

Mudflats

SUMMER 2023

ELIZABETH RIVER PROJECT

5205 Colley Ave., Norfolk, VA 23508 | ElizabethRiver.org

The Elizabeth River Earns Two A's – Thank You!

Sneak Peek - Elizabeth River Scorecard 2023

Astounding news for an urban river once presumed dead: Overall grade of “A” for Dissolved Oxygen.

That’s the most telling indicator of what fish need to be healthy (basically, is there enough oxygen for them to breathe?) Our committee of more than a dozen area scientists have agreed on that grade and other encouraging news to be released shortly in the official 2023 Elizabeth River Scorecard.

Congratulations and many thanks to our members, partners and supporters. Together you are making restoration of the Elizabeth River a reality.

Hamish Small, Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS), said he found only one site where the indicator fish for PAH exposure, the mummichog, showed a high prevalence of liver cancer. When the institute began



Dissolved oxygen gets an A this scorecard – a key indicator for healthy fish like this puppy drum, recently caught by Reid, 8, of Portsmouth, from the Elizabeth - once thought dead.

studying mummichog health in the river decades ago, cancer indicators were the norm across multiple sites.

A trawl survey found more than 30 fish species in the Main Stem. “Importantly, we confirmed the use of the Elizabeth River as a nursery habitat for juvenile

American Shad and Blueback Herring. These species are under a fishing moratorium due to historically low numbers,” regionally - making their presence in the Elizabeth more great news, notes Troy Tuckey, VIMS. See the draft scorecard, page 3.

This Goo Will Go! Thanks to Congress - State Help Next

Severe Contamination Targeted - “Money Point III,” South Norfolk

US Congressman Robert C. “Bobby” Scott stood on the sandy banks of a site long studied by regional scientists for its high rates of cancer in fish.

The Elizabeth River Project, he said, had told him the Elizabeth will not recover until the site is cleaned up. He handed over a symbolic giant check for \$11.25 million, funded by Congress for the US Army Corps of Engineers to tackle the

third and final phase of removing PAH contamination at Money Point, off-shore of South Norfolk, where a defunct creosote plant once operated.

“The goo must go!” agreed state and local legislators, repeating our rallying cry for cleaning up the river bottom. Next, the state will need to budget \$3.75 million to meet the Corps’ requirement for matching funds.



State, local and federal officials celebrate \$11.25 allocated by Congress to clean up “Money Point III.”

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From the Executive Director



Photo by Eric Lusher

The rainbow that made me think of you

I was sitting on my dock one late afternoon with my husband Bob and a funny bit of rain spitting through the sunshine. I was telling Bob about the unique demands of my day at Elizabeth River Project; something about the challenges of planning programs for our Ryan Resilience Lab, for which so much is hoped but for which the true nature of the space can only be imagined, since construction is still underway.

An enormous rainbow arced across the river. We tried to count the many deep hues and gave up, lost in wonder.

Life at Elizabeth River Project often feels like that for me lately. You, members and partners, have believed the vision of a healthier river into a reality I often find wondrous beyond my imagining.

Grades of “A’s” overall for dissolved oxygen and bacteria, on the latest Elizabeth River scorecard? We never dared hope for that. A first-class angler told me recently that the Elizabeth is now the most popular fishing spot in the region. Gosh, our urban river?

Let’s keep going, y’all. There are still sections and parameters of the river earning “F.” But maybe not for so long as I once would have predicted.

Your support makes possible the wonder of a reviving river once presumed dead. Thanks for returning your special gift with the enclosed card today.

Marjorie Mayfield Jackson,
Executive Director

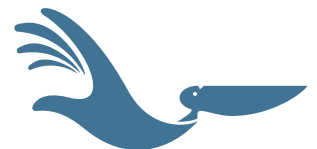


Discovering “Paradise”

Students from Portsmouth’s I.C. Norcom High School visit Paradise Creek Nature Park with our park manager, Larry LaPell (center). The students planted trees, met wildlife and lunched with visiting lecturer Lauren Pharr, co-founder of Field Inclusive, bridging the gap between people of color and natural sciences.

Mission – To restore the Elizabeth River through equitable collaboration with diverse communities, businesses and governments.

