

Mud Flats

Elizabeth
River
Project

NEW ADDRESS:
Interim Field Station
5205 Colley Ave.,
Norfolk, VA 23508

Annual Report Edition

Summer 2021

The newsletter for supporters of the Elizabeth River Project

ElizabethRiver.org

Historic gift creates unprecedented momentum for a healthier river

Initiatives expanding in Norfolk, Portsmouth and Chesapeake, thanks to you.



Photo by Eric Lusher

Louis and Pru Ryan visit the future site of a cutting-edge facility to be named in their honor on Knitting Mill Creek.

A Norfolk couple who are longtime supporters have now made the largest gift in the history of Elizabeth River Project - \$2.1 million. In appreciation, our cutting-edge environmental center, coming soon to North Colley Avenue, will be named for them as the “Pru and Louis Ryan Resilience Lab.”

The Ryans’ is the lead gift for what is now a runaway capital campaign with extraordinary momentum, given the context of an excruciating pandemic. Launched last year with a goal of \$8.6 million, the Next Wave Campaign has now raised nearly \$12 million. A new goal of \$13 million will achieve a broad array of projects to accelerate river restoration and education efforts region-wide.

Louis Ryan, vice president of the board of the Elizabeth River Project and retired general counsel for Landmark Communications, co-chairs the campaign. He says he and his wife, Pru, invested in it for “the opportunity for the Elizabeth River Project to project itself and its mission to a much larger audience.”

“A really great idea”

Having sailed and rowed the Elizabeth from the days when people considered the river hopelessly polluted, and having served as a longtime board member, Ryan said the Elizabeth River Project has made “remarkable” progress but has not yet achieved commensurate community awareness.

“I thought the whole campaign, and maybe particularly the Resilience Lab, represented a really great idea,” he said.

The Resilience Lab is in final design for Knitting Mill Creek where it will demonstrate how to redevelop in the urban floodplain in ways that are responsible for both humans and the ecosystem as sea levels rise.

Additional Next Wave projects include a new home port in Chesapeake for the Elizabeth River Project’s Dominion Energy Learning Barge; doubling the size of our education headquarters at Paradise Creek Nature Park in Portsmouth, and expanding river education and restoration programs river-wide.

Pent-up longing

The response to the campaign reflects the community’s pent-up longing for a healthy home river, never felt more keenly than during COVID-19 when the outdoors has become the refuge of choice, says Marjorie Mayfield Jackson, Elizabeth River Project’s Executive Director. “People have rarely been more desperate for a great turn-around story, especially when it promises for them, personally, a nearby escape to beauty and wonder,” Jackson said.

Louis Ryan, meanwhile, downplays the importance of his and Pru’s gift compared to the imperative to keep giving levels strong for Elizabeth River Project’s efforts over the long term.

“A single gift for a single campaign is not really the measure of what’s important,” he said. “I’m hoping that the momentum we’ve gotten going and the excitement we’ve created will spill over to increase the funding we’re able to raise on an annual basis.”

Keep the momentum strong – give today at elizabethriver.org or return the enclosed card.

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Wealth Management Advisor, Merrill Lynch

Vice-President | Louis F. Ryan

Retired General Counsel, Landmark

Treasurer | Phil Stedfast,

Operations Manager, Kinder Morgan Elizabeth River Terminals

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Joe Rieger, Deputy Director - Restoration

Robin Dunbar, Deputy Director - Education

Ian Ambs, Restoration Assistant

Mary Bennett, River Star Homes Conservation Specialist

Yolima Carr, Conservation Landscape Curator

Barbara Gavin, River Star Homes Program Manager

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Kayla Gradwell, Senior Educator

Christina Hall, Accounting and Payroll Assistant

Jake Kline, Restoration Administrative Coordinator

Larry LaPell, Youth Conservation Corps Assistant

Sarah McBride, Resilient Youth Coordinator I

Summer Mace, Learning Barge Manager

Sam Miller, Restoration Assistant

Phoebe Murrell, River Star Homes and Administrative Assistant

Rachel Peabody, Assistant Director Restoration

Jessica Pinsky, Office Manager

Katherine Reader, Director of Finance

Casey Shaw, Grassroots Coordinator

Susan Smith, Development & Communications Director

Seana Wilson, Interpretive Park Ranger

From the Executive Director

The phone call of a lifetime for a healthier Liz



Photo by Eric Lusher

Executive Director Jackson (far R) joins Pru & Louis Ryan at the site to be named for them.

