

CURRENTS

Fall 2005

Volume 4, Issue 2

DRBA RECEIVES MAJOR GRANT!

--Harry Cerino, Executive Director of the Harvest Foundation in Martinsville VA, has notified the Dan River Basin Association that the foundation has authorized a grant of \$95,000 to further trail development and river access in the area of the Smith and Mayo Rivers.

The Dan River Basin Association, founded in Rockingham County NC, has reached out to embrace the entire watershed of the Dan River, including the areas of its tributaries the Smith, Mayo, Sandy, Hyco and Banister.

Payable over two years, the grant of \$47,500 per year is designated to fund a full-time director of planning and programs to be headquartered in Martinsville and to work on programs that have special impact on the Basin in Virginia.

The request for the grant was written by Kay Slaughter of the Southern Environmental Law Center, who has worked for a year to assist in creating the Martinsville-Henry County Rivers and Trails Group. The group affiliated with the Basin Association in April of 2005.

According to the grant application, the new staff person's first task will be "to refine the volunteer efforts" and "develop a regional master river access and trails plan." In addition, the new director will "provide programmatic support to projects seeking additional funding" and "mobilize volunteer members to participate in educational activities."

In writing the proposal, Slaughter worked closely with T and Lindley Butler, secretary and treasurer of DRBA. Dr. Lindley Butler, a leading river historian, noted, "William Byrd's survey in 1728 drew a line across the watershed, but we are reaching across that line to build a new community."

According to T Butler, the first installment of the grant money has been received by the Association, freeing the group to begin its search for a director of Virginia programs.

Ellen Jessee, who serves as chair of the Martinsville-Henry County group, stated, "We are extremely excited to have this funding for a staff member who can help



Members of the Dan River Basin Association and its affiliate, the Martinsville-Henry County Rivers and Trails Group, pause before a paddle trip on the Smith River in Henry County. *Kneeling:* Ben Murdock. *Left to Right:* Ellen Jessee, Joe Jessee, Jim Martin, Kim Martin, Jim Franklin, Kathryn Christensen, Freda Pyron, Lois Christensen, Sharon Squires, Julia Pyron, Reynolds friend, Bev Bryant, Kimble Reynolds

make more things happen in our area. It will be great for the community."

In his letter to DRBA, Cerino praised "the important work that the Dan River Basin Association has done to inspire and galvanize the residents of our community to both protect and utilize in a sound manner our natural resources."

Additional grant proposals have been submitted to support further programming in Virginia and full-time staff in North Carolina.

"The Martinsville-Henry County Rivers and Trails Group and the Dan River Basin Association have developed an ambitious agenda for the next several years," said Tom Edmonds, DRBA President. "We're proud of our record so far in DRBA's brief three plus years of work, and we'll welcome the skills of our professional staff and continue to value the work of our dedicated volunteers as we pursue an ambitious agenda."

"I think we're in agreement," added T Butler, "that in working on local

projects, we're all dedicated to making that state line as invisible to us as it is to the rivers."

Submitted by Forrest Altman

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FIRST SATURDAY OUTING July, 2005

Thus has been my dilemma with the demons. Self-doubt says, "Why did I say I would write this piece?" Flattery replies, "Other than the three people who asked?" Malice and Vengeance plotted finding Trent and force feeding him that camera. Honor insisted we keep our word. Discretion gets all haughty thinking about being associated with Shakespeare, Falstaff and being the better part of Valor.

It rained the night before. Not a good omen. Primal Fear was jumping up and down having a fit in the car seat as we passed the red raging river of the Boiling Hole at Anglin Mill. She got a little quieter after we stood around watching the river rush by. She got mad at Distraction and went to sulk in the backseat.

