



Dan River Basin Association

CURRENTS

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Currents • Volume 15 • Issue 2

Dan River Basin Association

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Children prepare to get involved with DRBA's newest program . . .

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Currents Newsletter

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DRBA Celebrates 14 years!

On March 5 at the Museum & Archives of Rockingham County (MARC) 65 members and friends attended DRBA's Annual Celebration, welcomed by President Allison Szuba, MARC Executive Director Jordan Rossi, and Rockingham County Manager Lance Metzler.

Secretary Paul Johnson noted a drop to 309 memberships, but a 25.7% increase in membership income due to membership types. Treasurer Nate Hall reported a 23.7% increase in funds last year, with an ending balance of \$578,304.63. Members unanimously elected a new board member, Dr. Laura Meder, Averett University biology professor.

Staff members reported

DRBA's positive impact reflected in the revised water release schedule at Philpott Dam, legal upholding of the ban on uranium mining in Virginia, thousands of school children reached by DRBA's educational programs, large numbers of Citizen Water Quality Monitoring (CWQM) volunteers, and staff teamwork as they tackled joint projects.

Accepting the 2016 DRBA Partnership Award was Rockingham County Commissioner Mark Richardson, for all local governments in the county. The Corporate Partners Award was presented to Hometrust Bank President Jonathan Jobe for the bank's support of DRBA since 2008. Jennifer Atkins received the Service to DRBA award for her

work with CWQM. Volunteer of the Year Janice Wilkinson was recognized for partnering with DRBA on projects in Madison and Mayodan for 2 ½ years. Featured speaker was Davis Montgomery, District Manager of Duke Energy Carolinas, who addressed the current status and future plans for cleanup of coal ash in Eden and statewide.

Executive Director Tiffany Haworth described ongoing projects and new initiatives for 2016, including new and updated river guides, river access improvements, and a dog walking program for regional animal shelters.

The day's activities concluded with a hike on the Chinqua-Penn Trail.

Paul Johnson

Janice Wilkinson: DRBA's Volunteer of the Year

Retired teacher Janice Wilkinson of Madison, NC, sought ways to give back to her community. A key player in establishing DRBA as a partner with Madison's Small Town Economic Prosperity (STEP) program, she ensured that rivers and trails were a key component of STEP. The first rivers & trails group in the county is marking 3.5 new miles of mountain bike trail at Farris Memorial Park, improvements at Madison's river accesses, a trails and outdoor classroom project, and downtown beautification.

"Thank you for allowing me to give back to my community in a way that I could not even have imagined."

Janice Wilkinson

As recipient of DRBA's Volunteer of the Year award, Janice was recognized as "a tireless beacon, helping keep us on course, keeping the vision alive." Janice commented that she has "such a respect for DRBA and what it represents."

DRBA President, Allison Szuba presents the Volunteer of the Year Award to Janice Wilkinson

Jenny Edwards



DRBA President, Allison Szuba presents the Volunteer of the Year Award to Janice Wilkinson

Doing great things in a great way! ~ ~ Join DRBA today



Two years later. Coal Ash Spill

At the Duke Energy plant near Eden, where the February, 2014 coal ash spill occurred, ash is being excavated and removed to lined storage pits in accordance with new North Carolina law. DRBA's Brian Williams hosted one of our water resource protection partners, Yadkin River-Keeper Will Scott, on a two-year anniversary float by the plant to learn about the site first-hand. High water prevented sediment sampling, but the float was informative for all.

Williams comments, "DRBA continues to be the respected voice of the river and by partnering with other organizations, universities, and agencies we have been able to bring many resources to focus on the issues affecting the Dan and our future."

Violet Mazurek Studies Mysterious Growth in the Smith River

Have you ever heard of DYDIMO? It's an invasive exotic algae, affectionately referred to as "Rock Snot," which came to the Smith River 12 years ago, perhaps brought by birds or fishermen. Little is known about how it affects the ecosystem of the river, whether it harms fish or other organisms, and whether it spreads or stays in one place.

Enter Carlisle School student Violet Mazurek, who chose to study DYDIMO as her senior project. To measure the amount of algae on the river bottom, Violet and DRBA's Brian Williams created a 5-foot-square of pvc pipe, divided into 1-foot sections by yellow cord. The 25-square-foot grid was placed at four sites to sample 100 square feet. By determining whether DYDIMO was present or absent in each square foot, they could calculate relative amounts of the algae at each site.