Few non-profits can have begun more humbly or cautiously. Elizabeth River Project started as four citizens around a kitchen table. Our budget the first year was less than \$1,500. We spent it on a survey to see if anyone cared about the infamously filthy Elizabeth River or would support cleaning her up.

So imagine my joy nearly 30 years later when Louis Ryan called me to say that he and his wife, Pru, would commit \$2.1 million as the lead gift to the Elizabeth River Project's new campaign, the Next Wave, which promises a whole new level of region-wide engagement in the river's revival. This being the era of the cell phone, Louis' call came as I was getting out of my car at home. I flung down right there on the driveway everything I had in my arms – purse, folders, notebook – and began such leaping about, phone to ear, that my husband came out to see what was going on.

I'm proud that our iconic new facility on North Colley will be named the Pru and Louis Ryan Resilience Lab. Louis is a lawyer we value on our board because he is both cautious of pitfalls and an eloquent champion of promising possibilities. The campaign and Resilience Lab are simply "a really great idea," he says.

It's also clear to me that he and Pru deeply love our river. Posing for photos at the future site of the Ryan Lab, on Knitting Mill Creek, they told story after story of river wildlife they encountered when they lived blocks away (they still live on the Elizabeth, just downtown Norfolk). An ill otter they rescued, back when the wildlife rescue team at first wouldn't believe it could be an otter in this urban river. Baby ducks for whom they built a ramp over their swimming pool lip. Dolphins they approached so quietly, rowing, they bumped one.

In this, the Ryans are no different than you and I who love Liz. Please know how much each more modest donation still means. In fact, it is your collective caring that has brought us this far. She's no longer infamous. Join the campaign to make her famous for her glorious rebirth.

Marjorie Mayfield Jackson
Executive Director

Please consider a special donation with the enclosed card. You can also add to the Next Wave momentum at elizabethriver.org/thenextwave



The future Pru and Louis Ryan Resilience Lab

Mission – To restore the Elizabeth River to the highest practical level of environmental quality through community, business and government partnerships.

Mudflats is the newsletter of the Elizabeth River Project, a membership-based non-profit working to restore the Elizabeth River through citizen, government and business partnerships. Email Jessica Pinsky, jpinsky@elizabethriver.org, for membership questions.

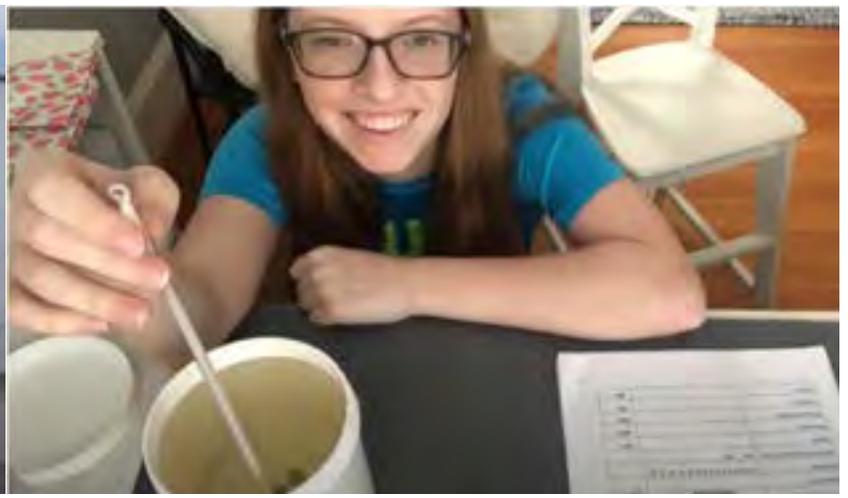
Elizabeth River Project
Making restoration a reality
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Be the first to know. Go to elizabethriver.org and click "Join our mailing list" at the top of the page.

