

# Patch Program

# Potomac Woods RiverWalk



**The Potomac Woods RiverWalk was made possible thanks to a generous gift by long-time Girl Scout members and volunteers Sara Phillips and her daughter Dr. Barbara Sutton**



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# Introduction

As urban sprawl continues to increase the amount of developed land around Washington, DC, our Girl Scout camps constitute an increasingly precious outdoor resource for girls. The Potomac Woods RiverWalk educates girls on the importance of preserving and managing natural resources while inspiring them to spend time outdoors. RiverWalk activities support the Girl Scout Leadership Experience by promoting the following goals for girls:

**Discover – Girls develop critical thinking and practical life skills which prepare them for a healthy and environmentally friendly lifestyle.**

**Connect – Girls promote cooperation and team building as they walk the trail together and complete activities which help them connect with the world around them.**

**Take Action – Girls can identify community needs and feel empowered to make the world a better place as they apply what they have learned to become stewards of nature.**

## **Not a scientist? Not a problem!**

You don't need to be an expert, or even an amateur, scientist or naturalist to guide girls on the Potomac Woods RiverWalk. The activity kits stored at the RiverWalk Eco-Lab include detailed instructions and most of the materials needed.

## **About This Publication**

The Potomac Woods RiverWalk program is designed to be completed with the use of activity kits while at camp. This booklet is an overview of the program and is intended for planning purposes only. Full activity instructions are included in program materials at camp, and can also be found online at

<http://www.gscnc.org/riverwalk.html>

# Program Overview

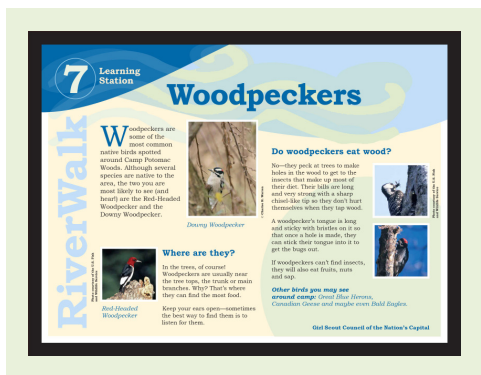
The Potomac Woods RiverWalk patch program has three interrelated components: Program Activities (patch requirements), Activity Kits, and Learning Trail Stations.

Each Program Activity has a corresponding Activity Kit stored in the RiverWalk Eco-Lab. There are two exceptions: the reflection activity does not have an activity kit and the fishing materials are all stored in a shed near Learning Trail Station 4 instead of in the Eco-Lab.



**\*\* The Eco-Lab benches containing the activity kits and the fishing shed are all locked. The combination for these locks is 1010 \*\***

Activity Kits consist of backpacks containing non-consumable materials and detailed instructions for each activity. Consumable materials not provided are listed for each activity needing them on the Patch Requirements pages of this booklet.



Each Program Activity also corresponds to a Learning Trail Station sign topic. Using the materials in the kit, the activity should be completed at that station.

## **Tell us what you think**

As always, your feedback is helpful as we work to improve the program and report about its impact. In an effort to use resources wisely, we have not included a paper evaluation for the RiverWalk program in this booklet. Instead, an online evaluation can be found on our website at <http://www.gscnc.org/riverwalk.html>

If you are unable to complete an online form for any reason, please email [programkits@gscnc.org](mailto:programkits@gscnc.org) or call 202-237-1670 for a paper version.

Activity Kits contain detailed instructions in the following format. For planning purposes activity instruction pages can be viewed online prior to your camp visit at <http://www.gscnc.org/riverwalk.html>

# Activity Title

Location: RiverWalk Learning Station \_\_\_\_

**Objective:** This briefly summarizes what the girls will do and what learning should take place during this activity.

## Activity Steps

1. This section provides step-by-step directions to help adults facilitate the activity.

## Materials Provided

- Item can be found in the kit

## Materials Needed

- ❖ Item must be provided by leader  
*\*\*these are also listed below the activity descriptions on pages 5-7\*\**

## Discussion Questions

These questions help you facilitate discussions with girls during the activity.

