

Website Stats for Number of Visits – **Jan** 92, **Feb** 107, **Mar** 171, **Apr** 337

We are growing and it shows!

1. The **Southern Albemarle Group** – a small, recently formed, group of builders, restorationists, designers, interested in new, affordable housing such as small houses, and eco-villages, and renovations of other houses in Esmont and Scottsville, toured both areas on April 30.

This group will be helpful to us for construction/renovations/budgets/etc.

One of the guys built the Center at Schuyler Gardens. Nice to have that connection, we need to visit the Gardens. And, several in the group are trying to connect with the owner of Purvis Store.

2. **Yancey School Community Center** – Advisory Panel meeting May 10.

I am on Advisory Panel which meets monthly to talk about the various activities that can and do go on there. That is a growing list. We talked about the Community Garden at this meeting.

They have applied for a big grant that would allow hiring a Director. This person would be able to keep the Center open in the evenings as necessary. We talked about joining with another group to meet the same evening so we could use that meeting space in the future. They have lots of rooms.

3. Expect to hear regarding **Trail Planning Grant** on May 30

We are very disappointed we did not win the grant from Rails to Trails. However, our trail has created lots of local interest – Scottsville wants to connect, County of Albemarle wants to connect. Because the entire County wants, and needs, to be connected, we will find the funding somewhere.

#### 4. Meeting with Matt Lawless, **Town Manager Scottsville**

Matt is part of the Southern Albemarle Group, so we have been working with him for a while. We met with him specifically for suggestions on writing a Business Plan for Friends of Esmont, a suggestion from our April meeting. He suggested we have a Program Plan, and a plan for each Project rather than Business Plan, which is what we did.

Matt is very interested in what we are planning to do in Esmont and will support us in any way he can.

#### 5. **Program Plan and Projects**

Feeling certain we will soon find funding to begin the Trail Planning, we want our first project to be Replacement of Esmont Depot which will serve as the Trailhead for Esmont-Alberene Quarry Line Trail. We expect the Trail to take some time to complete, so other projects will go on during the same time.

Attached is a copy of the Program Plan along with a description of each Project. Note that these are DRAFT copies. The final versions will be posted on the Friends of Esmont website when they are ready, along with maps of the Village, the entire Esmont area, and the area of Esmont, Alberene and Scottsville. It was mentioned that a link to the County Maps would be included in these minutes, link below:

<http://gisweb.albemarle.org/Map/Viewer.aspx?state=328866057046>



## **Friends of Esmont – Program Plan**

Esmont, Virginia, covers a large geographic area including Porters Road, Chestnut Grove, Esmont Road, and many farms surrounding the area. From its beginning in the late 1800s, Esmont village, located on Esmont Road, was a bustling village with a regional bank, several thriving general stores, a profitable railroad, a wood yard for railroad ties and pulpwood, a soapstone quarry operation, a livery stable, and doctor's office. This boom continued into the 1950s, when the quarry operation closed, the bank had long been converted to a post office, the rails and depot were removed, the wood yard vanished, most of the stores had closed, and the village of Esmont started into steady decline.

Over the next 60+ years, the village of Esmont (Village) deteriorated from a lack of attention from its residents or from local officials. The Village, itself, has never had its own elected officials, nor have Porters Road or Chestnut Grove, but Porters Road and Chestnut both prospered to some extent, while the Village steadily declined.

Friends of Esmont, Inc., (Friends) a non-profit 501 (c) (3), started by a former resident of the Village, who upon return to the area after a long absence, was quite dismayed at the deteriorated conditions. Once word got around that an organization had been started to bring life back into the Village, turn it into a destination, and make it the hub of activity as in the past, people from all around the local area and across the country signed up to become Friends of Esmont. The response was so overwhelming, the organization quickly grew and organized, selecting a Board of Directors, setting up a website, and holding regularly scheduled meetings. This success attracted the town of Scottsville and the village of Alberene to join forces, thereby covering the Southern Corner of Albemarle

County, or the *Forgotten* Corner of Albemarle County. These contiguous areas have a population of approximately 4,511 people.

After a couple of meetings with residents, the question was asked of them, “what would you like to see done in the Village to make it a destination?” A lot of discussion ensued and after several meetings, a list of fourteen (14) projects were identified as helpful to the Village but also benefiting all the other areas, particularly Porters Road and Chestnut Grove.

For a new, small organization, fourteen projects seemed too many at one time, therefore, the next task was to cull the projects down to the top 7 or so. The goal was to have all projects benefit the Village, as well as the surrounding areas, and each project would benefit others.

