

DANRIVER.ORG

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CURRENTS

The Newsletter of the Dan River Basin Association

DAN RIVER SOJOURN 2011
REMEMBERING ALSION SNOW JONES
"FRACKING"
LOCAL FOODS
HAPPENINGS IN PATRICK COUNTY

DAN RIVER BASIN



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Meetings of the DRBA Board of Directors
are held on the second Wednesday of
February, May, August and November.

The next meeting will be held
May 11, 2011, 5 p.m. at Eden City Hall.

CURRENTS

Staff

Editor: T Butler
Design, layout: David Pinney



On the cover: Pinxter azalea on the
Smith River at Gravely Nature Preserve.
-photograph by Brian Williams

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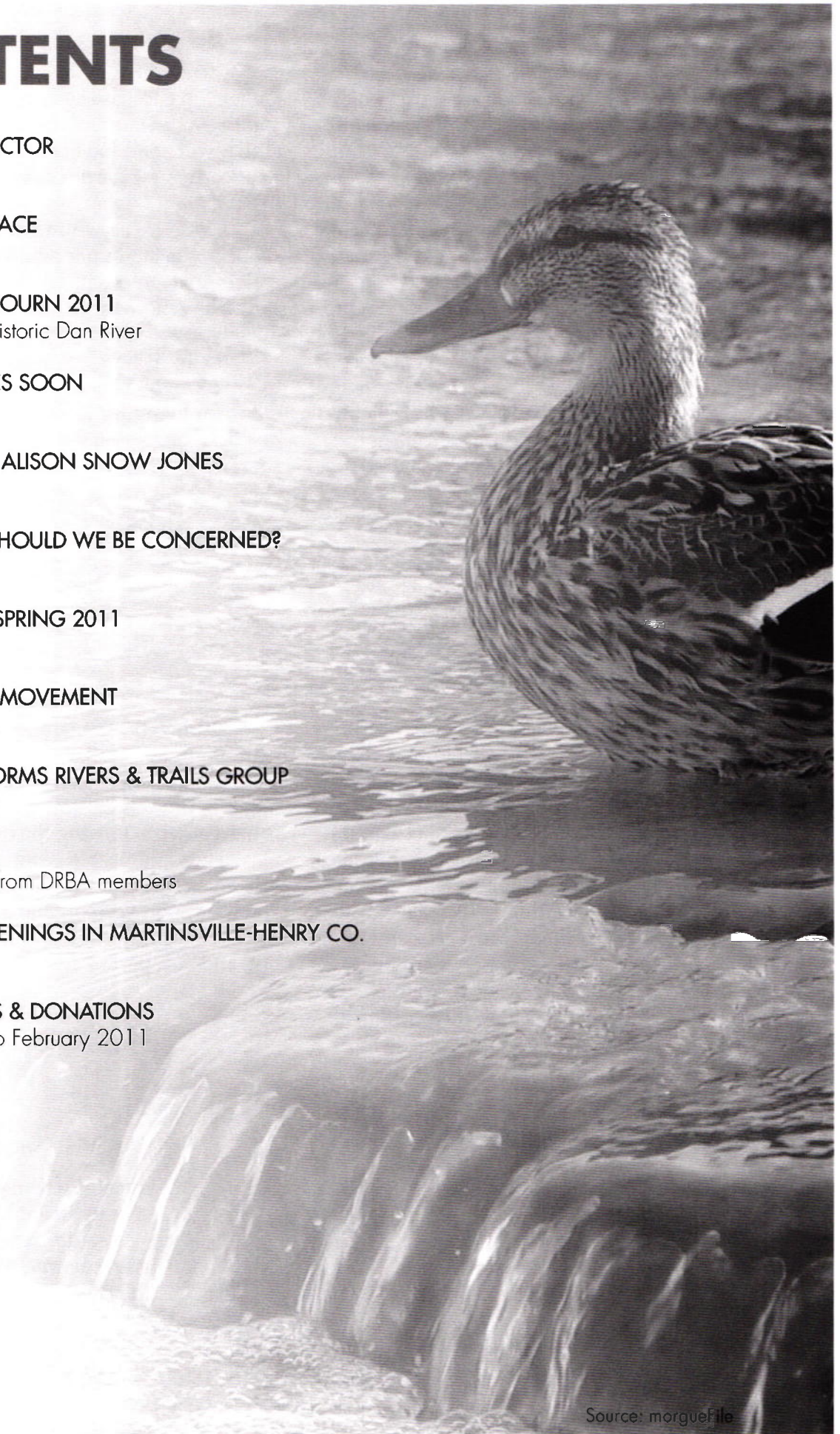
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December 2010 to February 2011



