Upper Tennessee River Roundtable, Inc.

UTRR Newsletter

Fall 2005 Volume 6, Number 2

Stream bank restoration, Guest River Project focus of Fall Roundtable meeting November 15 in Lebanon

Two projects will be highlighted at the Fall Roundtable meeting Tuesday, Nov. 15 at the Lebanon Bonanza. Registration begins at 5:15 p.m.

Justin Laughlin of the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries will talk about his work with stream bank restoration. Justin has been working in the Upper Tennessee River watershed for a relatively short time, but has already made an impact on the area.

Shannon O'Quinn of the Tennessee Valley Authority, accompanied by Toby Edwards of the Cumberland Plateau Planning District, will debut a new presentation on the Guest River Restoration Project. Shannon served as the first coordinator for the project and Toby, the second. The presentation is part of the export work being done as part of the EPA Targeted Watershed Grant.

The team working on the export decided to create a new presentation and guide book to go with it. The team also agreed to update the Guest River Project's display board and to make small displays for agencies that partnered with the project. For the fall dinner

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Letter from Roundtable Chair:

Dear Friends,

Lots of exciting things are happening with the Roundtable, including our work on the state Roundtable. By collaborating with others across Virginia, we hope to make strides toward potential state funding. We're into the final year of the EPA grant, so funding is on the forefront. We have gotten several grants and are preparing for more. I hope you can join us for the Fall meeting Nov. 15. See you there!

George Price, Chair

Assign-A-Highway Coordinator hired under DEQ grant

A grant from the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality is providing funds for a full-time coordinator to promote the Assign-A-Highway Program. Steve Hamro, III, of Buchanan County, began working for the UTRR in September.

This program utilizes probationers to pick up litter on specified sections of roads for designated time periods as part of their punishment. Steve will promote this program through a website, a manual and presentations throughout Virginia.

Multiple grants result in many planned projects

By Carol W. Doss, UTRR Coordinator

This is a busy and productive time in the life of the Roundtable. It's very exciting to be working with six grants that complement the work of the EPA Targeted Watershed Grant.

The third in a series of Environmental Emergency Response workshops is set for Saturday, Nov. 5, at Southwest Virginia Community College as part of the EPA grant. Last month, Andrew Seligman with EPA toured the watershed, meeting lots of partners and looking at lots of sites for various projects.

Last Saturday, 11 citizens made rain barrels at our first in a series of workshops funded by the Virginia Environmental Endowment. The next workshop is Monday, Nov. 14, at 6 p.m. in Norton. Progress is being made on rain gardens at Abingdon Elementary and St. Paul High schools as part of grants from EPA and the Virginia Department of Forestry.

Team Estonoa member Chris Vance and sponsor Terry Vencil assist at workshop.

Canaan Valley Institute is funding engineering and design for a septic system at Lower Exeter in Wise County. CVI will provide in-kind service for engineering for Upper Exeter. Two DEQ grants are mentioned in other articles. Steve Hamro, III, is doing a good job with Assign-A-Highway. The TVA-funded Regional Stream Cleanup went well, resulting in 418 volunteers picking up 20.33 tons.

Our OSM/VISTA worker Shane Barton has been very busy working in Tazewell County. We're getting another OSM/VISTA worker to spend half-time working with me and half-time with the OSM/VISTA team leader for the region. For more information, please call me at 276-628-1600.

Monitors needed in Clinch, Powell watersheds

By Martha Chapman, Conservation Assistant

UTRR is looking for volunteers in the Clinch and Powell watershed who want to learn the Save-Our-Streams monitoring protocol.

The Save-Our-Streams method of water quality monitoring evaluates the biological community of a stream and uses the existence of benthic macroinvertebrates to measure water quality. These benthic macroinvertebrates, or bugs, live in the bottom of streams and are good short-term indicators of water quality because they differ in sensitivity to pollution. These bugs are somewhat immobile and cannot avoid pollution events or other forms of stress that may be overlooked by other methods of monitoring.

