



Dan River Basin Association

# CURRENTS

DANRIVER.ORG • VOLUME 16, ISSUE 1 • WINTER 2017

**TIC and DRBA 10 Years Strong • Wild and Scenic Film  
Festival a Big Success • Trail Systems Continue to Grow**



# Currents • Volume 16 • Issue 1

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Cover: Hiker at Tanyard Branch

# You don't have to be a local student . . .

. . . to check out the TIC program, thanks to Antonio "Tony" Pritchett, owner of TJ's Aquatics and Pets in Martinsville. Pritchett has teamed with DRBA to host two trout tanks at his shop—one to raise brown trout from eggs and a larger one for adult brook trout hatched during last year's TIC program.

"We are thrilled to be partnering with DRBA to host the Trout in the Classroom here at TJ's Aquatics and Pets," Pritchett said. "We hope folks will stop by and enjoy the trout tanks and maybe learn something about protecting our rivers and streams."

Launched in Martinsville in 2005 by Dr. David Jones, the local TIC program has been directed by DRBA for ten years, reaching over 30,000 students, teachers, and citizens in VA and NC. Students receive trout eggs in late fall and care for them as they hatch and grow. Students record daily information and learn about the ecosystem trout need to survive, the trout life cycle, and water quality issues.



Brian Williams and Tony Pritchett observe one of two trout tanks at TJ's Aquatics and Pets



Draper Elementary students are excited to meet their new trout!

In the spring, students release their trout into the Smith River, where they see the river ecosystem first-hand. Here the students make the connection with what they have learned during the school year.

Said Krista Hodges, DRBA Education Manager, "The students are sad to see their trout go after caring for them for so long, but they know they can't keep them over the summer break."

Below: Hodges prepares students for their new trout at Patrick Henry Elementary



For more information, or to donate to support the program, contact Krista Hodges at [khodges@danriver.org](mailto:khodges@danriver.org).

# Trout In the Classroom

# *Celebrating* 10

years with DRBA





**DRBA hosted its first ever Wild & Scenic Film Festival and Auction** at Averett University’s Pritchett Auditorium. It was a night of fun and fellowship including 12 short award-winning films, one-of-a-kind art, and locally sourced snacks and beverages from within the Dan River Basin.

Started by the watershed advocacy group South Yuba River Citizens League (SYRCL) in 2003, the Wild & Scenic Film Festival is hosted in cities across the nation. The festival’s namesake is in celebration of SYRCL’s landmark victory to receive “Wild & Scenic” status for 39 miles of the South Yuba River in 1999.

Amy Farinelli, the Festival Coordinator and DRBA’s Program Coordinator for the Danville, Caswell County and Pittsylvania County region stated that “In today’s busy world, it is easy to disconnect from our role in the global ecosystem. When we realize that the change we need in this world begins with us, we start making a difference. DRBA offers so many ways to make a positive difference.”

While many of the films DRBA chose for local viewers take place in different states, regions, or countries they feature some of the same challenges that we have in the Dan River Basin. Stories about hope, courage and change were just a few of the film topics.

“This event is a natural extension of DRBA’s work to inspire people to act on behalf of the environment,” said Tiffany Haworth of DRBA. “We were very excited to be able to host this national film festival for the first time in our region. The positive response has been tremendous, and we look forward to putting together another inspiring event in 2017!”

Thanks to our generous sponsors, ticket sales, and generous silent and live auction bids, DRBA was able to successfully fundraise over \$8,000. All proceeds will go towards continuing DRBA’s work in protecting our drinking water, our wildlife, our

and Pittsylvania County region stated that “In today’s busy world, it is easy to disconnect from our role in the global ecosystem. When we realize that the change we need in this world begins with us, we start making a difference. DRBA offers so many ways to make a positive difference.”



The crowd eagerly waits for films to begin in Pritchett Auditorium.

history and our economy. To learn more about DRBA’s Wild and Scenic Film Festival and Auction, please visit [www.danriver.org](http://www.danriver.org).

[the films] “give people a sense that our region is facing issues similar to places around the world.”

