

THE RIVER RUNS

News from the Cowpasture River Preservation Association

Berriedale Farms Begins Third Year of Non-native Invasive Species Control Project



A Virginia Forestry & Wildlife Group crew member uses a brush cutter to remove autumn olive.

When Nelson Hoy (CRPA Board Member) and Lizzie Biggs (CRPA Accountant) drafted a conservation easement to be held by The Nature Conservancy (TNC) on their 366-acre Berriedale Farms near Williamsville, they had among their core purposes to protect the native plants, animals and habitat on their property through an active conservation stewardship program. Such a program would no doubt require the active management and control of non-native invasive species, one of the greatest threats to native flora and fauna in the Central Appalachians. But having already identified dozens of such invaders on their farm, the most egregious of which - autumn olive (*Elaeagnus umbellata*) - dominating their entire floodplain along the Cowpasture River, Nelson and Lizzie had to wonder where to start.

Timing, however, couldn't have been better as TNC had recently received a federal grant to help treat non-native invasives on state wildlife management areas and national forest lands, and a companion grant from MeadWestvaco Foundation to treat private lands. The two grants leverage one another, helping to stretch thin resources as far as possible. Berriedale Farms, situated between Highland Wildlife Management Area and the George Washington National Forest, was an ideal candidate to pilot control efforts along the River and (both literally and figuratively) bridge the public-private partnership. Nelson worked with TNC forester Jean Lorber to develop a forest management plan and identify several priority areas to initiate treatment of autumn olive and a few additional species such as tree-of-heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*), multiflora rose (*Rosa multiflora*) and Japanese barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*). TNC contracted with Virginia Forestry & Wildlife Group based out of Charlottesville and treatments (mechanical and herbicide) began in summer 2013.

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During the first year over 22 acres of autumn olive that were encroaching beyond the intensive infestation of the floodplain and into high quality surrounding forest areas were treated by the contractor and Berriedale Farms contributed in-kind match to the project by hand pulling garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*), spot spraying Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*), ripping up massive thickets of



Cut stumps are painted with herbicide and a blue dye to help indicate which stems have been treated.

Continued on page 8

Board of Directors (2014-15)

Officers:

John Fowler, President
William Hardbarger, V.P.
Michael Whiteside, Secretary
Ann Warner, Treasurer

Directors:

Caryl Cowden
Monroe Farmer
Stewart Hobbs
Nelson Hoy
Anne McVey
William Jones
Lucius Bracey
Lou Robinson
George Snead
Dick Lynn
Joe Wood

Staff:

Lisa J. Beckstrom, Executive Director

Elizabeth Biggs, Accountant



We are in need of one or two volunteers to assist with registration at the Annual Meeting. If you are interested in helping out, please call Lisa at: 704-930-8243.

From the President

Well, I think I can safely say spring is here in the Cowpasture River Valley. After a hard winter it is refreshing to see spring flowers, sarvis, redbud and green grass. The good weather promises to enhance our social schedule of the annual meeting at an exciting new venue and the picnic in August. Many changes in format and refreshments are planned. Please make plans to attend these functions and meet new friends and see old ones.



The health of the river is excellent and the membership has helped in many ways to perpetuate its well-being. Congratulations for your work in countering old practices and thoughtlessness.

Best wishes and good health to all.
See you on the River.

The Executive Director's Corner

Hello! I don't know about you all, but I am ready for the warm weather so I can get outside. Finally signs of spring are showing up at our house—tree swallows flying over the fields in our backyard, the Eastern phoebes checking out last year's nesting spot under the side deck, and some of our perennial flowers starting to show their colors out our dining room window. Spring can be a hectic time for most of us as we return to tending to the outside of our homes and the things neglected during the winter.

It is turning out to be a busy time for me planning many CRPA activities and events. It is an exciting time though to see what 2015 will bring to the Association. Most of you should have received an Annual Meeting "Save the Date" notification by email. We are adding some nice touches to this event and details are included on Page 9 of this newsletter. Hope to see many of you there!