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Photo: Denise Maples



Virtual Youth Resilience Expo participant Evelyn Page of Granby High School shares her winning project.

“It will give you hope for the future”

Thanks to you, students take action for the river despite COVID-19

A small beach on the Elizabeth River at 49th Street is one of Evelyn Page’s favorite spots. On good days, the high school sophomore and a friend collect sea glass and watch the wildlife.

Then there are other days.

“Sometimes we see dolphins and horseshoe crabs... Other times, the water is too nasty to wade in,” Evelyn says in a video she made for Elizabeth River Project’s third annual Youth Resilience Expo, held virtually April 24.

As with 1,075 students from 22 schools across the region, Evelyn, of Norfolk’s Granby High School, took action with Elizabeth River Project’s assistance to analyze and address the river’s problems, then documented her results for the Expo. Thank you, supporters, for making our education efforts possible even in the most challenging times.

In Evelyn’s case, she enrolled in a program we began last spring offering free water monitoring

kits to keep students engaged after schools shut down. She jumped at the chance to “use my love of chemistry and nature” to understand the ups and downs at her river hangout. Among her findings: Low oxygen, high bacteria. Her video theorizes causes, then identifies solutions, including Norfolk’s planned improvements to sewer lines and people picking up after pets. “We all love our dogs, but their poop belongs in the trash, and not the river.”

This year, every Expo project won a special award. Efforts ranged from reducing flooding, runoff pollution and greenhouse gases to spreading messages of resilience and hope. Camelot Elementary School in Chesapeake won “Above and Beyond.” Students there not only created four raised garden beds for native plants, but also planted native trees, installed rain barrels and provided reusable water bottles to students.

Aimee Batten, chair of our board’s Public Relations and Education Committee, recommends watching the recorded

30-minute Expo to see all the student projects: elizabethriverproject.wixsite.com/kids/youth-resilient-projects. “It will give you hope for the future.”

Participants also included the Hague School, Blair Middle School, Western Branch Intermediate, West Ghent Middle School Group (representing Blair Middle School, Rosemont Middle School and Academy for Discovery at Lakewood), Greenbrier Intermediate, Callen Tynch (Christopher Academy), GW Carver Intermediate, Deep Creek Elementary School, Sail Nauticus, Portsmouth CHROME Clubs, Truitt Elementary School and the Nauticus Youth Discovery Crew. Funders included the Barbara Upton Wilson Fund of the Hampton Roads Community Foundation and a National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration B-WET grant.

Plan your youth resilience project for next year - email Sarah McBride, smcbride@elizabethriver.org.



Add four wheels & go

Learning Barge programs unstoppable.

Our new Learning Barge on Wheels travels wherever students are, thanks to Elizabeth River Crossings, Dominion Energy and YOU, generous member. Far left, Christopher Academy students (L-R) Eleanor Jones, Allie Moses, Levi DeShazo & Peyton Moore. Left - River lessons for Ellsberg Court Homeschool Co-Op. Jack Thompson & Pace Hamrick meet spider crabs. Book now, sbrown@elizabethriver.org.

Finances

The Elizabeth River Project Statement of Activities
Fiscal Year Ending September 30, 2020

Unrestricted revenues and other support	
Grants and contributions	3,979,535
Program income	105,751
Membership dues	63,968
Other income	105,295
Interest income	17,528
Change in provision of uncollectible pledges	(12,970)
Net assets released from restrictions	153,126
	<hr/>
Expenses	4,412,233
Program services	1,778,136
Management and General	526,382
Fundraising	122,522
	<hr/>
	2,427,040
Change in net assets -no donor restriction	1,985,193
Support, revenue and gains with donor restrictions	
Grants and contributions	4,270,251
Contributions to endowment funds	16,000
Gain (loss) from beneficial interest in assets held by others	(1,603)
Net assets released from restrictions	(153,126)
	<hr/>
Change in net assets withdonor restriction	4,131,522
Change in net assets	6,116,715
Net assets - beginning of year	1,244,686
Net assets - end of year	7,361,401



