

Down by the River

May 6 Spring Roundtable dinner to feature Jim Barker, retired U.S. Forest Service

By Bob McKinney

Voted “Best Country Cooking” by Smyth Countians five years in a row, the Sugar Grove Diner in Marion will be the site of this spring’s general meeting of the Upper Tennessee River Roundtable. Interestingly enough for a group devoted to the health of our region’s water, the Diner just recently had to relocate to Marion from Sugar Grove because of infiltration problems with the Rye Valley Water System, which serves Sugar Grove.

Our speaker will be Jim Barker, a retired wildland and prescribed fire expert with the U.S. Forest Service who still works as a fire and aviation

consultant with federal, state and regional fire operations. Jim, a graduate of Virginia Tech, will talk about fire as an element of the Appalachian ecosystems, the results—not necessarily good—of decades of fire exclusion from the mountains and what is being, or should be, done to restore environmental equilibrium to our forests and watersheds.

Our buffet menu will include country fried chicken, ham, smashed potatoes swimming in sinful amounts of butter, country-style green beans, buttered corn, rolls, iced tea, coffee and ‘Nana Pudd’n. This is

not a meal for those on a diet. The cost per person is \$12, payable in advance by Tuesday, May 4, to Upper Tennessee River Roundtable, P.O. Box 2359, Abingdon, VA 24212.

Coming north on Interstate 81, take exit 47, turn left and go under the interstate to U.S. 11 (Lee Highway), take another left and go about ¾ mile. The Diner is located inside the Magnasun Hotel There’s plenty of parking in the motel parking lot or across the highway in the Tractor Supply parking lot.

For more information, call the Roundtable office, at 276.628.1600.



News from Roundtable Chair Teresa Harless

Dear Friends of UTRR:

Our Spring Roundtable meeting will be held Thursday, May 6, at 6 p.m. at the Sugar Grove Diner in Marion. We haven’t visited Smyth County in three years, so I hope you can join us for some good country cooking. We will again have our raffle fundraiser and annual awards cere-

mony. More details, including the featured speaker, are provided elsewhere in this newsletter. Please plan to join us on May 6.

One important change has already occurred for the Roundtable in 2010. At a called board meeting on

February 18, the Keep Southwest Virginia Beautiful (KSVB) affiliate was allowed to break away from the Roundtable to form an independent organization. A transition period is underway, and an agreement will be put in place which

Continued on Page 3

Board of Directors:

Agriculture:

Glen Broadwater

Citizen “At Large:”

Teresa Harless

Coal: Bill Bledsoe

Conservation Groups:

Bill Wasserman

Education: Dr. Ed Davis

Environmental Groups:

Steve Brooks

Forest Industry:

Greg Gambrel

Industry: Rick Holmes

Planning Districts:

Vacant

Real Estate

Development: Vacant

Local government:

Bonnie Aker

Teresa Guice

Lynn McKinney

Shawn Morris

SWCD: Lou Wallace

Local Watershed Groups:

Bob McKinney

Diana Withen

Tourism:

Sarah Love McReynolds

Recreation:

Justin Laughlin

Coordinator's Corner: Volunteers make a difference

By Carol Doss, Roundtable Coordinator



The Upper Tennessee River Roundtable benefits tremendously from volunteers who help with various projects, ranging from talking about water quality with citizens at festival booths to trying to keep their balance while planting trees on mined land hill-sides.

We so very much appreciate the efforts of volunteers who make rain barrels at workshops, as well as those who pick up litter, type mailing lists, put flower seeds into bags, raise funds, decorate festival booths, and stand on their feet all day registering participants for rain barrel workshops and making "dirt" cups for kids. We thank the volunteers who update our web site and make links for our newsletter (Thanks, Christopher!), beg local merchants for donated goods, pick up cigarette butts and count them, install

ash receptacles to reduce cigarette litter, hand out pocket ashtrays, design publicity materials, copy fliers and handouts, put up posters and hand out fliers to advertise events. We appreciate volunteers who recruit teachers for stream monitoring, train citizens for stream monitoring, count out stickers for other volunteers, plan many fundraisers, deliver trash bags and rain barrels, answer the phone, go to other offices to send faxes, count supplies for inventory, and transport supplies to and from our storage facilities. We thank those who drive the buses for our rain garden tours, maintain rain gardens we built, help us find places for new rain gardens, and talk about rain gardens during tours.