JOIN the Elizabeth River Project. Our mission is made possible by generous members like you. Email Jessica Pinsky, jpinsky@elizabethriver.org, for membership questions. 757-399-7487 | elizabethriver.org



**ELIZABETH RIVER
PROJECT**

This entire mailing was printed on recycled paper with soy ink



“Paradise” Expands, Thanks to Next Wave Campaign – Elizabeth River Project’s education headquarters, the Fred W. Beazley River Academy, expanded May 13 at Paradise Creek Nature Park in Portsmouth. Students gather for a field trip under the new outdoor pavilion (top). Ken Kimball, board president, Elizabeth River Project, and Portsmouth Mayor Shannon Glover cut the ribbon for the academy’s new lecture hall and work spaces (bottom right). Bottom left, Jane Batten (L), lead funder for the expansion, fills a birdbath handmade by park volunteers along with Brandon Corprew (middle), recent graduate of a Youth Conservation Internship at the park, and Lauren Pharr, avian ecologist. Pharr, co-founder of Field Inclusive, presented the kickoff lecture for our new Urban Nature series at the park.

Scorecard cont’d from p. 1

Sneak Peek - Elizabeth River Scorecard 2023

Dissolved Oxygen	Key to fish health; improving river-wide. Amount of oxygen present for fish to breathe.	A
Bacteria (enterococci – related to safe recreation)	Promising! Note, no determination of safe or unsafe swimming has been made since there are no public beaches where water quality can be monitored with sufficient frequency. ¹	A
Bacteria (fecal coliform – related to safe shellfish consumption)	Western Branch degrading, Lafayette improving. Shellfish beds throughout the river remain closed to harvest based on complex additional factors. Eastern Branch, Southern Branch not monitored.	B
Water clarity	Average C; Western Branch, Lafayette = D	C
Nitrogen	Improving trend	B
Phosphorous	Still failing – Broad Creek, Indian River	D
Chlorophyll-A	Pigment in algae; associated with algal blooms	C
Bottom “benthic” life	Most improved: Southern Branch	D

Overall score for each parameter as graded by area scientists for data 2017-2022

¹ Regarding recreation safety, be mindful of *Vibrio vulnificus*, a naturally occurring, potentially deadly bacteria increasing in many shallow tidal waters with climate change.



ELIZABETH RIVER
PROJECT

MAKE YOUR MARK ON THE FUTURE

MAKE A NAMING GIFT TO
THE RYAN RESILIENCE LAB

Together, We Can Do Something Beautiful

To raise support and awareness for the future-minded mission of the Ryan Resilience Lab, The Elizabeth River Project is offering a number of different naming opportunities.

Your gift will serve as a lasting reminder of the pivotal role our community plays in responding to sea level rise, and will help protect people, places and coastal ecosystems everywhere, for years to come. And thanks to a generous grant from the Mary Morton Parsons Foundation, **every gift will be matched one-to-one, doubling your impact!**

YES!

Put my name on the Next Wave to support the Ryan Resilience Lab.

NAMING OPPORTUNITIES

- Perry Outdoor Classroom Learning Stations** **LAST CHANCE!** *Offered at \$2,500*
Sustainable, durable, multi-seat worktables will feature your name and a cohesive design with the Ryan Resilience Lab
- Perry Boardwalk Plaques** *Offered at \$1,000*
Traversing TowneBank Learning Park and the river's edge, the highly visible Perry Boardwalk will feature named donor plaques
- Oyster Castles** *Offered at \$500*
Help support vital habitat for the native oyster, a keystone species on the Elizabeth River
- TowneBank Learning Park Plantings** *Offered at \$175*
You'll fund a square foot of wetland habitat planted with native *Spartina* grasses to support local wildlife and reduce pollution

PAYMENT METHOD

- Check *Make payable to Elizabeth River Project*
 - Credit Card
 - Amex
 - Discover
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- Account Number _____
- Exp. Date _____ CVC Code _____
- Name on Card _____

MY INFO

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email _____

Mail in the above form to 5205 Colley Avenue, Norfolk, VA 23508, or make your mark online at ElizabethRiver.org.