I am also coordinating some meetings and events for our hardworking river monitors. They continue to dedicate many hours to water quality monitoring and are a critical component to the CRPA — many thanks to all of you!



Trout Unlimited Expands Its Local Presence

Trout Unlimited (TU) is pleased to announce a new initiative in the Upper James River watershed. In March, Sammy Vest took the helm for TU's restoration and conservation efforts in the region as the Upper James River Home Rivers Initiative Coordinator. Sammy has a long history in agriculture and is still heavily involved with his family's farming operation in Rockbridge County that has been in his family for over a century. He comes to TU from the Natural Bridge Soil and Water Conservation District where he has years of experience working closely with landowners in conjunction with Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) staff. He will be continuing to work with the Soil and Water Conservation Districts and NRCS to aid in the implementation of conservation practices in the watershed.



The Upper James River watershed drains over 3,000 square miles of western Virginia encompassing 10 counties and hundreds of tributary streams. These waters are the lifeblood of the James River. This area includes all of Bath, Rockbridge and Alleghany counties as well as portions of Highland, Nelson, Augusta, Botetourt, Craig, Giles, Montgomery, Roanoke, and Amherst counties. The majority of these mountain streams and high valley creeks historically sustained abundant populations of native brook trout and provided a steady source of clean water to the communities and urban areas along the James River and the Chesapeake Bay.

The remaining intact populations of native brook trout—Virginia's official state fish and the only salmonid native to Virginia—are relegated to isolated mountain headwater streams. Habitat fragmentation, changes in land use, poor agricultural practices, and general water quality degradation are to blame for the demise of this iconic Appalachian species. Opportunities to restore and strengthen brook trout in the Upper James abound and this Home Rivers Initiative (HRI) will capitalize on those opportunities. Landowners and farmers in the Upper James are a segment of the agricultural community that often get overlooked by state and federal agencies due to limited staffing, distance from existing staff, and because the influence of these headwater streams on downstream water quality is so often underestimated. TU will use Virginians' historic respect for brook trout to inspire conservation activities.

This new HRI will be the second comprehensive watershed scale restoration effort in Virginia for TU that focuses the efforts of their skilled national staff, its volunteer base and its many partners on restoring and protecting the coldwater streams. Using brook trout conservation as a rallying theme, TU's HRI programs take a

watershed scale approach to protect the highest quality habitat, reconnect existing fragmented habitat, restore degraded habitat, and sustain the progress made by educating and motivating a future generation of environmental stewards.

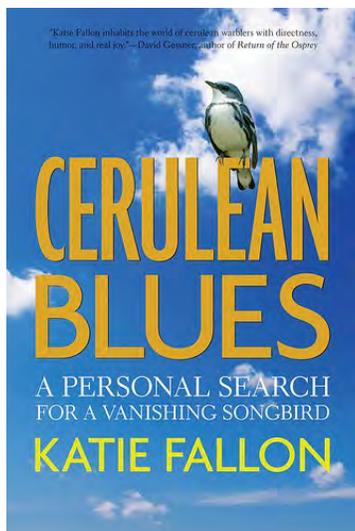
Using healthy brook trout populations as an indicator of overall watershed health, the Upper James HRI will restore the stream habitat and water quality of targeted high priority creeks in the watershed to benefit brook trout, other native fishes and riparian organisms while also engaging local volunteers and students to track progress towards that goal and foster a new sense of community ownership for these environmental improvements.

Landowners interested in learning more about this initiative, TU's efforts, and opportunities to restore and conserve brook trout in their streams and rivers can contact Sammy at 540-460-6311 or at svest.tu.org or by visiting TU's website at

www.tu.org.