Did you realize volunteers help us with so many tasks? I haven't even named everything!

Although too numerous to name each one, I want to specifically thank Dana Dettmar, who served as our most effi-

cient intern this semester, and April Grace, who volunteers so graciously with us on Wednesdays. Spencer Moss and Sarah Drakulich serve as our fabulous Office of Surface Mining Volunteers In Service To America. Samantha Lukasiewicz just started her VISTA term, but we're expecting great work from her.

I want to thank our newest volunteer, Chris Gilley, who was the one standing on her feet all day April 24 to register people for rain barrels. I met Chris through a master's program we're doing through Emory & Henry College; she's a dedicated and good spirited volunteer. Thanks also to my husband, Bobby Doss, who built many rain barrels this year, with help from Marty Taylor and Joe, Dana and her friends. A big thank you to Sherrie Leab who took care of rain barrel registration and much more! Many, many thanks!

I think you can see that we are never at a loss for work. Just give us a call and we'll put you to work, too! This issue is dedicated to all volunteers; hats off!

New OSM/VISTA organizes work in Tazewell

Hi, my name is Sarah Drakulich and I am the recently placed AmeriCorps OSM/VISTA with the UTRR. I will be working in the Cedar Bluff and Tazewell area. Carol Doss and Spencer Moss have been very helpful in teaching me some of the ropes of the UTRR and helping me to settle into the area. Whether it's grant writing, needing a place to stay, or finding contact info for just about anyone, those two have it all! Also, I've worked closely with my onsite supervisor, Elizabeth Bennett, education coordinator at the Soil and Water Conservation District Office. We worked with the 4-H Extension Office in Tazewell for their Arbor Day program and participated in the Cliff Road Cleanup organized by Keep

Southwest Virginia Beautiful.

Since my placement, official start date of February 13, I've been focusing on getting to know folks in the area by networking with local civic and agency groups as well as the schools. I've been working on two big events that happened in April, the Household Hazardous Waste Collection Day on April 10 and the Indian Creek Cleanup on April 17, both in Cedar Bluff. We had a great turnout for both events!

A little background about me is that I am a 2009 graduate from the University of Dayton in Dayton, Ohio majoring in International Studies, a minor in Spanish,



Sarah recycles her old laptop at the Indian Creek household hazardous waste event.

and a concentration in Global Development. I was born and raised in Alliance, Ohio (northeast Ohio). In between work and play, I am also enjoying moving into my apartment and look forward to anyone who would like to come out and visit! I look forward to this year as a VISTA!



Dana Dettmar, center, organized her sorority to clean up North Fork Fiver Rd.

Roundtable intern encourages citizen monitoring, organizes cleanup and more

By Dana Dettmar, UTRR Intern

In Virginia there is 50,357 miles of stream, and only about 14,300 miles are monitored. Virginia needs good data, generated properly by trained volunteers, to accurately determine water quality issues across the state which is why The Upper Tennessee River Roundtable is in need of help from citizens who could monitor a stream in their own backyard. Citizen monitoring would free up time for our organization to focus on other streams that need monitoring.

My name is Dana Dettmar and I was an intern this spring with The Upper Tennessee River Roundtable. I was

Continued on Page 4

OSM/VISTA utilizes creativity in fundraisers

By Spencer Moss, OSM/VISTA

I've just entered my sixth month as an Americorps OSM/VISTA (Office of Surface Mining/ Volunteer in Service to America). During my time at the Roundtable, my goals have been to work on funding and education. The Roundtable is working from a grant through EQT Foundation to do the RiverWorks Discov-

ery Program in schools. This program takes students through the history of our river systems, uses of the river, and ways to keep their watershed clean. Over the past couple of months the Roundtable has been involved in a few smaller fundraisers including Breakfast with Santa and the Town Wide Garage sale in Abingdon. This summer we hope to really step



Spencer painted a rain barrel that was auctioned off at the Roundtable's booth at the Garden Faire. Genette Yates, Keep Bristol Beautiful coordinator, background, and sister, took time

up our fundraising with "Round for the Rivers IV," a

Park in Bristol, Tennessee on Saturday, June 19. Call us for more information.