After lots of form signing, vessel arranging and reassurance from our guides, Sammy Allred, Trent Fentress, and David Mabe, the shuttle from Three Rivers arrived. Steve drove us to Moore's Mill Road Bridge on the North Fork of the Mayo in Henry County, VA. There we had to drop the sixteen watercraft down a sheer embankment where they could then be dragged to the river. That was the

easy part. Dropping the twenty persons of various ages, physical abilities and mental capacities was a different matter. My experience involved vines around the ankle, a big rock and a near face first slide. Got the vines off the ankle, re-aligned, only to hit the now slick mud and get the wind knocked out of me as I coasted down the embankment.

As we started down the river, two large dogs decided to follow us. The Big Brown Dog shot the rapids sans canoe, something he may do on a regular basis on a normal day. During the previous night's rain, the river had risen four feet. It had gone down two before we set out that morning. Big Black Dog was on the bank sounding very concerned for his friend. Bit further down stream the dogs found a man and a truck that they were very happy to see, thus ending their adventure with us.

Discretion now says that here we should say:

Everybody got wet.

Carolyn, the fish girl, had a good time.

Everyone was highly impressed with our guide, David Mabe, who may not be old enough to drive, but showed much more maturity and rationality than some of us.

Holding on to your boat is NOT an abso-

lute. Sometimes it is better to let the blasted thing go over the rapid, cause when it rights itself, it may be full of water. A gallon of water weighs just over eight pounds. A fully loaded tandem canoe weighs equivalent to a midsize hippo and responds equally as well.

While in the river, if given the choice, climb up on the rocks. You may be safer there and maybe can walk down stream before reconnecting with your vessel.

Never travel without an EMT/firefighter or pocket lint covered painkillers.

During the lunch stop, when many people ask you if you will write the bit for the newsletter, say you will think about it.

Back at work at Tryon Palace on Tuesday, the CI staff (character interpreters) were having a whining competition for most injuries sustained over the 4th of July holiday. They had bruises, knots and swollen knees from playing rounders (early lawn bowling) and cricket (early baseball) with Governor Tryon's guests. I won the whining contest because my injuries were more vividly colored, more painful (hence the sucking of air from the pulled muscles) and more visible.

Submitted by Freda Pyron



The Batteau Dan River's mascot Guy Johnston resting before the July 3rd Sunday afternoon excursion. Twelve passengers and six crew members participated in lively banter, while listening to historical excerpts about batteau trade on the Dan River over a century ago.





Clockwise from top left : Shooting Dix's Shoal Sluice; Launching the bateau at Angler's Pride Park , Danville, VA; Leaving Dix's Shoal Island after lunch; On the river; DRBA, Naturalist Club, Rockingham County Historical Society Booths at Eden Riverfest; 3 Rivers Outfitters' canoes for rent at Riverfest; View of a bateau excursion from the new Leaksville Landing Bridge.

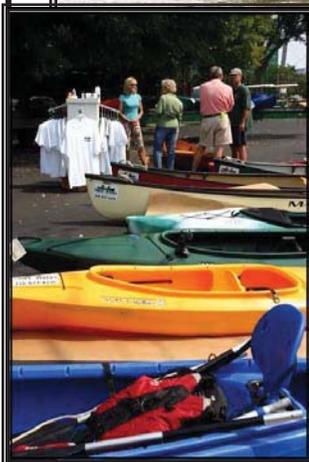


PHOTO GALLERY

"Swingin' Along . . . in the Fall of the Year

A Symposium About
"Connecting the Commonwealth"

HIKING AND LEARNING WITH TRAIL
AFICIONADOS TRAILS AND QUALITY
OF LIFE TO BE DISCUSSED AT
OCTOBER 28 SYMPOSIUM

The nights are chill, red leaves are flying, and my feet are itching to pull on boots and hit the trail—any trail from Rocky Knob Recreation Area to Staunton River State Park, or anything between: Mt Rogers, Fairy Stone, the Aqueduct Trail in Pinnacles Park, Hanging Rock, White Oak Mountain.