FROM THE DIRECTOR



Just outside my office window of Spray Mercantile Building in Eden, the Smith River is really stepping out. The sun is hitting it at an angle that casts a thousand lights off the rapidly moving water – on its way to Albemarle Sound, the waters my parents

wrenched a livelihood from as fishers and crabbers in the 1960s. The irony is not lost on me that after many years of wandering far from that place, I have landed here, with DRBA, with a mission to protect the very headwaters of my childhood. It feels like amends for abandoning that landscape for the arid West, seeking the excitement of other places.

As the earth tilts now, toward the sun and spring in our hemisphere, the river out my window will have

longer days to cast back its light, both mesmerizing and urging me, urging us, to press on with our work. DRBA will soon have a new Executive Director who will lead us forward. Change. We of the river know this reality.

But even as we move on, our terra firma, the shape of the land upon which we stand, is made from waters that preceded us; a reminder that we are all stewards who leave a permanent mark even as we, ourselves, are temporary.

So this is both a personal and heartfelt good-bye to my former boss and eternal friend, Katherine Mull, who is moving on to other rivers. And a greeting to our next leader, who is coming, just now out of sight somewhere upriver.

– Jenny Edwards

PRESIDENT'S SPACE



The season is slowly turning toward warmer and longer days, and April finds DRBA back on the river!

The Personnel Committee is evaluating candidates to fill the Executive Director position, with several excellent prospects emerging from the pool of applicants.

The position is open until filled, but it is anticipated that the top candidate will be identified within the next few weeks.

During the transition, I deeply appreciate the extra efforts of DRBA's staff. Brian, Jenny, Chad and Dale have all taken on additional work to keep the ongoing projects on time and on budget. Team DRBA is hard at work moving the organization forward.

Throughout this issue of Currents you will find upcoming opportunities to participate in great events and to support your organization with time, effort and direct contributions. I challenge you to step up, step out, and be a part of Team DRBA!

–Wayne Kirkpatrick

2011 Dan River Sojourn

Be part of the journey, the inaugural Dan River Sojourn 2011! Join us May 20 - 22 for two days of paddling, two nights of camping with good friends, great stories, fantastic history and 22 miles of the beautiful Dan River!

Come for a day, come for a weekend. Great food, great programs, and great



Dan River Sojourn 2011

a passage through time

music each night. If you can't paddle, sign up to join us at the river for dinner!

Additional information is online at www.danriversojourn.com. Limited to the first 100 registrants! Don't delay! Do it today!

FEATURES

Trout Releases Soon

Recently the DRBA watershed education presentation and Tub o' Bugs visited 19 Henry County schools, working with over 1500 students in the Trout in the Classroom (TIC) program. Additional schools are scheduled, and all TIC classrooms should experience the DRBA presentation before the trout releases begin near the end of the school year.

The trout fingerlings are growing well and have the Dan or Smith River in their near future. Students will say good bye to their trout and take a stream walk with Brian Williams to reinforce the DRBA classroom watershed education presentation.

All are welcome to attend the TIC releases, and volunteers are needed to assist. Please contact: **Wayne Kirkpatrick** at wynbtyk@embarqmail.com or **Brian Williams** at bwilliams@danriver.org for information and schedules.

– Wayne Kirkpatrick



photos Wayne Kirkpatrick

Remembering Alison Snow Jones



In January DRBA lost a dear friend, a past board member, and a dedicated supporter of our work on behalf of the Dan River region. Alison Snow Jones was

always available to advise, assist or provide resources. The following is her obituary, provided by her husband David Pinney.

