



CURRENTS

Dan River Basin Association

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**A Labor of Commitment • STIC a success with Students
DRBA Staff Recognized
Chinqua-Penn Stew Site Restoration**

Currents • Volume 19 • Issue 1

Dan River Basin Association

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North Carolina Offices

413 Church Street, Suite 401
Eden, NC 27288-3242

Tiffany Haworth
Executive Director
336-627-6261
thaworth@danriver.org

Robin Light
Office/Accounting Manager
336-627-6270
rlight@danriver.org

371 NC Hwy 65
Reidsville NC 27320

Jenny Edwards
Rockingham County Program
Manager
336-339-6169
jedwards@danriver.org

Virginia Offices

3300 Kings Mountain Road
P.O. Box 7
Collinsville, VA 24078

Brian Williams
Virginia Program Manager
276-634-2545
bwilliams@danriver.org

Krista Hodges
Education Outreach Manager
276-634-2592
khodges@danriver.org

308 Craghead Street
Danville, VA 24541
315-209-5055

Currents Newsletter

Editor
T Butler

Design/Production
Betty Kirkpatrick

Publisher
Rich Seybert, Felts Printing

Photo Credits:
Gordon Allen
T Butler
Krista Hodges
Betty Kirkpatrick
Wayne Kirkpatrick
Kim Barto Meeks



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Cover Photo: Contributed



The Leaksville Covered Bridge (circa 1930's) crossed the river from Bridge Street to what is now Bethlehem Church Road. It served the communities of Leaksville and Spray allowing farmers, merchants and visitors alike safe passage across the Dan River. It stood just one-half mile downriver from historic Leaksville Landing.

The onshore abutments and the piling in the center of the river are all that remain today. View is from Bridge Street, on river left.

A Labor of Commitment -- Restoring History on the Dan River

What is a Champion? It is a person who fights . . . for a cause or on behalf of someone else. The Dan River Basin Association is rich with champions. Champions of our communities, our people, our parks, our rivers and the quality of our lives. But none more recently than two extraordinary men, Jeff Johnston and Mark Bishopric.

In 2018 and 2019 when the rains brought the Dan River to flood stage through the cities of Danville and Eden, fallen trees caused dangerous and damaging conditions up and down the river. Most upsetting was the debris found wrapped around a piling in the river just below Leaksville Landing. The dry laid stone piling standing approximately 30 feet tall had once supported the Leaksville Covered Bridge before its collapse in 1943.

This historic structure, standing since 1852, had been bombarded with large trees and, through the spring and summer, the debris continued to pile up, rising to almost 2/3rds the height of the structure. And, for more than a year, it remained --- spreading across the river and creating strainers for paddlers and tubers alike.

When the waters receded during the summer of 2019, Bishopric and Johnston began the task of clearing the debris from the piling. Not only making the river safe again, but reducing the threat of damage being done to the piling.

Beginning in mid-September, and working whenever water and weather allowed, the men incorporated chainsaws, ropes, tractors, hoes, shovels and pick-axes to move the tons of rock, mud, branches and tree trunks. From the shore, Mike Haines worked with Johnston and Bishopric using his tractor to help free some of the larger trunks. By the end of October, this magnificent structure once again stood proudly in the river. A bit damaged and now in need of protection, its presence continues to serve as a reminder of our history.

The Dan River Basin Association is indebted to Mark Bishopric and Jeff Johnston, who along with Mike Haines, worked so diligently to make our namesake river safe, clean and grand. Take a look at the pictorial on page 6 and 7 and when you get the opportunity visit this bit of history found on the Dan River.

This piling that once supported the historic Leaksville Covered Bridge still stands in the Dan River approximately one-half mile up river from the confluence of the Smith and the Dan.



DRBA receives \$700,000 Challenge Grant from Harvest Foundation

DRBA received a five-year, \$700,000 challenge grant from The Harvest Foundation to manage the funding acquisition for the 2019 Outdoor Recreation Master Plan for Rivers and Trails in Martinsville and Henry County. The Harvest Foundation invests in community initiatives that support economic development within Martinsville-Henry County to improve the community's health, educational opportunity and quality of life.

The Master Plan was adopted by Henry County and the City of Martinsville in February, 2019. Both municipalities have made a commitment to provide substantial in-kind resources for plan implementation, but DRBA will be responsible for raising the rest of the \$7 million needed to complete all of the projects in the plan in five years.

