

Dan River Basin Association

CURRENTS

DANRIVER.ORG • VOLUME 13, ISSUE 2 • SPRING 2014

COAL ASH IN THE DAN

TROUT-N-ABOUT 5.5K

DRBA SPEAKERS AVAILABLE

WATER QUALITY TESTING

TEAM DRBA

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Meetings of the Board of Directors are held on the second Wednesday of February, May, August and November. The next meeting will be May, 2014.

NEWSLETTER

Editor: T Butler
Designer: David Pinney

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FIRST SATURDAY OUTINGS

(details at DANRIVER.ORG)

April 5: Paddle Banister River in Pittsylvania County

May 3: Paddle on Smith River in Henry County

June 7: Paddle on North Mayo River or Maywo River

Cover: Assessing river life after the coal ash spill. Photo Brian Williams.
This page: Trillium in bloom. Photo Brian Williams.

FROM THE DIRECTOR



Tiffany Haworth.

Since February 3rd, the day DRBA received confirmation of the Duke Energy coal ash spill, I've learned a lot about my co-workers, the DRBA board, and the people who live, work and play in the communities DRBA serves. I've seen commitment, passion and generosity at levels I never knew existed. People I have never met – and people I know well – have contacted me to offer assistance and gratitude for DRBA. In 30 days' time, DRBA has received over 1,000 phone calls, and I personally have received over 7,000 emails in my inbox. Most of those communications have come from people, businesses, and organizations wanting to help. In February alone, DRBA staff and board have donated over

1,500 hours of their time toward recovery and healing of the Dan. Throughout all of this, we have all managed to continue to provide our normal activities and events across the 16 counties of the Dan River basin.

This time, when a section of our beloved Dan River has suffered a devastating blow and the frustration is overwhelming, has somehow become a time when I have felt most connected with the river, the region, and the amazing DRBA Team of supporters, staff and volunteers. It has awakened in all of us a renewed love for our waterways, a commitment for their protection and a spirit of cooperation to work together toward a common goal.

It has been hard to find anything positive that could possibly come from such a horrible event, but it is there. The Dan River is lucky to have the DRBA family – to have you – helping it to heal and ensuring this event is not duplicated. Thank you!

-Tiffany Haworth

PRESIDENT'S SPACE



Allison Szuba.

Every day I am proud to be part of DRBA, and to serve as President is an honor that goes beyond words. As this is my first writing in the President's Space, I went back to read the wise words of my predecessors for guidance.

One paragraph struck me as rather poignant. Fletcher Waynick, Past-President and current Vice President wrote, "Let's make sure this great river basin is here for future generations, a clean and safe resource to be enjoyed, and not a

polluted mess to be avoided."

On February 2nd, a 70-mile stretch of the Dan River received a big blow with the Duke Energy Coal Ash Spill. This spill has brought to light so many deficits in the oversight system. We, the community, must always remain vigilant of our natural resources.

The DRBA Board unanimously adopted a Resolution, stating our position regarding the spill, those responsible, and our expectations. DRBA staff are working heroically behind the scenes to provide solid and credible information regarding the spill, the toxins in the water, water testing results, and general information for everyone. I encourage you to visit www.danriver.org regularly for updates on the spill and all of the events going on in DRBA.

What can we, the members of DRBA, do? Quite a bit, actually and I am so glad you asked!

1. We can donate (doesn't matter how much, whatever is comfortable) to the Stewardship Fund. You can sleep well knowing that every penny will be used wisely for water quality monitoring, education and management to bring our Dan River back!

2. We can print out, sign, and distribute DRBA's petition, "Call for Cleanup of Coal Ash," at www.danriver.org/danriver-coal-ash-spill-135. Our friends and neighbors will be glad to have a way to help.

3. We can write our elected officials and ask them to please use responsible oversight managing coal ash ponds and getting coal ash stored properly and away from our waters. Most officials say that if they don't hear about a problem, they have to believe everything is okay.

4. We can support our local businesses. The Dan River is long and mighty, and while this 70-mile stretch is bruised and hurting, there is plenty of good water to be had on it, as well as the Smith, Mayo, Hyco, and Banister rivers. Our local outfitters are ready to guide you to some places that will make you think you are in heaven on Earth! We need to show everyone how valuable we consider this river and make sure our basin doesn't suffer lost tourism dollars.

