

THE RIVER RUNS

News from the Cowpasture River Preservation Association



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The above photo of the Cowpasture River was taken by Tom Watts in early August of 2020. It was taken looking downriver from his deck at Lynchburg Camp.

Please send us your best photos of the Cowpasture River.

Board of Directors (2021-2022)

Officers:

Richard Brooks, President

David Burnett, Treasurer

Kim Manion, Secretary

Directors:

Linda Cauley

Margo Clegg

Caryl Cowden

Elizabeth Dudley

Michael Hayslett

Catherine Manner

Norwood Morrison

Tom Reycraft

Ross Waller

Nan Mahone Wellborn

Andrew Young

Staff:

*Lynne Griffith,
Executive Assistant*

Editor: *Lynne Griffith*

From the President

I got up just after dawn today, which is something I do most days. The early morning – so quiet when I lived in a city – is now a raucous mix of birds competing for a tasty breakfast, chipmunks racing across our deck, and squirrels attempting to dive head-first into the birdfeeders. Most mornings, I also watch the small herd of deer that quietly feed on our shrubs in the field below.



What matters is that I have finally started to notice and also appreciate the natural things around me.

One morning, as I went through the daily headlines, this one stopped me. "Covid's silver lining: a new – and possibly long lasting – passion for the outdoors." This came with the subhead, "The pandemic drove people outside. They really liked it." I realized that this headline was also true for me.

I have always enjoyed being outdoors. I hike, I fish, and I was a Boy Scout long ago. But since March of last year, the pace really picked up. With friends, we hiked many nearby trails, and then we hiked them a second and third time. Same with fishing our local rivers including the Cowpasture. In the spring, we went on wildflower walks and in the summer, we foraged for chanterelles. I was outside for longer periods of time than at any time since childhood. And it was fun. I was chagrined to think it took a pandemic to pry me out of my old routines.

Will this stay true as life returns to normal? Yes. That's a promise to you and to myself. The rewards are absolutely worth it. If you haven't yet tried it, do so. I know you'll be better off as a result.

Best regards,
Dick Brooks



Executive Assistant's Corner

It finally feels as if there is light at the end of the tunnel now that we can all get together and celebrate each other's company again. We can hardly wait! Thanks to the kindness of Kit and David Burnett, we will once again hold our summer picnic on their beautiful property that overlooks the Cowpasture River. The date is Saturday, August 7th. What's different about this year is that we are having the picnic fully catered. You can look forward to beef brisket, herb chicken, macaroni and cheese, green beans, salad and peach cobbler to boot! Plus we'll have beer and wine for the adults, as well as sodas and plenty of water. For those who are interested, we will also host a river float prior to the picnic. See all the details on page 5, and don't forget to RSVP!



On May 16th, we once again held our virtual annual meeting via Zoom. You can check out the details on page 4. We elected two new board members — Margo Clegg and Ross Waller, and we said goodbye to three of our departing board members — Steve Van Lear, Jeremy White and Marshall Higgins. We will miss them, and we're grateful for the time that they served on the board. We expect to be able to hold next year's annual meeting in person. Hooray!

Finally, we've had four successful events this past spring. We had an inspirational artist's retreat which was held at Fort Lewis Lodge on May 2-4, 2021. Some beautiful art was created out of this retreat. You can read further details on page 8. We've also had three interesting and informative field trips: a spring wildflower walk along the Jackson River Scenic Trail, a trek to Brown's Pond to study its ecology and geology, and a spring birding trip in the Cowpasture River Valley. Pages 6 & 7 will show you some of the highlights of these very special outings. And don't forget — there are still two more field trips to come (details on page 12). We hope you'll consider signing up!

SAVE THE DATES!

Saturday, August 7, 2021 — CRPA Summer Picnic and River Float. See details on page 8.

Monday, August 9, 2021 — Mussel Snorkeling. See details on page 12.

Saturday, September 18, 2021 — Bath County Fair. We will have an exhibit table.

Saturday, October 9, 2021 — Fall Geology Hike. Hike from Douthat State Park to the Cowpasture River Valley along Beards Mountain. See details on page 12.

Saturday, October 23, 2021 — The Walton Tract Clean-Up. Bi-annual clean-up at the Walton Tract, meeting up at the lower public access point ("rope swing").