The challenge grant will provide capacity support for DRBA staff and operations in MHC while we work to raise the funding and resources to fully implement the master plan. The challenge grant will provide two years of funding to the organization for the initial start-up, with additional support made available in years three through five contingent upon the organization achieving annual funding goals. No foundation money can be used for the projects.

The master plan includes seventeen projects throughout Martinsville and Henry County that will improve existing amenities and develop new ones. Major projects include the development of a Fieldale extension of the Dick & Willie Passage Rail Trail, trails in Bassett, Stanleytown and Fieldale connected to the Smith River Small Towns Collaborative work, and numerous trail and river enhancements along the Smith River. Local parks and ballfields also are marked for improvements.

Tiffany Haworth

To read the plan in full, go to our website at www.danriver.org and click on *Programs*.



Rivers & Trails Recreational Use Plan

Martinsville/Henry County, Virginia



2019



Jenny Edwards Recognized

Madison Mayor David Myers presented Jenny with a plaque recognizing her as Town of Madison *Good Neighbor of the Year* for her work in outdoor recreation. Jenny is DRBA's Program Manager for Rockingham County. Her work includes walking trails, river accesses and mountain bike trails. DRBA is proud of the work she continues to do to make our communities a place to enjoy nature, recreation and healthy lifestyles.



Looking for a way to give back? We've got something for everyone!



Join DRBA today and find out more!
www.danriver.org

Apple Dumpling Festival 5k

The weather was perfect for the Apple Dumpling Festival 5K on October 19. Thank you to the OVER one hundred participants who took off early Saturday morning to traverse the Mayo River Rail Trail. The race was won in a time of 20:00 by Jonathan Lazaro of Woolwine, followed by RJ Scott in 20:10 and Mark Joyce of Bassett in 21:13. On the women's side; Elizabeth Warriner was top finisher in 27:37, second was Sybil Slate in 28:28 and third was Eden Nickelson in 29:26.

Many of the runners were under the age of 12. They were part of the Stuart Elementary School Run Club, which had been training after school for six weeks leading up to the event. Other runners came from surrounding areas of Martinsville, Floyd, Pinnacle NC and Aberdeen, NC. Monies raised support DRBA's ongoing trail enhancement work in Patrick County. Specifically, this money will be used to place signage with each of the five Trail H.A.N.D.S. sculptures that are installed around Patrick County, including one along the Mayo River Rail Trail.



This event would not be possible without the help of our sponsors. We would like to thank Patrick County Tourism, The Patrick County Chamber of Commerce, Blue Ridge Accounting and Tax Services, Patrick County Eye Associates, Jones and Deshon Orthodontics, Clark Gas and Oil, Blue Ridge Bank, Clark Brothers Construction, Farmers' Insurance, Blue Ridge Therapy Connection, Patrick County Med Spa and Windy Hill Orchards. For complete results, visit the Apple Dumpling Festival 5K Facebook event page.

Wayne Kirkpatrick



FCPWT Stew Site Restoration Project

Renowned for their lavish entertainments in the 1920s and '30s, Jeff and Betsy Penn, owners of Chinqua-Penn Plantation, created a picnic area near a spring where they served Jeff's famous Brunswick stew to large gatherings. Over the years cattle roamed through the site, toppling the stone tables, benches, chimney, and food preparation area. The Chinqua-Penn Trail begins near the ruins, now called the Stew Site.



Friends of Chinqua-Penn Walking Trail have undertaken restoration of the stone structures, employing the remarkable skills of Fred Meder of Outdoor Designs of Danville. A ribbon cutting was held on November 8 for the completion of Phase I, reconstruction of three tables with benches. Additional tables and benches are slated for Phase II of the project, which has been described as a giant jigsaw puzzle with very, very heavy pieces. If funding allows, the goal is to restore the entire complex, to be used by the public as an educational asset.



Run with the Cows: The Udder 5K

On September 29 the sixth annual Run with the Cows was held at the Chinqua-Penn Trail. All finishers in the main event and in the one-mile Kids' Fun Run earned the coveted Cowbell Finisher's Award. Top winners for males were Cason Pyrtle, Mark Joyce, and Matthew Bedard, while open winners for females were Felicia Lombardi, Jaelyn Davis, and Skylar Critzer. All winners of cash prizes are listed at www.ChinquaPennTrail.org, along with photos of the race by Gordon Allen Photography and Wayne and Betty Kirkpatrick.

