

MUDflats

NEWSLETTER OF THE ELIZABETH RIVER PROJECT
Making restoration a reality.



FALL 2012 « ANNUAL REPORT « www.elizabethriver.org

Lafayette Revives in 2012

Seahorses, Cleaner Water Part of a Great Year



This seahorse was captured in the Lafayette in July - just one of the signs of the historic comeback of this branch of the Elizabeth, thanks to your support.

Dust off those swimming trunks. Set out your oyster knives! Safe swimming in the Lafayette branch of the Elizabeth - and safe feasting on the once famous Norfolk oyster - may be in sight for the first time in modern history; thanks to YOU, our generous supporters.

The year 2012 saw many other gains for the Elizabeth River through your support. The 200-foot pedestrian bridge going up as two miles of trails and 11 acres of new wetlands take shape at our new Paradise Creek Nature Park (p 3). A first-ever summer camp aboard our Learning Barge is raking up rave reviews (p. 6). And a new media sponsorship is convincing more industries than ever of the importance of participating in our River Star Businesses program (p. 4).

For the first time since area scientists have been analyzing the data, the Lafayette in 2011 showed no violations for safe swimming.

the Lafayette a few years ago, bacteria levels have been dropping. But I was not prepared for how great the results would be, this soon.” For the first time since area scientists have been analyzing the data, the Lafayette in 2011 showed no violations for safe swimming. Also for the first time, more than 50% of the Lafayette tested safe, in terms of bacteria, for eating oysters.

“Last year’s pollution results indicate that the effort is working,” said a Virginian-Pilot editorial.

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“But the highlight of the year, for me, was announcing the results of our first scorecard just for the Lafayette,” says Marjorie Mayfield Jackson, Executive Director. “Ever since we began organizing a community-wide focus on



A new summer camp introduced children to five river vessels with extra time to explore the river.



A Swimmable, Fishable River

With Your United Way Support

Your United Way gift will bring us closer to restoring your home river. Help us reach our goal to make the urban Elizabeth River safe for swimming and eating oysters by 2020 - and its Lafayette branch by 2014.

Designate your United Way contributions this year to the Elizabeth River Project:

Combined Federal Campaign - 61887

Combined Virginia Campaign - 3735

Combined Charities Campaign - Please write in “Elizabeth River Project”

Thanks for caring! Questions - Katie Duckett, kduckett@elizabethriver.org, (757) 399-7487.

SWIMMABLEFISHABLE2020



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Rainy Summer: Beautiful & Bothersome

From the Executive Director



I went kayaking today in a steady rain.

The grey sky and the grey river were beautiful, fringed with the green of wetland grasses, bubbles rising everywhere, making me smile at the wonder of life breathing below.

I also thought about how such a gentle rain used to mean all good things: Renewal, cleansing. Now the rain is bad news in our line of work. A long summer of regular rains, such as we've had this year, washes far too many chemicals off our streets and yards. Lawn fertilizers feed the "red tide" or harmful algae blooms that rob fish of oxygen. The red tide arrived a month early this summer on the Lafayette branch of the Elizabeth - and the first fish kill was early, too.

I'm proud that our River Star Homes are discovering they can have beautiful lawns - even their best lawns ever - without all those chemicals. But the 50 or so homes we've reached so far with our free "lawn makeover" evaluations is just a start. If you can't imagine a great lawn without "the usual" in fertilizers, please give us a try (see p 5).

It's exciting to see the good news about bacteria coming down in the Lafayette. I want to thank the grantors who gave us

start-up grants to focus on the Lafayette. As a result, in a little over a year, participating homes went from zero to more than 1,000. And every one I meet seems to know the important role that families play in picking up after the dog and more.

I hope, as well, that you know the critical role that you play as a donor to Elizabeth River Project. Grants often help us start programs like River Star Homes. Then the grantors look to the community to keep the success going. As we move into year two of River Star Homes, and our goal of a "swimmable-fishable" Lafayette by 2014 draws closer, your support is super-important.

As I climbed out of my kayak today, I felt such a longing for us to succeed with getting this gorgeous river healthy again. It's such a challenge, flowing as the Elizabeth and its Lafayette branch do, among the industries and houses of our dense urban cities. But we've also come such a long way together. People routinely ask if I am amazed at what we've accomplished so far. I always tell them - we're not there yet. Let's keep paddling.

