

# The South River Current



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*Promoting interest and collaboration for watershed stewardship*

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Tommy Lawhorne, a founder of the South River Fly Shop,  
with a rainbow trout.

## **Watershed Restoration: All About the Trout**

Did you know that the section of the South River near Constitution Park was officially designated Virginia's first urban trout fishery? So, if you are itching for some quality fishing, there's no need to load up the car for a long trek – just launch your boat or sport those waders in the river right near the Constitution Park Pavilion. The riverbanks have been remediated and now include a boat access area. To make sure you have the best chance of snagging a catch, check the [daily trout stocking schedule](#) on the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) website to see the last time they stocked trout at your destination. Stocking locations are listed by

county, date, and type of trout. The DWR also offers a [trout fishing guide](#) that provides trout fishing regulation changes and updates; trout seasons and limits; kids fishing events; and more. Remember a valid [fishing license](#) is needed regardless of where you decide to cast your line. A one-year license for freshwater fishing is \$23 for Virginia residents and nonresidents. (The nonresident fee was reduced this year.) One-day and five-day licenses are also available for less. Need more convincing to grab a pole and head for the water? Read about the health benefits of fishing in the October 2021 Connections article of *The South River Current* [here](#).

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### Did You Know?

- The South River Fly Shop won “Best Fly Shop” in Best of Blue Ridge 2023. That’s two years in a row!
  - According to the [Child Mind Institute](#), the average American child spends about four to seven minutes a day playing outside and over seven hours a day in front of a screen. Let’s get those kids to the River!
  - The Coalition’s *South River Currents: Navigating Our Watershed* is a collection of short videos about the treasures and challenges of our watershed. View them anytime [here](#).
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## Connections: Amateur Anglers in the Making

Fishing is a great way to get the whole family outdoors and active. Sharing a fishing experience can strengthen family bonds while relieving stress and awakening awareness of the natural world. But maybe your kiddos need some convincing. The Shenandoah Valley chapter of Trout Unlimited (SVTU) offers an up-close and personal experience through their [Trout in the Classroom](#) program. As part of the local program, students learn the life cycle of trout and everything that goes with it: fish biology, water chemistry, stream ecology, and cold-water conservation. SVTU works with local teachers and donors to raise funds for the program (around \$1,000 per tank). Classrooms receive a 50-gallon tank, a chiller to keep the water at 55°, a tank thermometer, a bubbler to oxygenate the water, and a load of fish eggs to nurture. Eggs usually arrive in October, and the fish grow to about 3 inches by May. Currently SVTU oversees about 17 tanks in our area. If your students' schools want to join the action, start the process [here](#). If you're not ready to take the plunge, consider encouraging your youth to give fishing a try at one of the youth-only, trout-stocked water locations. These locations are for youth aged 15 and under to fish with adult assistance in baiting, hooking, casting, and removing fish. Check [here](#) for stocking dates and locations.

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## Take a Walk Back: From Drab to Fab

Today, the South River is an angler destination. People come from all over the United States to enjoy spin fishing and fly fishing. In fact, thanks to visiting anglers, local business revenue totals have reached nearly three quarters of a million dollars in recent years. Half a century ago, our river reality would have been nearly impossible to imagine. Even in the 1990s, some people were wary of even touching the river water. Over time, local community members and businesses began working on revitalizing the river. The South River Science Team worked with local organizations to remediate and restore six eroding riverbanks, Shenandoah Valley Trout Unlimited established fish habitats and worked to prevent stormwater runoff, local farmers started developing riparian buffers, and local cleanup efforts became regular events, and the river starting healing. The whole environment has slowly transformed. Not only are there now plenty of fish to hook, but other native creatures have returned to the scene as well. Anglers have spotted soaring great blue herons, ospreys, and bald eagles. They've even noticed minks and otters swimming nearby. Native trees, shrubs, and flowers have grown bigger on the restored banks, adding to the whole experience. Listen to a couple of community members explain the transformation of the river from their perspective in [Fishing on the South River: Economic Benefits](#).

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For upcoming events go to the [South River Watershed Coalition Events Page](#).

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