

Girl Scout Troops Explore Stony Creek

Local Girl Scouts got a Friends lesson in stream ecology at Edinburg Mill recently. As parent Heather Strosnider shared,

“*The girls absolutely loved everything. I had to pry my daughter out of the creek with the nets when it was time to go home.*”



Volunteer Spotlight: Nadia Rauhala



Nadia Rauhala (right), a Strasburg High School sophomore, volunteered last year with our River Rangers camp, the Woodstock Police Department's Community Safety Day, and our Family Fun Day. She is eager to volunteer again in the same capacity this year.

What was your environmental experience before volunteering with Friends?

I've been active in FFA since sixth grade and there is a big community service aspect, which includes some environmental education. Right now I'm the FFA officer. We've done programs and community events with kids and read and talked about Dr. Seuss' *The Lorax*. We've also taught kids about watersheds. We go to the Shenandoah River and we go to Sandy Hook Elementary and teach kids about agriculture and the environment. There's a group in FFA—about five students—who are interested in environmental studies and we've talked about starting an environmental club. My mom took the Friend's teacher training five years ago and had a positive experience and encouraged me to volunteer with Friends. We've also read books about and paid attention to environmental issues and we do simple things like recycle at home.

See **NADIA RAUHALA** on page 3

Join us for a Volunteer Appreciation Brunch

Saturday, June 10, 10am-12pm
Swover Creek Farms and Brewery
4176 Swover Creek Rd, Edinburg, VA

Hear an update on recent river news and the monitoring work of Friends of the Shenandoah River and learn about all current volunteer opportunities at Friends of the North Fork.

Enjoy the countryside and try out wood-fired brunch pizzas.

All are welcome, Please let us know you're coming by email to friends@fnfsr.org or call 540.459.8550.

Report on Livestock Impacts Prompts Concerns

On Wednesday, April 27th, the Washington Post ran an article that was sharply critical of animal livestock production and its impact on water quality in the Valley: “Nearly 200 million chickens, turkeys and cows are making a mess of the Shenandoah River.” The article focused on two legitimate concerns: nutrients that cause algae problems, and manure in the river that can cause high bacteria counts.

As the headline pointed out, we do have a lot of intensive livestock production in our watershed. Some might argue that it's the backbone of our economy. Whether you like large scale industrial livestock and confined animal feeding operations or not, poultry and dairy production are a huge part of the agricultural base of the North Fork and the Shenandoah Valley as a whole. These industries are with us for the long run and provide essential employment and livelihoods for many Valley residents.

Despite the many hurdles still ahead as outlined in the EIP report, a lot of good work is already being done. A few days before the article came out, the “Waste Solutions Forum” met in Harrisonburg. This is a loose affiliation of agencies, nonprofits, and agri-business folks who have been working for more than a decade on various projects to reduce the impact of animal manure on water quality in the Valley. They have supported things like waste-to-energy projects, biodigesters, transporting manure to other regions, ways to inject manure into the soil so it won't run off, ways to deal with disposal of dead animals, etc. This is a very practical group that shares research and tries to be supportive of all efforts to solve the manure problem.

In the last few years, thanks to increased funding from the state, more farmers are putting up fencing to keep cows away from waterways. Our local Soil and Water Conservation

Districts (Lord Fairfax in Strasburg and Shenandoah Valley in Harrisonburg) are the front line for working with landowners on these problems. District staff along with federal folks from the Natural Resources Conservation Service provide technical assistance to not only farmers, but also homeowners and businesses who want to minimize their impact while making smart financial decisions.

Nutrient and bacteria problems are real and serious. They need to be addressed through better practices, innovative technologies, incentive programs, behavior changes, and ultimately, a reduction in the amount of livestock feed brought to the Valley from outside. We will never balance the nutrient equation as long as there is more manure than the local soils can use.

Is it Still Safe to Play in the Water?



A lot of folks are asking us, “Is the river safe?” We want to clarify that the report by the Environmental Integrity Project that prompted so much recent media attention is a summary of state testing data. It is not documenting some new high levels of pollution. The pollution problems have been there for many years. The main thing that is changing is awareness of the problem.

Constant changes in weather, season, and farming practices make it pretty much impossible to determine with confidence exactly what the risk of exposure is on any given day. What we can say, and our own research backs this up, is that anyone in the water should assume that harmful bacteria might be present. You should take precautions to avoid getting sick or infecting an open cut. The chance for higher e.coli levels goes up for several days after a storm upstream. Visit our website for more on our e.coli research.

Lecture Series Explored Past, Warned about Future

Our Seven Bends Lecture Series had a strong start this spring with three great talks. Dr. Carole Nash presented on the Native American pre-history of the Valley. Dr. Anne Hendricksen shared research on the very prevalent endocrine disrupting compounds that are found in our environment and their impacts on fish and human DNA.. Dr. Lynn Fichter wound up the spring series with a discussion of the geologic history of the region.

Thanks to our great speakers and everyone who attended and supported these lectures. We plan to do this again later this year. If you know of great topics and speakers, please let us know.

Save
the date!

Annual Fish Fry
and Auction

Saturday, October 7, 2017
Woodstock Moose Lodge





Friends Board Retreats to Move Ahead Planning Engages Broader Community

In April the board of directors and staff members of Friends enjoyed a quiet Saturday overlooking the river near Toms Brook. Our task for this retreat was to consider the overall priorities of the organization and forge ahead with a new strategic plan for the coming years.