I've renewed my Mummichog level support to ensure River Star Homes and our other programs keep growing. I hope you'll renew your support at whatever level is meaningful to you. I hope too, that you get out on the river soon to be inspired as I was today. Don't live on the river? Try one of our River Star Homes outings. The next one is a free cruise - generously donated by the Carrie B.

Marjorie Mayfield Jackson,
Executive Director

MUDflats is the newsletter of the Elizabeth River Project, a membership-based non-profit working to restore the Elizabeth River through government, business and citizen partnerships. "Mudflats" refers to that slippery, biologically active zone where land and water meet, symbolizing our search for common ground among diverse interests.

www.elizabethriver.org



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“Almost Heaven” - Nature Park Nears Opening Countdown to Paradise Begins



Volunteers spent the morning removing decades of litter along the Victory Boulevard frontage of the park. Forty acres of forest and wetlands will showcase restoration. (February 2012).

Once this corner of the Elizabeth River did look like Paradise. Thus the name from the 1800s, “Paradise Creek,” on “Paradise Plantation.”

Then came two world wars, when Paradise became a dumping ground. Sandblast grit from the nearby naval shipyard choked the headwaters. A long finger of the creek was filled with mud dredged to keep the river channel open. “The Mudflats,” this wilderness was dubbed by Portsmouth children who sometimes played in the vast fields and forest.

Come with us for a peek at Paradise being reclaimed - thanks to your generous support and that of many partners.

The first stretches of two miles of stone-dust trails have been laid down. They wind gently through the towering hardwoods to open onto 11 acres where the Virginia Port Authority has now dug out the dredged material, and in July let back in the tidal waters, restoring the creek where it flowed before.

Across the mouth of the new wetland, construction workers have added the

railing to a 275-foot pedestrian bridge. Stand on the bridge and look north, across the creek. On the far shore and all along the creek, the Navy has transferred its former problems, winning a White House award along the way. What you see now is the Navy’s new “wildlife mecca,” clean habitat for songbirds. Turn south. Admire the stature of the “Earthworks Mound,” built of the old dredge material, re-imagined. A trail to the top gives a vista of this unique confluence of restoration projects, from more than 20 feet high.



Businessman Bill Magann spearheaded construction of the pedestrian footbridge.

This will be the new Paradise - Paradise Creek Nature Park, 40 acres that the Elizabeth River Project, through your generosity, will open to the public by Dec. 31, 2012. The City of Portsmouth will operate the site as the City’s third largest public park. Thanks to you, we’ll use it for regional environmental education.

Stay with us. With your support, we’ll complete Phase 2 by 2014, with all-green education pavilions, “pervious” parking that lets the rain soak in, a unique children’s playground and compost toilets - all newly designed by the same team at University of Virginia that brought us the award-winning Learning Barge.

Now that will really be Paradise - an unforgettable first-hand experience of your home river, restored. For a slide show and video of park progress, visit www.paradisecreekpark.org. To find out more about this Capital Campaign, please contact Joanne Hansinger, jhansinger@elizabethriver.org. To help plan activities for the new park, contact Joe Rieger, jrieger@elizabethriver.org. Both are available also at (757) 399-7487.



Two miles of stone dust trail are taking shape through the forest.

VA Port Authority Earns Hall of Fame for Reducing Pollution

When your challenge is to reduce air pollution from big trucks that wheel in and out of your facility every day - and you don't own the trucks - you have two choices. Throw up your hands and call it someone else's problem - or do what Heather Wood did at the Virginia Port Authority, and invent a program to reward truckers for doing right by the environment.

Her "GO - Green Operator" program has now been copied by other ports. It's part of what this year earned the Virginia Port Authority highest honors in The Elizabeth River Project's River Star Businesses Program.

"They think so out-of-the-box... They're not scared to try new stuff," says Pam Boatwright, who runs the "Star" program. In January, **Virginia Port Authority was inducted into the River Star Business Hall of Fame.** One business each year wins this award, started last year by Inside Business when they signed on as media sponsor for our annual River Star Businesses Recognition Luncheon.

A record 49 businesses were recognized at the luncheon for documenting pollution reduced and urban wildlife habitat restored or conserved, all above and beyond requirements of law and peer reviewed.

Thanks to you, the generous donors to

Lafayette Revival

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The Virginia Department of Health will look carefully at many factors, including viruses, before declaring it is safe to eat the oysters from the Lafayette. A "relay" requirement, for the oysters to flush out for several days in other waters, will be likely. The state also needs to see a long-term trend in order to determine safe swimming. And, of most concern, algal blooms continue each summer, this year leading to a fish kill in mid-August. Do your part to reduce the causes at home.