Twelve youngsters between 4 and 13 years old ran the Kids' Fun Run, with all finishing the mile in under 13 minutes. The first three finishers were 7-year-old Caleb, 10-year-old Jocelyn, and 4-year-old Aaron.

All proceeds from the event go to maintenance and improvements on the trail. Friends of Chinqua-Penn Walking Trail thank the many volunteers and the following generous sponsors for their support.: BIG BULL: DRBA, Jacob B. (Skip) Balsley & Craig Cardwell, Home Trust Bank, Templeton Trailscapers, and Town of Wentworth. MAMA COW: John Strickland BOUNCING CALF: Ansbro-Knox Group, Annie Penn Hospital Foundation, Eden Jewelry, Pat Foeller, Gunn Auto Service, Hicks Insurance, House of Health, Rockingham Chiropractic Center, Strader's Shoe Store, Vernon Family Dairy, and Robert L. Wheless DDS. MOO-MOO: Big Apple Farm Supply, Compute This, Five Star Realty, God's Pit Crew, Horizon of NC, In Touch In Life, Maddrey Etringer Smith Hollowell & Toney, Reid's House Restaurant, Split Ends Family Hair Care, Fletcher & Ginger Waynick, Wentworth Animal Hospital, and Wild Ginger Bred Angel.



T Butler



DRBA founder Lindley Butler, who grew up nearby, recalls his family's crossing the Leaksville Covered Bridge in the family car and later on bicycles for outings. As a small boy he played on the bridge, throwing rocks through the lattice sides where planks had rotted away.

Butler has a vivid memory of the creaking and screeching of broken timbers and the huge cloud of dust that rose when the enormous bridge collapsed and floated in the river like a gigantic raft.



This massive abutment remains high on river right and serves to remind us of long ago travelers.



The piling stands as one of the most prominent and photographed structures found on the Dan River today.



High water in the fall of 2018 led to a pileup of debris that extended over 50 feet across the river creating dangerous strainers to kayakers, tubers and canoeists.

Mud and the tangle of logs demanded creative problem solving as the mass is brogght down to size.



Mark Bishopric and Jeff Johnston look minuscule against the enormity of the debris. Trees greater than 30” in diameter were sawn and moved down river over a period of three months.



By latching onto some of the larger tree trunks, DRBA member Mike Haines provided much needed pull power with his tractor perched above the river’s edge.



Logs causing some structural damage were left in place as a means of support and protection from further harm.



The work completed, the river is free of the dangerous strainers that threatened to block the width of the Dan River. The remaining debris will serve as a barrier to additional damage future floods may cause.



Martinsville school officials, the Dan River Basin Association, and partners cut a ribbon on the new Green Schoolyard at Albert Harris Elementary School on Oct. 10.

Green Schoolyard and Monarch Waystation Dedicated

On October 10 DRBA Education Manager Krista Hodges joined Albert Harris Elementary School second graders and teachers Laurie Witt and Elizabeth Jent in a ribbon-cutting for their newly certified Monarch Waystation and Green Schoolyard. Hodges states, “We have worked over the last year to get two rain barrels hooked up and running in the school courtyard, turn the startup butterfly garden into a certified Monarch Waystation, and implement a composting program within the classrooms.”

According to Witt, “The first seeds were planted when second graders wanted to help butterflies in our community.” Second graders learn about the butterfly life cycle as part of their science curriculum. Butterflies are important, as many plants depend on them to reproduce. Milkweed, on which monarch butterflies lay their eggs, is being killed off by agricultural herbicides, causing the butterflies’ population to decline. Waystations like this one provide them the plants they need to feed and lay their eggs. The space includes a newly installed interpretive sign about the importance of protecting monarch butterflies and what their habitat requires.

Jent recognized her second-grade class last year for moving all the rocks, pulling weeds, and planting flowers to create the garden. “They did an amazing job,” she said.

Envisioned as a green pilot project that can be used as a model for other schools, the project is supported by a grant to DRBA from the Community Foundation Serving Western Virginia. Additional support was provided by Koger Air, Gateway Streetscape, and the Master Gardeners, who donated supplies, expertise, and labor.

Hodges announced that the Community Foundation just approved a grant for the next phase of the project. It will include a weather station, which is part of the fourth grade curriculum; an outdoor whiteboard for students to record their scientific observations; and storm drain marking to educate people about protecting the watershed by keeping trash out of the drain.

