

mudflats

NEWSLETTER OF THE

Elizabeth River Project
Making restoration a reality.



MAKING RESTORATION A REALITY

ANNUAL REPORT 2010

WWW.ELIZABETHRIVER.ORG

Help Make the Lafayette River Safe for Swimming **New Plan Can Make The Difference**

The goal is ambitious, to make the Lafayette River, an urban watershed in the heart of Norfolk, safe for swimming by 2014. The main problem on this residential branch of the Elizabeth isn't toxic chemicals but harmful bacteria that can make you sick.

Recent research by the Elizabeth River Project, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Hampton Roads

*We're
adding 250
"Scoop the
Poop" stations.*

Sanitation District, the state Department of Environmental Quality and the City of Norfolk,

shows there's a simple way you can help: pick up the waste left behind by our pets. To help with related goals to restore healthy wildlife, you also need to reduce fertilizers on your lawn.



River Star Schools take the lead planting marsh grasses at the Virginia Zoo, one of our River Star facilities on the Lafayette River.

There used to be just two water quality stations on the entire Lafayette system. Thanks to donors like you, we've been able to work with partners to set up 13 new ones throughout the river to get a sense of where the Lafayette's health now stands. Researchers discovered that many sections of the Lafayette are already safe for swimming – but only if your timing is perfect.

Each monitoring site was sampled 14 times, under a variety of weather conditions. If the weather had been dry for a few days, the bacteria levels at most of the stations were within standards for swimming. But any time the 21-square-mile watershed got a half-inch of rain or more, those harmful bacteria levels quickly spiked into the danger zone.

Continued on page 4

Achieve a Swimmable, Fishable River Through Your United Way Gift

Please remember the Elizabeth River Project when you chose which charity will benefit from your United Way contribution this fall. Funds go directly toward achieving a fishable, swimmable Elizabeth River.

How to designate United Way contributions to the Elizabeth River Project:

Combined Federal Campaign – choose **61887**

Combined Virginia Campaign – choose **3735**

Combined Charities Campaign – write in **"Elizabeth River Project"**



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We Will Make the Lafayette River as Safe as She is Beautiful



From the
Executive Director

The river looks especially lovely when you are nearly at eye level with the surface, stroking your quiet oars through the Lafayette branch, hardly disturbing the multitudes of egrets in the lush wetland grasses that line so much of that shallow shore.

For me, a new member of the Hampton Roads Rowing Club, launching from Lakewood Park, there's an ache to the loveliness. If rain has recently fallen, I risk illness if I fall in; the storm having added its usual load of contamination washed off our lawns and streets. Even the Lafayette, our residential

finger of

the Elizabeth, is not safe for swimming, nor for eating the once-famous Norfolk oyster.

But I also feel hope as I practice my sculling and taste the salty-sweet spray. Thanks to you, our supporters and partners, there's a new plan afoot to restore the Lafayette River as the first branch of the Elizabeth to be safe for swimming and fishing — by 2014, we hope.

In a rare combining of strengths, the Elizabeth River Project and the Chesapeake Bay Foundation last year convened a 100-member steering committee to plan what to do about the Lafayette. They set three goals:

- 1) Reduce bacteria until all practical branches of the Lafayette are safe for swimming;
- 2) Curb algal blooms, in part by reducing lawn fertilizing, until healthy, plentiful wildlife returns;
- 3) Engage 1,000 homes in activities that make a difference.

Will all this happen? Be encouraged. Even with the plan not yet printed, dozens of strategies have been adopted — not only by us, thanks to you, our generous donors — but also by multiple community partners. Momentum is building for a **RiverFest on the Lafayette, Saturday, April 30, 2011 — save the date** — where you will hear all about the plan and what you can do.

No need to wait. Pick from our list of the seven best things you can do to help the Lafayette, or any other branch of the Elizabeth (p. 4). And don't forget to make time to simply appreciate the river — up close.

