



# Upper Tennessee River Roundtable, Inc. Fall Newsletter

Autumn 2007

Volume 8, Number 2

## Oct. 18 Roundtable Meeting to feature Selvage, Vicars at UVa's College at Wise, Alumni Hall

### Board of Directors

**Aquatic Resources:** Vacant

**Citizen "At Large:"**

Diana Withen

**Coal:** Vacant

**Conservation Groups:**

Bill Wasserman

**Education:** Dr. Ed Davis

**Environmental Groups:**

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**Forest Industry:** Greg Gambrel

**Industry:** Rick Holmes

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**Real Estate Development:**

Larry Johnston

**Local government:**

Bonnie Aker

Teresa Guice

Charlie Clark

George Price

Claude Ray

**SWCD:** Lou Wallace

**Local Watershed Groups:**

Vacant

**Tourism:**

Vacant

Upper Tennessee River Roundtable's fall meeting is set for Thursday, Oct. 18, at 6 p.m. at UVa's College at Wise Alumni Hall, featuring Kathy Selvage, who will talk about water issues, and Ronnie Vicars of the Office of Surface Mining.

Registration will begin at 5:15 p.m., with dinner at 6 p.m. The cost for dinner is \$15, which will include vegetarian lasagna, vegetable sides,

cheesecake, tea, coffee.

Selvage is vice president of Southern Appalachia Mountain Stewards. She has lived in the community of Stephens just outside the town of Wise for most of her life. Selvage is concerned about the quality of water as affected by mountaintop removal and the surface mining of coal as well as other issues.

Vicars works with OSM and trains OSM/Volunteers In Service

To America (VISTA) workers how to test streams for acid mine drainage.

Please notify the Roundtable office by Friday, Oct. 12, if you will attend. **The Alumni Hall has a limit of 60 people.**

Payment may be made in advance or at the door, but **you must pre-register** to be guaranteed a meal. A registration form is on page five, or call the office at 276-628-1600.



## Letter from the Roundtable Chair

Dear Roundtable members,  
On August 30th, the Roundtable had a public relations event: the opening of the new rain garden at the Abingdon Senior Center. Like most Roundtable success stories, this one is very "local" - it serves to reduce storm water runoff into a local stream. There are now dozens or even hun-

dreds of little improvements around our Upper Tennessee River Basin because of the work of volunteers over the past few years: cleaned up dump sites, protected caves, restored streambanks, replanted hillsides, fenced streams, installed rain gardens, created rain barrels, and, especially, greater public awareness through recreational,

educational and training programs. Yet many people in our basin are still unaware of the Roundtable. Sure, we could be proud that our Roundtable has played a big part (bigger than any other organization, perhaps) in supporting those many improvements. But our work is so often at the very  
*Continued on Page 4*

With this issue, I bid farewell to Martha Chapman, who has been my assistant for the past three years. Most of Martha's salary was funded through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Targeted Watershed Grant, although some of her earlier work was paid by a grant from Southern Appalachian Man and the Biosphere. Although the EPA grant is extended through March 2008, funding for personnel is rapidly running out. No additional personnel funds are available for Martha, who will continue to work part-time for the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation and also will begin working part-time for the Clinch Valley Soil and Water Conservation District. Martha began as my intern as an Emory and Henry College student in the spring of 2004 and I hired her that summer.

I have really appreciated Martha's assistance with a variety of work over the past three years and wish her well in every aspect of her future.

Raising funds to secure the future of the Roundtable's work is critical. Many people have helped with this task, which is always challenging when trying to find a funding source that will provide project money, salary, and administrative expenses. The Targeted Watershed Grant provided all of that funding, but that is rare. The Roundtable recently received notice of award for a new Water Quality Improvement Grant from DCR that will provide project money and some salary, but not administrative expenses. Thanks to TVA, particularly to Emily Lachniet, Martha Podren, Donna Reppard, and to our own OSM/VISTA Jade Napier for assistance in compiling that grant application.

The Roundtable already has another WQIA grant, as well as grants with Virginia Dept. of Environmental Quality, Virginia Dept. of Transportation, Virginia Dept. of Forestry, as well as some unrestricted contributions from Washington County and Virginia Dept. of Game and Inland Fisheries. We appreciate them all!