## Extensions

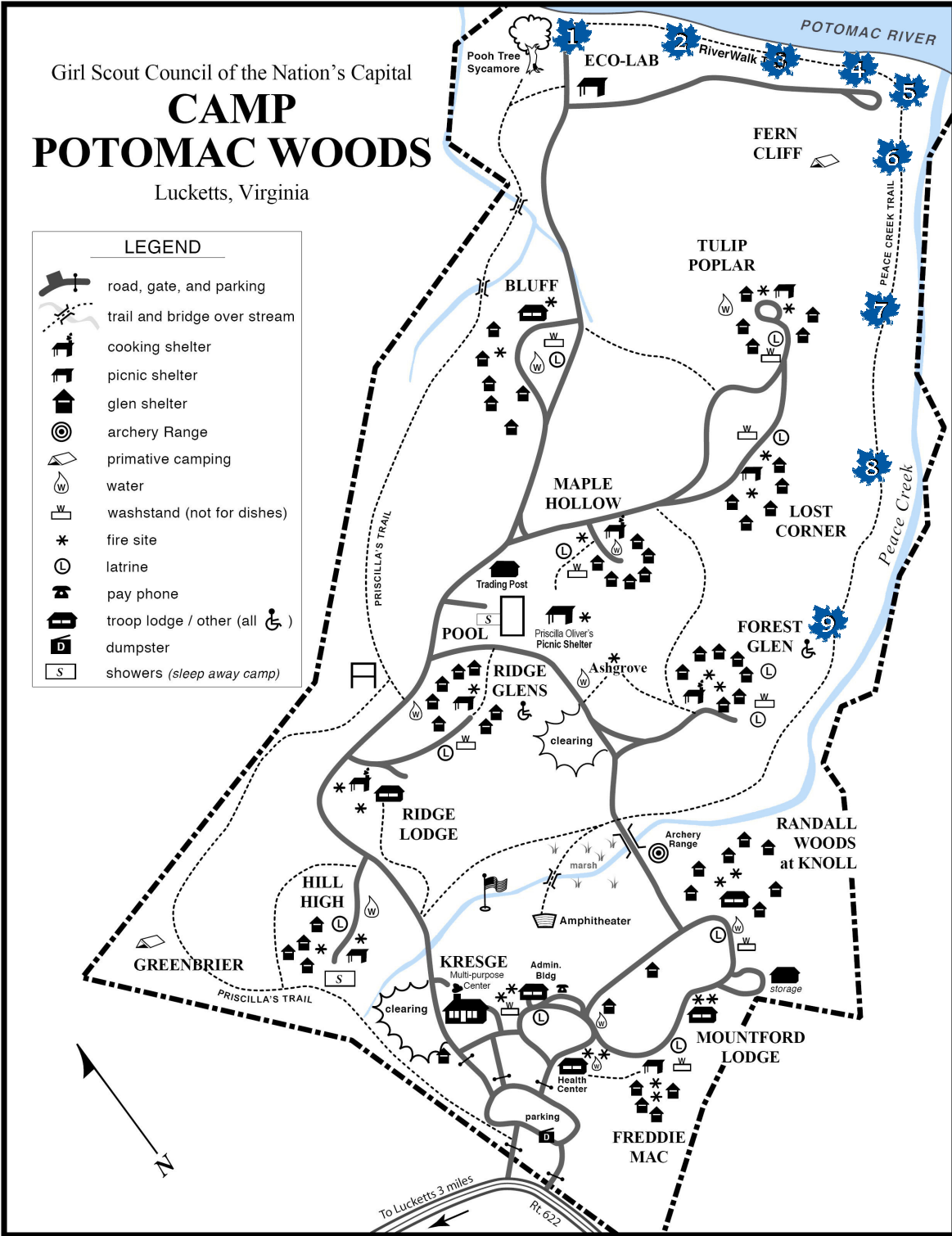
This section suggests similarly themed activities that may be done to extend learning beyond this activity.  
*These are not required.*

### On the Trail

On the Trail extensions are continuations of the activity, and should be done while at camp.

### Beyond the Trail

Beyond the Trail extension activities are to be done at home. These are described on the instruction pages but have also been summarized on pages 8-9 of this booklet for your convenience.



The Potomac Woods RiverWalk trail begins at the Eco-Lab just down the road from Bluff. Each number on the map above corresponds to a Learning Station where girls can complete activities.

**Please note: although the trail does not complete a full circle, you will need to return all borrowed Activity Kits to the Eco-Lab after completing the program.**

# Patch Requirements

To earn the Potomac Woods RiverWalk patch, girls should complete the required activity plus additional activities as described below. The letters next to each activity title indicate the appropriate Girl Scout program level.

\*Although multiple levels have the same number of requirements, distinctions between the activities have been designed to provide appropriate challenges for girls in each level.

## **Required Activity**

Walk the entire trail, starting at the RiverWalk Eco-Lab and ending near the Archery Range. As you walk, be sure to read the sign at each station, even if you do not choose to do an additional activity at that station.


