

CURRENTS

www.danriver.org | Vol. 26 | Issue 2 | 2026



Recreation • Education • Stewardship



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Cover photo

Volunteers at Monarch Waystation at Bike Barn YMCA
Dick & Willie Trailhead, 815 Fisher St, Martinsville, VA

From the Director

Tiffany Haworth, Executive Director

As the days grow longer and many of us spend more time outdoors, summer offers the perfect opportunity to reconnect with the wild and natural spaces that make the Dan River basin such a special place. Whether you're paddling, hiking, fishing or simply enjoying the beauty of our region, we hope you'll take time to explore all that our watershed has to offer.



None of the work we do would be possible without the dedication of our volunteers and the generosity of our donors and I want to make a point of saying THANK YOU for supporting our work. I hope you had an opportunity to join in on the fun during our Soaring Together Summer Campaign and we appreciate your generosity in helping to continue this work that benefits every person who lives, works and plays in our beautiful and unique region.

**On behalf of everyone at DRBA,
we wish you a safe and memorable summer!**



Need help planning your next outdoor adventure? You can find a new place to explore on our Interactive Map at danriver.org.



Summer is also when we remind everyone that safety is always our top priority. Before heading outdoors, I encourage you to visit our Be Safe Outdoors webpage for helpful tips on staying safe while enjoying your outdoor adventures

Soaring Together This Summer

DRBA launched its *Soaring Together* Summer Campaign celebrating the strength, resilience and beauty of the Dan River basin through one of its most iconic symbols, the bald eagle. Once nearly lost from our landscape, the eagle's story is an example of what we can accomplish together through conservation and dedicated stewardship and is the perfect symbol for DRBA's *Soaring Together* Summer Campaign.

Eagles depend on clean rivers, abundant fish populations and protected forests to thrive. Their return to the Dan River watershed after decades of decline reflects the success of conservation efforts and the importance of safeguarding our natural resources. Its story is also a reminder that conservation success is never permanent. The eagle's recovery shows what can happen when communities invest in protecting clean water and healthy habitats, but it also shows that these gains are fragile.

There is always more work to do to safeguard our watershed so that bald eagles and the people and wildlife who depend on these rivers and streams can continue to thrive for generations to come.



Throughout the summer, we're hoping everyone will take the opportunity to support DRBA's mission while showing your love for the basin by donating and getting yourself some limited-edition eagle-themed apparel and merchandise. Every purchase and donation during the campaign helps fund clean water initiatives and conservation efforts across the watershed.

Watch your email, follow us on social media and visit our website throughout the summer months for inspiring stories, special updates, event notices, tips for staying safe and ways to get involved.

Together, we can continue to ensure the Dan River basin remains a place where we all can soar for generations to come.



Keith Elliot, DRBA's NC Recreation Assistant, was able to photograph these two eagle watching over Egglestons Falls in Ridgeway, VA and this other soaring above the Smith River.

DRBA Professional Development Training

Early this summer, teachers from all over the Dan River basin participated in DRBA's Professional Development Training focused on "Stream Science, Human Impacts, and Community Connection." The teachers engaged in learning activities designed to bring environmental science concepts into the classroom. The training helped educators connect ecology, waterways, and conservation efforts to real-world examples from the Dan River watershed.

Teachers also learned about a meaningful watershed educational experience (MWEE) and the components needed to provide this impactful educational opportunity to their students. A MWEE in Virginia is a multi-step, investigative framework that immerses students in local environmental issues.

During the training, teachers learned about local fauna including black bears and coyotes, participated in leaf pack investigations examining aquatic insects that inhabit Hale Creek within the park, and water quality testing utilizing handheld technology.

The final stewardship focused activity was the construction of a "litter logperch," a trash trap designed to collect floating debris and plastic litter in creeks and rivers. Built using PVC pipe for the frame and pool noodles for flotation, it directs water through a mesh net that captures garbage and can help track pollution types while reducing the amount of litter flowing downstream.



Summer Adventures? Safety is Key!

Many of us have probably had a moment when we were exploring the outdoors that made us say, “Phew, that was close.” You were probably able to draw on all of your experiences, teachers and lessons that helped you know what to do in a challenging situation. But what about if you haven’t had those experiences while on the water? DRBA hosts paddle safety classes throughout our region so everyone can learn to safely and confidently paddle the region’s waterways.

