

Mudflats

Winter 2020

The newsletter for supporters of the Elizabeth River Project

Elizabeth
River
Project

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

ElizabethRiver.org

Plan for Resilience Lab builds momentum for river recovery

"One of the most promising projects in my lifetime for the health of the Elizabeth River"

– Norfolk Mayor Kenneth C. Alexander



The Elizabeth River Project's planned Resilience Lab, coming to the waterfront on North Colley Avenue.

The movement to restore the health of the Elizabeth River has taken on the most momentum ever, thanks to supporters like you and a campaign that will make possible a cutting-edge Resilience Lab in Norfolk while also expanding Elizabeth River Project's education efforts regionally.

Norfolk Mayor Kenneth Alexander calls the Resilience Lab, in final design for North Colley Avenue, "one of the most promising projects in my lifetime for the health of the Elizabeth River." Conceived with the help of Hampton University and University of Virginia student researchers and Work Program Architects, the Resilience Lab at 4610 Colley will showcase how to redevelop

in the urban floodplain in ways that safeguard river health as well as human quality of life.

Meanwhile, Dills Architects of Virginia Beach is donating more than \$100,000 in design services to expand Elizabeth River Project's River Academy at Paradise Creek Nature Park in Portsmouth. ***"There are very few groups out there that can make genuine environmental and social impact like the Elizabeth River Project,"*** said Clay Dills, principal of the firm, in announcing its donation.

The momentum is all part of the Elizabeth River Project's Next Wave campaign, launched in mid-June with a Facebook watch

The
Next
Wave
Elizabeth River Project

party and already our most popular campaign ever, despite the pandemic - or perhaps in part because of it.

"I think people are super-grateful right now for the solace of a river that's returning to life," says Marjorie Mayfield Jackson, Executive Director, Elizabeth River Project, "and super-glad for a chance to be part of taking the restoration of our home river to this next level in such a big way." (Cont'd p. 3)

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From the Executive Director

The fisher and the bulldozer



My neighbor was on his dock as I rowed past, my white lab, Sallee, at my feet. I dug in one oar to avoid the neighbor's fishing line. "Catch anything?" I asked, the idle, polite query that doesn't mean much more than "How you doing?" among passers-by on land.

"A 17-inch speckled trout," he answered, startling me - his voice quiet not to disturb the next one he said he hoped would fill out his dinner skillet. On the opposite shore, a bulldozer, commissioned by the City of Norfolk, rested from pushing sand to create the better part of a mile of new wetlands along the Lafayette branch of the Elizabeth.

Rowing on in a beautiful skiff my Bob built, I thought of them, fisher and bulldozer, as two parts of a new momentum hurling forward for the

restoration of the Elizabeth River. One part is the of reveling so many of us, especially in this pandemic, in the pleasure of an urban river returning to life. The other part is the restoration work gaining steam, and not just that of Elizabeth River Project, but also of many partners such as area Cities.

Our biggest challenge lately is to link these parts more strongly. If you are a member of Elizabeth River Project, thank you - you're a relatively small corps whose loyal support allowed us to work for decades as the catalysts to create this community-wide momentum. It will take a lot more of you to keep abreast of what is becoming, at last, a near tsunami of interest in large-scale gains for our home river and the projects that make them real.

"People have no idea of the number of fish in this little part of the river," the fisherman told me in a tone of quiet astonishment. Here's the only way we'll keep the momentum going and the fishes returning: Not yet a member? Join us with the enclosed card. Already a member? Your renewal is more important than ever. And please help us enlist others who #LoveLiz at ElizabethRiver.org.

Marjorie Mayfield Jackson
Executive Director

We've moved! Visit our Interim Field Station



Visit our new interim field station at 5205 Colley Avenue, Norfolk - just five blocks north of our planned 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 Ali McNaught, amcnaught@elizabethriver.org, for membership questions.



Be the first to know. Go to elizabethriver.org and click "Join our mailing list" at the top of the page.



