

A winter scene with snow-covered trees and a wooden fence. The sun is shining through the trees in the background, creating a bright glow. The foreground shows a snow-covered path and a wooden fence with a wire mesh. A small black pot sits on the snow in the foreground.

CURRENTS

Dan River Basin Association

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Working Across the Basin

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Dan River Basin Association

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Cover photo by Tiffany Haworth



“This program is wonderful because the students are growing and planting trees that are placed in their communities, in public places, and they can come back and visit them.”
Krista Hodges

Streamside Trees in the Classroom Field Days are like magic! Starting with a bare black willow stick, a little rooting medium, and a bottle of water, fourth graders in DRBA’s Streamside Trees in the Classroom (STIC) program care for the sticks for weeks, watching them sprout roots, then leaves, then grow strong enough to be planted in a public place alongside a nearby waterway.

Planting the trees calls for a celebration, which Education Manager Krista Hodges arranges with a field trip to the water’s edge featuring several natural resource partners. Students guess what kind of skull a VA Tech forester is holding as he tells stories about wildlife. They pour water into two trays of dirt, one plain and the other planted with cedar seedlings, then measure how much water runs off and see how dirty the runoff is. They play a chasing game, “The Riparian Buffer,” where each “Tree” intercepts “Soil” and “Pollution” runners, keeping them from reaching the stream. They learn about fitting life jackets from Philpott Lake rangers. They race to collect litter in pairs, one acting only as guide while the other, who has the grabber and bag, is blindfolded.



The students, says Hodges, “will remember planting the tree and taking the field trip for a very long time. To them, this is a big experience and they have something to show for it. Many students say it’s the best field trip they’ve ever been on. I love pulling in the natural resource partners and volunteers too; the program wouldn’t be the same without their help.”

Education . . . it makes a Difference

Hands-on STEM Experiences with DRBA became the focus at Albert Harris Elementary School in Martinsville. Pet wild insects? If you're a second grader, you may think of the butterflies fluttering in your school's garden as your pets. You're part of a multi-year Green Schoolyard Initiative created by Laurie Witt, the school's STEM coordinator, and Krista Hodges, DRBA's Education Manager. The problem-based learning experiences these two educators are providing have begun with a butterfly garden. The students started plants from seed and later planted them in their schoolyard. Now their rain barrel system collects runoff rainwater that the students use to water their plants.

Learning opportunities abound. While caring for their garden with the captured runoff, students learn to conserve water and track how much water they are saving. Using data they record provides math and science lessons. By diverting runoff from storm drains, they learn that they are protecting nearby rivers and streams, another important project goal. Sharing in responsibility for the garden encourages development of leadership, initiative, social responsibility, and a commitment to service.



Shortly before the Christmas break, the Community Foundation Serving Western Virginia paid a surprise visit to the school. Says Hodges, "The foundation's grant is to enhance their butterfly garden to make it a certified Monarch waystation and to start a composting program using their school cafeteria waste. The compost will enrich the butterfly garden, along with the collected rainwater from the barrels."

She adds, "This is going to be a multi-grade project that will hopefully expand over the years. It has the potential of reaching thousands of students since it will last several years, and see the same students as they move up in grades. All of the students are going to take part, and it will give them hands-on experiences aligned with what they are learning in class. Hopefully, they'll share their experiences with their family, and their family may want to become involved. It's an exciting project that I'm looking forward to working on!"

From the Executive Director
A new year offers the opportunity to give your body, mind and spirit the chance to truly engage with nature. Volunteer, donate, hike or paddle somewhere new, and participate in events and programs that protect and conserve our amazing natural environment. DRBA can help you. Simply take a few minutes to browse our website, danriver.org. I promise you will be inspired to make 2019 your best year yet.
 Tiffany Haworth

MHC After 3 Fall Program led students as they learned about the importance of recycling, reducing, and reusing during after-school sessions with DRBA. Students discussed what items and types of plastic can be recycled, how to read the plastic codes, and ways to reduce their waste. They made flowers from recycled bottles as take-home reminders to practice what they learned and to share the information with their families.

Krista Hodges



Our children . . . will make a Difference



High Rock Ford Historic Park Installations challenged us with a “sweat and muscle” installation of tremendously heavy prefabricated river access steps, and while I ended up with only one available volunteer, I was pleased to see the mighty Kelley Neiderhiser! I had met Kelley on the Dan River cleanup where she and I pulled 22 boats up a very steep and muddy slope. She had discovered DRBA through the initial clean-up at High Rock, and I was extremely impressed at her dedication, strength and determination.

