It's official. The knot has been tied. The three-year-old Dan River Basin Association has merged with the six-month-old Martinsville-Henry County Rivers and Trails Group. The engagement was a short one, but the prospect for a happy marriage seems good.

"It's a natural fit," says Lindley Butler, DRBA Treasurer, who with wife and DRBA Secretary T Butler has been attending the meetings of the Henry County group. "The emphasis with which DRBA started three years ago is the same as the one that has come to dominate the thinking of Martinsville-Henry County R & T: trails and river access." MHR TG has already obtained a VDOF greenway planning grant for a trail along the Smith River southwest of the Fieldale Bridge.

From its inception the Dan River Basin Association has been conceived as an umbrella group embracing sub-groups throughout the Basin. Henry County is one of the eight Virginia and North Carolina counties that make up most of the area of the Dan River Basin. The Rivers and Trails Group is particularly concerned with the upper reaches of the Smith River.

"I think that this is a good match," said Kay Slaughter, a lawyer with the Southern Environmental Law Center in Charlottesville who has been convening the sessions of the Henry County Group under the aegis of the Harvest Foundation, located in Martinsville. "The members of the Rivers and Trails group think so too, so long as the group is able to maintain its identity." At its April retreat, the group agreed to merge with DRBA.

Then at the DRBA annual membership meeting April 9 three members of MHR TG were elected to the DRBA Board of Directors: Roger Adams, Ellen Jessee and Ben Murdock. John Buck, a teacher at Patrick Henry Community College, who has been active in MHR TG, was already a member of the Board.

The two groups are now working jointly to secure grants to staff offices in both Virginia and North Carolina.

Board members and visitors preparing for meeting (#259). Left to right: Roger Adams, Linda Strange-Dillard, T Butler, Jeff Johnston, Ben Murdock, and Will Truslow

Submitted by Forrest Altman

Spring Clean Competition Nets Cash Prizes

For two weeks each April, the Rockingham County Beautification Council sponsors Rockingham County Spring Clean, designed to clean up area roadsides and illegal dumps. Nonprofit groups register, clean up pre-approved locations, deliver the trash to the landfill, and compete for cash prizes. Friendly rivalries arise between groups, though not often so pronounced as in the Pyron family, where Julia and daughter Ashley collect and haul trash for DRBA but Julia’s father George uses the same truck for the Rockingham County Naturalist Club.

Throughout the cleanup, DRBA and Naturalist Club members worked side-by-side and wondered which would win the first prize. Milton Hundley, whose energy never seemed to flag, put his new trailer through its paces with daily hauls. Jane and Ron Norwood brought in dump truck loads of tires, and pickup trucks carried debris loaded by Barbara Solomon, Ken and Margo Perkins, Bill and Cheryl Gannett, Mike Vaughan, Jim Joyce, Tom Good, Kitty Williams, Charles Mallard, Sandy Connolly, Peyton Cherry, Wanda Hamrick, Jocelyn Gordon, Marion Edwards, Jane and Mike Haines, Cheryl and Bennet Nooe, Brenda Atkins, Ann and Jim Clark, and T and Lindley Butler.

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ROCK CASTLE CREEK GORGE HIKE

I am happy, as a new member of DRBA, to report on my first "First Saturday Outing" on the Rock Castle Creek Gorge Hike. The day began rather inauspiciously when I awakened to the sound of pouring rain. But I managed to entice my husband, Joe, out of bed with the smell of bacon & eggs and to convince him that we should head up the mountain anyway, just for the fun of the ride if nothing else. But, who would have believed it, we arrived at the trailhead with bright blue skies dotted with fluffy white clouds, although I can't say that it was particularly warm.

Our group set out with our fearless leader, Will Truslow, and we started to get acquainted with our trail mates, Gerald Witt, Ken Hilton, Diane Bartz, and the Knight family. (Sorry I couldn't remember your names; I got a chance to refresh my memory with the others again at trail's end.) When we came to the first big creek crossing, I'm afraid the Knights got "cold feet" and decided to turn back. That lucky devil, Joe, had on tall waterproof boots and just waded across while the rest of us had to get along as best we could. Some of us, rather than get them wet, removed our boots and socks, and waded across. Then, not much further down the trail we had to repeat the process. But from then on we had much appreciated bridges for our treacherous crossings.

Forest Altman and his young neighbor, Dylan Stiltner, coming from the other direction, joined us near a rather nice white farmhouse with capital rest area facilities. The porch was a great picnic area for lunch and the wooden outhouse was first class with a regular toilet seat and a concrete floor.

