



This graphic issued by the National Weather Service at 11 a.m. Tuesday shows the forecast track of the center of Hurricane Isabel for Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. Changes in the storm's direction could alter the picture later, and local residents are urged to look for updates frequently.

Hurricane Isabel approaches

by Reid Armstrong

KILMARNOCK—While Hurricane Isabel plowed through open seas with a bead on the mid-Atlantic coast, residents up and down the Chesapeake Bay were preparing last week for the brunt of the storm.

Reports on Tuesday indicated Isabel was losing some strength, but it was still rated as a Category 2 storm with sustained winds of 105 mph and stronger gusts.

The hurricane had twice been labeled a Category 5 storm over the weekend and officials cautioned that some restrengthening is possible prior to landfall.

On Monday night, emergency teams in Northumberland and Lancaster counties met to designate shelters and to begin emergency planning. Gov. Mark R. Warner declared a State of Emergency.

At 11 a.m. Tuesday, the National Weather Service issued a hurricane watch from Little River Inlet, S.C., to Chincoteague.

Meteorologists were still not certain where the hurricane would strike land by Tuesday afternoon, but most predictions showed the storm traveling directly across the

western shore of the bay, its outer bands hitting the Northern Neck Wednesday night followed by the full force of the storm on Thursday and into Friday.

Several area schools had already begun to discuss closing. Middlesex County schools decided Tuesday afternoon to close at 1 p.m. Wednesday and will make day to day decisions Thursday and Friday based on the storm.

Northumberland County schools were planning to stay open Wednesday, sending a note home with students about Thursday's school hours depending on how the storm was tracking at that point.

County administrators in Northumberland and Lancaster counties were relying on Tuesday evening conference calls with the NOAA weather center in Wakefield to help make decisions regarding evac-

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Bill Palmer (left) and Tim Booth of W. F. Booth and Son in Kilmarnock install sheets of plywood to protect the glass storefront on Main Street from the expected wrath of Hurricane Isabel.

Board delays additional action on sludge permit

by Reid Armstrong

HEATHSVILLE—Force of presence spoke louder than words at last Thursday's hearing on a sludge permit in Northumberland County.

Most of the 100 or so people in attendance kept quiet, allowing a few poignant comments to speak for all.

"I was really proud of the way the public handled it," said county administrator Kenneth D. Eades.

The county has learned from the Milton Wright Trucking that it most likely has until next month's meeting, October 9, to decide whether it will enforce the 25 sludge application conditions it earlier placed upon the company, said county attorney Les Kilduff.

There is no guarantee, however, that Wright Trucking won't begin applying sludge before then, Kilduff said.

The issue of sludge application resurfaced recently after the trucking company informed the county that it intends to apply sludge on county agricultural lands, not necessarily by the conditions the county previously imposed on its permit.

Meanwhile, the board is requesting an opinion from the

environmental department of Troutman and Sanders in Richmond. Kilduff expects the opinion prior to next month's meeting.

The board is also closely following a court case in

Appomattox County. While a decision in that case has not yet been released from the District Court, a temporary injunction against the county was upheld by the Circuit Court.

The Circuit Court found the balance of injury favoring the farmers, meaning that the citizens were less likely to be harmed by the application of sludge than the farmers and trucking companies

were likely to be harmed by the inability to apply it.

The injunction therefore prohibits the county from enforcing its conditions while the court considers the case.

Two other recent cases were less closely related. The Supreme Court ruled in an Amelia County case that a county cannot ban the application of sludge. A second case in Louisa County was settled out of court.

If, in Northumberland County, legal council determines that any or all of the conditions could hold up in court, the county may decide to notify Milton Wright Trucking that it intends to enforce the conditions, said Eades.

From there, several things could happen. Wright Trucking could seek an injunction. The company could outright ignore the county, forcing the county to prosecute. The company could sue the county for damages, which is something to give the supervisors pause, said Kilduff. The county could also take the offensive and sue Wright Trucking.

The board will discuss its legal options in public during its October meeting, Eades said.

Last week, the board limited

comments to those focused on the legal aspects of the sludge application rather than the environmental or emotional aspects, since only the legal aspect remains to be argued.

"You don't need to tell us about the evils of sludge," said chairman Ronald Jett. "That's like preaching to the choir. We would ban sludge in Northumberland County if we could."

The emotional message from the public, however, was loud and clear. The majority of the community supports the board of supervisors in sticking to its guns, no matter what the cost.

Dr. Sharolyn Hummel of Burgess said she did not believe any of the previous cases involved a school bus yard next to a field where sludge was to be applied.