Watershed News



Cerulean Warblers Topic of Meeting

Among the diversity of wildlife that can be found in the Cowpasture River watershed is a small, sky-blue bird of the deciduous treetops called the Cerulean Warbler. Unfortunately, this species is the fastest-declining Neotropical migratory songbird in the country; since 1966 its populations have declined by approximately 3% per year. At May's meeting of the Bath-Highland Bird Club, Katie Fallon, author of the nonfiction book *Cerulean Blues: A Personal Search for a Vanishing Songbird*, will speak on the biology and natural history of this fascinating species in addition to discussing the challenges these warblers face during the breeding and non-breeding seasons. She will discuss tips for finding and identifying Cerulean Warblers while birding, as well as the ways that we can help conserve their populations. Note the Allegheny Highlands was designated a *Globally Important Bird Area* by the National Audubon Society based primarily on this species' occupancy of the region.

Katie was a finalist for the Reed Award for Outstanding Writing on the Southern Environment. She has taught writing at Virginia Tech and West Virginia University, and she is one of the founders of the Avian Conservation Center of Appalachia, a nonprofit organization dedicated to conserving the region's wild birds through research, education, and rehabilitation. Her first word was "bird."

The Bath-Highland Bird Club meets on Monday, May 18 at 7:00pm in the Bolar Ruritan Club Building, US 220 and VA 607, Bolar, VA. The meeting is open to the public. Contact Keith Carson, President, at 540-474-2858 for more information.

Virginia Drinking Water Clinic

The objective of the Virginia Household Water Quality Program (VAHWQP) is to improve the water quality and health of Virginians using private water supplies (including wells, springs, and cisterns). Initiated in 1989, VAHWQP drinking water clinics have been conducted in nearly every county across Virginia, and samples from about 16,000 households have been analyzed and results confidentially returned to participants. An analysis for 14 chemical and bacteriological constituents is conducted on your drinking water. The results of this analysis are explained in an informative meeting, where ways of preventing contamination and treating water quality problems are addressed.



It is not unusual for counties that contain Karst topography to have higher incidences of bacteria contamination due to the close connection of the surface to groundwater, thus the importance for residents in the Cowpasture River watershed to consider getting their water tested.

Drinking water clinics are organized by your local Extension Agent and Virginia Tech faculty in the Biological Systems Engineering Department and announced at: <http://www.wellwater.bse.vt.edu/clinics.php>. **Participation is voluntary and all information is kept strictly confidential.** If you're interested in registering for one of these clinics, Contact Cristin Sprenger at: 540-564-3080 or cristinc@vt.edu. Cost is \$49/household.

Water Quality Program Updates

Fecal Coliform Monitoring: 2014 Summary

By Kent Ford, Past Board Member and Water Quality Monitor

The CRPA's team of water quality monitors sampled the Cowpasture River monthly in 2014 at seven sites up and down the river. From these sites, we measured 78 samples of water for *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*) bacteria with Coliscan Easygel tests.

Why do we test for *E. coli*? All of us warm-blooded animals have some *E. coli* in our digestive tracts. Most strains of *E. coli* are harmless. Some even have a pleasant yeast-like odor. But there are some strains that do cause illness when ingested. For example there have been well-publicized instances of outbreaks of sickness caused by lettuce contaminated with a strain of *E. coli*. We cannot identify the strains of *E. coli*, or its origin, with our tests. Rather we are using the presence of these bacteria as an indicator for fecal contamination of the water. High levels of fecal contamination are a health risk from the pathogens that can cause sickness.

For drinking water, no *E. coli* contamination is allowed. For water contact sports such as swimming, tubing, and canoeing, a traditional safe limit is 126 *E. coli* colonies per 100 milliliters of water. For our Coliscan tests we take a carefully measured 5 milliliter sample and extrapolate the number of *E. coli* colonies that we count to 100 milliliters. Therefore, this is an easy test that gives a good approximate answer.

So how clean is the river? Figure 1 is a chart showing the data for 2014. It looks pretty good – only one sample (on July 6, at upper Sharon) was above the “safe limit.”