5. Please, continue to spread the word about DRBA and all we are doing. This organization, a mere 12 years old, was the first one contacted about the spill. News media from across the globe called our staff during this crisis and continue to do so. It is a huge tribute to the quality of our organization (staff, members, and board) that this is so.

Thank you so much for all you do! Hope to see you all at the April 5th First Saturday Outing on the Banister River!

-Allison Szuba

DAN RIVER BASIN ASSOCIATION PRESENTS
A FUNDRAISER FOR TROUT IN THE CLASSROOM



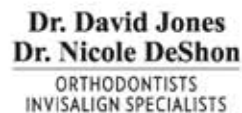
**TROUT
 N
 ABOUT**

A 5.5K RACE ALONG AND THROUGH THE BEAUTIFUL SMITH RIVER
SAT. MAY 10TH
10^{AM} • FIELDALE TRAIL ACCESS, FIELDALE, VA
REGISTRATION: \$20 UNTIL APRIL 25 • \$25 AFTER APRIL 26 AND ON RACE DAY
INCLUDES T-SHIRT, AID STATIONS, RACE SWAG AND TASTY POST-RACE SNACKS
VISIT [WWW.DANRIVER.ORG](http://www.danriver.org) TO REGISTER

More Info: 276-634-2592 | khodges@danriver.org | rebajksn@aol.com

This race is a fundraiser for Trout in the Classroom, an environmental education program designed for k-12 students. Classroom teachers and students raise trout from eggs to fingerlings, then release them in the Smith River. Students learn principles of water quality, stream habitat, responsibility and conservation.

TROUT IN THE CLASSROOM IS PROUDLY SUPPORTED BY:



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Headwaters Headlines: Coming in Patrick County

Homestead Hikers explores trails each 2nd weekend of the month (even months on Saturday, odd months on Sunday). <https://www.facebook.com/groups/homesteadhikers/>

College for Older Adults: Spring hiking class meets on Wednesdays from April 16 through June 21. <http://www.reynoldshomestead.vt.edu/CollegeAdults.html>

Patrick County High School DRBA Club plans community service and educational events: planting blight-resistant Chestnut trees at Philpott Lake on March 17; roadside cleanup at Lovers Leap on March 29; paddle Philpott Lake to Calico Wall on April 19; visit Mulberry Farm on June 9 (water buffalo herd, energy efficient home, water quality monitoring of Rye Cove Creek).

Roadside cleanup in Stuart on May 24. See DRBA e-newsletter and website for more information.

GO WOW!

DRBA member and volunteer Jo Proia, an outdoor guide for Get Outdoors of Greensboro, oversees their paddling program GO WOW (Get Outdoors Women on the Water). Jo is offering a paddle through the coal ash spill site section of the

Dan River for GO WOW paddlers who become new DRBA members. Her goals are to heighten awareness about the coal ash issue, build support for the remediation of the river, and gain funds and new members for DRBA.

For details, see the DRBA e-newsletter. Thank you, Jo! And GO WOW for the Dan River!

-Wayne Kirkpatrick

Trout-N-About 5.5k Run

Trout-N-About, a fun 5.5k race in Fieldale, Virginia on Saturday, May 10, will take runners along and through the beautiful Smith River (you're gonna get wet!). The dry-land portion will be on the scenic Fieldale Trail beside the river.

Located within easy driving distance of Roanoke, Winston-Salem, Greensboro, and Raleigh, this unusual race supports the award-winning Trout in the Classroom (TIC) program in Southern Virginia and Rockingham County, North Carolina. (DRBA's TIC program is the nation's largest!)

Beginning at 10 a.m., the race is a great family fun event, open to runners and walkers of all ages! Registration is \$25 (just \$20 before April 25), and includes T-shirt, aid stations, race swag and tasty post-race snacks.

To register, visit www.danriver.org. More information: 276-634-2592, or khodges@danriver.org.

-Krista Hodges

EDUCATION

Speaking of DRBA

Does an organization meeting near you need a speaker? Would they like to learn about DRBA? DRBA volunteers and staff appear before groups all across the basin that request a program on our work and services.

