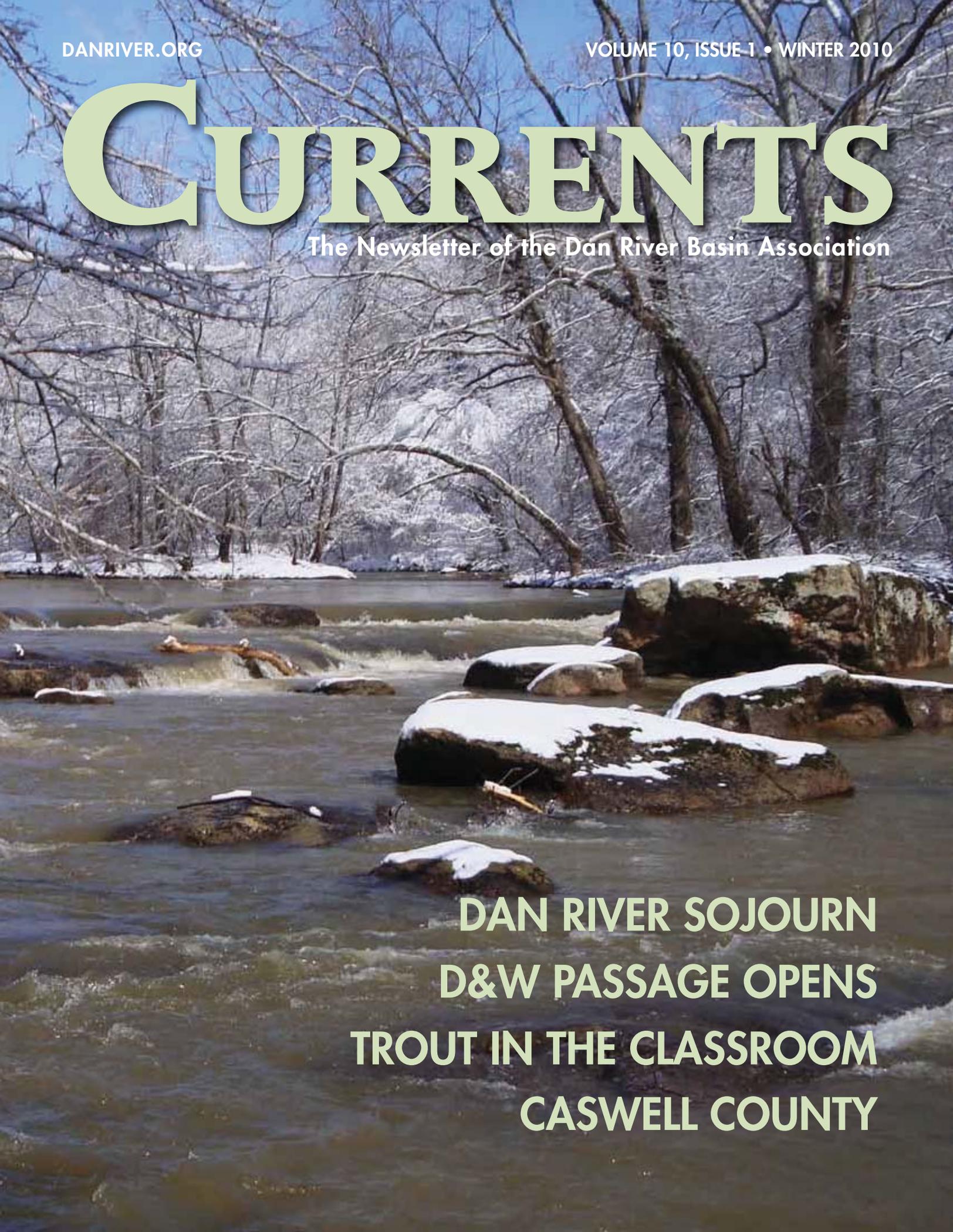


DANRIVER.ORG

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# CURRENTS

The Newsletter of the Dan River Basin Association



**DAN RIVER SOJOURN  
D&W PASSAGE OPENS  
TROUT IN THE CLASSROOM  
CASWELL COUNTY**



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Meetings of the DRBA Board of Directors  
are held on the third Wednesday of  
January, April, July and October.