Annual Meeting Highlights

Several folks gathered together via Zoom on the afternoon of May 16th for our 49th Annual Meeting. Dick Brooks led the meeting and highlighted several of the successes that we have had during the last twelve months. He spoke about how we have amped up our social media presence on Facebook and Instagram, tightening our community of members. We also hosted our first online auction in support of our education efforts. We went to the Supreme Court of the United States. Oh, and we helped stop a reckless pipeline project! In addition to the items above, Dick highlighted six key metrics, which are described in his italicized words below:

Financial. *Our association has always had the goal to bank up to two years of operating costs. In 2020 we succeeded in that due to growing our membership base, gaining honorariums and managing costs. This does not mean that we can take our foot off of the gas. No, we need to continue to grow. But the urgency of month to month or week to week fundraising that haunts so many nonprofits doesn't haunt us.*

Membership. *Last year we grew the Association membership to more than 400. Yes 409 in total. Keen observers will remember that not too very long ago we were in the low 200's. This is a testament to you, our valued members, to the quality of our Board of Directors and to the efforts of our chief of everything important – Lynne Griffith.*

Water Quality Monitoring. *Our efforts here were spotty last year due to the pandemic. Our key partners in these activities mostly abandoned their efforts altogether. But we've resumed this activity now.*

Education. *This too has been curtailed during the Covid crises. No school has wanted us to enter their premises, and many learners are remote from the schools altogether. But we are working on a program to help the students where they can do water sampling and bring the results to the classroom. More on this in the coming months.*

Aesthetics. *We had a successful Artist Retreat in conjunction with Fort Lewis Lodge. We are also sponsoring a \$200 award at the upcoming Bath County Art Show (July 17-25, 2021) for the judge's selection of "Best Cowpasture or Bullpasture River in any medium."*

Conservation. *With the Atlantic Coast Pipeline behind us, we've turned our attention to strengthening water quality standards, improving our relationships with like organizations and trying to make unneeded development projects more difficult.*



Photo by Norwood Morrison.

Norwood Morrison floating down the Cowpasture River.

CRPA Annual Summer Picnic & Family Fun Day



SAVE THE DATE!

SATURDAY, AUGUST 7, 2021

COME JOIN IN THE SUMMER FUN!

3:00—5:00 p.m.	Guided river float
5:00— 6:00 p.m.	Cocktail hour with hors d'oeuvres
6:00—7:30 p.m.	Picnic dinner

WHERE:

River home of Kit and David Burnett — overlooking the Cowpasture River at 438 Cowpasture River Farm Road, Millboro, VA 24460

COST:

- \$12 per person; children 12 and under are free.
- The entire meal will be catered this year. Beer and wine will also be served, in addition to water and sodas.
- Bring your own lawn chairs.
- You **MUST** sign up in advance if you are participating in the river float.



RSVP Deadline: July 23, 2021

RSVP: Email directorcrpa@gmail.com or call Lynne Griffith, CRPA Executive Assistant, at 540-620-7795.

DIRECTIONS:

From I-64, take Rt. 42 North exactly 6 miles. The sign for Cowpasture River Farm Road is the first left after one passes the “Welcome to Bath County” sign. It will also be the first street sign after crossing the Cowpasture River on Rt. 42 North.

From Rt. 39, drive 10 miles down Rt. 42 South. The Cowpasture River Farm Road is the first right after one passes the Indian Hill Road and Virginia Elks Boys Camp sign. If one passes over the Cowpasture River Bridge, then turn around and go back over the bridge to the first left, which is Cowpasture River Farm Road.

Field Trip Highlights

Spring Wildflowers Walk on the Jackson River Scenic Trail

On April 4th and April 17th, Michael Hayslett, along with CRPA Members Roger and Cynthia Baroody, led outdoor walks which included members from both the Jackson River Preservation Association and CRPA. Everyone enjoyed a leisurely stroll along the banks of our sister James River tributary while looking for native wildflowers along the trail. See some of the highlights below:



Photo by Annette Naber

Group photo taken on the April 4th walk.



Photo by Charles Garratt

Bloodroot.



Photo by Annette Naber

Michael Hayslett talking about garlic mustard.



Photo by Charles Garratt

Saxifrage.



Photo by Charles Garratt

Dutchmans Breeches.



Photo by Charles Garratt

Another group photo.

Brown's Pond Field Trip

On Sunday, April 18th, Grant Colip, Research Geologist with the U.S. Geological Survey, along with Michael Hayslett, Principal of VA Vernal Pools, led a hike investigating the ecology and geology of ancient Browns Pond on the George Washington National Forest. See the highlights below:



Photo by Grant Colip

Group shot — all masked up!



Photo by Will Mahone

Sinkhole cave entrance.



Photo by Grant Colip

Trekking on Tower Hill Mountain.



Photo by Emily Schultz

Grant explains research on Browns Pond.