The projects getting final approval are listed below. Descriptions of each project are attached showing how each project benefits the community, how each project relates to other projects, the estimated cost for each project and each project’s sustainability. Also attached is a map of the Village showing all structures and all projects, a map showing the area with an Esmont address, and a map of Esmont, Alberene and Scottsville.

#### **PROJECT LIST:**

1. Rails-to-Trails: Esmont-Alberene Quarry Line Trail
2. Rebuild Esmont Depot
3. Restoration of Historic Homes
4. Establish a Wildlife Refuge Along Ballinger Creek
5. Chronicle Historic Esmont Village History
6. Easy Access to Esmont Fulfillment Farms
7. Purvis Store

## **IMPLEMENTATON PLAN**

Even though all the projects are interconnected, it is not expected that all seven projects will be active at the same time, but rather one, maybe two, at the same time. The Rails-to-Trails will take many years to complete; the Purvis Store Project will take several years as will the Restoration of Historic Homes. The other four projects should take less time per project.

The decision as to which project to begin, and when, will be determined primarily by the availability of funds. Land acquisition could present time-lag problems for the Wildlife Refuge, the Depot and Purvis Store.

Rebuilding the Esmont Depot would be an ideal project to begin with as it would give Esmont its identity back with the "Esmont" signs on the building and would make a very nice visual for resident and visitors.

**Project Name:** Rails-To-Trails: Esmont-Alberene Quarry Line Trail

**Project Description:** The Esmont-Alberene Quarry Line Trail is a 5.5-mile trail system from the historic Village of Esmont (the Village) to the Alberene Soapstone Quarry, using the abandoned Nelson-Albemarle rail line originally used for stone transport from the quarry to City of Charlottesville's C&O Railroad and the town of Scottsville's Hatton Ferry on the James River.

**Benefit to the Community:** The benefits to the community are tremendous. Albemarle County, City of Charlottesville, and the town of Scottsville are all working to be interconnected. Esmont lies within that connectivity and could bring in both Alberene and Schuyler, taking bicyclers, walkers, and horseback riders off the narrow roads, putting them on wonderfully scenic trails through old historic farmlands and beautiful quarry sites.

**Relationship to Other Projects:** The newly built Esmont Depot will serve as a Trailhead offering bathroom facilities and a refreshment area, the only such area available for miles.

**Estimated Cost:** Crushed Stone/mile \$100,000; Asphalt/mile \$285,000

**Sustainability of Project:** The trail would be incorporated into the Albemarle County trails system.

**Project Name:** Replace Esmont Depot

**Project Description:** The original Depot in the Historic Village of Esmont, (the village), was removed when the railroad tracks were taken up in 1963, taking the Village name signs with it. The Village lost a major part of its identity when it was abandoned by the C&O Railroad.

Friends of Esmont has been researching the possibility of replacing the depot on or near the original site. Working with the C&O Historical Society and Friends of Esmont with strong interest in trains, we have learned there may not be a copy of the original drawings of the depot. However, we believe we will be able to duplicate the drawings from pictures.

**Benefit to Community:** A new Depot with the Village name signs on either end would be valuable in helping identify the Village and restoring dignity. The Depot would house a small museum containing story boards describing the origin of Esmont and its rich history. With a trailside location, the Depot would serve as a rest stop for those using the trail.

**Relationship to Other Projects:** The Depot would serve as the Trailhead for the Esmont-Alberene Quarry Line Trail. Outdoor bathrooms, snack machines and parking would be provided for those using the trail.

**Estimated Cost:** \$100,000

**Sustainability of Project:** The Depot will be given to Albemarle County as part of their trail system.

**Project Name:** Restoration of Historic Homes

**Project Description:** Many of the historic homes, most of which are over 100 years old, along Esmont Road and Red Row Lane in the historic village of Esmont, (the Village), have fallen into disrepair. This project will start by inventorying the homes needing work and interviewing the residents and owners to determine their interest in restoration and specific tasks for each home. Once the initial data gathering is completed funding sources will be identified, builders retained, and restoration will begin.

**Benefit to Community:** Historic homes now threatened with being lost will be preserved and the Village will more closely resemble its appearance and charm of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. These restored homes will instill pride in the neighborhood as well as provide affordable, attractive housing.

**Relationship to Other Projects:** Other projects aimed at drawing visitors and new residents to the Village will be enhanced as a result of this restoration project.

**Estimated Cost:** To be determined when initial data gathering is completed.

**Sustainability of Project:** The maintenance of the restored homes will be agreed upon by the home owners before the restoration will be started.