Let us introduce you to Stacy, who joined us for a few classes last summer. She was nervous about what to do in an emergency and how to know her limit when paddling in a group or with friends. She learned about general water safety, weather and general water safety, what are classes of rivers, where to find information on water recreation throughout the region and who to contact for emergencies. Armed with this knowledge now, she is able to understand her limits on the water as she moves around with new paddle groups or jets out with friends on a lake paddle.



Now, Stacy has bought her own boat from GetOutdoors in Greensboro and invited over 10 of her friends to register for DRBA’s Safety Paddle Classes. We have also spotted Stacy at DRBA’s First Saturday Outings! This is what makes DRBA special; we meet people where they’re at so they can have a great, safe time having outdoor adventures. We are grateful to the NC Recreational Trails Program, Duke Energy Foundation and the Eco Ambassador Council who have funded these critical safety classes.

This is DRBA’s third year hosting paddle safety classes in North Carolina and our first in Virginia. Our first year of classes in Virginia have been well-received and we are looking forward to the future of this program. We are also grateful to our licensed and certified instructors and for those who have offered us the space to host our classes over the years including Outdoor Women by Jo, GetOutdoors, Fairy Stone State Park and Danville Parks & Recreation.



Jacob's Creek Batteau Landing River Access Site

Preserving History and Expanding Access in the Dan River Basin Region



Ribbon Cutting at Jacob's Creek Batteau Landing June 11, 2026

Some places tell the story of a community, and Jacobs Creek Batteau Landing is one of them. Located along the Dan River near Madison, North Carolina, the site is both a gateway to outdoor recreation and a window into the region's rich history. Long before railroads connected communities, the Dan River served as an important transportation corridor. Large flat-bottomed boats known as bateaux carried tobacco, grain, and other goods along the river, linking settlements throughout the Piedmont. Much of this demanding work was performed by enslaved African Americans, whose labor was essential to the region's economy but whose stories are too often overlooked.

The landing itself is part of the historic Alexander Martin plantation, a property listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Martin served as North Carolina governor, represented the state at the Constitutional Convention, and later became a U.S. senator. Together, the property's cultural history and the surviving batteau landing make this one of the Dan River's most significant historic landscapes.

Recognizing both its recreational and historical value, local partners began working to protect the property after public input identified the need for additional river access in the Madison area. The land was acquired through grant funding, followed by a Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) grant with matching support from the Rockingham County Friends (Quakers) in memory of John Lamiman. Along the way, the project overcame unexpected challenges, including plans for a nearby industrial water intake, rising construction costs during the COVID-19 pandemic, and significant budget shortfalls. Although the initial improvements provided public access to the river, some planned features had to be postponed. Then, in January 2024, record winter flooding dramatically reshaped the riverbank. Severe erosion damaged the existing trail and undermined the staircase leading to the river, making access even more difficult. While the flood created new challenges, it also underscored the importance of building resilient river access and preserving this historic site for future generations.

With the Dan River's designation as a North Carolina State Trail, new opportunities became available through the Complete the Trail Fund. In partnership with Rockingham County, Visit Rockingham County, Kris Bass Engineering, Backwater Environmental, and many dedicated supporters, the Dan River Basin Association secured funding to rebuild the access with improved durability, accessibility, and flood resilience. The project represents the power of collaboration among nonprofits, local government, engineers, volunteers, and community partners who all share a vision of connecting people to the Dan River.

The work at Jacobs Creek Batteau Landing is far from finished. This fall, trail expansions and a native pollinator garden will further enhance the park through a partnership with Piedmont Conservation Council. As these improvements continue, Jacobs Creek Batteau Landing will remain a place where visitors can experience the natural beauty of the Dan River while reflecting on the history that shaped the region—ensuring that both the river and its stories continue to be shared for generations to come.



Boat Launch Location at Jacob's Creek Batteau Landing

Monarch Waystations = Healthy Waterways

DRBA celebrates 13 certified Monarch Waystations in the Dan River basin.

