

**DAN RIVER BASIN**



Editor: K. Paul Johnson

Contributing writers: Forrest Altman T Butler Julia Pyron Heather Leavitt

Technical Assistance: Carol Beadles

DRBA Officers:

President: Jeffrey Johnston

Vice President: Mike Covey

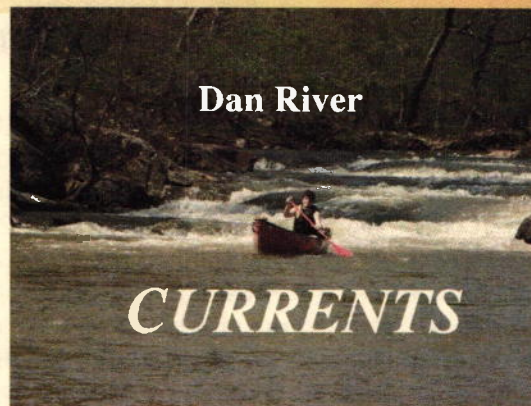
Secretary: T Butler

Treasurer: Lindley Butler

**First Saturdays Outings**

- September 6: Smith River
- October 4: Mayo River

(details sent by email and postcard)



*Paul Stevens just below Mayo Falls*

## **OCTOBER TRIP FEATURES A PRIME SITE OF NEW MAYO STATE PARK**

Playing a variation of its usual tune, the Dan River Basin Association has designed its October "First Saturday Outing" either as the usual "Family Trip" or as an opportunity for thrill seekers to start their Saturday with a SPLASH ! The trip was planned to run from Anglin Mill Road, in northern Rockingham County, to North Carolina Road # 770, a distance of about five miles (less than half the distance of the Smith River cleanup trip in September).

Participants have a choice: They can choose either to float a couple of Class 3 rapids or put in immediately below them and run only rapids classified as Class 1 and 2. Even the "easier" run is not lacking in thrills. Its first Class 2 rapid calls for alertness and skill to avoid getting stuck on a rock shelf.

Skilled and experienced boaters likewise face a challenge: the famous (or, to some, infamous) "Boiling Hole," immediately followed by a tricky and demanding "ferry" across swift current and an equally challenging and thrilling rush of water that goes by various names: "S TURN," the more accurate "C TURN" or the perhaps more appropriate "BLENDER." The latter rapid, to many a more difficult run than the Boiling Hole itself, whips a boat about and, in the midst of about a three-foot drop, turns it 180 degrees toward the opposite bank of the river. Probably more spills have occurred at the BLENDER or between it and the BOILING HOLE than at the BOILING HOLE itself. All of the rapids just described are within sight of the famous Mayo Beach, which has a reputation as one of the most attractive places on the Mayo River, justifying its inclusion in a new state park.

Progress of the planning for the Mayo River State Park has been rapid and dramatic. Under the Basin Association's leadership, widespread local support has been marshaled, leading to the authorization of the park by the state legislature. October 4 outing participants were among the first to experience this section of the scenic Mayo River since its approval as the newest link in the chain of future parks proposed by the young Dan River Basin Association. (FA)



## **HIGHLIGHTS OF THE JULY BOARD MEETING**

The DRBA Board of Directors met on 19 July 2003 from 10:00 a.m. to 1:15 p.m. at the Milton Woman's Club, Milton, NC. The meeting opened with reports from officers. Secretary T Butler reported 137 active memberships, with over half from Rockingham County. Treasurer Lindley Butler reported \$2,966.76 in checking, \$800.00 in savings, \$11,200 in grant money, \$3,277.53 in the Mayo River State Park fund, and \$1000 owed on the Dan River Atlas loan. President Jeff Johnston has appointed a Grants Committee. At the River Rally in Washington State, he learned that (1) people are astounded at what DRBA has accomplished in such a short time, and (2) a master plan is absolutely essential, especially for fundraising. He also found that DRBA as currently constituted cannot be licensed for a River Keeper since we have public employees on our board. We can, however, plan eventually to help fund a River Keeper as part of our strategic plan. Barry Dunkley suggested having a River Keeper speak to DRBA at one of our programs, and Jeff recommended a nearby Keeper or head of the program, Robert Kennedy, Jr. Vice-President Mike Covey reported that the 15 persons who participated in the July 5 paddle trip on Lake Talbott collected 7 bags of smelly trash. Discussion then proceeded with news from various localities.

