



CURRENTS

Dan River Basin Association

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HAPPY 19 YEARS TO DRBA
ANNUAL MEETING GOES VIRTUAL
VOLUNTEERS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Currents • Volume 20 • Issue 2

Dan River Basin Association

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Currents Newsletter

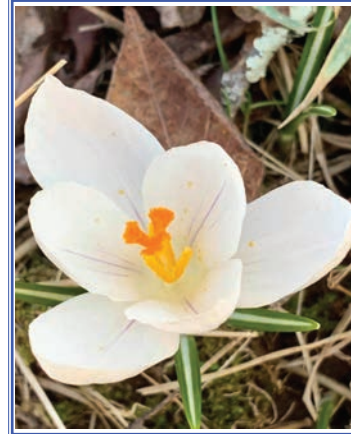
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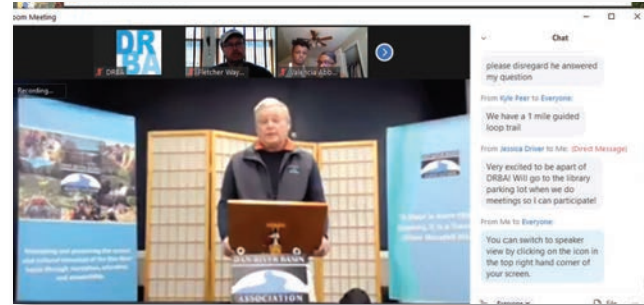
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Cover Photo: Beth Almond Ford



DRBA Staff Members worked to coordinate the first virtual annual meeting



Shawn Gorman presented the annual financial report

19 years -- DRBA at your Service!

Members and guests gathered via Zoom and in person on March 6 at the Spencer-Penn Centre in Spencer, Virginia, to celebrate the 19th anniversary of the Dan River Basin Association. President Sonya Wolen opened the annual meeting emphasizing the theme “Rx: Nature” and urged everyone to get outdoors as much as possible during this trying time of COVID-19.

Guest speaker, Kyle Peer, Superintendent of VA Tech’s Reynolds Homestead Forestry Research Center in nearby Critz, described the center’s programs and dedication to increasing forest health and productivity. He said working with DRBA’s Education Outreach Manager Krista Hodges and STIC (Streamside Trees in the Classroom) since 2009 was a great partnership.

Staff Review of 2020 Activities

Brian Williams, Virginia Program Manager, accomplished a lot in the field, with focus on Lake Reidsville, the Moss Street Trail, the Smith River Dog Park, and signage for the new Otter Holt in Eden.

For *Krista Hodges*, Education Outreach Manager, activities were somewhat limited because of changes in the school year. Last spring a YouTube presentation replaced students’ in-person release of trout they had raised. Trout in the Classroom participants this fall will be at Hope Academy in Greensboro and the Virginia Museum of Natural History in Martinsville. STIC will resume in the fall, ***continued on page 8***

Krista Hodges Celebrated for 10 Years with DRBA

Krista connected with DRBA through long-time member and founder of DRBA’s Trout in the Classroom program, David Jones, during a conservation land purchase with her husband. When David learned of Krista’s environmental education background, he suggested she meet DRBA’s Brian Williams. Call it serendipity but soon after they met an education position in DRBA opened up.

“The last ten years have flown by, I am so proud to be able to touch the lives of thousands of youth every year and help shape future environmental advocates.”

Krista Hodges

Since joining DRBA, Krista has transformed DRBA’s menu of environmental education programs into an award-winning model for other organizations throughout the United States. She has developed and presented programs that reach almost 10,000 youth a year across the Basin. She has created and designed workshops that train hundreds of water quality monitors and she has helped folks install and understand the value of rain barrels. Over the past decade, Krista has raised over \$100,000 to ensure DRBA’s environmental education programs are available to people of all ages. This year, Krista will be focusing on developing new virtual programs for teachers and home-school programs.



Tiffany Haworth



Stewardship



New Riverside Park Takes Shape

On February 6, 2021, fifteen DRBA volunteers gathered for a First Saturday Outing work detail, in lieu of a paddle or hike, at the Jacobs Creek Batteau Landing Park on Planters Road in the heart of Rockingham County to assist in completing the first phase of this Rockingham County park. The group spent several hours preparing the disturbed area around the recently finished parking lot, sowing grass seed and spreading straw to help the grass grow in that area. Fallen trees were cut along the river and along the existing trails on the property, which features a 200-year-old batteau landing.