## Conservation Assistant urges more involvement

By Martha Chapman, Conservation Assistant

As another great year at UTRR finishes, I find myself writing my last commentary for this newsletter. I have been with UTRR for over three years now and the time has come for my position to end. With this, I leave you urging everyone to become more actively involved in the sustainability of UTRR. UTRR needs everyone's help to continue its endeavor for clean water.

The citizen monitoring program at UTRR has grown considerably, thanks in part to the Soil and Water Conservation Districts and the Office of Surface Mining/VISTAs (Volunteers In Service To America) in our region. I will still be active in citizen monitoring efforts, especially Russell County, as I have accepted the Environmental Education Specialist position with

the Clinch Valley Soil and Water Conservation District. If you are interested in learning more about citizen monitoring or attending a training session, please feel free to contact the UTRR office at 276-628-1600.

I look forward to continue working with the many volunteers and agency partners I have met during my time at UTRR. Let us hope we can continue to work together to ensure our region clean water for the future.



Martha offers instruction during a Save Our Streams training event at White's Mill last month for the Highlands Festival to Alex Joppie, OSM/VISTA for Clinch Valley SWCD, and Dan Wilson, the newest OSM/VISTA for the Roundtable.

Having mostly theoretical knowledge and very little practical hands-on experience, I entered my term as a summer associate with eyes wide open not really knowing what to expect. Would there be challenges and obstacles? Most certainly, as no opportunity in life would be complete without these chances for personal growth. What about triumphs and victories? Hopefully there would be these as well. Not being as sure about their frequency I still determined to glean the most out of this life experience.

During my 10 weeks of service, I was able to build upon talents and abilities that I already possessed and to acquire new skills. For the Roundtable I was able to strengthen my communication and public relations skills through preparing for and attending events such as the Powell River Float trip and the Save-Our-Streams workshop. I also communicated with area businesses to encourage local stores to participate in a Monofilament Fishing Line Recycling program.

For my host town of Cedar Bluff, I assisted in designing and editing two brochures, one for the Tan Riffleshell mussel and a second for the historic walking tour under development. While I have done a considerable



Yancy Taber, who served as summer intern for the Roundtable, holds a creature he found while participating in the Save-Our-Streams workshop coordinated by the Roundtable for the Highlands Festival in August.

amount of writing throughout my academic career, I had the occasion to try something new and assist Jade Napier in editing a grant proposal to the Tom's of Maine foundation. Another brand new experience for me included writing press releases and news articles. I still have much to learn in this department, but thanks to Carol Doss, I have a good foundation.

Perhaps most satisfying to me has been the people I have become acquainted with and the relationships I have built over this summer. This includes not only the professional contacts I have made, but also the volunteers and participants I have met. The most memorable moment

came during the Powell River Float trip July 20. As I was helping the paddlers out of their boats and canoes, I couldn't help but to be taken aback by the joy that each person exuded as they described the journey over the past few hours. Each person seemed to have a deepened appreciation for the river and the scenic beauty that surrounds it. To me, that was the ultimate expression of what serving really is; it is not how it makes you look, or how it makes you feel, but rather true service is centered on how it makes the other person feel.

My time as an Appalachian Coal Country Watershed Team Summer Associate has left an impression upon my life that will benefit me as well as those around me for years to come.

## Roundtable loses board member, friend: **Dink Shackelford**

By Ed Davis, Chair

Dink loved the rivers of Southwest Virginia, and so it was no surprise that he helped to found a non-profit group dedicated to these rivers' health – Upper Tennessee River Roundtable. Back in 1999 when this group was organized to serve the Powell, Clinch and Holston rivers, Dink was one of those who stood up and offered his time and talent. He was elected the first vice

president and helped write the mission: "to achieve clean water throughout the watershed with the involvement of citizens in planning, education, coordination, attracting funding, and serving as an advocate for our water resources."