On January 16, volunteer Wayne Kirkpatrick gave an overview of DRBA's operations, programs, and activities to a 7:30 a.m. gathering of over 100 at the Danville Riverside Rotary Club. Questions following the talk covered topics such as water supply within the basin; interests beyond the basin looking to tap into the Dan as a drinking water source; the DRBA TIC program; water quality monitoring methods and current sampling efforts; and environmental challenges facing the region.

Opportunities such as this offer a chance to speak to engaged audiences about DRBA's mission to preserve and promote the cultural and natural resources of the basin. DRBA thanks the Danville Riverside Rotary Club and looks forward to visiting their group again.

To schedule a DRBA speaker for a program related to

DRBA's efforts in the basin, please contact Tiffany Haworth, thaworth@danriver.org, 336-627-6270.



Wayne Kirkpatrick at the Danville Riverside Rotary Club. Photo Barry Richmond.

Philpott Blueway

When you're out on a river or a big lake and approach the shore, do you ever wish someone would tell you just where you are? What you'd like to have is an attractive sign at each landing – a Blueway Trail. That's what DRBA intern Jacob Snyder is working on at Philpott Lake.

In early February Jacob and a DRBA volunteer kayaked part of Philpott Lake to become familiar with the shoreline. Taking note of potential points of interest and stops for the water trail, Jacob learned about the history of the lake, scenic

natural features, and access points. Additional trips are planned to compile a database of potential sites for the trail.

Slated for completion in 2014, the Philpott Blueway Trail will feature signs visible from the water to identify the location and provide pertinent information, making the lake experience more enjoyable. Funded by several partners, this amenity is designed to attract tourists and allow for safer travel on the lake.

-Wayne Kirkpatrick

STEWARDSHIP

DRBA and Virginia DEQ

Back in October, 2007, DRBA and the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) formally signed a two-year Memorandum of Understanding, stating that "DEQ and DRBA agree to partner on efforts to protect and restore water quality in the Dan River Basin." (See http://www.danriver.org/content/File/currentsfall_2007.pdf)

Although the formal agreement lapsed, the partnership has remained alive and well, thanks to DRBA staff and volunteers and such VA DEQ staff as citizen scientist liaison James Beckely. Beckely has conducted many training sessions for DRBA volunteers, including a recent webinar about data collection by citizen scientist water-quality monitors. He discussed the collection methods and uses of that data, sampling distribution across Virginia, and grant funding available through VA DEQ.

DRBA is grateful to Beckely and VA DEQ for all the information and training, and we anticipate many more years of this beneficial partnership.

-Wayne Kirkpatrick

Team DRBA

Are you a member of Team DRBA? You may be without realizing it!

Originally coined to recognize DRBA's amazing staff and super-active volunteers, Team DRBA means all members of the DRBA family who make good things happen in the Dan River basin. You're part of Team DRBA if you've ever -

- Helped a fellow First Saturday Outing paddler enter or leave the river or load a boat
- Brought a yummy dish to share at a DRBA event
- Helped plant trees along a stream or in a park
- Hosted a DRBA TIC tank in your classroom, or helped with a TIC tank or a trout release
- Taken the training and joined a DRBA water-quality monitoring team
- Helped build or care for a DRBA-sponsored trail
- Volunteered at a DRBA event or staffed a DRBA booth at a festival

- Invited someone to attend a DRBA outing or event
- Referred someone to DRBA's website
- Told your friends and neighbors about the great work DRBA is doing

Welcome, everyone, to Team DRBA!

-T Butler

Water Quality

Tub of Bugs: As a complement to the trout tank in Mrs. Setliff's Patrick County classroom, DRBA's Tub of Bugs visited her two AP Biology classes in early February. As indicators of water quality and part of the food web for trout, the macroinvertebrates illustrate the benefits of keeping pollution out of our communities and our rivers. The students' Brown Trout fingerlings are scheduled for release into the Smith River in late March.