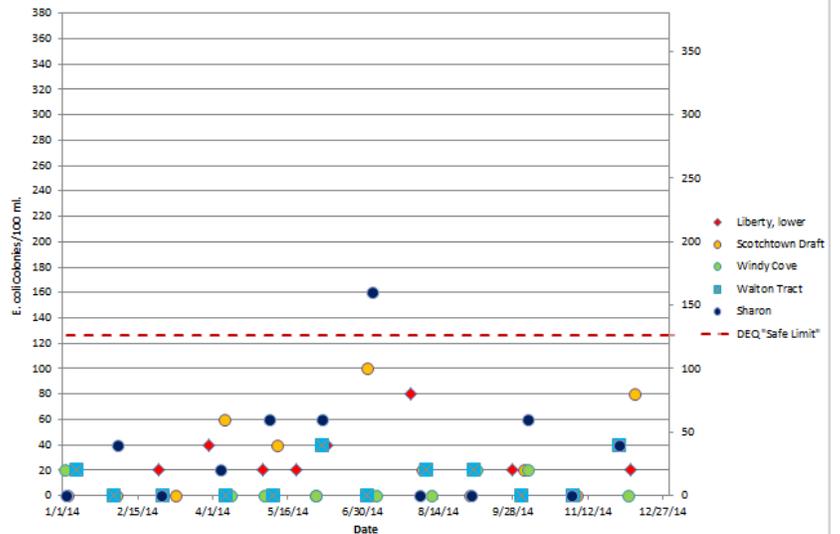


Figure 1: Cowpasture River *E. coli* readings from July 2012 to December 2014.

Looking at that one point and at the date, we might be tempted to speculate on what Fourth of July celebrations might put in the river. So let's look at Figure 2 showing the colony counts from July 2012 through 2014. We see that there is some history of high counts at that site.

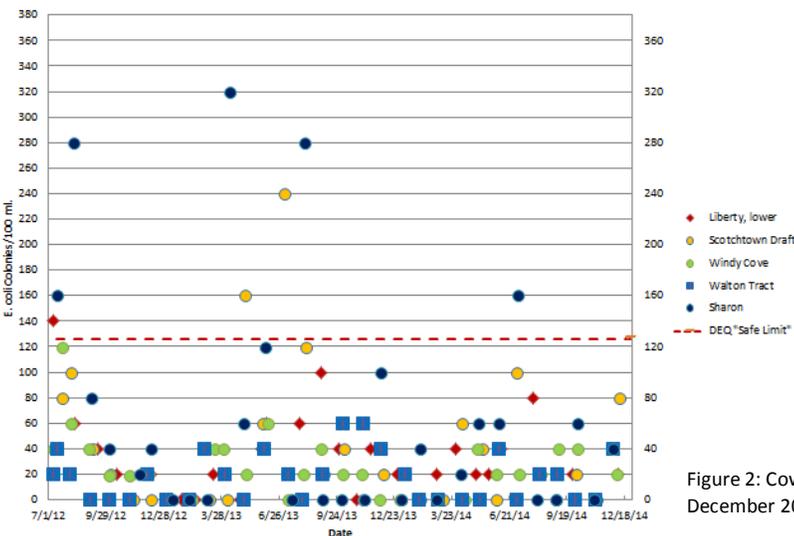


Figure 2: Cowpasture River *E. coli* readings from January - December 2014.

What we were taught as children is still true: the water in the Cowpasture River is safe to swim in unless the river is muddy or you see cattle upstream in the river.

Member Spotlight

Welcome White Family!

Tell us about your family:

We are Jeremy and Laura White and have two children, Natalie who is 8 and Nicholas who is 12. Natalie and Nicholas both attend Millboro Elementary School in Bath County. We have our own construction and contracting business, JS White Construction, which Jeremy is eager to get up and running in the area. Our plans are to have a small homestead and enjoy a slower pace of life.

Where are you from?

We moved here in December from Wellsville, Pennsylvania.

What is your connection with the Cowpasture River or area?

We love the area and after several visits, we decided to start looking for property about two years ago. After a stay at Berriedale Farms' cabin on the Cowpasture River we fell in love with the river. We continued to look for properties and last fall found our current home located on the River.