The volunteers explored some of the wooded park property where additional trails and bird watching sites will be developed. Some volunteers experimented with wood floating races, launched from the batteau landing as everyone enjoyed the beautiful winter day.



DRBA volunteers provided the finishing touch to the parking area at Rockingham County's newest park.

DRBA is managing the county's Parks and Recreation Trust Fund grant to develop this park. Matching funds from the public have supported the project as well, primarily from donations in memory of John Lamiman. When development has been completed, this 17-acre riverside park will feature an ADA accessible covered wooden overlook, a river access, and other outdoor recreation features. The initial phases of the park development should be completed by the fall of this year.

M. Bishopric & W. Kirkpatrick

The Paw Park

Dog parks, where pets can scamper off-leash, have long been the fastest-growing segment of urban parks in the United States. These pet- and people-friendly areas are fenced in to ensure an enjoyable and safe experience. Most dog parks, unfortunately, designed by architects who don't understand a dog's nature, are typically fenced-in flat, grassy areas. However, when dogs are in natural settings, they're leaping over logs, they're climbing on rocks, and they're sniffing trees. They are stimulated by a variety of different sensations when they are in the woods.

Currently, all public area trails and parks in the Martinsville/Henry County region require dogs to be on a leash. The new Paw Park will be the first of its kind, not only in the local area, but in the entire state of Virginia. It will be a uniquely designed, fully fenced-in, wild and natural space, allowing dogs and pet parents to enjoy nature, to socialize, and to get exercise.

Presently the Paw Park is still under construction at the Smith River Sports Complex in Axton, VA. The park is expected to open to the public in early Summer, 2021. Many volunteer workdays are needed to build the accessories and clean/clear the trail during the next few months.

Be sure to sign up for the Volunteer alert on our website or the E-newsletter to learn about the upcoming work days.



Stephanie Brooks Bates cleans graffiti from the new Paw Path sign near where the new Paw Park will be located

Tiffany Haworth

Partnerships

Anna Wheeler Joins the DRBA Team!



Mark Williams came up for a visit and joined his brother Brian and friend Rob Melmer as they worked to install new signage on the Eastman Educational Boardwalk. The site can be found at the Great Road River Access in Bassett. Rob was visiting from Medicine Bow, Wyoming, and has helped with many DRBA projects in the past.



Anna Wheeler joined the DRBA team in March, 2021, having relocated to Martinsville, VA from Raleigh, NC to assist on the implementation of the Martinsville/Henry County Rivers & Trails Master Plan. She will be working from DRBA's Henry County office with Brian Williams, DRBA's Virginia Program Manager and Krista Hodges, DRBA's Education Outreach Manager. Anna is a 2020 graduate of Appalachian State University, with a degree in Biology-Ecology, Evolutionary, and Environmental Biology. She also holds a Certificate of Geographic Information Systems including Geospatial Data and Technology. Prior to DRBA she worked with Girl Scouts.

Lake Reidsville Progress

"I got my boots dirty for DRBA!" Those were the happy thoughts Melissa Mericle had after a 'field' trip from her regular daily assignments. Since joining DRBA in October last year, she's been in the Eden office behind the computer working on the financials. She makes sure our project bills are paid

and our grant money is allocated correctly. While she loves to hike and spends a lot of personal time out on the trails, it wasn't until just recently she had an opportunity to 'take one for the team' when she, Mark Bishopric, Wayne Kirkpatrick, and Sandra Meadows visited the Lake Reidsville Trail to check on the work being done there.

Seeing the results of a lot of hard work and cooperative effort come to fruition was refreshing. Hopefully there will be many more opportunities like this in the future.



Join DRBA today!

www.danriver.org

DRBA Participates in Growing Kids and Trees Program

In celebration of Earth Day 2021, DRBA is participating in the Growing Kids and Trees program through Virginia Tech and the Department of Forestry to plant over 100 trees throughout the Dan River Basin. The purpose of this project is to improve water quality by restoring forest cover to residential and stream buffer locations. Students may plant seedlings as a group or they may take seedlings home to plant with the help of a parent or youth leader. Studies show that planting, caring for, and watching a tree grow builds community involvement and a sense of stewardship for years to come.

The program is available to selected school groups throughout the basin and the trees are suitable for planting in residential areas or along a stream. They must be planted on your own property, unless you have special permission to plant them on public or private property. All trees must be planted before Earth Day, April 22.

