

# Friends of the Russell Fork

ISSUE 3

WINTER 2008/09

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Hiking/Biking Trail 2

Recent Grants 2

Haysi Food Drive & Sewer Survey 3

Become a volunteer water monitor 3

Streamwalks 3

ACCWT 4

## Sandlick 4th & 5th Grades Spend Day Outdoors

Sandlick Elementary School 4th & 5th grade students had a chance this fall to learn about forestry, recycling, pollution and drinking water purification from area professionals.



Flannagan Water Authority model and demonstration.

Employees and volunteers from John Flannagan Water Authority, VA Department of Forestry, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Lonesome Pine Soil & Water Conservation District, and local watershed groups shared their knowledge with students during a day-long visit on October 9th on

school grounds and at the riverside.

Sandlick Principal John Whitner and Assistant Principal Glenda O'Quinn gave their permission for the event and helped plan and coordinate it. Students spent about a half hour at each of six stations, receiving instruction and participating in demonstrations at each.

Superintendent Billy Hylton and operator Terry Sutherland of John Flannagan Water Authority set up their functional model of the

water plant to show students the exact process by which their drinking water is treated.

Chris Owens of the Department of Forestry spoke to students about fire prevention, forest management and tree identification.

Marty Davis of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers gave the children a lesson in lake safety and hypothermia prevention.

Landon Johnson of the Lonesome Pine SWCD presented a 3-D watershed model that showed how various pollutants enter lakes and rivers.

Claire Donley of the Guest River Restoration Project hosted the recycling table, and Johnny Sawyers of the McClure River Restoration Project led students in bug capture and identification on the Russell Fork riverbank.



Group photo at recycling station

Thank you to our presenters and to the teachers and staff at SES for making the day enjoyable and worthwhile - we hope to see you again next year!

## Hardwoods to be Planted on Old Mining Sites

A group dedicated to restoring forests on coal mined lands in the Eastern US plans to assist the FORF with some experimental tree planting in March. The group, known as the Appalachian Regional Reforestation Initiative, is a growing coalition of citizens, the coal industry and government agencies which advocates hardwood tree planting on former mining sites for their investment value, environmental



American Chestnut

benefit, and future recreational use. The American Chestnut, almost wiped out in the early 20th century, appears in the mix of hardwoods that have been planted with success. The FORF, with the assistance and cooperation of land-owners The Forestland Group will scout potential sites in Splashdam for 1 or 2 acres of test planting. If the effort succeeds, other Splashdam sites could see tree planting projects in the future.

## DID YOU KNOW?

- The Russell Fork watershed covers nearly 140,000 acres in Dickenson and Buchanan Counties.
- The primary contaminants in our watershed arise from sedimentation, straight pipe pollution, acid mine drainage and illegal dumping.
- A new DEQ report says that Virginia's statewide recycling rate has gone up almost 10% in the last four years.
- The Friends of the Russell Fork watershed group emails monthly results of bacteria monitoring of local streams to anyone who is interested. If you'd like to receive these emails give us a call.
- Four miles of the Russell Fork River in the state of Virginia are listed as impaired due to PCB contamination in fish tissue.

## Haysi-Breaks Hiking/Biking Trail: Latest Developments

The Friends of the Russell Fork is working with Dickenson County to move the long-anticipated Haysi-Breaks trail forward to its initial construction phase this spring.



*Confluence of the Pound & Russell Fork Rivers and site of hiking/biking trail junction.*

As many residents of Dickenson County are aware, the trail has overcome a colorful history of obstacles and setbacks since receiving initial funding over 10 years ago.

With many of these issues resolved, the project team is working toward submitting construction plans to VDOT for the trail section below Flannagan Dam. The team includes Roanoke architectural firm Hill

Studios, Dickenson County Administrator Mark Vanover, project manager Gene Counts, and VDOT Enhancement Project Coordinator Eddie Stamper. This group has met several times for planning sessions and trail walks in 2008.

The section of the trail that is currently being prepared for construction, between John Flannagan Dam and Bartlick Bridge, also happens to be the most expensive part of the trail. It will require four bridges and will feature parking areas, picnic shelters, and signs with historical information. The final design hurdle to be overcome is to engineer a means of connecting the trail below the dam with an old roadbed above the Pound River in steep terrain.

On November 1st, in anticipation of construction in the spring, the FORF and Dickenson County submitted a grant request for \$300,000 in additional funding for the trail through the VDOT Transportation Enhancement

Program's 2009 funding cycle. We will find out in March if the County is to receive this additional grant money.

The trail corridor between the dam and Bartlick is memorable to visitors for its natural beauty as well as its historical and recreational value. Now frequently used by kayakers and fishermen, it was once the home of the Bartlick mining camps. Historical markers will inform hikers and bikers about the mining and logging activities that occurred here in the last century and will point out the original foundations of the Pound schoolhouse and the Bartlick Bridge. Preservation of County history will be one of the benefits of the trail.



*Skegg's Tunnel overlook of the Russell Fork on the proposed trail route.*

## DEQ Grant for 2009 Water Monitoring

In November the Friends of the Russell Fork was awarded \$700 by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality to be used toward the purchase of water monitoring supplies in 2009.



The grant funds will be allocated for Coliscan test kits for monitoring local streams for E. coli bacteria. About 275 tests can be performed with the money.

The FORF monitors about 25 sites per month between Haysi and the Breaks Park for E. coli bacteria. Many of these sites were scouted and chosen by Justin Stanley, a summer associate with the Appalachian Coal Country Watershed Team who worked in the FORF office for 8 weeks this summer.

