

A photograph of two young girls sitting on a grassy area. The girl on the left has long brown hair and is wearing a pink and white jacket, holding a thin green plant stem. The girl on the right is wearing a colorful striped sweater and is smiling. In the background, there are trees and a parking lot with cars.

CURRENTS

Dan River Basin Association

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Toward a Brighter Future

**Creative Classrooms • Continuing the Cause on Uranium
Trails to New Destinations • Water: Pure and Simple**

Currents • Volume 15 • Issue 3

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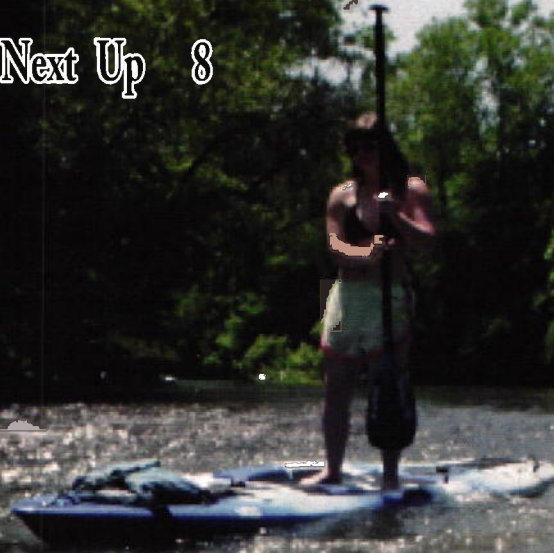
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Cover: Students work to plant a sapling grown in DRBA's STIC program

Uranium Mining Ban in Courts

Virginia Uranium, Inc. (VUI) has filed two lawsuits seeking to overturn Virginia's 33-year-old uranium mining ban.

(1) In federal court in Danville, VUI argued that the federal Atomic Energy Act preempts state laws related to uranium mining. DRBA and the Roanoke River Basin Association (RRBA), represented by the Southern Environmental Law Center (SELC), filed a "friend of the court" brief supporting the VA Attorney General's successful motion to dismiss the case.

VUI has appealed that ruling to the U.S. Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals, where SELC also filed a "friend of the court" brief on behalf of DRBA and RRBA explaining why the trial judge's ruling was proper. Arguments should be heard this fall, and SELC on behalf of DRBA and RRBA will pursue every opportunity to participate.

(2) In Wise County state court, VUI argued that the mining ban violates the VA constitution by prohibiting uranium mining, which deprives VUI's property of economic value without proper compensation. On behalf of DRBA and RRBA, SELC filed a "friend of the court" brief supporting the Commonwealth's argument that the ban is a legitimate exercise of Virginia's authority to regulate activity within its borders.

The judge denied VUI's demand of \$483 million in compensation, ruling that the statute of limitations had expired. However, the case will proceed on VUI's request for a judicial order that state agencies ignore the ban and process VUI's mining permit applications. RRBA, DRBA, and SELC will participate in every way possible to defeat the lawsuit.

Olga Kolotushkina

Riparian Buffer Demonstration Sites

Riparian buffers are the natural vegetation extending from the edge of the stream bank several dozen feet onto land. This vegetative zone protects the stream by filtering pollutants from runoff, controlling erosion, and providing wildlife habitat.

DRBA has recently completed Riparian Buffer Demonstration sites to show examples of good buffers, hoping to inspire property owners to plant their own! Come and see for yourself:

protecting the Dan River—YMCA and Camilla Park in Danville, VA; protecting the Mayo River—DeHart Park in Stuart, VA; and protecting the Smith River—Smith River Greenway in Eden, NC and Beaver Creek Reservoir in Martinsville, VA.

Dan River Basin Water Quality

Reflecting its high priority to DRBA, our water quality activities span the basin. Quarterly macroinvertebrate sampling is conducted by DRBA board members Jennifer Atkins in Pittsylvania County and Sonya Wolen in Danville. Semiannual macroinvertebrate sampling of the Smith River and Sycamore Creek in Patrick County is carried out by Woolwine Elementary School's 6th and 7th grade classes, most recently in May. Also in May, the Woolwine Kindergarten class released their TIC trout into the Smith River.

DRBA's Tub of Bugs gave over fifty students an Earth Day experience at the VA Museum of Natural History. Kids on the Move, a VA Tech extension program, brought fifty eight-to-twelve-year-olds to Dehart Park and Campbell Creek, where they learned about the role of macroinvertebrates as indicator species and the importance of stream buffers for water quality. Also at DeHart Park, DRBA's Brian Williams presented a water quality program on riparian buffers to the Patrick County High School Horticulture and Landscape Management classes.

