



Rivanna Currents

Fall 2005

RIVANNA
CONSERVATION
SOCIETY

The Rivanna Conservation Society is dedicated to safeguarding the ecological, scenic, recreational and historic resources of the Rivanna River and its watershed

Volume 15 Issue 3

RWSA Prepares for Nutrient Reduction Mandates

By Angus Murdoch

A recent [Daily Progress](#) article cited a Rivanna Water and Sewer Authority (RWSA) spokesperson who acknowledged that the Charlottesville/Albemarle utility will soon be obliged to build new facilities to reduce nitrogen and phosphorus pollution from its Moore's Creek Sewage Treatment Plant in Charlottesville. Homes and businesses in the RWSA service area can expect modest increases in their sewage disposal rates to cover the portion of those upgrades not subsidized through state and federal pollution control grants.

The upgrades to the Moore's Creek Plant, whose effluent enters the Rivanna via Moore's Creek, just downstream from Woolen Mills Dam, will be installed over a multi-year period. Specific details of costs and pollution reduction targets have yet to be determined, and much will depend on the standards and procedures adopted as part of a James River watershed-wide pollution control plan which the Virginia State Water Control Board expects to finalize in November or December of this year.

In hopes of reaching the 2010 Bay restoration targets that the Bay states have pledged themselves to, scientists from the Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) are urging a Bay watershed-wide standard of 3mg/liter maximum nitrogen content for treated sewage released into public waterways. A few localities have employed "state of the art" nutrient reduction treatments to bring their wastewater below the 3mg/liter threshold. Most, however, continue to pollute far in excess of that level. Recent RWSA releases from Moore's Creek have been in the neighborhood of 15mg/liter nitrogen.

RWSA officials have argued that Charlottesville's effluent compares favorably with pollution levels from Lynchburg and especially from several large older treatment plants in the Richmond area. RWSA and other Virginia utilities have also argued that pollution in the James River does not significantly impact the Chesapeake since the James joins the Chesapeake so close to the Bay's mouth. Whether or not this argument holds water, the algae blooms and oxygen-depleted dead zones caused by excessive nitrogen and phosphorus in the Bay are also serious problems in the tidal portions of the James below Richmond. Concerned citizens should hope, expect, and insist that these issues will be addressed in detail at the James-wide nutrient allocation hearings.

In response to citizen concerns about the RWSA Moores' Creek sewage permit renewal, the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) scheduled a public hearing for 7:00pm

Please turn to page 5



"Clean-up crew turns trash into folk art at Palmyra! (See story page ?)"

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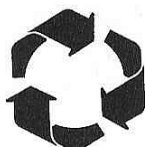
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President's Message

By Ryan Jacoby

Greetings fellow river advocate:

The Rivanna Conservation Society has had an exciting and fulfilling year in 2005. Our big news is that we've hired our first full-time Executive Director. Matt Rosefsky joined RCS in August and brings a diverse background of environmental and business experience. We are very happy to have Matt join our team and believe he will successfully guide RCS through the coming months of growth. We have also hired Laurie Miller as our new part-time Assistant to the Executive Director. Laurie brings a wide array of experience in both non-profit and environmental work. The addition of our new staff has us poised to make a significantly positive impact on the Rivanna watershed within the coming year.

Over the past year RCS has:

- Continued the efforts to breach the Woolen Mills Dam, reopening many miles of streams to native fish and wildlife, and enhancing recreational opportunities.
- Monitored water quality as a partner in StreamWatch –a joint effort of local and State agencies, environmental non-profit organizations, and trained volunteers who regularly survey the health of rivers and streams throughout the Rivanna watershed.
- Executed a comprehensive cleanup and organization at Scheier Natural Area.
- Updated our website to make it more informative and user-friendly.
- Served as an advocate for the river—speaking out against development that we feel is potentially harmful to the long-term health of the river.
- Continued bringing you the events such as our annual kayak raffle and rain barrel sales, which promote awareness of RCS's work for the watershed.

While we are proud of our accomplishments in 2005, we also feel that there is a great deal more to be done in the coming year. This will take financial support to ensure that we have funding for program development and enhancement. Please remember that your dollars stay local and go directly to support the programs and services that RCS offers within the watershed. We ask you to continue as a valuable partner in the work of RCS and hope you will consider a higher financial level of support this year. As we continue advocating for the sustained health and enjoyment of the Rivanna River, we recognize that this is only possible through the continued and generous support of our membership. Thank you.

