



Rivanna Currents

Winter 2006

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 16 Issue 1

Smooth Sailing at Get Dedicated Rally in Richmond

By Tatyanna Patten

On January 16, 2006, RCS participated in the Get Dedicated Lobby Day rally in Richmond. For those who were unaware, the Get Dedicated event was sponsored by Chesapeake Bay Foundation in conjunction with many local watershed organizations, and the goal was to focus our General Assembly's attention on the need to fund clean streams and bay projects. In the past, the State has promised funding to clean up and protect our watershed, but the money has not been fully dispensed. The EPA has given Virginia a hard date of 2010 to prove our good-faith intent to improve our water quality. RCS participants included Leslie Middleton, Hank Helman, Matt Rosefsky, Laurie Miller, and Tatyanna Patten. Some of the other Charlottesville-based groups attending were Ivy Creek, the Monticello Bird Club, and The Nature Conservancy.

Just under 1,000 people showed up to the rally from all over the state. A breakfast meeting with a keynote address was held at the Omni; then we trekked to the General Assembly to participate in the rally and to speak with our representatives. A Chesapeake chowder lunch was served outside the GA to any representatives and their constituents who wished to partake.

The Keynote Speaker was State Senator Frederick Quayle (R-13th District), who introduced a bill to fund watershed clean-up. The bill would follow-up on former-Governor Mark Warner's intent to dedicate a 1-time amount of \$200 million from the state budget in 2006, plus set up a permanent fund of \$70 million per year to put toward meeting the EPA requirements. In that permanent fund, \$40 million per year would come from recordation (court reporting) fees, which is an existing discretionary fund managed by the State, and \$30 million per year would come from a new lodging tax, at \$1.00/room/night, so that the burden of funding the clean-up would be shared by the tourists who travel here to enjoy our natural resources. This bill is SB 626, and is now

wending its way through the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Conservation & Natural Resources.

In support of this piece of legislature, we approached Delegates Rob Bell and David Toscano, and Senator Creigh Deeds. Toscano and Deeds said they would support the measure when it came to the floor. Toscano even consented to wear my Clean Streams scarf into the General Assembly. Bell spoke more at length with us, saying he was concerned about the issue, but could not promise support for the bill until he had looked at it. He requested that we write to him with the appropriate bill number for his perusal once such number had been assigned.

As individual constituents, we all have the ability, and some would say the mandate, to write to our state representatives requesting that



Please turn to page 7

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Printed by Palmyra Press on
100% post consumer recycled
paper

President's Message

By Ryan Jacoby

Greetings and Happy 2006! As I mentioned in our last issue of River Currents, 2005 was a busy and rewarding year for RCS. Continuing upon our successes of the past year, the staff and board members of RCS are extremely excited about our prospects for the coming year. To better prepare ourselves to meet the goals we've set for 2006, we have restructured our committees and look forward to greater involvement and support from our membership.

Throughout this issue, you will hear more about our various committees and projects for the upcoming year. These include expanded educational programs, on-the-river events, and more aggressive outreach and development efforts. All are signs of the growth that we've encountered within the past twelve months, and just as importantly, the significant growth that we are poised to experience in the coming year.

We've been fortunate to add three new members to our Board of Directors. These talented and passionate individuals will greatly enhance our efforts and we welcome them into the family. We are also extremely excited to announce the addition of Ida Swenson, who will manage our B-Wet educational programs that cover Fluvanna and Albemarle counties. Ida brings a wealth of background in sciences and education and we look forward to her contributions.

We invite you to join us this year in protecting the Rivanna River. From our continued efforts to remove the Woolen Mills Dam to our ongoing river cleanup events, we hope you will find programs that appeal to you. The more that we are able to engage our membership, the more we are truly serving the needs of the Rivanna River and those that utilize this precious resource. We also invite you to provide feedback on our efforts and to help us continue developing programs that truly benefit the watershed.

Please remember that your financial support is crucial to our continued success. As always, your dollars stay local and directly support programs that positively impact the Rivanna River. You are a valuable partner in our efforts and we appreciate your ongoing support. Thanks and we hope to see you at a future RCS event.