The Resilience Lab will include a Learning Park with restored shores and a research dock, showcasing how to protect the river and you as sea levels rise.

Resilience Lab (Cont'd from p. 1)

If you're already part of the momentum with your gift to the Next Wave, thank you! Not yet a part of the movement? Please consider a special gift at elizabethriver.org. At least as important is #LoveLiz, our companion campaign to connect people to the joys of a living river while also increasing the number

of s whose generous support will be key to sustain Elizabeth River Project's restoration and education efforts long-term.

Campaign includes river education

The Next Wave also will support five years of Elizabeth River Project's pioneer river education programs at the 40-acre nature park,

an oasis of restored wetlands and revitalized urban forest, as well as aboard our Dominion Energy Learning Barge and throughout the region when students conduct hands-on stewardship projects for our Youth Resilience Expo.

These programs reach more than 10,000 students of all ages in a typical year. Your campaign gift makes possible meaningful outdoor ecology lessons for inner-city schools where as many as 100 percent of the students qualify for free or reduced price lunches.

Nationally important for resilience

Work Program Architects (WPA) is designing the Resilience Lab for the waterfront on Knitting Mill Creek. Building on earlier research by multiple community partners as well as University of Virginia students into how to improve the urban creek, architect students at Hampton University held a planning "charrette" with WPA, Elizabeth River Project and multiple stakeholders in fall 2019.

The result: A concept now being funded by the Next Wave, with your help, to demonstrate how citizens and businesses can continue to live and work in the urban floodplain for the next 30 to 50 years, even as communities like Norfolk experience accelerated sea level rise. (Cont'd p. 4)

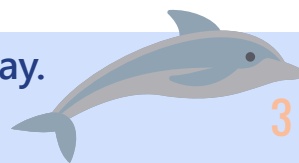


Renderings, Work Program Architects. The project will replace a dilapidated marina and aging building.

Keep river life returning



Send your special gift today.
elizabethriver.org



Kayaks ready for The Next Wave

Thank you, Sharon McQueen, and wonderful friends!



Sharon McQueen, volunteer, tells WAVY-TV 10 about the kayak fleet that she and neighbors made possible for Elizabeth River Project.

As soon as Norfolk resident Sharon McQueen heard about Elizabeth River Project's Next Wave campaign, she made up her mind to help.

An avid kayaker, McQueen was entranced by the campaign's plans for a Resilience Lab on the waterfront along North Colley. When she spied a set of six matching used kayaks for sale, she thought, "ERP needs these!" She set out to raise funds from her Winona neighbors, friends, family and businesses to obtain the little boats as a fleet for cleanups, tours and the like at our coming location.

Within weeks, she had gathered cash and in-kind donations to Elizabeth River Project from no less than 25 donors, most of them first-time members. The nearly \$1,700 was enough to buy the kayaks, make minor repairs and add paddles, life jackets, a cart and even a storage rack, hand-made by two next-door neighbors.

McQueen explained in a WAVY 10 feature on the project that she and her husband, Richard, often enjoy the river by boat. "It's really important to us that the water is clean and safe," McQueen told WAVY.

Thanks, Sharon, for setting a great example by inviting others to join the momentum of the Next Wave by becoming members of the Elizabeth River Project. Donors like you provide the critical support that makes our long-term work possible to restore "Liz" to health and educate future river stewards.



The Resilience Lab: Going to the front lines of the national struggle for urban waterfront resilience.

(Cont'd from p. 3)

"We're going to the frontlines of the struggle to be resilient along the urban waterfront," says Jackson.

The elevated building, with solar panels, a green roof and living walls, will be surrounded by a Learning Park and docks where student and partner research will be on display. Old Dominion University is co-locating its resilience efforts across the street. Norfolk State University is planning projects ranging from art to science.

With the Next Wave, Elizabeth River Project can achieve a whole new level of community engagement not only for resilience, but for our additional challenges to clean the river bottom, restore healthy waters and shores and educate a new generation of river stewards – with your help.