I'd like to see all of them connected, and so would the planners of the West Piedmont Trails Symposium October 28, at the

Conference Center of the Institute for Advanced Learning and Research on US 58 west of Danville. I'd like every child in my county to be able to walk or ride her bike to school or to the library without crossing a road.

Wordsworth was right: "the world is too much with us." We need to feel the breath of the wild wind, the scents of spring and fall, the feel of earth under our feet. We need to be able to get from here to there without exhaust fumes and without depleting the planet's costly, non-renewable resources. So say the planners of the Trails Symposium.

One of the speakers on the program, David Crockett (descendant of that other Davy), with a long resume in business, has become an authority on sustainability. Another, Tom Hirsch of Damascus, opened

six businesses based on the influx of tourists attracted to the Virginia Creeper Rail-Trail.

Trail efforts in the Dan River Region are swingin' right along. The new Rivers and Trails group of Martinsville-Henry County, an affiliate of the Dan River Basin Association, has a grant to develop a trail from Fairy Stone Park to the town of Bassett. Danville, of course, under the leadership of Outdoor Director Karen Cross, is a leader in urban trail development, and Virginia's newest rural "open road," the Tobacco Heritage Trail, dedicated its first 4-mile segment (of a proposed 48 miles) early in September with a ribbon-cutting by Governor Mark Warner, whose initiative helped spark the effort.

Continued page 6

FIRST SATURDAY OUTING *September, 2005*

"What a day!"

Under a clear blue sky on Saturday morning, September 3, DRBA members gathered at Anglers' Pride Park in Danville, VA to board the batteau *Dan River* for an eleven-mile excursion through Pittsylvania and Caswell counties to Milton, NC. With seating limited to 20, the reservations had closed weeks ago, and DRBA members Milton Hundley, Wayne Kirkpatrick, Ben Pruitt, and Ken Yates had volunteered to help man the poles and sweeps. Accompanying the batteau were 20 canoes and kayaks. With a total of about 60 participants, it was the largest DRBA outing yet.

This section of the 200-mile-long river is the only one accessible by public access points for a craft of this size that can be run in a day. What a tourism asset for Danville and Caswell County!

Tempered by a light breeze under a warm sun, the batteau was poled out into clear green waters for its second voyage from Danville to Milton—only the second on this section in over a century. (The first was in the spring of 2003.) The accompanying flotilla of brightly colored boats quickly spread out all along the route, which flowed between tree-clad banks that gave a sense of wilderness. Great blue herons lifted from the river from time to time; scolding kingfishers darted around the craft; a startled deer crashed back into forest shadows; and a turtle and a water snake dived below the surface as we passed.

Between the two river ports are six stone structures, built as part of the historic sluice navigation system that enabled the batteau to clear rock ledges and rapids. Some are located at historic crossings, and several are modified fish weirs originally constructed by Amerindians possibly over a thousand years ago and then widened for bat-

teaux by the Roanoke Navigation Company in the 1820s.

During our trip, three of the navigation structures were visible. At Dix's Shoal Sluice near the mouth of Hogans Creek, Jeff Johnston and Mark Bishopric deftly threaded the eight-foot-wide batteau through standing waves in the ten-foot-wide sluice to eddy up below the gravel island and join the rest of the boaters for a leisurely lunch break and a photo by videographer Kelly Martin.

At Wilkinson's Shoal Sluice the long stone angle was evident, but the batteau had a clear passage on river right. However, at Dodson's Shoal Sluice, an ancient double-vee fish weir, the batteau approached cautiously, striking a submerged rock at the opening. The sweepmen, Milton Hundley and Captain Jeff Johnston, quickly spun the vessel in place, freeing *Dan River* to enter and slip through the right-hand narrow sluice. The skillful boat handling in the swift current and rocks brought cheers from passengers and onlookers.

The final excitement of the day came at the Milton Access when the batteau missed the turn at the landing, drifted below the bridge, and had to be hauled back through the rushing water by rope. The passengers disembarked under the bridge on the bank, much as they would have done 150 years ago.