When I contacted Kelley to tell her about the Haw River High Rock project, I was pleasantly surprised to learn she lives just up the road from the site. Wow, how lucky was that! Imagine my excitement to find out she was so close to High Rock and was new to paddling and very excited to be a DRBA volunteer.

On the day we were set to install the steps, a crew happened to be there to install the fence along the property line. When I arrived with the steps and she realized how heavy they were, Kelley suggested we enlist the fencing crew for help. So she asked for their help, and they graciously agreed. Using their Bobcat loader they hauled the frame down close to the river, and Kelley and I were able to manage it from there. We drilled holes with the post hole diggers and used a block and tackle to haul the frame in place and install it. Then we cemented the posts and added the steps. So far they have survived two record floods and are still just as we installed them.



Kelley also helped on the sign installation at a moment’s notice. She has become our “Adopt-a-Trail” volunteer, and we have plans to paddle various sections from the new access downstream. Kelley is an awesome addition to DRBA. She sends photos and updates on river and site conditions and obviously loves this site. DRBA is truly lucky to have her!

Brian Williams

Editor’s Note: Just before Christmas the river rose again, covering the steps and low-lying parts of the trail. As upstream rains have continued, on our January 5 First Saturday Outing hike at the park we may just see the tops of the railings on the steps.

Our Volunteers . . . they make a Difference

Dan River Implementation Team and St8 Crossings yield more results. Rockingham Community College's TRAILS program continues to grow, training outdoor recreation-oriented job seekers, park personnel, and volunteer trail builders. The college is working to move the program from continuing education to a mainstream curriculum by 2020.

In 2019, year two of the promotional campaign initiated through Duke Energy, information on the St8 Crossings website (www.st8crossings.com) will be augmented with trip itineraries, a calendar of major festivals and events across the basin, and updated information on the interactive map – all to guide residents and visitors to the natural and cultural resources of the basin. Parallel to DRBA's environmental, stewardship, and outdoor recreation programming, this expands the effort toward increased economic activity while remaining focused on preserving and promoting the basin's natural and cultural resources. Wayne Kirkpatrick



2018 4th Annual Art in Nature Auction

was a huge success! For the first time ever, the event was held online and was made available to bidders for eight days. Fifty-one unique made-from-nature, inspired-by-nature, and upcycled/recycled items were donated by 19 artists and art supporters. Almost 170 bids were received raising \$1,400 to support DRBA's ongoing work. Tiffany Haworth

Patrick County Trail HANDS Project initiated by an AIR Shift workshop held last spring, will make finding a trail in Patrick County easier by mid-2019, thanks to the Trail HANDS (Heritage-Arts-Nature-Dreams-Stories) project. The project melds artists, businesses, and community leaders to serve community needs. The initial phase of Trail HANDS will place a large hand-shaped sculpture decorated by local artists near the trailheads of five trails. Wayne Kirkpatrick



Our Partners . . . they make a Difference



October 6 on Fairystone Lake: The people, the beautiful landscape, serenity, and places to enjoy without human sounds attracted us to Patrick County and Stuart, Virginia. You see, we are soon to be transplants here, exported from the Sunshine State. With anticipation and excitement we were finally able to join DRBA's outing on Fairy Stone Lake, and we weren't disappointed. As kayaking novices we were delighted with the venue's still, shallow waters, and not a marathon distance to paddle.

Sixteen paddlers in thirteen kayaks and two canoes convened under overcast skies. Coordinator Wayne Kirkpatrick and historian Lindley Butler gave us perspective on what we would experience. We began our paddle up

Goblintown Creek to one of the old mine tunnels (opening gated for safety) from "The Iron Works." After a u-turn we paddled past the state park's swimming beach and over Fayerdale, a long-ago busy town that extracted iron ore, and the railroad spur that transported the product. The outdoor theatre and camping cabins could be seen on shore as we continued our leisurely paddle to the earthen dam and spillway where Philpott Lake can be seen below. After lunch on the "rocks" we headed back to the launch site. For the duration of the outing we counted migrating monarch butterflies, tallying 41. Delicious chocolate brownies, courtesy of T Butler, welcomed us when we returned.

Our experience fortified our choice of a retirement location: peacefulness, beautiful scenery, and a great group of people.