The next meeting will be held  
5 p.m., Jan. 19, 2011, at Eden City Hall.

## **CURRENTS**

### **Staff**

Editor: T Butler  
Design, layout: David Pinney

Cover and opposite page: photography by Brian Williams

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# FROM THE DIRECTOR

I would like to bid a fond farewell to the DRBA family and all who welcomed me to this area in 2006. It has been an honor to serve as DRBA's first executive director and to help grow DRBA as guided by its vision and mission. It has been a nonstop experience, and I am so grateful for having had this opportunity.

As I prepare to move to Richmond in 2011 to be near my family, I wish to extend special thanks to DRBA's inspiring founders, T and Lindley Butler and to Jeffrey Johnston.

Thanks, too, to DRBA board president Wayne Kirkpatrick, treasurer, advisor and volunteer Mark Bishopric and, especially, to Team DRBA, our fantastic staff, as well as all who have contributed, volunteered and worked so hard for the Dan River region of North Carolina and Virginia.

Best wishes to you and yours for a fun-filled 2011 on our rivers and trails! Thank you for your continued support of DRBA!

– Katherine Mull

## PRESIDENT'S SPACE



DRBA completes its ninth full year of operation as we close out 2010. We have grown into an organization with a reputation for delivering value on invested resources. Multiple river accesses and miles of trails are bringing the natural resources of the basin within

easy enjoyment of our citizens and our visitors.

Successful partnerships with public and private groups have yielded swift progress in arenas

previously stymied by a lack of collaboration. Improved economic activity, enhanced quality of life, natural resource amenities and improved conservation awareness across the basin – all attest to DRBA's successful, diligent efforts.

Looking forward to 2011, the basin presents challenges that require all of us to work together to keep DRBA's mission and vision moving forward. DRBA thanks our volunteers, staff and partners for your past and continued support and effort.

All of you make DRBA successful. Thank you! Happy Holidays!

–Wayne Kirkpatrick

## CURRENTS REACHES A BEND IN THE RIVER

DRBA began publishing a quarterly newsletter, *Dan River Currents*, in the summer of 2002, when the organization was just a few months old. Under our first editor, Paul Johnson, the newsletter grew from two pages to four and introduced a color banner photo.

Without fanfare, two years and eight issues later the editorship was assumed by Dorcas Midkiff, an artist and active DRBA volunteer. Her first issue, Summer 2004, was six pages long and featured a new format with several color photos. The name was shortened to *Currents*.

During Dorcas' tenure, *Currents* continued to grow and change. Over twenty-six issues, Dorcas expanded *Currents* to twelve pages, incorporated a basin map keyed to the articles, and offered the newsletter online in full color. Among popular innovations have been a full-page photo cover and

photo collages of such events as First Saturday Outings, litter cleanups, mistletoe gathering, and the batteau raising.

As the river flows around a bend and changes course along its journey, with this issue Dorcas is turning over the design duties to David Pinney, another artist and dedicated DRBA member. DRBA is grateful to David for assuming this role, and we look forward to his continuing the excellent job that Paul began and Dorcas expanded.

Thank you, Dorcas, for the creativity, dedication, and many, many hours you have devoted to sharing DRBA's story. Your work provides a beautiful record of DRBA's amazing growth and development over the past six and a half years.

–T Butler

# FEATURES

## Farewell To Katherine Mull

Back in 2006 DRBA hired our first executive director. Katherine Mull came to us with the highest recommendations for her broad experience in government and business, her strong passion for rivers, her vision and dedication as a proven leader, and her amazing work ethic. Even before she was on the payroll, she was working for DRBA in Richmond and southern Virginia to facilitate the preservation of a crucial tract straddling the state line on the Mayo River. That effort culminated in the recent authorization of the Mayo River State Park in Virginia—just one of many, many successes Katherine has shepherded for DRBA over the past four and a half years.

During Katherine's tenure, DRBA has grown from a volunteer organization with a gleam in its eye to a highly respected leader in the region with four offices and a superb staff. At the recent basin-wide conference of trails and heritage planners from Virginia and North Carolina, DRBA was unanimously selected as the facilitating organization to coordinate the new project across the region. With Katherine's leadership, we have earned the reputation of being the "go-to" organization, the one that bridges boundaries and gets things done for the benefit of all parts of the river basin.