For questions or for more information about the DRBA tree planting project, contact Krista Hodges, Education Manager at khodges@danriver.org or (434) 250-0292.

Krista Hodges



Wayne Kirkpatrick, his son, and grandchildren planted a tree for Earth Day

From the Director

In 2021, I am thrilled to celebrate a decade as the Executive Director of DRBA. Over the past 10 years, I've made new friends, discovered new places and gained quite a bit of new knowledge. I am extremely grateful to be a member of the DRBA team, working together to ensure our natural and cultural resources are protected and preserved now, and for future generations. The longer I am a DRBA member, the more I realize just how critical this organization is to the health and well-being of every single person who lives, works and plays in this region. With every day, I see more clearly the interrelationship between nature, the environment and humanity. During the Spring season I can see this connection with my own eyes as both the earth and humans emerge from winter.

Yes, we are living in a world and time of uncertainty and unrest. But we can count on Spring, we can depend on the air warming, buds emerging and grass beginning to grow. Because of your generosity and commitment to DRBA, our neighbors and families can enjoy nature on trails and on the rivers. You can trust DRBA to continue to make those special places available to everyone and keep them clean and healthy. During this past year, DRBA's contribution to the health and well-being of our citizens has been magnified, and we could not have done any of our work without you.

Please celebrate your support of DRBA, celebrate the renewal that Spring brings to us all, and I will continue to celebrate my good fortune as I start the next decade working for you to make a positive impact with DRBA. Tiffany Haworth

Springtime at the Chinqua-Penn Trail

Spring is a glorious time of year, when the Chinqua-Penn Trail in central Rockingham County, NC is at its best. Thanks to a sustainability grant from Reidsville Area Foundation and the dedicated maintenance by Friends of the Chinqua-Penn Trail, Lee Templeton, chair of the Friends, reports that the trail is in excellent condition, in spite of recent heavy rains.

As you walk the 1.6-mile loop, you will hear from the pastures the songs of Meadowlarks and Bluebirds, garbed in their brightest plumage, followed by a chorus of Spring Peepers and Bullfrogs in Betsy Pond and the nearby streams. Just across the trail from Little Niagara waterfall, tiny Spring Ephemeral wildflowers are pushing up through the blanket of last year's leaves to announce the arrival of warmer days. Trout Lilies, Bloodroot, Bluets, and Trilliums await careful observers.



Sweet Betsy Trillium

Come and walk the trail with your friends, family, and leashed, well-behaved pets. As the days go by, new beauties will emerge—Mountain Laurel, Rhododendron, Foam Flower, Blue Star, and Day Lilies—as well as dozens of birds who return to raise this year's brood. There is much to welcome you!

T Butler

Patrick County Happenings

DRBA has several ongoing efforts in Patrick County this spring. The Stuart Rotary Club is working most weekends on developing trails on the Rotary Field property. To date, about 1.1 miles have been roughed in, consisting of four interconnecting loops. Plans are to work toward about 3 miles total over time. Ticks, bees, and snakes will soon slow the work until autumn.

April is designated as "Pick-up Patrick County" month to encourage residents to police their neighborhoods of litter along the roadways. It is a well-supported project, but at the same time it is sad that this litter issue seems an endless battle.

Patrick County now has a Tourism Visitors' Center located in up-town Stuart. Our Tourism staff, Sandra Belcher and Sarah Sheppard, welcome all to stop by and learn more about the county. The scenery, the vistas, the history, and the friendly people are attractions Patrick County shares with all who visit.



DeHart Botanical Gardens is a steep, wooded property alive with spring wildflowers that boasts six miles of strenuous trail loops. Former owner, Allen Dehart, deeded the property to Ferrum College as an outdoor classroom. Unfortunately, the property is currently closed to the public due to a Virginia Department of Transportation Route 58 widening project begun last month. Prior to the road work, the trails were being rehabbed by volunteers from Ferrum, Patrick County, and hiking enthusiasts from across the region. About three miles had been worked on when an ice storm created havoc by downing limbs and trees. Plans are to continue clearing the trails of downed limbs and improving the tread. Ferrum and Patrick County Tourism plan to open the trail to the public when both trail and road conditions improve. If you would like to volunteer with this project, please contact the Wayne Kirkpatrick at 540.570.3511.

Wayne Kirkpatrick



One more thing...