Dink's favorite "angle" on our water resources was recreation. He was a lifelong fisherman who

caught many fish out of the beautiful Clinch River. He often spoke of the need to make our rivers more accessible by building more public access facilities. Dink not only set a noble example by overcoming physical limitations to get close to nature. He worked to make it possible for everyone in our region to have an intimate connection to our rivers. Dink was a friend we won't forget.

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## Dan Wilson joins Roundtable as OSM/VISTA

By Dan Wilson, OSM/VISTA

Hey All! I'm Dan Wilson and I just moved from Pittsburgh, PA to be your newest OSM/VISTA. I will be working in the Town of Tazewell doing a number of different things for Tazewell. Cedar Bluff and the UTRR. Southwest Virginia so far is welcoming and full of new experiences. My first night down here, I was taken kayaking down the Middle Fork of the Holston River. I did say night and it was my first time kayaking on any kind of white water, so it was an experience to remember! I'm hoping to get out onto some more rivers to kayak while I'm here in SWVA.

About a year and a half ago, I graduated from West Virginia University with a degree in Recreation, Parks and Tourism. Being a Mountaineer in Hokie country makes me a little nervous, especially with football season here.

I love the outdoors and all kinds of recreation; be it hiking, biking, backpacking, winter sports and most recently kayaking. This area seems like it has a lot to offer in that aspect. If anyone knows of some good spots, shoot me an email (DFWilson3@gmail.com). I am hoping that I make an impact on this area through the work I do here. I have several projects that I will be working on. Some of these include a



**Roundtable's new OSM/VISTA Dan Wilson is working in the town of Tazewell.**

few walking trails with interpretational signage, working with storm water management grants in Tazewell and Cedar Bluff, and writing a few, hopefully successful grants. There is much to do and I know I will not finish everything but, the next OSM/VISTA will be able to pick up where I leave off.

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## Letter to the Roundtable: Building Partnerships

By Ed Davis, Chairman

*Continued from Page 1*

local, almost mundane scale, that most citizens don't pick up their ears and take notice. I suggest that the Roundtable needs to think bigger: if our goal is healthy streams, we'll need to bring far more people on board. We need to bring greater media attention to our water resources and the need to protect them. One popular way to get the public's attention today is through splashy lawsuits, but that doesn't fit the bill. This Roundtable was founded on cooperation, not confrontation. So what can we do to significantly increase the public awareness and commitment to our streams?

One way is to build a major partnership is with the region's

educational institutions: public schools, community colleges, state and private four-year colleges. Although the Roundtable has always connected to teachers - teachers have always served on our board - there is much untapped potential: principals, superintendents, school board members, professors, college presidents, deans - they often value environmental education, but lack time and resources to offer educational programs. I need help in imagining how to provide services effectively to (and/or with) these institutions. Perhaps the Roundtable might seek to establish, with our partners, a Southwest Virginia center for water, to offer affordable training for teachers, community leaders, and volunteers.

A major grant might support such an effort.

Now, many people could have better ideas than I about how to make healthy rivers a priority. Come to our next Roundtable meeting and join in the discussion.

Meanwhile, we must continue to make the very local improvements such as rain gardens that will show people the way to restoring our rivers. Such projects will always be at the heart of our work - Every river restoration - even that of the Mighty Tennessee River - begins with little solutions on the slopes above a tiny creek. Please participate in the Upper Tennessee River Roundtable.

Your great-great-grandchildren will thank you!

## Mined land conference examines survival rate of trees *By Jade Napier, OSM/VISTA*

August 7 was the Mined Land Reforestation conference themed with the Appalachian Regional Reforestation Initiative (ARRI). This is a revolutionized way of reclaiming mined land so trees will have a better chance of surviving.

The traditional way of reclaiming mined lands is spraying large amounts of legumes and grasses, which easily grow in harsh conditions such as acidic soil and exposure to the sun. Easily growing species have been favored because when the land is left without any ground cover, the sediment washes into local streams and kills aquatic wildlife.

The favorable ground cover prevents trees from being able to grow because they are choked out. Trees also do not grow on these sites because of compaction by bulldozers. Traditional methods have encouraged dozer operators to smooth out the disturbed surfaces so devastated areas look nice. After the area has been driven over enough times by the bulldozers, the soil is compacted and there is no room for tree roots to infiltrate.

