

DAN RIVER BASIN



ASSOCIATION

Preserving
the
Natural
and
Cultural
Resources
of the
Dan River
Basin
by Promoting
Stewardship,
Recreation
and
Education

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

| | |
|--|---|
| Director's Notes Creating Eden | 2 |
| Rivers and Trails Eden Riverfest | 3 |
| First Saturday Outing November | 4 |
| First Saturday Outing 24th Annual Sprig | 5 |
| Big Sweep Record Smith River Cleanup | 6 |
| Memberships Henry County Access Points Opened | 7 |
| 1st Saturdays' Schedule River Clean Up Photo | 8 |

Volume 6, Issue 1

WINTER 2007

DRBA RECEIVES HARVEST FOUNDATION GRANT

At their meeting in mid-December the Board of Directors of The Harvest Foundation awarded a grant for \$87,495 to the Dan River Basin Association for development of the Richard P. Gravely Nature Preserve on the Smith River near Ridgeway, Virginia. Located near the new Marrowbone Creek Access Point and a short distance from Henry County's Fisher Farm Park, the Gravely Nature Preserve will be on 75 acres formerly owned by the late Richard Gravely, a Martinsville businessman, industrialist, and amateur archaeologist.

Gravely's will specified that this property be maintained and preserved as "a wildlife habitat and nature conser-



frontage on the Smith River, the property features a steep hogback ridge that rises about 200 feet above the river. North facing slopes are covered with large, mature stands of rhodo-

dendron and mountain laurel. DRBA will work with scientists from the Virginia Museum of Natural History to identify plants and signs of wildlife along the trails. A log barn and a family cemetery will be preserved and interpreted as well.

With a half mile of

continued page 7

Z. SMITH REYNOLDS FOUNDATION GRANT

The Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation has just announced a \$50,000 grant awarded to the Dan River Basin Association for general operations in North Carolina. Funds in support of operations are critical to building capacity to launch on-the-ground programs and projects, particularly for young organizations such as DRBA.

A requirement of the grant is that DRBA raise \$10,000 in matching funds as new contributions to the Association. Qualified matching funds are those portions of donations in excess of donors' prior contributions and/or funds from those who have not contributed before. DRBA executive director, Katherine K. Mull, stated, "We

are very appreciative of the Foundation's vote of confidence in our work in the Dan River region, and we are making plans to meet the \$10,000 match."

In his letter informing DRBA of the award, the Foundation's Executive Director, Thomas W. Ross, stated, "Our Trustees are happy to share in the work of your organization." It should be noted that the Foundation recognizes the importance of cross-border collaboration in creating wealth in border counties, and DRBA's work across state lines directly supports those goals.

continued page 6

Greetings from the Director



CELEBRATING AND GIVING THANKS

During this time of joy there is much to be thankful for, and I would like to take this space to recognize only a few of the many who have helped further our good work over the past six months.

With Tom's help, DRBA is making connections that will greatly improve our effectiveness as an organization.

Thanks to Barbara Solomon for her deft management of member communications, timely announcements, data base management and to Dorcas Midkiff who produces our DRBA newsletter, a major and critical component of our work, one that receives rave reviews!

Thanks to Mike Vaughan and board member Ken Bridle for lending their scientific expertise to the development of DRBA's water quality program. Thanks, too, to DRBA vice president Wayne Kirkpatrick who trains teachers in Virginia, sets up stream monitoring teams, and works with Trout Unlimited on the "Trout in the Classroom" program in Virginia. We and our rivers will all be safer and healthier for your work.

A big thank you goes to Ellen Jessee for her continuing work to find new places for people to access the Smith River, and for her contributions – too numerous to list. Special thanks go to former board member and awesome whitewater boater Mike Covey for speedy repair of the sign case at the Settle Bridge landing.

Finally, a double-dose of gratitude to DRBA's Virginia program director, Katherine Hebert, for her tireless work on parks, trails and river access in Henry County to create a stellar regional example of the good things that can happen when people work together!

In this limited space, I cannot begin to properly acknowledge each person who has contributed financially or with valuable hours. No matter how little or how much, every action and every dollar contributed is an investment in your own community, an investment that will grow and yield dividends not only now, but for our children and grandchildren. And you are making it possible. Thank you and best wishes for 2007!