-Ryan Jacoby

Executive Director's Report

By Matt Rosefsky

I'm pleased to announce that with the help of volunteers, Laurie and I completed the long process of building our internal infrastructure so that we have a solid foundation on which to grow. Our accounting, communication, managerial, and other administrative systems now are running efficiently and effectively, ready to handle all of the growth we envision.

Speaking of vision, at our annual meeting last fall, I presented the following:

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

I am extremely excited to report that the wheels are in motion for realizing this vision in 2006! In January we formed a new committee structure to accomplish these objectives, and many of you kindly stepped up and volunteered to serve. Thank you! With your support, 2006 will be by far RCS' biggest year ever! The effort to remove the Woolen Mills Dam and restore the Rivanna River to natural condition is progressing nicely; some of our volunteers are trained to perform coliform testing to check for bacterial contamination, enabling us to research and report on the swimming safety level of the Rivanna; our new Education Manager Ida Swenson is leading the effort to impart in-field watershed education to every Albemarle and Fluvanna County public school 6th grade student, while our Education Committee is preparing to share watershed principles with many other groups; our Recreation Committee is gearing up to provide several fun, educational, and conservational river events spring through autumn (through recreation I became an environmentalist, and we hope to inspire more); Leslie Middleton is orchestrating the publishing of a Rivanna River Days 2006 calendar brochure and poster to list and advertise our and other river-friendly organizations' Rivanna River Watershed special events in April through October; Board Member Tatyanna Patten, with Development Committee support, is planning several RCS events in addition to our annual fall river and riverbank cleanup; our Advocacy Committee has doubled in size and hence capacity; and Prasad Sombhatta tentatively has volunteered to create a brand new, highly functional and educational website for us.

Wow. Thank you to the 30 of you who have volunteered to serve on a committee and turn my vision into reality. This year is going to be amazing.



\$5000 Grant Received



Thank you to the Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOF), Urban & Community Forestry Program and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) for your \$5000 grant to RCS! The grantors are impressed with our riparian forestry work, they are long-time supporters of RCS, and they have designated the grant money to partially fund the RCS Executive Assistant / Administrator position. We rely on this grant and RCS membership dollars to fund Laurie Miller's position, and we are particularly grateful because staff funding is the most difficult to obtain. VDOF indicated that there have been severe funding cuts for their next grant cycle, and so they may not be able to grant RCS any funds next year ... thank you in advance for your continued membership support, helping to keep Laurie on board.



Support provided by



Welcome, Education Manager Ida Swenson

We are excited and proud to announce RCS' first-ever Education Manager, Ida B. Swenson. Ida will coordinate RCS' local public school in-field watershed education program, funded by the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration Chesapeake Bay Office's Bay Watershed Education & Training (B-WET) grant program. This spring, Ida will orchestrate meaningful in-field watershed educational experiences for 6th grade students throughout the Fluvanna and Albemarle County public schools. We are planning to expand this educational programming into Greene County during the 2006-2007 academic year. In addition, Ida joined our Education Committee, and she will be guiding RCS to provide more educational programming in the future.

Ida comes to RCS with over 30 years of experience as a middle and high school science teacher. In addition, as a volunteer for Lake Monticello Owners' Association Lake Preservation and Storm Water Management Committees, she wrote the successful Legacy Grant application for the Lake Monticello Stream Restoration Demonstration Project, from the Chesapeake Bay Small Watershed Grants Program at the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. We are lucky to have you on board, Ida. Welcome, and thanks for joining us! Please feel free to welcome Ida personally by sending her an email at edmgr@rivannariver.org

The B-WET program is designed to develop partnerships between county public schools and organizations like RCS in order to engage teachers and students in meaningful watershed experiences. Through the program, students develop an awareness of their local watershed which helps them understand the impacts of their own behaviors and actions on their local rivers and streams and ultimately the Chesapeake Bay. Teachers in the program receive professional development training and learn both science content and how to implement meaningful bay or stream outdoor experiences with their students. Teachers and students work together to design and implement watershed investigations that support academic standards; activities are often recorded on film and in writing. Students participate in testing that covers sixth grade science standards and is used as a specific measure of student achievement.



