

Dan River Basin Association

CURRENTS

DANRIVER.ORG • VOLUME 14, ISSUE 1 • WINTER 2014



COAL ASH MONITORING

ART IN NATURE AUCTION A SUCCESS

**DRBA VISITS WITH
GOVERNOR MCAULIFFE**

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FIRST SATURDAY OUTINGS

(details at DANRIVER.ORG)

January 3: Mayo River Hike, Anglin Mill to Byrd's Ledge

February 7: Reynolds Homestead Hike and Tour

March 7: Annual Celebration in South Boston

Meetings of the Board of Directors are held on the second Wednesday of February, May, August and November. The next meeting will be February 11, 2015.

Photo this page Brian Williams.

On the cover: Working to restore the American Chestnut to our forests, DRBA volunteers joined US Army Corps of Engineers and American Chestnut Foundation to plant 100 saplings (15/16th American Chestnut, 1/16th fungus-resistant Chinese) near Philpott Lake.

CURRENTS newsletter: Editor: T Butler. Design/Production: David Pinney

FROM THE DIRECTOR



Tiffany Haworth.

As you may know, the Dan River Basin attracts over a million visitors who come to experience our outdoor adventures and unique cultural experiences each year. Visitation has held steady as people come to enjoy our region all year round.

Are you? Just because it's cold outside, it doesn't mean you can't get out and explore. Hiking or biking our amazing trails in the winter offers a different, and beautiful, landscape. Paddling our rivers during this season isn't just for the adventurous. The view from the water is spectacular, and if you dress warmly, a two-hour paddle promises to lower your blood pressure after the hectic holidays.

If going outside isn't your thing, there are quite a few cultural places to visit. Pick up a driving tour guide in Caswell County or the Martinsville/Henry County Historical Society and immerse yourself in the rich history of the Basin. Or visit an art museum, support community theater, or meander through a historical museum.

There is no excuse to sit on the couch during the winter with so much to do and see in the Dan River Basin. Others are coming to our region for adventure and memories, while we get to live here and enjoy our watershed every day. Invite your friends and relatives from around the United States to come and join you in an adventure!

I look forward to seeing you at a DRBA event in 2015!

-Tiffany Haworth

PRESIDENT'S SPACE



Allison Szuba.

As 2014 ends, DRBA can look back with pride over a year especially well-done. The coal ash spill took a prominent place for us this year, and Team DRBA has worked tirelessly to provide education, resource, and encouragement. Our staff put in countless long hours from the beginning and haven't slowed down since.

The 2nd Annual Art-in-Nature Auction took place in October in Danville, home of our newest office. It was great fun and

a tremendous success. We are excited to get started on next year's event!

DRBA had three different 5K races/family fun walks across the Basin: Trout'n'About benefited the ever-growing and ever-popular Trout in the Classroom program; Run with the Cows benefited the Chinqua-Penn Trail; and the Apple Dumpling 5K benefited trail building in Patrick County.

DRBA hosted 12 First Saturday Outings (FSOs), with record-breaking participation. It has been a joy to meet new

friends and see old friends while introducing many families and friends to new parts of our basin, be it by water or by land.

DRBA has worked unstintingly to monitor the quality of our water. We all know we can't live without it! We have held and supported river clean-ups, pulling everything from tires to strollers out of our waters. We continue to monitor water quality across the basin and will promote our mission for clean water wherever we can.

People ask me, "How can I help?" My answer is simple: join DRBA. Membership is so easy, with so many levels offered that even towns, cities, and businesses are joining. The benefits far outweigh the cost! Beyond that, invite your friends to a FSO, participate in the Adopt-a-Trout or Adopt-a-Tree programs and introduce others to all of the beauty that our basin gives us so freely.

Thank you for your support! From all of us at DRBA, we wish you a most joyous Holiday season and the Happiest of New Years!

-Allison Szuba

Are you receiving your email notices from DRBA?