Much of the bacteria found in our streams is due to failing septic systems and straight pipes to the creek. Water monitoring is part of the FORF's overall wastewater strategy of helping residents find solutions to their septic problems.



The FORF applied for the annual grant in August. All water monitoring data that is collected in 2009 will be submitted to DEQ for its official records.

The grant was prepared by Krista Duty, who worked for the FORF for 12 weeks this summer as an intern sponsored by the Office of Surface Mining. Thank you Justin and Krista!

## Viking Canoe Club Makes Donation

The Viking Canoe Club of Louisville, Kentucky made a generous donation of \$500 to the Friends of the Russell Fork in October.

Members of the VCC frequently travel to this area to paddle the Russell Fork River and the Breaks Gorge, particularly during the October whitewater season, and they wanted to make a contribution to help keep the river safe and clean for recreation.

The club's board voted to make the donation at their September meeting. The money will be used to support our wastewater treatment program.

"We donated because our club members love the Russell Fork, love the region and want to do our part to financially support the region both with our dollars when we visit and with this donation," said VCC member Darrin Hines.

The FORF expresses its sincere appreciation to the Viking Canoe Club for its generosity. Many thanks and good paddling!





## Door-to-Door Food Drive and Sewer Survey set for Dec 18th

On December 18th, please open your door to volunteers from the Friends of the Russell Fork who will be out and about in Haysi.

On this day we plan to visit residents and businesses within the town limits that are connected to the public sewer system.

Our volunteers hope to accomplish two things with their visit. First, we would like to ask you to donate 1 or 2 cans of food, or a dollar or two, to the Dickenson County Food Bank. As many of you know the Food Bank is facing a shortage of food donations this year and may not be able to meet the demand that is expected during the Christmas season.



In the current economic environment it is more important than ever to take care of the hungry in our community, so please donate if you are able. The Food Bank can buy a large amount of food with just a little money.

### Haysi Residents:

**Please Donate a Can of Food or a Dollar for the Food Bank**

**And Take a Minute to Respond to a Survey About your Public Sewer Hookup**

Second, we plan to survey each resident and business owner about their public sewer hookup.

By doing so we can compile a document that outlines all the different issues townspeople and businesses are facing. Specifically, we'll assemble a list of leaks, odors, and unknown pipes in and around

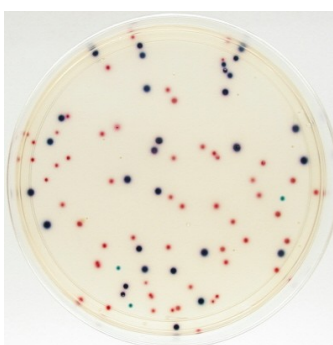
each building. This document will be useful for getting recognition from state and federal agencies for our town's issues and could help with acquiring funding for sewer line inspection and repair.

If you would like to volunteer for this event, call our office at 865-4918. If you visit just 2 or 3 houses, it would be a big help to us.



## How Can You Help the Friends of the Russell Fork?

### Become a Water Monitor



*A Petri dish with bacteria colonies.*

Are you curious about how clean the water is in the creek that runs past your home? Would you like to have it tested once a month to find out how safe it is for your children to play there? If so, please consider becoming a citizen water monitor for your area. As a volunteer monitor, your efforts will lead to cleaner rivers. You can choose to simply drop off your water samples at our lab, or if you prefer, you can learn in depth

about any of the monitoring methods we use. We do several kinds of water testing and we'd be more than happy to teach you any of them. If you're interested please call our office: 865-4918.

The most difficult and costly part of water monitoring for us is travelling to all of the sites we want to test. That's why it is so important to have volunteer citizen monitors. If you travel into Haysi once a month you can drop off your sample at our office and save us a lot of time and money. We will give you all the equipment and training you need.

### Volunteer Environmental Surveys

One of the FORF's highest priority projects - one that affects the health and safety of the residents of Dickenson and Buchanan Counties - is to help the Virginia Department of Health update its database of environmental risks in our watershed. Specifically, the goal of our project is to locate and map household wastewater and graywater discharges (straight pipes), sewage failures, eroded streambanks and illegal dump sites along the Russell Fork River and its tributaries. This effort is a critical first step in addressing these problems, because residents and communities who organize



*Straight pipe discharge of wastewater.*

themselves to tackle local issues are normally the ones who are awarded state and federal money to solve them. The Friends of the Russell Fork would like to sponsor a series of *streamwalks* for mapping health risks in our creeks and hollows so that together we can find solutions for them. If you would like to see this happen in your small community, give us a call at

865-4918. We'll provide extra volunteers, training, and all the necessary equipment, and the whole process can be finished in one day.



## Upcoming Meetings:

Tuesday Dec 16

Tuesday Jan 27

Tuesday Feb 24

6PM

at the FORF office  
(Haysi High School)



## Appalachian Coal Country Watershed Team

The Appalachian Coal Country Watershed Team (ACCWT) helps rural communities by building local organizational capacity and partnerships. The Team coordinates a group of 45 OSM/VISTA volunteers who live and work in their Appalachian host communities to promote environmental change.



*The Appalachian Coal Country Watershed Team.*

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

Founded in response to requests from local watershed groups throughout coal country, 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 work to propel a new Appalachian economy based on conservation and development, strong and wide-ranging partnerships, and community mobilization and empowerment.

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.