“Alison Snow Jones, 61, died of an apparent heart attack at home on January 17, 2011. Dr. Jones was an Associate Professor in the Department of Health Management & Policy at the Drexel University School of Public Health. An economist, she conducted research concerning alcohol use and health, and directed joint programs between the Schools of Business and Public Health at Drexel.

Dr. Jones received a Ph.D. in Health Economics from The Johns Hopkins School of Hygiene & Public Health (now the Bloomberg School of Public Health) in 1991. Before joining Drexel in 2009, she served on the faculties of Wake Forest School of Medicine and of Johns Hopkins.

She wrote the blog “Maxine Udall (Girl Economist)” where devoted readers sparked lively debates in the comments section. In response to the blog post about the author’s passing, one reader said “There are so few people who combine a deep appreciation of the power of commerce with moral indignation at its excesses. Taken in combination with her energy and deep academic knowledge, I think she was, regrettably, unique.”

According to Dr. Jones’s husband David Pinney, “Alison’s deepest hope was to challenge people to think in new ways about our society and how we live, and to bring her

see *Alison* page 6

Alison from page 5

unique viewpoint to as many people as she could."

A native of Indiana, PA, Dr. Jones graduated from York (PA) Central High School in 1966 and from Millersville University. She was known for her passionate love of kayaking, the American West, and cooking, and was thrilled to be back in her native state after many years away.

In addition to her husband, survivors include her father Elias Jones, her sister Meredith Frost, brother Michael Jones, and nephews Cristian and Carlos Frost. A memorial service was held March 5th, 2011 in Media, PA.

Memorial contributions may be made to FaithTrust Institute, in memory of Alison S. Jones, 2400 N. 45th Street, Suite 101, Seattle, WA 98103, or to the Alison Snow Jones Memorial Fund at Drexel University, by calling Ray Slater, Director of Development at the School of Public Health, at (215) 762-8437. "

Many friends and fellow paddlers remember Alison for her love of our rivers, particularly the Dan River in Stokes County. There is no better way to express this loss than in Alison's own words, a poem she wrote about a death of a friend after paddling the Dan River. This poem was published in the Monacacy Canoe Club's Smoke Signal newsletter.

Alison's article in that same newsletter included these thoughts about the death of her friend, words for all of us to remember:

"Fracking": Should We Be Concerned?

Natural gas produces only half as much carbon dioxide as coal and one-third less than oil, making it the best available fossil fuel today. According to the Environmental Defense Fund, "By some estimates, there's enough natural gas trapped in deep shale deposits in the U.S. to power the country for 100 years."

The Marcellus Shale, the largest gas reserve in the country, lies beneath New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and West Virginia. Gas shale basins are also found under 14 North Carolina counties, including

For Earl Hamby, January 1, 2006

Maybe paddling down a quiet river
In the faint warmth of winter sun,
The easy banter of old friends,
Brings us too close to that golden place
Where angels dwell and we forget,
For a moment, the bonds that hold us here.

Perhaps some portion of our soul lingers in golden light
Even as our mundane feet climb the banks of the stolid shore.

Is it any wonder that some heed the soul's call
And step through that unseen door
To a place where the rivers always run clear
And light spangled water flows to eternity?

– Alison Snow Jones

"It is over too soon. So savor the scenery that non-boaters never see. Relish the friendships forged paddling quiet backwaters, sparkling streams, boulder-strewn creeks, and the rivers that flow through our lives. Treasure each and every day, like the unique and irreplaceable gem that it is. Remember those who have gone before us, blazing paddle trails down rivers we cherish, painting gauges, writing guide books, developing safety protocols. We are interwoven, here and now, past and present, the warp and weft of a community that looks out for each other and for the rivers that we love. It is over too soon, but what a great way to live while it lasts!"

– Katherine Mull

Rockingham, Stokes, and much of the Triangle area.