If not, please notify Robin Light, rlight@danriver.org to be sure your email address is up to date!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Supporters

Dr. David Jones and Dr. Nicole DeShon, orthodontists, are proud supporters of Trout in the Classroom and DRBA. Stop by their office, mention DRBA, and get a chance to win a free membership! 25 Cleveland Avenue, Suite E
Martinsville, VA 24112

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Martinsville-Henry County Milestones

DRBA staff based in Martinsville-Henry County have been preparing for the 2014-15 Trout in the Classroom Program, working on the Paw Path at the Smith River Sports Complex, continuing to deal with issues surrounding the Dan River coal ash spill, training new water monitoring volunteers, developing the Philpott Blueways trail, and working on our existing monitoring projects.

Trout in the Classroom: Krista Hodges has been getting all the schools set up and delivering trout eggs to excited classrooms. This season we have 41 tanks in Henry, Patrick, Pittsylvania, Rockingham, and Guilford counties. Presentations have begun, and students will raise Brown, Brook, and Rainbow Trout, with releases beginning with Brook Trout in March. Four new tanks are at Huntsville, Central, Lincoln, and Williamsburg elementary schools in Rockingham County.

Philpott Lake Blueway: DRBA has partnered with the Army Corps of Engineers and Philpott Lake Rangers to develop a series of water trails to points of interest on the lake. Informational signs will be placed at access ramps, showing the current location and suggested paddling routes and estimated times to visit sites within a 4- to 8-mile round trip. Large safety signs will be installed at key places visible from the main parts of the lake so boaters can quickly identify where they are in case of an emergency. The blueway's grand opening is planned for the spring.

Small Towns Collaborative: DRBA staff is participating in the Small Towns Collaborative that is creating the "15 Magical Miles," a mapped corridor along the Smith River connecting Philpott, Bassett, Stanleytown, and Fieldale. Plans include construction of trails linking the communities, river access points, and promotion of outdoor activities. Enhanced public spaces will capitalize on historic and natural resources. The project is expected to improve economic development for these communities and the region as a whole.

Smith River Paw Path Dog Trail: Construction is nearly complete on the Trish Owens Smith River Paw Path Dog Trail at the Smith River Sports Complex. The 0.4-mile riverside trail connects the existing canoe access ramp to the rest of the

complex, ending under the Highway 58 overpass. Doggie waste stations, dog play equipment, and dog-themed accessories are provided. Pet owners can walk their dogs on leash, while the dogs can enjoy hiking, playing, and mingling with other pets. Karen Jones, wife of Dr. David Jones, dedicated funds to help pay for the trail honoring her sister, the late Trish Owens, who was a long-time river advocate, paddler, and dog lover.

Water Quality Monitors: DRBA volunteer water monitors continue to collect data on the Smith, North Mayo, and South Mayo rivers as part of the Department of Environmental Quality TMDL Implementation Plan and grant.

As reported in other stories, Krista Hodges is helping Amy Farinelli train water quality monitors in Danville, and Brian Williams is spearheading DRBA's monitoring and support of academic researchers in the efforts to learn from and mitigate the effects of the coal ash spill on the Dan River and the region's economy.

-Brian Williams and Krista Hodges

Cleanup of Historic Site

DRBA Club members from Patrick County High School and their faculty sponsor Rebecca Delenback pulled about 500 pounds of tires and other trash from a historic site on Peters Creek. A state historical marker identifies this as the terminus of William Byrd's 1728 survey of the North Carolina/Virginia border.



Cleanup crew at Historical Marker. Photo Wayne Kirkpatrick.

In the spring, the club plans a hike to Rock Castle Creek Gorge, a paddle on Philpott Lake, and a visit to the restored Vade Mecum resort hotel in Stokes County which featured healing waters in the late 19th century.

-Wayne Kirkpatrick

After Coal Ash

Duke Energy has taken responsibility for both restoring the Dan River Basin's natural resources and benefitting the basin's communities after the February 2 coal ash spill. Duke has hired the UVA Institute of Environmental Negotiation and the VA Cooperative Extension Service to facilitate meetings with stakeholders to seek solutions in both areas.