Research of old abandoned mine sites versus reclaimed mine sites have shown that trees grow better in the abandoned mine sites. This has led to research of newly mined

areas being test plots for answers to whether compacted soil versus uncompacted soil and brown sand stone or gray sand stone allows better tree growth. The results show that uncompacted soil, only 2 bulldozer runs, and brown sand stone allow trees to grow and faster. This method of reclamation allows voluntary tree species to appear.

Research results are leading mine land reclamation toward leaving the terrain rough and planting trees with only 50 percent ground cover from grasses and legumes.

*Continued on Page 8*

## Assign-A-Highway expands *By Bobby Justus, AAH Coordinator*

Since July of 2006, the Assign-A-Highway Coordinator has been collecting program data on a monthly basis from each locality implementing Assign-A-Highway. From July 2006 through June 2007, the data has been collected and can now show program results for a full fiscal year.

The program has expanded throughout Virginia in the past year, from far Southwest Virginia to the Eastern Shore. In early 2006, there were only seven localities implementing the program and there are now 27 programs statewide. The program has seen much success in the past and the future looks just as bright. For the past year, Assign-A-Highway has been able to utilize probationary labor of 9,498 individuals. With that many people working on the program, there have been 6,713

miles cleaned and maintained throughout the Commonwealth. Having cleaned up that many miles, one would expect that a lot of litter has been collected and that is a correct assumption. The number of trash bags picked up during the last fiscal year was 61,309 bags, which is the equivalent of approximately 3,096 tons. Wow! That is a lot of soda bottles and fast food bags. The program has also saved the local governments thousands of dollars, which is a good incentive for them to adopt the program. Localities in Virginia have been able to capitalize on 59,816 man hours saved from the program.

When you calculate those cost savings based on the minimum wage of \$5.15 per hour, the program has saved local governments just over \$308,000. That results in big savings, for such a simple program.

### Registration Form

**for Oct. 18 Roundtable Dinner**

**Please cut out and mail this form to Upper Tennessee River Roundtable, P.O. Box 2359, Abingdon, VA 24212, no later than Oct. 12, 2007.**

**Yes, I will attend dinner.**

**I am enclosing \$ \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_ meals.**

**No, I can't attend, but am enclosing my donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_.**

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone** \_\_\_\_\_

**E-mail** \_\_\_\_\_

**Names of guests I'm bringing:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# KAB certifies Keep Southwest Virginia Beautiful April 21

By Carol Doss, Coordinator

Keep America Beautiful educator and trainer Sue Smith officially certified Keep Southwest Virginia Beautiful April 21 as the nation's newest and largest regional affiliate. About 75 people participated in the ceremony held in Wise.

Bob Hundley, executive director for Keep Virginia Beautiful, expressed appreciation for this effort.

Numerous sponsors provided funds or goods for the event, including Wal-Mart, Pepsi Cola Bottling Co. of Norton, Appalachian Electric Power, Southwest Disposal, Austin Sales, Wellmore Energy, Consolidated Coal, Waste Management, Lowe's, Payless IGA of Wise. Keep Southwest Virginia Beautiful includes in Lee, Wise, Scott, Smyth, Washington, Russell, Tazewell, Dickenson, Buchanan



Keep Virginia Beautiful Executive Director Bob Hundley talks to the crowd with Lester Turner, chairman of Keep Southwest Virginia Beautiful, in background. In inset photo, KAB trainer Sue Smith addresses the crowd.



## Great American Cleanup

Jonathan McNutt of TVA and Ray Mullins, OSM/VISTA in Wise, assisted at the Guest River Gorge regional cleanup day for the Great American Cleanup. The entire two-month-long cleanup resulted in 1,212 volunteers picking up 147.91 tons of litter. Kayakers and others assisted in cleaning up the gorge, which is located near Coeburn.