Why did you join the CRPA?

We joined the CRPA so we could meet like-minded people in the area and involve our children in learning stewardship of this beautiful river.



Upcoming Events—Mark your calendars!

Look for the following events and activities as they are scheduled in 2015:

- **CRPA Annual Meeting** will be held on Saturday, May 23, 2015 at Camp Mont Shenandoah. Details and registration information are listed on page 9 of this newsletter.
- **Macroinvertebrate Monitoring Training** event will be held in 2015—Date To Be Determined. This training is a collaborative effort with Virginia Save our Streams (VA SOS) and the Izaak Walton League of America (IWLA) and will help certify some of our current monitors through the VA SOS program and also provide an opportunity for any members interested in getting involved with our monitoring program to learn more! Additional information regarding this training will be provided in our summer newsletter and at <http://www.cowpastureriver.org/events>.
- **CRPA Picnic/Family Fun Day** will be held on Saturday, August 1, 2015 at the Lynchburg Camp. Details of this event will be provided in our summer newsletter and at <http://www.cowpastureriver.org/events>.
- **2015 Mid-Atlantic Volunteer Monitoring Conference *Bridging the Water Quality Data Gap*** will be held from August 6-8, 2015 at the Shenandoah University in Winchester, VA. Information about this conference can be found at <https://vcwq.wordpress.com/>.

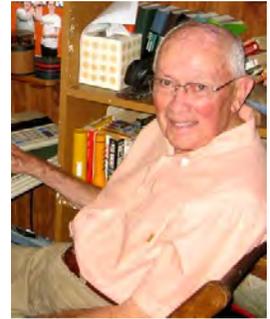
Association News

Goodbye to Fred Terrell

Fred Terrell, long-time CRPA member and life-long member of the Lynchburg Camp on the Cowpasture, died on October 15, 2014. With 83 years of memories on the river, Fred was an expert in keeping the lore and history of the camp alive. Fred started his life on the river at age 8 when he began camping with his grandfather and the group of



men who founded *Quietas Castra* on the site that will celebrate its 100th birthday



this summer. As luck would have it, Fred's wife Kay also enjoyed growing up on the Cowpasture through the membership of her father, Bob Davis. The love for this beautiful river was

passed on to their children Rick, Diane, Lisa, and Amy. Starting with Fred's grandfather, the family now has six generations who have camped, fished, canoed, and swam on and in the Cowpasture River. When Fred was diagnosed with lung cancer in February 2014 and given a prognosis of just a few months, his reply was, "That's not enough time." His children knew that he meant not enough time if he couldn't get to the river again. Happily he enjoyed his final summer on the river with 39 family members and his extended camp family.

Education and Outreach

CRPA Members Take Tour of MeadWestvaco

By John Fowler, CRPA Board President

On April 15, several CRPA Board of Directors and members were treated to a tour of the new biomass boiler and storage area at MeadWestvaco in Covington. The company is now able to operate the entire paper mill from electricity generated in-house by burning their own bark, bark and sawdust from sawmills, treetops, and tree trimmings from landfills and other municipal yard waste facilities. The boiler allows the mill to be energy self-sufficient and also sell some electricity back to the grid.



The mill's excess steam is also utilized internally before being treated to a condition better than drinking water and returned to the Jackson River. Thanks to Joe Wood and the many employees of MeadWestvaco for this informative tour and discussions.

Board of Directors News—Elections

Board Nominees

A few members of the Board of Directors will rotate off the Board, and at the upcoming Annual Meeting new members will be elected. Chris Peters and Marshall Higgins have been nominated for open seats on the Board.