Forest Buffers Protect Water Quality

By Angus Murdoch

Riparian forest buffers provide a wide range of benefits to aquatic and terrestrial wildlife. Tree planting is also excellent physical exercise for human beings. Establishing and caring for a single tree or a stand of forest can cement powerful psychological bonds between people and specific points in the landscape, with lasting benefits for both. Besides these physical and mental health benefits, many landowners are pleased to learn that restoring riparian forest buffers makes them eligible for government conservation programs and generous public incentives in the form of cash payments, cost shares, and/or tax credits (see TJSWCD article attached).

Natural regeneration is often the most effective strategy

RCS encourages everyone to get out and plant trees along a stream near you. In most cases, however, landowners and communities can efficiently reestablish riparian forests buffers – with minimal landowner effort and zero expense to the public treasury – by simply leaving the land alone and letting nature take its course.

Planting buffers with nursery-grown stock allows landowners to use proven varieties of species selected for particular wildlife, timber management, or aesthetic goals. However, any given square foot of floodplain is probably already well stocked with numerous locally-adapted seeds which wind, water, and wildlife transported to that site. Most likely, at least a few of those seeds will be well-adapted to that site's specific mix of soil texture, chemistry, moisture, and light conditions. With or without supplemental plantings, a healthy stand of trees will usually take root within a few years so long as livestock and mowing equipment are kept out of the area.

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Buffer cont'd

Dollar for dollar, streamside fencing probably regenerates riparian forests more effectively than tree planting. If livestock is not an issue, then a series of blue-painted stakes or similar simple signage demarcating the riparian buffer (i.e. Please Don't Mow Beyond this Point!) can achieve the same effect at minimal expense.

Communication is Key

For either planted or naturally regenerated buffers to succeed it is critical that all parties involved in the management of the property understand and endorse (or at the very least be contractually obliged to uphold) the goals of the buffer restoration project. On both city parks and private farms buffer work all too often gets set back or destroyed when landowners fail to communicate the specifics of their conservation plans to the mowing contractors or maintenance crews who actually tend those sites on a day to day basis.

Big Potential for Urban Green Spaces

Many conservationists have found that, on a school property or other public area, obtaining bureaucratic approval for conservation landscaping practices can be much more complicated and time consuming than the logistics and manual labor of installing the actual conservation project itself. Patience, perseverance, a broad base of support, and a clear understanding of the decision making channels involved are essential for getting things done in these cases. The potential results -- in terms of improved water quality protection, educational opportunities, and increased community involvement in hands-on conservation -- are well worth the effort.

The City of Charlottesville is presently conducting a systematic overview of all City Parks, schools, and other City-owned properties with an eye to identifying ways in which stream buffers on those lands can be expanded and potential water quality hazards reduced. Meanwhile, a range of youth service and civic groups will be working to install and tend riparian tree plantings throughout the city this spring. For more information on these efforts, please contact C'ville Parks Volunteer Coordinator, Susan Pleiss, at (970-3585)

Buffer Programs Offered by Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD)

Offers landowners cost share and/or tax credits.

The Thomas Jefferson Soil and Water Conservation District (TJSWCD) provides or coordinates the following riparian conservation incentives to landowners throughout the Rivanna watershed and elsewhere in TJSWCD's (four) county service area, and in the City of Charlottesville. For more information, please contact TJSWCD at ...-....

Forested - SWCD will pay \$200/acre to plant trees in appropriate riparian areas from 35-100 feet from streams. This practice (FR-3) must be excluded from grazing, and the tree species are selected by DOF (*Virginia Department of Forestry*) personnel, along with low growing shrubs or ground cover.