So, how do we capture that natural gas? Until recently, we couldn't. Now, hydraulic fracturing or "fracking" is a method that involves drilling wells vertically to a certain depth, then continuing horizontally. The deep shale deposits are blasted with millions of gallons of water, sand, and chemicals under high pressure to open cracks and release the natural gas.

The problem is that much of the chemically laden fluid returns to the surface as "flow back," or highly contaminated wastewater.

But that's not all. The documentary "Gasland," recently shown in Mayodan, shows evidence of health problems and drinking water contamination near

fracking wells. A homeowner holds a lighter by his faucet, and the running water bursts into flame. The groundwater supplying his drinking water has been contaminated.

A factsheet supplied by Clean Water for North Carolina (CWNC) notes that a 2005 federal loophole exempts fracking from environmental regulation. Further, "NC currently doesn't allow horizontal drilling or injection of hydrofracking fluids, but the energy industry is seeking to buy leases and overturn these protections."

So, what can we do? CWNC advocates reporting contacts from companies seeking to lease your land for hydrofracking; hosting a community meeting or a showing of "Gasland"; and urging legislators to prevent attempts to bring fracking to our state.

- T Butler

Caswell Spring 2011

Spring is in the air in Caswell County and we're busy preparing for construction on three trails!

At the Caswell Senior Center, bids have been collected for the construction of the Stream Walk Trail, Phase Two. This 900-foot-long trail will feature a bridge and two boardwalks, one of which will be 70 feet in length. This crusher run trail will complete a loop at the senior center, once sidewalks are installed. More important, though, will be its ability to link seniors to Oakwood Elementary School kids. Construction has been delayed due to wet weather, but we anticipate breaking ground in March, and the trail should be complete in late spring.

We've also met with the Southern Virginia Mountain Biking Association. They will assist in training for construction of over 2 miles of jogging/mountain bike trails adjacent to Oakwood Elementary School. Construction should be occurring simultaneously with the Stream Walk Trail. A number of bridges will be required, so we will be seeking donated materials and/or funding to build those over the summer.

And we've been working with a couple of private property owners to create a trail linking the Senior Center and Yoder's Market in Yanceyville. The trail options have been flagged and we've recorded those options via GPS to illustrate its course to the property owners. While we are awaiting the "go ahead," this opportunity to create trails on private property underscores the changing attitudes in Caswell County and the recognition that trails are a valuable community amenity.

Finally, the Heritage Trails Master Plan effort is gearing up for its final phase of public input. Stakeholder meetings are beginning in March and will occur throughout the summer as the Master Plan takes shape.

- Chad Hall

Local Foods Movement

As a member of the Local Foods Movement steering committee, DRBA is engaged in working for the development of a local foods network. The committee will meet at the Spencer-Penn Centre on March 16, 2011 to review the first draft of the regional food system report, identify other potential options, and begin developing an implementation plan.

-Wayne Kirkpatrick



Some local foods found at the Stuart Farmer's Market
- photo Wayne Kirkpatrick

Patrick County Forms Rivers & Trails Group

Building on the success of the Martinsville-Henry County Rivers and Trails Group, the inaugural meeting of the Patrick County Rivers and Trails Group (PCRTG) was held on Wednesday, January 26, 2011 at the PHCC (Stuart Campus). The Dan River Park slogan *Making Better Communities Starts In Our Own Back Yard!* rings true and reminds us of opportunities to develop a more vibrant community.

PCRTG will work toward developing a healthier lifestyle for the citizens of Patrick County. Combining talents and skills related to community viability, health care, trail development, parks and recreation, tourism, and employment opportunities, the cooperative effort and shared information about local programs will create a more efficient use of resources while developing a greater sense of unity throughout the county.

-Wayne Kirkpatrick

ADVENTURES

DRBA's Annual Celebration Held March 5th, 2011

President Wayne Kirkpatrick and Blue Ridge District Supervisor Bobby Thompson welcomed 59 members and guests to DRBA's ninth Annual Celebration on March 5, 2011, hosted by Friends of Philpott at the Community Center in Henry, VA, enhanced by photo displays about DRBA's projects, Jamison Mill history, and Philpott Lake.