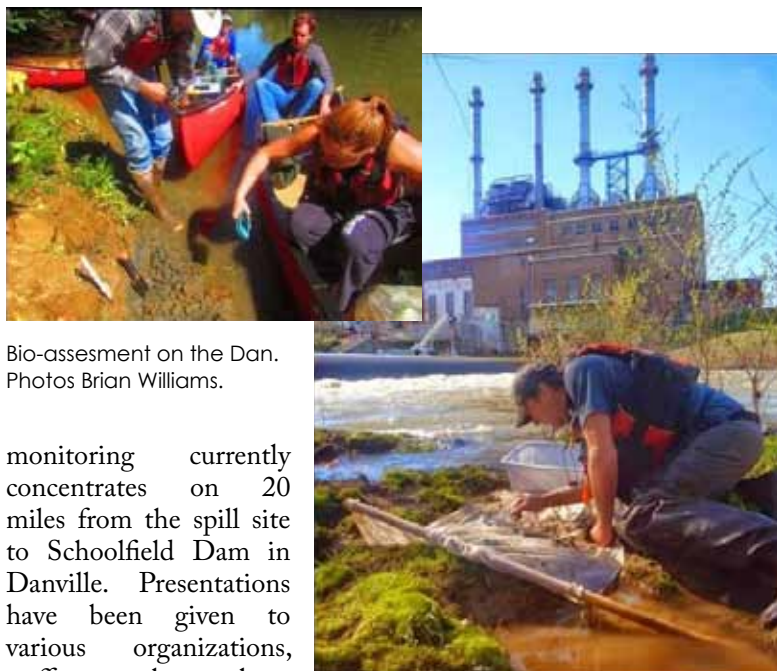
Goals of stakeholder meetings include full engagement in a transparent, legitimate discussion; authentic, broad-based consensus for what Duke Energy can do; and long-term, positive relationships with affected communities.

DRBA is pleased to be included as a stakeholder and to provide expertise about the basin's natural resources.

-Wayne Kirkpatrick

Coal Ash Spill Monitoring

The February 2 Duke Energy coal ash spill into Dan River near Eden has kept DRBA staff and volunteers busy in several capacities throughout 2014. Long-term bio-assessment



Bio-assessment on the Dan. Photos Brian Williams.

monitoring currently concentrates on 20 miles from the spill site to Schoolfield Dam in Danville. Presentations have been given to various organizations, staff members have lobbied in DC, and work on the river continues.

Coal ash contains highly toxic heavy metals that persist in the environment. Mercury, especially, strongly accumulates and magnifies in aquatic food webs, leading to long-term environmental and human health risks even when water concentrations are low. Mercury concentrations in Dan River water samples below the spill showed a three-fold increase, compared to upstream samples.

We have partnered with a number of universities and colleges on coal ash contamination studies, some funded by the National Science Foundation. Researchers from UNCG, University of Maryland, Cornell, and Virginia Tech are

obtaining data on food web contamination and studying germanium as a tracer element for coal ash. DRBA assists these scientists and students in collecting macroinvertebrate and sediment samples from Eden to South Boston. Biology and environmental majors under Chekka Lash at Ferrum College have studied macroinvertebrates obtained below the spill with help from DRBA staff, volunteers Wayne and Betty Kirkpatrick, and intern Collin Rachner.

DRBA volunteers recorded observations and wildlife counts from the spill site to the state line in May. Sediment samples being obtained by DRBA are tested by Meritech Labs in Reidsville for arsenic, lead, selenium, and boron. Researchers from Virginia Tech are investigating the composition of coal ash and its ability to transport and release contaminants. Appalachian State personnel are studying coal ash sediment sites to determine the downstream movement of the deposits. DRBA has also guided Guilford College and Wake Forest University students on sample collection trips. Coal ash deposits are still found in layers 4 to 6 inches below normal river sediments. Data from all of these studies are shared with state agencies in North Carolina and Virginia.