Danica Perhacs



October 20 in Patrick County

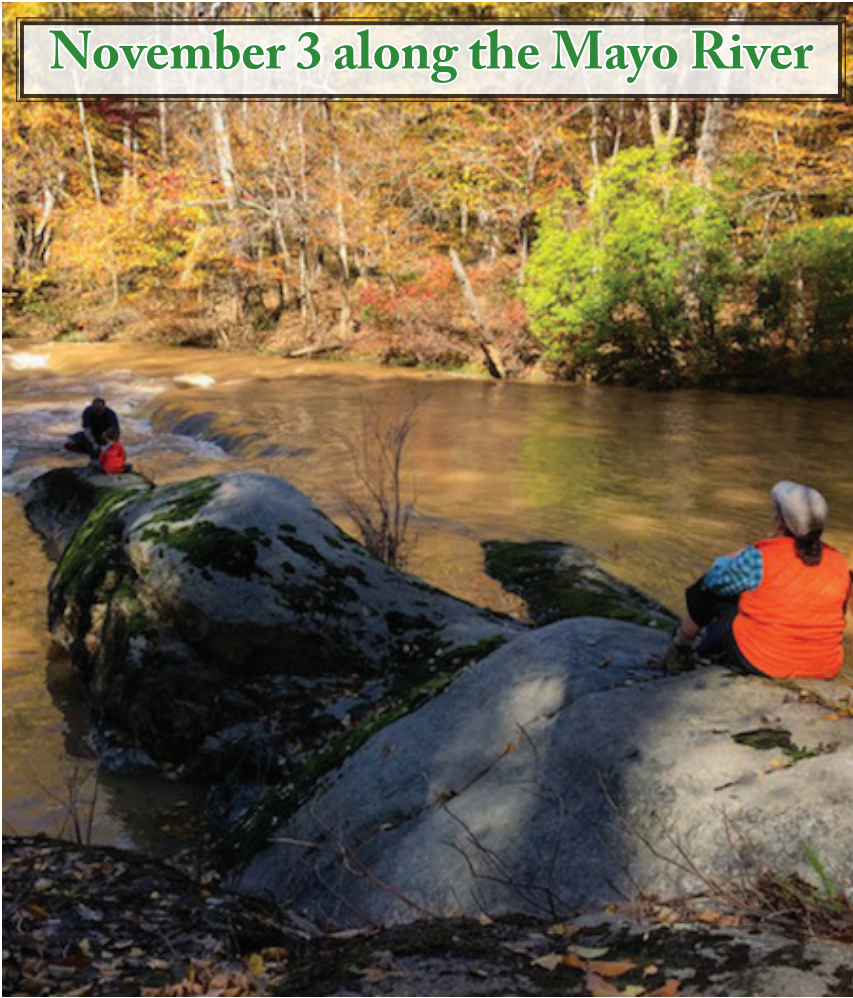
begun with the Apple Dumpling 5K. This event is supported by participant registrations, local businesses and individuals. All proceeds are used for trail development and enhancement in Patrick County.

Later that morning, while many enjoyed the Apple Dumpling Festival in downtown Stuart, twenty DRBA members and guests met at the Kirkpatrick's' home for the annual *Third Saturday Outing* hike and covered-dish meal. This year hikers toured the remains of the 1916 DC electric generating plant, water flume, hand-dug tunnel and dam on the South Mayo River near the Kirkpatrick farm. This early electrification project for the Town of Stuart illuminated streets and homes until it was integrated into the Appalachian Electric Power grid around 1939. The DC system is a testament to the hard work and ingenuity of basin residents as modern conveniences came online early in the 20th Century.

The covered-dish meal caps off a great day of hiking, fun and fellowship with tasty entrees and treats by some of the best cooks in the basin. Wayne and Betty look forward to this day each year, and 2019 will bring another fun DRBA Day in Patrick County. Ya'll come!

Wayne Kirkpatrick

November 3 along the Mayo River



Dazzling golden and red leaves glistening against a brilliant blue sky, crisp fall temperatures, and a congenial group of 11 nature lovers equals the perfect hike on November 3rd along the Mayo River. Led by the knowledgeable Dr. Will Truslow, the group hiked up and down the spectacular river and across large rocks on Fall Creek to various points of interest. Along the way Truslow provided historical tidbits about the local area. A highlight for first-time Mayo hikers like me was the gorgeous 50-foot-wide, 18-foot-high Fall Creek Falls, an unexpected gem now in the Mayo River State Park.