Preliminary findings indicate that the substrate, or river bed, impacts the growth, as do sunlight amounts and water temperature. More questions than answers have arisen. According to Williams, "That's a good thing and a good reason for someone to pick up this project and continue to refine it and learn more about DYDIMO on the Smith River."



Mazurek measures the quantity of DYDIMO in the Smith River

Brian Williams

Flowers are starting to bloom and the sun's rays are getting warmer. Spring is here! Though I love the basin, I always of energy in the Spring. All members, volunteers
From the Director
 Tiffany Haworth
 the calming winter scenes discover a special new en- of the DRBA staff, board, and donors will need a lot of energy with all the amazing things planned. There are many ways you can protect and promote our beautiful region. Keep informed by signing up with our e-news; tell your friends, family and co-workers, too. Visit www.danriver.org and click on the "Get our Newsletter" link.

Smith River Water Flow Increases



Kayakers prepare to enjoy a weekend release on the Smith River

In 2015, DRBA facilitated discussions among government officials, Dominion, and the Corps of Engineers. The cooperative efforts by all involved have resulted in weekend water releases on the Smith River. Due to the dramatic increase in recreational use, the parking lot at the Great Road access has been expanded with grant funding from Eastman and construction by Henry County PSA.

Public input will determine the next two-year phase of stakeholder discussions; all who enjoy the benefits of the Smith River are invited. DRBA thanks these stakeholders for realizing the potential for improved health of the Smith and more recreational opportunities. Questions or comments can be directed to Brian Williams, bwilliams@danriver.org

Tree Plantings for Streams and Forests

DRBA's Streamside Trees in the Classroom (STIC) program has reached around 800 students this year, with some 400 saplings being cultivated in classrooms in the basin. With transportation funding from the National Park Foundation and in partnership with the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), students are planting their trees this spring, chiefly at Philpott Lake.

According to Krista Hodges, trees are being planted at Goose Point Park, Philpott Visitor Center, Jamison Mill Park, Salthouse Park, and Callaway Elementary. Students



learn about the importance of forested buffers that filter sediment and pollutants from runoff, and they have a personal investment in creating healthy buffers.

Meanwhile, at the hybrid American

Chestnut planting site near Philpott Lake a hardy group of DRBA volunteers recently worked for about 5 hours, replanting hybrid American Chestnut saplings in place of those that died over the winter and removing nearby competing saplings, weeds and briars. Wayne Kirkpatrick reports, "Another set of vigorous 15/16 pure American Chestnut and 1/16 fungus-resistant chestnut saplings replaced the lost trees. DRBA thanks its partners USACE and the American Chestnut Foundation in this effort to reestablish the past king of Appalachian forests."

DRBA Club Serves and Learns

"Dump No Waste – Drains to River" is being stenciled on storm drains in Stuart as the service project of students from the Patrick County High School DRBA Club. Inspired by DRBA's pilot project in Danville, the club is raising awareness of non-point source pollution. With permission from the Stuart Town Council and VDOT, dozens of storm drain locations are being mapped and stenciled with the reminder that they drain directly to the Mayo River.

The DRBA Club enjoyed a recent

field trip to VA Tech to tour the College of Natural Resources and Environment, visit the campus, and lunch in one of the dining halls. According to student Devin Bain, "What interested me most was knowing that there's a college close to home that offers degrees that require hands on experience. I was definitely interested in the water program and what it has to offer. It made me look at water in a different perspective."

Bain continues, "The campus tour, especially the part across the drill

field, was cool. It was interesting to hear the history associated with that



area." Regarding lunch at Diedrick Hall, he comments, "I can see why Virginia Tech is ranked number one when it comes to campus food."

W. Kirkpatrick/D. Bain



Jennifer Driver is all smile after learning she passed the VASOS VWQMC test

**"The beautiful spring came; and when Nature resumes her loveliness, the human soul is apt to revive also."
—Harriet Ann Jacobs**

Enjoy a walk on a trail and revive your soul!

Allison Szuba, President Dan River Basin Association

January FSO Hike at Mayo Lake Park

DRBA's January 2 outing was an enjoyable winter hike along the banks of spectacular Mayo Lake in northeastern Person County's Mayo Park. The park encompasses 120 acres of quality family-oriented facilities. The day's Carolina blue skies, fresh air, and moderate temperature were just what the doctor ordered to beat cabin fever and the boredom of December's rainy days.

Seven members and friends of DRBA, accompanied by one DRBA pet, enjoyed hiking led by Patricia Anderson and Paul Johnson on the 1.92-mile Red Tail Hawk Trail, the park's furthest of nine trails. Along the trail we observed a va-

riety of hardwood trees and loads of hickory nuts. The calls and songs of chickadees, blue jays, cardinals, ravens, sparrows, and finches



accompanied our walk.