The Elizabeth River Project
Statement of Financial Position
Fiscal Year Ending September 30, 2020

Current Assets	
Cash without donor restriction	504,718
Cash and cash equivalents with donor restriction	4,377,792
Contract receivables	281,971
Promises to give - net	299,913
Prepaid expenses	560
	<hr/>
Total Current Assets	5,464,954
Property and Equipment - Net	1,087,782
Noncurrent Assets	
Noncurrent promises to give - net	599,070
Other non-current assets	4,500
Beneficial interest in assets held by others	639,156
	<hr/>
	7,795,462
Current Liabilities	
Accounts payable and accrued expenses	155,596
Current portion of long-term debt	25,000
Refundable advance on conditional grant	221,900
	<hr/>
Total Current Liabilities	402,496
Long-term Liabilities	
Long-term debt - less current portion	31,565
	<hr/>
Total Liabilities	434,061
Net assets	
Without donor restrictions	315,924
Without donor restrictions, board designated	934,196
Without donor restrictions, invested in property and equipment	1,087,782
	<hr/>
Total Net Assets without donor restrictions	2,337,902
With donor restrictions	5,023,499
	<hr/>
Total Net Assets	7,361,401
	<hr/>
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	7,795,462

Administrative and fundraising expenses temporarily increased relative to program expenses as the Elizabeth River Project launched a large capital campaign to increase our impact region-wide.

Annual report 2021

Last 12 months

Nesting pairs coming back

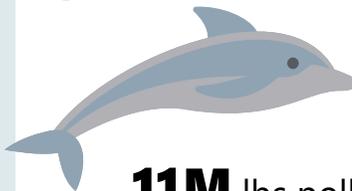
Bald Eagles



Branches of the Elizabeth where

dolphins

sighted: ALL



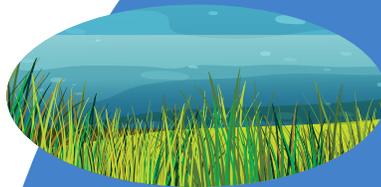
11M lbs pollution reduced by businesses



6,065 River Star Homes



15,435 sq. ft. restored marsh



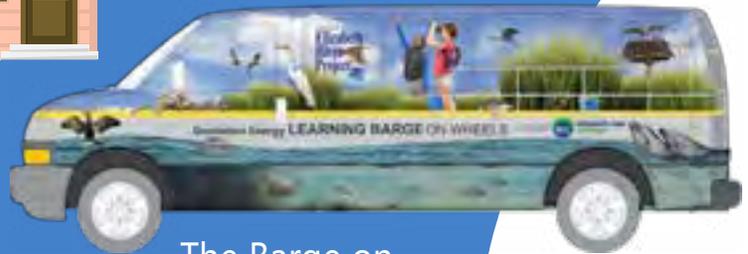
494 acres of wildlife habitat restored or conserved

20 acres of oyster habitat restored.



139 River Star Businesses

Lafayette's most common wading bird: Yellow-Crowned Night **Heron**



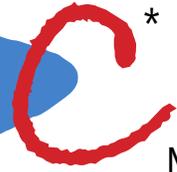
The Barge on Wheels has booked almost

100 trips helping reach more than

2,000 students with our hands on programs



Overall Grade:



Most Improved Score: Indian River **(F to C*)**

ALL THIS DESPITE COVID!

Thank you to the community that takes care of our home river, no matter what.

*Elizabeth River Scorecard December 2020



Norfolk Southern's "living shoreline" - three football fields long - helped the railway win Inside Business River Star Hall of Fame.

11 million lbs. less pollution – thanks, “stars”

“I should have known that businesses along the Elizabeth wouldn’t be stopped by a little thing like a pandemic”

At first it seemed this would be a lost year in terms of businesses able to voluntarily reduce pollution to the Elizabeth River. With a sad heart, Pam Boatwright, program manager, cancelled our annual in-person River Star Businesses Recognition Luncheon, usually a packed ballroom with more than 300 community and business leaders.