As of 2026, we have assisted in the installation of thirteen certified Monarch Waystations at various schools and parks in the basin region. These gardens provide critical habitat for monarch butterflies by supplying native milkweed for caterpillars and a diverse selection of nectar plants for adult butterflies throughout the growing season while also supporting other pollinators. While their colorful blooms often capture public attention first, Monarch Waystations are much more than attractive gardens—they are an investment in healthier ecosystems, stronger communities, and a more resilient watershed.

A certified Monarch Waystation should meet guidelines made by *Monarch Watch*, a nonprofit based at the University of Kansas, who started the Monarch Waystation program in 2005. These guidelines include having at least 10 milkweed plants of two or more species and a diverse selection of nectar plants. Their presence can support healthy and diverse aquatic plant communities that can stabilize banks, provide shade, and support other insect populations. Not only does this space support pollinators, it is a sustainable and practical addition to an empty space. Monarch Waystations composed of native plants typically do not need as much maintenance as they are better adept to the local climate, meaning less watering and less fertilizing. In addition, with deeper roots, the plants can help the ground maintain a higher level of moisture, reducing chances of flooding and stormwater runoff. Rainwater is better filtered into the ground as groundwater, which results in less money spent on maintenance.

As our ever-changing weather conditions continue to trigger inconsistent rainfall levels and warmer conditions, threats to our waterways and pollinators continue to increase. Pollinators, including butterflies, bees, hummingbirds and even some small mammals, are crucial to food webs and local water ecosystems. Pollinators play an essential role in maintaining healthy ecosystems and food supplies, yet many people never have the opportunity to see that impact up close. These gardens are much more than beautiful landscapes, they are a place for connection. A Monarch Waystation is a commitment to environmental health and education and we can't have healthy rivers without healthy landscapes and pollinators are a critical part of that equation.

These spaces also provide the opportunity to enhance outdoor education spaces. DRBA's Monarch Waystations allow students to observe those connections firsthand while learning the value of environmental stewardship and community involvement. Waystations provide students with opportunities to observe monarch butterflies and other pollinators, participate in habitat maintenance, collect data, and explore environmental science concepts through hands-on learning experiences. Teachers can incorporate the garden into classroom instruction, allowing students to connect lessons in biology, ecology, conservation and environmental stewardship to real-world applications.



Certified Monarch Waystation at Bassett High School



Want to learn more? Visit monarchwatch.org

DRBA's River Legacy Circle Gets Inside Look

Donors get behind-the-scenes look at Henry County water treatment facility



The River Legacy Circle is a group of leadership donors whose generous support of \$1,000 or more annually helps sustain our recreation, education and stewardship programs throughout the Dan River basin. In appreciation of their commitment, members are invited to enjoy experiences that aren't typically open to the public and offer unique access to the region's natural, cultural and community resources while connecting with fellow supporters who share a passion for protecting our waterways.

The River Legacy Circle was recently invited to a special behind-the-scenes tour of the Henry County Public Service Authority's water treatment facility where they learned firsthand how our local rivers and streams become the clean, safe drinking water that serves our communities every day.

The private tour provided an in-depth look at each step of the treatment process, from the intake of raw water to the final product delivered to homes and businesses. Along the way, they gained a greater appreciation for the science, technology and dedicated professionals who work around the clock to ensure a reliable supply of high-quality drinking water.

A special thank you to Mike Ward, the Director of Regulatory Compliance & Technical Applications for the Henry County Public Service Authority and his outstanding staff for hosting the River Legacy Circle. Their willingness to answer questions and share their expertise made for a memorable and educational experience.

Following the tour, the group gathered at Papa's Pizza in Bassett, VA to share a meal together. There was a lot of reflection about what they had learned and the important connection between clean rivers and clean drinking water, inspiring everyone to continue their commitment to protecting the Dan River basin and promoting a healthier environment for future generations.

Opportunities like this are one of the many ways we thank our River Legacy Circle for their generous commitment to DRBA's mission. This group of generous supporters give a donation of \$1,000 annually to DRBA. Their leadership support helps protect the Dan River basin and ensures clean water remains one of our region's most valuable resources.



We're already planning our next River Legacy Circle event! If you are interested in joining the River Legacy Circle, please reach out to Tiffany, DRBA's Executive Director at thaworth@danriver.org.