DRBA staff were part of a Virginia delegation lobbying in Washington, DC for a strong federal coal ash rule. On December 19 the EPA announced its decision not to label coal ash a hazardous waste, but did impose tighter controls on its handling and disposal. Federal regulations now include specific measures to protect air and water, among them a requirement to close unlined storage ponds that are polluting groundwater. For more details, see http://www.news-record.com/rockingham_now/epa-rules-coal-ash-not-hazardous-waste-imposes-tighter-controls/article_7badf9aa-87b5-11e4-b3f8-d3637d1b5f7c.html.

-Brian Williams

Danville Begins Water Quality Monitoring Program

DRBA's Danville, VA office opened in August 2014 with a long list of proposed activities and programs to enhance environmental education, outdoor recreation, and stewardship in Danville and Pittsylvania and Caswell counties. At the top of that list was introducing a citizens' water quality monitoring program, following the example of DRBA's programs in Patrick and Henry counties. The hope is that one day in the near future DRBA can boast volunteer citizen water quality monitoring along all tributaries and waterways in the basin.

In December, after months of promoting the importance of clean waterways, recruiting volunteers, and scouting for potential monitoring sites, DRBA staffers Krista Hodges and Amy Farinelli hosted a training session. Over 15 Danville volunteers were taught Coliscan Easygel procedures for monitoring *E. coli* bacteria. Once certified, pairs of volunteers commit to collect samples once per month from a selected

site on a Dan River tributary. After data is compiled by the volunteer groups, any trouble spots identified will be further investigated with additional testing sites and shared with the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality for follow-up on their end.

Another important partner in DRBA's water quality efforts is Averett University. Professor Laura Meder encourages her environmental and biology students to participate in the program. In addition, she has made a university lab available for DRBA staff and volunteers to incubate, process, and analyze monitoring samples collected throughout the duration of the program. One of her students will also provide general assistance and support to the program as part of his environmental studies internship during the spring semester.

"I am very excited that we are now able to bring this program to the Danville area," says Danville Program Coordinator Amy Farinelli. "The recent environmental challenges this area has faced bring to new light DRBA's mission and the need to proactively protect and promote waterways so that they can



Photo Brian Williams

remain clean for present and future generations to appreciate and enjoy. Monitoring is a vital part of carrying out that mission."

Future plans are to include macroinvertebrate sampling at all monitoring sites to provide a better-rounded picture of the river's health. Several Danville volunteers have expressed interest in becoming certified to monitor macroinvertebrates at their sites through the Virginia Save Our Streams program.

"With the volunteer support and commitment we have experienced thus far, I am very confident the program will thrive and provide an important service to the Danville community in 2015 and into the future," says Farinelli. Volunteers will begin field work in January, launching DRBA's water quality monitoring project in Danville.

-Amy Farinelli

Fracking in NC

Fracking (hydraulic fracturing) is the process of injecting chemical-laced water to break apart rock layers deep underground and release gas to the surface. The North Carolina Mining and Energy Commission has published 124 proposed rules for fracking in the state, and drilling could start as early as spring 2015. The rules are woefully inadequate to protect North Carolina's drinking water and property values from the negative impact of fracking. Rockingham County sits in the crosshairs for early drilling.

More than thirty local, regional, and statewide organizations, working together as Frack Free NC to prevent fracking in North Carolina, participated in public hearings on the draft rules. DRBA members, founders, and staff spoke of the dangers of fracking. We were met with an outburst of applause when we drew parallels between fracking and the Duke Energy coal ash spill to demonstrate that extractive practices are fraught with serious environmental implications.

During the public comment period, the commission received more than 200,000 comments, with the great majority urging strengthening of the proposed rules. The proposed rules will go to the Rules Review Commission and, unless objections are raised, then to the General Assembly for adoption.

Individuals concerned about the potential impact of fracking are encouraged to attend a meeting of No Fracking in Rockingham County, a grassroots group of concerned Rockingham County citizens. Meetings are held bimonthly on Monday evenings at Madison Public Library. For more information, visit their website at <http://www.nofrackinginrockingham.org/> or contact Jenny Edwards at atedwards@danriver.org.