Chris Peters



I would like to serve a term on the Board of Directors for the CRPA because of my love for the Cowpasture River. The river was my playground during my youth. I have many fond memories of the good swimming holes, fishing and frequent canoe trips with friends. I grew up on the family farm at Peters Bridge and plan to return to the farm when I retire. I attended the old Millboro Elementary and am a 1990 graduate of Bath Country High School. Upon graduation, I left Bath County to Attend Virginia Tech. I am a 1996 graduate of Virginia Tech and a 2006 graduate of University of South Carolina. I have been employed by the University Libraries at Virginia Tech since 1993 in various capacities. My current duties deal with the bulk storage of traditional print resources in high-density warehouses. I currently reside in Christiansburg, Virginia and am an avid ham radio operator and music fan.

Marshall Higgins



I would like to serve a term on the Board of Directors because of my long-term ties to the Cowpasture River. My parents have had a camp located below Sharon on the Cowpasture since 1963 (off Bluebird Lane). My grandparents also had a camp on the river so I have spent most of my summers on the river while growing up. I currently work for UPS Freight in Richmond, Virginia and my wife, Jane, and I live in Glen Allen, VA with our two dogs, Gus and Reese. We have two children—Patrick 29, Captain in the US Army and David 26, who works for Amtrak Auto Train.

Berriedale Farms - Invasive Species Control Project *(Continued from page 1)*

autumn olive with a tractor, and providing lodging for the contract crew in their rental cabin. A second year of treatments was conducted in 2014 to treat any resprouts from the 2013 control efforts and expand treatments to another 10-15 acres. Berriedale once again contributed in-kind match through a donation of lodging for the contract crew and extensive clearing of nearly 20' tall autumn olive along 500' of fence line. Plans are currently underway for a third year of treatments in 2015, with the intent to effectively restrict autumn olive to the Cowpasture River floodplain where longer-term control efforts will be necessary.

The Nature Conservancy continues to have funding available for other landowners along the Cowpasture River who are interested in controlling non-native invasive species such as autumn olive. Priority is given to those willing to contribute cash or in-kind match to the project and those properties adjacent to other protected lands, such as national forest. Please contact Marek Smith, Allegheny Highlands Program Director with The Nature Conservancy, at 540-839-3599 for more information.



Autumn olive dying back in the hardwood forest after cutting with a brush sythe and painting with herbicide.

CRPA Annual Meeting



- 5:00—6:00 pm Beer and Wine Social with Silent Auction
- 6:00—6:30 pm Business Meeting
- 6:30—7:15 pm Dinner (Catered by Garth Newel's resident chef Josh Elliott)
- 7:15 pm Program with Guest Speaker: Marek Smith, Allegheny Highlands Program Director with The Nature Conservancy - *Biodiversity of the Cowpasture River Watershed*

Proceeds from silent auction will support the CRPA, businesses and artists.

Cost: \$18 per person, \$13 children (12 and under)
 Please send this reservation form along with checks payable to CRPA by **May 16** to:
CRPA, PO Box 215, Millboro, VA 24460

***Or, AT LEAST email your intentions by May 16: directorcrpa@gmail.com
 (We must guarantee the number attending the dinner to the caterer).***

Directions: <http://www.campmontshenandoah.com/contact-us/directions-and-transportation.php>

Please print your name (as you wish it to appear on nametag)	Dinner Cost (\$18 adult, \$13 children)
Total	

CRPA Annual Meeting

IF YOU CANNOT BE PRESENT AT THE ANNUAL MEETING, PLEASE RETURN THIS PROXY BY MAY 16, 2015
ALONG WITH ANY UNPAID DUES* TO:

CRPA, PO Box 215, Millboro, VA 24460

PROXY

I am unable to attend the 2015 Annual Business Meeting and do hereby name the following Director (*circle one*) to be my/our Proxy. I/we authorize him/her to vote for the new Directors and on any other business to come before the membership.

John Fowler	Bill Hardbarger	Monroe Farmer	Stewart Hobbs	Carly Cowden
Bill Jones	Ann Warner	Anne McVey	Joe Wood	Dick Lynn
Nelson Hoy	Lucius Bracey			

Printed Name _____ Signed _____ Date _____

Please Note: Unsigned proxies will be void. Unpaid dues will disqualify your vote.