Katherine Mull's stated personal goal is "to make a difference." Katherine, you have made a tremendous difference in the Dan River region, and your legacy here is huge. New river accesses, miles of new trails, greater recognition of the region's shared heritage, beautiful river guides to attract visitors, increased stream monitoring, heightened awareness of the impact of riverside trees, teacher training and thousands of students raising trout and learning about water quality: all this and more has occurred on your watch. On behalf of the Dan River Basin Association, thank you from all of us, our children, and generations to come.

– T Butler

## 2011 Dan River Sojourn

*Make your plans now!* The 2011 Dan River Sojourn will be held May 20, 21 and 22, 2011. Great food, great entertainment, great programs, great companions!

Starting at Lindsay Bridge in Madison, NC and ending in Eden, NC, this 22 mile paddle and camping trip on the Dan River carries you through



**Dan River Sojourn 2011**  
*a passage through time*

history from dinosaurs to nineteenth-century navigation structures to the present. Enjoy paddling, camping, programs highlighting the history and music of the Dan River basin, gear handling, delicious food, and lots of fun. Visit [www.danriver.org](http://www.danriver.org) for details.

## Caswell On The Move

It's been an exciting year in Caswell County. DRBA began the year with the Heritage Trails Master Plan public workshops. In the summer we added 900 feet of nature trail at the Senior Center, with more to come. We've had programs at libraries and attended several festivals, helping to spread the good word of DRBA. And as we turn another new year, some of our biggest strides yet are just occurring.

We are currently partnering with the Caswell County Historical Association in producing a Heritage Driving Tour for the County. Please see Miriam Farris' article; she is a wonderful talent and we are delighted to have her join our team. Sites and stories are being sought and sorted – no small task for a county as rich in history, culture and lore as Caswell.

In another effort, we are aiding the Historical Association in gaining support for a Heritage Tobacco Barn Village and

*see Caswell page 6*

## Caswell County Heritage Driving-Tour

I am happy to be joining DRBA for the development of a heritage driving-tour of Caswell County, NC. Having spent much of my childhood on a family farm in middle Tennessee, I feel right at home amongst the rolling hills of Caswell County.

My appreciation of the Piedmont began two years ago in the Public History program at UNC-Greensboro. With fellow graduate students, I developed a driving tour of Greensboro's former mill villages (Cone Mills). Now an urban residential area, the mill villages once had more rural features, where mill workers kept chickens, kitchen gardens, and fruit trees in their yards. Part of the challenge in developing the mill village tour was helping visitors see the past in a modern landscape. Fortunately, Caswell County's heritage is visibly evident in the beautiful farms and spectacular buildings that adorn town and country. What I hope to draw out of these places are people's stories. I am already indebted to the Caswell County Historical Association for the rich material they have collected and produced, both in print and on the web.

If there is a place in Caswell County that you feel must be part of the tour, please let me know!

Feel free to drop me a line at: [miriam.farris@gmail.com](mailto:miriam.farris@gmail.com).

– *Miriam Farris*



Miriam Farris at the County Home cemetery.  
– photo Jenny Edwards

*Caswell from page 5*

Museum. In the birthplace of Bright Leaf Tobacco, this could be a wonderful opportunity to draw visitors to the county, Yanceyville and Milton, especially during the Bright Leaf Hoedown.

At the Senior Center, over 1400 additional feet of the Stream Walk Trail has been flagged and is ready to begin construction. Bids will be collected in January and trail development should commence in February. This trail extension has the potential to connect to a daycare, Oakwood Elementary School and Maud Gatewood Park, ultimately linking over 400 students and 150 seniors daily via a stream valley.

Finally, we anticipate the construction of over 2 miles of mountain bike/walk-run trails on the north side of Oakwood Elementary School, also beginning early in 2011.

Happy Holidays from the Caswell County Office of DRBA.

– *Chad Hall*

## Dick & Willie Passage Officially Opens

It began as many good ideas do...just a dream. The dream was the brainchild of DRBA board member Ellen Jesse, who planted the seed with the newly formed Rivers and Trails group way back in 2005. On October 11, 2010, that dream became reality as more than 200 people crowded the Liberty Street Trailhead parking area to celebrate the official opening of the 4.5 mile Dick & Willie Passage.



