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The South River Current



Promoting interest and collaboration for watershed stewardship



Left: Restored riverbank at Shiloh Baptist Church. Right: group stopping to talk on the Greenway to North Park.

Watershed Restoration: Celebrating Collaborative Cleanup and Greenway Expansion

Have you heard “it takes a village to raise a child?” Along the riverbanks of the South River, it has taken the collaboration of scientists, City officials, remediation workers, Science Team members, and the public to raise a healthier, happier watershed! In September, Corteva (formerly DuPont) hosted a celebration for the team that included a walk from Constitution Park to North Park. As the group walked, they took in several of the riverbanks that underwent mercury remediation. (Click [here](#) for details on the remediation process.) At North Park, the latest of the riverbanks to be remediated, the transformation of the South River Science Team into South River Watershed Coalition was announced. The Coalition’s mission focuses on the entire

watershed with an emphasis on education and bringing community members, businesses, and organizations together to promote community health by promoting watershed health. A week later, Waynesboro Parks and Recreation gathered collaborators and community members at North Park to celebrate the completion of the latest section of South River Greenway between Port Republic and North Park. The pathway was dedicated and officially opened, and the hard work and cooperation of all were recognized. With the greenway, the area has been transformed into a welcoming natural respite from the rigors of everyday life. If you haven't made your way to the South River recently, seize the day before the winter cold sets in!

Did You Know?



- The native pawpaw tree is host to the zebra swallowtail butterfly (pictured at top left). The fruit of the pawpaw (bottom left) resembles a green potato, and the flavor is often compared to bananas but with hints of mango, vanilla, and citrus. (*Swallowtail butterfly photo credit*)
 - Riparian buffers alter how sunlight reaches streams and, in so doing, help keep stream temperatures cool for fish, wildlife, and humans!
 - Recent improvements to the South River Greenway have provided nearly one mile of new trail for all to enjoy!
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September 2022 Buffer Training Certification Class at Augusta Forestry Center.

Connections: Master the Method of Buffering

You are likely familiar with video buffering—when that circle spins endlessly on your computer screen while you await your favorite movie download—but have you heard of riparian buffers? The [May 2021 issue](#) of *The South River Current* explains the importance of these vegetated areas that help reduce nutrient and sediment runoff from rainstorms. The Chesapeake Bay Landscape Professional (CBLP) Certification Program includes a Buffer Training Certificate that combines virtual instruction with in-person workshops. The latest workshop took place right here in the Watershed at the Augusta Forestry Center. This comprehensive course on planning, implementing, and managing riparian buffers is designed for landscape professionals, government employees, and nonprofit staff, as well as anyone who wants to master the practice. The fall course just finished in September, but winter training dates will be announced soon. Go to the [CBLP website](#) to learn more and check out other classes that promote sustainable landscape practices in the Chesapeake Bay Region.



Left: *Appalachian Gooseberry* ([photo credit](#)). Right: *American Dogwood* ([photo credit](#)).

Take a Walk Back: Uncovering the Understory

When you think of a forest, you may picture trees like oaks, maples, and birches soaring up to the sky with their colorful autumn leaves. But hidden beneath each towering canopy, smaller trees, saplings, shrubs, and vines grow that are just as vital to forest life. They make up what is called the forest understory. For thousands of years here in the Shenandoah Valley, small native plant species have evolved under large-growing trees, some with little to no known human intervention, and have created a complex and interdependent ecosystem with other species, insects, and animals. Some of these local native species like the Allegheny blackberry, Appalachian gooseberry, trumpet honeysuckle, American holly, and flowering dogwood are pretty easy to identify. Even the pawpaw tree can be spotted if you know how to identify its fruit. (See “Did You Know?” for a clue.) Since the 1600s, over 800 nonnative species have been introduced to Virginia soil. Some have adapted well and added to the variety of plants we see every day. Others, like the Japanese knotweed (see [July 2020 issue](#)), have become invasive and have caused health, economic, or ecological damage by crowding out the native plants and, therefore, disrupting the food web, degrading waterways, and harming water quality. According to the USDA Forest Service, the major threat to forests in the United States is invasive understory forest vegetation. Nationwide, annual costs and damages arising from invasive plants are estimated at \$34 billion. Managing a healthy indigenous understory can provide overarching benefits. Click [here](#) for more information about the conservation and restoration of native plants in Virginia.