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## Wild and Scenic Environmental Film Festival

Friends of the Russell Fork teamed up with the Clinch Coalition, McClure River Restoration Project and the environmental club at UVA-Wise to host a Wild and Scenic Environmental Film Festival. FoRF received a grant from Patagonia to cover most of the cost. UVA-Wise offered the science auditorium as the venue. There was a reception held prior to the film showings with kids' crafts and activities.

Winners of an art/essay contest held in Wise and Dickenson counties were also recognized and rewarded with a tree to plant. The purpose of the film festival was to reach out to the community and recruit new members and volunteers. The theme of the event was "Clean Water for Southwest Virginia" but the films covered a variety of topics. Six short films were shown including: Secret Life of Paper, Everyday at School,

Planting Hope, Split Estate and Watershed Revolution. The feature film was "Tapped," which looked at the bottled water industry and how it effects the environment and human health. It also questioned the fairness of treating water as a commodity rather than a basic human right. A good time was had by all and plans are already in the works to put on a similar event next year!

### Did you know?

- The Russell Fork watershed covers nearly 140,000 acres in Dickenson and Buchanan counties.
- The primary contaminants in our watershed come from sedimentation, straight pipe pollution, acid mine drainage and illegal dumping.
- Four miles of the Russell Fork River in the state of Virginia are listed as impaired due to PCB contamination in fish tissue.



Artwork display done by local students



## FoRF to host Sustainability Summer Camp

Are you a high school or middle school student looking for something interesting to do this summer but have a limited budget?

Friends of the Russell Fork will be teaming up with the Haysi Partners this summer for a

Sustainability Summer Camp. The day camp will take place July 5<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> at the Friends of the Russell Fork building and throughout the town of Haysi. The Sustainability Summer Camp will be an opportunity to get the youth involved in the Town of Haysi, promoting a

sustainable environment and community and encouraging entrepreneurship. The camp will start with an introduction to sustainability and each day will hold different activities such as town beautification projects, trail work, sustainable agriculture (cont on pg 2)

## *FoRF needs your help!*

Friends of the Russell Fork's mission is to improve and protect the Upper Big Sandy River Watershed especially around the Russell Fork River through volunteers, partnerships, and education while promoting the economic development of the local community. We work to close straight pipes, promote environmental education in the schools, clean up the river, and conduct water quality tests on the local waterways. One of our top goals is to assist needy families with home repairs and installation of wastewater treatment systems. Lack of a wastewater treatment system poses a human health hazard for those who use the river for

repairs and installation of wastewater treatment systems. Lack of a wastewater treatment system poses a human health hazard for those who use the river for recreation as well as those who are lacking a system. In the summer of 2011, we are planning to host a group called ReCreation Experiences. They are based in Weaverville, NC and have had a lot of experience doing work on homes in western North Carolina. They will be bringing around 100 volunteers on 2-3 different occasions during the summer. It is also likely that will come a few summers in a row to work on as many homes as possible. Volunteers with ReCreation

experiences are capable of doing major home repairs and possibly even installing septic tanks. FoRF must work to locate homes throughout our watershed in Dickenson and Buchanan counties to identify families who would benefit from the services of ReCreation Experiences. This is where FoRF needs the help of citizens living in the area. If

you know of anyone who needs help, please let us know by phone (865-4918) or email ([russellfork@gmail.com](mailto:russellfork@gmail.com)).



## *Town-wide cleanup draws a crowd*

The town-wide cleanup held in April was a huge success in spite of the rainy weather. Several students from Haysi High School came out to help as well as the Dickenson and Buchanan county litter controls. Volunteers spent about two hours picking up trash before the rains came. Haysi High School teacher Ben Collins and some of his students even managed to pull a car engine and other parts out of the river. A lot of trash was collected and the work done was visibly noticeable. After the work was finished, everyone enjoyed pizza provided by litter control.



*Haysi high school students take a break*

## *Summer camp cont'd*



and water monitoring workshops, and speakers on green jobs and local business. Some of the town beautification projects include painting a mural in town, a community vehicular reclamation project, and designing recycling and trash

receptacles.

The camp is free of charge and will include lunch. Anyone in grades 6-12 is welcome. It is a great opportunity to get outside, have some fun, learn something new, and leave a mark in your local community.

If you would like to attend for the whole week or only a few days, contact us at 865-4918 or [tuckerforf@gmail.com](mailto:tuckerforf@gmail.com). We need everyone to register by no later than June 28<sup>th</sup>, whether it be for a day or the entire week.