Fall colors on the D&W.  
– photo Lynn Pritchett

The new trail has quickly become Henry County's most popular walking and biking attraction. The 10-foot-wide paved trail extends from Virginia Avenue near El Parral restaurant to Mulberry Creek

east of Martinsville. Part of the Smith River Trail System, it connects with the city's spur trail leading to uptown Martinsville, with future connections planned to the Fieldale Trail and the Smith River Sports Complex.

Keynote speaker Congressman Rick Boucher, who helped secure \$400,000 from the federal government toward the \$1.4 million project, told the crowd, "The travel industry has become the main economy in both Abingdon and Damascus thanks to the Virginia Creeper Trail, and we can make that happen here. This is just the beginning. This new trail will significantly advance Henry County's tourism economy as well as provide a new recreation opportunity

for local residents and tourists alike.”

All funding came from grants and in-kind donations, including \$800,000 from the Virginia Department of Transportation and \$111,000 from the Virginia Tobacco Indemnification and Community Revitalization Commission. Land for trailheads was donated by the City of Martinsville, Hooker Furniture and Univar Chemical.

The Dick & Willie Passage uses a former stretch of the Danville & Western (nicknamed the “Dick & Willie”) rail line, the first railroad to Henry County. In full operation by 1884 to serve the humming furniture and textile mills, the Dick & Willie was a vital transportation link and continues to serve and connect citizens by living on as a paved recreational trail. “The transition from its former life to its new life is remarkable,” according to Henry County Board of Supervisors Chair Debra Buchanan

Commonwealth Transportation Board member Dana Martin said the trail is “a good investment of transportation funds. It’s a good use of money. We will see a return on it. The investment will affect health and welfare and will enhance the quality of life,” which is one of “those intangible things that attracts economic development.”

Other speakers at the ceremony included Chair of Martinsville-Henry County Rivers & Trails Ellen Jessee, whose extensive groundwork helped give shape to her dream in a short five years. Jessee thanked the many others involved in the project, including DRBA staff and volunteers, Henry County staff, and especially Henry County Administrator, Benny Summerlin, who shepherded the project through all obstacles to make it a reality.

– Brian Williams

## Working Across Borders

In November DRBA hosted a bi-state conference of state, regional and local trails and heritage planners and supporters. The initiative launched a conversation regarding how to best work across state lines to leverage the Dan River area’s natural and heritage resources for greater economic impact. Presenters discussed advantages of a regional perspective and reported on progress underway. The afternoon was reserved for an all-inclusive discussion, brainstorming and setting of priorities.

The workshop was led by professional planner, David Long. Out of his facilitation came thoughtful recommendations regarding alliance building and networking, marketing and communications, strategic planning and visioning, capacity-building and fundraising, information-gathering and tools, and

## Conflicts & Concerns Raised Regarding Uranium Studies

A proposal to mine uranium in the Dan River basin in Virginia (upstream of the Roanoke River basin in North Carolina) has generated much concern regarding potential environmental, health, socioeconomic and other impacts across the region.

Four different studies are now underway, and concerns relating to coordination, sharing of information, conflicts of interest and other aspects have been submitted to members of the Virginia General Assembly Coal and Energy Commission by Katie Whitehead of Chatham and Hollis Stauber of Danville.

Their comments and details regarding the scope, funding and status of the studies can be found at [www.danriver.org](http://www.danriver.org). Click on the link on the home page under “DRBA News.”



Boating on the lower Dan River. – photo Betty Kirkpatrick

programs and facilities. This first meeting was made possible with financial assistance from the Danville Regional Foundation.

A benchmark for progress could be an adopted, broadly-supported master plan—a clear vision, mission and strategy for five, ten, twenty years or more. Such a document would attract dollars to the region to implement the plan’s priorities.

The next objective of the initiative is participation of a wider audience, including elected officials and members of the business community. A second convening is expected to occur early in 2011 in Halifax County, Virginia. Jurisdictions are expected to rotate hosting meetings held on a bi-monthly basis.

