

Summer Camps Encourage Outdoor Play and Investigations

Our two summer camps with Shenandoah County Parks and Recreation were a big hit. Budding scientists and curious adventurers navigated the Shenandoah River in kayaks, assessed river health by surveying macroinvertebrates and measuring nutrients, explored Shenandoah Caverns, and learned about turtle and fish research from wildlife experts. The week-long camps were led by seasoned local teachers who brought the scientific method to life in intriguing new contexts, helping nearly fifty students see their surroundings with

new eyes. The younger group learned through play, both in the woods and around the river. The older group conducted a chemical analysis of water quality and learned about the importance of streamside trees and shrubs. Campers kept their findings in notebooks and shared results amongst groups. One camper, a rising fifth grader at Ashby Lee Elementary, summed up the experience of full river immersion when he told a Northern Virginia Daily reporter "I like this place. It's awesome."



Trail Work Starts in Seven Bends State Park



In July, Friends volunteers joined with Youth Conservation Corps students and State Park staff members to begin work on trails at Seven Bends State Park. Volunteers helped

create the first 3.1-mile trail of Seven Bends State Park, conveniently located near downtown Woodstock. The volunteers used hand tools to clear brush, remove rocks, and level

the trail. A big thank you to the first on-site volunteer effort at the park: Stuart Avis, Jim Barnard, Robert Bray, Dale Carlson, Megan Church, John Hoffman, Cully MacDonald, Miguel Mendoza, Laura Sager, Wayne Sager, Adam Smith, and Tim Smith.

Bray, a retired professor, expressed the sentiments of several volunteers who worked alongside the YCC group and its college leaders. "I was delighted to see the leadership of three current Virginia college students from James Madison, Virginia Tech, and William & Mary universities with the high school students in mentoring work ethics, showing commitment, and profiling what it takes to be successful," he said. "I enjoyed talking to the kids about their educational and professional goals." We look forward to expanding volunteer opportunities in the coming months and showcasing these efforts at our Family Fun in the spring. Potential future projects include a "bioblitz," building bluebird boxes for a Bluebird Trail, and conducting flora and fauna inventories.

Wishing you a most wonderful and peaceful season

The board and staff of Friends of the North Fork



School Programs Provide Meaningful Experiences

Friends staff help the public schools across the region by providing “Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences” for a variety of age groups reaching hundreds of students each year. On October 13, Cindy Frenzel and Concha Mendoza from our staff joined teachers and volunteers Sandy Good-Wetsel and Ron Falyar at Plains Memorial Park along the North Fork in Timberville. The entire 4th grades from Plains Elementary School visited through the day, learning at various stations set up for water chemistry, macroinvertebrates, and watershed exploration. Let us know how we can help your school!

Summer Interns Reflect

Amy Johnson

I wasn't sure what to expect from my internship. I have a lot invested in my degree and I hoped to enjoy applying my knowledge, but I didn't expect to fall in love with the work. Helping Cindy with students during the school year and in the summer camps was an experience I will never forget. I'm so grateful for it and proud to say I was able to work alongside three wonderful staff members and two other interns this summer.

Megan Church

I thoroughly enjoyed my experience interning at Friends of the North Fork. Helping with E. coli testing along the river took us to some of the most beautiful places in the valley.

Working alongside DCR and FNFSR to clear trails has been a great experience. It was very rewarding to know I was one of the first people to hike the newly formed trails of the Seven Bends State Park.

E.coli Study Released

How safe is the river for summer recreation? Our recent study of E.coli bacteria levels at high use recreation sites shows that river users need to be cautious. You may be risking exposure to bacteria that can make you sick. The full study and details are available on our website at: www.fnfsr.org/science

Board Changes



We are pleased to welcome to the board, Bill Buechner. Bill recently retired from his position as Vice President, Economics and Research with the American Road and Transportation Builders Association (ARTBA). He

holds a PhD in Economics from Harvard and has taught at Smith College and the George Washington University. Prior to joining ARTBA in July 1996, he was a senior economist for 21 years on the staff of the Congressional Joint Economic Committee, where he worked with members of Congress on a broad range of economic policy issues.