Photo by Emily Schultz

Spotted salamander egg masses.

Our First Annual Artist Retreat — “Spring on the Cowpasture River”

The Aesthetics Committee partnered with the Membership Committee to produce “Spring on the Cowpasture River|An Artist Retreat,” which started on Sunday, May 2 and culminated on Tuesday, May 4 with a “Showcase and Sale” where the 21 participating artists sold a number of pieces. The artists were at it from dawn to dusk enjoying all that Fort Lewis Lodge and Farm has to offer. The event gave us the opportunity to share the beauty of the Cowpasture, information about the Bath County Art Show and our sponsored award. As a result of the retreat, CRPA has 21 new members. We will invite these artists to share their work in our newsletters and on social media. And they will be invited to participate in our auctions. — Nan Mahone Wellborn



Photo by Erin Cowden

Watercolor artist Matt Gentry.



Photo by Erin Cowden

Nan Mahone Wellborn painting on the bridge south of Fort Lewis.



Photo by Anita Kersch

Artist Amy Varner showing her work at the Tuesday afternoon sale at the artist retreat.



Photo by Claudia Wisdom Good

Vickie McCormick-Goodheart enjoying the Tuesday afternoon exhibit and sale of the various art work.

CRPA and the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969

By Andrew Young, CRPA Board Member

For those of us in CRPA, it is no secret that the Cowpasture River and surrounding areas are a national treasure. The clean water, clean air, healthy forests and remarkable biodiversity are something that we rightfully cherish. Yet for those of us that recognize the priceless value of the land and water, we have also been given the responsibility of safeguarding these resources in trust for all future generations. In fact, CRPA was founded all these years ago as a result of concerned advocates who felt that large government and corporate development projects in the local area posed an impending threat to the River. Plainly, we are stewards of the River and failure is not an option if we want our children and grandchildren to inherit their birthright of clean air and water.

To that end, the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (commonly referred to as NEPA or the “Magna Carta of environmental laws”) was enacted to protect human and environmental health by



ensuring that unquantifiable environmental assets and values are given appropriate consideration in federal agency decision making processes. NEPA is the nation’s best attempt at balancing the needs of the present with a responsible and keen eye toward the future. And as one of the nation’s fastest growing regions, while also being home to some of the nation’s most diverse and valuable natural resources, these protections hold heightened significance in the southeastern United States.

What Does NEPA Do?

The law has two aims. First it sets up transparent procedures that require federal decisionmakers to consider and account for environmental impacts stemming from any federal project. To this, the law requires all federal executive agencies to prepare environmental assessments (EA’s) and

Andrew and his wife Linsey standing in front of the Middle Fork Salmon River in Idaho — a river which is pristine as it is because of NEPA.

environmental impact statements (EISs) that state the potential environmental effects of the proposed federal agency action. At its core, NEPA intends to ensure that government decisionmakers are well informed and make prudent decisions that account for long term impacts. As a way of ensuring agency accountability, NEPA's other aim ensures that members of the public are informed of the environmental impacts for projects, as well as other alternative solutions, so that they may weigh in on the decision-making process (aka the public comment period). It is no secret that local communities are typically in the best position to inform decisionmakers because of their special relationships to the land and water.

Through both public participation and the preparation of impact assessment reports, NEPA aims to ensure that regardless of what decision is ultimately made, the decision makers at federal agencies take a "hard look" at the impacts of their actions, are accountable for their decisions, and "use all practicable means and measures...to create and maintain conditions under which man and nature can exist in productive harmony." 42 U.S.C. § 4331(a).

Why is CRPA a Client in *Wild Virginia v. Council on Environmental Quality*?

These NEPA regulations, largely unchanged, have been in place for over fifty years, and eight presidential administrations from Nixon to Obama. However, under former President Trump, the White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) abruptly abandoned NEPA's longstanding central provisions without any "good reason" to, as required by the Administrative Procedure Act (APA). The rule changes exclude a range of projects from NEPA review, severely limit the environmental effects that must be considered under NEPA, restrict which alternatives should be studied (this was a major reason we defeated the Atlantic Coast Pipeline in court!), and allow projects to proceed before the NEPA process is complete.

These are drastic changes that eviscerate the heart of NEPA's statutory scheme and legislative goals. But rather than listen to the more than 1.1 million public comments opposing the rule changes, the CEQ gave no evidence to support its changes, made no consideration of the disruption the



Andrew and Linsey vacationing at the Frank Church-River of No Return wilderness area in Idaho. It is the largest wilderness area in the lower 48 states.

changes will cause, considered no less drastic alternative measures, and rushed to finalize the rule less than four months after the public comment period closed. This is in stark contrast with the requirements of the law that the federal government truthfully explain its reasoning to the public so that it may be held legally and politically accountable for the policy changes.