– Katherine Mull

# Trout In The Classroom & Water Quality

Excitement in Education! Trout in the Classroom! Year 6 of this flagship program is underway. Trout eggs arrive in a classroom near you in December. TIC is a growing, learning experience that raises students' environmental awareness and appreciation. Meanwhile, water quality efforts abound in many parts of the basin. Here's a sampling:

- DRBA's tub of bugs has been on display at Stokes Stomp in Danbury and Central Elementary School in Eden.
- The Woolwine 6th and 7th grade classes of veteran TIC teacher, Rozina Turner, held the first of two stream monitoring sessions on the Smith River and on Sycamore Creek in Patrick County.
- Ecological scores were determined for Fell's Branch in Bassett by the VMNH Master Naturalists class and for Campbell Creek in DeHart Park by Rebecca Adcock's Biology Lab students from the Stuart campus of PHCC.
- Fell's Branch, which has been sampled over the past three years, remains borderline acceptable for ecological conditions.
- Campbell Creek tests excellent for ecological score, indicating a great job by the park maintenance crew in keeping fertilizer and pesticide out of the stream.

We enjoyed having a guest from Chatham working with us, Deborah Lovelace, President of League of Individuals for the Environment, Inc. (L.I.F.E., Inc.), who is interested in receiving training in stream monitoring methods.

Finally, the coliform sampling of portions of the Dan River continues. Results for 2009 are published at:

[www.danriver.org/Publications/Other/DanRWatershedAssmtFinalReport%20Feb09.pdf](http://www.danriver.org/Publications/Other/DanRWatershedAssmtFinalReport%20Feb09.pdf).

– Wayne Kirkpatrick



**Top:** Taking water quality samples from Campbell Creek. – photo Wayne Kirkpatrick.

**Center:** Trout tank in a classroom. – photo Brian Williams.

**Bottom:** Trout hatchlings. – photo Brian Williams.

**Inset:** Trout eggs fresh from the state hatchery at Wytheville, VA. – photo Brian Williams.

# ADVENTURES

## October Clean-Up Cancelled

DRBA's October First Saturday Outing was cancelled due to high, swift water that created dangerous paddling conditions. Scheduled as part of the NC Big Sweep, the outing was to collect trash from the Dan River from the 704 Bridge in Madison to Jacobs Creek.

DRBA thanks the Kennedys for inviting us to take out on their property and offering assistance in disposing of gathered trash. The outing will be rescheduled in 2011 when we hope for more favorable river conditions so we can enjoy a paddle and clean up that section of the Dan.

– Wayne Kirkpatrick

## December 4<sup>th</sup> Hike

For the December outing, DRBA traded in the usual canoes and kayaks for hiking boots as we explored the property of Jo and Ben Lackey. The property is in a very scenic section of Stokes County, and as the participants were taking the winding road up to the trailhead we could all tell it was going to be a fun hike.

The small size of the group (only 8 people on this adventure) meant that everyone could socialize and swap stories with each other. It was fascinating to hear the stories other people told. It was almost a



– photos Lucas Conkle

mini classroom as we educated each other about geology, biology, and history of the area. That these conversations were happening as we were walking up and down the hillsides, continually crisscrossing the beautiful Mill Creek, and passing through

tunnel-like corridors of Rhododendron and Mountain Laurel made it all the more meaningful.

We were all having so much fun that no one even wanted to stop for lunch, eager to see what would be around the next bend. Of course the exploring had to stop and we eventually had to head back. But even retracing our steps turned exciting because of the



snow. That's right, just as we turned back we noticed small flakes drifting down. Soon there many more flakes, each seemingly larger than the last. As the snow started to stick to the trees and fields it gave us a whole new appreciation for the beauty of the land.

Eventually we did reach our cars where we got to end a hike the best way I can think of...with hot cider and yummy doughnuts that Jo (a truly wonderful hostess) had brought out for us, giving us one more long pause to talk with new friends and enjoy the beauty of the falling snow before returning home.

– Lucas Conkle

## November 6, 2010: A Day Of Firsts

Today was my first outing with DRBA, my first day on the Mayo River, and the season's first frost. Driving toward the put in below the "famous" Boiling Hole, I was grinning ear to ear with that "I'm on an adventure" feeling. Anywhere new and "off road" ignites that feeling of absolute joy. As I drove the winding Smith Road I was breathless at the sudden view of the mountains far off in the distance...but so close to home.