The cities of Danville, Stuart, and Halifax are participants in another program to protect our waterways and our drinking water: marking storm drains with the message "Dump No Waste – Drains to River." This reminder encourages us to keep storm drains free of trash, pet waste, motor oil, paint, and other materials, since storm drains empty directly into our rivers and streams.

Wayne Kirkpatrick



Join DRBA today!

A Day in the Woods

This past April, fifth-graders from five elementary schools in Franklin County spent “A Day in the Woods” at Waid Park located in Rocky Mount, Virginia.

Divided into small groups that mixed students from each school, they spent time getting to know each other, then rotations where local businesses games and

“an incredible experience”

~~ from a student participant at “A Day in the Woods”

Krista Hodges talked about stream ecology, using macroinvertebrates found in local streams. Other activities included a K-9 demonstration, identification of plants and animals, geocaching, dancing, and Ultimate Frisbee.

A highlight of the day was an Underground Railroad simulation, in which adult “conductors” led all the groups along trails to a final “safe house” where they gathered to summarize the day’s experiences.

“A Day in the Woods” -- not your average school day!

Trails at Lake Reidsville

Partnering with the City of Reidsville and RoundRock Design, on May 2 DRBA hosted a public meeting seeking input for recreational trails at Lake Reidsville. Attendees included city officials, a lakeside landowner, and representatives from mountain bike clubs in Winston Salem and Greensboro. Interest in designating the trail as part of the Mountains to Sea Trail was particularly high.

The proposed trail is part of the Pathways Plan for Recreational Trails adopted in 2013 by all municipalities in Rockingham County, including the City of Reidsville. Pathways was funded by Reidsville Area Foundation, with other support from DRBA members and Piedmont Triad Regional Council.

DRBA is seeking a grant from the Recreational Trails Program with N.C.

State Parks to design and build some 2 miles of hiking and biking trail along the lakeshore. Funding decision is expected in the fall of 2016. Meanwhile, Reidsville Area Foundation recently awarded DRBA \$5,000 to build the first quarter mile of trail on the lakeshore.

This summer, working with RoundRock Design, DRBA began construction of 3/4 miles of hiking/biking trail adjacent the disc golf course at Lake Reidsville. Slated to open later this summer, it will connect to a current one mile of trail on the north side of Lake Reidsville Park. For more information on the proposed trails, contact Jenny Edwards at jedwards@danriver.org or (336) 339-6169.



Jenny Edwards

From Our Executive Director:

Have you noticed the transformation in our region over the past 5 years? More local governments, businesses, educational institutions and families have focused on promoting and protecting their natural resources. Over \$4 million has been invested in our region specifically to improve the water quality of our rivers and streams, expand environmental education, build outdoor recreational infrastructure, and implement policies that will ensure our resources are sustained for future generations.

DRBA members and donors are a big reason why this transformation is taking place. This summer, enjoy the results of your DRBA support and explore and experience the unique resources of our amazing watershed!

Water Protector Program

Become a DRBA Water Protector! As a household or business in the basin, you are eligible to apply at www.danriver.org/waterprotector

Successful applicants to DRBA’s new program will receive Water Protector Certification, plus gifts to show that you are doing your part to protect our precious water.

Mayodan Mountain Bike Trail Opens

On June 4, National Trails Day, about 15 people gathered at Farris Memorial Park for the formal opening of the 3.5-mile Mayodan Mountain Bike Trail. Cutting the ribbon were Mayor Jeffrey Bullins, Town Manager Michael Brandt, and Mickey Silvers with the Chamber of Commerce. Other attendees included DRBA members, cyclists, trail volunteers, and representatives of the West Rock Rivers & Trails Group. A group of cyclists on a 70-mile ride through Rockingham County stopped by to express their congratulations.



Tony McGee, landscape architect and trail builder/designer, led a short hike explaining trail features that make it particularly attractive to mountain bikers. It is the “home trail” of the McMichael High School Mountain Bike Club led by Coach Pat Sedlock and organized by DRBA with funding from Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust.

In addition to Kate B. Reynolds, funding for the trail came from REI, NC STEP, and Reidsville Area Foundation. Other support came from DRBA members and the Town of Mayodan. Over 200 volunteers from Duke Energy and Hands On Charlotte hand-finished the trail and built two trailhead kiosks.