Katherine Morrison, a Friends member who has run nonprofits and facilitated a lot of strategic plans, guided the process. Planning began weeks ahead, with Katherine conducting nearly 20 interviews with community leaders, past board members, current volunteers and supporters, and agency partners. The findings of those interviews helped the board ground our future work in the needs and priorities of our watershed community.

We greatly appreciate everyone who participated in those interviews and the patient guidance Katherine provided. Thanks also to our volunteer board of directors who give so graciously of their time and expertise. Onward!



LFCC Class Helps out the Bluebirds at Seven Bends

On March 27, Stacey Ellis' Outdoor Recreation class from Lord Fairfax Community College built and installed 10 bluebird boxes to continue a bluebird trail, initiated by Friends volunteer David Timer, at Seven Bends State Park. Megan Church, Friends board member and Seven Bends State Park committee chair, led the project. After a lunch by the river, Megan and the class found mayfly nymphs and crayfish and talked about how macroinvertebrates are an indicator of river health.

On our first day monitoring the trail, we found a nest of bluebird eggs and several other boxes with the beginnings of tree swallow and bluebird nests.

Please let us know if you are interested in monitoring the bluebird boxes or in helping with future volunteer projects at the park.

Bird Walk Planned for Seven Bends Saturday, June 3, 8am-10am, weather permitting

Join us for a walk along the bluebird trail at Seven Bends State Park with local birder Kirk Andrews. Learn some tricks of the trade and hear more about the many species of birds in the park. The trail is flat and about a mile long. On a recent short walk there, Kirk identified 34 species of birds by sight or sound. The list included wood ducks, bald eagles, gold-

finches, red-bellied woodpeckers, an eastern meadowlark, and a yellow-throated warbler.

The Park is not Open to the Public. Meet at the Friends office at 8am and we'll carpool to the Lupton side of the park.

Please register by email to friends@fnfsr.org or call the office at 540.810.2258.



NADIA RAUHALA continued from page 1

What did you hope to get out of volunteering with Friends?

I was hoping I would be able to further my knowledge of the environment.

What did you take away from volunteering with Friends?

I learned a lot and realized more career paths from talking to Cindy. Volunteering definitely helped me realize the importance of what you guys do and seeing why teaching is so important. It's fun to work with kids at a young age, because they still have their imagination and can be themselves. They can learn and still have fun. My favorite activity from last year's camp was taking the kids down to the river and studying the creatures in it and how that relates to the health of the river.

How has your work with Friends and your work and studies in FFA informed your future plans?

Being able to understand the greater aspects of the environment, agriculture, and education has helped me understand what I want to do in college and after college. I definitely want to go on the environmental tract. I hope to attend Liberty University or Virginia Tech and study something related to environmental science and join environmental clubs. I enjoy studying about the environment, animals, and weather. Right now, I'm thinking of becoming a meteorologist or a law enforcement officer within the Department of Conservation and Recreation.

Are you looking forward to getting involved with Friends again this summer?

I'm definitely looking forward to becoming active with you guys this summer. I love working with an organization that can teach me more about what I want to do and to see some of the office work that goes along with the more fun work like working with kids. I also feel like doing the work with Friends has more of an overall impact on the community as a whole.

Friends of the North Fork of the Shenandoah River

John Eckman *Executive Director*
Cindy Frenzel *Education Coordinator*
Concha Mendoza *Operations Manager*

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Summer Camp Registration is Open!

We run our camps with Shenandoah County Parks and Recreation and they handle all registration. Please visit <https://www.scprsignup.info> or call them at: (540) 459-6777

North Fork Explorers Camp

Cost: \$75.00 per student; When: June 19-23, 2017

Rising 9th through current 12th graders can attend this environmental education experience that includes backpacking, hiking, wilderness camping, orienteering, cave and stream exploration and ecology, mountain geology, teambuilding initiatives, survival skills, and kayaking. The camp will be at these locations:

- **June 19-22**, 4 days and 3 nights camping near Spruce Knob Mountain Center, near Circleville, WV
- **June 23**, Kayak Trip on the North Fork of the Shenandoah River in Shenandoah County, VA.

Nature Rangers Summer Camp

Cost: \$55.00 per student; When: July 17-21, 2017 Time: 8:30 am – 4:30 pm

Location: Shenandoah County Government Building, Woodstock, VA

We are joining with Shenandoah County 4-H to hold this joint summer camp for ages 9-14. Activities will include kayaking the river, stream ecology, forestry, wildlife biology, hiking and other environmental and conservation themed activities.

Shenandoah River Players Summer Camp

Cost: \$35.00 per student; When: June 26-30, 2017

Time: 9:00 am -3:00 pm (Field trip day may be longer); Location: Woodstock, VA

This summer enrichment environmental education day camp is for rising 1st-3rd graders. It is designed to instill a love of nature and outdoor play while teaching stewardship and caring for the environment. Students will learn about animals, trees, soil, plants, and water. They will learn and play in outdoor classrooms, visit the river, and spend a day at Passage Creek on the Lion's Tale Trail in the George Washington National Forest.

Family Fun Day on Smith Creek

Saturday, May 20
11am to 3pm

Susie Q Farm
near Tenth Legion

Free lunch!

Wildlife, fishing, science,
games, and more!

Registration required

Visit our website or contact
us to learn more.

This event is run in partnership with the Smith Creek Watershed Partnership. We are grateful for our many partner agencies and nonprofits.

Special thanks to the businesses supporting this year's event: Shenandoah Growers, Farm Credit, and F&M Bank.

Lunch from Beans BBQ. The event is free but **registration is required** so we know how many folks to expect.