Louis Ryan (L) and Norfolk Mayor Kenneth Alexander attend the “topping out” ceremony to place the highest beam on the coming Ryan Resilience Lab. Louis and his wife Pru are the generous leading donors. Add your name to this pioneer project – page 4.



The Ryan Lab drew the best turnout of any recent hard hat tour of the American Institute of Architects, Hampton Roads Chapter. Mike Fox, Stromberg/Garrigan & Associates (R), explains the “living shoreline” underway, replacing a failing marina.



Two giant cisterns, 5,000 gallons each, will save rain water for re-use to flush the Ryan Lab toilets. Here, architects observe them on the tour.

Ryan Resilience Lab Nears Completion, N. Colley Ave.

Next Wave Campaign Project Will Teach Ecosystem Resilience

The aging pier and bulkhead are gone. New pilings are in place for the circular Perry Family Boardwalk, to arch over a new wetland.

Further upland, fronting busy North Colley Avenue in Norfolk, three stories now rise, including, on the second floor, the soaring ceilings and sweeping views of the Brock River Room. Out front, a

floating pavilion is roughed in – the Goode Entry Pavilion, to offer refuge during future flooding.

This is the Elizabeth River Project’s Pru and Louis Ryan Resilience Lab, the signature project of the Next Wave Campaign. Save the date for the Grand Opening, Saturday, Oct. 14, 2023 – thanks to many generous supporters.

It’s not too late to name your own piece of the future. The Ryan Lab will demonstrate cutting edge but accessible practices for adapting to Norfolk’s extraordinary rates of sea level rise, in ways that protect the ecosystem as well as humans.

[Find your naming opportunity, p. 4](#)

These Businesses Did Something REALLY Beautiful

River Stars Celebrate Mega Pollution Reductions, Habitat Gains

Only one sector could achieve such mega results.

This sector has reduced pollution voluntarily on the Elizabeth River by more than 373 million pounds.

They've also found the open space along this mega-developed, urban river to restore or conserve 2,512 acres of wildlife habitat.

You've got it: The business sector. "Our River Star Businesses have been voluntarily leading the way to the restoration of the Elizabeth River since 1997," says Marjorie Mayfield

Jackson, Executive Director, Elizabeth River Project, citing those results as cumulative since the free River Star program debuted that year.

Most recently, River Star Businesses grew to a record 148 organizations feted at our 26th annual recognition luncheon for them, held Jan. 19, 2023 at Founder's Inn and Spa. Facilities document measurable results for peer review and range from some of the world's leading maritime industries to universities, municipality departments, places of worship, non-profits and mom and pop stores.

Virginia Wesleyan University won Inside Business Hall of Fame for exemplifying sustainability throughout its campus. Advancing to "Model Level" were shipping giant CMA CGM (America) and Lady Fern's Native Plants on Knitting Mill Creek.

Find out if River Star Businesses is right for you:
riverstarbusinesses.org
or contact Pam Boatwright,
pboatwright@elizabethriver.org.



CMA CGM installs aquatic plants in a stormwater pond at its North American HQ.



Virginia Wesleyan students plant a wetland, helping earn Inside Business River Star Hall of Fame



Native gardens surround Virginia Wesleyan's Greer Environmental Sciences Center



Erick Pinzon quietly cruises the creek on one of his electric craft. His Electrified Marina is part of our new EcoDistrict.

“Eco-District” to Promote a Healthy Knitting Mill Creek

Eco-Minded Businesses & Residents to Launch Creek Restoration Plan

Down one of these blocks is the region’s only marina renting all-electric watercraft. Opening soon, Electrified Marina can set you up with the quietest jet ski you’ll ever ride, or an also quiet, electric runabout with a party canopy.

Around the corner: The only storefront in the area retailing all-native plants. That’s Lady Fern’s Native Plants, where owner Nikole Knudson recaptures enough rain to keep all her inventory watered.

Those are just two of more than a dozen eco-minded businesses joining together with Elizabeth River Project’s coming Ryan Resilience Lab as the nucleus of a new “Eco-District,” launching this fall with a new logo, street flags and the hope that other business and residents of Norfolk’s North Colley and adjoining communities will join together to restore Knitting Mill Creek.