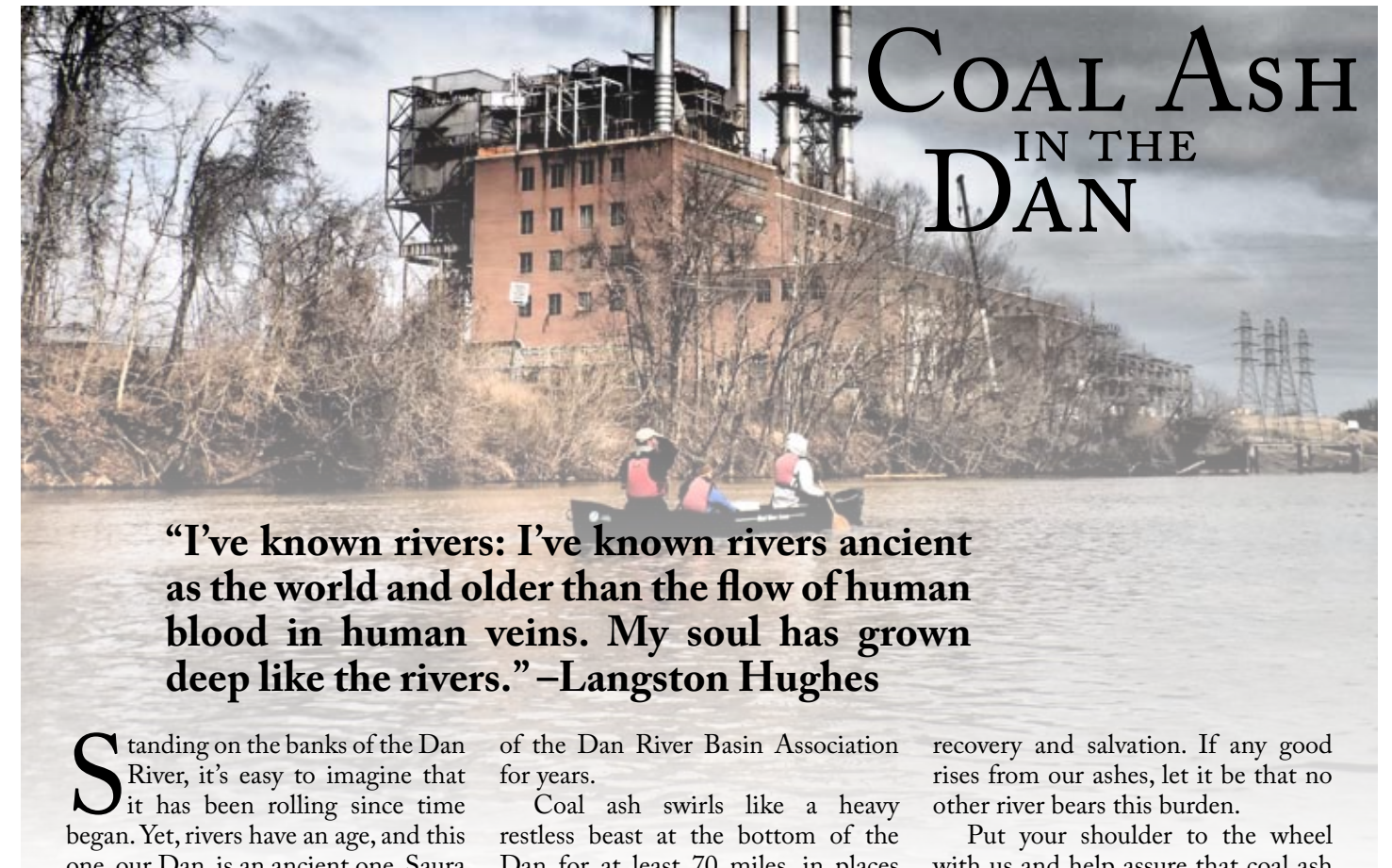
Coliform Testing: Teams of trained DRBA volunteers are collecting samples from the Smith River and some of its tributaries to test for coliform levels each month throughout 2014. The project is part of the implementation phase of the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) plan for portions of Patrick and Henry counties through a partnership between DRBA and the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation.

All samples to date are within Virginia standards for water quality, but as water levels change, the readings are expected to vary. DRBA's 14 volunteers work in pairs, following the Department of Environmental Quality's coliform sampling protocol.