**Project Name:** Establishing a Wildlife Refuge Along Ballinger Creek

**Project Description:** Ballinger Creek runs through the historic Village of Esmont, (the Village), mostly in an area that is a flood plain, creating a situation ideal for a Wildlife Refuge.

**Benefit to Community:** Building a board walk and planting native plants to attract birds, ducks, and other wildlife, would bring life and beauty to that area and could be used for education and research. Creating this outdoor attraction would bring visitors to Esmont and elevate its image as a destination.

**Relationship to Other Projects:** The Fulfillment Farm property, owned by the Virginia Wildlife Foundation, abuts some of this property. Virginia Wildlife Foundation has a wildlife refuge on their property not far from Esmont Village. Perhaps there can be a partnership of some kind to expand their Refuge.

**Estimated Cost:** Land acquisition costs will be approximately \$20,000, building the construction of board walk will cost approximately \$200,000-\$300,000.

**Sustainability of Project:** It is proposed that Albemarle Parks & Recreation will maintain the Refuge.

**Project Name:** Chronicle Historic Esmont's, (the Village), History

*Southern Albemarle County's Forgotten Corner*

**Project Description:** The history of Esmont does not exist in one single document, but rather in bits and pieces in numerous places. Esmont has a rich history going back to the 1800's and played an important role in the county and region. It is worthy of being documented and published as a teaching tool.

Knowing the history has helped in selecting other projects for the Village such as the Rails to Trails project and Replacement of the Esmont Depot.

Documenting Esmont's History is, therefore, one of the Projects selected for inclusion in Esmont's Project Plan.

**Benefit to the Community:** This would attempt to consolidate and present a comprehensive history so is likely to be well received and will raise the level of interest in the Village.

**Relationship to Other Projects:** The Lane Family, trains and soapstone all had major impact on Esmont which lead to the selection of Rails to Trails Project, Rebuild the Depot Project and Esmont Fulfillment Farm Project involving the Esmont Soapstone Quarry.

**Estimated Cost:** Research costs for this Project will be donated. Printing costs will be \$2000.

**Sustainability of Project:** Publications of Esmont's history will be distributed electronically and in paper copies.

**Project Name:** Easy Access to Esmont Fulfillment Farms

**Project Description:** Our plan is to work with the Virginia Wildlife Foundation to designate the 200 acres of Fulfillment Farms abutting the historic village of Esmont, (the Village), making that land more accessible and family friendly as a recreational area for walkers, hikers, birders, and others.

**Benefit to Community:** Hopefully, the Wildlife Foundation will play a major role in creating an additional wetland on the Esmont flood plain, creating a major visitor area, which would incorporate the Esmont-Alberene Quarry Line Trail.

**Relationship to Other Projects:** The connection to the Wildlife Refuge and the Esmont-Alberene Quarry Trail will provide important recreational opportunities to outdoor enthusiasts.

**Estimated Cost:** One mile crushed stone path, approximately \$100,000.

**Sustainability of Project:** It is proposed that Albemarle Parks & Recreation will maintain the Fulfillment Farms area.

**Project Name:** Purvis Store

**Project Description:** For many years Purvis Store was the hub of activity in the Historic Village of Esmont (the Village). Built in the early 1900s, it is listed on the Albemarle County Preservation Committee's list of Historic Country Stores.

The store played many roles in serving the Village and nearby residents other than selling groceries and gas and making home deliveries. It was also a message center for those who had no telephone, a recreation center for those who had no television, and a place to go when they needed help.

Our hope is to work with the owner of the property to restore it as the hub of the Village again instead of a derelict old building about to collapse, as it is now. Our vision is to provide a marketplace for crafts people to sell their wares and perhaps to make them on site. Everything sold in the Purvis Store would be locally made or tied to the history of the area, and a small museum of local artifacts will be housed there.

**Benefit to Community:** Purvis Store would attract craftspeople and visitors from around the area.

**Relationship to Other Projects:** Visitors to the Wildlife Refuge and those on the Esmont-Alberene Quarry Line Trail will enjoy and extend their time in the Village by stopping by the Purvis Store.

**Estimated Cost:** \$300,000

**Sustainability of Project:** The headquarters for Friends of Esmont, Inc. will be housed in the Purvis Store along with other shops bringing in rental revenue.

Esmont School

WYNOVA LN

Esmont Post Office

Depot

715

Esmont

BALLINGER CREEK

Purvisford Wetland

ESMONT RD

RED ROW LN

Fullbright Farm

ACES STORE RD

IRISH RD