Our vision: “A model for urban waterways everywhere,” spelled out in a new restoration plan for the creek, developed over the last two years by

Elizabeth River Project with more than 100 stakeholders and funding from National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

The plan seeks equity as well as environmental restoration. Stay tuned for the launch, dubbed the “Eco-Ex” (Ex-citement, Ex-pedition, Ex-plore!) pairing the grand opening of the Ryan Lab with a scavenger hunt and other activities (including free electric boat rides) presented by participating Eco-District businesses.

More info: Luísa Black Ellis, lblack@elizabethriver.org.



An Indigo Bunting (left) perches outside our expanded River Academy at Paradise Creek Nature Park. Note the “anti-bird strike” dots on the window to keep birds from flying into the glass (a top cause of songbird death). Meanwhile a Pileated Woodpecker (right) explores the park woodlands. Your membership makes possible ongoing revitalization of habitat throughout the 40-acre park – thank you.

Deepest thanks to our donor circles

The Elizabeth River Project is proud to recognize members of our leadership giving circles. Thank you for contributing \$250 or more annually to support our award-winning restoration and education programs. Join us! For more information, contact Susan Smith at 757-399-7487 or 757-407-1406 (c) or ssmith@elizabethriver.org. Contributions received October 1, 2022 – April 30, 2023



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Goode Family Foundation
The Landmark Foundation
Perry Family Foundation
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In Kind Gifts received Oct. 1, 2022 – May 15, 2023

Bay Environmental, Inc.	Elizabeth River Garden Club	Orchestra and Show Choir
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“All Hands on Deck” - Students Do Their Part

Eighteen Youth Groups Carry Out Resilience Projects



Students from Norfolk's St. Helena Elementary School pose after planting wetland grasses with us at Norfolk's Camp Young on the Elizabeth.

They planted 1,000 wetland grasses.

They picked up 430 pounds of trash, planted milkweed for butterflies and trees to absorb runoff. They grew 6,000 oysters to filter the river.

“We need all hands on deck if we’re going to create a sustainable future for our community,” said Granby High School’s Evelyn Page, addressing participating for her third year in our Youth Resilience Expo.

A total of 18 schools and other youth groups participated in this spring’s Expo, with special thanks to Hampton Roads Community Foundation and you, our generous members and partners. “Above and Beyond Winner 2023” was the Hague School, creating a sustainable garden and composting project that students estimated saved 386 net pounds of CO2 its first month.

Congratulations and special thanks to Blair Middle School, Camp E.W. Young,

Chithum Elementary/Girl Scout Troop 772, Cradock Elementary, Granby High/Evelyn Page, the Hague School, IC Norcom High, the Kent Family of youth water monitors, Maury High/Garden Club, Maury High/Surfrider Club, Oyster Project Summer Camp – Portsmouth Public Schools, Tarrallton Elementary, Westhaven Elementary, Kingston Elementary, Lindenwood Elementary, Sherwood Forest Elementary, Park Place School and Christopher Academy.



Former Governor & First Lady Roll Up Sleeves - Former Virginia Governor Ralph Northam and Pamela Northam have moved from the Governor’s Mansion to the shores of the Elizabeth River in Norfolk. So naturally, he’s joined in as one of our “spat catcher” volunteers, dangling an oyster cage off his dock to help us count how many baby oysters (spat) attach. Even better, the former First Lady – also a former science teacher - has joined our staff as part-time Education and Public Relations Associate.

“The river inspired me to make art”

Sculptor donates curlews carved from salvaged wood

As a kid, fishing the Elizabeth, Spencer Tinkham became fascinated by the trash he picked up along the shore. “Some I’d throw away and the cool stuff, I’d keep,” he recalls. Eventually, his parents told him he needed to do something with all that cool stuff.

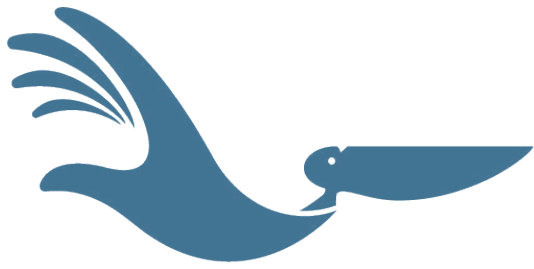
Thus the beginnings of Tinkham’s current life as a celebrated Norfolk sculptor.