We continued our journey through the lovely gorge with rushing Rock Castle Creek cascading over rocks and cliffs crowded with rhododendrons. Although the rhododendrons are still a couple of months from blooming, we did discover numerous wildflowers in bloom, including Virginia Bluebells, Spring Beauties, Bloodroot, Cut-leaved Toothwort and Early Saxifrage. There were others, though not in bloom yet, the leaves have appeared such as Trillium, Trout Lilly, and Rattlesnake Plantain.

I noticed Gerald taking numerous notes and on questioning him about it, discovered that he is a reporter for the Danville Register and Bee writing an article on spring wildflowers! The article should be in either this coming Wednesday's or Sunday's edition.

Ken's brother, Kerry Hilton, who lives nearby, saw us off at the trailhead and met us at trail's end. A special thanks to Kerry and Forrest for shutting us back to the trailhead.

Submitted by Ellen Jessee

Stokes County Float
NC 89 BRIDGE TO DAN RIVER COMPANY

We began the May 7th outing in the parking lot of the Dan River Company on Flinchum Road in Stokes County. They provided the shuttle and quickly, expertly loaded us and our gear. We were taken to the put-in point, provided with up-to-date hazard info ("tree down river left..." etc.) and unloaded with "have a great paddle" ringing in our ears.

The weather was perfect for paddling. It was a very moderate temperature with a clear Carolina Blue sky and plenty of water in the river. Our group of 16 donned PFD's, loaded gear (better known as "stuff") into boats in record time and prepared to engage with the mighty Dan. Ah, but it was then that "Where's my paddle? Have you seen my paddle?" was heard from four of our group. It seems they were about to be "up the creek (in this case the river) without a paddle"...literally. Whoops! The day was saved by the quick action of our group leader who pulled out his cellphone and got...a signal. Most cellphones go dead in this area near Hanging Rock/Danbury. A quick call to the Dan River Company and within 10 minutes we were all on the river. Our deepest thanks!

This day's leisurely float covered a 6.5 mile scenic section of the Dan passing Moore's Spring Campground, Cascade Creek, Indian Creek and Demon Rock. It has Class I and II rapids. It is here too, that it is easy to believe that civilization has been left far behind. High bluffs, wildflowers, a variety of trees and birds; these are what can be seen from the river. There is no sound of traffic and no visible pollution. As we neared our lunch stop at Demon Rock, there was a glimpse of houses high on the bluff. The first sign of civilization.

It was during lunch on the gravel beach adjacent to Demon Rock that the youngest member of our group helped a fisherman bring in a "single serving" size bass. It was a beauty. Good job! After lunch, we continued our leisurely float to the take-out at Dan River Company. We had enjoyed a day of perfect weather, beautiful scenery and good companionship.

Submitted by Barb Solomon

Demon Rock
Surprise Discovery in Mayo River State Park

Some long-distance sleuthing has turned up architectural treasures in the old Mayo Park in Mayodan, NC, now part of the Mayo River State Park. Dr. William Whitaker of the University of Pennsylvania discovered that in 1948 Washington Mills employed internationally renowned architect Antonin Raymond to design the recreational buildings for the mill-owned property.

Born near Prague, Raymond came to America in 1910 and worked with Frank Lloyd Wright. According to Professor Whitaker, Wright's influence and Raymond's decades of work in Japan inspired a philosophy that "enlivens the spirit through the use of natural materials" and "captures the essence of nature." Constructed of local wood and stone, Raymond's buildings include elements of Japanese style and seem uncommonly suited to their location.

Beloved by generations of mill employees and townspeople, the park achieved Raymond's goal of creating "an atmosphere of serenity and calm, life and joy." Clearly, Raymond was especially proud of the park pavilion, since he published a photograph of the building on the cover of a Japanese architectural journal and included it in his autobiography.

DRBA organized Professor Whitaker's visit to the park in early May to discuss the buildings' future with officials from NC State Parks, NC Cultural Resources, Rockingham County, and the Town of Mayodan. All are viewing the buildings with new respect, hoping that this architectural legacy can continue to inspire many generations to come.
Retiring Board Member Steve Carpenter Shares His Experiences

About eight years ago, when I was in the second or third year around in my second childhood I "rediscovered" canoeing. I grew up in the mountains near Morganton, about five miles from Wilson Creek but, although I'd lived a third of my life there I never tried paddling rivers. Before I moved here to Roxboro, nearly six years ago Sherri and I bought a lake boat to paddle for bird watching. I thought my life was too dull so I decided to learn about river paddling.