“We thought surely there would be little to recognize, as businesses turned their full attention to surviving and adapting to the pandemic,” Boatwright says.

What a testament to the renewing qualities of river restoration work, that 23 businesses, non-profits and government facilities in fact documented stellar results, recognized at a virtual event Jan. 21 instead. “And I mean stellar,” Boatwright continued – as in reducing pollution voluntarily by 11 million pounds and restoring or conserving 494 acres of wildlife habitat, despite COVID-19.

“I should’ve known that businesses along the Elizabeth River wouldn’t be stopped by a little thing like a pandemic,” said Jamie Mitchell of HRSD, mistress of ceremonies for the celebration.

Highlights include Norfolk Southern’s “living shoreline”-- three football fields long, winning Inside Business River Star Hall of Fame. The railway’s Lamberts Point terminal installed one of the largest privately funded living shorelines

anywhere, controlling a steeply eroding bank through natural measures including wetlands and oysters. The company saved 75% over the cost of traditional erosion controls.

“I continue to urge others to adopt Elizabeth River Project’s approach of forming close partnerships with businesses who want to do the right thing for the environment. It is such a constructive approach and it has produced amazing results for the Elizabeth River,” said James Squires, railway CEO.

In its mission to create the most iconic urban waterfront trail in America, the Elizabeth River Trail Foundation earned three stars as a River Star Business with wildflower meadows, a new kayak launch, and original river art among other efforts.

Also earning three-star, Model Level recognition, awarded by peer review, was the Naval Support Activity Hampton Roads-Lafayette Annex, for constructing an oyster reef and much more.

Two-star, Achievement Level recognition went to Coastal Virginia Unitarian Universalists, Lady Fern’s Native Plants, Pender & Coward, and the Retreat at Harbor Pointe. And welcome to incoming Commitment Level River Stars Living River Trust, Sacred Heart Church, and Tidewater Staffing!

One great thing about virtual events is that they live on. Watch the recognition event for yourself at <https://elizabethriver.org/rsbevent>.

Now that’s star power.

The Elizabeth River Project launched River Star Businesses for organizational partners in 1997. Since then, River Star Businesses have become the finest environmental stewards on the Elizabeth. Cumulative results:

- **Pollution reduced:**
367 million pounds
- **Wildlife habitat restored, conserved:**
2,377 acres.
- **Other materials reduced, recycled or reused:**
More than a billion pounds

Results are voluntary (above and beyond compliance) and must be documented for peer review. Find out more:

RiverStarBusinesses.org, or contact Pam Boatwright, pboatwright@elizabethriver.org.





Artist's rendering of the research dock at the Elizabeth River Project's Pru and Louis Ryan Resilience Lab, coming soon to Knitting Mill Creek.

Resilience Lab already leads new data monitoring

State begins most comprehensive tracking ever of Elizabeth River health.

When dead fish washed up last summer on the banks of Knitting Mill Creek, confusion reigned for days over the creek's condition and potential contributing factors. As of this spring, though, a new monitoring station on the creek, at the future site of Elizabeth River Project's Ryan Resilience Lab, measures river health continuously and reports results live to the public.

The station, installed by Virginia Institute of Marine Science, is one of two representing the first ongoing, real-time monitoring of Elizabeth River health. The other also was added this spring, on the Eastern Branch at Grandy Village Learning Center.

The new monitoring stations are just one example of the most comprehensive data collection program yet for the Elizabeth River, launched this year by Virginia Institute of Marine Science. The Virginia General Assembly funded the program, thanks to lead patrons Sen. Lynwood Lewis and former Del. Matthew James, at the request of the Elizabeth River Project to improve scientific understanding of river conditions and pinpoint restoration needs. Other efforts through the new program range from trawl surveys of fish to sampling for contaminants and tracking of the indicator fish, the mummichog.



Virginia Institute of Marine Science conducts study at Money Point for tracking mummichog fish.