All agreed that although the trip was long, the pleasures of a beautiful day, the companions and conversation on the batteau, and the excitement of running the sluices made it a great experience.

Look for future excursions sponsored by DRBA as we partner with Three River Outfitters to bring batteau navigation back to the Dan River, restoring a lost and important part of our past to citizens of the 21st century. *Submitted by Lindley Butler*

(see photos page 3)

EXCERPTS FROM JULY BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

Next Meeting: The next Board of Directors meeting will be at 4:00 p.m. on October 12th at the Danville Water Treatment Plant.

Treasurer's Report: Lindley Butler recommended that DRBA offer a \$1000 grant to Eden's 2005 Riverfest, scheduled for September 10, to be used for heritage activities pre-approved by a DRBA committee. The Board approved the request and appointed Lindley Butler, Julia Pyron, and Jeff Johnston to serve on the committee.

Lindley Butler recommended that he and Julia Pyron explore the possibility of offering ball caps and polo shirts embroidered with DRBA's logo as new sales items. The Board approved their researching these items.

Julia Pyron suggested that DRBA use the \$500 Spring Clean award to purchase a printer that can be used for the newsletter and sales items such as notecards. After some discussion, the Board decided to postpone such a purchase until we know whether we receive funding for offices and staff.

Grants: Andy Talbert has offered to solicit a \$1000 grant from Procter & Gamble, which the Executive Committee recommends be designated for educational display materials. T Butler will work with Andy to prepare the proposal.

Mike Vaughan, who now chairs the Grants Committee, is administering the Chinqua-Penn Trail grant from Annie Penn Community Trust.

Lindley Butler distributed copies of the new Dan River Batteau Navigation Trail brochure, which was funded by a grant from the Rockingham County Tourism Development Authority.

Kay Slaughter, T Butler, Will Butler, Mike Vaughan, and Lindley Butler have prepared grant proposals submitted in June and July to Harvest, Public Welfare, and Z. Smith Reynolds foundations for staff and offices in Virginia and North Carolina. We have requested \$47,500 per year for two years from Harvest, the same from Public Welfare, and \$85,000 per year for three years from Z. Smith Reynolds. Decisions will be made in the fall for next year.

The Board discussed changes that will occur when we do have professional staff.

Ellen Jessee reminded us of Ben Murdock's caution that we be extremely careful to hire staff members whose goals match ours.

Tom Edmonds pointed out the wisdom of documenting our activities in a systematic way to retain organizational memory and make it easy to enumerate what we have accomplished as we solicit funding. He commented that raising money from the region's businesses and industries should not be difficult, since we are clearly working for the good of the basin's citizens.

Stream Monitoring: Ken Bridle reported that 24 volunteer individuals or groups have signed up for NC Stream Watch, with several from outside the basin. The forms are available on the web page. Training is needed, and Ken will try to schedule a workshop at Hanging Rock State Park for the western part of the basin and another in the east.

Brenda Martin suggested that an SOS trainer be engaged to certify more volunteers in the Virginia part of the basin. Tom Edmonds commented that the committee has considerable autonomy to set up training as they see fit.

Display Committee: Dorcas Midkiff sent a written report. Wayne Kirkpatrick borrowed the computer and projector and the display units from the Eden City Hall for a Rotary Club presentation in Stuart and wants to use them again for the Patrick County Fair in September. The display that was at the NC 29 Visitor Center will be stored at Three Rivers Outfitters. Larry Willard and Mike Covey have provided batteau models to accompany the photographic displays.

Festival Committee: Julia Pyron solicited volunteers for the following festivals in August and September: Dan River Boat Race in Madison on Aug. 6; Eden Riverfest on Sept. 10; Stokes Stomp in Danbury on Sept. 17-18; Brightleaf Hoedown in Yanceyville on Sept. 24-25.