—Ryan Jacoby, Vice President

Executive Director's Report

By Matt Rosefsky

Greetings, RCS! I am honored to serve as your Executive Director; thank you for having helped make my position possible! It is exciting and extremely rewarding to feel that everything I'm working on for RCS will directly or indirectly benefit our beloved watershed's natural environment.

Imagine an RCS of the future: even more educational programs to draw children and adults into thinking about how their choices and actions affect our watershed; a jam-packed calendar of exciting events nearly every spring through autumn weekend, including members-only canoe trips and interpretive hikes, as well as public river & riverbank cleanups and tree plantings; a voice for watershed advocacy at every relevant government meeting; multiple task forces on hot issues critical to the ecological health of our watershed; a website which functions as a one-stop source for all Rivanna River Watershed-related news, scientific education, issue discussion, advocacy opportunities, member networking, and photos; and much more.

Our current volunteers (Board members included), Laurie and I are doing our best to turn this vision into reality; unfortunately, it is more than we can manage. It is incredible how just one person can make a huge difference. Please consider volunteering by reviewing the two pleas for help (website programming, and general) presented in this newsletter. Thank you in advance for your much-needed assistance. Together, we can realize our dreams.

Laurie and I are working diligently to streamline RCS' internal systems so that RCS will be prepared to handle rapid growth efficiently and effectively. We will be focusing many of our efforts internally over the next few months; when we're finished, we'll be reaching out and making RCS grow, grow, grow.

New Staff and Office!

Generous grants from the Charlottesville Area Community Foundation, Dave Matthews Band's Bama Works Fund, Patagonia, and an anonymous fund, along with your membership donations, have made it possible for RCS to grow its staff. In early August, RCS hired its first-ever Executive Director, Matt Rosefsky, and Executive Assistant, Laurie Miller, as a new team to lead RCS in fulfilling its mission to safeguard the health, scenic beauty and cultural heritage of the Rivanna River and its watershed. Matt brings to RCS his organization-building success of having founded the Outdoor Adventure Social Club of Greater Charlottesville, VA, and three Masters Degrees including an MBA from the University of Virginia's Darden School. Laurie brings to RCS two years of experience as executive assistant to the Executive Director of The Nature Conservancy in Virginia, 11 years of experience in a variety of roles at the Southern Environmental Law Center, and a Master's degree from UVA. Matt and Laurie are working on enhancing RCS' infrastructure (financial and accounting systems, website, volunteer database, grant tracking systems, etc.) and increasing membership, donations, grants and alliances so that the Society can grow and continue to achieve its watershed objectives. In addition, RCS is pleased to announce its establishment of an office in downtown Charlottesville at 609 East Market St., Suite 106 – across from the Market Street Garage, along the pathway to the old Live Arts Space, enter the double-glass doors just past Garden of Sheba, please stop by and say "Hi!"

Contact information:

Laurie: (434) 971-1553 aed@rivannariver.org

Matt: (434) 760-4453 exec@rivannariver.org

Conservation Project: Riparian Landowner Mailing

By Matt Rosefsky

Did you know that through a combination of federal and state funding, landowners can make money by turning their streamside agricultural land into a riparian forest buffer and if necessary, building an alternative water source for livestock? Landowners can get reimbursed up to 115% of the costs involved, and receive up to \$100 per acre in rental payments for 10 or 15 years! In late September and throughout the fall, we are sending out as many as 10,000 letters—one to nearly every stream- and riverside landowner in the Rivanna River Watershed—Informing them of the ecological and landowner benefits of riparian forest buffers as well as healthy natural stream banks, and of funds available to create and protect them. We also are including general information on RCS ... so hopefully this will help fuel RCS growth while improving our water quality.

Coliform Testing in the Rivanna

By Frank Persico

Bacterial contamination of surface waters in Virginia is a major problem. This includes the Rivanna River Watershed. For example, a 14-mile stretch of the Rivanna River was recently declared impaired by the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) because of contamination and the Thomas Jefferson Planning District is developing a plan to reduce the levels of fecal coliform bacteria in Moore's Creek to meet Virginia's water quality standards. Additionally, there have been instances of problems with sewerage plants leading to contamination and the posting of advisories not to use the affected waters for recreation.