Now, even with a change in presidential administrations, the rule change has not been rescinded. We at CRPA, in partnership with attorneys at the Southern Environmental Law Center and fifteen other conservation groups, filed a complaint in federal court against the CEQ because NEPA should not be subject to changes based on the unjustified whims of whoever happens to have political power at any given time. NEPA, at its heart, is a fundamentally democratic process that cannot be caught up in the political game playing of Washington DC. Clean air and water, healthy people and livestock, and responsible decision-making as related to our natural resources, will always be more important than political expediency. These rule changes are nothing other than shortcuts and attempts at obscuring an otherwise transparent process to avoid accountability for potentially unpopular, and environmentally destructive agency decisions. CRPA is optimistic we will receive a satisfactory outcome in the case, and rest assured we have the most competent, ethical and committed attorneys you could find anywhere.

We promise to keep you apprised of any updates in the legal proceedings and hope to see you on a river float or gathering this summer! We are here to serve CRPA on behalf of our 400+ members and welcome your input!

Rockbridge Man Breaks State Record by Catching Heaviest Fallfish in Virginia

(excerpts below from WSLs 10 news article written by Nicole Del Rosario published April 16, 2021)

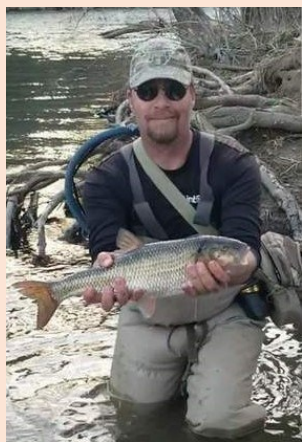


Photo from Virginia Dept.
of Wildlife Resources

Jerry Hall was spending his afternoon fishing for trout along the Cowpasture River in Bath County when a particularly heavy fallfish hit his fly on March 21, according to the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR). The next thing he knew, he caught a fallfish that weighed 3 pounds, 5 ounces and was 19.75 inches in length.

Hall said he normally catches and releases the fish, but he had an inkling he had a record-breaking catch. "I know what a 3-pound fish looks like and feels like. I thought I'd seen that the state record fallfish was a bit over 2 pounds. I knew this fish was well over 3 pounds. So, I brought it out on the notion that it was a state record," Hall said.

DWR Region 4 Fisheries Manager Steve Reeser certified the fish's weight and confirmed it as the new state record. This fallfish was 13 ounces bigger than the previous state record fallfish recorded in 2020. "It's an extraordinarily large fallfish; I've fished a lot in my life and I've never caught one close to it before," Hall said. "It set the bar high, but I think that record can be beaten!"

Virginia Highlands Wood Duck Club 2020 Annual Report

by Arne Peterson

Spring 2019 was a record year with 53 boxes used by ducks, 47 of them successfully. Spring 2020 was on track to be even better with 62 boxes being used by ducks. Then the wetlands froze hard. Eighteen boxes were abandoned, with a total of 100 eggs in them. That was a painful loss. The effect was worse on the western part of the trail, especially on the Jackson and Cowpasture Rivers. East of Goshen Pass, events were normal. The good news is that 44 boxes had successful hatches, only three less than the previous year. Their young, plus the fact that 153 boxes are in place and ready for spring, should provide for a quick comeback. Screech Owls continue to be a factor, with 37 boxes being used by them. A large number, 25, were in the box when we inspected. Previously, we listed two color morphs, red and grey. We have changed our latest documentation to conform with the latest guide books which list three morphs: red, brown and grey. This accords with our own observations. Under the two morphy system, Virginia had an average 60-40 red to grey spread. Adding red and brown together gives a 64% to 36% spread, very close to the norm.



(Left) Arne Peterson with one of his duck boxes on the Cowpasture River at Lynchburg Camp with camp representative, Jeff Mayes. (Photo courtesy of J.F. Brown.)

TRAIL SUMMARY

Total Boxes = 145

Used by Ducks	62
Successful Nest	44/31%
- Unhatched Eggs	20/Avg. .45 per box
Nest Failure	18
- Total Eggs	100/Avg. 5.8 per box
No Duck Activity	83/60%
Egg Dumping	0
Used by Owls	37/26%
Owls in Box	25
- Red Phase	5
- Brown Phase	11
- Gray Phase	9

JOIN US FOR OUR TWO UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS

Monday, August 9, 2021 — Mussel Snorkeling with Brian Watson. 10:00 am—12 noon.