He’s just donated to us his “Preening Curlew,” two elegant, long-billed birds carved from an old cypress post salvaged from the Nansemond River. The bills are the tines of a pitchfork that once bailed hay on Deal Island. Rods elevating the curlews are from the Elizabeth’s Eastern Branch.

Now the curlews will grace our coming Ryan Resilience Lab, where art will marry with science to touch both the heart and mind. “The river is what inspired me to make art,” Tinkham says, so he it makes him happy to give back – especially since he has seen a “shocking” increase in the diversity of fish since his childhood.

You, too, can give back to the river. Return your special gift with the enclosed card.





ELIZABETH RIVER
PROJECT

PARADISE CREEK
NATURE PARK

Join us for Paradise Creek Nature Park Programs

Volunteer Service Days
Summer Bird Walks
Yoga in Nature
Art in Nature
FREE! Family Nature Walks
Guided Kayaking Tours

FREE! Blackberry Foraging
Native Plant Sale
Hispanic Heritage Nature Walks
Family Fun Nature Movie nights
Resilient River Teacher Training

Presented by the Elizabeth River Project

1009 Victory Boulevard, Portsmouth, VA 23702

Open to the Public: March-October 6:30 am-7:30 pm

November-February 7 am-5:30 pm

Park 757-392-7132 | ElizabethRiver.org



NEW!

Urban Nature SATURDAY SERIES

**Lectures & Celebrations
of Nature Co-Existing
with Our Busy City Lives**
at Paradise Creek Nature Park!

Mosaic Steel Orchestra

Date: Saturday, July 22 | 11:00 am-12:30 pm

Target age: all ages, children accompanied by adults

Cost: Free, donations are welcome to help us clean up the Elizabeth River.

Nothing says summer like sunlight, lush green spaces, popsicles, and the shimmering sounds of steel drums. Dr. Anthony Hailey will be leading the Mosaic Steel Orchestra in a community performance with cultural beauty and tradition. Be transported to a Caribbean retreat and support Mosaic's mission to foster accessibility to the arts in marginalized communities, encouraging diversity in the arts.

Register online at ElizabethRiver.org/events.

What Hides in the Tides?

Art Exhibit Opening and Family Workshop

Saturday, September 2 | 10:30 am-12:00 pm
(art also on display through Dec. 2).

Target age: all ages, children accompanied by adults

Cost: \$10 members, \$15 not-yet-members (children under 10 - free).

Two artists with teaching backgrounds, Vicky Tavernier and Jenifer Borg of Athens, Ga., will debut a mixed media exhibit with an accompanying workshop. Their collages of found materials highlight the variety of life in tidal pools such as mummichogs

(the Elizabeth River's very own indicator fish), octopi, barnacles, crabs, and nudibranchs. Each collage is accompanied by a poem. The workshop will begin with a brief introduction to the exhibit and a fun scavenger hunt. Participants will then make their own collage or sculpture, using a wide variety of found materials, and write a short poem or story about their real or imagined creature. More on the artists: www.tavernierandborgbooks.com.

Register online at ElizabethRiver.org/events.

Wellness in Nature Lecture & Performance

Date: September 9 | 10:00 am – 12:00 pm

Target age: 16 and above

Cost: Free, donations are welcome to help us clean up the Elizabeth River

Date: September 9 | 10:00 am – 12:00 pm

Target age: 16 and above

Cost: Free, donations are welcome to help us clean up the Elizabeth River

Experience a new nature soundscape, set to the beat of the drum, encouraging participants to use their gifts and talents. This interactive performance and lecture by LaTreice V. Branson will guide participants to re-imagine wellness, flow to a rested life, and connect with our home river. LaTreice V. Branson, MFA, GISFA, is an award-winning educator, speaker, musician, interdisciplinary artist, disability advocate and radical wellness.

Register online at ElizabethRiver.org/events.