Microorganisms are natural inhabitants of freshwater streams, lakes and rivers. They are part of the normal ecology and perform a variety of important functions. However, surface waters can also become contaminated with organisms that normally inhabit the intestinal tracts of humans and animals that are passed out of the body in fecal wastes. Sources of contamination include raw sewerage, run-off from fields and pastures, etc. Some of these organisms can be pathogens, causing diseases such as dysentery, gastroenteritis, typhoid fever, cholera and others.



The only readily measured parameter of water quality directly related to human health is the presence of fecal coliforms. Coliforms are a group of bacteria that have certain characteristics in common. If they are of intestinal origin, they are called fecal coliforms. The detection of these microorganisms in high levels suggests the possibility that pathogenic species may be present, and if such are ingested, either accidentally or intentionally during recreational activities, illness can result. It isn't practical to measure and delineate all fecal coliforms, so the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) recently began to implement a new State Water Quality Standard for the evaluation of the presence of bacterial contamination. This rests on the measurement of *Escherichia coli*, a coliform specific to the intestinal tract which serves as an indicator of fecal contamination. Thus, while not necessarily pathogenic itself, *E. coli* can signal the presence of other, possibly pathogenic microorganisms from fecal (human or animal) sources. We propose to concentrate our effort on the measurement of *E. coli* using a procedure acceptable to DEQ as a screening method.

Please turn to page 5

Volunteers Trained in Coliform Monitoring Techniques

By Angus Murdoch

Since spring 2005, at least a dozen volunteers from RCS and Friends of the South Anna River have been trained in the use of the Coliscan™ test kit to test local waters for bacterial contamination. The Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has endorsed Coliscan as an inexpensive, user-friendly first-line screening to identify potential problem areas for further study. Trainers from Virginia Citizens for Water Quality and the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay instructed RCS volunteers in sterile sampling technique, proper incubation of test kits, and accurate identification and counting of the color-coded microbe colonies that result.

Coliscan test kits and materials cost about three dollars per sample, and the RCS directors approved funding for up to one hundred kits. Smith Tree Experts donated a poultry egg incubator suitable for processing Coliscan kits to DEQ specifications. Recent Palmyra/Lake Monticello area test results from the Rivanna at normal flow indicated coliform levels well within safe limits for swimming and other recreational uses, as have our previous samples taken from other popular swimming areas during normal flow. Bacteria levels during flood flows typically spike to levels far above the DEQ safe recreation standard. RCS Coliscan test results correlated well with the results of simultaneous samples that DEQ biologists took from the same sites and analyzed using more sophisticated techniques.

Fall River Clean-Up

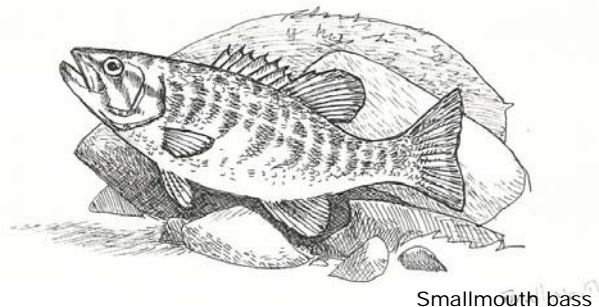
By Angus Murdoch

Until a few days beforehand, it appeared that unfloatable low water would limit the RCS fall river clean-up to land trails and reservoirs. Then the rain came – six inches or more for some of us – and the river rose to near flood stage by October 8.

By the 15th, however, a warm sun was shining, and river flow had dropped to ideal paddling conditions. The water, teeming with minnows and small fry, was crisp, clear, and still warm enough for comfortable wading. Herons, kingfishers, wood ducks, muskrats, and other charismatic wild critters showed up on cue.

Andy Wilson led a ground crew and a pair of Daily Progress reporters cleaning up the shoreline and islands below Woolen Mills Dam; Stephanie Cangin and Jessica Andreoletti of the Outdoor Adventure Social Club led a clean-up team in canoes from Crofton to Palmyra, and Angus Murdoch and Kris Parker led a team from Palmyra to the Barbers' farm at Hell's Bend. The good folks at Oak Hill Farm provided their beach as a mid-point tire drop-off and their ATVs to haul the pile up a long slippery slope on Sunday afternoon. Commonwealth Timber Land Trust lent its canoes, truck, and trailer for the event; a local VDOT team hauled our collected debris from the Palmyra landing; and the Fluvanna County Engineering office arranged a waiver of landfill disposal fees for this event.