When I moved here I read the "green book" written by our local Dan River guru, sorry Forrest this is not an advertisement just a truth telling, and a mutual friend suggested that I call him if I was interested in learning about the river and canoeing. Eventually, I did and he invited me to go with him to Mayodan to a meeting where a group was interested in increasing access and use on the Dan River in a manner what preserve its' uniquely isolated and unspoiled state. I don't know why, but folks seem to think that's a natural conflict. He told me that if I'd help him he'd guarantee me some instruction on how to survive the river. It sounded like a deal to me so I took him up on the offer.

Anyway, after a couple of those meeting I accidentally became the temporary treasurer of the group and was entrusted with the non human "assets" of the group. I believe it was about $36 or so? can't really remember. A few more meetings and a group of us set some goals and mission statements and invited a whole host of people to another meeting in Mayodan. Although, the DRBA has a number of stated lofty goals, education, stewardship, preservation and the like, we all knew that unless we got folks on the river, we would never get enough people interested and committed to those goals so we concentrated in those first years on encouraging the recreational assets of the river and the "first Saturday" trips evolved.

In addition to being fun, and allowing folks to safely get on the river and live to tell the experience to others, the group really jumped in size. Although the interest of the Board was to share that experience all along the Dan River Basin the real focus came in Rockingham County. I guess it was just their time! Others have lent their support and faithfully worked on core projects but those Citizens in Rockingham "got the picture" and have developed the curiosity of floating on the Dan into a local trade. I applaud them and hope others will follow them when they figure it out.

My work on the Board has been to represent local government and to share some of the things we know about how groups work and what it takes to keep developing new leaders and interests. Without new people coming into the organizations and picking up the challenges any group is destined to die.

That's why after about five years it's time for me to move along from the Board and watch from the side. It's kind of like when mom pushed me off on my first bike without training wheels on the "back road". It was a steep down hill dirt road with a 90 degree right turn and 30 foot bank on the end of it. She sure was brave to push her eldest progeny, did you like that one Forrest?, off the hill, but, in spite of the fact that I wrenched twice on the way down, I did eventually make it and gained knowledge, and experience in the process.

Good luck to those coming onto the Board and may your ride down the hill be rewarding as mine has been. Watchin' from the side!

Steve

PS guys, I just bought a new bicycle so maybe if I live long enough I'll be ready to try this again.

FIRST SATURDAY OUTING June 4th 2005

By all accounts the trip down the Dan on June 4th was a resounding success - the weather started out overcast and very warm, but progressed to be a hot and sunny early summer day. With 21 boats and 38 participants, it was a great group. Several commented that this was the largest group for an outing yet.

At the Settle Bridge Access Lindley Butler gave us all a good introduction to the history of that section of the river, noting points of interest that we would pass along the trip. After our "lesson" we all loaded up and headed to Madison where we launched a small flotilla of canoes and kayaks at the 704 Access on Water Street.

The journey began smoothly with everyone getting used to the boats and those sharing boats working together. We went along nicely, with T and Lindley leading the way and stopping to help people navigate under the bridges at Highway 220. But then came the first challenge - Slink Shoal Sluice - the water was up slightly so you really couldn't see the structures, and unfortunately two boats didn't make it through with out taking a dip. We understand the water was pretty cold. But the ones that overturned quickly got their boats set right, and we were on our way again.

About noon we stopped at Lone Island for lunch and a comfort break. After a nice respite, we loaded back up and were on our way again. We passed Jacob's Creek Landing and a large metal object embedded in the river that Lindley tried to convince us was a Confederate submarine. (Nobody took him up on his offer of land that went along with that story either. It turns out the thing was a fuel tank of some kind that had been in that spot for years.)

The next challenge was Gravel Shoal - luckily everybody made it through without mishap. We traversed along for another hour or so, making good time until we spotted our final destination dead ahead - Settle Bridge. Everyone made it out okay and a few of us transported folks back to their cars at 704. All in all, a wonderful trip.

It's amazing how peaceful the river is even amongst a large group of people. You truly do feel as if you're in the wilderness, doing something that was commonplace in days gone by. It gives you the chance to look at the flora and fauna with more than a glance. We saw a number of species of birds, including a great blue heron, an osprey, and a red-tailed hawk; a turtle, all kind of water bugs, and the odd cow from pastures that border the river. What is most striking though is the trees along the river bank; they are amazingly tall and many are reckoned to be 100+ years old, you just don't see that along the roads we travel.