For more information on fracking, visit <http://frackfreenc.org>.

-Jenny Edwards

MillerCoors Stewardship Day



DRBA raises a cheer to the 2014 MillerCoors Stewardship Day in thanks for this great corporate partner in clean water!

About 40 volunteers installed tree identification signs along the Smith River Greenway and cleaned a section of the Smith and Dan rivers.



Photos: Michael Lorenzo, MillerCoors and Jenny Edwards, DRBA.

The identification signs add to MillerCoors' ongoing enhancement of the Smith River Greenway. The signs stand proudly with the tree plantings, butterfly garden, and education signage of previous MillerCoors Stewardship Days. MillerCoors is placing a fine imprint upon this treasured asset in Eden. The tree identification signs are sure to foster an appreciation of native trees and the local wildlife that

depend upon them.

Volunteers also pulled tires and other debris out of the Smith and Dan rivers. Wrenching mud-filled tires from a river bottom is not an easy task and ranks as one of the most important actions that volunteers can take to protect water quality. Tires contain toxic heavy metals that leach for as long as they rest on river bottoms. Getting them out of there has an immediate and direct impact on water quality.

DRBA thanks Spray Mercantile for providing the venue, tents, tables, and chairs for lunch and Three Rivers Outfitters for leading the river crew.

-Jenny Edwards

Water Quality

DRBA's water quality efforts are basin-wide and move forward on multiple fronts. As noted elsewhere in this issue, DRBA is working on coal ash issues in numerous ways, training volunteer water quality monitors, and conducting a robust e-coli sampling program in three counties. Collaborations with others are enhanced by DRBA's participation in the

Virginia Water Resources Research Center State Advisory Board and the annual Virginia Citizens for Water Quality state conference. Locally, DRBA hosted the Tub of Bugs at the Danville River District Festival.

Biologists from Virginia Department of Game & Inland Fisheries (VDGIF) recently presented findings from last summer's Smith River fish sampling to the local Trout Unlimited group. About 1.5 miles between Philpott Dam and the Martinsville Dam and about 11.1 miles below the Martinsville Dam were sampled. Higher numbers of trout were found in the river between Philpott and Bassett, with dramatically fewer trout below Bassett. Plans were discussed for further sampling of the section from Fieldale to the Martinsville Dam, with possible relocation of some trout to these waters. Below the dam, 1300 brown trout were moved from the upper river to three locations in the waters below Martinsville. Additional sampling and stocking are also being considered for this section of the river.

-Wayne Kirkpatrick

RECREATION

Mayodan Mountain Bike Trail Continues to Grow



REI crew at Mayodan. Photo Jenny Edwards

DRBA sends a huge thank-you to REI Greensboro for coming out to help build the Mayodan Mountain Bike Trail. It rained, but these folks are not lightweights in the great outdoors! Thank you, too, to the Town of Mayodan, Greensboro Fat Tire members, Blue Ridge Trail Works, Inc., and DRBA members

for their help. In January, DRBA will announce the 2015 trail-building dates.

Congratulations to the Town of Mayodan for receiving funding from the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust to build two miles of the trail and start mountain bike clubs for youth in Mayodan. For more information on how to help build the trail or how to enroll youth in the mountain bike club, contact Jenny Edwards at (336) 339-6169.

Cyclists Promote Beaches to Bluegrass Trail

To promote Virginia's Beaches to Bluegrass Trail, eighteen cyclists biked from Danville to Clarksville in early October, stopping along the way to tour interesting sites. Halifax County

Tourism Director Linda Shepperd noted that their route highlighted the central section of the conceptual trail system. The Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation is developing this series of linked trails that will traverse southern Virginia from Cumberland Gap to Virginia Beach, generally along the Highway 58 corridor.