The Madison-Mayodan Recreation Department's Dan River Race will once again be our August First Saturday Outing. DRBA cosponsors the race and will have a booth and provide safety for the race. The Board agreed that DRBA is now large enough to schedule a separate event for the August outing in addition to the race.

Julia Pyron reported that high water

caused some scrapes and several capsizes on the North Mayo in July, although our guides did an excellent job. Safety issues were discussed, with agreement that we need a policy about canceling a trip, a designated safety person with first aid and CPR skills, and a first aid kit and cold packs. T Butler will contact Will Truslow with these concerns.

Trails Committee: Jeff Johnston asked that someone else handle trails. T Butler will invite trails volunteers to a meeting to discuss minor maintenance that can be done on the Eden Smith River and Chinqua-Penn trails.

Martinsville-Henry County Rivers and Trails Group: The Board passed a resolution designating Kay Slaughter as project director to administer the Virginia Department of Forestry greenway planning grant for the Fieldale trail. Ellen Jessee and John Buck reported that the group hopes to buy the abandoned railway corridor from Fieldale to Martinsville for a trail.

Website: David Tingen will work with Tom Edmonds to revise the design of the website to encourage more visits. They will work with Dorcas Midkiff to make the newsletter available to persons with dial-up Internet connection. The Martinsville-Henry County group was encouraged to send publicity to David and to Dorcas for inclusion on the website and in the newsletter.

Halifax County Access: Clark Graves reported that he is exploring with local officials the possibility of having an access ramp built at the US 58 bridge over the Dan River east of Danville that is currently being replaced. He has talked with the property owner and will contact Karen Cross in Danville for her advice. The Board encouraged him to pursue the idea and offered help as needed. An access is needed there, as well as at the next bridge downstream at Pace's.

Leaksville Landing Access: Tom Edmonds will sign the 90-year lease of DRBA's lot to the city of Eden for the parking lot at the Leaksville Landing Access beside the new Leaksville Landing Bridge.

Annual Meeting: Ellen Jessee offered her lakeside site in Sydnorsville, Virginia for the 2006 annual meeting. No program chair has been selected.

HELP THE SMITH RIVER



Photo Courtesy of Dr. David Jones

**This Environmental Two Day Event
Will Begin With Highway Trash Pick-Ups On
FRIDAY, OCTOBER 7, 2005**

The Event Will Conclude With

The **SMITH RIVER CLEAN-UP** ON SATURDAY OCTOBER 8, 2005

8:00 A.M. UNTIL 12:00 NOON

MEET AT THE FIELDALE BALL PARK ROUTES 609 AND 57A IN FIELDALE

**Following The River Clean-Up, Join Us For
A Celebratory Cookout At The Ball Park**

TO REGISTER FOR THE EVENT CONTACT GATEWAY STREETScape FOUNDATION, INC.

“Connecting the Commonwealth” Symposium continued from page 4

Over and over I've become burnt out with attending meetings, but I'll attend the Trails Symposium.

Why? A morning of experts telling us what trails do for the community and how to build them. That packet of information, in a neat canvas bag labeled "VIRGINIA IS FOR LOVERS." An afternoon stroll on the urban Riverwalk Trail or the rural Ringgold-Sutherland Rail-Trail with trail aficionados regaling me with information and sharing their enthusiasm. And the price! A mere \$15 (thanks to the generosity of the sponsors) for program, lunch and a chance to check out the new conference center! I wouldn't miss it-and I live in Carolina!

Move those feet! Communicate by October 21 with Conference Registrar, Continuing and Professional Education, Virginia Tech, Mail Code 0272, 702 University City Blvd., Blacksburg, VA 24061, phone: 540/231-5182. I've already sent my check. I love a bargain-and a fall outing.

