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## *Plans Created For a Fitness Park at Splashdam*

Jonathan Watterson, FORF's summer intern was busy designing a fitness park for the former town site of Splashdam during his term in Haysi.

The plans were completed August 2011 and include a fitness walking track with dispersed work out equipment, a mountain biking trail, a scenic river trail, boat launches and picnic areas.



Jonathan capturing Splashdam

Jonathan presented his plans to the town council in August where he received warm responses for his design. Local business woman Kay Owens said, "the design looked beautiful and I would use the fitness trails at Splashdam Park."

Funding is still needed to develop these plans But both town and FORF members are on the look out.

### **Did you know?**

- The primary contaminants in our watershed come from sedimentation, straight pipe pollution, acid mine drainage and illegal dumping.
- The Eastern Hellbender, a large aquatic salamander, breathes entirely through its skin.
- The Indiana Bat, a local to our watershed, is highly endangered and with the current epidemic of White Nose Syndrome in surrounding areas, need your protection!



Jonathan presenting his design at August's Haysi Town Hall Meeting



## Storm Drain Stenciling

This August, Friends of the Russell Fork completed its Storm Drain Stenciling Project. The project originally started as a partnership between Dickenson, Washington and Wise counties as a day of stenciling and education last spring. However, the rain this past spring made the project almost impossible but FORF was able to complete the project this summer!

Volunteer Kay Owens and AmeriCorps Vista Bernetta Marchand spraypainted the message "Dump No Waste, Drains to Stream" on several storm drains or potential dumping spots around the

town limits of Haysi.

Storm drain dumping, while illegal is still a fairly common practice. The new spray painted message will help remind citizens how even the most mundane actions can negatively affect the environment. The morale is to be as mindful of the potential consequences as possible.

While most of the pollution that plagues the Russell Fork River is from industrial and urban development, eliminating poor environmental problems at home will make a difference and help conservationists target problems that need all of our attention.



Volunteer Kay Owens stencils the positive message

## River Clean Ups

Friends of the Russell Fork's fiscal sponsor, the Big Sandy River Basin Coalition held its annual Russell Fork River Sweep this past July. Teams from Dickenson and Buchanan Counties departments of litter control and volunteers of the BSRBC cleaned out multiple truck loads of garbage from the river. One load in particular was filled with over forty car tires.

September brought an Autumn cleaning to the Russell Fork from Bartlick to the Garden Hole.



Bobbi Rasnick demonstrates water pollution with the EnviroScape

## Environmental Education Update

FORF continues to work relentlessly in local schools to spread the word about clean water and good environmental practices.

Over the summer, FORF partnered with the McClure River Restoration Project to make environmental education fun with kids at the Dickenson county fair stopping by to make crafts.

Also this summer, FORF VISTA Bernetta Marchand was busy strengthening her teaching skills by attending environmental education workshops. Bernetta travelled to West Virginia to attend the Mountain Institute's Water Quality Monitoring for Educators Workshop. To Norton for the Trees to Products workshop and Natural Tunnel State Park to acquire Project Learning Tree certification.

This September and October FORF presented water quality monitoring to over 180 students at Sandlick Elementary and Haysi High School. Sandlick Environmental Day went swimmingly this November with all the 4th grade class learning about wildlife such as bats, invasive species, water pollution, litter and mushrooms!



The crew and trash at Bartlick, September 2011

## *ReCreation Experience repairs homes in Dickenson and Buchanan County*

August brought a trained team from ReCreation Experience non profit group into Dickenson and Buchanan counties to repair homes.

The surveys completed by the AmeriCorps NCCC team the previous season equipped FORF with the information about which homes needed the most help.

The work done included: fixing roofs, painting exteriors, installing handicap ramp, repairing a sunken floor, and installing thicker windows. The work mainly focused on handicapped and elderly residences.

One homeowner in particular, Beatrice Byrd was overjoyed with the work, "they [ReCreation Experience] did wonderful. One wall in my home was completely gone- they

fixed that, closed in my porch, cleaned up outside, fixed my floor in kitchen and living room. Everything is holding up good and I am so pleased. This winter will be a lot warmer in my trailer!"

ReCreation Experiences hopes to return next summer with an extended team staying once again at the Haysi High school gym.

## *Water Quality Monitoring Program Expanded*



YSI multiparameter probe



Benthic macroinvertebrate monitoring

Friends of the Russell Fork plans to expand the citizen water quality monitoring program on the Russell Fork this fall.

The past two seasons have been mainly focused on E. coli monitoring on Prater Creek, Frying Pan Creek and Grassy Creek. These results have all been in a healthy range. A slight reduction in the usual high E. coli levels found in certain streams of the Russell Fork.

To expand the program FORF volunteers will be monitoring for chemical, biological and physical parameters. Chemical parameters include E. coli, dis-

solved oxygen, pH, conductivity, turbidity, and alkalinity. Biological parameters include benthic macroinvertebrate monitoring and physical parameters include analyzing water color, algae type and color, sediment type and color, velocity of the stream, stream bank erosion, riparian zone evaluations, and sediment deposition.

These parameters will help give environmentalists and citizens a better sense of the state of their rivers and how to best remediate them. The information will go to Virginia's Department of Environmental Quality.

As always Friends of the Russell Fork is looking for new volunteers to help with events and projects. In particular, FORF is working together with professors and academics to write a journal about issues along the Russell Fork River and the local area. Please contact our office if you are interested in contributing!

### **FOR SALE**

**FORF is selling t-shirts and The Virginia Headwaters of the Big Sandy River books as a fundraiser. \$15 is suggested amount.**



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.