Everyone should take at least one of these outings....it's well worth

Submitted by Julie Talbert
Martinsville-Henry County Rivers and Trails Group (MHRTG): Kay Slaughter of the Southern Environmental Law Center (SELC) brought the Board up-to-date on this group, which has been meeting for about six months and which share’s DRBA’s goals of preserving, protecting, and enjoying the area’s rivers. MHRTG decided at their April 1 Strategic Planning Retreat to merge with DRBA while retaining their group’s identity. T and Lindsey Butler serve as ex officio members of the group, and John Buck has been a member of both from MHRTG’s beginning. [Note: Roger Adams, Ellen Jesse, and Ben Murdock are MHRTG members who were also elected to DRBA’s Board of Directors at the Annual Meeting on April 9.]

As part of their Strategic Plan, MHRTG decided to apply for a Virginia Forestry Department greenway planning grant for a demonstration trail alongside the Smith River southwest of the Fieldale Bridge. The trail is envisioned for hikers, bikers, and horse riders and is located near the sewage treatment plant, with a river access beside the bridge to be built in the future.

John Buck made a motion (Brenda Martin seconded) that DRBA authorize Roger Adams to apply for a planning grant from the Virginia Department of Forestry for the greenway river trail and access. The motion passed unanimously.

Grants: Lindsey Butler and Kay Slaughter reported that DRBA and MHRTG will apply to North Carolina’s Z. Smith Reynolds (ZSR) and Virginia’s Harvest Foundation (HF) and Public Welfare Foundation (PW) For planning, offices, and full-time staff in both North Carolina and Virginia. Kay Slaughter and Will Butler, working with other SELC staff, will prepare the grant applications. Harry Cerno, HF Executive Director, has suggested that we write a combined grant application to take advantage of the regional synergy across the state line.

Since the deadlines are June 15 for HF and August 1 for ZSR, the application will be completed this spring. Both grants should be awarded by early November.

Bateau: Jeff Johnston reported a successful batteau voyage earlier today on the Dan River at Eden for editor’s of Our State magazine. The batteau will be on display at the Rockingham County Folk Festival in Wentworth on Saturday, May 7, with the riders offered on the river at Eden on May 8. DRBA members are needed to learn how to pole the batteau and serve as crew. Jeff said that Three Rivers Outfitters in conjunction with DRBA are enabling folks to get on the water who otherwise could not. Mark Bishopric stated that the trailer is completed and licensed, and the boat can accommodate approximately 15 passengers, plus the crew.

Jeff had noticed today that the USGS river gauge at Wentworth is to be discontinued on July 15 if no financial partner is found to support it. Barry Dunkley said that the City of Danville pays $5,000 annually toward the $11,000 cost of maintaining the gauging station above its wastewater treatment plant. Jeff will look into the problem of the Wentworth gauge, which is vital for all river users.

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Philpot Dam 216 Study: Kay Slaughter read a draft of a letter to Virginia Congressmen Goode and Boucher requesting their support of funding for a study of Philpot Dam operations. Currently the flow regime associated with power generation at the dam adversely affects the Smith River’s trout fishery, and the study will review impacts on other users of the river. Ben Murdock moved, and Barry Dunkley seconded, that the letter be sent as read to Virginia representatives in Congress and that additional letters be prepared and sent to North Carolina representatives. The motion passed. Copies will be sent to the respective senators as well. Members were urged to write similar letters as individuals and to get other interested groups to do so as well.
Election: Julia Pyron reported for the Nominating Committee, recommending the election of the following slate of officers and Board members, who were elected unanimously:

President: Tom Edmonds, Caswell County
Vice President: Barry Dunkley, Pittsylvania County
Secretary: T Butler, Rockingham County
Treasurer: Lindley Butler, Rockingham County

New Board Members:
Terms Expire 2008: Roger Adams, Henry County
Mark Bishopdc, Rockingham County
Ellen Jesse, Henry County
Ben Murdock, Henry County
Will Truslow, Guilford County
Mike Vaughan, Rockingham County

Returning Board Members:
Terms Expire 2006: Joey Bane, Halifax County
Ken Bridle, Stokes County
Paul Johnson, Halifax County
Terry Painter, Person County
Julia Pyron, Rockingham County

Terms Expire 2007:
John Buck, Henry County
Paul Ferguson, Wake County
Clark Graves, Halifax County
Wayne Kirkpatrick, Patrick County
Brenda Martin, Patrick County
Tom Taylor, Guilford County

Term Expires 2008:
Jeffrey Johnston, Rockingham County

Tour of Dairy Farm: Wayne Kirkpatrick gave a detailed and fascinating tour of his dairy farm. He pointed out the difference between two young calves, one of which will join his herd as a good milk producer, the other to be sold. He displayed and explained the 100-pound mixture of feed that each of his 84 cows consumes daily. The milking parlor was visited, concluding with the milk storage facility where he explained how the milk is transported for processing.

Wayne’s dedication to the farm and his pride in its high quality products are evident, as is his enjoyment of his profession.