Many thanks to all the above and to all those who came together to make this year's clean-up a success. 2005 may not have been our biggest clean-up ever, but everyone who turned out enjoyed a fine day to remember. Please stay tuned for a big RCS fall clean-up effort in 2006, and for numerous neighborhood and ad hoc efforts in the meantime.



Smallmouth bass

Mandates cont'd

on November 9, 2005 in Charlottesville. However, DEQ cancelled this hearing once it became clear that most of the discussion would be moot until after state regulators completed the overall James River basin guidelines. The public hearing on the RWSA Moore's Creek permit may be rescheduled if DEQ, again, receives a clear demonstration of local public interest in this matter.

RCS thanks all of you who took the time to contact DEQ about the Moore's Creek permit renewal in response to our email alert in July, and we encourage all members to once again register their concerns and request a local public hearing for the RWSA sewage permit renewal; to do so, please contact Eric R. Millard at the DEQ Valley Regional Office at ermillard@deq.virginia.gov or by phone at (540) 574-7813.

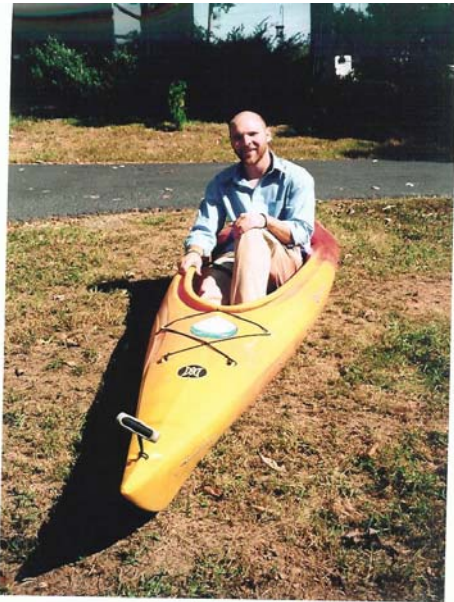
Coliform Testing cont'd

DEQ has been monitoring several sites in the Rivanna watershed for evidence of fecal coliform contamination. Some of the data they accumulated over several years can be found at http://gisweb.deq.virginia.gov/monapp/mon_query_form.cfm. However, DEQ does not have the resources for a rapid response or systematic evaluation of potential trouble spots. Additionally, we can provide spatial information to complement their efforts. We expect to begin by implementing an experimental program on a small section of the river. If this effort meets our expectations in terms of providing useful and consistent data, we would like to expand this effort to eventually cover the entire watershed. As this proceeds, we will communicate and collaborate with DEQ and other interested local parties.

- Frank Persico is a retired PhD Microbiologist and active RCS volunteer. He lives along the Rivanna in Fluvanna County, just downstream from Lake Monticello.

A new way to support the Rivanna Conservation Society!

RCS is now participating in the **Commonwealth of Virginia Campaign**. The CVC is an annual opportunity for Virginia state employees to give to the charities of their choice through cash, check, payroll deduction, stock or credit cards. 100% of your contribution will go to RCS and a percent of each undesignated (or general pool) contribution will also go to RCS, based upon the designated contributions we receive. In 2003, more than 20,000 state employees raised over \$3.2 million for local and international charities! The campaign officially kicked off on October 1st. Most employers send out pledge cards and information by November 1st and ask that you **submit your pledge by November 30th** - to qualify for the payroll deduction. For further details on the CVC - please visit the following link :<http://www.cvc.vipnet.org/index.html>



And the Winner Is...

On Saturday, October 1 at Old Farm Day in Palmyra, Steven Watkins of Charlottesville was the happy winner of the Perception Sundance 12.0 Kayak, donated to RCS by Extreme Sports. Steven moved to the Charlottesville area in May from Oklahoma. Shortly afterwards, he was walking on the downtown mall on a Friday evening. Steven saw an RCS volunteer selling raffle tickets for the kayak and thought to himself, "this is a great cause!" and he purchased the winning ticket! An outdoor enthusiast who wants to learn more about recreational activities in this area, Steven was absolutely thrilled by his good luck. He hopes to learn more about RCS and is looking forward to getting out on the river with his new kayak.

Nothing says "happy holidays" like an RCS Rain Barrel!!

Get a big jump on next year's gardening season! We currently have only 15 of our 60 gallon, food grade plastic rain barrels (with screw on lid and spigot!) left, and they are available right now at

**Eltzroth and Thompson Greenhouses,
Inc.**

They are only \$75 each, two or more \$65 each.