Mayo Lake is part of the lower Dan watershed, with a drainage area of 51 square miles. The 2,800-acre lake was created by a dam impoundment of Mayo Creek (not to be confused with the Mayo River). If you're looking for quality fishing, boating, camping, or a place to relax, Mayo Park is the place. Eric Tichay

FSO on the Chinqua-Penn Trail March 5

A beautiful day greeted DRBA members at Chinqua-Penn Walking Trail. Fifteen hikers gathered beneath old oak trees as Bluebird songs filled the air. Led by Becky Loyacano and Milton Hundley, we walked the 1.7-mile National Recreation Trail loop.

The trail follows a small brook to two ponds along the way. We passed Angus cows with their adorable calves, and the butterfly garden, near the Penns' Stew Site. We viewed the slate roof Spring House and tumble-down stone tables, benches, chimney and firebox as we shared stories of Jeff Penn's famous 1920's Brunswick stew ingredients.

The historic stone structures were built over 80 years ago for Jeff and Betsy Penn, owners of Chinqua-Penn Plantation.

At Turkey Pond we pointed out tall grasses where Green Herons breed, and the swampy edge where Red-Winged Blackbirds sing their wetland songs. We stopped at Little Niagara waterfall above the stone Pump House and marveled at the graceful Summer House that overlooks the huge Rock Dam that creates Lake Betsy. The melodious songs of Eastern Meadowlarks brought our wonderful hike on this North Carolina Birding Trail to a close.

Becky Loyacano

February FSO to Tanyard Creek

[Editor's note: Author Tobias Conkle was 13 months old at the time of the hike.]

In February I went on my first DRBA outing -- a hike to a waterfall on Tanyard Creek. There was also lots of interesting history there, too. There was an old house on top of a hill with a spring at the bottom. People in wagons used to stop to water their horses -- but I didn't see any horses so it must have been a long time ago. The creek had lots of cool rocks to look at and play with -- they said some of the rocks were puddingstone but my dad wouldn't let me taste them. There were also big hollowed out areas in some of the rocks that people said were "Indian ovens." I don't know what that means but it sounded cool. The waterfall was very pretty with the sparking water dropping really far over the rock. I could have spent all day there but there was more stuff to see!

When we got to the top of a big hill it was time to take a break and eat lunch. That was good because for most

of the hike my dad carried me and I was ready to get out and explore on my



Master Tobias takes a break after exploring a nearby tree

own.

There were 23 people on the hike and I got to walk around and say hey to most of them. They were all very friendly and I'm glad I got to know them.

We didn't follow the creek back to the field but kept going over the hill where we discovered petrified wood! I'm not sure why they called it wood because it looked and felt more like a rock to me. After that it was just a short walk across the field and back to the cars where we said goodbye. I hope I get to go on another outing soon.