Marjorie Mayfield Jackson



Some of the surprising wildlife on the Lafayette includes these owls, captured by Kenn Jolemore. Our action plan will return the Lafayette branch of the Elizabeth to full health. Visit Jolemore's photo blog at elizabethriver.org.

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.

www.elizabethriver.org



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757-399-RIVR (7487)
fax: 397-8377



Morgan and Harry Ramsey examine wildflowers at the future site of Paradise Creek Nature Park. Portsmouth educators say students are starved for natural settings like this for exploration.

Schools eager to explore Paradise Creek Nature Park **“We Need This Park Immediately”**

When Portsmouth educators crafted their Science Technology Engineering and Math curriculum for 5th graders, they knew just where they wanted all children to do their field work: our future Paradise Creek Nature Park.

The park, a project of the Elizabeth River Project, the Virginia Port Authority and the City of Portsmouth, is under preparation for a first phase opening in 2012 – with your help. The 40-acre site, on a tributary of the Elizabeth River, will become home to two miles of trails that wind their way through 29 acres of native shrubs and forests and 11 acres of restored natural marshes. We’re in the “Countdown to Paradise” now, thanks to donors like you.

But for Laura J. Nelson, director of science education for Portsmouth



The park will conserve one of the last stands of mature forest on the Elizabeth while inspiring environmental stewardship.

schools, the park can’t come soon enough.

“We need Paradise Creek Nature Park immediately,” she said. That new curriculum she’s developed – it’s in a holding pattern, waiting on its showcase park and the opportunity to share the curriculum not only with Portsmouth students but with those from other cities on the Elizabeth River.

Most importantly for Portsmouth educators, the park will offer a chance for the city’s urban children to experience a natural environment while fulfilling a mandate by all Chesapeake Bay governors to complete at least one “meaningful watershed education experience” before graduation.

Thanks to donors like BB&T, which this summer pledged a whopping \$50,000, kids will experience the Elizabeth River - the bay’s southernmost tributary - first-hand at Paradise Creek Nature Park. “We’ll do some water testing, compare studies as seasons progress. We’ll be interested in migratory birds as well as the ones that stay there all year round,” said Nelson.

Portsmouth’s 5th graders now do their wild walk at Portsmouth City Park, hardly a natural setting. So Nelson was happy to sign on as an educational consultant when the Elizabeth River Project started developing plans for Paradise Creek.

By 2014, Phase II of the park will open with canoe opportunities, outdoor classrooms and sculptures and an interpretive center powered entirely by sun and wind. More than \$10 million is pledged or in hand, and just another \$175,000 needed to open Phase II!

To find out how you can help make the nature park a reality, call Emma Ramsey at 399-RIVR, or visit ParadiseCreekPark.org.



More than 1,500 visitors toured the Learning Barge at Harborfest in June 2010. Our education vessel, the world's first floating wetland classroom, was front and center at Otter Berth, thanks to sponsor Wilbanks, Smith & Thomas Asset Management.

Lafayette River, Continued from page 1

"During dry weather, in the majority of the Lafayette from the Granby Bridge towards the mouth, the levels of bacteria are safe for swimming," said Joe Rieger, our director of watershed restoration. But every downpour brought a heavy dose of harmful bacteria into the mix – along with excess nutrients, which each summer create another problem: harmful algae blooms. While not a risk to human health, the "red tide" robs the river of oxygen, leading to fish kills.

The research drives home the message in a community action plan developed by a 100-member Steering Committee co-convened by Elizabeth River Project and Chesapeake Bay Foundation. To make the Lafayette safe again, we need everyone's help to keep "poo" and fertilizers out of our runoff – everyone, from the Lafayette's 110,000 residents, to the City of

Norfolk, federal, regional and state agencies as well as private businesses.

Thanks to your generous gifts to Elizabeth River Project, many initiatives are already underway to restore the Lafayette. We're adding 250 "scoop the poop" stations, helping River Star Businesses like the Virginia Zoo install stormwater projects such as a new "floating wetlands," replanting the shoreline, enlisting all schools in the Lafayette watershed and – perhaps most significantly - piloting "River Star Homes" on the Lafayette, a new stewardship program for citizens.