“By installing rain barrels and using the collected water, students became environmental stewards.”

L. Witt

Kim Barto Meeks, Henry County Enterprise

STIC a Success with Kids

DRBA education manager Krista Hodges along with Franklin County 4th grade students visited the Booker T. Washington National Monument to study the history and to plant the seedlings they had started in their classroom through Streamside Trees in the Classroom (STIC). Everyone was so excited to tell about their experiences! STIC is a hands-on program where students grow native seedlings in their classroom and then plant them as riparian buffer along a waterway. At the planting, students gain more knowledge through activities and presentations. To see more of their letters, go to Members Only page and click on STIC with Franklin County.



Following their trip, the children wrote about their experience at The Booker T. Washington National Monument.

From the Executive Director

No need to stay inside just because it's cold! It's the perfect time of year to journey out and celebrate all the wonderful things we can't see or find when everything is covered in lush green vegetation. Animal tracks, winter birds, and cold-weather flora and fauna are just a few things you'll see during these next few months. You can be sure that DRBA is outside, too, moving forward on several projects during this winter season. In the next few months, we'll be reaching out to DRBA's members and volunteers, asking for your help on several projects, including a dog playground, otter habitat and trail building. We hope we can count on your time and energy despite the temperature.

October 5 FSO Paddle on Mayo Lake

Led by Mayo Park Superintendent Jeremy Royster, fifteen paddlers enjoyed DRBA's October FSO--a four-mile paddle on Mayo Lake in Person County. Although the day was overcast and cooler than usual for mid-fall, nearly half of the paddlers were experiencing a DRBA outing for the first time. Introducing new people to the basin's natural resources is an ongoing effort by DRBA. The basin is blessed with abundant clean water, yet this is a finite and fragile resource that can quickly be lost.



DRBA thanks Jeremy and many others across the basin for their steadfast work to educate the public about the outdoors while helping them enjoy it at the same time. DRBA's FSOs provide twelve opportunities each year to be close to nature on the water and on the trails across the Dan River Basin. We look forward to our next outing together!

October 17 Third Saturday Outing

The Kirkpatricks' annual Third Saturday Outing found us hiking along the North Prong of the Smith River in Patrick County. Fourteen hardy DRBA members and guests tackled the steep grade and brushy mountain as we made our way up the cascading Smith, revisiting this hike from several years ago. Since then, flooding had reworked much of the streambed and portions of the ravine, severely altering the look and aesthetics of the stream. While it was still a wild mountain river with continuous plunge pools, gurgling and roiling water, erosion to the narrow valley was only partially healed.



For those of us who enjoy the outdoors, seeing nature's power to both destroy and to heal the landscape reminds us of how fragile, yet resilient, our surroundings are. Our group included some who were first seeing this section of the Smith and some who were also on their first DRBA hike. First-timers were wowed with the hike, while repeat hikers felt sorrow for the damage the stream had suffered.

Following the hike, we returned to the Kirkpatricks' home where some bid farewell and others arrived for the always terrific late afternoon pot-luck. Betty and Wayne look forward each year to this DRBA-day of friends, fun and food!

November FSO at Grassy Hill

Grassy Hill Nature Preserve, a prominent landmark on the west side of Rocky Mount, VA, was the site for DRBA's November FSO. Thirteen hikers traversed the four mile natural surface trail that is composed of a single track entry

path intersecting a ridgetop loop, where a scenic overlook offers a view of the Town of Rocky Mount. Grassy Hill's rocky slopes are forested with hardwood species and scattered patches of Virginia pine. Shallow, basic, heavy-clay soils predominate, and outcrops of magnesium-rich bedrock are common. These unusual soil and rock substrates provide habitat for rare woodland communities. Several rare plants grow in small grassy openings near the hill's summit.

As suggested by its name, there is evidence that this community type once dominated much of Grassy Hill. For example, open-grown oaks with low spreading crowns are found amidst younger, closely spaced trees. Fire scars on some trees indicate that fire may have played an important role in keeping Grassy Hill open. With the advent of effective wildfire suppression during the twentieth century, the open, grassy woodlands slowly transformed into forest and dense woodlands with a continuous canopy. VA DCR now employs prescribed burns, forest thinning, and invasive species control to maintain and restore the preserve.