Return a special gift today with the enclosed card. And find out how you can support the Next Wave campaign at elizabethriver.org, or contact Susan Smith, 757-407-1406, ssmith@elizabethriver.org.



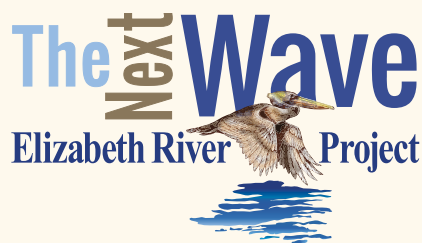
Hampton University architecture students work on early ideas for the Resilience Lab. Students from University of Virginia, Norfolk State University and Old Dominion University also contributed research with much more collaboration to come.

Next Wave bolsters the mission in Portsmouth

Help expand education facilities for one of river's last wild places, Paradise Creek Nature Park



Artist's rendering by Dills Architects for expanding Elizabeth River Project's River Academy at Paradise Creek Nature Park.



This is how much demand there is for wild places along the urban Elizabeth River.

Beneath a towering elm at Paradise Creek Nature Park, George Bangs, one of the Thursday morning regular volunteers, is trying out his new invention. He's fixed a wrench to the bottom of long boards to help the team pull out invasive saplings.

The Elizabeth River Garden Club is nearby, touring the location for a shade garden they plan to install with Elizabeth River Project's conservation educators.

And inside our two-room Beazley River Academy, made possible by you, generous supporters of Elizabeth River Project, the day's lessons await Portsmouth teenage youth. They're earning job-ready certification as Virginia's first Chesapeake Bay Landscape Professionals, junior level.

A partnership of Elizabeth River Project and the City of Portsmouth, these 40 acres of restored wetlands and revitalized forest are a work-in-progress that can seem like a three-

ring circus. With your help, our Next Wave campaign will expand the River Academy to keep up with burgeoning demand for programs like our new Forest School for pre-K to 2nd grade - sold out this fall.

John Joyce, a volunteer working with Bangs to reclaim the area around the elm, told us it's "a delight and a pleasure" to be part of the park's story, which he describes as "the rebirth of nature from human abuse and neglect."

Visit paradisecreek.elizabethriver.org for upcoming programs and consider a Next Wave gift. Through Dec. 31, your gift will be matched 1:1 for our education programs.



Exploring the park's restored wetlands is a favorite activity for youth programs.



*"Such a perfect day! Just what the soul needed!"
#LoveLiz post from Kay-tee Tracey, regarding her family's visit to Paradise Creek Nature Park.*

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-winning restoration and education programs. To find out more about our donor societies contact Susan Smith at (757) 399-7487 (O) or (757)407-1406 (cell) or ssmith@elizabethriver.org.

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(Cont'd p. 8)



Keith Maples of Virginia Beach greets a thrilling visitor: Dolphins were spotted in every branch of the Elizabeth River this summer.

Dolphins join returning river life, thanks to you!

Community finds covid relief with sightings of dolphins, otters, eagles, minks and more

When a pod of eight dolphins cruised by his home on the Eastern Branch of the Elizabeth this summer, Keith Maples joined them by kayak. His wife, Denise, enjoyed the pod's tail-smacking show.

"Every day the Elizabeth River brings a new thrill," she posted

with the photo for our #LoveLiz campaign, launched last spring with the arrival of covid to encourage people to find solace in the life returning to our home river.

The campaign also celebrates YOU, for achieving a healthier Elizabeth - whether you're one of our 5,890 River Star Homes, 160 River Star Schools and 134 River Star Businesses; a generous donor making these programs possible, or a regional partner taking on companion river restoration projects.

At press time this issue, we were awaiting a big announcement about our work with the state and other partners to restore oysters throughout the Maples' Eastern Branch. Meanwhile, on one of the most industrialized rivers in

America, our River Star Businesses have voluntarily prevented no less than 356 million pounds of pollution since 1997.