The cyclists' route included three Dan River basin trails: the Danville Riverwalk, Ringgold Trail and Tobacco Heritage Trail. Visits featuring the rich history of Danville, the Richmond and Danville Railroad, Berry Hill Resort near South Boston, and Occonehee State Park punctuated the six-day, five-night tour and made it a fun learning experience.



Ashley Hodge/Gazette-Virginian

The Dan River region is fortunate to have Virginia's Beaches to Bluegrass Trail and North Carolina's Mountains to Sea Trail passing through or close to our river basin. Both will include new and existing trails in our watershed.

More information about the Beaches to Bluegrass Trail can be found at http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/recreational_planning/trailb2b.shtml.

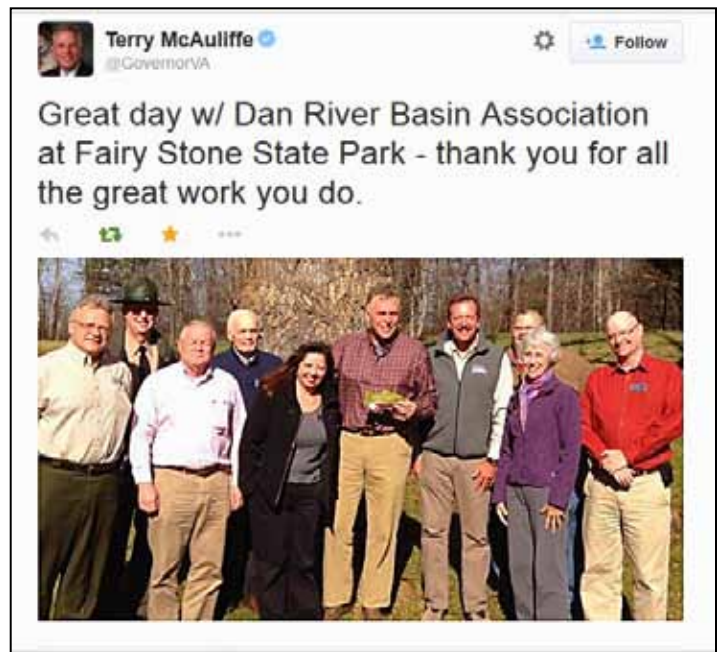
DRBA Visits With Governor McAuliffe

Virginia's governor, Terry McAuliffe, is a strong supporter of state parks. He has vowed to visit every state park in the Commonwealth during his tenure.

On Saturday, November 22, Gov. McAuliffe came to see Fairy Stone State Park in Patrick County. Over a light lunch, he and other members of his administration discussed the future of parks in the region. DRBA's Tiffany Haworth, T and Lindley Butler, and Fletcher Waynick advocated opening the nascent Virginia Mayo River State Park for limited public use.

Host John Grooms, Superintendent of Fairy Stone State Park, and Clyde Cristman, Director of the Department of Conservation & Recreation, were well acquainted with the Mayo River property, having accompanied Secretary of Natural Resources Molly Ward on a visit there with DRBA in April. DRBA offered to help with trails and signage in the new park, while Cristman presented a staffing possibility.

Gov. McAuliffe was delighted to receive Tiffany Haworth's gift of an Adopt-a-Trout for supporting environmental education in the Dan River basin. He proudly displayed the stuffed trout in the group photo. Check out his comment and photo on Twitter:



2014 Art in Nature Auction a Success



Over 80 DRBA members and guests attended our second annual Art in Nature Auction on October 16, 2014. Held at Two Witches Brewery beside the Dan River in Danville, the auction featured 140 works from 95 artists and donors, many offering their creations at a DRBA function for the first time.



Photos by Brian Williams.

During the preview hour, attendees enjoyed an expansive spread of delicious foods donated by DRBA board members and local businesses. Beer, wine, and non-alcoholic beverages were supplied by Two Witches Brewery. Silent auction items were available for bidding throughout much of the evening.

At live-auction time, Select Auctioneering Services sprang

into action, setting a lively pace and punctuating the bidding with jolly patter. Paintings, pottery, sculpture, basketry, photographs, woodcarvings, jewelry, lamps, furniture, textiles, DRBA merchandise, and assorted other items quickly found new homes.