Katherine K. Mull

It goes without saying that the wisdom and vision of T and Lindley Butler continue to inspire on a daily basis. No words can adequately recognize their contributions to the Dan River region. I nominate them both for canonization to sainthood!

Mark Bishopric deserves our undying gratitude for his countless hours fulfilling the duties of treasurer, taking on the daunting and unenviable task of setting up automated accounting and reporting systems, filing tax returns, making payments, handling legal matters, controlling floods from leaky roofs, and for being a day-to-day resource to DRBA.

Our admiration and thanks should also go to DRBA president, Will Truslow, who has taken the lead in meeting the challenge to raise \$20,000 in matching funds to continue DRBA's work. Only by following Will's example in reaching out to the local community for financial support will DRBA be able to sustain itself on a long-term basis.

Special thanks go to Jeff Johnston who, as computer procurement officer and IT expert, continues to be a driving force in DRBA's efforts to promote the heritage of the Dan River region. And Forrest Altman is to be recognized for his indomitable spirit, vision and hard work toward the development of a master trails plan for Caswell County.

Thanks to board member Tom Edmonds for making critical linkages and opening doors to opportunities for collaboration with other regions.

1

CREATING THE LAND OF EDEN

The Smith and Dan Rivers have existed for thousands of years, but only in the last few years have they been promoted and plans developed to protect them. The establishment of the Dan River Basin Association was critical in drawing attention to the importance of preserving and navigating our rivers.

Recognizing the importance of the rivers to its past and its future, in 2003 the City of Eden, NC changed its slogan to "Land of Two Rivers." In September 2006, the first Eden river access point was opened. DRBA, the City of Eden, and Jeff Johnston played major roles in its develop-

ment.

A master plan for Phase I of the greenway system that parallels the Smith River will be finalized in January of 2007. In addition, the City of Eden, DRBA and other interested citizens have created the Eden River Development Committee to create river access points to make the rivers easier to navigate. A recent trip to Henry County, VA provided the committee with various examples of access points that can be developed in our community.

Quality of life is listed in the top ten reasons why industry and businesses move to an area. Growth is coming our

way as people move from the more densely populated—and expensive—areas of Greensboro and Guilford County, NC. Our objective is to preserve our city's green space, offer quality of life opportunities, such as a citywide greenway system and the very popular Freedom Park, and make Eden the premier place to navigate its historic rivers. This will make Eden attractive to new residents and businesses. It will also help us be a vital contributor to the mission of the Dan River Basin Association.

Submitted by Mike Dougherty, Director of Business Development for the City of Eden

2

MARTINSVILLE-HENRY COUNTY RIVERS & TRAILS

The Martinsville-Henry County Rivers & Trails Group is happy to announce that a lot of progress has been made on the planned walking and biking trails in our area. Construction on the Fieldale Trail began in mid-November and will continue as weather permits. In addition, the corridor for the Martinsville City Spur Trail has been cleared, and planning for the Smith River Rail Trail project is progressing.