We hope you have enjoyed this edition of

CURRENTS

While hard copy is generally reserved for foundations and members of the *River Legacy Circle*, this issue has been made available to all members, donors and partners as a thank you for your continued support though a most difficult year.

Find out how you can continue to help by your membership, your gifts or your volunteer spirit by visiting

www.danriver.org

A digital copy of each issue can be found online. Be sure you get the latest news by logging onto the *Members Only* page each quarter.

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depending on schools and COVID restrictions. Twenty new volunteers are participating in Citizen Water Quality Monitoring.

Sandra Meadows, the new Rockingham County Program Manager, reported DRBA has received a three-year grant to develop a recreational plan called Beyond Pathways.

Melissa Mericle, the new Office and Accounting Manager since October 1, has organized the office in Eden, updated the filing system, and created a master list for donations.

Tiffany Haworth, Executive Director, commented on the success of the newly formed Eco Ambassador Council. Carryover projects include the Mayo River State Park Master Plan, the Settles Bridge Renovations Project in Madison, Lunch with DRBA webinars, the Lotus Float, the Art in Nature Auction, and continued river cleanups in which 400 volunteers had participated.

Vice President Wayne Kirkpatrick announced the officers for 2021: President Sonya Wolen, Vice President Wayne Kirkpatrick, Secretary Margaret Petty, and Treasurer Shawn Gorman. Two new board members were nominated and approved: Valencia Ann Abbott—Social Studies Department Chair at Rockingham Early College High School and Jessica Driver—an inspector with the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Ser-

vices. The Board now has fifteen members.

Treasurer Shawn Gorman reported a trend which is expected to continue for the next year or so: Income and expenses would fluctuate with more cash assets equally divided between restricted and unrestricted funds. He praised the Staff for keeping projects going through the abnormal year.

VP Wayne Kirkpatrick announced the following: **COMMUNITY PARTNER AWARD**—Albert Harris Elementary School for its butterfly garden; **CORPORATE PARTNER AWARD**—to the founding members of the ECO Ambassador Council--Blair Construction Company, Carter Bank and Trust, Clark Gas and Oil, Frith Construction, Jones and DeShon Orthodontics, Hooker Furniture Company, and the Lester Company; **SERVICE TO DRBA AWARD**—Kelley Neiderhiser for her help with many projects including river cleanups; **VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR AWARD**—Mark Bishopric for moving DRBA's mission forward since 2002 as a board member and valuable volunteer all across the Basin; and a **TEN YEAR SERVICE AWARD**—Tiffany Haworth, Executive Director, for her tireless devotion to DRBA's mission.

The meeting concluded with Brian Williams who led a virtual tour of the new Spencer Penn Trail.

Margaret Petty

Membership December 16, 2020 -- March 15, 2021

River Legacy Circle

Jennifer Ayers
Dr. Mervyn and Virginia King
George and Lee Lester

Protector Membership

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Nancy S. Garner
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Steve Shelton
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Individual Membership

Alice and Lee Dodson
Lillian Holland
Barb Edlen
Robert Morris

Hazel Puckett
Anne Rexrode
Terry Shipwash
Mike & Ginny Wray

Donations 12/16/2020 - 3/15/2021

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Mike and Jane Haines
Martha and Dwight Hopkins
Gail Howland
Katie Whitehead and Robert McNutt
Christine Marze
Hazel Puckett
Alan Raflo
Anne Rexrode
Ronald Stanfield
Brian and Patricia Williams
Marion Wolen

Corporate & Organization Donations

AmazonSmile
Blackbaud Giving Fund
Kroger Customer Program

Lake Lanier Association
Network for Good
Williamsburg Elementary School

Chinqua Penn Trail Donations

Dorothy B. Love

Eco Ambassador Council Founding Member Donations

Blair Construction, Inc.
Clark Gas & Oil Co., Inc.
Frith Construction
Hooker Furniture
The Lester Group

Donations for Jacob's Creek Batteau Landing Park

Three Rivers Outfitters, LLC

Donations for Clearwater Park

Mark Bishopric



THE DAN RIVER BASIN

First Saturday Outings*

- April 3: Hike at Knight-Brown Nature Preserve
May 1: Paddle Mayo Lake in Person County
June 5: Paddle Philpott Lake

*All events are subject to change due to inclement weather or government guidelines. Please check with the Dan River Basin Association website or the trip coordinator before leaving home for any event.

www.danriver.org

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