Livestock Exclusion - The buffer must be fenced out, but the buffer area can be mowed if the landowner wishes. A cost-share practice of 75% require fencing a minimum 35 feet from the top of the bank of the stream, and can be done in conjunction with watering facilities, crossings, wells (this is an SL-6), or can be fencing only (WP-2). The landowner can place the fence closer to the stream for 25% tax credit only (SL-6B).

There is also the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), a federal program that will pay to establish a forested buffer on pasture. With this program, the buffer must be fenced from livestock, and trees planted. The landowner gets paid 50%, then 40%, then an annual rental rate on the acreage in the buffer. Contracts are for rental for either 10 or 15 years.

HEADWATERS HIKE

SUGAR HOLLOW/NORTH FORK OF THE MOORMANS RIVER

By Tracey Crehan Gerlach

My first impressions of Sugar Hollow and the Moormans River area were fed by the Blue Ridge Mountains, the verdant quality of everything along the drive on the way up to the hike – but most importantly, they were about the river – the streams, brooks and waterfalls; the river's relationship to the rocks and boulders it wove its way around; the unforgettable geological impressions left by the violent flood of 1995; and the cool, inviting spots it created on a sweltering summer day for a favorite swimming hole or fishing spot.

That first impressionable visit was an inspiration to learn more about the area, the river and local conservation efforts – efforts that would recognize the role this river has played in supporting and reflecting the life around it. This hike is an ideal way to secure a front row seat to what is happening with the Moormans.

FRIENDS OF THE MOORMANS

In the early 1900s, it was acknowledged that the water of the Moormans River was the purest in Albemarle County and subsequently, Charlottesville and the University of Virginia turned to it as a viable water supply option. It was first tapped into in 1925, when the original version of the dam and an 18" gravity-fed pipeline was installed – carrying the water 13 miles to the Ragged Mountain Reservoir and then to the O-Hill water treatment plant.

This was just the first step in the health of the Moormans being compromised – with the water being dammed and diverted to supplement Albemarle's water supply in the decades that followed, less and less water was being released into the Moormans. The present day dam, grandfathered and originally built in the 1940s, doesn't meet current water release state regulations and the river and its ecosystem have suffered.

Things reached a critical mass in the early 1990s, several years after the Moormans was named a State Scenic River. Between July and mid-November, the two-mile stretch of the river bed below the dam would consistently dry up because the tap intended to release water into the river had been shut off to supplement other Albemarle reservoirs.

In response, concerned residents spearheaded the Friends of the Moormans, a watchdog group dedicated to the conservation of these headwaters. They sought out accountability, answers and solutions to this threat to the river. Local authorities eventually installed a tap at the base of the dam, releasing 400,000 gallons per day into the river but the group has remained very active – more recently with regards to the drought of 2002 and its affects on the river, as well as playing a role in the present watershed solution. You can now enjoy this stretch of the river on your drive up to the hike and the dam is a formidable landmark at the end of the paved section of Sugar Hollow Road.

THE HIKE

The North Fork of the Moormans River, tucked between Pasture Fence Mountain and the Blue Ridge Mountains, is a 3.2 mile out-and-back hike that is part of Shenandoah National Park. Considered a relatively easy hike – it should take you about three hours. (Please note that there are several river crossings – rock 'bridges' and boulders are usually there to help out, but make sure to come equipped with a sturdy pair of hiking boots and a sense of balance.)

Take the road that winds north of the parking lot to the boundary of Shenandoah. The beginning of the trail is actually an old fire road and a trailboard will offer details on the park and regulations. For the most part, the trail runs alongside the river - it is well-worn and easy to follow.

At about .4 and .5 miles, the trail will cross the Moormans – note that there will be a smaller foot path after the last crossing (this sometimes gets overgrown). You will cross again at about 1 mile. At 1.6 miles, you will find yourself going toward the river's

please turn to page 6

Moormans cont'd

edge. Turn left to climb alongside the falls at Big Branch, a tributary that empties into the Moormans by way of a 50-foot waterfall – a waterfall that originates by way of snow and rain-fed streams trickling off of Turk Mountain and Horsehead Mountain. This is your reward for a trek well-hiked – take advantage of the broad, flat rocks for a picnic, sunbath or catnap to reenergize for the return trip.