The trail is rated beginner to intermediate. Mountain bikes are available for rent for a nominal charge when the concession stand is open. For more information on trails in Rockingham County, contact Jenny Edwards at jedwards@danriver.org or (336) 339-6169.

Stoneville Trail Opens



Amy Chan, Janet Silvers, Mickey Silvers and about 20 others enjoy an inaugural walk on the Stoneville Downtown Connector Trail

Stoneville opened its Downtown Connector Trail on Sunday, April 17, with a celebration and ribbon cutting. Starting at Stoneville Memorial Park, the 1.3-mile trail uses a system of natural surface, gravel trails and sidewalks to connect the park to downtown Stoneville.

Partners who supported this project include the Reidsville Area Foundation, REI, Town of Stoneville, DRBA members, and the Dan River Grant Program from the Rockingham County Community Foundation funded by Duke Energy.

A special thanks to Charles Rakestraw, whose property easements made the project possible, and Tony McGee with Blue Ridge Trail Works, whose technical expertise and attention to detail made the trail come to life.

Thursday Trail Trekkers

Thursday Trail Trekkers, a walking group sponsored by Henry County Parks and Recreation Senior Services, began in June, adding a new option to ongoing Monday and Wednesday Dick and Willie Passage hikes. Led by DRBA members Paul Johnson and Ellen and Joe Jessee, with Melissa Puckett of Senior Services, the hikes visit different Henry County places each week. So far the group has hiked at Doe Run Park, the F.I.T. Trail at Philpott Park, the Beaver Creek Reservoir, and the Gravelly Nature Preserve.



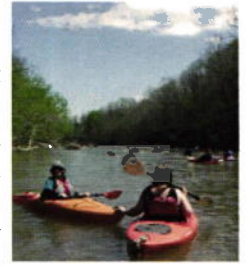
The meeting time is 9:15 a.m., with no minimum age requirement. Hikes are sometimes moderately strenuous, but never last more than one hour. Future Thursdays will feature visits to trails in Fieldale, Bassett, and Collinsville.

For schedules visit www.henrycountyva.gov/seniors. To register, call Henry County Senior Services at 276-634-4644.

April 2 on the Mayo and Dan

Would you float six miles of high-banked river offering a remote wilderness feeling, with historic features from present day to colonial times? That's exactly what thirty-seven people did on DRBA's April 2nd outing on the Mayo and Dan rivers.

Starting at the new Mayo River State Park access in Mayodan, the group floated past the colonial Mayo Ford and the 1892 Mayo River Bridge stone piling. Just beyond the confluence of the Mayo and the Dan, paddlers encountered 19th century Slink Shoal Sluice and Wing Dams, the "crown jewel" of the river's commercial batteau navigation system. This long sluice and log-crib wing dams still direct the water and allow boats to slip over the rapids with ease. More history waited at Lone Island, where Revolutionary War soldiers forded the river after the 1781 Battle of Guilford Courthouse. Centuries of history – all experienced on a DRBA First Saturday Outing.



Wayne Kirkpatrick

May FSO Float—Hyco, Dan, & Aaron's Creek

Editor's note: DRBA veteran Katie Whitehead and novice Woodson Hughes generously contributed to this story. Excerpts follow.

KW: Fourteen DRBA members and guests enjoyed a flatwater paddle on May 7th on the Hyco River to its confluence with the Dan in Halifax County, VA. The six-mile trip began at the Hyco access on Rt. 58 east of South Boston and returned to another access point on Rt. 58 by paddling upstream on Aaron's Creek.

WH: Several days prior to this adventurous gathering were quite rainy, but nature was cooperative. The sky was azure and the few clouds were as soft dabs of cotton. A phalanx of aviary life provided a lovely augmentation to our parade.

KW: Though paddling on the Hyco is suitable for beginners, navigation at flood level requires a rare familiarity. Coordinator Paul Lowry helped everyone relax and enjoy the warm sun and the cormorants.

WH: In the spirit of cooperation, which marks the spirit of the group, all members helped one another. The river was over a foot higher than normal. Trees seemed to emerge from watery depths in surreal fashion. (Senior members graciously helped an inexperienced newcomer disentangle from vines and tree limbs.) All of this majestic natural force contributed to the hypnotically dream-tinged feeling the trek engendered.