I had broken my GPS, but the directions were perfect. Without the GPS, I saw more. I noticed more. I felt more. I had to really pay attention. I actually experienced more, like old times. I won't be replacing it. Or if I do, it will live in the glove box until an emergency arises.

## October 16, Third Saturday at Rock Castle Creek Gorge

As I drove on the winding back road, I felt the stirring in my soul that said “this is what I live for.” And then I saw it. The river. The Mayo River. I thought it was going to be tiny. Like, really tiny. But it wasn’t. It was shimmering in the morning sun. The grin on my face somehow got bigger.

Arriving at Mayo Beach I saw Will Truslow wearing a DRBA T-shirt and felt instantly at ease. I was there. Paradise was only 18 miles from my back door. And I never even knew it. Thank you DRBA for bringing me here. Will and all the other members made me feel so welcome. All fifteen of us shared a deep love and appreciation for nature and the river and the desire to keep these treasures intact. I was among friends.

We launched below the Boiling Hole; I was pretty hesitant; I am used to lakes and very calm rivers. This was different. I needed to be...aggressive. The first couple of rapids were stressful. I tried to copy the “pro’s” before me and learn from them. No hesitating, keep paddling, be bold. Then they started getting really fun. It was about 49 degrees when we launched, but by now I wasn’t concerned about getting wet. Even if I did take a swim I was surrounded by experienced, safe paddlers. I really appreciated the feeling of safety I had on this trip. Everyone looked out for everyone else and helped each other.

The river was gorgeous, with high banks and massive boulders. Professor Butler told us about the Native American fish weirs. So much rich history and beauty practically in my backyard. I was filled with joy, surrounded by this glorious nature, this shimmering river, and fellow river lovers who were just wonderful. I met an 8<sup>th</sup> grade teacher, a nurse and very experienced paddler, a professor, his lovely wife, the leader who was in a playboat, an octogenarian who really knew how to man his canoe and had the nicest whistle going down the river, and Katie who loved my lunchbox and Wayne’s wife who loved the “ripples” that I call rapids, and the guy who moved here from Wyoming. What a friendly, welcoming, knowledgeable group of folks. I am most grateful and look forward to many happy years as part of this important and lovely organization.

Thank you for an even more lovely day on the Mayo. I am grateful DRBA exists. Keep paddling and preserving please!

– Jo Proia

Mill Creek. – photo Lucas Conkle

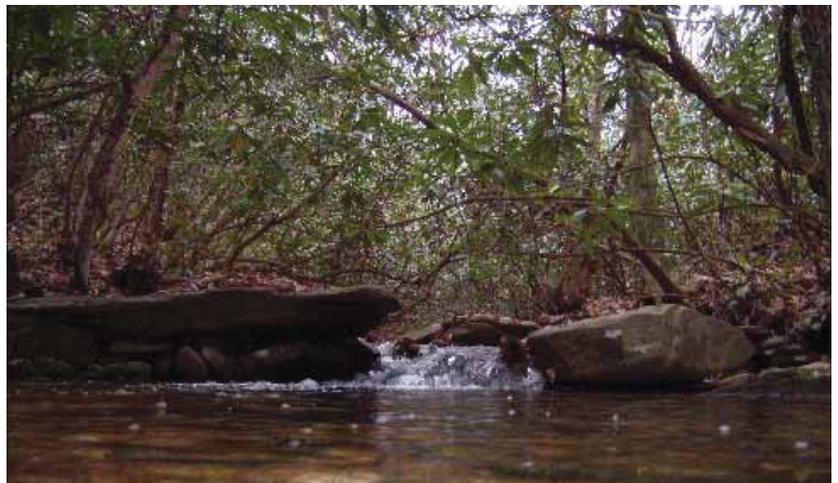
Rock Castle Gorge Trail is truly as beautiful a hike as anywhere to be found! At least that is my opinion, and many in our group of 12 agreed it is perhaps the Dan River Basin’s very best. Gathering at the home of Betty and Wayne Kirkpatrick, we were greeted with coffee and goodies before heading off to our starting point, Rocky Knob Cabins just off the Blue Ridge Parkway near Meadows of Dan. If you have never been to these cabins, they are a treat unto themselves. You get a real back to the basics experience in a near perfect setting. I know of at least one person who had a life changing experience from her visit there.