Secretary T Butler shared a remembrance of the late Alison Snow Jones, whose poetic words about paddling the rivers admonish us to treasure each day and each other.

Noting that DRBA is a nationally recognized organization that collaborates across borders, Wayne Kirkpatrick promised that "Team DRBA" members will build on our past successes.

DRBA's success is reflected in our 327 active memberships, with 57% at the family level or higher. Treasurer Mark Bishopric reported total expenditures last year of \$467,000, and we obtained about \$506,000 in grants and \$62,000 in unrestricted funds. Budgeted expenditures in 2011 will be \$576,000, and our goal for unrestricted donations is \$85,000.

Fletcher Waynick of Reidsville, NC was unanimously elected to a second three-year term on the Board of Directors.

Chad Hall, Program Manager for Caswell Heritage Trails; Brian Williams, Education and Outreach Coordinator; Dale Swanson, Stokes Program Coordinator; and Jenny Edwards, Virginia Program Manager, listed a few of the year's accomplishments. Highlights include trails, trout, streamside trees, river accesses, children's programs, workshops, and water quality monitoring and improvement.

Looking ahead, Interim Executive Director Jenny Edwards recognized the moment of transition as we say goodbye to Katherine Mull. She emphasized DRBA's fine staff and strong organization that continue to work toward making sure every child has a safe place to ride a bike, take a walk, fish, and access rivers. We also celebrate the historic places that hold our stories, give a strong sense of place, and convey who we are.

Wayne Kirkpatrick awarded a special photograph from Darrin Doss Photography to each of

the following volunteers: Lynda Purcell, Silverfish for the Rivers; Linda Drage, Friends of Philpott; Charlie Williams, Explorers Club and Outings Chair; Barry Dunkley, Board service and monitoring water quality; Ellen Jessee, Board service, Martinsville-Henry County leadership, and the Dick & Willie Passage.

The Outstanding Service to DRBA Award went to Katie Whitehead, Uranium Mining Task Force Chair, for her extensive research and careful statements about the uranium mining issue. Katie described the scientific and socioeconomic studies due in late 2011 and urged DRBA members to advocate for delaying General Assembly action past the 2012 session to allow legislators time to read and absorb these studies before voting on lifting the uranium mining moratorium in Virginia.

For the program, Operations Project Manager Craig (Rocky) Rockwell used historic and current photographs to describe Philpott Lake. Constructed for flood control, the dam produces "green" hydroelectric power, and the lake provides water recreation that brings a local economic benefit of \$15 million/year. With help from Friends of Philpott, one of five shower houses opening this year will be part of a fully accessible park, including the first outdoor elevator in Virginia. Recognizing partnerships, Rockwell stated that it's Philpott's team of people that makes Philpott Lake such a great place.

After lunch on site, many attendees drove to Jamison Mill Park for a hike led by Mary Lawson.

-T Butler

January 1st Walk on the Dick & Willie Passage

DRBA held its January 2011 First Saturday Outing on the Dick & Willie Passage in Martinsville. More than twenty people walked on the 4.5 mile trail that runs along a former Danville and Western Railroad track. The 10-foot-wide paved trail is nearly level, with attractive landscaping that includes split rail fencing and carefully selected trees, and extends from the Virginia Avenue Bridge near El Parral Restaurant to Mulberry Creek east of Martinsville.

DRBA volunteers Lynn and Ashby Pritchett served as Trip Coordinators and led the 5.8-mile walk,

beginning with an out-and-back hike from Fisher Street to Mulberry Creek. Lynn identified different trees and plants along the trail, pointing out native and non-indigenous or invasive species.

Winding through the heart of Martinsville, the Dick and Willie Passage is a graceful bridge between pure wilderness and developed land. It provides a nexus where people and nature can co-exist to their mutual benefit.

Henry County Administrator Benny Summerlin identified several buildings housing factories and businesses that back up to the trail. Lynn Pritchett pointed out deer hoof prints running alongside the trail. Joan Ragland of Martinsville said she often saw wildlife along the trail, including a fox that once ran in front of her bike.