The attention to river health is in sharp contrast to early days of efforts to improve the Elizabeth, said Marjorie Mayfield Jackson, Executive Director, Elizabeth River Project. Back then, in the early 1990s, "the Elizabeth was written off as a dead sewer. Regular monitoring had almost stopped." She thanked Elizabeth River Project's members and partners for achieving a dramatic turnaround in concern for our home river.

Live data for visitors

Meanwhile at our coming Ryan Resilience Lab, the live data will be displayed in the lobby for visitors as well as on-line. In fact, the site is already becoming a data hub. Norfolk State University interns this summer will help analyze

results and maintain the instruments. More instruments will be added to track weather and tides and Old Dominion University plans to follow the numbers for related class studies.

Next time Knitting Mill Creek experiences a significant drop in dissolved oxygen, posing a potential fish kill, "we'll be able to get out there right away" to work on solving the problem, said Joe Rieger, Elizabeth River Project's Deputy Director – Restoration.

Keep the momentum going when you return a special gift to Elizabeth River Project with the enclosed card.

Deepest thanks to our donor societies

The Elizabeth River Project is proud to recognize members of our leadership giving societies. Thank you for contributing \$500 or more annually to support our award-winner restoration and education programs. Join us! For more information about our donor societies, contact Susan Smith at 757-399-7487 (o) or 757-407-1406 (c) or ssmith@elizabethriver.org.



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Aimee and Frank Batten, Jr.
Foundation
Goode Family Foundation
Perry Family Foundation
TowneBank Foundation

\$500,000 and Above – Individuals

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\$1,000 - \$1,499 Organizations

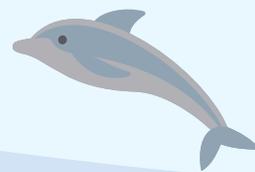
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Mr. Carlisle M. Wroton

(Cont'd p. 8)

Deepest thanks to our members



Contributions received from October, 1, 2020 – April 30, 2021

(Cont'd from p. 8)

\$500-\$999-Organizations

Accurate Marine Environmental
Bay Diesel & Generator
Crofton Industries
Luck Stone
Perdue Agribusiness, LLC.
Tidewater Staffing
Vulcan Materials Company