## **Additional Activities**


*Activities are listed in the order their Learning Stations are encountered on the trail.*


**Daisies:** 3  activities

**Brownies:** 4  activities

**Juniors:** 4  activities

**Cadettes:** 5  activities

**Seniors:** 5  activities

**Ambassadors:** 5  activities

### **Web of Life**

*Location: RiverWalk Eco-Lab*

Play a game which introduces the types of flora and fauna that can be found along the Potomac Woods RiverWalk. Learn how everything is interconnected and interdependent by creating a physical web of life.

*\*Materials needed: paper, pens/pencils (for extension only)*

### **LEED-ing the Way**

*Location: RiverWalk Eco-Lab*

Do you know what makes a building sustainable or ‘green’? Learn about LEED® certification for green buildings, and investigate the green components of the RiverWalk Eco-Lab.

### **Mystery Tree Challenge**

*Location: RiverWalk Learning Station 1*

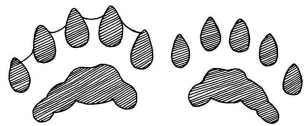
Learn how scientists use taxonomy to identify and classify trees. Now apply what you have learned and use taxonomy processes to identify several common trees along the RiverWalk.





**Whose Clues?** **D B J C S A**

*Location: RiverWalk Learning Station 2*



Most wild animals will run and hide when people approach but that does not mean they aren't around. Animals leave all sorts of clues that they were here. Can you find animal clues along the RiverWalk and determine whose clues they are?

*\*Materials needed: paper, pens/pencils*

**Ad-libbed Aliens** **B**

*Location: RiverWalk Learning Station 3*

Fill in the blanks to create Mad Libs® style stories about crazy plants. Watch out though—sometimes truth can be stranger than fiction.



Now that you know a little about real invader plants, design your own super alien.

*\*Materials needed: paper, markers/colored pencils*

**Stand Your Ground** **S A**

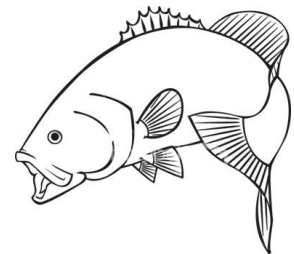
*Location: RiverWalk Learning Station 3*

Not everyone agrees on whether people should control invasive species. Read quotes that come from a variety of sources and try to identify the position of the writer—sometimes it is harder than you would think.

**Hook, Line & Sinker** **J C S A**

*Location: RiverWalk Learning Station 4*

Learn all the skills needed to try fishing. Set up a pole, tie on your hook, and practice casting. If you want, you can even try catching fish in the river.



**\*\*Fishing materials are stored in the shed near Station 4 instead of a backpack kit in the Eco-Lab\*\***

**NOTE:** Safety-Wise requires at least one adult watcher certified in American Red Cross Basic Water Rescue be present for shoreline fishing. Shoreline fishing in the river is an optional extension and is not necessary to complete Hook, Line & Sinker as a patch requirement. Troops wishing to fish must comply with Safety-Wise and provide their own bait. More information on fishing can be found online at <http://www.gscnc.org/riverwalk.html>

**Buggo!**  

*Location: RiverWalk Learning Station 4*



What is the difference between a grasshopper and a cicada? How about a millipede and centipede? Find out the answers by playing Buggo!—a game where you use clues to identify bugs on a bingo board.



**Marsh Munchers**  

*Location: RiverWalk Learning Station 5*

Act out dinner time in a marsh. Learn about different types of animals that live in the marsh and how they feed. Then pretend to be either a predator or a detritus eater and try to stay alive for an entire tidal cycle.

*\*Materials needed: paper, pens/pencils (for extension only)*

**Marsh Mystery**  



*Location: RiverWalk Learning Station 5*

Somehow pesticides from farms near Taylorstown, Virginia have ended up making someone sick in another town. By reading what happened and then tracing the behavior of marsh animals—solve the mystery and find out what is making people sick.

**Geologic Jargon**  

*Location: RiverWalk Learning Station 6*

Sedimentary, weathered, deposition, limestone...any of these words ring a bell? Learn their meanings by completing a crossword puzzle and use your newfound geologic vocabulary to describe a rock outcrop on the trail.



Complete the activity above, then use a geologic map to determine the rock's age and other information.

**Wearing Away Walk**  

*Location: RiverWalk Learning Station 6*

Erosion is a common problem in areas where humans have altered the landscape. Examine the banks of Peace Creek and observe measures that have been taken to address the problem. Use your observations to plan a project to combat erosion in a place you have noticed it occurring.



