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Sandlick Elementary Participates in 2nd Annual Environmental Day

4th and 5th graders at Sandlick Elementary got a treat at Environmental Day on December 8th. This was the second time that Environmental Day was held because of the success of the event held last year, which was coordinated by FoRF's former OSM/VISTA, Chris Eberly. Students gathered in the gym and were separated into five different groups and took turns going to different stations. Terry Owens, naturalist at Breaks Interstate Park, had a station with information about the park and wildlife in the area. Spencer Moss, OSM/VISTA with the Upper Tennessee River Roundtable, had several activities for the kids to do that emphasized the importance of freshwater and how to protect it. Corey Fleischer, OSM/VISTA with the McClure River Restoration Project, brought the EnviroScape,

which is a watershed model that shows students how water becomes polluted. Landon Johnson from the Lonesome Pine Soil and Water Conservation District brought the soil tunnel and several different types of rocks. The students were able to get a better idea of what soil is composed of. The students really enjoyed going through the soil tunnel and looking at the different kinds of habitats that can be found underground. There was also a station set up for the students to learn about recycling and composting. There are plans to have another environmental day in the spring, which will enable the kids to do some outside activities.



Corey Fleischer, OSM/VISTA with McClure River Restoration Project, shows students how a watershed works.

Did you know?

- FORF is always looking for volunteers to help with water quality monitoring and other activities. If interested, contact us by phone or e-mail!



Terry Owens, naturalist at Breaks Park, shows students a jawbone.



Students feel different soil types

Splashdam Gets some Attention



Director of FORF, Gene Counts, uses his trusty kayak to wrangle a punching bag from the other side of the river

On November 19th, Friends of the Russell Fork teamed up with Dickenson County Litter Control, mayor Larry Yates and Haysi community workers to begin cleaning up the old Splashdam community. The cleanup was very successful but would not have been so without the use of the Haysi Volunteer Fire Department's Polaris vehicle and the community workers. The area has been used as a dumpsite illegally. Some

items that were removed from the area include scrap metal, several old tires, household garbage, a punching bag (wrangled by FoRF director, Gene Counts, from a kayak) and a bowling ball. An old car was also discovered but has yet to be removed. Two weeks after the initial clean-up, Dickenson County Litter Control and Gene returned to the Splashdam area to do more work and collect trash along the road and river. There is still work to be done in the area particularly because a trailhead for the Haysi-Breaks trail

is to be located in Splashdam. There will be other clean-ups along the river and at illegal dumpsites throughout the year and FoRF needs and welcomes volunteers to help with those efforts.



King Day of Service Events Held

"The discussion was great, folks talked from their hearts and were willing to stay as long as it took."

Edna Gulley, Appalachian Women's Alliance

Three local organizations, Appalachian Women's Alliance, McClure River Restoration Project and the Upper Tennessee River Round Table, recently worked with Friends of the Russell Fork to host events in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. On the evening of Friday, February 15th, a potluck was held at the Clinchco Senior Citizens Center. This was a time for friends to gather, share a meal and reflect on how things have changed since the Civil Rights Movement and Dr. King's passing. Rev. Jimmy Ellis shared words of encouragement to the group.

On the Monday following the potluck, volunteers from the participating organizations got together and began doing work in the community. Volunteers cleaned up the senior citizens

center in Clinchco and went to homes and assisted with winter storm damage clean-up.

Edna Gulley, with the Appalachian Women's Alliance, stated that the event went very well and she "was pleased that folks came out to support things that are going on in the community. The discussion was great, folks talked from their hearts and were willing to stay as long as it took."



The Monday cleanup team: Drake Asberry, Spencer Moss, Edna Gulley, Amber Bellamy, Patrick Smith, Nicole Tucker, and Corey Fleischer



OSM/VISTA Patrick Smith cleans chairs at Clinchco Senior Citizens Center



Critter Close-Up: Indiana Bat

We will start featuring a critter that can be found in Southwest Virginia in each issue

The Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalis*) is a medium-sized brown bat that is often confused with the Little Brown bat (*Myotis lucifugus*). The Indiana bat has small toe hairs that help distinguish it from the Little Brown Bat. The Indiana Bat is highly endangered in the state of Virginia. They can be anywhere from 7.7 to 9.1 centimeters long, have a wingspan of 24 to 26.7 centimeters and weigh anywhere from 5 to eight grams. They are nocturnal and come out at night and feed. You can usually find them in treetops or over streams eating moths, mayflies and other insects. Their diet consists mainly of moths and beetles. Bats play an important role in pest control. Female bats breed before going into hibernation, which occurs in mid-October. Hibernating bats can be found in caves in the western part of Virginia, but it is important to not disturb them or they will die. Young bats are born in late June or early July and will return to hibernation caves in August. Indiana bats can live up to 20 years. It has recently been discovered that many bat populations are dying out due to something called white-nose syndrome (WNS). WNS is caused by a fungus that is transferred from bat to bat and can cause the following symptoms: white fungus on nose, wings, ears or tail of bat, bats outside during the day with temperatures at or below freezing, bats clustered outside of hibernation area or dead or dying bats on the ground or on buildings and trees. It is also thought that humans can transmit the fungus on their clothing and gear when traveling from cave to cave. WNS has been discovered in New Hampshire, Vermont, New York, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, West Virginia and Virginia. No human illnesses have been reported in relation to WNS. Cavers are encouraged to obey all closures and advisories and to avoid caves with hibernating bats. They are also asked to stay out of caves in states where WNS has been observed. If you observe a bat with WNS symptoms, contact the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries at 804-367-1000. Information provided by Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries and the US Fish and Wildlife Service.



Indiana bats with WNS



Indiana Bat

Sandlick Elementary Receives \$5000 from Lowe's

Sandlick Elementary recently received a \$5,000 grant from the Lowe's Charitable and Educational Foundation. The money will be used to purchase materials for the construction of an outdoor classroom. The actual construction of the classroom will be done by volunteers and the Dickenson County Career Center with site prep from the school board and should start in late February. An additional \$1000 will also be available from a grant that was received last summer from the Foundation for Virginia's Natural Resources. An outdoor classroom will give teachers the freedom to take their students outside for lessons and integrate more hands-on activities into the curriculum. The classroom will most likely be used for science classes, but it is certainly not limited to that. Students will also become more familiar with their local environment and history. The outdoor classroom will be a valuable resource to teachers wanting to utilize the outdoors for scientific, historical or art education. The classroom will basically be a 24X24' shelter with a concrete pad that should accommodate 30 students. There will be picnic tables under the shelter for student seating. Haysi High School would also be able to use the outdoor classroom. Construction is to begin in the spring and volunteers are needed.



Vice-Principal Glenda O'quinn and Principal John Whitner with the award



Were on the web!

<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.