The Port Authority is one of 92 "River Star Businesses" who together have reduced pollution by 279 million pounds - voluntarily.

our Elizabeth River Fund for programs like River Star Businesses, **we've helped 92 businesses reduce pollution by 279 million pounds, and restore or conserve 1,194 acres of habitat,** since the program started in 1997.

As well as recognizing the Virginia Port Authority - recently known as the "Green Port of the East Coast" - this year's banquet also recognized the only current Fortune 500 company to reach "Model Level," the highest level of achievement in the program. **Norfolk Southern Corporation** earned Model Level for reducing air emissions locally by more than 6 million pounds, among other achievements. Air pollution contributes as much as a third of the excess nitrogen in the Elizabeth River and Chesapeake Bay. Also advancing to Model Level River

Star was **Volvo Penta of the Americas** for intergrating environmental protection into all operations at is Chesapeake site.

Save the date for the 2013 banquet on January 24 at 11:30 at Portsmouth Renaissance Hotel.

Help keep programs like River Stars growing. Donate today at www.elizabethriver.org or just return the reply card enclosed.

Earn our free River Star Homes yard flag at RiverStarHomes.org (more, p. 5).

We still have a long way to go -- and we need your continued support. Please consider returning the enclosed card with a special gift for a "swimmable-fishable" Elizabeth by 2020 - and a swimmable-fishable Lafayette by our goal of 2014. In the meantime, please accept our thanks for making possible this historic year of progress.

Saluting River's Best Business Stewards

Our "River Star Businesses" have reduced pollution voluntarily by 279 million pounds since we started the program in 1997. Read more about this year's accomplishments and how **YOUR** business can star at www.elizabethriver.org, or call Pam Boatwright, 399-7487.

RIVERSTARS
BUSINESSES





Seven Easy Steps to Become A River Star Home

Becoming a River Star Home is easy and free. If you agree to these seven simple steps - and you live in the Elizabeth River "watershed" or the area draining into our river when it rains - we can recognize you as a star!

1. **SCOOP THE POOP** after our dogs. When pet waste washes into the river, bacteria levels make swimming unsafe.

2. **REDUCE FERTILIZERS** on our lawns. Over-fertilized lawns lead to algae blooms that choke river life.

3. **PROTECT STORM DRAINS** from grass clippings, leaves and oil. Storm drains lead to the river. Even leaves add excess nutrients that harm river life.

4. **NO GREASE IN SINK.** Pouring grease down the kitchen sink can cause clogged drains, leading to sewer overflows and raw sewage in the river.

5. **HELP GEESE MIGRATE** by not feeding them. Overpopulations of geese mean too much poop in the river and unsafe for swimming.

6. **PUMP OUT** boat sewage at proper facilities. When boats dump directly into the river, it adds to unswimmable conditions.

7. **DON'T FLUSH MEDICINES.** Treatment facilities can't remove medicines from sewage. Keep them out of the river by following safe disposal methods.

Sign up today at
RiverStarHomes.org

*River Star Homes is not just a yard flag.
You learn to be green and still achieve*

"The Best Lawn Ever"



Walter Rieger enjoys Susan and Chuck Beers' healthy lawn at a recent River Star Homes event. The Beers report their "best lawn ever," thanks to a River Star Homes makeover.

While more than 1,100 households have now signed on with us as "River Star Homes" to do their part for a cleaner river, the biggest stumbling block remains commitment No. 7 - "reduce fertilizers on our lawn."

"I don't want a brown lawn," an otherwise gung-ho supporter muttered, hesitating over the sign-up form at Lafayette RiverFest.

Great news - you don't have to have one.

As River Star Homes passes the one-year mark since its debut at our first Lafayette RiverFest on April 27, 2011, participants in our "lawn makeovers" - made possible with the support of donors and grantors like you - are now seeing the results, and they're loving it.

"**Exquisitely healthy... beautiful**" reports Ellen Seilig. Our lawn care experts visited her yard, tested the soil and advised her to add lime to create a healthy, natural lawn that would not need the chemicals she once used. Over-use of chemical fertilizers on lawns is a major component in polluted runoff that leads to fish

kills in the Elizabeth and its Lafayette branch.

