RIVERKEEPER REPORT

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The RIVERKEEPER® Report

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Written by Riverkeeper Jeff Turner
142 Members Strong

Riverkeeper Around Town

I'm going ahead now and apologize for this thin newsletter. The last newsletter came to you around the first of September. On October 18th I broke my leg and was out of commission for 94 days. October 2008 was a tough month for me. The broken leg came after a camping trip where Moonpie went AWOL for five days. I broke the leg the night of the day we found her! Those 94 days of not being able to get around really put a damper on Riverkeeping. So I'm reporting what I have even though it's not much. Moonpie was recovered safely and not too much the wear for worst. Moonpie is getting ready to be 16 this spring or 112 in people years. On her trips to the river from now on she will be kept very close, I can assure you of that. Before the leg incident I did attend the Wakefield Family Day at the old school there. I had the BNRP booth manned and handed out a good amount of information about the program, fishing and boating safety etc. I also got to talk to a few people from the upper part of the river and that was nice. On Oct 6th I presented to Cub Scout Pack 17 at the Methodist Church in Franklin and showed the Scouts the BNRP 2nd movie. On the 9th I made a presentation to the High Street Seniors at the Franklin Baptist Church where I showed the slide show from the banquet that year. In January Freezing Deer and I traveled to Richmond where I was presented with an award from the Fly Fishers of Virginia (FFV). The Taylor F. Turner JR. Conservation Award was presented to me at the posh Salisbury Country Club in Midlothian.
It was quite an event with fly-fishing legends Lefty Kreh and King Montgomery showing some of their fishing slides. The FFV even put us up at the Holiday Inn Select that night!

Riverkeeper on Patrol

I have only spent five patrol trips on the river since last September. Three were before the accident with the third trip being a four-day three nights in hopes of Moonpie finding her way back to camp. Two have been since the accident, one on January 22nd which was a three-day leg test trip, and one on 2/9 which was a four day trip. Why a four day trip? Hey, I had been stuck in the house for three months; I'm trying to get back what I lost. Of course I know that will never happen, but I'm trying. The leg is better for sure, but it was not great even before the accident. I'm still having a right tuff time on uneven ground like IN THE WOODS and I'm told it might not ever be as good, or bad/good whatever as it was before I broke it. That's okay I guess, I can crawl pretty darn good in sand!

New Bridge Construction

The new Rt. 58 Bridge being built over the Blackwater in Franklin near the mill is coming right along. The original bridge built in 1938 will be removed once the new one is finished. I have contacted VDOT and ask that the pilings that are still there from iron trestle bridge that was there before the bridge that's now being replaced be

removed when this bridge is destroyed. The new bridge will be higher and have better river flow capacity under it. That will help reduce a bottleneck effect that occurs there during flood conditions. Now if the same thing would be done at the railroad bridges just down and upriver of the new bridge, Franklin would have a better chance of staying dry the next time we have high water. August 2009 is the scheduled completion date for the $4.2 million dollar project.

Invasion Of The Cows

After the discovery this summer of cows in the Nottoway and the increased frequency of those sighted in the Blackwater, I again filed formal complaint in August with VDACS or the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. This is the agency that claims to look into these issues. The outcome of that investigation has ended with VDACS again stating that the cows in the Blackwater appear not to be causing a water quality issue. Appear is the key word here. The farm that had the cows in the Nottoway was not investigated because the landowner denied them access. A court order will now be needed to get access to the farm and VDACS has ask that I wait until I see cows in the water again since it took so long this past year to get the court order that the cows were sold and there are none there now. So I guess this will just go around and around forever. It just goes to show how ineffective the State of Virginia farm management agencies like VDACS are at protecting our streams and rivers from ***bad*** farm practices. It's a matter of bad laws that need changing. NO, amount of livestock should be allowed in our rivers. The tons of cow dung that is allowed into our rivers will continue to contribute to high fecal coliform levels. Until these landowners stop polluting our rivers and jeopardizing our community health I advise anyone contemplating skiing or tubing in the Blackwater do it way down river from the Pretlow farm where these cows are located.

New River Film

FINALLY, after four years I have produced the third river movie "The Living Blackwater & Nottoway Rivers II". The 30 minute long movie is primarily about the abundant wildlife that inhabits the shores of our rivers. This film also shows some of the problems our rivers face. There is even a segment in the movie where Moonpie is interviewing me and I let it all hang out concerning what I think about the cow problem. I started not to put that in the video, but what the heck, none of the prior movies have me in them so I thought it might be good to do that. Heck, I might not be around for the 4th movie, who knows? A cow could kill me! Hopefully soon we will have copies available to folks for a $10 donation. As always we will also be placing them in local Libraries and schools free of charge. Its just another way the BNRP is helping to educate people about our two wonderful natural resources.