**Rockingham County:** All pledged money for the Mayo River State Park master plan has been received, and the park master plan is being written. A local committee has been appointed, with DRBA acting as a catalyst in the project, providing the push and expertise. Bridge construction has delayed building the Leaksville Landing access in Eden, but it should be started in the fall. Eden's planning department has appointed a Greenway committee, which has met with a planner from the Piedmont Triad Council of Governments. The endorsements from civic groups and landowners are vital for the success of the project. A landowner at the Spray bridge has agreed to having a paddle access built on his property. The town of Wentworth has asked DRBA to help create a walking trail greenway, and Jeff Johnston has contacted officials in the three affected governmental entities about the idea. At Miller Brewing Company's suggestion, \$3000 of their \$10,000 festival grant can be used to purchase a batteau for DRBA. The Board approved (1) purchasing a batteau with Miller's grant money, (2) raising money and acquiring a batteau trailer, and (3) in concept, leasing the DRBA batteau to a business for providing rides on the river commercially. Liability and control issues would be modeled on truck or boat leases, and the leasing company would maintain, insure, and store the batteau.

**Caswell County:** Forrest Altman asked for help in determining the cost of building a paddle access at Blanch, as well as expertise in the grant writing and design for it. The board discussed the question of ownership, concluding that a public access leased by a governmental entity is most desirable since the landowner is absolved of liability and maintenance. The Blanch location is ideal for a batteau ramp and would give the Danville to Milton section of the river three accesses suitable for batteaux, making it perfect for the commercial venture we envision. The landowner would receive public goodwill and a possible minor tax break. If he chooses to include a campground, he could have a business possibility as well.

**Person County:** Two new docks are being installed at Mayo Lake.

**Halifax County:** Halifax County – South Boston Museum staff have contacted Jeff Johnston about DRBA's helping to put on a Dan River exhibit by September 2004 similar to the Staunton River display. The board discussed our role, which should be providing information and collateral events. Lindley Butler offered to give a slide presentation at the museum as a kick-off event to draw people into the project, which we hope would increase DRBA membership in the eastern part of the basin. Forrest Altman suggested tapping expertise in the historical associations throughout the basin. A committee of Forrest Altman, Barry Dunkley, Terry Painter, Paul Johnson, and Steve Carpenter (chair) will work on the display. (Two meetings have been held thus far.)

**Danville:** Shirley McCulloch asked for endorsement for making the Worsham Street Bridge in Danville into a pedestrian bridge. Barry Dunkley stated that estimates are for \$8 million to tear down the bridge and \$13 million to rehabilitate it for vehicles, but no figures have been published for pedestrian use. The board enthusiastically agreed to support preservation of this exceptional structure in



writing and by a DRBA presence at a public meeting on the question.

Strategic Plan: DRBA's purpose is protecting the river basin, with our mission statement listing education, stewardship, and recreation as means to accomplish this end. In March 2002 the board identified specific tasks as short- or long-term goals. The board reviewed these goals and noted that six of the short-term goals have been achieved, leaving three ongoing (recruitment meetings, paddle trail, and conferences), with River Keeper moved to the long-term list. Among the long-term goals is increasing membership. Forrest Altman recommended that we have a membership committee to nurture members and provide awards or certificates of recognition. Julia Pyron commented that there are members who want to be more involved and need specific tasks. The officers will put together a draft of the strategic plan, circulate it to the board for revision, and then circulate it to the membership.



