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# The South River Current



*Promoting interest and collaboration for watershed stewardship*



Source: [Link](#)

## Watershed Restoration: Intelligent Design Meets Natural Tranquility

In 2020, the City of Waynesboro and the Department of Parks and Recreation announced the re-design of Constitution Park into the South River Preserve. This year, the planning team worked with the DuPont Natural Resources Damage Assessment and Restoration (NRDAR) trustees to align the plans for the first phase of work with the funding the trustees awarded. The first phase of design includes Rockfish Run streambank restoration (eastern side of the South River), replacement of about five acres of old parking lot with a forested wetland and meadow, native plantings, additional angler access, and an ADA-accessible fishing platform. A river theater with clear views of the river and river

access will also be constructed. Work is expected to begin in the coming weeks and to be completed in 2024. Subsequent phases of work include a Bicycle Safety Training Course, otherwise known as a traffic garden. Traffic gardens provide small-world versions of a city. Children can walk, drive motorized wheelchairs, ride bikes, steer scooters, pedal mini-cars, and navigate in these spaces as practice for real life. Projects like the traffic garden will be completed as further funds and partnerships are secured. As you watch the project unfold over the next several months, check the [website](#) for updates.

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### Did You Know?

- The federally threatened swamp pink (*Helonias bullata*) (pictured here) and the federally threatened and state-endangered Virginia sneezeweed (*Helenium virginicum*) grow in Maple Flats Ponds Complex. (See Take a Walk Back below.)
  - SUP Shenandoah is a new business offering standup paddleboard lessons and guided tours along the South River and other local rivers. Experience the river from a new perspective. Click [here](#) for more information.
  - The Sherando Lakes were man-made to control flooding. The Civilian Conservation Corps built Lower Sherando Lake (20 acres) in the mid-1930s, and the U.S. Soil Conservation Service built Upper Sherando Lake (seven acres) in 1958. (See Connections below.)
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*Lower Sherando Lake (photo [link](#))*

## Connections: The Jewel of the Blue Ridge Mountains

As the summer heat settles in and the kids get antsy, you might struggle to find a one-stop outdoor destination where everyone can expend some energy and keep cool. Have you considered Sherando Lake Recreation Area? There you can take a short hike around the Lower and Upper Sherando Lakes and Cliff Trails or commit to a day hike on the Torry Ridge Trail. If hiking is not your troop's style, fishing and boating are an option outside the designated swimming area of the lake. (There is no vehicle launch access, so boats need to be hand carried from a vehicle to the launch area.) If neither hiking nor fishing tops your list, head right to the cool-off point—Lower Sherando Lake. The springs of the North Fork of Back Creek and Williams Branch feed into the lake, so the water is sure to be cool. When you've worked up an appetite, grab your picnic and head to the sandy beach or shaded, woody areas nearby. Want to extend your stay? Campsites between the lakes nestled in the shadows of Torry Ridge are available for a fee. The Sherando Lake Recreational Area is open to campers through the end of October. It is rumored to be the jewel of the Blue Ridge Mountains, so grab some friends and family and experience the natural brilliance for yourself!

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*Maple Flats Ponds Complex (photo by Meagan Bragg [link](#))*

## Take a Walk Back: Seasonal Surprises

When we talk about history we usually focus on the past of humans, but nature has a history too – and sometimes it's surprising. Take, for instance, Maple Flats seasonal ponds in southeastern Augusta County. Maple Flats ponds are areas of land underlain by dolomite (a type of limestone) formed long ago. On top of the dolomite lies a deposit of more acidic quartzite weathered from the nearby mountains. Over time, the dolomite is dissolved by water, leading to its collapse and the formation of sinkholes. A layer of clay forms several feet below the surface and creates a perched surface water table that reaches up into the sinkholes during the wet season and causes a temporary pond to form. The Maple Flats Ponds Complex includes about 22 natural sinkhole ponds and has been the focus of scientific investigations since the 1930s. Maple Flats is home to a unique array of flora and fauna, some of which are not found anywhere else in Virginia. Scientists have identified a treasure trove of more than 90 species of vascular plants that are not normally found in the area and a few unusual species of critters too, like the eastern tiger salamander, wood frog, and fairy shrimp. Access the ponds on foot from Forest Road 42 (Coal Road). A nearby parking area is marked with big boulders.

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

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