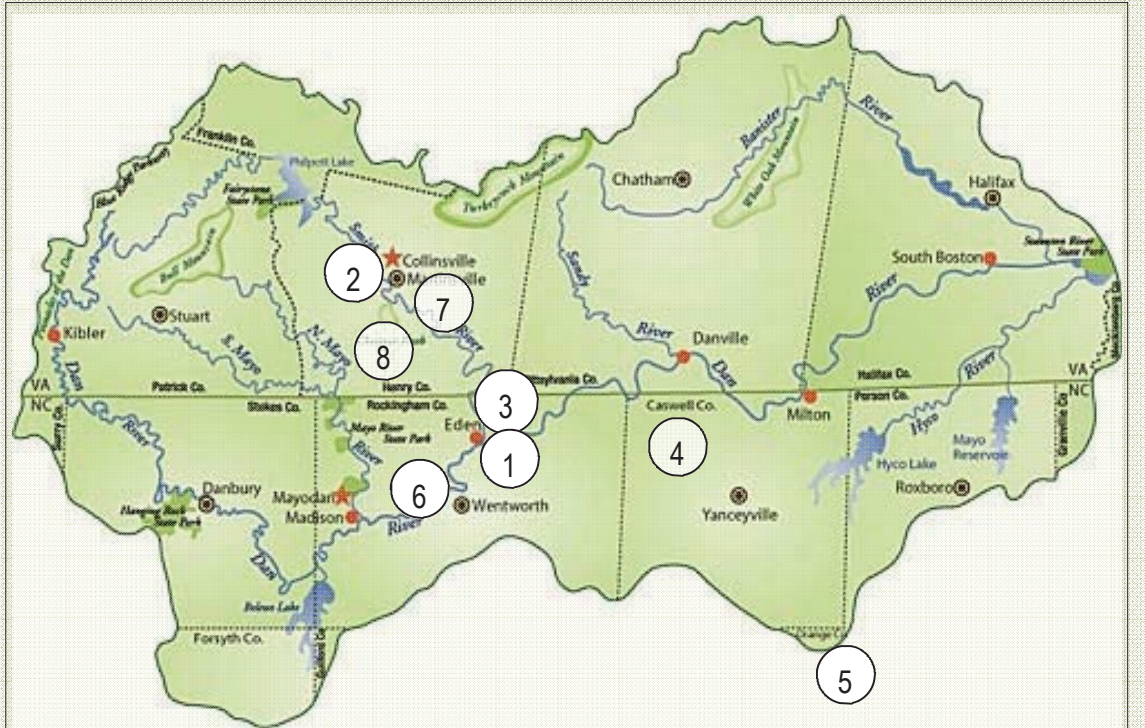
Other projects being planned include expanding Wayne Kirkpatrick's water quality monitoring program by training teachers throughout the basin and developing trails on the Smith River Gravelly Nature Preserve. In addition, we are promoting scenic designation of the Mayo River and exploring ways to establish more public parks.

Rivers & Trails continues its community outreach efforts by presenting public programs on the first Thursday of

every other month from 5:30 to 6:30 PM, followed by a short business meeting. The first public program, held on September 7, highlighted the horse riding community and equestrian trails being built around Fairy Stone State Park. The November 2 program showcased Water Quality Monitoring and the importance of developing a network of monitors in this region. The next program will be in February 2007 and is

currently planned to be a discussion about the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries' birding and wildlife trail guides and ecotourism. Programs are held in the conference room of the Harvest Foundation, located on the lower level of the BB&T building at 1 Ellsworth Street in Martinsville, Virginia.

submitted by Katherine Hebert



3

EDEN RIVERFEST ADVENTURE

Sometimes the rivers remind us that they are untamed and unpredictable. The Dan River did its best on that score in September when DRBA scheduled rides with historical commentary on the batteau *Dan River* as a central part of the Eden Riverfest activities.

DRBA and the Rockingham County Naturalist Club set up a booth at the newly opened Leaksville Landing Park and Access, where the batteau rides were to be held.

But upstream rains before festival day changed everything. The batteau, which had been

tied up a short distance downstream, was under water, still tethered to its moorings, and flipped upside down by the strong current. Several hardy members of DRBA joined batteau captain Jeff Johnston and his crew in attempting to turn the batteau right side up.

As the stalwart volunteers wrestled with the 40-foot-long waterlogged boat, other DRBA members greeted visitors at the booth, which was a popular spot for viewing the river and the new park. Ben Pruitt, in batteau crew costume, demonstrated the old-style wooden pump that he had

made for use on the boat. But this time, Ben pumped water from a bucket, since the river had other plans for the batteau.

Late in the day a rope was set from the batteau to the opposite bank, and several festival-goers added their weight to effort lifted the batteau and turned it over. The combined



continued page 6

4

NOVEMBER 2006 FIRST SATURDAY OUTING: SWINGIN' ALONG THE OLD COACH ROAD IN THE FALL OF THE YEAR

The forecast called for a clear, chilly day. Would anyone show up?

Did they ever! Nineteen stalwarts from as far away as Stuart and Greensboro showed up at Hardees' in Yanceyville to go bush-whacking on the old stage coach road at Stephentown.

Three North Carolina and three Virginia counties were represented: Rockingham 6, Patrick 4, Guilford 2, Henry 2, Pittsylvania 2, and Caswell 3.

