

# The South River Current



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*Promoting interest and collaboration for watershed stewardship*

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## Watershed Restoration: Growing the South River Greenway

Spending time out in nature has been linked to improved attention; lower stress; better mood; reduced cortisol levels, muscle tension, and heart rates; and even increased empathy and cooperation. You may not have the time or ability to venture out on a mountain hike, but a walk on the South River Greenway in the sunshine near the rippling river can also do the trick. And with the South River Greenway expansions, there is always more to explore! Last September, the City of Waynesboro completed an extension of the two-mile Greenway to include a stretch from Port Republic to North Park. Now they are working on two other extensions—from Loth Springs to Ridgeview Park and from North Park to Basic Park. Once completed, four miles of new pathways will allow for safe and scenic walking and riding through town connecting Ridgeview, Constitution, and North and Basic Parks. The Greenway is open all year long! Take advantage of this free stress reliever. Your body and mind will be better for it!

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## Did You Know?



- Being in nature can help improve your short-term and working memory. ([Read more.](#))
- Over half the world's population lives in urban areas where exposure to nature is scarce. Emerging green infrastructures, like the tree canopy pictured here, use nature to improve water and air quality.
- More information about the expanding South River Greenway and parking lot locations can be found [here](#).



*Friends show their fish consumption advisory bookmarks at the Community Health Clinic in Waynesboro.*

## Connections: Reaching the Latino Community

“Promotores de salud” is the Spanish term for “community health workers.” For over 10 years, the South River Science Team (now South River Watershed Coalition) has partnered with the Promotores de Salud Program at the Institute for Innovation in Health and Human Services at James Madison University (JMU) to raise awareness and educate Spanish-speaking communities in the South River Watershed about the mercury fish consumption advisories. Last year, Onesimo Baltazar Corona, Promotores de Salud Program Manager, distributed Spanish versions of the *South River Current* and fish advisories at monthly community health clinics, the Harrisonburg Hispanic Festival, RiverFest, and the International Festival. He also visited popular fishing areas along the South and South Fork Shenandoah Rivers during peak fishing season to talk to Latino anglers about the advisories. JMU’s Promotores de Salud Program is on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) – follow them to get information about events, training opportunities, and even free dental services in the area and share the links with Spanish-speaking members of your community!



*Riverbanks see new life as workers plant trees along the South River after remediation.*

## Take a Walk Back: The Difference a Few Decades can Make

Environmental protection has come a long way since the 19th century when factories and mills operated along the South River and the population grew along with industry. Two big factories, DuPont (which made rayon) and Crompton Mill (which dyed and finished corduroy and velvets), used the river to extract water and discharge wastes. Cities and towns discharged untreated sewage into the river, and early agricultural practices allowed animal wastes, fertilizer, and topsoil to make their way to the river. The result? River water quality declined, and the number of different South River fish species and their populations plummeted. In 1970, there were no fish available at the Waynesboro Main Street Bridge collection site during a fish survey. In 1972, the U.S. Congress passed The Clean Water Act, which required wastes to be treated prior to their discharge into rivers. The City of Waynesboro constructed a basic wastewater treatment plant in 1950 and has upgraded it over the years three times. Best management practices for agriculture emphasize the importance of maintaining a healthy watershed. Now, there are more than 25 different species of fish in the river—harkening back to pre-industry river conditions. The South River is back to life! Do you want to play a part in maintaining the health of our river? Learn more at [southriverwatershed.org](http://southriverwatershed.org) and follow the South River Watershed Coalition on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

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