"**The best lawn we have ever had,**" said Chuck Beers. When a committee of advisors to the River Star Homes program visited his house for a cookout this spring, the children attending spent much of the time rolling in the lush grass.

The Beers went a step beyond the free lawn visit offered by the program. They hired My Sister's Garden, an organic lawn care company working with River

Star Homes, to aerate the yard and add organic compost. The organic material binds with the soil for little runoff. A grant from National Fish & Wildlife Foundation helped fund a portion of the cost.

These and other grants from HRSD and the Water Quality Improvement Fund are also helping River Star Homes add "**super-sized**" rain barrels and shoreline vegetation, if they live in the Lafayette River area - our focus for achieving "swimmable-fishable" standards by

{ "I don't want a brown lawn"...
Great news - you don't have to have one. }

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“An Intimate Experience of the River”

Barge’s First Summer Camp Gives Children Time To Fall In Love With The River

On a typical field trip to the Elizabeth River Project’s Learning Barge, a child has less than two hours on board.

That’s enough time for six carefully structured lessons on what’s wrong with the Elizabeth and how to help. It’s not really enough time to fall thoroughly in love with our home river, the way children must if they are to grow up to be lifelong stewards.

Thus the transformative power of summer camp, discovered Robin Dunbar, the project’s Deputy Director – Education.

When Dunbar organized the barge’s first week-long summer camps this July-August, “Elizabeth River Adventures,” she found time for “zen moments” such as beginning the morning with the students standing quietly and looking at the river, to notice the colors, then closing their eyes to listen to river sounds.

The week was packed, with visits aboard five different kinds of river vessels, learning to play sea shanties on the harmonica, tying nautical knots,

“They were getting a closer, intimate experience of the river. They had time to breathe. They weren’t rushed.”

identifying live river critters and more. But while sailing on the Schooner Virginia - the lead partner vessel for this year’s camp

- Dunbar also invited each week’s 15-20 students simply to lie on the deck “and feel what it’s like to just float on the river.”

“They were getting a closer, intimate experience of the river,” Dunbar recalled. “They had time to breathe. They weren’t rushed.”

More than one student also reported that this was their favorite summer camp - ever. By summer’s end, the camp was selling out.

“I learned so much new stuff,” said Beach Hough, participant: “What we need to do to keep the rivers clean so I can play in them pretty soon; what to do on really big sailboats. I can’t wait for next year!”



Photo by Bill Tiernan for The Virginian-Pilot

Sailing the Schooner Virginia meant time to enjoy the river. The schooner and barge were joint hosts.

All Norfolk 4th Graders To Visit Barge

Thanks to a new grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), all Norfolk 4th graders – and their teachers – will board the Learning Barge as part of a year-long investigation of the Elizabeth River, and its Lafayette branch, in partnership with Elizabeth River Project.

About 2,500 students will take field trips to the floating wetland classroom, and conduct at least nine additional activities – some also outdoors - to learn science in a real-world application – how to restore their home river. Robin Dunbar, our Deputy Director – Education, will lead teacher workshops to give the teachers new tools and information for the year-long study.

“This is a huge help toward our goal of involving the maritime community in making the Lafayette branch of the Elizabeth swimmable, fishable by 2014,” said Executive Director Marjorie Mayfield Jackson. The special “B-Wet” grant from NOAA is supplemented by member and donor support of the Learning Barge, including from the American Honda Foundation, Virginia Environmental Endowment, Kinder Morgan and many supporters in the maritime who donate in-kind assistance with maintenance. The barge was launched in 2009 with a lead grant from Dominion Virginia Power.

Call 399-7487 for a field trip while space lasts.

River Star Schools: Record 140!

The number of River Star Schools doing their part for the river grew from 128 to a record 140 in 2011-12! Visit elizabethriver.org to read more on the exciting achievements. Email Robin Dunbar, rdunbar@elizabethriver.org, to sign your school up this year.





The Elizabeth River Project

Mummichog Society

This society recognizes top donors at the level of \$2,500 or more per year for individuals and \$5,000 or more for organizations.

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- Consul and Mrs. Rolf Williams
- Mr. and Mrs. Henry Wolf



The Elizabeth River Project

River Otter Society

This new society recognizes donors at the level of \$1,000 - \$2,499 per year for individuals and \$2,000 - \$4,999 or more for organizations.