*\*Materials needed: paper, pens/pencils (for extension only)*



**Ornithological Orations** **D B J C S A**

*Location: RiverWalk Learning Station 7*

Listen to the woods around you. Spend some time listening to the bird songs and try to identify the birds that are singing. Then use binoculars to see if you can find the birds in the trees.

*\*Materials needed: paper, pens/pencils, markers/colored pencils/crayons*



**Water We Have Here** **C S A**

*Location: RiverWalk Learning Station 8*



How can you tell how healthy a stream or river is? What kind of things might affect the health of a stream? Test the Peace Creek water and then analyze your results and compare them to other troops' test results.

*\*Materials needed: paper, pens/pencils*

**Reflection** **D B J C S A**

*Location: RiverWalk Learning Station 9*

Think about your experience on the RiverWalk trail: as you discovered new things, what was your favorite activity and why? How did your group connect through teamwork as you completed the activities? How will what you observed and studied here translate to your community when you go home?

Choose your own way to express your reflections: maybe through a poem, a paragraph, a song, a drawing, or a photo. Share your experience and reflections with other troops by submitting it for the Potomac Woods RiverWalk webpage at <http://www.gscnc.org/riverwalk.html>

**\*\* There is not an activity kit associated with the reflection activity. Unlike the other activities, it may be done at camp or at a later troop meeting once girls have had time to think about their experiences\*\***

# Beyond The Trail

These are optional extensions of the patch activities. They provide a starting point for more investigation on topics girls found interesting while on the trail.

## **Web of Life**

Choose an eco-system that is different from camp. It could be your meeting place or somewhere you like to visit. Identify the natural resources in your new eco-system, then figure out how they all interact to form a web of life.

## **LEED-ing the Way**

Find out the requirements for LEED® certification by exploring the US Green Building Council's website at <http://www.usgbc.org>. Are there any LEED® certified buildings in your area? If so, try to arrange to take a tour.

## **Mystery Tree Challenge**

Purchase some field guides or check them out from your local library and use them to identify trees near your house or meeting place. How do they compare to the trees you saw on the RiverWalk?

## **Whose Clues?**

Look for signs of animals near your house or meeting place. Even in urban areas where tracks are unlikely, you might see birds' nests or mole tunnels.

## **Ad-libbed Aliens & Stand Your Ground**

Help with a local effort to remove invasive plants. Here are some area organizations that have programs to restore native habitats:

- \* Anacostia Watershed Society - <http://www.anacostiaws.org>
- \* The Maryland Native Plant Society - <http://www.mdflora.org>
- \* Virginia Native Plant Society - <http://www.vnps.org>
- \* West Virginia Native Plant Society - <http://www.wvnps.org>

## **Stand Your Ground**

Check out local and national newspapers for articles relating to invasive species management. Are most of them for control or against it? Respond to arguments by writing letters to the editor.

## **Buggo!**

Visit the Insect Zoo at the Smithsonian's Museum of Natural History. You can watch a tarantula feeding, crawl through a model termite mound, see scientists working with insects, and more. Find exhibit information online at <http://www.mnh.si.edu/education/exhibitions/insectzoo/index.html>.

### **Hook, Line & Sinker**

Try fishing with your family or friends. Fishing equipment can be purchased at stores such as Bass Pro Shops, Cabela's, and Dick's Sporting Goods. Before fishing, check with the US Fish & Wildlife Service or your state's Department of Natural Resources to find out if you need a fishing license. If you know someone with a boat, try fishing for bigger fish that live further from the shoreline. Remember to always wear a life vest (PFD) in a boat.

### **Marsh Munchers & Marsh Mystery**

Learn about the various types of wetlands. Explore salt marshes, mangrove swamps, bogs, freshwater marshes, and more. If you can, arrange to visit one. Consider going to the Battle Creek Cypress Swamp in Calvert County, MD—the northernmost Cypress swamp in the USA. Visit [www.calvertparks.org/Parks/CypressSwamp/CShome.htm](http://www.calvertparks.org/Parks/CypressSwamp/CShome.htm) for the location and more information.

### **Geologic Jargon**

Start a rock collection. Each time you find or buy a new rock, learn as much about it as you can.

Visit the United States Geological Survey headquarters in Reston, Virginia. Learn how they create maps, monitor geologic changes occurring right now, and much more. Find more information online at [www.usgs.gov](http://www.usgs.gov)

### **Wearing Away Walk**

Complete one or more of the proposed projects to combat erosion in your community! Did your work halt or slow the erosion? If it didn't completely halt it, what could you do to increase the effectiveness of your work?