Power Plant

Well I knew it would come back and it did. Years ago we fought to keep a coal fired power plant from being built in the upper Blackwatershed and it was put on hold. Now Old Dominion Electric Cooperative a company I believe is based in Kentucky wants to come here and build a coal fired power plant near Dendron in the headwaters of the Blackwater River. A river that already has mercury in its fish so bad that the Virginia Department of health advises people to eat only a limited amount of fish from its waters. The new plant will put a lot of other pollution into our environment also like millions of tons of carbon dioxide into the air. Another thing that most people do not realize is a massive generating plant of this size will use about a one-mile long trainload of coal EVERYDAY. That train will bring the coal to the plant on the railroad track that runs through places like Windsor. Everyday that long pollution bearing train will hold up people on RT. 258. The coal industry wants you to think there is such a thing as clean coal. Well there is no such thing. Besides for burning it

and causing pollution like acid rain and spewing mercury into the environment we live, just mining it and destroying mountains to get at the coal is a dirty business. If that plant is built near Dendron air and water quality will degrade and let me guarantee you this. When our environment degrades so to will our health and then we will be the statistics people will read about and see on the news with higher rates of cancer and respiratory diseases. YOU will be one of those who will suffer the effects of this monster.

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Big Mamma Dead At 1000

I was sad to hear it but one of the countries oldest cypress trees died this past year. The cypress tree formerly known as Big Mamma was pronounced dead this past fall. The news came only a scant three years after the tree was discovered or lets say rediscovered, as I'm sure many humans have seen it over its estimated 1000 plus years of life. The tree located in the Nottoway River near Cypress Bridge is/was 123 ft tall and 35 ft in circumference. Byron Carmean measured the tree and brought it to the attention of the world in 2005. Since that time numerous people have visited the site to see the mammoth tree. I have seen it a couple times in my life, once after it became famous and once before. Back then I just thought it was a really big tree and really did not pay it any special attention. I think it is just wild to imagine that the tree was already 364 years old when Jamestown was discovered. You know that tree has seen a lot of Indians paddle past it in its day. I think its also pretty odd that after only three years of being disturbed by sightseers it died. Maybe it would have preferred just to be left alone and remained *maiestas anonymous*.

Riverkeeper Banquet

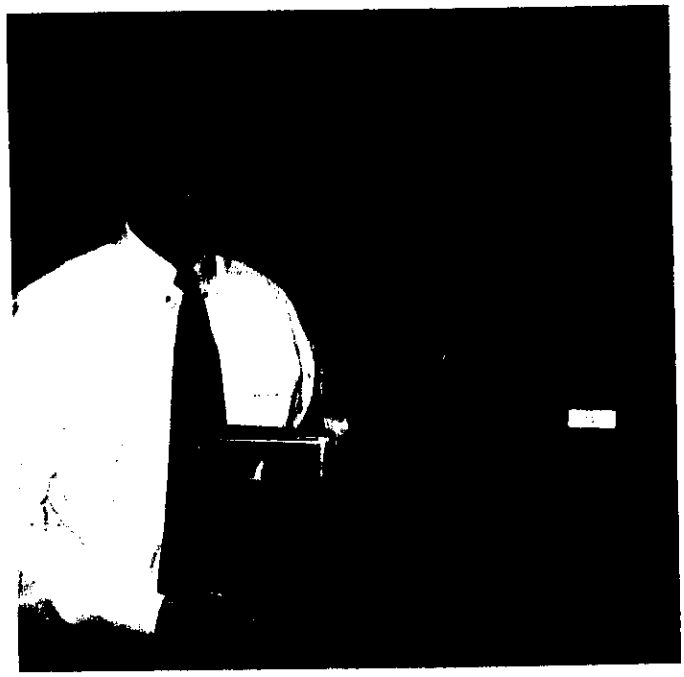
On February 18th the BNRP held its annual banquet for members and their guest. The banquet is a celebration of the success of the eight years the BNRP has serviced this community and its environment. The excellent dinner was provided by Elaine Butler catering service and was great as usual. The guest speaker and recipient of the 2008 Lon Marks Conservation Award was Brian van Eerden of the Nature Conservancy. He talked about the Forrest legacy Program that is working hard and succeeding in preserving land along our rivers. Some gifts were given away including a $100 gift certificate from Lowes, which VDGIF Biologist Eric Brittle won. Suzanne Duffey who came to dinner hoping to purchase a Moonpie t-shirt was disappointed when she learned there were none for sale. Amazingly though she won the coveted Moonpie apparel during a drawing of names of those that attended the banquet. The climax of the evening was the showing of the new BNRP film. Attendance was great with 81 attending. We were very fortunate this year to have District Field Representative for Congressman Randy Forbes Mr. Rick Franklin join us as well as Franklin City Mayor Jim Councill and Isle of Wight Board of Supervisors Phillip Bradshaw and his daughter.

While You're Up

I just have to mention my good friend Mr. Jack Camps new book "While You're Up" before I sign off here. I received my copy about a month ago and read it in two nights, both nights staying up late. It really is fantastic reading and Susan Block who did the interviews and put the book together did a really great job. The book is a looking glass into the interesting life that Mr. camp has led during his long life. I think anybody who likes local history will truly enjoy this book. Mr. Camp being as gracious as he is even put a few pages in the book about the Riverkeeper program and me. I was very humbled by this and very thankful I am able to call this interesting and thoughtful man my friend.

Moonpies Photo Gallery

Fall Colors On The Blackwater



Brian van Eerden Receiving Award

Banquet At Work Force Center

Beaver Hut & Food Storage

Icecicles On The Nottoway

Log Jam I Broke Up At The Pump House On The Blackwater

Moonpie With A Blackfish Scale On Her Nose