The disappointment of having the afternoon hike on Rattlesnake Creek canceled (too many hunters there on the first day of Black Powder Season) was balanced by the opportunity to spend time exploring at Stephentown.

We started our hike at Stephentown Road by walking on the old stage road through the woods, dodging under down

trees and skirting areas of heavy undergrowth, tangles of brush and patches of blackberries. At the plantation's 1780's era house, with its two sides of brickwork in common bond and two in Flemish bond, we were greeted by our host, DRBA member Hilda Brody. We stopped again at the estate's abandoned cemetery, with its mat of periwinkle, its few marked gravestones and its many slave burial sites, each mounted by a simple unhewn rock. We stopped where the work horses were penned. We lunched where the old plank road crossed Reedy Fork Creek, a tributary of the Hyco.

Then we followed the old stage coach road up to a ridge top, dividing the group to explore in four directions. We found evidence (wall sections by piles of stone) of at least two of the many houses scattered

throughout this formerly prosperous and populous plantation.

We admired the stately sheltering cedar and tasted the ripe persimmons, sweetened by the recent frost.

The highlights of the trip were talks by hike co-leader, DRBA member Mark Kennard, sharing his knowledge of old houses, old roads, the old cemetery, the genealogy of the Stephens family and of breeds of work horses. A fringe benefit of the day was the discovery of more old ruins and more of the old roadbed.

Much more exploring is needed, both in maps and on the ground before we can start clearing and preserving the old road as part of a projected Caswell trail network.

Submitted by Forrest Altman

5

DECEMBER 2006 ANNUAL SPRIG OUTING

On that first Saturday of December 2006 it was with great excitement that we jumped into our car and headed south to Lillington NC. There were three major reasons for our chirpy mood: the bright sunshine and crisp air, the short one-hour drive (as compared to the 2 and a half hours it usually takes to join our fellow DRBA paddlers at the northernmost bounds of North Carolina) and, last but not least, the prospect of a pleasurable day on the river gathering mistletoe.

Actually, beside the tradition of collecting mistletoe on the first Saturday of December, there seem to be two other customs the DRBA "modern druids" are following: first, having breakfast at Har-dee's in Lillington, a convenient meeting point for the 14 participants (+ 5 children) rallying from such different places as Semora, Cary, Garner, Raleigh, Benson, Clinton, Fayetteville, Chesterfield (SC); second, stopping at a farm whose owners graciously allow us access to the Upper Little River: on that Saturday a lovely Holiday wreath made of all natural materials by Forrest Altman, Kate Wandsher and Scott Sauer was presented to the lady of the home as a token of our appreciation.

Once we reached our put-in and our canoes and kayaks were ready for their launching our fellow Forrest Altman, that day's trip leader, called for our attention: we had high waters which meant higher risk especially as we had five children with us. After we

were reminded of a few basic safety rules off went the colorful craft onto the high, however calm river.



Ben Fleming of Cary, NC watches as Nathan McKenzie of Garner NC grapples for mistletoe and young son Sam peers into the water, watching a fallen spring of mistletoe sink rapidly to the bottom.

continued page 5

Once underway, each boat crew exhibited great zeal to spot the most mature mistletoe sprigs, the ones bearing the more white berries and that point started the "team work" as two or three craft would join and press around in order to stabilize the canoe/kayak whose crew would reach out to grapple the coveted sprig without falling into the river. Even though we were not using the golden sickles the druids are said to have used in ancient times our modern painter poles and extendable pruning shears came in very handy.



Boaters preparing to launch on the 24th Annual Sprig Outing.



Marie Claire Almairac, Raleigh at left signaling to guide grapple, Forrest Altman, for sprig directly overhead.

Three boats are joined at the thwarts to form a platform stable enough to facilitate grappling for mistletoe, using an extended painters plow with hook at the end. North Carolina residents left to right : Evan Diener, Apex; Sue Yarger, Raleigh; Sarah Gibson, Fayetteville; Larry Yarger, Raleigh; Charles West, Benson and Forrest Altman, Semora.



Larry Yarger uses tree pruner to cut off a nice sprig of mistletoe as Forrest Altman and Kathleen Wandscher of Semora steady the canoe.