-Wayne Kirkpatrick



Coliscan test. Photo Wayne Kirkpatrick



"I've known rivers: I've known rivers ancient as the world and older than the flow of human blood in human veins. My soul has grown deep like the rivers." –Langston Hughes

Standing on the banks of the Dan River, it's easy to imagine that it has been rolling since time began. Yet, rivers have an age, and this one, our Dan, is an ancient one. Saura Indians, displaced Africans, European settlers – all have intimately known it, relied upon it. The Dan quietly flows and sometimes rages through human history. Our river gave rise to mighty textile mills with their complicated role in U.S. labor history. Our river secured the course of a nation when General Nathaniel Greene outmaneuvered the British in the Race to the Dan. Our river was hit with 3rd largest coal ash spill in United States history, beginning on February 2, 2014. That event will shape the course

of the Dan River Basin Association for years.

Coal ash swirls like a heavy restless beast at the bottom of the Dan for at least 70 miles, in places up to five feet deep. Our devoted band of river advocates has witnessed otters swimming in, and bald eagles flying above, a river of coal. Turtles are crawling up on its banks and dying. What, if not suffocating coal ash, rouses them from winter's sleep? Locals, mostly fisherman and hunters, stop by Draper Landing, the closest public access downstream of the spill. They gaze at the river, hands in pockets, contemplating. One said, "It feels like a funeral." Our eloquent co-founders sold Duke Energy stock that had been in their family for generations. They are using the proceeds as challenges to raise funds to support DRBA's work for the Dan.



DRBA staff, board members, and volunteers assessed the river a week after the coal ash spill. Photos Brian Williams.

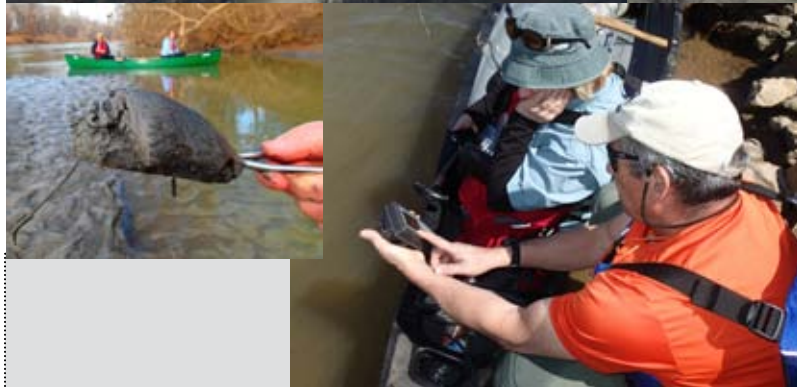
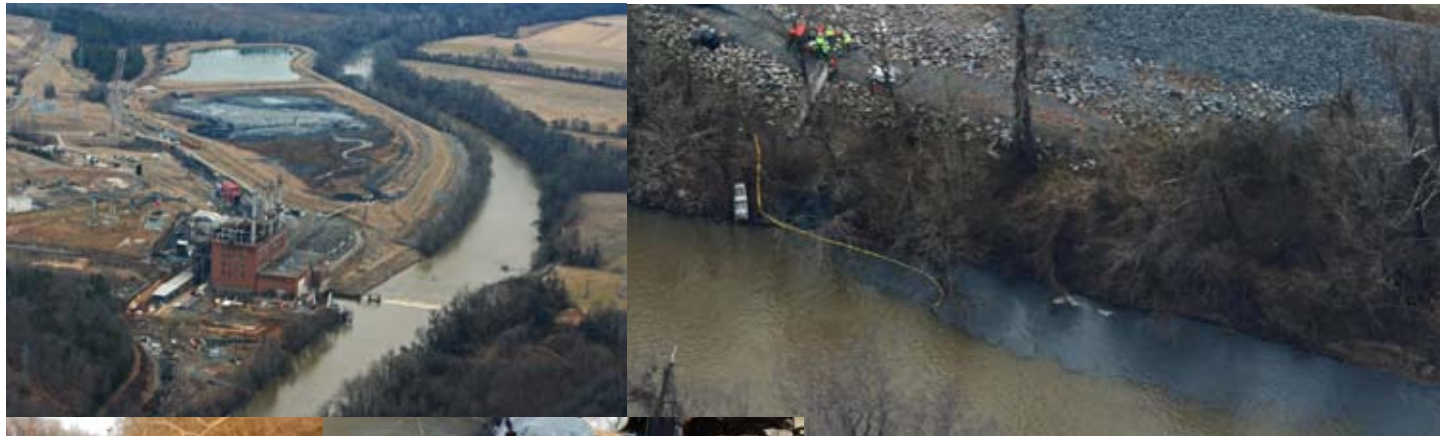
A disaster, like a river, has a life, and age. Now is the time to act, while the story is alive, while the nation cares. We are resolved to see our Dan River through it, to work toward its