Keep Southwest Virginia Beautiful separates from Roundtable

Continued from Page 1

will allow Carol Doss to continue to help the new organization and be paid for her time. KSVB has evolved and grown and will now work as a partner with the Roundtable, not as a committee within the Roundtable.

Carol Doss, our Coordinator, has spent a large percentage of her time over the years to obtain, manage, and grow the KSVB affiliate. In this regard, Carol recently received the Professional Lead-

ership Award from Keep America Beautiful. This is a national award and the organization's highest honor. Please join me in congratulating Carol on receiving this prestigious award.

Funding continues to be at the forefront of concern toward keeping UTRR a viable organization. We have applied for several grants; the major donor drive has raised \$7,450 to date; and other fundraisers are planned for the summer. If you haven't

made a contribution to the Roundtable recently, I urge you to do so. It is tax deductible, and will help us continue to have a significant presence in Southwest Virginia. If you are interested in becoming more involved in the Roundtable's work, there are several vacancies on the Board of Directors. General seats open include Aquatic Resources, Small Business, Real Estate Development, and Powell River. Seats open that are appointed by county

government include Russell, Tazewell, and Washington counties. Please contact Carol for more information.

As UTRR Chair for 2010, I look forward to working with all our members and partners to promote the importance of clean water in the Upper Tennessee River watershed. I hope to see you all at the meeting on May 6.

Sincerely,
Teresa Harless
UTRR Chair

River Spotlight: Roundtable volunteers make a difference



Thanks to all of our volunteers!

OSM/VISTAs Samantha Lukaszewicz and Sarah Drakulich, above top left, monitor for acid mine drainage. Scouts, center top, clean up Norton; mother and daughter, Diana Stinson and Ashlie Lee, clean up in Cedar Bluff. John Dew of the town of Abingdon at far left helps with Roundtable's rain garden tour. Below left, crew unloads household hazardous waste, including mercury saved for 50 years. At left, Earth Day draws a crowd at the Roundtable's booth at Virginia Highlands Community College. Center photo shows Keep America Beautiful President Matt McKenna giving professional leadership award to Coordinator Carol Doss.

Intern encourages help with stream monitoring program, rain barrels

Continued from Page 3

In charge of recruiting citizens to help out with our stream monitoring program. The organization first wants to get teachers involved. Teachers would be able to implement stream monitoring into their curriculum, and get their students involved as well. However, this program will not be limited to just teachers; the Roundtable also welcomes anyone else who may be interested in monitoring. The stream monitoring technique used by the Roundtable is very simple. Virginia Save-Our-Streams (SOS) monitoring involves biological stream monitoring which focuses on the benthic macroinvertebrates that live on the rocky bottom of streams. This method identifies three groups of macroinvertebrates based on their sensitivity to pollution. A stream that is rated as excellent should support a variety of all macroinvertebrates. Benthic macroinvertebrates have limited mobility and are not able to move away from unfavorable stream con-

ditions, so it's a good judgment of water quality. Virginia SOS monitoring asks that each site be monitored 4 times per year, and then you can simply enter the data collected on the Virginia Save-Our-Streams website.

The Roundtable plans to host a workshop in the spring to get citizens certified. The workshop will be free. To become certified it usually takes two or three sessions in which citizens will be taught proper techniques to accurately collect data. Each session runs about two hours. Anyone who is interested in becoming involved with our program can contact the Roundtable at upptnriver@yahoo.com; 276.628.1600.

Helping make rain barrels

On Saturday February 27, several girls in my sorority and I volunteered to help make rain barrels. Rain barrels are a simple way to conserve water. They are easy to construct, and are a great way to save money on your water bill. The water in the installed barrel

is collected from rain water running off your roof. This water can then be used to wash your car, water your plants, or bathe your dog. Upon arriving to the workshop my friends and I had the challenge of constructing 24 rain barrels which ended up being a very easy process. We first started by drawing large circles on the tops of the barrels that we eventually cut out so a colander could fit inside. Two more holes were drilled on the side at the top and the bottom for overflow tubing and a faucet to be inserted. After adding some last minute touches the barrels were finished. It took about 15 minutes to install pieces into each barrel, and it was such a simple process. My friends and I really enjoyed volunteering for this workshop. It felt very rewarding to volunteer our time towards making this area a greener community.