Grants Committee: Tom Taylor reported that we have recently received two grants. The Annie Penn Community Trust has awarded about $8000 to DRBA, the Rockingham County Naturalist Club, and the Upper Piedmont Research Station for the Chincu-Penn Trail to cover a brochure, parking lot, and landscaping. The application and administration of the grant are headed by Mike Vaughan.

The second grant of $5600 to DRBA from the Rockingham County Tourism and Development Authority will pay for a bateau navigation system brochure to promote and enhance paddle trips on the Dan River in Rockingham County. Lindley Butler is writing the brochure and administering the grant.

In addition, Will Butler is working on a Z. Smith Reynolds grant application for paid staff in North Carolina.

Education Committee: Forrest Altman asked for volunteers to help with the committee’s tasks, which include archives, public relations, booths at festivals, brochures, displays, news releases, newsletter, pamphlets, programs, photo library, and website. He recognized David Tingen, our new webmaster. New volunteers include John Buck and Ellen Jesse, and many more are needed.

Stream Monitoring Demonstration: After lunch Wayne drove the group to the South Mayo River on his farm where he and Brenda Martin demonstrated the process of netting macroinvertebrates from the river bottom. Three stations were set up where we could collect and count the insects and crustaceans, comparing them to an identification chart before they were returned to the river. Wayne and Brenda calculated the condition of the stream based on the organisms we counted, and we were pleased at the good quality of the river at this location.

Stewardship Committee: Ken Bridle reported that as Streamwatch Group for the Dan River Basin in North Carolina, DRBA is being asked to organize monitoring activities in the river and tributary streams twice a year. NC DENR has supplied packets explaining the assessments—visual survey, stream diagnosis, and insects and aquatic life—that volunteers can perform. The forms and instructions will be posted on DRBA’s website. As volunteers select a stream to monitor, they should notify Ken, who will create a map of monitored sites throughout the basin in both states. He invited everyone to a meeting of Dan River Partners, organized by Piedmont Land Conservancy to coordinate the effort, at 10:00 a.m. on April 27 at Hanging Rock.

Mike Vaughan introduced our special guests from Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), Amanda Gray and Mike Shaver from the South Central Regional Office in Lynchburg, which oversees the eastern portion of the Dan River Basin. Brenda Martin and Wayne Kirkpatrick, our Save Our Streams certified stream monitors, participate with other volunteers in Virginia in creating the data base that screens waterways and lets DEQ know what needs their attention. Both officials solicited DRBA’s help in increasing cooperation across the state line.

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DAN RIVER POKER PADDLE RUN

for Hospice of Stokes County will be held on June 25th. The fee is $16.00 per person. This run is a 6.2 mile river trip on the scenic Dan River through Hanging Rock State Park, a trip time of 2.5 to 3 hours depending on skill level. Fee includes shuttle, BBQ dinner, dessert, live music, 1st prize of $250 and many more prizes. Sign in at 9 am at the Dan River Company at 1110 Finchum Road, Danbury, NC. Rain date is set for July 16th.

Raffle for a Mad River canoe, courtesy of Confluence Water Sports Company, will be held. Raffle tickets are $5 each or 5 for $20. Tickets can be purchased at the Hospice of Stokes County office or the Dan River Company. All proceeds go toward patient care of Hospice of Stokes County.

For more information call 336/593-5309 or 336/593-2628.
DRBA VOLUNTEER SIGN UP SHEET

As we grow so does the need for more volunteers to help with the following needs. Please share some of your talents, energy, and passions.

I am interested in helping with:

___ Historical batteau reenactment (poling batteau, making costumes, storytelling)

___ Boat access on Dan, Smith, or Mayo (planning, constructing, maintaining)

___ Create/maintain hiking, riding, portage trails (demo trails in Fieldale, Eden)

___ Grant proposal writing

___ Program for 2006 annual meeting

___ Streamwatch testing/monitoring

___ Displays for festivals, museums

___ Other ________________________________

And so very many thanks to those of you who already give so much!!
To preserve
the Natural
and
Cultural Resources
of the
Dan River Basin
by promoting
Stewardship,
Recreation
and
Education

The mark of a successful man is one that has spent an entire day
on the bank of a river without feeling guilty about it.
Chinese Philosopher

First Saturday Outings
July thru December 2005

July 2.
Mayo River in Henry and Rockingham Counties

August 6
Dan River Boat Race in Madison, NC

September 3
Danville, VA to Milton, NC, including batteau

October 1
River cleanup, TBA

November 5
Mayo River in Rockingham County

December 3
Sprig Outing on Upper Little River

COME JOIN US