recovery and salvation. If any good rises from our ashes, let it be that no other river bears this burden.

Put your shoulder to the wheel with us and help assure that coal ash is moved into safe lined landfills, far from our singing rivers. This requires your presence. Simply show up at coal ash meetings, town halls, rallies, and other events. "Friend" DRBA on Facebook, sign up for mailing lists of our fellow environmental groups: Appalachian Voices, Waterkeeper Alliance, Yadkin Riverkeeper, Southern Alliance for Clean Energy, and Southern Environmental Law Center. Download the coal ash petition from our website and collect signatures. Invite us to speak to your church, temple, civic group. Donate to DRBA's Stewardship Fund by mail or on our website.

Come see us, paddle the plenty of good river miles that grace our Dan River Valley. Step into the flow of the movement and soon you will find your place, with us. We promise you there are few things that give life more meaning than to know a river, to let it become part of who you are, to allow it to flow through your veins, through your being.

-Jenny Edwards



Top left: Ash ponds along the Dan. Above: Coal ash spill. Photos Southwings.

Left: Ash-laden silt. Volunteers checking water quality. Photos Brian Williams.

Coal Ash Spill – The Long View

What are the long-term implications of the February 2 coal ash spill to the Dan River basin?

The physical damage is great enough, but when considered with the immediate and long-term economic losses, the immediate and long-term tourism revenue, the loss of water quality for the foreseeable future, the potential agricultural issues, the bio-accumulation issues, the immediate and long-term loss of wildlife and other environmental, social and economic situations brought on by the spill, the total dollar amount attributed to this event will be beyond enormous and will reverberate in both states for generations to come.

DRBA is committed to continuously addressing this issue through to a remedy that is in the best interests of the natural and cultural resources of the Dan River basin.

-Wayne Kirkpatrick



Ash pond outflow pipe. Photo Brian Williams.

DRBA Volunteers Respond to Coal Ash Spill

On Sunday, February 2 at Duke Energy's retired Dan River Power Station near Eden, a corrugated metal stormwater pipe buried three feet below a 27-acre coal ash lagoon ruptured. The failure of the 48-inch pipe released some 39,000 tons of coal ash and millions of gallons of polluted water directly into the river, creating the third largest coal ash spill in the nation's history. Within days, the black ash and toxic slurry had spread 70 miles downstream to the mouth of the river at Kerr (Buggs Island) Lake.

Like larger coal ash ponds in the Dan River basin (Mayo and Roxboro power stations in Person County and Belews Creek Steam Station in Stokes and Rockingham counties), the unlined lagoons at the Dan River plant hold waste from burning coal.

As world attention focused on the Dan River accident, DRBA staff responded quickly and heroically to the disaster. DRBA volunteers and board members have also joined them in supportive ways: paddling the river for a first-hand view of the spill; providing boats and guides for reporters; hosting or partnering in public meetings to share information and raise funds to support recovery efforts; and assisting officials from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in detailed assessment of the river.

The cleanup will take a very long time, and the effects of the spill will last for many decades. But DRBA volunteers join our amazing staff in continuing to strive for the river's healing.

-T Butler

OUTINGS

DRBA's 12th Annual Celebration

On March 1, the town of Stuart, VA warmly welcomed 66 DRBA members and friends who came for a day of celebration. DRBA President Allison Szuba presided over the 12th annual



Top: Registration at the DRBA's 12th Annual Celebration. Photo Wayne Kirkpatrick.