FLORA AND FAUNA

It's impossible to talk about this hike without paying respect to the flood of June 1995 – a flood that changed that landscape of the North Fork in ways that would normally take millions of years. According to *Hike America – Virginia*, five days of rain culminated in a storm pocket that hovered over the North Fork and dumped rain for another nine hours. The manager of the Sugar Hollow Reservoir reported 11.5 inches in a two-hour time frame.

The resulting flood and the force of the water moved boulders, wrenched trees out by their roots and caused over 100 landslides in the area above the reservoir. You will see first-hand the resulting 20-foot high stream banks, stretches of logjams and a sense of newness and upheaval to what is actually a very old valley. According to my husband, Corey, a visit to the area shortly after the flood felt like a walk on a moonscape.

But nature is laying claim again. Saplings are finding their way in between rock piles on the riverbed. *Hike America - Virginia* reports the return of wild ginseng and white monkshood, as well as brook and brown trout. According to the book, "A fish survey two weeks before the storm counted 13 different species in the stream, including 30 brook trout; a survey after the storm netted six fish – *total!*" Local naturalists have also spotted otters and a paw-paw tree.

Corey, a sure-footed trail runner, has come up on bear several times on this trail and has also spotted a bobcat of sorts. Local lore, picked up at the general store, says that mountain lion and coyote have made a comeback, as well. Not one to balk at the expertise of people who have known the area for decades, this has left me to always explore the spot with our trusted and sharp-nosed basset/border collie mix, Otis, at my side.

DIRECTIONS

Take Garth Road approximately 10 miles to White Hall. At the Piedmont Store, bear left and continue on Sugar Hollow Road. Take it all the way to the end – where you will see the reservoir. Continue on the gravel road to the parking lot. Walk north up the fire road to the trail head.

If you are interested in getting involved with the Friend of the Moormans, please contact John Martin at JCMartin1@aol.com or 978-2872.

Rally cont'd

they support this funding. I think we can agree it would preferable for Virginia to control the clean-up effort of our watershed than to have the federal government come in and force restrictions and measures upon us in 2011. Please consider writing your State Delegate and Senator and ask them to vote for SB 626. You can find the text of it on Virginia's Legislative Information System (LIS) at <http://leg1.state.va.us/lis.htm>

New Committee Structure for 2006

On January 10th, the Board of Directors held its annual planning meeting, an outcome of which was a new committee structure. We now have eight committees:

- Advocacy
- Development
- Education
- Executive
- Recreation
- Rivanna River Restoration
- Scheier Natural Area

Water Quality

As of the writing of this article, 30 people had volunteered to serve on these committees! Simply outstanding; thank you so much. We always can use more help; please let Laurie know (at 434-971-1553 or aed@rivannariver.org) if you are interested in learning more about these committees and/or if you would like to volunteer. Most committees meet just once per month.

Woolen Mills Dam Breach Heading for Permit

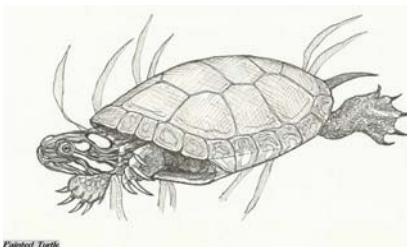
By Leslie Middleton

Last April, the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fish (DGIF) stocked 400,000 shad fry in the Rivanna for the first time since the Boshers Dam fish way in Richmond opened the Upper James to anadromous fish. The DGIF release was optimistic – but not without good cause. DGIF has been partner to RCS's efforts to partially breach the Woolen Mills Dam in order to allow American shad and other migrants to reach further upstream into their historic spawning grounds.