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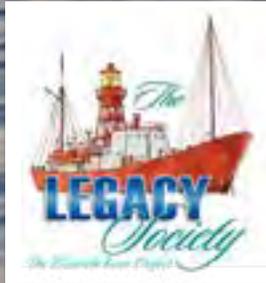
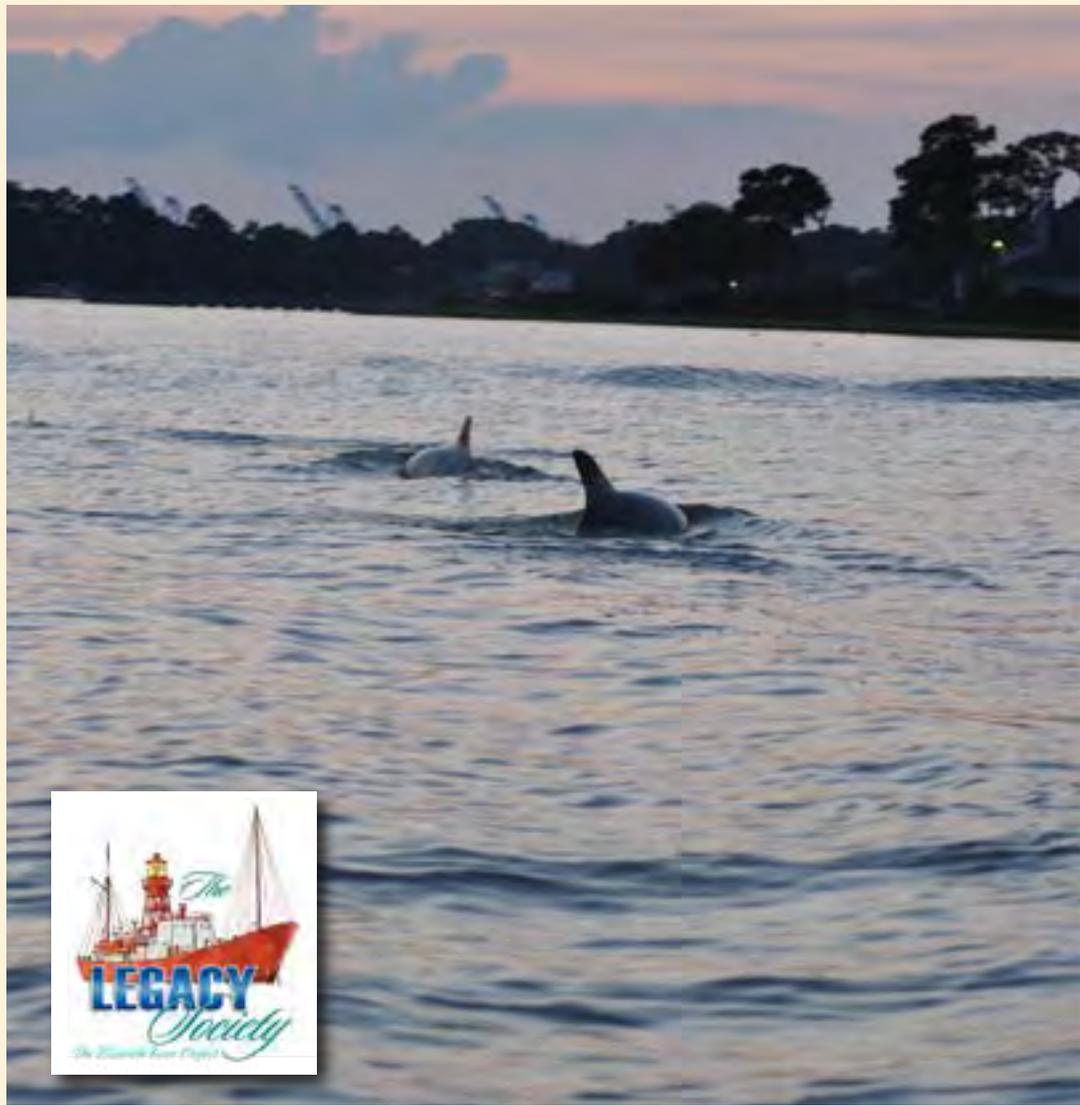


Scott's Creek is now home to this Bald Eagle and mate, tracked for us this spring by our bird blogger David Gibson. Follow his posts at <https://birdpartner.com/>

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Dolphins along the Lafayette branch of the Elizabeth in 2021. Photo by Kimberly Siebert.

Keep the wonder returning

Let your passion for the Elizabeth River live on, long beyond your years.

Since the first conversation around a kitchen table in 1991, these have been some of the watershed moments for the Elizabeth River Project:

- Cleaning up the “goo” – 36 million lbs. of river bottom contamination
- Launching the Learning Barge, “America’s Greenest Vessel”
- Establishing the region’s first urban river park, Paradise Creek Nature Park
- Making the Lafayette branch first in Virginia fully restored for oyster habitat

And there’s so much more to do... more than a lifetime.

Your legacy gift-through a bequest, charitable fund or other planned giving options will allow us to do the work of stewarding the Elizabeth River, forever.

Consider joining the Elizabeth River Project’s Legacy Society.

Contact Susan Smith, 757-399-7487,

ssmith@elizabethriver.org,

for your confidential conversation.

Leave your legacy  of a clean river. 9

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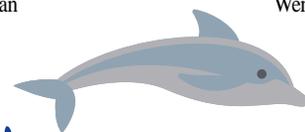
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Volunteer with Our Restoration Team

Wade in! Volunteer alongside Elizabeth River Project's scientists as they work throughout the summer to restore healthy shores. Volunteers needed for shifts up to five hours. Help build "living shorelines" and install oyster habitat.

Dates vary with the weather and tides; typically during the week. Strenuous work in hot weather. Get fit while helping the river get fit! Email Rachael Peabody, rpeabody@elizabethriver.org.