We All Live Downstream Project Completed

Martinsville teachers provide a meaningful watershed education experience to their students.



This year, DRBA completed the We All Live Downstream project generously funded by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation to provide fifth grade students at Albert Harris Elementary and Patrick Henry Elementary in Martinsville City with a meaningful watershed educational experience. The We All Live Downstream project started last August with fifth grade teachers from the schools attending a professional development training to learn about the components of a meaningful watershed educational experience (MWEE) and how to implement it in their classroom with the assistance of DRBA as a community partner. The primary goal of the We All Live Downstream project was to provide all fifth-grade students in Martinsville City Public Elementary Schools with a MWEE before they entered middle school.

Over the school year, teachers worked with DRBA to implement their pre-designed MWEE curriculum plan that aligned with Virginia Standards of Learning (SOLs) while also integrating watershed focused hands-on activities in the classroom. Patrick Henry Elementary's driving question focused on litter and how it affected their community. With this focus, students designed mini watershed models while learning about the impact of point and non-point source pollution on our waterways.



At one of their field trips to the Beaver Creek Reservoir, the source of their drinking water for Martinsville City, Patrick Henry students completed a litter cleanup and also tested the water quality of the reservoir. They then compared the litter collection data to a park beside their school where they also picked up litter, determining that the litter was different at the locations but both types ended up in our waterways through stormwater runoff.



Albert Harris Elementary focused on determining the health of the water quality of the Smith River while they raised trout in their STEM classroom. Students tested and monitored the water quality of their trout tank over six months, ensuring healthy trout to release in the river. At their trout release, students compared the water quality of the Smith River to their trout tank and concluded that it was a healthy waterway for survival of their trout.

The experience provided a meaningful learning opportunity that connected students to their local community in the Dan River basin. Additionally, it also helped with reviewing science guidelines to help them be more confident students and better test-takers.

Finally, the MWEE plan was evaluated and will now be built into the pacing schedule for the fifth grade teachers annually, with full support from school administration. The Dan River Basin Association is proud to help create students that are academically successful, responsible citizens, and contributors to healthy, bountiful, and enduring waterways.



DRBA Concludes *Inspire Clean Water with Green Leaves* Environmental Initiative

This summer, DRBA proudly concluded the *Inspire Clean Water with Green Leaves* project in Franklin County, funded by the Virginia Environmental Endowment (VEE). This two year project provided elementary students with green leaves investigations that aligned with the science curriculum framework of the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOLs). Within the scientific framework, the green leaves components state that all students need to complete a hands-on investigation alongside their textbook learning.

The project's goal was to certify all Franklin County elementary schools as Virginia Naturally schools with the VA Department of Wildlife Resources, with DRBA as a community partner. Virginia Naturally Schools is the state's official environmental education recognition program, acknowledged by the Virginia Board of Education. This program recognizes the wonderful efforts of many Virginia schools to increase the environmental literacy of our youngest citizens. Fourth graders participated in the Streamside Trees in the Classroom program, nurturing black willow trees for planting at Philpott Lake. Fourth and fifth graders also engaged in campus investigations, monitoring Eastern Bluebird nest boxes and collecting weather data through The Community Collaborative Rain, Hail, and Snow Network (CoCoRaHS). As of June 2026, nine elementary schools in Franklin County are certified as Virginia Naturally schools.



DRBA Office and Finance Manager attends Value of a View Roundtable



Melissa Mericle attended the inaugural Value of a View Roundtable hosted by Scenic Virginia at James Madison's Montpelier in Montpelier, Virginia.

Scenic Virginia believes that beauty is good for business and essential for the soul, and our scenic assets are essential to the cultural and economic health of the Commonwealth of Virginia. With all the threats to our natural landscapes, including data centers, pipelines, highway projects, industrial construction, and many others, Scenic Virginia is trying to find ways to protect our most precious natural views and vistas.