Rev. Gayl Fowler of Edwardsville said she interviewed an inspector of biosolids who believes that 24 of the 25 conditions are reasonable. Only one — requiring that sludge be applied only in areas with less than a 2 percent grade — could be considered equivalent to an outright ban.

Dr. Lynton Land of Heathsville he did not think this particular

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The public turned out in droves at the Northumberland County courts building last week as supervisors revisited a previously issued sludge permit. Rallying behind the board, citizens gave the board a standing ovation for taking a stand in defending the county against sludge.

Smith Point Light named to state landmark register

RICHMOND—The Virginia Board of Historic Resources and the State Review Board recently approved 28 new properties and the boundary expansion of an already listed property to the Virginia Landmarks Register.

The recent additions include St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Westmoreland County and Smith Point Lighthouse in the Chesapeake Bay off Northumberland County.

St. Peter's was consecrated in 1849 as the first Episcopal Church in Washington parish since the church's disestablishment following the Revolutionary War. In 1860, an Augustus Dei stained glass window was added above the altar and a small addition was completed on the northeast side

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Smith Point Light (Photo by Marie Vincent and Jerry Waters, courtesy the Chesapeake Bay Chapter, U.S. Lighthouse Society)

NAPS honors Luther Welch

by Reid Armstrong

REEDVILLE—Lifelong farmer Luther E. Welch said his plows are rusting up, and he's happy about it.

Welch began practicing no-till farming more than 20 years ago, long before anyone else in the county had even heard of the soil conservation technique.

"I was doing it on back fields where no one else could see what I was doing," Welch said.

A fourth generation Northern Neck farmer, he discovered the benefits of no-till while watching a squirrel digging in some soil by a tree in his field, he said. The earth around the tree had not been disturbed by the plowing. He dug a little hole and discovered, "some of the blackest topsoil I had ever laid eyes on," Welch said.

He has since pursued soil conservation techniques and has spent the last decade on the board of directors of the Northern Neck Soil and Water Conservation District.

"My family would never do anything to harm the watermen," said Welch. "No-tilling protects them and it protects us."



Luther E. Welch

On September 13, the Northumberland Association for Progressive Stewardship recognized Welch's significant contribution to the enrichment of the county through land conservation practices and historical preservation efforts.

More than 170 people attended the NAPS fall social at the

Reedville Fishermen's Museum to witness the presentation of the Distinguished Citizen of the Year award to Welch.

Many areas in the Northern Neck have less than 15 inches of topsoil, said extension agent Ginny Barnes, who nominated Welch for the award. When farmers plow, rains wash away a lot of the loos-

ened topsoil.

While yields decline slightly using no-till techniques, Barnes added, farmers make up for it by saving on fuel and labor expenses by not plowing.

Some day, Welch believes, farmers will only need to use nitrogen and lime on their fields. He hopes to continue to discover ways to preserve his farmland and the Chesapeake Bay, he said.

Welch is also actively working to preserve the history of farming in the Northern Neck. He has acquired, restored and cataloged a large collection of antique farm equipment and memorabilia. He hopes to open his History of Farming Museum near Kilmarnock in November, after the corn is harvested.

Association seeks greater commitment from town

by Robb Hoff

IRVINGTON—The future of the Village Improvement Association (VIA) was raised last week at the Irvington town council meeting.

The VIA sponsors and organizes several community activities including a farmers' market, a Thanksgiving run, a concert series and a Halloween costume contest, and, formerly, a Christmas boat parade.

VIA member Frank Tetrick said the organization's president, Alli-

son Drake, intends to resign at the end of the year. Citing the 3,100 hours of VIA work by volunteers at a value of \$24,000 in donated time, Tetrick sought more commitment from council than a \$200 annual contribution.

"There can be no doubt that these events and activities add to the quality of life for Irvington residents," Tetrick said. "They certainly contribute to the attractiveness of the town of Irvington to our visitors. However, without a joint commitment to a success-

ful future by the town council and the association, it is possible that the best days are behind us."

Last year, the town donated \$1,000 for the boat parade. However, the VIA is not expected to organize it this year.

At Tetrick's request for more council input in programming for 2004, council members Norm Mosher, Kathleen Pollard and Garry Luckham volunteered to serve as liaisons to the VIA.

Additionally, Duncan Bright of the Irvington Business

Association indicated that group's 42 business members could also provide input.

"The Irvington Business Association would be very, very supportive of the Village Improvement Association in any way we can," Bright said.

The next VIA meeting is September 24 at 6 p.m. at the Randall Kipp Architecture office at 81 King Carter Drive.

Commons development

In another matter, Kipp pre-

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