

# ACCOMPLISHMENT HIGHLIGHTS

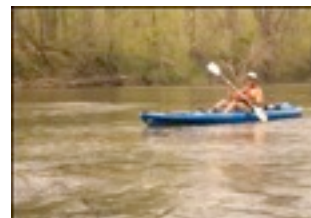
## Rivanna Conservation Society

### 2011

#### NEW PROJECTS

Rivanna River Steward – We are excited to report on the creation of our new Rivanna River Steward program, now under development. The Steward will be the eyes and ears of RCS on the river, a voice for the organization throughout the Rivanna River watershed. The River Steward will serve as the on-the-water advocate for conservation and responsible stewardship of the river. The Steward will advocate for the river and its watershed: identifying, investigating and helping to resolve issues to improve the health of the river. The Steward will also be a primary contact for recreational users and volunteers to monitor the river and take action to protect and restore it. With its Steward program, RCS will advance initiatives to protect and restore the river through information sharing, regulatory compliance, land stewardship, and ongoing relations with river users and riparian land owners.

The Rivanna River Steward will serve as 1) the point person for the identification of pollution and potential restoration locations, 2) the contact for the River Otters Corps, and 3) support for the Executive Director as an integral component of the RCS Water Health for the Commonwealth Water Quality Monitoring Network.



**River Otters Corps (ROC)** – Another RCS innovation, this program will engage volunteers to patrol the Rivanna and its tributaries in order to 1) identify water quality and pollution problems, 2) document the health of fish populations, and 3) help RCS to take on-the-ground action to protect, and restore threatened areas across the entire watershed. Whether walking beside a neighborhood stream or paddling the Rivanna, the ROC will document suspected pollution sources and their effects, while also reporting natural patterns in river hydrology and aquatic/wildlife sightings. Training and equipment will be provided to River Otters as a part of this project.



The River Otters will be proactive in protecting their river through their commitment to action projects in their communities. They will patrol a selected section of the Rivanna each quarter (or more often) by kayak/canoe or on foot to identify problems ranging from sources of pollution to streambank erosion, invasive species, and improper land-use practices in the riparian zone. Similar to the well-known “adopt-a-highway program,” volunteers will be asked to commit at least 10 hours per year to this phase of the project. Our goal and expectation is that by engaging citizens like you in the care and protection of the river, you will also inspire friends and neighbors to help “Keep the Rivanna Clean.” Collected information relating to water quality problems and concerns along the Rivanna River will be shared via email, FaceBook, the RCS Blog and Twitter. This kind of vigilant, hands-on role will also provide volunteers with something we all truly seek: significant work to protect the environment.

**Water Health for the Commonwealth (WHC)** – The Rivanna Conservation Society the Blue Ridge School, Collegiate School, Monticello High School, and St. Anne’s Belfield are working together to create a watershed-wide water quality monitoring system comprised of middle and high school students and teachers from schools adjacent to the Rivanna and James Rivers. We will begin at the headwaters of the Rivanna River, will expand to include the James River, and will end at the Chesapeake Bay. The project includes classroom learning and in-stream water quality monitoring (chemical, biological, bacterial, flow and volume). Within the first three years of the project our goal is to reach 30 schools.



## ADVOCACY

Local Growth Plans – Seven environmental groups joined forces to make their voices heard in the planning process for Charlottesville and Albemarle County, calling on local government to make preservation and conservation a higher

priority in guiding future growth. The groups are the League of Women Voters of Charlottesville and Albemarle County, Piedmont Group of the Sierra Club, the Nature Conservancy, the Southern Environmental Law Center, Advocates for a Sustainable Albemarle Population, the Piedmont Environmental Council, and the Rivanna Conservation Society.



Pollution Diet –RCS has communicated with Governor Bob McDonnell to ensure the expeditious development of state-wide standards for the States' Pollution Diet known in the bureaucratic world at Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL). When complete the TMDL will develop limits on the amounts and kinds of pollutants discharged into Virginia's rivers. RCS also urged the Governor to approve Virginia's Watershed Implementation Action Plan. RCS just received a grant from the Choose Clean Water Campaign to conduct public involvement activities throughout the watershed.

## **EDUCATION & OUTREACH**

Blue Ridge Commons Earth Day Water Monitoring – The RCS Executive Director led a group of more than 25 elementary school students in their Earth Day Celebration. The young people learned about watersheds, why clean water is important to people and fish, and the actions that we can all take to keep our water clean.

Blue Ridge School – Mussel Education Workshop, focusing on the importance of freshwater mussels to the aquatic ecosystem. More than 100 students participated in this event, co-hosted by the school, RCS and the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

Fluvanna High School Watershed Field Day – RCS joined with teachers, volunteers, and the USDA extension service to conduct the annual "Field Day" at the Sandy Beach in Palmyra. Events included chemical monitoring, biological monitoring, watershed studies, and an investigation of the locks.

Monticello High School Watershed Education and Monitoring Day – Three classes of senior students participated in this all-day event of in-class learning and field water quality monitoring. The fall event focused on physical and

chemical monitoring and the spring event will include a refresher in class lecture and biological (macro-invertebrate) monitoring along the Rivanna River.

Oakland School – Students and teachers at Oakland have been consistent and enthusiastic participants in the RCS watershed education program. In addition to regular cleanups, participating in River Sojourns, planting buffers, and conducting water quality monitoring, the students host the RCS Rivanna Watershed Exhibit at their school.

Tandem Friends River Monitoring and Cleanup – Students from Tandem Friends joined the RCS Executive Director to learn about water chemistry, watershed protection, and water monitoring for temperature, dissolved oxygen, clarity, and pH. This kind of monitoring is the first step to rolling back pollution and the damage it causes to watersheds and aquatic life.