"It was a great place to do some special Christmas shopping, while benefitting DRBA's programs," said Lindley Butler. One couple found the ideal painting to give to each other—a view of the Smith River Valley.

DRBA thanks all artists, vendors, and members who donated to the auction and purchased pieces of art that utilize or depict the variety of natural wonders in the Dan River Basin. After all expenses were paid, proceeds exceeded \$4,500, all of which supports DRBA's mission.

-T Butler

December 6 Hike

For DRBA's December First Saturday Outing at Knight-Brown Nature Preserve, the day started out with such unpromising gray weather that only four of us managed to show up. But our leader, Dr. Ken Bridle, Will Truslow, Patty May and I ignored the dreariness and took the hike near Belews Lake in Rockingham County, NC. Although it rained a little, we had a lovely, fascinating walk through rolling terrain covered by leaves and beside babbling streams as Ken shared his extensive knowledge of the area and nature in general.

We saw native plants that remain green in winter, such as Club Moss (*Lycopodium*), Puttyroot (*Aplectrum hyemale*), Crane-fly Orchid (*Tipularia discolor*) and large areas of still-green Christmas Ferns (*Polystichum acrostichoides*). Ken also pointed out a patch of the rare eastern leatherwood shrub



From left: Ellen Jessee, Patty May, Ken Bridle at Knight-Brown. Photo Will Truslow.

(*Dirca palustris*). Although the shrub was bare of leaves, the stems had a distinctive light brown color and upright habit and could be tied in knots without breaking, like soft leather, hence the name “leatherwood.”

We observed some small vernal pools that Ken explained were great breeding grounds for frogs and salamanders. We passed three absolutely beautiful cedar benches along the trail, the most gorgeously colored benches I have ever seen. Ken described how he and several others had manually carried the

separate parts of the benches to their respective spots in the woods and then assembled them on site.

We were told that there is a profusion of blooming wildflowers in the spring, and we can't wait to return then. Maybe Ken will lead us on another walk to identify all the spring plants!

-Ellen Jessee

October Cleanup on the Dan

Saturday, October 4, was a good day to be on the river as part of NC Big Sweep, whose goal is litter-free watersheds. Cleanup floats are always interesting and fun. Experience tells us not to be surprised by what we might find.

From the Wildlife Access in Eden, Julia Pyron of Three Rivers Outfitters bussed paddlers and boats to the Whetstone Creek put-in, which proved to be challenging. It was an easy float from there, with a lunch break at Leaksville Landing. Although our group of eight was small, we collected approximately 275 pounds of trash, consisting mostly of plastic bottles, styrofoam items, and cigarette butts. There was less litter on the river banks. Most seemed to be caught up near the bridges.

Being out on the water always has such a positive effect, physically and mentally. DRBA floats/paddles are so much more than just recreation and camaraderie; they are history and geology lessons and links to the past when the river was essential to commerce in the region. Today was no exception, thanks to our North Carolina historian Lindley Butler.

After gathering and itemizing the trash, we celebrated with brownies from T Butler, which has become a tradition. Thanks, T. Thanks to Ward Collis, also, for getting us together.

-Sharon Olson

October 18 in Patrick County

The third Saturday in October was a beautiful and busy day for DRBA. The morning began with another successful Apple Dumpling 5K in Stuart, with proceeds supporting trail development in Patrick County.

Adventurous DRBA members then enjoyed a strenuous hike on private property along the South Fork of the Smith River. After bushwhacking up the mountainside, repeatedly slipping and sliding across the chilly stream, the bold and hearty were rewarded with spectacular views of a 250-foot

cascading waterfall. All were grateful for the strong DRBA ethic of helping fellow participants!

The day ended with a delicious covered dish meal at Wayne and Betty Kirkpatrick's home. Thank you, Kirkpatricks, for making this Third Saturday Outing with you a wonderful DRBA tradition!



