



# Rivanna Conservation Society

*Our Heart is With Our River*

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Presentation of  
Robbi Savage, Executive Director  
Before the  
Charlottesville Area Community Foundation  
Saturday June 23, 2007

Good Morning.

My name is Robbi Savage and I am delighted to be here to share this Rivanna River Field Experience with you. Thank you so much to John Redick, Art Riser, Kevin O'Halloran, Holly Hatcher and all of the CACF leadership for inviting us here today. We are going to have a beautiful day on the River.

Let me first tell you a little about the Rivanna Conservation Society (RCS). The organization was established in 1990 and has been a very credible and successful federation of dedicated volunteers. RCS members and volunteers are committed to the protection and enhancement of the Rivanna River and its tributaries.

In recognition of the increasing challenges to the physical, chemical and biological integrity of the Rivanna, the RCS Board of Directors determined that the services of a professional staff would be necessary. The organization currently has two staff members, a volunteer webmaster and 3 college interns volunteering for the summer.

One of the most significant challenges to the wellbeing of the Rivanna is rainwater runoff that carries human and animal waste, pesticides and fertilizers over the land and into the stream, causing increased levels of bacteria and nutrients in the waterway. This type of pollution is generally referred to as nonpoint sources

Since the passage of the 1972 Clean Water Act, many of what are called "Point Sources," discharges that come from a pipe or other discreet conveyance, have been addressed. As previously mentioned, the more prominent remaining pollution comes from what is termed "Nonpoint Sources." Nonpoint sources are defined as diffuse sources entering the waterway from multiple and often non discernable locations. This distinction is important because "Point Sources" are generally produced at industrial facilities and waste water treatment plants and "Nonpoint Sources" are usually the result of individual activities in homes, on yards and as a part of farming practices. For this reason, information sharing, youth education and teacher training, embellished by direct involvement in the stream monitoring and ongoing protection efforts become critically important.

To achieve its mission to protect and improve the conditions of the Rivanna River, the RCS has undertaken a number of programs and projects to increase public outreach and involvement in watershed protection. These include:

- Third Thursday Brown Bag Public Education Forums
- Fourth Sunday at the Scheier (field experiences on native plants, bird, pond culture, etc.)
- River Clean Ups and Paddles
- Stream bank buffering, easement and restoration programs
- Youth Education Programs for schools within the watershed
- Teacher Training Programs
- Rain Barrel promotion and Sales
- The Rivanna River Regatta and Festival
- The Rivanna River Launch of the James River Sojourn

**P.O. Box 1501 Charlottesville, VA 22902-1501**  
**Phone: (434) 97-RIVER (977-4837) • Fax: (815) 846-0917**

- The Woolen Mills Dam Breach planning and design project

Over the coming months, the RCS intends to expand its programs/projects to include;

- The breach of the Woolen Mills Dam (August)
- The initiation of World Water Monitoring Day (October)
- The sponsorship of a Teacher Watershed Summit (March)
- The sponsorship of a Youth Watershed Summit (April)
- The expansion of the RCS Speakers Bureau (Ongoing)
- The initiation and facilitation of the Citizen Dialogue on Stormwater (July)

You will note that the majority of the program and project undertaken by the Rivanna Conservation Society (or cosponsored with partners like the Chesapeake Bay Foundation and The Nature Conservancy) are directly linked to public outreach, education, training and involvement. This is because environmental insults to our waters are increasing daily, population growth is placing new and increasing demands on our waterways and fiscal resources from federal and state governments are diminishing. The end result is that, in many instances, our community will need to make its own decisions on how best to protect the Rivanna River. We at RCS know that in order to make the best possible decisions, the public and its elected decision-makers need the most current and credible information available. RCS is dedicated to providing such information.

In summary, it is only with your help that the Rivanna Conservation Society can continue its efforts to promote (through its variety of programs) the education and involvement of community leaders, home owners, farmers and ranchers, developers and contractors, young people and senior citizens. We are convinced that through this information sharing, better environmental decisions can be made in our Charlottesville Area Communities.

Thank you so much for sharing this beautiful day on the Rivanna River with me and my colleagues...