Right: Team Philpott. Photo Rocky Rockwell.



Left: Brian Williams presents Service Award to Prillaman Landscaping. Photo Wayne Kirkpatrick.

Below: Hiking the MRRT. Photo Wayne Kirkpatrick.

meeting where food, fellowship, and laughter were abundant.

DRBA remembered the late Forrest Altman, founding member and advocate for the river. New board members Susan Carter, Lucas Conkle, Wayne Knox, and Sherri Wright were elected. Service awards were presented to Tracey McCoy, Betty Kirkpatrick, and Bob O'Neil. Prillaman Landscape Dimensions, PHHC HVAC/Building Trades



Department, and Philpott Lake management and staff comprised the inaugural class of DRBA Corporate Partners Awards.

Other highlights were a video report of the outstanding work done by our devoted staff in 2013, a brief look at the year ahead with Tiffany Haworth, and a presentation by Chris Owens of the Patrick County Tourism Advisory Council about expanding efforts to promote the county.

After lunch, 33 hikers enjoyed walking 2.75 miles on the completed Phase I and planned Phase II of the Mayo River Rail Trail. Beginning at Rotary Field and concluding on the old Dick & Willie Rail line beside the river, the hike also showcased trail kiosk signs made possible with DRBA funds generated by the Apple Dumpling 5K run/walk.

February 1 at Grassy Hill

On February 1st Robin Davis led a group of 37 people on a 3.1-mile hike up Grassy Hill Nature Reserve in Rocky Mount, Virginia. 13 people continued up Grassy Hill and completed the 6.6-mile loop. It turned out to be a beautiful day with blue skies and a comfortable temperature of 50° F. The trail had plenty of switchbacks to allow all hikers, new and experienced, to be able to hike the entire time and not feel winded. The hike took place in winter so, sadly, we were unable to see the Carolina thistle (*Cirsium carolinianum*) and the Menge's fame-flower (*Phemeranthus mengesii*). But we were

rewarded with interesting rock outcrops and spectacular views.

Prior to the hike we were led on a tour of the Center for Energy Efficient Design classroom at the Franklin County Gereau Center by teacher Neil Sigmon. All were impressed by the cutting-edge features of the building and the curriculum.

-Sally Davis

Editor's note: Sally Davis is a second-year DRBA member and Franklin County High School Environmental Science student.

January 4 at Hanging Rock

There's something special about a winter hike. You notice the colors of tree bark, views are unobstructed by leaves, and then there are the icicles.

DRBA's outing to Hanging Rock State Park featured fun, friends, water and ice. On the 20-degree day the sky was clear and the sun shone brightly. Hikers came from as far away as Raleigh, NC. Although my car has New Jersey plates, I'm happy to have officially moved to Stuart, VA.

The group ranged from high school students to 60+ years. The plan was to see 4 waterfalls, beginning with Upper Cascades Falls, which offered us a real treat – ice hanging from all the rocks. The sun shining through the ice formed a spectrum of colors on the water. We followed the stairs, and the braver participants crossed the falls for more spectacular views.

The next stop was down a long series of steps to another amazing waterfall, where natural ice sculpture around the waterfall was spectacular. We hiked back up the trail to view yet another



Photos Jo Proia.



waterfall. We then returned to the visitor center, shared lunch and stories and soaked up some sun before driving to the fourth destination, the Lower Cascades.

There we descended a series of wooden stairs to a grotto that had ice hanging far above our heads where we took pictures of our adventure and new friends. The pictures definitely didn't do it justice.

While hiking I met a high school cheerleader from Greensboro who loves nature and hopes to have rock steps like those near the waterfalls at her first house. I learned about a naturalist program, where to ski in Virginia, other hiking opportunities in the area and a proposed medicinal garden. My favorite part of DRBA events is meeting people and making new friends with similar interests. My husband gave me a membership to DRBA as a birthday gift 4 years ago while we were still living in New Jersey, and it has definitely been a gift that keeps giving. Thank you to all the volunteers that make these events possible. I'm looking forward to the next First Saturday Outing.

–Norma Bozenmayer

MEMBERSHIPS & DONATIONS | 12-1-2013 | 2-28-2014

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