KW: The Hyco River was known 150 years ago for Hyco Falls... "boiling and leaping over the ragged rocks." The falls are long gone, and any "ragged rocks" lie well beneath the surface, now known as Hyco Flats. Flooded, the river was lake-like.

WH: Fish leaped momentarily in the air and aviary life perched on trees to watch the humans. Those humans showed their kind nature with the way all stuck together, silently caring for one another by observing a respectful distance but still providing friendly conversation and watching to make sure no craft encountered difficulty, much less trouble of any kind.

KW: Not only was Paul Lowry's first-hand knowledge of the river reassuring, one could take heart at the sight of Three Rivers Outfitters partner Mark Bishopric sporting a sit-on-top kayak, instead of his usual ready-for-a-rescue canoe, and another participant standing on a paddle board.

WH: The hazily warm and perfect day had yielded an experience almost surreal in its perfection. One can only hope the next journey will find the same formula which made the May occasion so wondrous.

June 4 on the Dan

When my mom told me we'd be kayaking Saturday morning, I never expected it to be with 41 people. But the trip from Rebecca Gibson's farm to Hanging Rock State Park was great. The scenery was so beautiful, as it always is on this section of the Dan River. The water was a perfect temperature with the hot sun beating down on us. I was one of the first ones to get started, and using a stand-up paddle board, I could see all 41 paddlers in the water at one time, and it looked as if a herd of cattle was behind me. Although these people had better manners than actual cows, I could tell that most of them were experienced paddlers, but had not paddled this section of the Dan before. Their faces lit up at the mesmerizing sights around us. One girl let out a small squeal when I pointed out a black snake swimming past us to the river bank. At one point, a gentleman climbed up the smallest rock at Demon Rock with his kayak, slid off the rock, and smacked right into the water. He worked to upright his kayak and then decided to try it again.



The trip was a great experience and I am grateful to Rebecca for allowing me to kayak with her and my uncle Doug on these local sections of the Dan. Seeing such a beautiful part of Stokes

County helps me appreciate where I come from and the fun people I get to be around, and I thank them so much.