Since opening last October, the Passage has proven popular among area residents and tourists alike. Despite damp, foggy morning weather that threatened rain, the group passed several trail joggers and bike riders.

The fortunate choice of place and timing provided a great opportunity for exercise and fellowship to begin a new year.

—Ashby Pritchett

Jamison Mill Hike March 5th 2011

As part of DRBA's annual membership celebration, 25 adventurous souls had the pleasure to hike parts of the newly constructed trail network at Jamison Mill Park at Philpott Lake. The clouds were all about, but no rain fell, so the natural surface trails were in good shape for the hike.

Views of the lake are lovely and make you want to return to paddle the deep, blue-green waters. The forest is a mix of pine and oaks on the mature side, with a sprinkling of rhododendron and white pines. Several members of Friends of Philpott came along and gave an insight into life in the valley before the lake was built.

There are six miles of interconnecting trails, mostly moderate to difficult, that would probably



Mary Lawson describes the Jamison Mill Trails to Samuel Moore before the hike.
— photo Kevin Moore

take about three hours to complete. Only hikers and bicyclists are permitted on the trails. The group hiked the Golden Shore Loop, Red Rays Loop and North Access Trail for about two hours.

Over half of the trails were built by Franklin County Parks and Recreation staff using a John Deere 450 bulldozer. One and a half miles of the trails were constructed by volunteers from partnering organizations using an SK 500 Ditch Witch mini-skid steer. The remaining one mile of trail was built by hand. The final trail was completed in August 2010.

Trail Partners are US Army Corps of Engineers, Franklin County Parks & Recreation, Franklin Freewheelers, Friends of Philpott, Henry County Bike Club, and Southern Virginia Mountain Bike Association.

—Kevin and Samuel Moore

Reynolds Homestead February 5, 2011

Would a forecast of February cold, fog, drizzle, and wind deter me from driving 48 winding miles from Ferrum to DRBA's outing at the Reynolds Homestead? Heavens, no. As I drove up to the historic Rock Spring Plantation, the 1843 brick plantation house perched solidly on a slight hill surrounded by pines, open fields and outbuildings. Thoroughly 19th century.

DRBA's seven hearty souls convened at the

Continuing Education Center near the house. Bundled up in layers of rain gear, warm hats and boots, we followed Kyle Peer, the Superintendent of Forestry Research, into muddy cutovers, part of Virginia Tech's 780-acre research center, created to study forest biology, genetics, physiology and soils. Here acres of loblolly pines are meticulously tended and studied by VA Tech forestry students to determine the best growing conditions. Big timber companies depend on the expertise of these experimental forests. The 2.5-mile hike through the pines was easy walking on a grassy trail. As we ended our hike through the pines, we encountered a field of experimental poplar trees being studied as a source for biofuels. It is so amazing that all of this is happening in the fields surrounding an historic home.

Back at the Continuing Education Center we shared our picnic lunches in the warm auditorium with the director of the center, Kay Dunkley. After lunch we joined John Reynolds, a distant relative of the facility's namesake family, who guided us through the fully restored Rock Spring Plantation House, birthplace and boyhood home of tobacco magnate and manufacturer R. J. Reynolds. We saw many of the original family furnishings and heard stories about the Reynolds family. Because our group was so small the tour of the house seemed intimate and special. The house was not grand but comfortable. John also led us through the original brick kitchen, brick milk house and log icehouse.

Our last experience was walking the new 1 mile LEAF interpretative forest tour trail, which combines learning about natural resource use and heritage tourism. A mowed walking trail led to the Reynolds family cemetery, a newly reconstructed tobacco barn, a native grass field for birds, a reclaimed slave cemetery, a friendship garden and finally the original rock spring for which the plantation was named. We even sampled a dipper full of the spring water.

I was impressed with both the staff and the facilities at Reynolds Homestead. It was a true Janus experience – a look into the past at the Reynolds House and a look into the future in the forestry research project. Both the past and the future are in good hands here at Reynolds Homestead.