And our River Star Homes have helped us create a whopping 46 "living shorelines" since 2014 alone, bringing back wetlands for the fish, otters, minks, eagles and more you're posting on #LoveLiz.

**True love flows two ways.
Thanks for loving Liz and the joy
she brings us all in return.**

The Next Wave
Elizabeth River Project



Aimee & Frank Batten, honorary campaign chairs

“The restoration of the river with the Elizabeth River Project is really a miracle.

It's the story of the river coming back to life – and not only has it come back to life, it's brought all of our community together to clean it up.

So we hope that you will help to keep it clean.”

*-Aimee Batten, honorary co-chair with her husband, Frank Batten,
of the Elizabeth River Project's Next Wave Campaign.*

The Battens offered a \$1 million challenge to launch the campaign. Their challenge has now been met and a new donor has offered an additional \$100,000 challenge to match your gift dollar for dollar through Dec.31. Funds will be designated to education goals of the campaign.

**Make your Next Wave gift at Elizabethriver.org,
or contact Susan Smith, ssmith@elizabethriver.org, 757-407-1406.**

Deepest thanks to our members

Contributions received from Oct. 1, 2019-Sept. 30, 2020

(Cont'd from p. 8)

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Giant elm rescued

Thank you to the Elizabeth River Garden Club for a \$1,200 donation and volunteer help with native shade plants to replace invasives beneath this elm at our Paradise Creek Nature Park. Here, the tree gets a young visitor during Forest School.

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Photo: Yung-Han Chang

Look to our river's future

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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(Cont'd from p. 9)

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World's only sailing tugboat races for Liz

The Norfolk Rebel raises momentum for a healthier Elizabeth

It wasn't fun that a pandemic kept the real crew home. But it was great fun and a huge windfall for Elizabeth River Project when the boat's biggest "crew" ever, more than 80 donors, brought the Norfolk Rebel in for a close second in this year's Great Chesapeake Bay Schooner Race.

Traditionally from Baltimore to the Elizabeth, this year's race was virtual with winners determined by which boat got the most donations Oct. 14-17 for the vessel's favorite cause. The world's only sailing tugboat, formerly owned by the race's founder, the late Capt. Lane Briggs, the Rebel raised \$17,191 for the Elizabeth River Project.

Thanks, crew – that's a lot of wind in our sails for the greater health of the lower bay.



River Star Homes: 5,980

restoring river life. Join at riverstarhomes.org

A new way to stargaze: River Star Businesses to be celebrated virtually

Save the date for Jan. 21 virtual celebration with new perks



The Naval Support Annex, Lafayette branch, installed oyster habitat with Elizabeth River Project in July – just one of many River Star facilities we'll celebrate for "doin' right by the river" despite covid. Photo: Kevin DuBois

It felt so great to get outside and do something positive together for the river this spring that the Navy team at its Lafayette annex is captured in an exuberant photo, literally leaping for joy, face masks and all, as they complete an oyster habitat project.

The pandemic didn't stop Norfolk Southern, either, from carrying out a River Star Business initiative with Elizabeth River Project. The Fortune 500 constructed a living shoreline that's three football lengths long with new

wetlands, oyster habitat and other natural erosion controls.

Celebrate these and other remarkable achievements at Elizabeth River Project's annual River Star Businesses Recognition Event on Thursday, Jan. 21. Mark your calendar: The main event is virtual and free, from 10 am – 11 am.

New this year is the option to order a River Star Business face mask – and sign up for a happy hour celebration later the same day, at 4 pm.

The reception is virtual, too, but sponsored by Smartmouth Brewing with tentative plans for delivery of real brew right to your door.

River Star Businesses is a free program of the Elizabeth River Project providing technical assistance and public recognition for facilities in the Elizabeth River watershed when they document measurable, voluntary results in pollution prevention and wildlife habitat.