Led by Brian Watson, Aquatic Resources Biologist/State Malacologist with the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources. (Limit of 20 people.) — More information will be forthcoming.

Saturday, October 2, 2020 — Geology-Focused Hike. A geology based hike from Douthat State Park to the Cowpasture River Valley along Beards Mountain. Co-led by Grant Colip (from the United States Geological Survey) and CRPA Member Dave Peters. More information will be forthcoming. (Limit of 20 people.)

Check Out Our New Merchandise Items



Our new CRPA t-shirts have finally arrived! They feature the CRPA logo on the front and our new design on the back. They are made by Gildan from 100% ultra cotton.

We also have our new 10 ounce engraved ARC Nordic Whiskey Glasses. They feature a safe edge rim, cylindrical body and a thick base for stability.

Be sure to check out these new items, as well as all of our other items, at our website at <https://cowpastureriver.org/shop/>



IN ANTICIPATION OF CRPA'S 50th ANNIVERSARY

The Cowpasture River Preservation Association turns 50 in 2022. It has been as Jerry Garcia might say, "A long, strange trip indeed." And that is only the first 50. Imagine the next 50!

Help us celebrate this momentous occasion by submitting anything that you might have, know or remember that will be of value to our current and future members. Photos, memories, songs, poems, etc. Anything that is meaningful to you will likely be so for others. Please send these to Lynne Griffith at directorcrpa@gmail.com or to our P.O. Box 215, Millboro, VA 24460.

Thank You to Our Departing Board Members



Steve Van Lear — Many thanks to Steve Van Lear who has faithfully served on the CRPA board for six years. He has headed up our Membership Committee during much of that time period, as well as being a tremendous help in the planning of our Annual Meetings and summer picnics. He's been instrumental in setting up our silent auctions, and he is a master at the barbecue grill. We thank him for his years of service to the board. He will be missed.



Jeremy White — Jeremy White settled his family in Bath County a few years ago and soon after was in the water with the monitors. In addition, he volunteered with the education committee and was often in the classroom with students and on field trips identifying the “bugs” so important in monitoring the health of the river. His appointment to the board fit perfectly with the importance monitoring has to the members of the CRPA. His input will be missed on the board, but he will still be in the water. — from Puggy Farmer

In Memory of Robert C. Hilton (June 27, 1937—April 7, 2021)



Bob Hilton first came to the Cowpasture River in the early '60's to be with Macon Winfree of Lynchburg Camp - the woman he would soon marry. He instantly fell in love with the place, and especially enjoyed fishing, hiking, and taking in the sheer beauty of the place in general. In the early '80's, he bought Sitlington Farm, and enjoyed restoring the Revolutionary War era stone house. Bob traveled far and wide over the course of his life, but sitting by the banks off the Cowpasture River topped them all. He will be missed by so many of us.

A Request for Auction Items

The Bill Hardbarger Education Scholarship Fund

Since our online auction was such a huge success last year, we have decided to make it an annual event. In an effort to carry on Bill Hardbarger's passion for river education to students of all ages, we created a scholarship fund in his memory, and the proceeds from this auction will go to that fund. Last year, members donated a whole array of items, ranging from artwork, gift certificates, woodwork items, a fly rod, a cabin rental, etc. A few photos of some of the donated items are pictured below. If you would be interested in donating items to our auction this year, please contact Lynne at 540-620-7795 or at directorcrpa@gmail.com. The auction will occur in the fall.



Painting of the Cowpasture River by artist Debra Sheffer.



Fall wreath made by Christie Hardbarger.



Woodwork kitchen utensils from Joe Wood.



R.E.M. Collectors Package.



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Protect The Things You Love

Please join us today. The river needs your time, talent and support!

Your donations are tax deductible!

☐ \$25 Adult Membership (*minimum annual dues per individual*)

☐ \$50 River Guardian Donation

☐ \$100 Headwaters Circle Donation

☐ \$250 Watershed Steward Donation

☐ \$500 Wallawhatoola Society Donation

☐ \$1,000 Bedrock Patron Donation

☐ Memorial Donation \$ _____

in memory of _____

☐ \$12 Junior Membership Dues

☐ I am a NEW member!

☐ I am RENEWING

NAME(S): _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY — STATE — ZIP

PHONE

E-MAIL: _____

☐ I prefer to NOT have my name published as a contributor.

☐ Please send my newsletter by email version only.

☐ I am interested in becoming a volunteer and/or river monitoring.

(Note: A financial statement is available upon written request from the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services — Office of Charitable and Regulatory Programs.)