At the conference, they introduced the Virginia Scenic Registry. The idea of the registry is to find a way to protect the scenic landscapes that define

Virginia's communities, heritage, and sense of place. Discussion centered around the challenges and opportunities ahead as we work to identify, document, and protect Virginia's treasured views. Scenic Virginia wants to gain public input on these treasured views and vistas through public nominations. Since there are so many threats to our natural areas today, this registry is one way Scenic Virginia can try to save them. If these places are documented and placed on a registry as valuable assets to Virginia, then they will be considered in planning decisions moving forward. After learning about the registry, DRBA as an organization decided to nominate some of the most treasured views in the Dan River basin. Since the Dan River runs through 8 counties in Virginia, DRBA nominated 8 views, one in each of the counties we serve. The nomination period was May 15th – June 30th. Visit Scenic Virginia's website at scenicvirginia.org to learn more about this initiative and see photographs of the views that have been nominated.

DRBA Introductions

There's **2 new staff members** we want you to meet!



Leeah Sutton
Recreation & Stewardship Coordinator

We are thrilled to welcome Leeah Sutton as the first Recreation & Stewardship Coordinator! A native of rural East Tennessee, Leeah's path into conservation started with a stormwater internship with the City of Kingsport, surveying impaired creeks by foot and by kayak to assess stream health, riparian buffers, and pollution sources. Her focus will be on expanding outdoor recreation opportunities and stewardship efforts across the Dan River basin, with a primary focus in Henry County, VA. "This position felt like the kind of work I've been praying for and being able to do it somewhere I'm already putting down roots made it an easy yes. I'm looking forward to building my own relationships with members of the community and contributing to a mission that I care deeply about." Outside of work, Leeah enjoys whitewater kayaking and exploring new places whenever she can.



Martina Brady
Education Coordinator

We also want you to meet the new Education Coordinator, Martina Brady! Martina joined the DRBA team in early July as Education Coordinator and will be working closely with Krista Hodges, DRBA's Director of Environmental Education. She's bringing a passion for science, wildlife and the great outdoors to DRBA, plus an impressive résumé that includes everything from biotechnology and environmental labs to rehabilitating native wildlife. When she's not helping provide DRBA's environmental education programs, you'll likely find her with horses, underwater as a PADI-certified diver, or looking for her next outdoor adventure. We are so excited she's joined the DRBA team and be sure to say hello when you see her out in the watershed!

Feature Creature

Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*)

The Bald Eagle is North America's largest bird of prey and has served as the national symbol of the United States since 1782. Once pushed to the brink of extinction by habitat loss, illegal hunting, and the widespread use of DDT, bald eagle populations have made a remarkable recovery thanks to decades of conservation efforts and stronger environmental protections. They rely on healthy rivers, lakes, and mature forests for nesting and hunting, making them an important indicator of a healthy watershed. In Virginia, bald eagles can be seen year-round along rivers and reservoirs, including Philpott Lake and the Smith River. While their recovery is one of America's greatest conservation success stories, new challenges continue to emerge, including lead toxicosis from ammunition fragments left in animal carcasses. Just like the rest of our conservation work here in the basin, protecting wildlife is not a sprint, but a marathon. As new challenges arise, we must continue to care for and protect our beautiful region and the incredible creatures that call it home.



How can you help Bald Eagles and other birds of prey?

- Use alternatives for lead bullets such as copper or steel bullets.
- Educate others about the issues with lead bullets and how they can help.

Educators Corner

Learn something new and take it into your classroom, home, or next outdoor adventure

In the wintertime, food sources are not as readily available to birds as they are in warmer times of the year. The plants and/or insects they consume are mostly dormant or overwintering and are often covered in ice and snow. Native birds can typically find enough to make it through the winter, but with continual habitat loss and increasing competition, these feathered friends could use a boost!

This boost could come from planting native plants with winter berries and cover, having a warm bird bath with water, or putting out food for them.

But what if you didn't just put food out for the birds, what if you crafted your own bird feeder?

Why make DIY bird feeders?

Crafting your own bird feeder helps teach environmental stewardship and utilize eco-friendly practices. Crafting something for animals helps connect to wildlife and conservation. Participating in eco-friendly activities demonstrates resourcefulness and innovation for the future. By using items already in your house, you are repurposing items that would otherwise end up in the landfill and you are saving money on items you would have purchased to complete the bird feeder. Depending on the feeder you make, it can also be compostable - extending the feeders use after the birds.

