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*Select AmeriCorps NCCC Team Joins FORF in Surveying over 200 Homes*

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**Haysi, VA** – The Friends of the Russell Fork hosted an AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC) team from April 6 through May 2, 2011. The team consisted of eight college grads selected to serve for one month the residents of Dickenson and Buchanan counties.

‘FORF 4’ members came from all over the country and aided FORF in making huge strides in a sewer surveying project.

Sewer surveys are a continuing initiative of FORFs. The surveys ask homeowners about their waste management practices in order to discover which homes need a septic system. There is an Indoor Plumbing and Rehabilitation program in VA. In many cases, septic systems may be installed free of charge or on a sliding scale. The IPR program is managed by the Cumberland Plateau Housing Authority and can work with homeowners to

address plumbing, waste management and infrastructure needs. Lastly, the surveys indicate which homes are in need of immediate repairs. A home repair mission group will be coming in June to address these cases.

FORF partners with Virginia’s Department of Health, Cumberland Plateau Planning District, Cumberland Plateau Housing Authority and ReCreation Experiences to move this project along. *Cont. on page 2*

**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.
- Gene passed his contractors exam! Enabling FORF to help get more qualified homes built and repaired.



Max, Amber, Jess and Lisa from NCCC and Bernetta at Guest River Clean Up



## *NCCC Continued from Page 1*

The survey project was wildly successful with over 200 homes surveyed in the Birchleaf, Bartlick and Prater areas in a month. Helping homeowners find safe way to manage their waste and the county keep better records of homes that need addressing.

Owners that were not at home were left a brief information sheet describing the survey and leaving FORF, VDH and CPHA's contact information to find out more. If you live in Dickenson county and want to complete the survey please contact our office.

FORF 4 also helped in clean ups at the Guest River Gorge and Russell Fork river, gave

presentations to Ervinton and Haysi high school on the NCCC program and partnered with Emory and Henry's outdoor program.

The team also took part in local recreational activities. They could be seen every week square dancing at the Kiwanis building, practicing kayaking skills on the Russell Fork, volunteering at the Hillbilly Festival in Pikeville, hiking at Breaks Interstate Park and biking at the Creeper Trail in Damascus.

Their service ended early after being called on disaster relief in Cleveland, TN after the recent storms.



Bernetta teaching at Wildlife Table, Clear Creek Days May, 2011

## *Environmental Education Update*

New Friends of the Russell Fork AmeriCorps Vista, Bernetta Marchand has been busy teaming up with various agencies and non-profits to spread FORF's message of environmental conservation.

This Spring Bernetta presented at several events. In March, FORF was active training Haysi High School's Envirothon team on their oral presentation every day until the presentation April 1st. They placed third in the regional competition! In April, FORF presented water monitoring to more than one hundred 5th graders at UVA Wise. Two education events happened in May. Bernetta presented her new animal tracking lesson plan to over 70 4th graders from the local elementary school in Norton at Clear Creek Conservation Education Days. Also, the Lonesome Pine's Kids in the Woods day was another great event with FORF helping at the Insect Safari station.

Also, plans are underway for a year long student water monitoring program. FORF is in the preliminary stages of organizing this capacity building effort. So far, Ervinton and Sandlick Elementary and Ervinton and Haysi high school are on board to team up and test water quality. The program will start late August 2011.



Bernetta and Ervinton Elementary students gathering specimens!

## *\$10,000 in kind donations*

FORF received \$10,000 worth of in kind donations this season! Thanks to Sheltolee Trace Outfitters and private donors, FORF now has a 4 person raft, 3 barge kayaks, 2 duckies and extra helmets, paddles and personal flotation devices to host events and clean the Russell Fork river!



"Check out this water bug!" FORF at Ervinton Elementary

## *Cyber Mapping the Russell Fork to Expand Interest in Area*

FORF has started a mapping project on internet site, Google Maps, to highlight important spots on and around the Russell Fork river.

This mapping project identifies whitewater access for paddlers, historical points of interest, areas of high pollution, and local tourism and business hotspots.

The Google Maps Project will help to expand tourism in the area, and spread awareness on local history and environmental problems.

Currently, the map is still under construction but is accessible through the FORF website, [www.forf.weebly.com](http://www.forf.weebly.com). Simply click on the Russell Fork Mapping Project link to access the map. As of now, there are four whitewa-

ter accesses, 19 river and lake features, 12 town and trail sites, 13 historical points of interest and 3 areas of high pollution mapped.

If you have any information you think would be important to map along the Russell Fork river, please don't hesitate to call or visit our office.

## *FORF hires New AmeriCorps Vistas*

Friends of the Russell Fork has hired two new AmeriCorps Vistas. The full service year Vista, Bernetta Marchand started in late February and Jonathan Watterson, FORF's summer Vista will be in Haysi from June -August. Bernetta Marchand is a recent cum laude graduate of San Francisco State University. She received a B. A. in anthropology and hopes to acquire her doctorate in conservation to ensure a position with the National Park Service. Bernetta will focus on environmental education and to support ecotourism expansion efforts in Dickenson county.



Bernetta hiking on Thumb Butte, Prescott, AZ



New FORF Vista, Jonathan Watterson

Jonathan is a MLA Candidate in Landscape Architecture at the State University of New York's College of Environmental Science & Forestry in Syracuse, NY. He will be helping FORF and the town of Haysi design a green park at the old town site of Splashdam. The park will include a walking and biking trails, paddling access, picnic tables and historical markers for any remaining structures from Splashdam's mining days. Jonathan is a native of South Carolina and loves to bike and paddle and hopes to incorporate these activities into his design work.

## *Upcoming Activities at FORF*

- June 1: Benthic macroinvertebrate presentation at Ervinton elementary
- June 4: National Trail Day
- June 13: Summer Vista arrives!
- June 19: Home Repair Mission group, ReCreation Experiences arrives
- June 21: E.Coli and Coliform monitoring for the Russell Fork and McClure Rivers
- June 28: Community meeting at Home Ec. cottage on high school campus, 7pm

### **FOR SALE**

**Friends of the Russell Fork is still selling t-shirts as a fundraiser. They are only \$12 so let us know if you want one!**



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



Recently made a Virginia state scenic river, the Russell Fork River runs northward through Buchanan and Dickenson Counties in Southwest Virginia, passes through a dramatic gorge in scenic Breaks Interstate Park on its way to Kentucky and into the Big Sandy River. The Russell Fork provides recreational opportunities for locals and visitors alike and has long been popular with kayakers, particularly on October weekends when John Flannagan Dam offers weekend releases that generate Class IV and V rapids through the gorge.

On the Virginia side, the Russell Fork cuts through steep terrain and encounters few urban areas on its route. The economy of this region throughout the years has been founded on coal mining and logging, and increasingly on natural gas extraction. Some of the environmental issues facing the Russell Fork are sedimentation, illegal dump sites, and poor septic facilities. Sedimentation, which blankets streambeds and damages aquatic habitats, arises from the steepness of the surrounding landscape coupled with poor resource extraction practices. Illegal dumping, a chronic problem in the region, contributes to poor drainage and chemical contamination of waterways. Straight-piping, aggravated by poverty and poor soil, persists.

The Friends of the Russell Fork (FORF) is a watershed group based in the town of Haysi. FORF comprises of local citizens who want to improve the quality of the waterways in the Russell Fork watershed, restore the diversity of aquatic life, promote economic development in their community and develop programs for environmental education. The FORF partners with schools, businesses, government agencies, and nonprofits to clean illegal dump sites, monitor streams, give citizens access to lawful wastewater treatment, 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 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.