You can learn more, while celebrating the progress, at RiverFest on the Lafayette, a free family festival planned for Saturday, April 30, from 10-3 p.m. Save the date! To find out how you can help today, call: 399-RIVR, or visit us at elizabethriver.org.

The Elizabeth River Project Statement of Activities

Fiscal Year Ending September 30, 2009

Unrestricted revenues and other support

Pledge income	\$283,077
Grants and contributions	\$37,533
Membership dues	\$69,594
Other income	\$21,274
Interest income	\$4,399
Net assets released from restrictions	\$3,147,160
	\$3,563,037

Expenses

Program services 87%	\$1,859,794
Management and general 9%	\$183,655
Fundraising 4%	\$99,264
	\$2,142,713

Change in unrestricted net assets \$1,420,324

Temporarily restricted net assets

Grants and contributions	\$3,162,456
Net assets released from restrictions	(\$3,147,160)

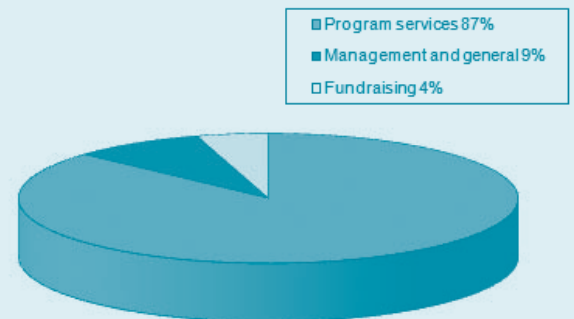
Change in temporarily restricted net assets \$15,296

Change in net assets \$1,435,620

Net Assets - beginning of year \$637,355

Net Assets - end of year \$2,072,975

Expenses for Year Ended 9/30/09



Seven Best Things You Can Do for the Lafayette

1. Pick up after your pets. not only when you walk them on city streets, but also in your back yard.

2. Pump out boat sewage. Human "poo" contributes harmful bacteria to the river.

3. Report sewer problems. Norfolk's 24-hour hotline is 823-1000.

4. Use rain barrels. They are easy to install and can capture a lot of water that would otherwise wash nutrients into the Lafayette.

5. Can your grease. Dumping it down the drain is one reason sewers back up. When it solidifies, put it in the trash.

6. Don't feed geese or ducks. They are supposed to migrate but have been coaxed into staying by handouts. When they don't leave, they add to the bacteria problem. An un-mowed, 6-foot buffer of tall native grasses also will discourage geese.

7. Reduce or eliminate fertilizers on your lawn. The nutrients end up in the river, feeding excess algae.

Student Clean Up Efforts Spread River-Wide

River Star Schools Up to 126!

At Kempsville Elementary in Virginia Beach, principal Nancy C. Chandler takes a weekly walk with students around the grounds, talking about the environment, picking up trash and always stopping at a creek that feeds into the Elizabeth River to stress the importance of scooping the poop and limiting the use of fertilizers. Kempsville Elementary is one of 126 River Star Schools now partnering with the Elizabeth River Project to make a real difference in the health of our watershed.

River Star students engage in projects that help the Elizabeth River. Among projects: planting wetlands grasses and butterfly gardens, installing scoop the poop stations and poster campaigns. Thanks to your support of this and other education programs, more than half of all public and private schools in the watershed are River Stars, which already exceeds the original goal of enlisting 100 school partners by 2014. Thirty seven of the organizations are at the Model Level, which recognizes continuing and more involved projects.

“To me that illustrates a group of citizen soldiers that are already committed, up and running and doing right by the river,” said Robin Dunbar, public outreach manager for the Elizabeth River Project.



River Star Schools are serious about cleaning up the Elizabeth River; getting out to plant grasses, pick up trash and net debris from the waterway they intend to swim in by 2020.