Amy Farinelli

I am so lucky to work for DRBA and experience the amazing sights of our watershed every day, every season. Our region has so many places that I haven’t seen them all in my five years with the DRBA family. Winter is my favorite time to explore new places. With the leaves gone, it’s easier to see our rivers and streams and gaze for miles from our many vistas. Even when it’s grey outside, the beauty of our region shines through the clouds.

Tiffany Haworth, Executive Director

**DRBA’s Environmental Education program was recognized** in 2016 by the VA Wildlife eStore Grant Program, a partnership between the VA Wildlife Foundation and DGIF, which connects youth to the outdoors. We received funding to purchase equipment and supplies for Trout in the Classroom at Carlisle School in Martinsville. The program will reach an estimated 70 students through the science lab at Carlisle and about 20 of those students will attend the trout release in the spring.

This program is supported by the 2016 Virginia Wildlife eStore ([www.ShopDGIF.com](http://www.ShopDGIF.com)) Grant Program through a partnership between the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries and the Wildlife Foundation of Virginia with additional support this year from Richmond Ford.



**The Patrick County High School DRBA Club** held its first two activities of the school year. The club revisited the historical marker commemorating the terminus of William Byrd's 1728 survey of the VA/NC border, where the DRBA Club of a prior year cleaned up an illegal litter dump. This time, instead of removing about 500 pounds of trash, the club was encouraged to find only about 100 pounds. No litter at all would be best, but less is moving in a positive direction.

The students also checked the water quality of the Mayo River near Stuart, assessing the macroinvertebrate population and diversity. Results indicated excellent water quality with low pollution concentrations of toxins, nutrients, or sediment.

In early 2017, the DRBA Club anticipates a field trip to VA Tech's College of Natural Resources and Environment, a hike in Hanging Rock State Park, and a paddle on Philpott Lake. DRBA thanks club faculty advisors Rebecca Gibson, Brenda Martin, and Stephen Henderson.



Students work to count macroinvertebrates in the Mayo River

Wayne Kirkpatrick

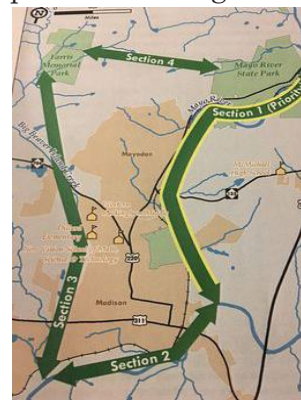
**Operation Riverbank** begins its eleventh year at Woolwine Elementary (WES). Sixth and seventh grade students test the Smith River and Sycamore Creek, sampling macroinvertebrates and checking for sediment, toxic, and nutrient pollution levels. DRBA's Wayne Kirkpatrick has provided lessons on streamside pollution and conducted numerous training sessions for students and lead teachers.



Originally funded in 2005 by a Virginia Naturally program funded by the VA Dept of Conservation & Recreation through the EPA's Chesapeake Bay Program, the grant provided hip waders and neoprene gloves for river testing. Anna Lester, a generous DRBA supporter, recently donated funds for new waders. WES thanks DRBA for supporting this worthwhile, hands-on learning opportunity and hopes to continue Operation Riverbank for many years to come.

**The Mayo River Recreation Plan**, developed by proponents in Rockingham County, is a comprehensive plan to develop trails and river frontage in Madison, Mayodan, and Stoneville to improve health, quality of life, and economic development. Collaborators with the towns include DRBA, Piedmont Land Conservancy, Mayo River State Park, Piedmont Triad Regional Council, and West Rock River and Trails Group.

Current focus is on an "Emerald Necklace"—five sections of trails to link state and municipal properties, and downtowns with river access points. The first phase would also establish a swimming beach on the river and a riverside community park. The multi-year project proposes connecting the eastern and western sides of the



river with a pedestrian bridge and a zip line.

DRBA's Jenny Edwards comments, "Rockingham County is already a great place to live and work. There is a real strong sense of community and people looking out for each other. As we continue to focus on the growth of trails and water access in western Rockingham

County, it will only make the county appeal that much better."