–Emma Parcell

Spring Happenings in Martinsville-Henry County

- March 17** 1 p.m. Ribbon cutting for Patrick Henry Community College – Beaver Creek Reservoir Loop Trail.
- March 17** 6 p.m. Southwestern Piedmont Master Naturalists Chapter Meeting at VA Museum of Natural History. Speaker Benny Summerlin, Henry Co. Administrator.
- March 19** 11 a.m. Beginner bicycle ride on the Dick & Willie Passage Rail Trail. Meet at the Liberty Street Trailhead.
- March 19** 9 a.m. - noon. Gateway Streetscapes sponsored Smith River Cleanup. Meet at South Martinsville Smith River Access below Martinsville Dam at the end of Tensbury Drive.
- April 2** 10 a.m. DRBA First Saturday Outing. Paddle Smith River from Bassett to Great Road Access.
- April 16 - 23** VMNH sponsored Earth Week, Community-wide Celebration. Details: www.vmnh.net
- April 16** 1 - 4 p.m. Friends of Philpott Annual Environmental Expo, Philpott Dam Overlook in Bassett, Virginia.

–Ellen Jessee



Source: morgueFile

MEMBERSHIPS

December 2010 | February 2011

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Spray Mercantile, LLC
Three Rivers Outfitters

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David and Deborah Sharp
Smith River Valley Canoe Club
Mrs. Lee Plummer Templeton
Judith Winston

LOCATION KEY

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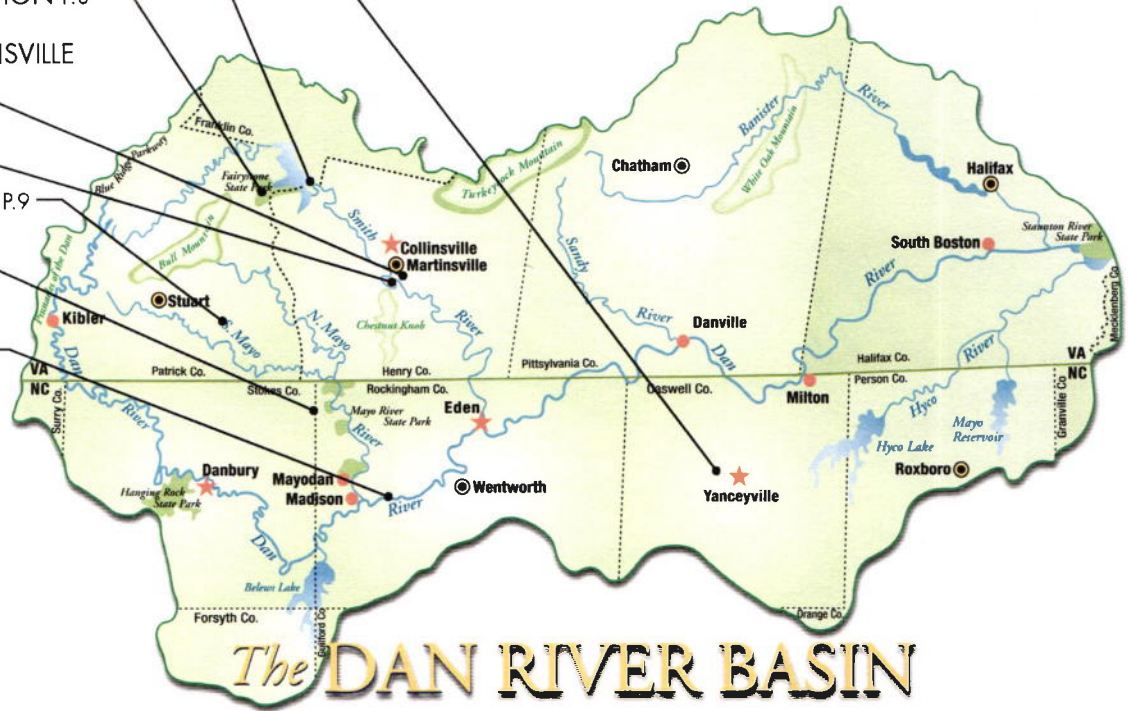
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