In November 2005, RCS and the private owners of the Woolen Mills dam reached an agreement that will allow RCS to move forward with obtaining the necessary permits from local, state, and federal agencies required for deconstruction of the dam. The permitting process includes a historical review that RCS welcomes as an opportunity to demonstrate how the recommended partial breach will aid in future historic interpretation. Removing only 175 feet of the 270 foot structure will allow easier and safer access to the remaining structures, known to pose a serious impediment to boaters traveling downstream from Darden Towe Park. (For more information, see the study at www.rivannariver.org/RCSWoolenMillsRestoration.html)

RCS's Rivanna River Restoration Committee is hard at work completing the paperwork necessary for the next phase of this important project which, like previous phases, will include opportunities for public input. Meanwhile, Albemarle County is working to establish the Old Mills walking trail along the County side of the Rivanna between Darden Towe Park and Milton. Several years from now, we look forward to stopping at the site of the old Woolen Mills Dam to marvel at the stonework left in place and celebrate a river running free through Charlottesville and a completely free-flowing main stem Rivanna River for the first time in more than 170 years.

RCS is seeking private funds to match a large federal grant given to remove the dam. Because federal and state funds are involved and the final demolition will be competitively bid, we can't reveal our exact budget here. If you or someone you know is interested in supporting this effort or you would like more information, please contact Jason Halbert, Chair of the Restoration Committee: jhalbert@wildvirginia.org or 434-220-0083 (work) 434-923-0107 (home).



Is it Safe to Swim in the River?

We endeavor to answer this important question for everyone in our community. The RCS Water Quality Committee is setting up a watershed-wide network of volunteers to perform coliform bacteria monitoring to supplement ongoing periodic tests conducted by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality and other agencies. The testing process is easy and we will arrange to train you and supply test kits. Interested in volunteering to test the water quality at your favorite swimming spot? Concerned about a potential pollution source in your neighborhood? Please let Laurie know at aed@rivannariver.org or 434-971-1553.

Welcome to Three New Board Members

RCS is pleased to welcome three new Directors to our Board

Having started her family, **Jen Downey** is happy to be back on the RCS Board. Jen's interests in investigative journalism, writing, and politics tie in perfectly with the mission of the Advocacy Committee, on which she has volunteered to serve. In addition, Jen is excited to be the Chair of our new Recreation Committee, enabling her and others to get out onto the Rivanna as she loves to do.

Tatyanna Patten has been extremely active in the Charlottesville area's environmental and political community—ideal interest and experience for her being the new Chair of the Advocacy Committee. In addition, she has for several years and continues to orchestrate Charlottesville's Earth Week celebratory events, great experience for her being the Special Events Champion on the Development Committee.

Morgan Butler is an attorney at Southern Environmental Law Center, where he has worked on the King William Reservoir case, the effects on water of the potential Lake Anna nuclear power plant, the Charlottesville long term water supply issue, and more. Morgan is looking forward to serving on our Advocacy Committee.

Welcome aboard Jen, Tatyanna and Morgan, and thank you so much for all that you are doing for RCS and our beloved watershed!

Kid's Corner

The Rivanna Watershed - Save It, Don't Pave It!

By Laurie A. Miller

Wouldn't this catchy phrase -- accompanied by a map of the Rivanna River and its watershed -- make a great bumper sticker? Dillon Norback thinks so. But who is Dillon Norback? That's what I wanted to find out. In the January 15 edition of The Daily Progress, I noticed a letter to the editor with a headline that intrigued me - "Clean Water Needs Public Support," by Dillon Norback. I read the piece and was impressed by the writer's thoughtful opinions about how citizens in Charlottesville and Albemarle County could help save water and keep the watershed clean. "The Rivanna watershed provides us with water, beautiful scenery, and recreation. Let's work to save it, not pave it," concluded the piece.

Right you are, Dillon. But who are you? I clipped the letter and came to work the following Monday, determined to contact Mr. Norback and thank him for mentioning RCS in his letter to the editor. Alas, I couldn't find him in our membership database. How could I reach him? RCS needs members like this - informed, thoughtful, and committed. Then it hit me -- I could try "googling" him! If that failed, I could always try the "old way," and look in the telephone book. Maybe there would only be a few Norbacks. I would call them all until I found my author.