Tana Frye

Danbury, NC

Senior, North Stokes High School

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Sharon M. Olson

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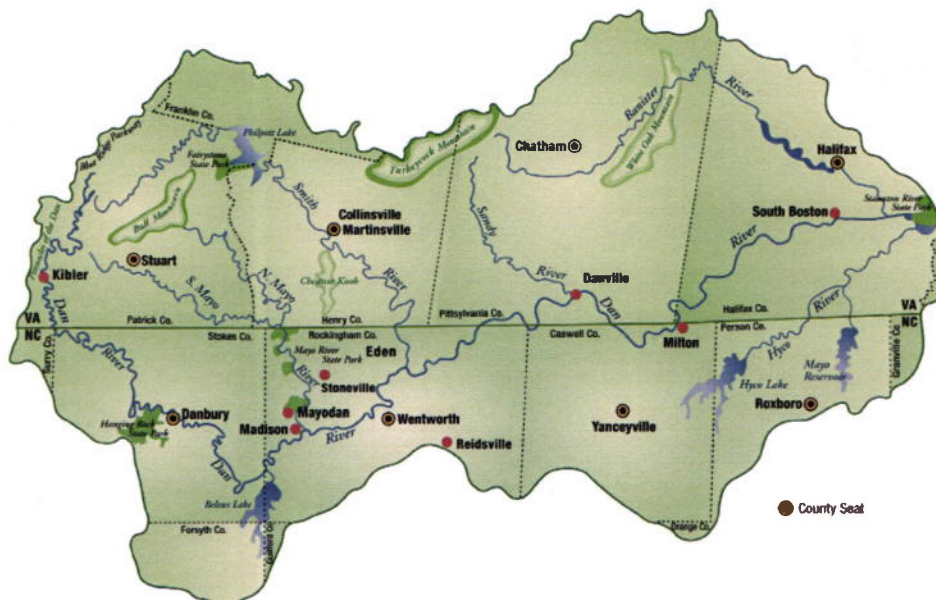
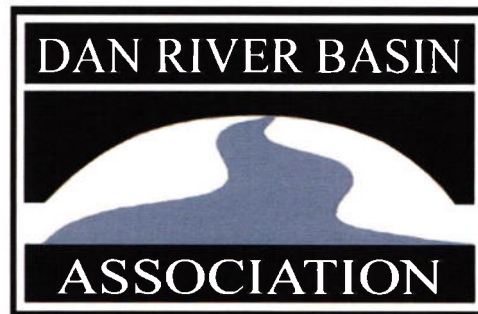
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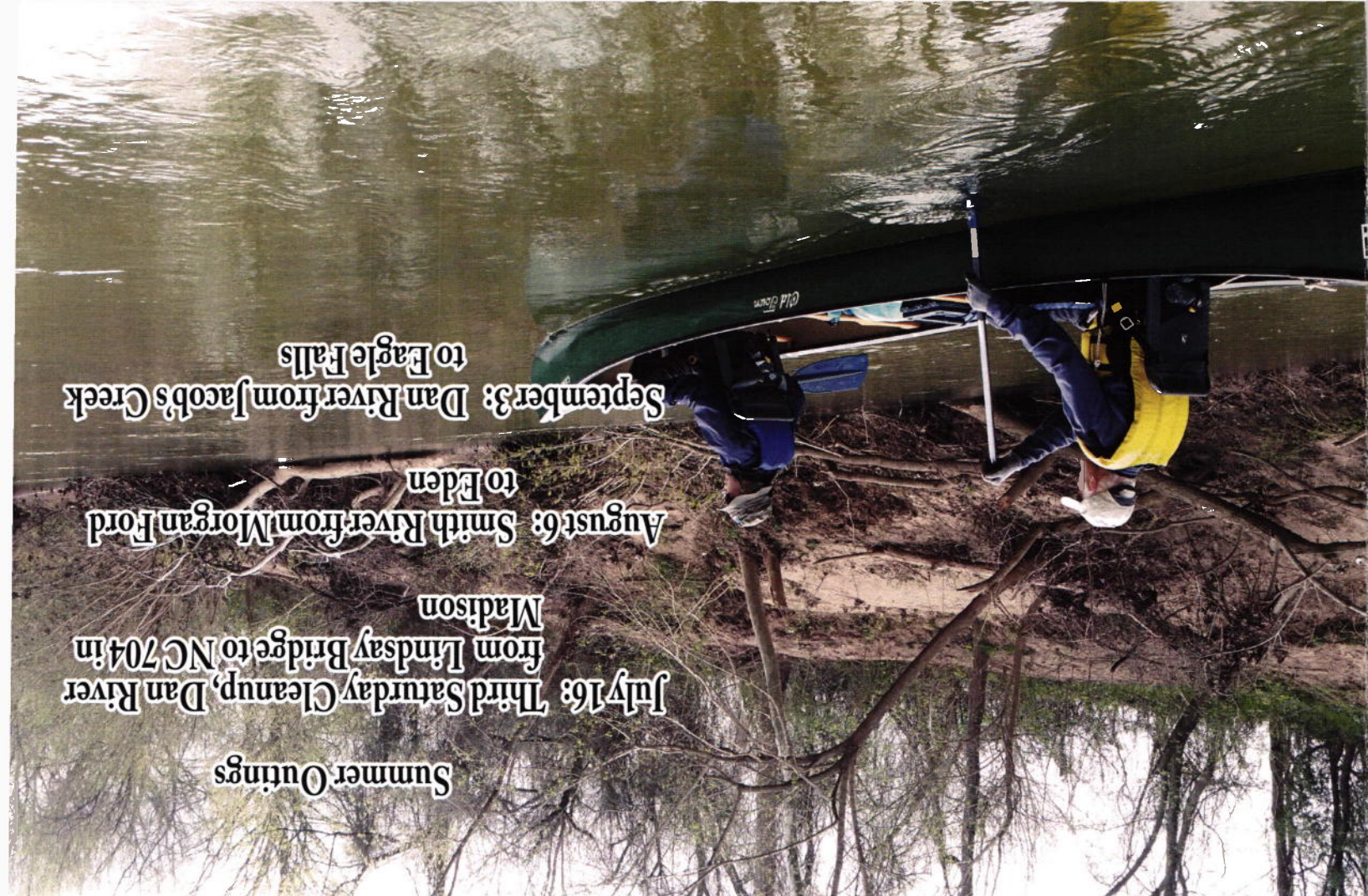
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We are DRBA, Are YOU?





September 3: Dan River from Jacob's Creek to Eagle Falls

August 6: Smith River from Morgan Ford to Eden

July 16: Third Saturday Cleanup, Dan River from Lindsay Bridge to NC 704 in Madison

Summer Outings

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