- Margaret Bartelt
- Fred and Jane Bashara



Pat Herman, Living River Restoration Trust, toasts the cleanup of Money Point on the Mummichog Society Cruise 2011. Mummichogs, mark your calendar for this year's cruise, coming up Oct. 18.

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Eighth Grader Picks River For Bar Mitzvah Project

Miles Fine, now an 8th grader at Norfolk Academy, signed up to become a River Star Home with his family at our Lafayette RiverFest last year. Then he took matters further. He decided his Bar Mitzvah project would be about “being a River Star Home and recruiting my friends and neighbors.”

To top it off, Miles asked that gifts in honor of his Bar Mitzvah be made to Elizabeth River Project – bringing in more than \$2,500. Thank you, Miles, for your hard work and commitment to a swimmable, fishable Elizabeth River!

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NEW! Earn Your Ribbons

River Star Homes

Once you've mastered the first 7 steps as a River Star Home, you'll want to do more. Apply for the new "achievement" ribbons to add to your flag when you take extra steps to achieve clean air, clean water and wildlife habitat - and when you mentor others.

There's even a gold, "Champion" ribbon when you're doing the maximum for your home. **River Star Homes are invited to celebrate all this year's achievements with a free cruise donated by the Carrie B on Oct. 5, boarding at 6:00. More at RiverStarHomes.org.**



Tim Ferring & Martha Versprille attach their ribbons for going beyond the first 7 steps as River Star Homes.



Champion ribbons debut October 5 on the Carrie B!

The Elizabeth River Project

Statement of Activities

Fiscal Year Ending September 30, 2011

Unrestricted revenues and other support	
Pledge income	\$39,628
Grants and contributions	175,043
Membership dues	80,030
Other income	2,729
Interest income	657
Net assets released from restrictions	<u>607,831</u>
	\$905,918
Expenses	
Program services 79%	\$956,226
Management and general 16%	196,712
Fundraising 5%	65,534
	\$1,218,472
Change in unrestricted net assets	(\$312,554)*
Temporarily restricted net assets	
Grants and contributions	\$874,608
Net assets released from restrictions	<u>(607,831)*</u>
Change in temporarily restricted net assets	\$266,777
Change in Net Assets	(\$45,777)
Net Assets - beginning of year	\$1,779,412
Net Assets - end of year	\$1,733,635

Statement of Financial Position

Current Assets	
Cash	\$376,490
Accounts Receivable	52,110
Pledges Receivable - net	69,616
Prepaid Expenses	6,420
Accrued Interest Receivable	0
Total Current Assets	\$504,636
Property and equipment - Net	\$1,263,372
Non-current pledges receivable - Net	<u>\$70,058</u>
	\$1,838,066
Current Liabilities	
Accounts payable and accrued payroll taxes	\$21,562
Current portion of long-term debt	\$2,346
Deferred revenue	12,500
Total Current Liabilities	\$36,408
Long-term Liabilities	
Long-term debt - less current portion	\$68,023
Total Liabilities	\$104,431
Net Assets	
Unrestricted	142,269
Unrestricted invested in property & equipment	1,263,372
Temporarily restricted	<u>327,994</u>
	\$1,733,635
Total Net Assets	\$1,838,066

*Last year's negative change in net assets resulted from pledge income recorded in prior years but spent this year as projects became ready for implementation, such as a nature park, and depreciation expenses for the Learning Barge.

Best Lawn Ever

continued from p 5

2014. Find out if you qualify for these opportunities - or a lawn makeover - at RiverStarHomes.org, or call John McLeod or Erin Jackson, 392-7135. Special thanks to donors to the Elizabeth River Fund for the support that makes these and other programs possible. Donate today at elizabethriver.org.

Deepest
Thanks

Elizabeth River Project Grantors, Members & Donors

Contributions to the Elizabeth River Project received July 21, 2011-August 24, 2012

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Elizabeth River Project members and donors are vital to the success of our organization. We appreciate each donation and have worked to ensure every one made within the listed time frame is acknowledged here. We regret any unintended omissions. United Way donations are reported to us once a year and require the donor's permission for release.



Our 2nd Lafayette RIVERFest drew a crowd of more than 2,000 for more than 30 fun, free activities about how to get involved in restoring the Lafayette branch of the Elizabeth.

Contact Katie Duckett, kduckett@elizabethriver.org, 399-7487, if you have any activity or would like to help sponsor RIVERFest III - and mark your calendar to attend, Saturday, April 27th, 2013.



www.elizabethriver.org



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