## RIVER CLEANUPS AND RESTORATION

Buffer Plantings – RCS facilitated two buffer plantings this year – both at the Greene County Community Park. The first was a slope tree planting and the second was native plants for the constructed bio-swale. The project was a partnership between a number of groups: the Center for Watershed Protection, Greene County Planning Division, Greene County Parks and Recreation, Greene County Ruritans, RRBC and RCS. The project was funded through a federal grant to the Rivanna River Basin Commission (RRBC).



Clean the Bay Day – Spring found RCS members along the Rivanna for Clean the Bay Day. RCS served as the local coordinator for the event, which included partner groups such as Blue Ridge Mountain Sports, the Virginia Master Naturalists, The Nature Conservancy and the City of Charlottesville, the County of Albemarle and Fluvanna County. More than 100 volunteers came out to help clean the Rivanna River. Tires, grocery carts, bottles, cans, fishing supplies and

lots of cigarette butts made up the mounds of trash collected. This year Dixon Disposal was kind enough to pick up and recycle the trash, and we are most appreciative. Cleanup Statistics 100 volunteers more than 2.800 pounds of trash.

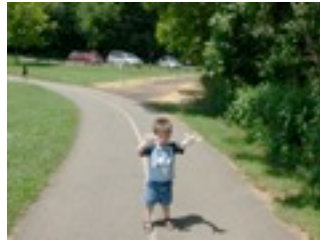
21th Annual Rivanna River Cleanup – In October the Rivanna River Clean-Up took place at five locations along the Rivanna. With the help of the UVA football team, students from UVA’s Ecology Club, students from Oakland School in Keswick, Monticello High School, Charlottesville High School and Albemarle High School – and of course the dedicated RCS Board and membership, we had about 120 volunteers. This year we focused on efforts at the following locations. Riverview Park, Reas Ford Bridge, South Fork Reservoir, Darden Towe Park and the Sandy Beach and boat launch in Palmyra.

Our biggest challenge was the transport of three 20 ft. pipes up the streambank. Students from the Albemarle High School Key Club pulled from the river but couldn’t get up the slope. The UVA Football Team and Coach London showed up right on queue to help pull those huge pipes out up the slope so the City of Charlottesville could recycle them. Now that was a real “Team Effort.”

Cleanup Statistics – Overall 120 volunteers, 262 volunteer hours donated, and the collections of more than 3,400 pounds of debris (including an oil tank and a refrigerator), filling 130 large trash bags with assorted trash (including diapers, soda and beer cans, paper, cardboard, Styrofoam, fast-food trash, tires, car parts, batteries, tennis balls, dog toys, plastic bags and bottles and stuff you could not name and don’t want in your river).

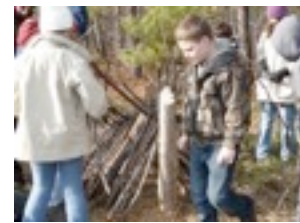


Teeny Tiny Cleanup – This cleanup brought the youngest participants ever to Riverview Park as a part of the “pre scout” troop of 4 and 5 year olds -- and their parents of course. The wee ones were so excited and full of energy -- though not always focused on the task-at-hand. It’s never too early to teach the little ones about the importance of keeping our rivers clean.



## **SCHEIER NATURAL AREA**

The RCS Friends of Scheier Committee presented a series of public events at our 100-acre nature preserve in Fluvanna County (open to the public daily during daylight hours). Popular events include the Survival and Primitive Skills Workshop (held each fall) and the Edible & Medicinal Plant Walk, held each spring. Scheier is available for use by educational groups upon request.



## **THIRD THURSDAY BROWN BAG LECTURES**

**January 20** – Marvin Moss and Steve Pence: Virginia Scenic Rivers and Rivanna's status as the first designation. **February 17** – Alexandria Searls, Executive Director, Lewis & Clark Exploratory Center: What's New at the Lewis and Clark Exploratory Center. **March 17** – Chris French, VA Director, Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay: What is a Bayscape and How Does It Work? **April 21** – Delegate David J. Toscano: Environmental/Conservation Issues before the General Assembly. **May 19** – John Murphy, Executive Director, StreamWatch: Land Use and Stream Health in the Rivanna Basin. **June 16** – Ann Jennings, Virginia Executive Director – Chesapeake Bay Foundation: Bay litigation and its impact on cleanup and TMDL's. **July 21** – Bill Street, Executive Director, James River Association: Bay TMDL and Water Implementation Plans. **September 15** – David Hirschman, Program Director Center for Watershed Protection: Watershed Management: From Stanardsville to Saipan. **October 20** – Leslie Middleton, Executive Director, Rivanna River Basin Commission: Goals and accomplishments of the RRBC. **December 15** – Kristin Szakos, Charlottesville City Council Member: Water Conservation and the Citizen's Role in Saving Water.

World Water Monitoring Day – In addition to the dozens of water quality events held in our watershed, the RCS Executive Director (the founder of the event in

2003) was invited by the Taiwan Government to host the event in Taipei. More than 8,000 students and teachers participated.



**Quick Facts about RCS in 2011:**

2 Major River Cleanups involving hundreds of volunteers and the collection of more than 10,000 of pounds of trash,  
15 Mini cleanups  
15 School programs conducted, (450 students and 20 teachers)  
10 Third Thursday Brown Bag lectures conducted  
20 Presentations before local organizations,  
2 Buffer plantings conducted, (100 volunteers & 2,200 plants)  
4 New projects being launched,  
5 Programs/events at the Scheier Natural Area,  
4 Water Health for the Commonwealth events sponsored,  
4 Save Our Streams macro invertebrate trainings conducted.

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