Model Level

Atlantic Shores Christian Schools
 Butts Road Elementary
 Camp E.W. Young
 Chesapeake Bay Foundation's – Bea Hayman Clark Vessel
 Christopher Academy
 Christ the King Catholic School
 Churchland High School
 Cub Scout Pack 421
 Fairfield Elementary
 Ghent Montessori School
 Girl Scout Council of Colonial Coast
 Great Bridge Intermediate
 Greenbrier Intermediate
 Holy Trinity Ecology Club
 Junior Girl Scout Troops 282 & 630
 Kempsville Elementary
 Kingston Elementary
 Larchmont Elementary
 Maury High School – Phoenix Rising Environmental Club
 Nansemond Suffolk Academy
 Nauticus Junior Scientists
 Norfolk Academy
 Norfolk Collegiate Lower School
 Oceanair Elementary
 Ocean Lakes Elementary
 Ocean View Maritime School
 Portsmouth Catholic Regional School
 Portsmouth STEM
 St. Pius X School
 Simonsdale Presbyterian Preschool
 STARBASE Victory – ENVIROBASE, Portsmouth Schools
 Tallwood High
 Western Branch Intermediate
 Western Branch Middle School
 W.H. Taylor Elementary
 Willard Elementary
 Woodrow Wilson High School

Achievement Level

Arrowhead Elementary
 Azalea Gardens Middle School
 Berkley/ECC
 Blair Middle School
 Campostella Elementary
 Cedar Road Elementary
 Centerville Elementary
 Chesapeake Bay Foundation's Virginia Canoe Rig
 Chesterfield Academy
 Churchland Academy
 Churchland Elementary
 Churchland Primary
 Coleman Place Elementary
 Corporate Landing Middle School
 Crossroads Elementary
 Cub Scout Pack 42
 Deep Creek Middle School
 Douglass Park Elementary
 Dreamkeepers Academy
 Fairlawn Elementary
 G.A. Treakle Elementary
 Ghent Elementary
 Girl Scout Troop 501
 Girl Scout Troop 4080
 Granby Elementary
 Great Bridge Middle
 Greenbrier Christian
 Greenbrier Middle
 Hickory Elementary
 Hickory Middle
 Hodges Manor Elementary
 Holland Elementary
 Holy Family Day School
 I.C. Norcom High School
 Indian River Middle School
 Ingleside Elementary
 Jackson Memorial Preschool
 Jacox Elementary
 James Hurst Elementary
 James Monroe Elementary
 John Tyler Elementary
 King's Grant Elementary
 Lakeview Elementary

Lindenwood Elementary
 Little Creek Elementary
 Montessori Academy of VA
 Mount Hermon Preschool
 New Castle Elementary
 Norfolk Collegiate Middle School
 Norfolk Collegiate Upper School
 Norfolk Highlands Primary
 Norfolk Technical Center
 Norview Elementary
 Oakwood Elementary
 Ocean View Elementary
 Olive Branch Elementary
 Park View Elementary
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 Plaza Middle
 Portlock Primary
 Providence Elementary
 Rena B. Wright Primary
 Resurrection Preschool
 Richard Bowling Elementary
 Rosemont Middle School
 Ruffner Middle School
 St. Gregory the Great School
 St. Helena Elementary
 St. Patrick Catholic
 Sherwood Forest Elementary
 Simonsdale Elementary
 Southwestern Elementary
 Sparrow Road Intermediate
 Suburban Park Elementary
 Tanners Creek Elementary
 The Wilds Home School
 The Williams School
 T.C.C. – Camp Osprey
 Tidewater Park Elementary
 Trinity Lutheran School
 Truitt Intermediate School
 Victory Elementary
 Virginia Aquarium
 Western Branch Primary
 Western Branch High
 Westhaven Elementary
 William E. Waters Middle
 Willoughby Elementary
 Woodstock Elementary