Joe Dexter

**Mayo River Rail Trail (MRRT) Expansion** is complete with Phase II, making the trail doubled in length. From the original downstream terminus, the trail now branches in two directions. One segment continues a half mile along the river to an earthen berm with a kiosk and a resting bench memorializing Jeanie Frisco, visionary former Patrick County Tourism Director.

The second segment crosses Commerce Street, winds up a gentle slope on the property of Blue Ridge Therapy Connection, stopping at a kiosk. From this point, Phase III will eventually cross Woodland Drive and Stuart Rotary Field to again parallel the Mayo River.



Local trail enthusiasts attend the dedication of the MRRT Phase II completion

DRBA will contribute trail distance markers and interpretive signage, using funds raised through its Apple Dumpling Festival 5K.

Wayne Kirkpatrick

**Join DRBA today!**



**Meet Your New DRBA Board President...**

Jennifer Atkins of Danville, VA, is Agricultural Operations Director for Tyton BioEnergy Systems. Active with DRBA since 2012, she is CWQM certified, a board member since 2015, and the 2016 recipient of the Service to DRBA Award.

Jennifer enjoys traveling and being involved in her community; she serves as a member of Pittsylvania County Farm Bureau and a board member of both Riverview Rotary and Danville Historical Society.



*"I am honored to have been chosen and very excited about my new role with DRBA, which I know will be a rewarding challenge"*  
Jennifer Atkins

**My first DRBA outing.**

Any time is a good time to be outdoors but October 1st is especially good, the end of a hot Summer with hints of Fall in the air. At Ryan's Branch I saw Robin's pink kayak and knew this was who I was meeting. I launched my trusty old blue Coleman canoe as DRBA folks started arriving. There were about 15 people with kayaks and two with paddle boards. Everyone was nice and made a newcomer feel welcome.

We headed East under Union Bridge, then North up the channel. The deep water was beautiful and dark, reflecting the steep surrounding hills. Just a couple of miles up is a beautiful, interesting cliff called Calico Rock for its unusual coloration. A little further up the branch, lake meets river at the head water where we had our lunch. Here the water is clear and you can get out on the river rocks.

When we got back everyone helped load boats; DRBA folks are friendly and welcoming! My canoe

will be riding on top of my truck a lot more now.

Mike Shelton

**DRBA's October 15 Third Saturday**

outing was a hike at the DeHart Botanical Gardens in Patrick County. The woods sported late summer green hues of a warm fall. Seventeen hikers enjoyed the steep climbs and descents that make the three-mile loop of this Blue Ridge gem a challenge. A covered dish meal at Wayne and Betty Kirkpatrick's home followed with good friends and fellowship.

The gardens were donated by Allen de Hart to Ferrum College as an outdoor classroom. De Hart wrote several hiking guides, helped spur development of the NC Mountains-to-Sea Trail, and established a second botanical garden at his home near Louisburg, NC. He passed away at age 90 on the day prior to the hike, making the opportunity to explore the Gardens a special occasion to honor his lifetime of conservation.

**November 5 on the Banister**

found a dozen boaters and a standup paddle boarder, come considerable distances to enjoy a beautiful fall morning navigating a portion of the Banister River Blueway. The river's well-preserved 19th century batteau sluices, considered to be some of the best preserved structures in Virginia, made it easy to navigate the few rapids. Historic bridge remains and a photogenic railroad trestle added interest to what Lucas Conkle calls "this gem of a river."

**DRBA's December 3**

FSO featured a crisp day just right for a visit to the Gravelly Nature Preserve. Eight hikers enjoyed the two-mile loop of the Jones and Rhododendron trails. After an ascent to the Burgess Cemetery, hikers descended to the Smith River, traveling through the Rhododendron tunnel before completing the loop. This brings the 2016 FSOs to a close, but DRBA has many great hikes and paddles scheduled for 2017.

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# The Dan River Basin





Trails system.

History. We'll meet from 9:30-noon, lunch on our own, then hike on the Smith River

Mark your calendar! DRBA's Annual Celebration at the Virginia Museum of Natural

Annual Celebration - Make Your Plans!

**March 4**

FSO Hike at Reynolds Homestead

**February 4**

(out)

FSO Hike at Knight-Brown Nature Preserve (snowed

**January 7**

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[www.danriver.org](http://www.danriver.org)