Tobias Conkle with help from his dad, Lucas



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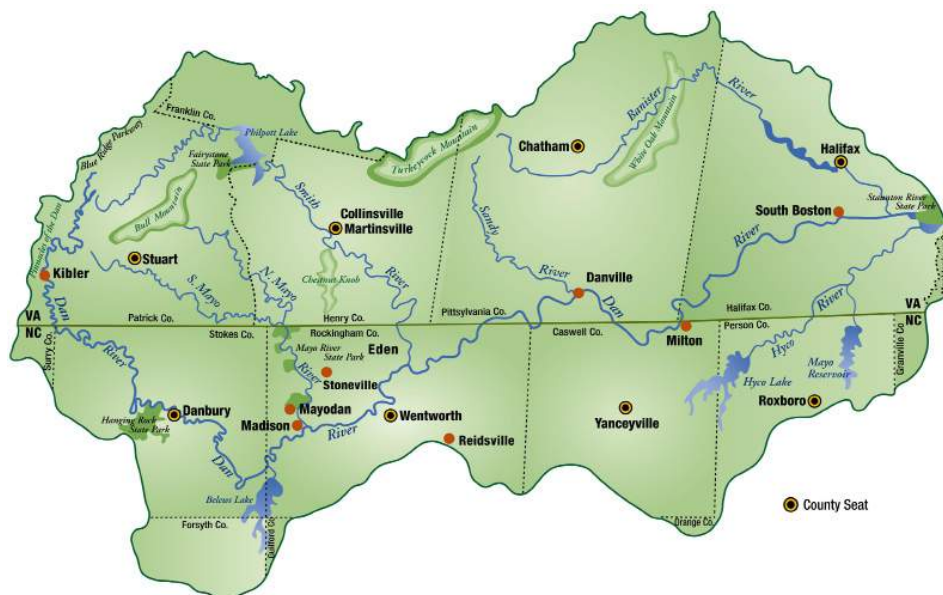
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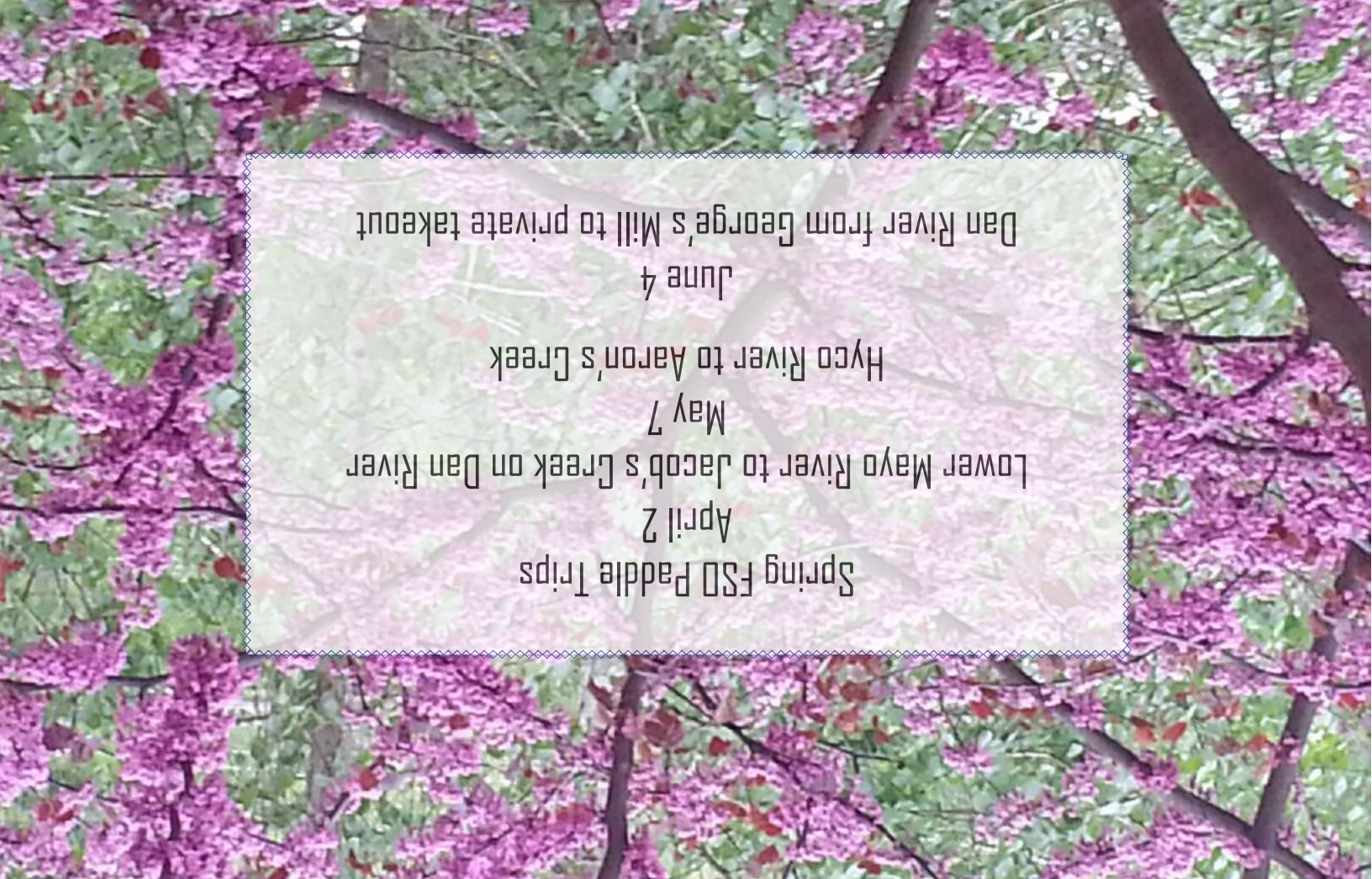
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Dan River from George's Mill to private takeout
 June 4
 Hyco River to Aaron's Creek
 May 7
 Lower Mayo River to Jacob's Creek on Dan River
 April 2
 Spring FSD Paddle Trips

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www.danriver.org