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\$100,000 & Above

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\$50,000 to \$99,999

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Hampton Roads Community
Foundation
National Fish & Wildlife Foundation
– Lasting Legacy Grant
National Oceanic & Atmospheric
Administration
TowneBank Foundation

\$25,000 to \$49,999

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Agency – Environmental
Education Grant
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Memories of the Nature Park Site Trigger Estate Remembrance

Marsha Lynn Wilkins grew up in Cradock, just a few steps from the mudflats at the mouth of Paradise Creek. She played on those banks, even packed a pail of its mud to her elementary school in 4th grade, where the students used it to mold creatures. "I made a hippo and painted it lime green and shocking pink," she

remembers fondly. Later she would return to those banks with a future husband, and the 13-year-olds would plink bottles and cans with their .22 rifles.

Recently, Wilkins found a way to honor those same mudflats. She has bequeathed \$10,000 to Elizabeth River Project in her will. The generous donation will go to projects like Paradise Creek Nature Park – the very same land where Wilkins used to play.

Have you thought of including the Elizabeth River Project in your will? Call Caitlin Kilpatrick, 399-RIVR, for details.

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Jennifer Yellen
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Thank
You!

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.



Before

Elizabeth River Project and partners restored seven acres of healthy river bottom and new marsh habitat, summer 2009. Here, wetland grasses are barely visible in the newly excavated site.



After

Volunteers from Wilbanks, Smith & Thomas walk through lush wetlands at the same site in summer 2010. They removed eight tons of storm debris from a nor'easter to help the site thrive.

Big Restoration Site Returns to Life **Money Point Oasis Crawling with Critters**

Three ospreys circled over 3.5 acres of wetlands and 3.3 acres of forest that weren't there a year ago, hoping to find a meal. Along the shore, the mud undulates with fiddler crabs in the first phase of the Money Point project. Last year, a barge full of toxic goo was removed from one of the most polluted areas on the Southern Branch in Chesapeake, the legacy of a long-running, and long gone, creosote industry.

Thanks to your support, the 7-acre project, one of the most ambitious reclamations in the nation, will eventually encompass 25.3 acres and replace a notorious aquatic dead zone with thriving habitat.

The river bottom was capped with clean sand, and the shoreline stabilized against incessant wakes with rock biers. The shoreline was graded gently, allowing a large area for more than 40,000 wetlands plantings and some 2,000 saplings.

"We noticed an immediate resurgence of wildlife, even during construction," said Dave Koubsky, environmental project manager. "Wildlife just filled it. These are happy hunting grounds."

The work, on land donated by Kinder Morgan/Elizabeth River Terminals, was completed in November, then tested by a fierce Nor'easter that brought a record tidal surge. Volunteers from

"We noticed an immediate resurgence of wildlife, even during construction."

*- Dave Koubsky,
 Project Manager*

Wilbanks Smith & Thomas, a Norfolk asset management company, spent a day in May removing debris. They filled a huge dumpster with some 8 tons deposited by the storm, then planted marsh grasses and promised to return in the fall.

The new natural area had withstood nature's trial. Today, periwinkles hold tightly at low tide to nearly every blade of wetlands grass. Fish splash as they feed in the channel, drawing hungry osprey.

The oasis is about to be enlarged.

Contractors have been asked to bid on Phase II. When that work is finished next fall, another 20,000 cubic yards of contaminated goo will have been removed.

As a donor to Elizabeth River Project, you provided the seed funding for the restoration. The first two phases will cost more than \$6 million, with \$5 million of that provided by The Living River Restoration Trust, authorized by the US Army Corps of Engineers and the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality. Other funding came from donors like you as well as the Environmental Protection Agency, NOAA, the FishAmerica Foundation, the Virginia Migratory Waterfowl Stamp Grant Program, Hess Corp., Luck Stone and you, members and donors of The Elizabeth River Project.

*Watch scientists count
 the returning fish:
youtube.com/ElizRiverProj*