## *Chili Cook-off raises funds for community garden*

On Saturday, March 6<sup>th</sup>, the Sandlick Community Association and Friends of the Russell Fork hosted a chili cook-off to raise funds for a community garden. There were ten entries and all were unique but Patsy Barton took the prize for the best chili with the most votes. The Sandlick Community Association also had a bake sale during the event to raise funds for their cookbook. \$100 were made to put toward a community garden in Sandlick that will compliment the outdoor classroom being constructed at Sandlick Elementary.



*Patsy Barton, winner of the chili cook-off, with her prize*

## *Public Water Forum*

Two public forum meetings have been held to address water quality issues in Dickenson County. The purpose of the meetings is to invite citizens out to voice concerns that they may have with the water or environment. Hosting the meetings is an effort between the McClure River Restoration Project and Friends of the Russell Fork to learn about and discuss issues that they may not be aware of. Some topics that have been brought up at the past two meetings include cleaning up the debris left in the streams from the December storm to prevent flooding and involving citizens in an effort to do sewer surveys. The forums are a great way to give citizens an active role in making a change in Dickenson County.

## *Critter Close-up: Variegate Darter*

The variegate darter (*Etheostoma variatum*) is considered on Virginia's endangered species list. The Dismal Creek, Knox Creek and the Russell Fork have been designated "Threatened and Endanger Species Waters" because of the presence of the darter. The male variegate darter has colorful markings but the female does not. The darters can be found in medium to large streams that are warm with a rocky bottom. They usually feed on mites and other insects and can generally be found in the fastest flowing part of a riffle. Variegate darters are an indicator of good water quality but are adversely affected by acid mine drainage, sedimentation and other pollutants. Darters spawn in spring from mid April to mid May and lay their eggs in riffles. They then cover them up with sand or gravel. They provide no further care for their young.



*Male variegate darter*

[http://www.epa.gov/bioinvt/images/fish/perch/variaturm-jeff\\_web.JPG](http://www.epa.gov/bioinvt/images/fish/perch/variaturm-jeff_web.JPG)

## *Upcoming Events with FoRF*

- June 4th: Coal Fields Folk Life Festival at Poplar Gap Park
- June 5th at 11 am: Rain barrel workshop at shelter in front of Haysi town hall
- June 19th starting at 10 am: 4th Annual Sand Lick Homecoming
- June 22nd at 6 pm: FoRF meeting at the Home Ec cottage at Haysi High School
- June 25th starting at 9:30 am: Big Sandy River Basin Coalition Conference at Breaks Interstate Park
- July 5th-9th: Sustainability Summer Camp
- July 10th: WaterFest, Fish Fry and Bluegrass

## **FOR SALE**

**Friends of the Russell Fork is still selling t-shirts as a fundraiser. They are only \$13 so let us know if you want one!**

**If you have any questions about our upcoming events please call, email or drop by our office!**

Check us out!  
<http://forf.weebly.com>



**The Friends of the Russell Fork (FORF)** is a young watershed group based in the town of Haysi with an office on the campus of Haysi High School. The FORF comprises local citizens who want to improve the quality of the waterways in the Russell Fork watershed, restore the diversity of aquatic life, and promote economic development in their community. The FORF partners with schools, businesses, government and federal agencies, and nonprofits to clean illegal dump sites, monitor streams, give citizens access to lawful wastewater treatment, stop sedimentation through reforestation and raise public awareness about environmental issues.

The FORF is a partner with the **Appalachian Coal Country Watershed Team (ACCWT)**, which helps rural communities by building local organizational capacity and partnerships. The Team coordinates 53 OSM/VISTA volunteers who live and work in their Appalachian host communities to promote environmental change. Gene Counts is currently the director of FORF.

The ACCWT targets environmental problems in eight Appalachian states (AL, KY, MD, OH, PA, TN, VA and WV) through partnerships between the Office of Surface Mining, AmeriCorps\*VISTA and watershed groups throughout coal country.

Founded in response to requests from watershed groups throughout coal country, the work of the Appalachian Coal Country Watershed Team arms citizen groups with the knowledge, skills, and tools necessary to make them effective environmental stewards, community leaders, and accelerators of change. Together, the Team and its local partners are propelling a new Appalachian economy based on conservation and development, strong partnerships, and new hope.

Founded and directed by Dr. T. Allan Comp, the ACCWT and Allan are both recipients of numerous national awards. The ACCWT was named the Governmental Partner of the Year by the National Summit of Mining Communities in 2006 and received the U.S. Department of the Interior Environmental Achievement Award in 2004. Allan's work with his AMD&ART Project won a Green Design Award from the PA Environmental Council and the prestigious Phoenix Award from the EPA Brownfields Program, among others.