*Willie Knowls Bottom, Talbott Lake*



*Morgan Ford Bridge, Henry County*

## **FIRST SATURDAY AT TALBOTT LAKE IN JULY**

On July 5, 2003, DRBA members and visitors enjoyed an almost perfect day at Talbott Dam on the Dan River. After meeting at Po' Folks Market in Meadows of Dan, VA, our group of 15, with ages ranging from the teens to the seventies, caravanned to Talbott Dam. Since we had the required permit, we passed through the locked gate, unloaded our vehicles, and toted our gear down a very steep hill to the access. The dam is only yards away, which to a novice paddler is quite intimidating; however, the calm and easily navigable water quickly extinguished any fears. Our band in kayaks and canoes paddled the wide lake enjoying the peaceful beauty of the area with hills full of trees, rocks, wildlife, and all kinds of greenery. Only an outing in the prime of leaves turning in autumn could be more incredible. The only sign of civilization are two houses built way at the tops of two hills. After stopping at some rocks to rest and eat lunch, we paddled down to explore Willie Knowls Bottom. It was a little tricky navigating with multiple trees across our narrowing path.

On the way back to the dam we picked up approximately seven bags of trash. After it started to rain, some of us made a fast track back to the access, while the rest stopped at an old campsite to collect more trash. When we arrived back at the access, the climb back up the hill with boats in tow was even more strenuous than the downhill descent. A few of us investigated the dam while waiting for the last of our group to return. Only by walking across the dam and looking down both sides can you appreciate the size and strength of it. As we watched the remaining boaters paddling in, we realized that, except for the smelly trash and getting a little rained on, we had a perfect day on the river.

---Julia Pyron



Dan River Basin Association  
P.O. Box 103  
Wentworth, NC 27375

Email: [news@danriver.org](mailto:news@danriver.org)

---

**WE'RE ON THE WEB AT:  
[HTTP://WWW.DANRIVER.ORG](http://www.danriver.org)**

---

Promoting stewardship, recreation, and education in  
the Dan River Basin region

---

## **SMITH RIVER PADDLE TRIP SEPTEMBER 6 MITCHELL ROAD, VA TO EDEN, NC**

On Saturday September 6<sup>th</sup> my husband, Charles, and I set off for our first big adventurous, yet relaxing, 11-mile paddle down the Smith River with DRBA. Upon arriving at a small gas station in Eden, we expected to meet a small group of river enthusiasts eager to pick up trash and enjoy a beautiful Saturday scenic trip down one of our most precious waterways. When we pulled into the parking lot, we were surprised to see 40 adults and children from Virginia and North Carolina ready to roll on the river.

Once at our put-in destination, T and Lindley Butler were gracious enough to let Charles and me use one of their fabulous canoes. After everyone was settled and in the water, our large group with 27 boats set out to pick up trash and enjoy the scenery. Throughout the day, we gathered trash of all kinds, paddled through some small rapids, and gained additional education on the river from Forrest Altman, the author of the *Dan River Book*.

The day was full of new things, but our favorite first DRBA trip memory would have to be the lunch break on a small sandbar, four miles into our trip. If you can picture a dozen boats pulled close together, a quick bite, and an occasional pistachio nut being tossed back and forth for a first time taste tester; it was quite a moment. Overall, the trip was a great experience and really helped us to see how careless actions can pollute our rivers. Aside from the sore muscles and exhaustion from a hard day's work, the experience is one we will never forget. (HL)

In addition to the Smith River First Saturday outing in September, a dozen volunteers participated in a DRBA Dan River cleanup on September 20 near Madison, and several DRBA members led river enthusiasts on trash collecting trips elsewhere in the basin. Forrest Altman helped coordinate a cleanup on the Dan in Caswell County, while Mike Covey concentrated on the Smith River in Eden and the Mayo River beaches. Tami Lundy, Julia Pyron, and their daughters collected litter at Lake Reidsville on the 27<sup>th</sup>. Among unusual items retrieved from the rivers and lake were road signs, a motorcycle frame, a battery charger, and a dumbbell. Most extraordinary was a 36-hour-old colt that Jeff Johnston and four young men pulled out of the Dan River near Eden and returned safely to its mother. (TB)