This monitoring project is part of the UTRR's EPA Targeted Watershed Grant. UTRR hopes to establish 10 monitoring sites throughout the Clinch and Powell watersheds. All of the sites will be on streams that are on Virginia's impaired waters listing. UTRR has recently acquired grant funds from the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality to furnish monitoring kits for each of the monitoring sites. Each of the sites will be monitored seasonally and all volunteers will be accompanied by a Save-Our-Streams certified monitor. Monthly bacteria monitoring will also occur at each of the sites.

All volunteers will be trained in both the Save-Our-Streams monitoring protocol and the Coliscan Easy Gel bacteria monitoring equipment. If you are interested in becoming a volunteer monitor or simply learning more about the project, contact us at (276) 628-1600.

Grazing affects water quality throughout watershed

By Mike Altizer, Grazing Systems Specialist

Most of you are probably wondering what grazing has to do with water quality. Grass (grasses clovers and other grazable forbs) covers most of our land not covered by forests. Two to four inches of grass have lots of water holding capacity so has major influence on water quality. Over grazing, which is fairly common, means that cattle graze at least parts of a pasture too short so that rain causes erosion.

NRCS (Natural Resource Conservation Service) and Soil and Water Conservation Districts have provided federal and state cost share funds to install best management practices to fence streams from livestock, provide alternative water and sub-divide pastures so cattle grazing can be controlled. This now has to become a grazing system to be successful. We like to have enough paddocks so cattle can graze two to four days and leave two to four inches of grass and the pasture rested for 20-40 days depending on the season of the year. Cattle are moved from paddock to paddock to conform

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Bringing the Clinch Back to life . . .re-establishing five mussel species

Five different common mussel species have been re-established in the Clinch River at Williams Park Complex in Richlands. Partnering on the project are Ecology and Advanced Placement Biology students from Richlands High School, biologists from the Virginia Department of Game and Inlands Fisheries and Virginia Tech.

This reach of the Clinch River was impacted by the 1998 Certus chemical spill that killed approximately 18,000 mussels, untold numbers of fish, snails, and other aquatic organisms for seven miles. One of the actions identified in the Certus Spill Restoration Plan is to restore mussels to the seven mile spill zone over a 12-year period.

On September 24, students collected common mussel species from the Clinch River at Artrip, Virginia to release at the Williams Park Complex section of the Clinch River in Richlands. After taking habitat measurements such as the force of water on the streambed, water depth, water velocity, and substrate composition, students and biologists determined the most suitable locations for reestablishment. They collected data from 60 different locations in the 300 meter reach that flowed through the park. Students then released mussels in the most suitable locations of this section of the Clinch River on October 1.

Provided by Kerry Linehan, Virginia Tech

UTRR Intern needs letters of support for EPA brownsfield grant application

My project is to write an EPA Phase I Assessment Grant for 34 Tipple sites in Southwest Virginia. The grant application is due in December, and I have made lots of progress. On November 4, I will be presenting the project, and the viability of redevelopment of mine-scarred lands in the region, at the National Brownfields Conference in Denver. The conference is an annual gathering of national interests concerning the reuse of all types of industrial sites. My presentation will be to the general conference, but more importantly to the officials in the EPA who will be judging my application. I anticipate giving this presentation to the Executive Council soon.

I am also working diligently in garnering support for the project. I have received a few responses, but desperately need more! I have received letters from the State Delegates in support of the project, and Skip Skinner has also agreed to allow Wise County support. If this project is successful, it will create a 34-site redevelopment project that will be managed by the Upper Tennessee River Roundtable. The $200,000 grant will cover managerial salary and all related expenses to develop a reuse vision for the region, with a special emphasis on environmental and economic change.