### **Ornithological Orations**

Spend some time bird-watching near your troop meeting space or home. Do you see the same types of birds as at Camp Potomac Woods?

Build birdhouses or feeders to attract birds to your neighborhood, or contact your local animal protection agency (US Fish & Wildlife Service, EPA, etc) to see if you can volunteer to build birdhouses or work at a bird refuge.

### **Water We Have Here**

Find a stream near your meeting place and test the water each week or month for at least one season. How do storms and different seasons affect the water quality? Report your findings to your local environmental agency—volunteer-collected data can be extremely helpful to them.

*Test kits can be purchased online or at local aquarium supply stores. You can also visit [www.worldwatermonitoringday.org](http://www.worldwatermonitoringday.org) for kits and more information about water monitoring around the world.*

# Did You Know?

Many fun facts about Camp Potomac Woods and the surrounding area could not be included in the activities—here they are!



When you look at the Potomac River from the trail, the land you see is not the Maryland shore, but two islands—Birdsaw and Cox Islands. However, Birdsaw and Cox Islands *are* part of Maryland! The state line is not in the middle of the river, but follows the Virginia shoreline.



A boulder in the river on the other side of Birdsaw and Cox Islands marks the apex of one of the most well-preserved ancient fish weirs in the Potomac River. You can learn more about weirs and the placement of this one at Learning Station 4.



© Mike High

*Aerial photo of the nearby weir*



The Dickerson Whitewater Course is less than two miles (as the crow flies) from camp. This is a training facility for the US Olympic Kayak team. The course is 900 feet long, with various boulders and other obstacles paddlers must navigate around.



The Smithsonian Castle is built with red sandstone that came from Seneca Quarry, which is just over three miles from Camp Potomac Woods.



The Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park is across the Potomac River from camp, in Maryland. Better known as the C&O, the 185 mile long canal connects Washington, DC with the headwaters of the Ohio River in western Pennsylvania. It was used for shipping from 1850-1924, eventually shutting down as the railroad industry captured more and more of the carrying trade.



The land that is Camp Potomac Woods was purchased by the Girl Scouts on May 8, 1948—exactly 61 years and one day before the RiverWalk trail and patch program became available for use.

# References

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3. “Marsh Munchers” *Project WILD Aquatic: K-12 Curriculum & Activity Guide*. 3rd ed. 2000.
4. Mittermaier, Beth. *Invaders of the Forest: Educators’ Guide to Invasive Plants of Wisconsin’s Forests*. 2005.
5. “Mystery Tree Challenge” *Arbor Day: Youth Programs*. The National Arbor Day Foundation. Retrieved 7 July 2008 <<http://www.arborday.org/kids/TreemazeFINAL.pdf>>
6. Slattery, Britt. *WOW! The Wonders of Wetlands*. Eds. Susan Higgins and Mark R. Schilling. 2003.

# The RiverWalk Story

**By Barbara Sutton**

You never know what's going to happen as the result of a simple question like "Would your daughter like to be a Girl Scout?"

That question that was asked of my father by one of his patients one day, long ago. When the answer was "Yes," she called my mother and in true resourceful Girl Scout fashion, told her that I was welcome to join, but she would have to become the troop leader!

That simple question started both of us, my mother and me, on a long and wonderful relationship with the Girl Scout Council of the Nation's Capital.

After Brownies I joined a Junior and then Cadette troop led by Mrs. Jones and Mrs. Sawtelle. These two extraordinary ladies loved to hike and camp, so our troop hiked and camped! The place we went to many times was Camp Potomac Woods. It became a favorite place for me, and my troop camping trips there added fuel to the fire that was my growing love for the outdoors.

For the next 44 years, my mother also continued her work with the Girl Scouts. It seems she's done everything—from troop leader, registrar, and summer day camp "T-shirt Lady," to service on the Council Board of Directors, various Task Forces, National Convention delegate, and creating the Gold Award Scholarship endowment with my father in 2006. As my husband likes to say, "She's a real Four Star General in the Girl Scouts."

Several years ago my mother asked me if I'd go in with her to create something lasting for one of the GSCNC camps. It seemed like such a simple question, and I agreed. Out of that question, focused by my long love affair with rivers and woodlands and fishing and camping, and my mother's desire to see this Girl Scout Council offer the best that it can offer to its girls, came the RiverWalk.

What's gone around really has come back around. I truly hope that out of the thousands of girls who walk this learning trail, experience the river and its environment, that many will also begin a life long love affair with being outdoors. And who knows, maybe one day someone will ask them a seemingly simple question, and more good things will happen for Girl Scouts.