Crafting a bird feeder also reduces risks of disease for your neighborhood birds. Typical bird feeders can transmit diseases because they hold a lot of bird seed that sits around and collects bacteria. So, building a Do-It-Yourself bird feeder means it will be smaller than traditional bird feeders, so there is less time for bacterial growth.

Remember that feeding birds is a responsibility and it is important to avoid feeding birds any food formulated for other animals and to **AVOID** harmful ingredients such as:

- bread
- rice
- crackers
- coconut pieces
- coconut oil
- honey
- chocolate
- coffee beans
- animal fat
- artificial food coloring
- raw dried beans
- salt



Make your own bird feeder!

Check out these low-cost feeders that use biodegradable or recycled materials and are fun projects for people of all ages, families and classrooms!

*Adapted from “Four Do-It-Yourself Birdfeeders” by Michele Berger, published by the National Audubon Society in Audubon Magazine.

To view the original article, scan the QR code.



Citrus Cup Feeder



A hollowed citrus peel becomes a small hanging seed cup.

Materials:

- Grapefruit, orange, or similar citrus fruit
- Spoon
- String or twine
- Birdseed

Steps:

- Cut the fruit in half and carefully scoop out the inside, leaving the peel intact.
- Poke three evenly spaced holes just below the rim.
- Thread string through each hole and knot it securely on the outside.
- Tie the strings together at the top to create a hanger.
- Fill the peel with birdseed and hang it from a sturdy tree branch.

Pinecone Feeder



A classic feeder perfect for attracting seed-eating birds.

Materials:

- Large pinecone
- Peanut butter (or seed butter alternative)
- Birdseed
- String or yarn

Steps:

- Tie a length of string securely around the top of the pinecone.
- Spread peanut butter into the crevices of the cone.
- Roll the coated pinecone in birdseed until well covered.
- Hang it from a sturdy branch.

Recycled Carton Feeder



Clean milk or juice cartons can be repurposed into a simple seed feeder.

Materials:

- Empty milk or juice carton (washed and dried)
- Scissors
- String
- Birdseed
- Crayons (optional for decorating)

Steps:

- Once the carton is dry, cut one or two window openings on opposite sides, leaving space at the bottom to hold seed. (Use the flaps for landing pads or use sticks to create perches.)
- (Optional) Decorate the exterior using crayons
- Poke a hole near the top and thread string through it, tying a secure knot.
- Add birdseed to the base of the carton.
- Hang it from a sturdy tree branch.

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1/1/2026 - 5/31/2026

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Thank you!

To support DRBA,
scan the QR code.



Nonprofit Giveaway at DRBA Headquarters



DRBA's main office has been located in the Spray Mercantile Building in Eden, NC. since 2007. Over the years, we've accumulated a lot of supplies to do our work. Melissa and Alice took on the job of inventorying these items and cleaning up our storage areas in the building. They found many items that were still in good shape, but we just didn't use them anymore. Because of our mission, we try to reuse, repurpose and recycle as much as possible. We didn't want these items to continue to sit around in our supply room or go to the landfill, so, we thought of our local partners. Maybe someone else could reuse these items and they could find a new home.

We set a date for a Nonprofit Giveaway, sent flyers to our local nonprofit partners and began organizing all of the items. The only thing we asked them to do in order to receive these items was to bring some type of swag to show off the name of their nonprofit such as a t-shirt, a hat or a name badge.

On Friday, July 10th, several local nonprofits stopped by to choose the goodies they wanted to take home with them. Melissa and Alice helped them load their gathered treasures and took a picture with them in their swag to share on social media. Most of the items found new homes that day. And those items that were left, were donated to a local charity thrift store.



Check out the Director of Environmental Education's Mussel Adventure!

Krista Hodges participated in a Mussel Power workshop with the James River Association (JRA) in Lynchburg. During this workshop, participants paddled the James River, located mussel shoals, dissected mussels, and discussed how mussels can be incorporated into school classrooms.

Thanks to Matt with JRA for hosting the workshop. Organizations sharing knowledge like this only helps to strengthen our collective watersheds in Virginia and North Carolina.



THANK YOU FOR BEING A FRIEND OF DRBA!

Dan River Basin Association

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Eden, NC 27289



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anywhere, anytime.

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