The trail passes through Rock Castle Gorge and for much of the way parallels the creek. Wayne Kirkpatrick led the hike and served as historian and naturalist! The area is rich in early American history, and Wayne related details of settlers from the early 1800’s up to 1929, a time when the valley had a thriving agricultural economy. Scattered among the hillsides are ruins of 1st, 2nd, and 3rd generation structures. As we hiked, with Wayne’s help you could almost see the abundance the early settlers must have enjoyed.

The trail dips, twists, turns, rises and offers much diversity, with magnificent views and thick forests. The creek sings throughout the forest most of the way.

We were lucky enough to visit here when all things gold were at their peak, the leaves making a stunning contrast against the clear blue sky. It was the perfect hike on a perfect fall day and all the better because it was shared in good company. Though I missed the festivities afterwards, I understand the “in good company” theme continued into the evening with a pot luck dinner at the Kirkpatricks’ home.

– Connie Russell



# MEMBERSHIPS

September | November 2010

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Molly Urquhart

## LOCATION KEY

CONFLICTS & CONCERNS

CASWELL COUNTY  
ON THE MOVE

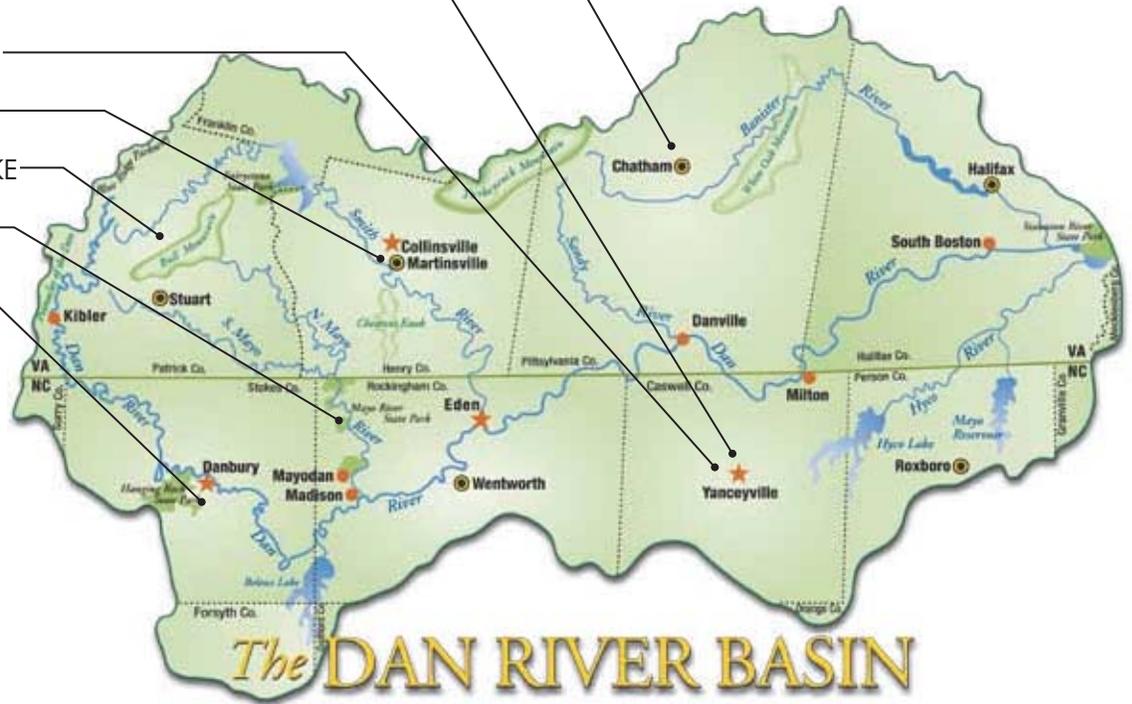
CASWELL COUNTY  
HERITAGE DRIVING TOUR

DICK & WILLIE PASSAGE

ROCK CASTLE CREEK HIKE

DAY OF FIRSTS

DEC. 4 HIKE



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