Find out more: RiverStarBusinesses.org, Pam Boatwright, pboatwright@elizabethriver.org.

River lessons "barge on," despite covid.

Learning Barge on Wheels takes to the streets, thanks to YOU!

Maybe this isn't a real barge, docked on the river. But when The Learning Barge on Wheels arrived from the graphics shop, a repurposed van wrapped in a detailed panorama of wetlands, crabs, dolphins, river map and more, it mesmerized environmental educator Summer Brown.

"She just kept walking around it, and walking around it," says Robin Dunbar, deputy director – education for Elizabeth River Project.

In normal times, Brown is the program manager for Elizabeth River Project's Dominion Energy Learning Barge, a 120-foot-long steel barge with a live wetland. These

aren't normal times. While still available for small groups, with social distancing required, our normally sold-out barge field trips have been off bounds to most students during covid. So thanks to generous donors like you, we're taking some of the barge's outdoor activities on the road.

Elizabeth River Crossings, the tunnel company, paid for purchase of the used van. Members of Elizabeth River Project like you have made possible the new graphics, a van load of science lessons with a special focus on the Blue Crab - and free visits to neighborhoods and school parking lots. Ray Wicker, waterman, is donating live blue crabs. Available for groups of up to 15 students, ages



pre-K through 12th grade. An adult must host. Masks (free Blue Crab masks provided) and covid waiver required.

Thank you for helping us provide quality science education, no matter what. Not yet a member? Reply today with the enclosed card. To book a field trip with one of our barges (large or small), contact Summer Brown, sbrown@elizabethriver.org.

"The goo is going" – two big clean ups speed river health

Thank you to EPA, Living River Trust and YOU for progress with cleaning up toxic hotspots

The young scientist had a problem. Sent by boat to test the health of fish in the Elizabeth River, in a stretch near the Atlantic Wood creosote plant, he couldn't find any. High levels of toxic contamination in the river mud had rendered parts of the Southern Branch of the river practically devoid of life.

"I vividly recall trawling for an hour and a half and we got one toad fish," recalled David Paylor, now director of the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality. Paylor's remarks helped mark a July 28 celebration of a \$100 million cleanup of the Atlantic Wood site by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in collaboration with many interests including Elizabeth River Project.

Scientists now testing that stretch of water say cancer in the fish has dropped dramatically following a cleanup project decades in the making. The EPA hosted the event, citing clean up of 35 acres of river bottom contaminated with creosote and heavy metals.

Following the event, Regional EPA Administrator Cosmo Servidio and EPA Project Manager Randy Sturgeon humored Elizabeth River Project by literally jumping for joy (see photo) – since addressing contamination in the river's toxic hotspots has been our top priority for decades. School children and legislators know our slogan: "The goo must go!"

Paradise Creek to get pioneer PCB cleanup

Meanwhile, the non-profit Living River Trust is also making the goo go. In a nearly \$6 million pioneer project, managed in the field



Getting the "goo gone" at Atlantic Wood was decades in the making. The Environmental Protection Agency's Regional Administrator Cosmo Servidio (L) and project manager Randy Sturgeon show the joy following a July 28 event marking project marking the project's substantial completion.

by Dave Koubsky, formerly of Elizabeth River Project staff (go Dave!), pellets of

activated carbon, a purifying material, will be placed along the river floor in Paradise Creek in Portsmouth.



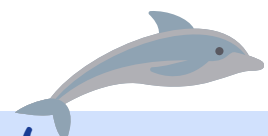
The project officially launched in September and will reduce potential harm to river life from PCBs, a chemical compound once used in transformers and correlated with cancer.

More hotspots remain. Thank you for supporting the Elizabeth River Project in our work to act as the catalyst for many partners to join in the restoration of the Elizabeth River. Your special gift today really helps.

A cleanup of PCB's is underway for the bottom of Paradise Creek, Portsmouth. VIMS begins tests.



Your gift means more than ever!



elizabethriver.org