Keep river
life returning

Send your special gift today.
elizabethriver.org



Olivia Askew, planner, City of Hampton (far right), readies marsh plants for a living shoreline installation with Elizabeth River Project. Above top and opposite page, Joe Rieger, Elizabeth River Project, teaches wetland restoration. Above bottom, installing temporary fencing to protect the young plants from geese. "Oyster castles" armor the new shoreline.

Instant marshes - pioneer team reinvents healthy shores, thanks to YOU.

"Living shorelines" were once unheard of, but you've helped us make them the go-to approach.

The volunteer waggles her long spade in the new sand. Her instructor, Joe Rieger, Deputy Director – Restoration, Elizabeth River Project, drops a sprig of marsh grass into the hole, then tamps down around it with his foot.

"Boom! That's it," he says.

In minutes, rows of native marsh grasses cover the shore. It's a normal morning for our restoration staff and volunteers. They're working through a waiting list of homeowners eager for "living shorelines," restored wetlands typically anchored in place by manmade oyster reefs. Once little known but promoted for years by Elizabeth River Project, the practice creates wildlife habitat and filters pollution while stemming erosion. In a victory for conservation efforts, living shorelines recently became Virginia regulators' officially preferred approach for stabilizing shores.

Regional leader

On this spring morning, the shore is owned by two adjoining River Star Homes in Norfolk, but most of the volunteers work for the City of Hampton. "We're trying to make sure all our staff are knowledgeable," says Allison Jackura, Hampton's senior planner, helping unroll temporary fencing to protect the new marsh from geese.

As with recent guests from the James River Association and the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, these city staff are here to learn the approach first-hand. Thanks to you, donors and partners, Elizabeth River Project has become a regional leader in hands-on shoreline restoration and continues to experiment with new approaches.

Fish move in

At this site near DePaul Medical Center, five dump loads of sand along with recycled oyster

shells and concrete "oyster castles" were added earlier. Elsewhere in Norfolk, alongside more adjoining homes but along Elizabeth River Circle on the Eastern Branch, Rieger's team will become the first in the area to use "Bone-Rasta" structures, burlap dipped in concrete to elevate oysters out of the mud zone. These will be part of a large-scale oyster reef underway since spring with partners including Chesapeake Bay Foundation.

"Right away, fish started moving in," Rieger said.

Contact rpeabody@elizabethriver.org for a free site visit to evaluate your shore for a living shoreline next year. Thanks to grants and contracts with area cities, funds may be available to reduce costs.

Also consider volunteering with the restoration team. "It's a great free workout, and you're giving back to the river at the same time," says Rieger.

The summer you've needed.

From blackberry picking to kayaking and volunteering, meaningful river fun awaits your family.



Kayak 11 acres of restored wetlands at Elizabeth River Project's Paradise Creek Nature Park or enjoy the revitalized shore - free blackberry picking and more.

Hooray for summer - when life along a river is extra special. Join us for activities for all ages to connect with the ecosystem of the Elizabeth River. Thank you, members, for making all of our programs possible.



Paradise Creek Nature Park

Visit our 40-acre urban oasis at 1141 Victory Blvd., a partnership of Elizabeth River Project and City of Portsmouth.

Free blackberry picking - Our native blackberries should be ripe from late June to early July, mostly along the Osprey Trail. Pick at your leisure but please leave plenty for others including the birds. Early mornings suggested. Wear gloves, bring bucket.

Pre-registration required - all other activities
- ParadiseCreek.elizabethriver.org.

Bird walks - June 19, 8:30-10 am; July 17, 8:30-10 am. Ages 16+, \$5 pp.

Guided kayak paddles - June 26, Noon-2; July 31, 11 am -12:30 pm. Kayaks, paddles, life jackets, instructors/guides provided. No experience needed. Explore a restored wetland. \$30 Elizabeth River Project members, \$40 non-members (join today! Elizabethriver.org).

Volunteer service days - July 10, Aug. 7, 9 am - 11 am, free, ages 16+.

Meet the critters - July 17, Aug. 4, 11 am - Noon, free, all ages with Ranger Seana.

Fungi ID - July 24, 9 am -10 am, all ages. \$5.



Elizabeth River Project
Paradise Creek
Nature Park