Provided by Suzi Zakowski, OSM/VISTA Intern for UTRR

Katy Dowe, at right, with the Holston River Soil & Water Conservation District, talks with children who attended the UTRR's event at White's Mill during the Highlands Festival.

Fall Roundtable Dinner set for Nov. 15 in Lebanon

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each person will order a meal and pay for it; the Roundtable will not collect money. However, in order to plan for seating and handouts, please let us know if you will be attending, by calling the office at 276-628-1600 or send a note by Nov. 14 to uppertnriver@yahoo.com. A drawing will be held that night for a photo of the Channels on Clinch Mountain, donated by Frank Kilgore. The agenda will include:

5:15 Registration

6:00 Dinner

6:30 Speakers

7:30 Business Session

8:30 Drawing and Adjourn

New medium to showcase the Roundtable's accomplishments

The Upper Tennessee River Roundtable has yet another tool in the quest to inform the public about our mission and accomplishments, thanks to funding from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The EPA Targeted Watershed Grant paid for a video camera that will produce TV quality footage. A group of nine Roundtable representatives were trained Saturday Oct. 22 by Joe Gragg of WCYB in Video News Release Composition. Throughout the day the group was introduced to camera operations and video needs in order to increase the possibility of getting our message on local TV.

Christine Smith of DEQ, a member of UTRR's Education Team, tries out the new video camera .

The training provided an opportunity for the group to become familiar with the Roundtable's digital camcorder including its menu and operations. We also practiced setting up shoots consistent with composition requirements that will ensure professionalism when filming segments for television .

The day started off with a discussion of general composition that included setting up shoots, how long to shoot, and types of shots that may make a segment stand out to an editor. We later touched on the multiple functions integrated within the camcorder and critiqued our shoots from previously in the day to ensure we understood all the composition principles.

The Roundtable will be purchasing an appropriate microphone in the immediate future to begin shooting stock footage and capturing video of upcoming events and watershed specific news releases. Stay on the lookout for our first video new release and if you have a program or event you would like to showcase please contact the Roundtable's OSM/VISTA Shane Barton at (276) 964-4889 or email shanebarton@hotmail.com

Assistance available in planning efficient grazing systems in Upper Tennessee River Watershed

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to the grass growth so that there's always adequate cover.

The best thing about controlled grazing systems is that improving grazing management can greatly improve profitability. You can decrease costs and improve production at the same time and improve water quality as a positive by-product.

2005 has not been an easy year to manage grass. May and June were dry in parts of southwest Virginia. July had about normal rainfall in most areas. Since August, rainfall has been low and pastures have dried up. Even our experienced graziers could not anticipate such a dry fall. Andy Wallace, who is a seasonal grass dairyman in Smyth County, had his cows in dry lot feeding hay in early September. By mid October Andy's pastures had recovered enough that he was back on pasture. Milk production declined steadily on hay and Andy is going into the winter with no pasture.

Bill Thompson called last week asking about using stockpiled fescue now rather than saving for November and later. I suggested confining his beef cows to a sacrifice area and feeding hay and save the stock piled fescue until later. There's no mud now, so confinement won't cause water pollution nearly as much as mid-winter confinement. Bill probably has less than half as much fescue as he had last year when he had ample rain in August and September.

An interesting farm that many of you can watch regularly is the Emory farm at the Emory and Henry College exit on I-81. The grazing system is on the North side of the Interstate and was installed this spring and stocked with beef cows in late June. This farm was leased by E&H to Charlie Clark of Rich Valley and is being managed by his son Ben Clark, who is an E&H student. There are four hill side paddocks facing the interstate.. Ben is trying to clean up fescue that got out of hand before they were able to stock the farm. We think that grass will be gone on this farm and cattle moved by Thanksgiving. When the bottom three paddocks along the Interstate can get grass established this farm will be managed as year round beef cow operation with limited winter feeding.

I'm available anywhere in the Upper Tennessee River watershed to help design efficient grazing systems or more importantly to help graziers learn to manage an installed.system.