Later on, with our boats filled to the brim with an abundant crop of the "kiss magnet" we eventually reached our lunch destination, a welcoming sunny spot where some of us were fortunate to benefit from Forrest's erudition on Shakespeare as well as on the age-old origins of mistletoe gathering.

Then with our minds and bodies well-nourished, we eventually paddled down the Little River and after a smooth float unloaded our precious crop which some of us would sell to raise funds for various causes while others would share with friends.

We would like to extend our warmest thanks to Forrest for sharing his knowledge and expertise so that all of us could enjoy a lovely day on the river while following a pleasant ancestral tradition.

submitted by Marie Claire Almairac



6

DRBA HELPS ROCKINGHAM COUNTY SET NC BIG SWEEP RECORD

For the eleventh year in a row, Rockingham County broke its previous year's record for the number of volunteers participating in the North Carolina Big Sweep watershed cleanup this fall.

"Not only that," says T Butler, "but once again we've broken our all-time record for volunteer participation in the annual cleanup.

"In 1995 we had 44 participants. Every year since then, we have steadily increased the number of volunteers who collect litter from Rockingham County's waterways, highways, and byways," reports Butler, Rockingham County Coordinator for the past 10 years.

"This fall we had 1190 volunteers in 64 teams, who cleaned 191 miles of roadsides, lake shores, and rivers," she reported. DRBA members comprised nine of those teams, and DRBA members led a total of 17 teams. With unflagging leadership from Milton Hundley and Mike Vaughan, DRBA and the Rockingham County Naturalist Club held multiple cleanup events during the eight-day effort, concentrating on illegal dumps near streams.

County participants included Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, school groups, civic clubs, church groups, businesses, and individuals. All told, they collected more than **26 tons** of trash, including 410 tires retrieved from dumpsites and rivers.

North Carolina Big Sweep celebrated its 20th Anniversary with a luncheon for its 100 county coordinators on November 17 at the NC Zoo. Butler received a certificate of appreciation for her service from Governor Mike Easley.

Submitted by T Butler



DRBA and Rockingham County Naturalist Club members pose with trash they pulled out of a ravine during this year's NC Big Sweep cleanup. Left to right: Milton Hundley, Louis Roberts, Ken Perkins, Kitty Williams, Braxton Priddy, Mike Vaughan, and Hazel Puckett.

7

SOGGY SMITH RIVER CLEANUP SUCCESSFUL

If we need rain in Martinsville and Henry County, all we need to do is schedule a river cleanup! Fortunately it did not rain much on either day of the October cleanup and we were able to remove **10.79 tons** of debris and trash from the roads, riverbanks, the Smith River and its tributaries.

The event was staged from a new location this time—Jordan Creek Park in Fieldale on Creekside Drive. Appropriate name for a water cleanup! Thanks to Henry County Parks and Recreation for allowing us to use their park and to Wayne Kirkpatrick, DRBA vice president, who explained his display of healthy stream critters to all who attended.

We had ninety-six wonderful volunteers that braved the weather to help with this two day event, with highway pickups on Friday and cleanup of the river and banks on Saturday. The volunteers enjoyed the plentiful breakfast and lunch foods that were donated by Collinsville Biscuitville, E-Z Stop #213 on Church Street, and the Pepsi Corporation.

We could not accomplish this cleanup without the help of the trucks and men that were there for the duration, helping with the heavy tires, appliances, rugs and trash. Skyline Tree Service donated the use of their winch truck, which can pull debris from 200 yards away—a tremendous help with getting debris out of the river. Thanks to employees and equipment from Henry County and the City of Martinsville for their continued support of this event.

Mark your calendars now for a winter cleanup on February 10, 2007, and hope it doesn't snow!

Submitted by Lois Christensen

UNPREDICTABLE DAN RIVER

continued from page 3

Celebrations on Washington Street, including food, crafts, and other displays, continued as planned on the clear, warm day. And the Civil War Hospital Unit reenactors' display and colonial crafts demonstrations by staff from the Betsy-Jeff Penn 4-H Center went on without interruption. Only the river activities at Riverfest were disrupted by the untamed, unpredictable Dan River.