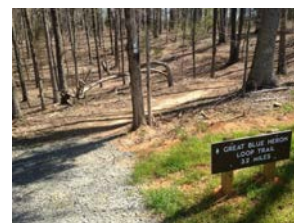
Portions of this report courtesy of DCR (<https://www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural-heritage/natural-area-preserves/grassyhill>).

Great Blue Heron Loop Trail at Iron Ore Belt Access, Haw River State Park

Editor's Note: Second grader Savannah Rose and her sixth-grade brother, Hunter, submitted their thoughts about DRBA's December 7 FSO.

The hike was fun at the Haw River. We saw a bird. It was a big, blue Heron. We walked the Heron Trail. I liked going on the hike. Thank you, Savannah

The Haw River Trail hike was a good experience. The Heron Trail was fun, and obviously, I saw a heron. The trail guides were nice. I learned about the Troublesome Iron Works, and mining the iron ore. They couldn't use the iron ore, because it had titanium in it. I would say the Haw River was very cool, and beautiful. Thank you, Hunter



For more information on DRBA FSO's go to our website at www.danriver.org and click on *Programs*.

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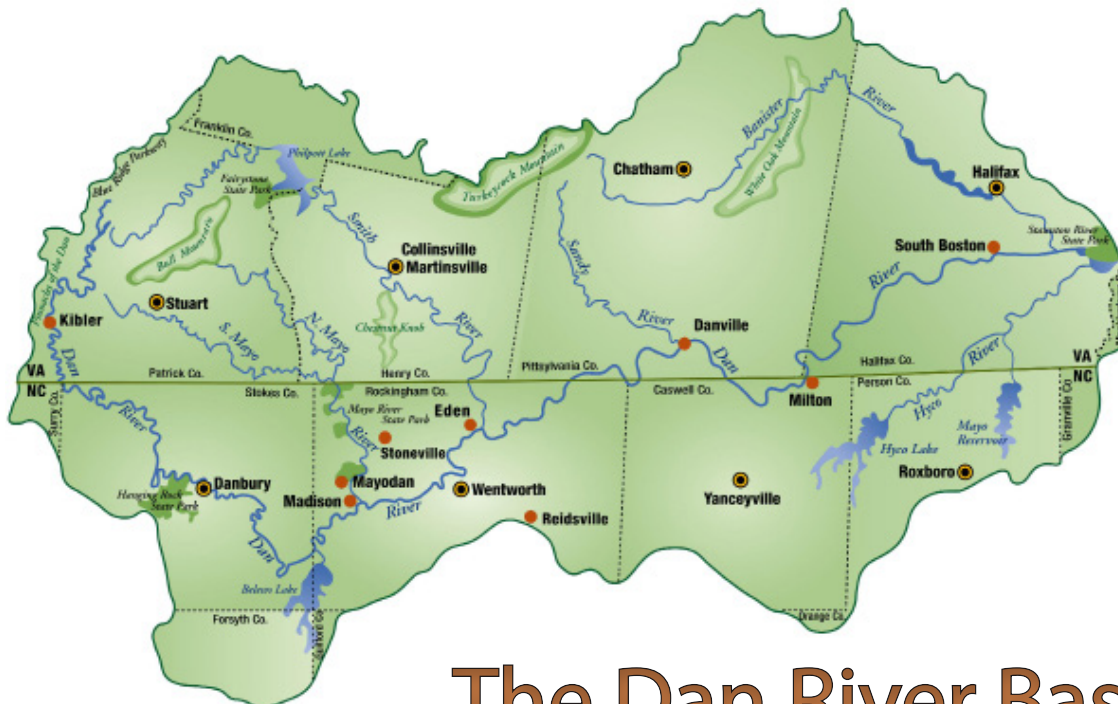
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If you joined or renewed your DRBA membership from October 1- December 31, 2019 and your name is not listed here, please contact DRBA at drba.nc@danriver.org or (336) 627-6270.



The Dan River Basin



Mark your Calendar!

January 4 Hike Chinqua-Penn Walking Trail

February 1 Hike Redtail Hawk Trail at Mayo Lake Park

March 7 DRBA's Annual Meeting:
Eden City Hall / Hike Matrimony Creek Trail

DAN RIVER BASIN ASSOCIATION
413 Church Street, Suite 401
Eden, NC 27288-3242



www.danriver.org