You can get additional information from Karen Cross at Danville Parks, Recreation & Tourism, 434-799-5215, crossks@ci.danville.va.us; from Jennifer Wampler at the Virginia Department of Conservation & Recreation in Richmond, 804-786-9240, jennifer.wampler@dcr.virginia.gov; or from Robert Dowd at West Piedmont Planning District

Commission in Martinsville, 276-638-3987, rdowd@wppdc.org

Submitted by Forrest Altman

[Editor's Note: Altman, an outdoor activist at age 81, is author of *The Dan River Book: Odyssey, Epic, Guide and 26 Wilderness Adventures: Afoot and Afloat*, co-founder of the Dan River Trail Association; Charter Member, past Education Chair and Board of Directors member of the Dan River Basin Association, secretary of the Caswell County Recreation Commission and a member of the planning committee for the West Piedmont Trails Symposium].

Dan River Basin Association

Volunteer Stream Monitoring

Supplemental Directions for Stream Watch Activity

We would like a minimum survey of one stream per volunteer. Although you may do as many as you like. Try to pick named perennial creeks (usually third order) or direct tributaries of the Dan River. Small first and second order streams may not provide consistent data. Surveys of the Dan River itself might also be conducted.

North Carolina and Virginia participants are both needed for this effort.

Each stream should be checked twice a year, more frequently if there is a notable problem. If you find something that you think might be a serious problem call Ken Bridle (336-591-5882).

1. Identify your Survey Stream(s) on a Vicinity Map
 - a. Large scale, showing nearest town or major road intersection.
 - b. Can be hand drawn or copy of road map
2. Identify your Survey Stream(s) on a Site Map
 - a. This is more detailed and smaller scale
 - b. USGS Topographic Map is best
 - c. A few narrative lines that could be used by someone unfamiliar to find the site.
3. Copy the Stream Watch Forms, so you will have a continuing supply.
4. Complete the Stream Watch Survey for your stream.
5. Mail your completed forms to: Ken Bridle

1160 Ralph Tuttle Road
Walnut Cove, NC 27052

I will compile a data base of this information and pass the forms on to NC DENR and VA DEQ
I will also produce uniform USGS maps (1/24000 and 1/100000) and aerial photos (1/1200) of each sample site and a GIS data layer of the entire study.

You will find the Steam Watch Data Form on the Dan River Basin web site at www.danriver.org.

Dan River Basin Association

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*To preserve
the Natural
and
Cultural Resources
of the
Dan River Basin
by promoting
Stewardship,
Recreation
and
Education*

Though government has an important role to play in meeting the many challenges that remain before us, we are coming to understand that no organization, including government, will fully succeed without the active participation of each of us.

Volunteers are vital to enabling this country to live up to the true promise of its heritage.

President Bill Clinton

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First Saturday Outings

October thru December 2005

October 1

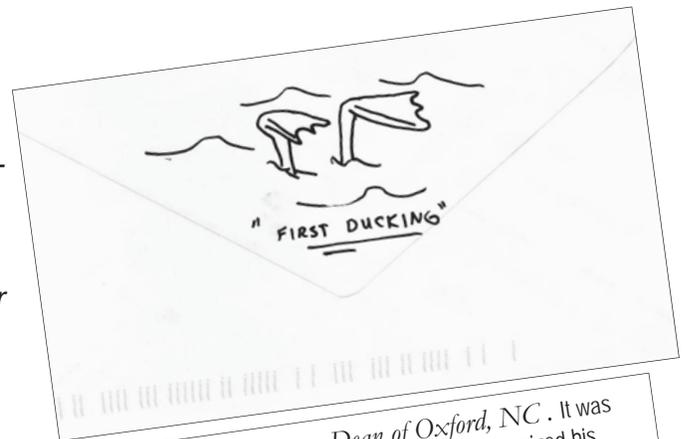
River cleanup, TBA

November 5

Mayo River in Rockingham County

December 3

Spring Outing on Upper Little River



Cartoon by Norman Dean of Oxford, NC. It was sent with his membership renewal after he capsized his kayak during June's First Saturday Outing on the Dan River.

COME JOIN US!