Z. SMITH REYNOLDS GRANT

continued from front page

Established in 1936 as a memorial to Z. Smith Reynolds, youngest son of the founder of R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company, the Foundation has made grants totaling more than \$388 million to recipients in all of North Carolina's 100 counties. Focus areas for the Foundation are community economic development; the environment; democracy and civic engagement; pre-collegiate education; and social justice and equity.

HARVEST FOUNDATION GRANT

continued from front page

When she learned of the The Richard P. Gravely Na-grant, Virginia Planning and ture Preserve will be a won-Program Director Kathy derful asset to the commu-Hebert said, "I am abso- nity, serving as a pristine-lutely thrilled to learn of the area where the young andHarvest Foundation's con- the young at heart can enjoy- tinuous support of the Dan learning more about theirRiver Basin Association's environment and their heri- efforts to promote recrea- tage."tion, education, and stew- ards-hip in Henry County. *submitted by Katherine Hebert*

Editor

Dorcas Midkiff

Mike Dougherty

Katherine Hebert

Katherine Mull

Associate Editor

T Butler

Photography

Guy Almairac

Contributing Writers

Marie-Claire Almairac

Marie-Claire Almairac

Forrest Altman

T Butler

T Butler

Jeff Johnston

Lois Christensen

Katherine Mull

Julia Pyron

MEMBERSHIPS RECEIVED SEPTEMBER–NOVEMBER 2006

Sponsor

Piedmont Magazine

Keith, Diann and Rebekah
Rorrer

Drew & Britta Grabbe
Andy & Bonya Tredway

Steward

Larry Hutchens

Friend

Janet Reid

Family

Dwight & Martha W. Hopkins
Joseph & Ellen Jessee

Individual

Debby Cardwell
Dennis A. Casey
John Grogan
Harold Knight
Charles J. Powers
Barbara S. Turner

8

GRAND OPENING OF RIVER AC- CESS POINTS IN HENRY COUNTY



Putting a kayak or canoe into the Smith River is now easier. On October 13, 2006, Henry County and the Dan River Basin Association celebrated the official opening of three access points in Henry County. A ribbon-cutting ceremony took place at the Bassett access point located off Trenthill Drive (Route 666) next to Bassett Furniture Industries, which made the access possible.

Attending the ceremony were members of DRBA, our affiliate the Martinsville-Henry County Rivers and Trails Group, the Henry County Board of Supervisors, Henry County Department of Parks and Recreation, and interested members of the community.

The other two access points are located in Fieldale off River Road (Route 682) and in Ridgeway off Eggleston Falls Road (Route 642). All were created through a cooperative effort between the Henry County Department of Parks and Recreation, the Public Service Authority, and DRBA, using \$15,000 allocated by the Henry County Board of Supervisors.

Each access point has a boat ramp, parking lot, trash can, and entrance sign that will be maintained by Henry County Parks and Recreation. Recently the access points were viewed by city officials from Eden who left inspired by our swift actions to establish access points along the Smith.

Comments from Henry County Supervisor Chairman H.G. Vaughn best capture the sentiments of the day: "There is nothing as soothing or as calming as being on a boat in a beautiful setting like the Smith River. With these three new access points, we are making progress toward opening that opportunity to the world."

Submitted by Katherine Hebert

DAN RIVER BASIN ASSOCIATION

KATHERINE MULL
Executive Director
PO Box 65, Mayodan, NC
27027
336-548-DRBA (3722)
kmull@danriver.org

KATHERINE HEBERT
Virginia Planning and
Program Director
P.O. Box 7, Collinsville, VA
24078
276-634-2545
drba.va@danriver.org

Visit us on the web at
WWW.DANRIVER.ORG

First Saturday Outings

January 6

Hike Chinqua-Penn Trail

February 3

Hike along the Mayo River,
Anglin Mill to NC/VA line

March 3

Reynolds Homestead hike
and house tour

April 7

Paddle on Smith River
Henry County



PRESERVING THE NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES OF THE DAN RIVER BASIN
By Promoting Stewardship, Recreation and Education

To put your hands in a river is to feel the chords that bind the earth together.
Barry Lopez, Author

Members of Dan River Basin Association and Martinsville-Henry County Rivers and Trails Group helped to retrieve over 36 tons of debris from our watershed during Fall cleanups. Community participants included Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, school groups, civic clubs, church groups, businesses, and individuals.