Google found an article from The Daily Progress ("Kids Get Digital at Tech Camp," June 30, 2005) about school aged children attending a digital technology summer camp. Voila -- Dillon Norback, age 11, attendee. A quick check in the telephone book -- one Norback -- and I was in contact with the remarkable young man -- now 12 years old -- who authored the letter.

Dillon agreed to meet with me one afternoon at his home in Charlottesville, where he lives with his mother, sister, and uncle, to answer my questions about the project he did on the watershed which was mentioned in the newspaper. It turns out that his project sprung from an assignment from his middle school science teacher, Julia Weed. Ms. Weed teaches at Burley Middle School and her assignment involved "Teaching Active Citizenship Through the Innovative Learning of Ecology" (TACTILE projects). Students were encouraged to research topics of their own interest, then create an appropriate report for an authentic audience. Students researched topics like global warming, endangered species laws, and the effects of urban sprawl; many, like Dillon, wrote letters to their state and federal legislators voicing their concerns. "Dillon did a lot of outside research for his project," said Ms. Weed. "He was very thorough, too. He wrote many letters to his state and local level government officials, so he did a great job reaching an authentic audience."

In many ways, Dillon is a typical 7th grader. He attends J. P. Burley Middle School; he has read all the Harry Potter books; and he didn't want his mother to brush his hair for the photo I wanted to take of him. But how many 12-year-olds do you know who get their letter to the editor published in the local newspaper? Or who read Noam Chomsky because they want to learn more about propaganda? Or who -- when asked what he thought was his greatest strength -- say, "I guess that would be my ability not to become overly emotional in certain situations." Not many, I would suppose -- me, neither.

For his 11th birthday, Dillon's grandfather gave him some money and encouraged him to think about donating it to a worthy cause. Dillon decided to donate to The Nature Conservancy (TNC). Dillon asked if someone at TNC might be able to help him with his assignment, so Ridge Schuyler, director of TNC's Piedmont Program, provided Dillon with lots of helpful information, including maps of the watershed, flow data, and information about the problems affecting the Rivanna River, such as sedimentation. Edgar Imhoff, a family friend and member of the State Water Supply Committee, provided additional helpful information.

Dillon wrote letters to state and local politicians as well as the letter to The Daily Progress. "Often times you just get a form letter as a reply," he told me, with a sly smile. "I also learned that sometimes it costs MORE to

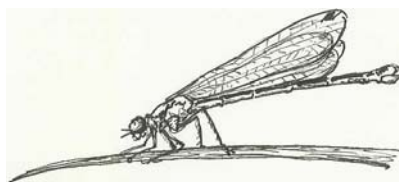
Please turn to page 10



Kids Corner cont'd

do NOTHING to solve an environmental problem, than it would to do something about it." Another smile. But I wouldn't call Dillon jaded – just realistic. He told me that he likes the "comforts of urban living," but if he could change one thing about this area, it would be to protect more open area close to those urban spaces. He said I would probably be surprised to know that he "really isn't the outdoorsy type." When I asked him who his most important influences were, he said, "Adults always ask kids that question. Kids don't know the answer to that until they're older." And when asked what his favorite book was, he replied, "I'm not really interested in favoritism."

While Dillon and I spoke, his mother and grandmother listened and smiled. Neither of them tried to answer questions for him, nor did they try (or need!) to put words in his mouth. They clearly have a great respect for Dillon as a person. Dillon praised his grandmother, who is home schooling him part-time, and who was a great help to him with his project. The family walked me out to my car to say goodbye and to read my bumper stickers, which are plentiful and express my "green" leanings. I promised to keep in touch – maybe Dillon could help RCS with the river clean-up this fall. As I drove off, full of hope because of this inspiring young man's convictions, I imagined one more bumper sticker finding its place onto my car.....



