



# The South River Current

Promoting interest and collaboration for watershed stewardship



## Restoration Beyond the River

April 2021 Volume 2 Issue 4

Cowbane is a sparsely branched plant with umbrella-shaped white flowers that thrives in marshlands and prairies. The flower name is derived not from its form or stature but from its detrimental impact on its unwitting consumer. Yes, cowbane is poisonous to cattle—the bane of their existence in any cowbane-infested prairie, but an important habitat for smaller indigenous wildlife. In fact, the South River runs through Cowbane Prairie in Augusta County, and it has been preserved and expanded with part of the funds from the DuPont Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration settlement.

Cowbane Prairie Natural Area Preserve actually protects a variety of natural prairies that were once threatened by agricultural and industrial development. The deep, fibrous roots of prairie grasses protect watersheds, increasing water filtration and reducing erosion. According to the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, a reach of the South River within the prairie also provides habitat for two watch-listed freshwater mussel species. The preserve is open to visitors but is periodically closed for resource protection or prescribed burning activities. If you want a chance to bask in the beauty of the undisturbed prairie, call the DCR before you venture out. If you want to enjoy the prairie virtually, click [here](#) and scroll down for the latest South River Currents video.



## Did You Know?

- Did you know that you have a watershed address?
- Do you know who Southy the Mouthy is?

To find the answers, watch the new South River Currents video, Navigating Our Watershed, by clicking on the picture.



## Connections

Two-thirds of the earth is covered in water—a science fact you likely learned first in elementary school. What’s the other one-third? Land. And though it’s hard to imagine, our actions on the land can impact and even threaten our water resources. In a video recently produced by the South River Science Team, Tom Benzing explains it this way, “How we behave on the land, how we manage the land, impacts that water quality. And that’s the importance of watersheds – realizing that there’s a connection between the water that runs across that land area and what we see when we get to a point in the river.” The fun and detailed illustrations in this video help explain the connection between our backyards and the entire watershed. Check it out [here](#) and share it with your friends and neighbors. Together we can make a difference!



## Take a Walk Back

It wasn’t until the 1960s that Virginia started trying to manage the flow of stormwater to prevent flooding. The goal back then was to quickly and efficiently get the water to flow away from homes and businesses. Cement drains directed water to drainage ditches and into low-lying streams and basins. The result was unsightly, overgrown ditches behind buildings and unfiltered runoff flowing into bigger water sources, impacting the water in our rivers, lakes, and bays.

Fifty years later, the philosophy and approach has changed. As a local example, in 2016 the City of Waynesboro constructed a 10-acre wetland that directs runoff to drain downhill into designated wetland pools. The wetlands circulate the water, removing sediment and absorbing pollution before the water goes into the South River and eventually to the Chesapeake Bay. In the past five years, the wetlands (now called Mulberry Run Wetlands) have matured into a peaceful wildlife haven. While humans and animals enjoy the tranquil view, the scattered pools and ponds work naturally to remove 300 pounds of phosphorus and 1,700 pounds of nitrogen per year. When you visit, read all about it on the nearby sign. For details about the original construction, click [here](#).



The Current is a publication of the South River Science Team ([www.southernriverstewards.org](http://www.southernriverstewards.org)). To be added or deleted from our distribution list, contact KB at [kbaldino@writingunlimitedllc.com](mailto:kbaldino@writingunlimitedllc.com)