All proceeds go to RCS to help the Rivanna.

Eltzroth and Thompson is located 3.4 miles south of I-64 on 29 South

New Membership Dollars Count Double!

Looking for the perfect welcome for new neighbors? Or maybe a holiday gift for that hard to shop for friend or relative? Consider a membership to RCS. Recipients will receive a card and letter acknowledging you as the giver, and a whole year of RCS membership. Be sure to make a note of your gift on the "membership information" form.

All new memberships to RCS are twice as nice this year, the Virginia Environmental Endowment (www.vee.org) is matching all new non-corporate membership dollars one-for-one, up to \$7500 for 2005! Please tell your friends that this is an exciting time to have their tax-deductible contributions be doubled! They can join using the membership form in this newsletter, or online at www.rivannariver.org

Watershed Education Moves Upstream

By Ann Regn

In August Charlottesville City and Albemarle County's teachers traveled to Wintergreen to participate in a 2-day professional development institute to plan and implement meaningful watershed education for their students. The program is being funded by NOAA Chesapeake Bay office as part of the regional commitment to introduce every student to their watershed before graduation from high school. The schools' plans will include hands-on water quality investigations for every county and city sixth grader. RCS will serve as a local resource as will Emily Nelson from the TJ Soil & Water Conservation District and John Hermsmeier from the Environmental Education Center. Last year RCS worked with Fluvanna Middle School to provide a canoe trip and field day at Camp Friendship, providing two days of invaluable river experiences for nearly three hundred kids.

Scheier news

PONDS CLEARED AT SCHEIER

By Jackie Brown

Zack Miller, a Fluvanna County Boy Scout, has chosen the Scheier Natural Area as his project for his his Eagle Scout Leadership Service Project. Zack presented RCS with a 12 page workbook complete with plans and photos of the work he was undertaking.

Zack's focus area is the 8 ponds at the Natural Area. The ponds had become overgrown with invasive plants and the sheer number and density were threatening to compromise the dams. On a cloudy weekend in August, Zack and his troop, as well as parent volunteers, worked for hours to cut through the brush surrounding the ponds. It was an incredible amount of work for these young men.

In the end, each of the 8 ponds was cleared of all debris with the exception of some native plants and trees. The ponds are now completely visible and accessible. It is a beautiful place to walk, see pond life and picnic with your family. And that's not all! After finishing the ponds, Zack cleared an overgrown trail and built a foot bridge across one of the Natural Area's many creeks. Please come out to Scheier and enjoy this wonderful landscape made so much more enjoyable by a very dedicated young man, Zack Miller and Troop 138.

Directions to Scheier Natural Area:

From Palmyra:

Rt. 15 S to Rt. 640, turn right and follow 640 to Rt. 639, right on 639, follow 639 to Scheier Parking area on R (apx. 1 mi from 639 intersection with 620).

From Charlottesville:

R 53 E to R on Rt. 795; past Ash Lawn, bear L at sharp curve at Blenheim Road; bear left onto Rt. 620 at Antioch; follow 620 across Fluvanna line, then L onto 639 for apx. 1 mi. to parking area on left.

Kid's Corner

Something fishy!

Test your knowledge of some of our Rivanna neighbors. Match the species with the description. Answers below.

- 1) American shad
- 2) Longnose gar
- 3) Brook trout
- 4) River chub
- 5) Largemouth bass
- 6) Crawfish



a) This large and prehistoric looking fish, *Lepisosteus osseus*, can often be seen basking just beneath the surface of the water as you float down the Rivanna. It has a long, slim body and a slender, pointy snout filled with teeth. In addition to breathing with gills, these fish have a unique, lung-like swim bladder that can absorb oxygen from the air. This enables them to survive in waters where many other fish species could not live. This fish is a survivor; it has existed relatively unchanged for over 240 million years!

b) This member of the minnow family, *Nocomis micripogon*, can grow to be eight inches long. The males build large pebble nests you may have seen on the river bottom or in larger creeks. These gravel mounds can be a foot tall and three feet wide- that's a lot of pebbles for one small fish to move!

c) A member of the sunfish family, *Micropterus salmoides* likes to hang out under the shade and cover of bridges, ledges or overhanging trees. It is a predator that will gobble up bugs, frogs and crawfish. It is a very popular sport fish.

