

Down by the River

Dominion Charitable Foundation awards \$25,000 to build outdoor classroom, garden at Abingdon Community Center

The Dominion Energy Charitable Foundation recently awarded Upper Tennessee River Roundtable and The Nature Conservancy in Virginia \$25,000 each to support critical conservation projects benefiting communities and the environment in Southwest Virginia.

With this financial support, the Upper Tennessee River Roundtable is creating an outdoor classroom focusing on environmental stewardship that also includes a rain garden at the Abingdon Community Center. The Nature Conservancy in Virginia is using the funds to support its ongoing mussel restoration work in the globally significant Clinch River.

“This gift will help double the number of mussels released annually into a key 15-mile stretch of the Clinch River, adding three important species to the mix,” said Brad Kreps, local director of The Nature Conservancy. The Nature Conservancy will work with Virginia Tech’s culturing facility to produce and release 50,000 juvenile mussels.

Both projects proposed by the Upper Tennessee River Roundtable and The Nature Conservancy in Virginia include a community education and engagement component.

“Environmental stewardship is a key part of outdoor learning as students are taught how to care for their natural environment,” explains Carol Doss, UTRR Executive Director.

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Dominion award to fund outdoor classroom to be built by UTRR

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“This generous gift will enable us to create a new outdoor classroom for the benefit of students, schools and the general public,” Carol said. “We are very excited to get started.”

Wolf Hills Community School students created a mural showing their ideas for the outdoor classroom. Cindy Balderson, foundation director, talked with the children during the check presentation event. Abingdon Vice Mayor Cindy Patterson and Outdoor Recreation Director Kevin Worley attended as project partners. The Roundtable will build the rain garden to capture runoff from a new pickle ball court to be installed by the town.

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America Recycles Day in Abingdon results in collection of paper, HHW, electronic waste

The addition of household hazardous waste to the items accepted at America Recycles Day in Abingdon boosted the attendance to 256 vehicles.

Over a three-hour period, volunteers from Sustain Abingdon and Keep Southwest Virginia Beautiful (KSVB), the hosts for the event, welcomed participants and recorded numbers.

The event concluded with many bags of pet supplies donated, 69 pairs of shoes brought for a KSVB reuse project, 16 gaylord boxes of electronic waste, about 10,000 pounds of paper brought for shredding and a large amount of household hazardous waste (weight had not been determined in time for printing this newsletter).



UTRR completes DEQ grant projects with key partnerships; exceeds initial project goals to protect Clinch watershed

Final results of the Upper Tennessee River Roundtable's Department of Environmental Quality 319 Total Maximum Daily Load grant in Tazewell included:

- 2 acres of riparian buffer planted at Dunford Park and the Wastewater Treatment Plant, both in Tazewell;
- 3,650 linear feet of stream bank stabilized at two above sites;
- 2,700 linear feet of restored stream and in-stream habitat at Dunford Park;
- 12.2 acres of riparian buffer planted on two farms;
- 11,985 linear feet of stream bank protected on two farms;
- 381 acres of grazing land improved on two farms.

Key partners on this grant included Tazewell Soil and Water Conservation District, which also coordinated five outreach events, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Partners for Fish and Wildlife, Canaan Valley Institute, and Town of Tazewell. Many thanks to everyone for the results which exceeded initial project goals and to DEQ for funding these projects.

UTRR completes fall education, outreach

Upper Tennessee River Roundtable coordinated several fall education and outreach events, including the third annual Conservation Camp for Smyth County. Held at the Saltville Park and Outdoor Classroom that the Roundtable helped create, the event included nine stations visited by 313 third graders over a two-day event. The event actually moved inside to a town building the second day due to rain.

UTRR also organized Guest River Education Day for over 60 fourth graders from Norton. The event took place at Clear Creek Park and Outdoor Classroom with 10 stations. Each event included presentations on such topics as forestry, food webs, animal tracks, litter prevention, recycling, plants, pet waste, natural gas, fossils, watersheds, and mussels. UTRR also assisted soil and water conservation districts with their fall education events.





Fall stream cleanups completed

Upper Tennessee River Roundtable and Keep Southwest Virginia Beautiful organized three fall stream cleanups with help from additional project partners. The town of Abingdon funded the annual Muster Grounds Cleanup with 42 volunteers assisting this fall and filling 21 bags and picking up a door, air mattress, and assorted wood pieces.

The annual Trash for Treats cleanup on the Mari on Riverwalk at River Bend Park had five people and a cute puppy dog filling three bags. Emory & Henry College of Health Sciences assisted with the event.

The annual North Fork of the Holston River cleanup ended with 14 people filling 14 bags and picking up three tires. Another pile of tires was also collected by other volunteers, for a total of 50 tires removed with the bagged litter.

Clean Virginia Waterways provided bags and gloves; TVA provided banners; DEQ provided signs. Several volunteer groups participated.