These participants received awards: George "Pedro" Hunnicutt, Jr. of Pepsi-Cola Bottling Co. of Norton for his continued support, Buchanan County Litter Control Officer Richard Lee for Assign-A-Highway success, Honorable Judge Henry Vanover of Dickenson County for supporting Assign-A-Highway, Honorable Judge Joey Carico for launching the region's first environmental court in Wise County, Attorney Frank Kilgore for creating Assign-A-Highway, Del. Terry Kilgore for support of litter control work, Tazewell County Litter Control Coordinator Dee Phillips and Tazewell County Board of Supervisors member Earl Griffith for Assign-A-Highway successes. Absent were Honorable Judge Teresa Chafin, for Assign-A-Highway, Del. Clarence "Bud" Phillips for support of litter control, and former Buchanan County Litter Control Coordinator Marie Sexton for her education work.

## EPA Grant composting begins; Tennessee conference set for October

A composting demonstration conducted by MapTech through the Roundtable's EPA Targeted Watershed Grant began in June. MapTech is composting sawdust with chicken litter at a site in Lee County. The finished product will be sold.

The Roundtable is assisting Appalachian RC&D with a watershed training conference Oct. 26, 27 in at the ETSU Bristol campus. Virginia watershed groups also will be invited. More information will be sent to the membership in a few weeks.

The \$800,000 EPA grant has been extended through March 2008, which is the final extension. Only a few projects remain to be finished.



Mohammed Alsmadi of Maptech takes a sample of compost from the windrow at the demonstration site near Jonesville in Lee County. Maptech is conducting this demonstration and plans to sell the finished compost in the near future. Contact the Roundtable for details.



Landscape architect Jeff Stapleton oversees planting.

## Rain garden completed at Abingdon Senior Center

The Roundtable's Water Quality Improvement Grant from the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation includes funding for seven low impact development projects in the region.

The first project was completed last month at Abingdon Senior Center. Landscape Architect Jeff Stapleton constructed the rain garden and the center will maintain it. The center was so pleased with the garden that director Polly Wirt planned a

dedication ceremony which was attended by over 60.

Another rain garden is underway at Universal Companies in the industrial park in Washington County, which is also funded by TVA and EPA. Additional projects will be done at Abingdon Elementary School, near the Saltville walking trail, beside a planned trail at Pennington Gap, and on a school campus yet to be selected in Wise County.



## Education and Awards

Robin Smith and Joyce Buchanan created edible landfills at an education workshop coordinated by Keep Southwest Virginia Beautiful and attended by 41 in July. At right, Coalfield Progress reporter Jodi Deal accepts a Roundtable award for her coverage of events.





## Upper Tennessee River Roundtable Calendar of Upcoming Events

**Regional Stream Cleanup:** Now through Sept. 22. Call 276.628.1600 to get supplies!

**Tourism Team Meeting:** Sept. 27, 4 p.m. Vencil Learning Center, St. Paul. Call if interested.

**National Public Lands Day:** Sept. 29, help take care of your lands! Call for ideas.

**Fall Roundtable Meeting:** Oct. 18, 6 p.m. in Wise.

**Rain Barrel Workshop:** Oct. 20, 9 a.m., Vencil Learning Center.

**Forest Landowners' Workshop:** Oct. 23, 7 p.m., Public Library in Abingdon. Register by Oct. 16. Free materials for landowners!

**Watershed Training Conference:** Oct. 26, 27, ETSU Bristol campus; 8:30 to 4:30. Sessions include funding, public outreach, monitoring, management, and much more!

**Roundtable's First Annual Round for the Rivers Disc Golf Tournament:** Oct. 27, Kingsport, TN. Call 276-628-1600 for details.

### Mined land conference examines survival rate of trees

*Continued from Page 5*

A coal operator claimed the only problem with this method is environmentalist complaining about the area being sparse of vegetation resulting with inspectors enforcing an 80 percent ground cover, which chokes out the trees. Research has also shown that sediment loads entering the stream are not higher using this method after the initial few rains.

This conference had another theme! Using wood growing on

the reclaimed mine lands for economic profit, contributing money to the landowners. This last theme is why we all should consider and critique the positive and negative aspects of these research results and what is the best decisions for our environment, our neighbors, and future generations. Is the money that we gain from creating and destroying highly valued hardwood forests more valuable than having a highly valued hardwood forest that is left alone for more than 20 years?



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