Needless to say, we are glad to have someone with Bill's deep experience serving on the Friends board and our finance and advocacy committees. Bill and his wife Judi live in Woodstock and stay busy visiting with their four children and eleven grandchildren.

We are tremendously grateful for the many years of service that Kim Uhl and Margaret Lorenz have given to the organization. Friends has seen amazing growth with their leadership.



River Cleanups Continue the Haul

This was a busy year for river cleanups. Along with our spring event, we also were out this summer with a group of high school age campers from ShrineMont who paddled a stretch starting in Timberville while picking up trash. This fall saw a crew from Virginia Eagle Distributing helping out on Cedar Creek near Strasburg. A second team that included several Justice Studies students from JMU helped out along Plains Mill Road west of New Market.

Floods and Droughts

Photograph by Holly Marcus for James Madison University



On July 13th, Woodstock suffered a short-lived but intense storm event that dropped over four inches of rain in just a few hours. Main Street was closed and a trailer park and several other buildings and roads suffered serious damage. The storm moved on into Fort Valley where roads and fields saw extensive flooding from Passage Creek.

Despite occasional intense storms, by the end of August, we were facing the potential for drought conditions. Water levels on the North Fork were reaching critical levels. Several communities—notably Woodstock, Strasburg, and Winchester—are dependent on the flow of the river for their municipal water supplies. With only modest reserves in their systems, low water events could require limiting water use. Due to some differences in permitting, the low levels triggered Strasburg's drought watch and warning levels first.

We can't predict what future summers will hold, but as population continues to increase, weather fluctuations become more pronounced, and overall demand for water rises throughout the watershed, potential drought conditions could have even greater impacts.

Communities need to plan for alternative water sources while also seeking ways to improve overall efficiency of water use. As has been proven in communities across the country, investments in water conservation technologies and practices that can help homeowners, industry, and agriculture reduce demand are usually cheaper and easier than trying to find more sources of water supply.

Friends will continue to raise this issue and work to ensure that there is adequate supply to maintain economic vitality and the ecological health of the river.

John Eckman, Executive Director

Teacher's Explore the Stinky and the Sublime

Our week-long North Fork to the Bay Teacher Training program again worked with the Chesapeake Bay Foundation to provide teachers an in-depth training on watershed issues and solutions. The group learned about how humans influence the watershed through tours of a wastewater treatment plant and the local landfill. They discussed stewardship activities with local farmers. They paddled the river and investigated macroinvertebrates as a gauge of river health. The teachers then spent several days at CBF's Fox Island learning center, exploring the Bay's unique beauty and threatened resources.



Kids in the Creek: That's Family Fun Day!

It was a beautiful morning on May 30th, as the sun started to cross the open meadow along Smith Creek. Boy Scout Troop 88 arrived early to begin cooking a delicious lunch for a big crowd, including their, specialty, Dutch oven apple cobbler. In a few hours the place was buzzing with activity.

About 125 folks of all ages made the trek to Susie Q Farm, near Tenth Legion in Rockingham County. They enjoyed learning to fish, getting to know various aquatic species, touring the restored stream, and meeting feathered friends from the Wildlife Center of Virginia.

Our thanks to the many partners involved, including Trout Unlimited, Virginia



Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, Virginia Department of Forestry, Shenandoah Valley Soil and Water Conservation District, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Make a gift for the future

Friends of the North Fork can help you consider tax-advantaged options for IRA distributions, gifts of stock and other assets, and planned gifts from your estate. Contact John Eckman for more information.

Friends of the North Fork of the Shenandoah River

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Warmer Days

The River Rangers summer campers explored the North Fork with help from Route 11 Outfitters.

The Fish Say Thanks!

Thanks to everyone who made this year's Fish Fry a great success. We had great support from our many sponsors, tremendous items donated for the auction, and a large and generous crowd of eager participants!

Thanks to the artists, crafters, and businesses who donated items and services.

We appreciate everyone who helped out. Special thanks to the following business sponsors:

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