On the 2.5-mile hike Dr. Truslow pointed out where the North Mayo and South Mayo rivers meet close to the state line. After crossing from North Carolina into Virginia we took a lunch and snack break on “Byrd’s Rock” or Byrd’s Ledge” – a picturesque spot where William Byrd, leader of the survey party that established the border between Virginia and Carolina in 1728, viewed his crossing and camping place on the west side of the North Mayo River. A very enjoyable way to spend a perfect Fall hiking day! Elizabeth Marquez

December 1 on Mountain Laurel Trail I wondered what the day had in store when thick fog appeared out of nowhere on the way to Mountain Laurel Trails near Horsepasture, Virginia. Lucas Conkle was at the trailhead beside a tree decorated with bikes, old and rusty, flat-tired, to a couple that appeared trail-worthy.

We started out, just the two of us, Lucas in the lead, meeting no other hikers or bikers on the 10-mile network of trails in this beautiful setting. There is a 5-mile Central Loop trail to which other trails connect.

I love rocky trails and a meandering creek, so this was a perfect hike. We followed Jennings Creek, the upper section with rocky creek bed and clear cascading waters and pools. A lower lying section saw a creek bed transitioning to sand.

On another section we reached the ridgetop by “stacked loops,” transversing the hill, then a sharp switch-back reversing direction, repeating until we reached the top. There were woods, areas with a blanket of running cedar covering a carpet of fallen leaves and, of course, mountain laurel.

We headed back to the trailhead after seeing the remains of a cabin believed to have belonged to an eighteenth-century trapper, killed by Indians, for whom the creek was named. Sharon Olson



You . . . you make a Difference to DRBA

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Lee Templeton
Will And Mary Truslow

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Mike Shelton
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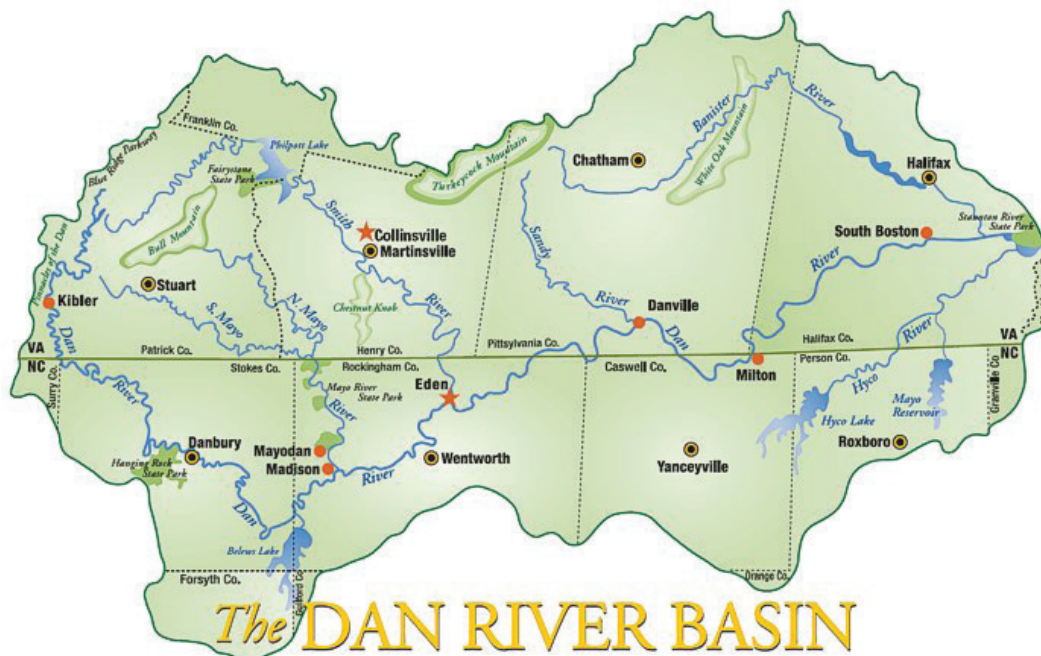
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January 5 **Hike at High Rock Ford
Historic Park**

February 2 **Reynolds Homestead
Hike**

March **Annual Celebration
(venue TBA)**

April 6 **Paddle Mayo River
Mayo Beach to NC 770**