d) Like the salmon and the sturgeon, *Alosa sapidissima* is an *anadromous* fish. That means it is spawned in fresh water streams, swims out to the sea to grow up, then, years later, heads back to the very streams it was hatched in to spawn the next generation. Damming rivers blocks migration routes, keeping this fish out of much of its natural range. Recent removal of dams on the James River has enabled it to swim back to some of its historic breeding grounds on the Rivanna. It is a member of the herring family.

e) You'll have to head for the mountains to find this fish. *Salvelinus fontinalis* needs cold, clean, running water that is rich in oxygen. You won't find them in the slower, warmer main stem Rivanna, but up in the fast moving headwaters of the watershed where they are favorites of fly fishing fans. It is a member of the salmon family, and the only one native to Virginia.

f) This isn't a fish at all!! *Cambarus bartonii* is a fresh water crustacean, an arthropod with jointed legs and a crusty external skeleton. Like its larger saltwater cousin, the lobster, this small scavenger is well equipped with a pair of claws to pinch in defense.

Answers: 1,d; 2,a; 3,e; 4,b; 5,c; 6,f

-K Parker

RCS Events Calendar

RCS Board Meetings are held on the second Tuesday of every month at 6:30 pm at PVCC.

Monday, January 16th, 2006 “Lobby Day” with the Chesapeake Bay Foundation. Gather in Richmond to lobby the General Assembly to ensure Virginia makes a lasting commitment to improving water quality throughout the state. Lobby Day 2006 is a crucial part of the Virginia Clean Streams Campaign, which aims to ensure a dedicated source of necessary funding for water improvement in Virginia’s impaired waterways and the Chesapeake Bay. To sign up, or for more information, go to www.cbf.org/valobbyday or contact CBF’s Virginia State Office at (804) 780-1392

StreamWatch activities: Please keep an eye out for scheduling announcements via email. If you are not currently on the StreamWatch email list, but would like to be, contact John Murphy at stream-watch@cstone.net

Be sure to check our website calendar for floats and other events TBA ! Our website address is www.rivannariver.org

Shop at Food Lion, RCS Receives a Donation!

If you register or re-register your MVP card, Food Lion will donate a percentage of its sales to RCS whenever you shop and use your card! Please note that Food Lion requires 2005 members to re-register for 2006. To register your card, please call (800) 210-9569, menu option 3, and mention that RCS is registered in Charlottesville, Virginia (though you can shop with your card at any Food Lion store). We currently have nine members registered for 2006, and need at least 25 to keep us in good standing. The more members we have registered, the higher percentage donation RCS will receive.

Website Programming Help Needed!

We have identified some fantastic software and need someone to install it. This will be a huge step forward for RCS, enabling us to offer online education, news, hot issues, membership accounts, advocacy action alerts, event organization and scheduling, photo gallery, shared file storage, and more! If you or a friend can help, please contact Matt Rosefsky at (434) 760-4453 or exec@rivannariver.org

Volunteers Needed!

This is an exciting time for RCS; with our new staff we’re planning to grow faster than we ever have. We need to create a volunteer database to support the growth. Please contact Laurie at (434) 971-1553 or aed@rivannariver.org if sometime in the next year, you would like to help: educate children, assist with canoe / kayak trips, plant trees, oversee volunteer groups, attend local government meetings, write press releases, help with mailings, write grants, staff the RCS booth at special events, offer legal assistance, proofread general communications, program our website, and/or volunteer to do anything else that impassions you.

The Rivanna Conservation Society– Membership Information

Yes, I want to join the Rivanna Conservation Society to protect our precious natural resource..the Rivanna River

Name: _____ **Organization:** _____

Address: _____ **City:** _____ **State:** _____ **Zip:** _____

Phone: _____ **E-mail:** _____

Individual....\$20.00 Family...\$30.00 Wood duck...\$50.00 Kingfisher....\$100.00 and above

Corporate Membership: Sustainer...\$100.00 Blue Heron...\$200.00 Bald Eagle...\$500.00 and above

All contributions are tax deductible. All members receive our quarterly newsletter, invitations to special events, and exclusive events at Sheir Natural Area. Thank you for your support.



"RCS volunteer Suzanne Malm teaches Agnor-Hurt kindergarteners about the water cycle. RCS members Phyllis White and Angus Murdoch were also able to spend this pretty day on the banks of the Moorman's, teaching and talking about water, trees and the environment at Agnor-Hurt's annual River Fieldtrip."

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The date above your name is the date of your last contribution. Please consider renewing your membership if more than a year has passed.