But, in case you're behind on your dues.....

* Membership Categories:

- .. Member (\$20 minimum contribution for individual)
- .. River Guardian (\$50)
- .. Headwaters Circle (\$100)
- .. Watershed Steward (\$250)
- .. Wallawhatoola Society (\$500)
- .. Bedrock Patron (>\$500)

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Thank You To Our Loyal Watershed Members

After the first five months of this year's Annual Campaign (November 2014 through March 2015) members have generously given over \$26,000. The following list includes dues and gifts received between December 31, 2014 and April 15, 2015. Thank you!

Bedrock Patron

George and Frances Phillips
Ross Waller and Ann Huebner

Wallawhatoola Society

Jim and Ann McVey
Nolan and Hope Nicely
Elizabeth Biggs and Nelson Hoy
Crossroads Mill Foundation

Watershed Steward

Jean Ann Manner
John and Caryl Cowden
Bob and Ann Hilton

Headwaters Circle

Walnut Tree Farm
Puggy and Kathy Farmer
Jon and Kathy Jencks
Carrington Pasco
Mike and Peggy Van Yahres
Robert and Mina Wood
Keith Carson and Polly Newlon
Robert C. Watts, III

River Guardian

Richard and Suzanne Miller
Fred and Peggy Paxton
Lillian McClain
Bill and Eleanor Washburn
Dick and Jean Miller
Alice Buck
Anne Caldwell and Lou Houff
Percy and Anne Montague
Jim and Katherine Morris
Lang Murray
Matthew Richardson
Matt and Katie Howerton
Mr. and Mrs. William Wilson, III
Elizabeth Van Lear

Individual

Dale C. Perry
Adele and James Lambiase
Frances Wright Wolfe (Robert K.)
William Lipscomb
Eddie Stinespring
Michael Stolarz
Mary Curtis Stolarz
Mead Stolarz
Turner Stolarz
Dr. Susan Virginia Mead

Individual (continued)

Mellea Mead
Otis Mead
John Devenny
Mary Ellen Plitt and Henry Dickerson
Jenny Shepherd Bertelsen
Bill Hardbarger (gift)
Jim LaVier
Howard and Nancy Dobbs
Elizabeth Young
Morgan Mead

In Honor of:

Mike and Peggy Van Yahres

Welcome to our New Members!

Jim Thomson
Bruce Thomson
Rob Thomson
Andrew Bostic
Michael Brown
Jeremy and Laura White

Junior Members

Natalie White
Nicholas White

Did we get it wrong? We're sorry for any errors or omissions in this list. We are happy to correct errors. Please contact Lisa at directorcrpa@gmail.com

Water Resources Stewardship in the Cowpasture River Watershed

Nelson Hoy, CRPA Board Member, has coordinated a new five-year article series on water resources stewardship in the Cowpasture River watershed, sponsored by the Cowpasture River Preservation Association (and published in *The Recorder*). The goal of the series is to create awareness among students, citizens and officials of the critical need to protect our surface and groundwater resources, and to stimulate interest in progressive stewardship. If you don't have a subscription to *The Recorder*, then you can check out the seven articles that have been completed since September 2014 on the CRPA website at: <http://www.cowpastureriver.org/publications>.



Cowpasture River
Preservation Assn.

P.O. Box 215

Millboro, VA 24460

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Not a member? Join today!

- \$20 Individual (minimum annual membership donation)
- \$50 River Guardian
- \$100 Headwaters Circle
- \$250 Watershed Steward
- \$500 Wallawhatoola Society
- >\$500 Bedrock Patron
- Junior Membership(s): 15 years and under; Cost = 4 hrs./year volunteer service
- Other _____

NAME(S) As You Want Them Published

ADDRESS

CITY — STATE — ZIP

PHONE

E-MAIL

- I prefer not to have my name published as a contributor.
- I am interested in becoming a volunteer river monitor.
- I want to help save valuable resources, please send my newsletter by email.