Volunteer Opportunities

In 2006, RCS will intensify our efforts to create a strong and active Volunteer Network. Volunteers are a vital part of organization - our Board of Directors all serve as volunteers and we simply could not function as an organization without their dedicated help. There are many things you can do as a volunteer. You can spend time outside on the river – lead a canoe or kayak trip, or take a hike with school children and help them learn about the watershed. If you love to write, help edit or proofread documents; if you're well-organized, show up at a mailing party to fold, stuff, and label envelopes. We want to find you a volunteer opportunity that matches an interest or a passion of yours – please review the following list for something specific you can help with:

Booth Staffers -- relax at the RCS booth at various public events, such as Fridays after Five and Old Farm Day (October)

Local Environmental Issue Advocates

Membership Coordinator -- coordinate with staff on current member relations and new member drives

Recreation Co-leaders -- co-lead canoe trips, hikes, cleanups, and/or trail and boat landing maintenance projects

Special Event Co-planners

Please sign up to volunteer for RCS by contacting Laurie Miller, Volunteer Manager, at 434-971-1553 (or email aed@rivannariver.org).

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

Canoes, Kayaks Wanted

This is going to be an incredible year chock full of exciting river events. We have a trailer and two canoes; however we need more canoes, kayaks, paddles, life jackets, etc. Got any collecting dust in your shed or out in the yard? Please let Laurie (971-1553 or aed@rivannariver.org) know if you would like to turn them into a tax-deductible donation to RCS. Thanks!

New Membership Dollars Count Double!

The Virginia Environmental Endowment (www.vee.org) is matching all new non-corporate membership dollars one-for-one, up to \$7500 for 2006. 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

Thank You for Your Support of the Rivanna Conservation Society

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RCS Events Calendar

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

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 streamwatch@cstone.net

Sunday, April 2nd, 10 am, Riparian Forestry Workday, Azalea Park Community Gardens. Tend and distribute conservation tree and shrub seedlings for spring plantings.

Saturday, April 8th, 10am Rivanna River Float, Crofton to Palmyra. Come explore some of the natural and historic marvels on the beautiful Rivanna. Free for members, some boats available. For more info and RSVP, call RCS at (434) 971-1553

Sunday, April 9th, Wetlands Interpretive Hike with guide Lonnie Murray, a member of the Virginia Native Plants Society. Meet at the RTF trail head on Hydraulic Road.

Friday, April 14th, 10am Creek Clean Up with RCS, Meet at Moore's Creek at Azalea Park.

Saturday April 15th, 10am Tree Planting with RCS, Time and location TBA

Saturday, April 22nd, 11am-6:30pm, Earth Day Festival 2006 ! Activities include Schencks Branch creek clean-up, James Yates' "Right Here, Right Now" art workshop project, RTF Treasure Hunt, TJSWCD's kids' stream monitoring program, and lots more!

Sunday April 23rd, 3pm 4th Sundays at Scheier Natural Area: Meet us every 4th Sunday at Scheier; fun nature exploration for all ages.

Saturday, May 6th, 10am, Creek Clean Up with RCS, location TBA

Sunday, May 7th, 10 am RCS Tree Planting and interpretive tour of established planting. Location TBA

Saturday, May 13th, 10am Rivanna River Float, Darden Towe to Riverview Park, RSVP (434) 971-1553

Saturday, May 20th, 10am Meadow Creek Clean Up with potluck cookout to follow. Meet at Meadow Creek near Holmes Ave.

Sunday May 28th, 3pm 4th Sundays at Scheier Natural Area: Nature exploration for all ages.

Saturday, June 17th, Rivanna Regatta Float from South Fork Dam to DardenTowe Park. Fun to follow! Stay tuned for more information.

Sunday, June 25th, 3pm 4th Sundays at Scheier Natural Area: Nature exploration for all ages

Check our website, www.rivannariver.org, or call Laurie (434) 971-1553 for more information

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 River Otter\$100.00

Blue Heron....250.00 Osprey....\$500.00 Bald Eagle...\$1000.00+

Corporate Membership: Green Heron...\$100.00 Mink...\$500.00 Kingfisher...\$1000.00 +

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

Please complete and mail with check, made payable to: Rivanna Conservation Society, PO Box 1501 Charlottesville, VA 22902



The Woolen Mills Dam in Charlottesville. Photo J. Halbert

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