DRBA people. Photos by Brian Williams.

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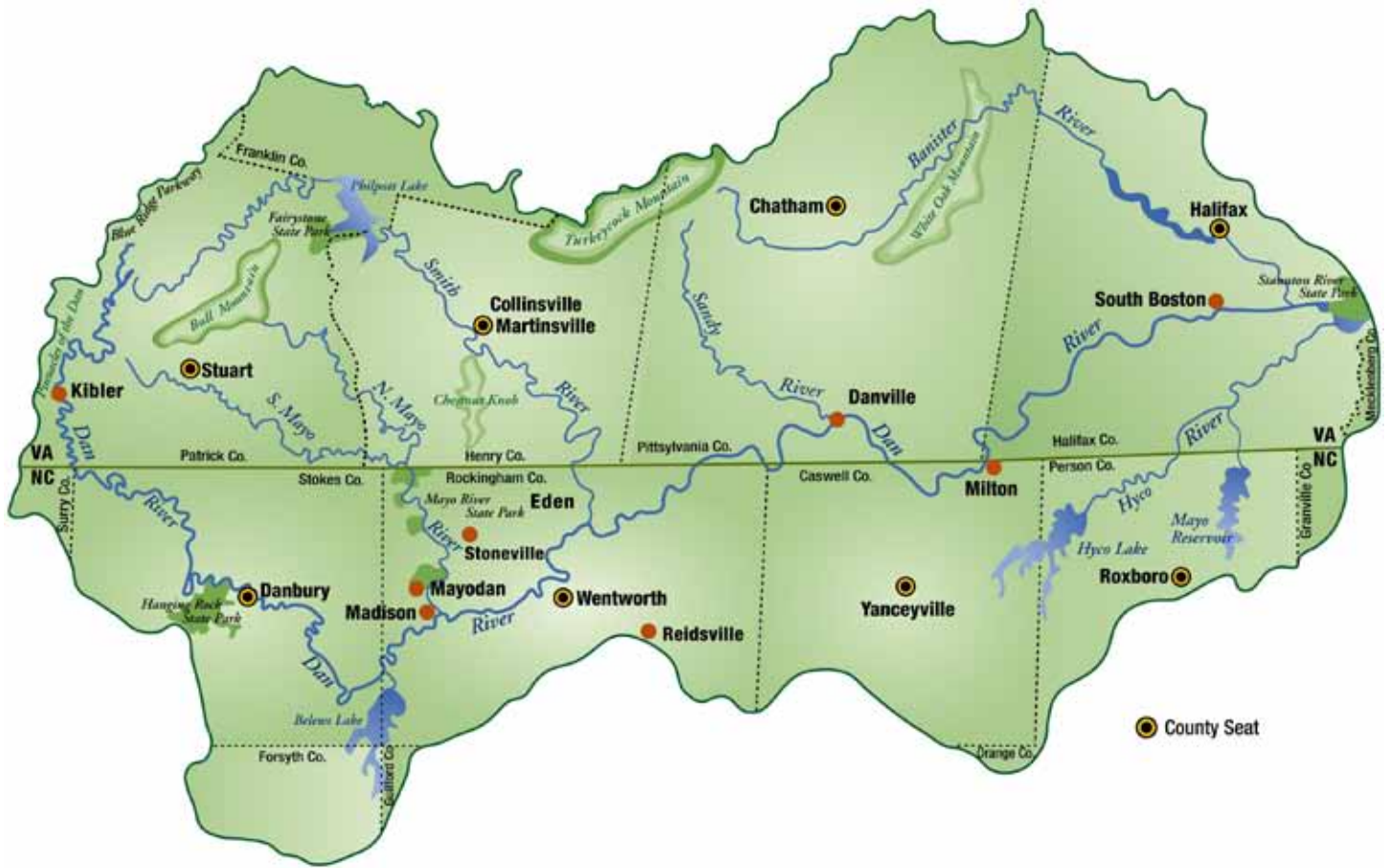
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