



the river's voice

The Official Publication of the Friends of the Locust Fork River Winter 2006-2007

Our Mission

As Friends of the Locust Fork River, we join together to actively preserve the natural integrity of the river in its free-flowing state, and to that end, the lifestyle of the community that surrounds it.

OUTINGS

January 21

Membership meeting open to public; topic TBA (see page 7 for details)

January 13

Locust Fork headwater hike (see page 6 for details)

February 3

Locust Fork Invitational Canoe and Kayak Races (see page 2 for details)

March 24

Locust Fork Whitewater Classic Canoe and Kayak Races (see page 2 for details)

March 3 & 4

Mulberry Canoe and Kayak Races (see page 2 for details)

April 14

Easy canoe trip (see page 4 for details)

May 11

River cleanup (see page 5 for details)

79 BRIDGE UPDATE

by Nancy Jackson

Two good news items:

- 1) **Attention to stormwater runoff continues** at the bridge project site, with one unfortunate prison break, and
- 2) **Paddler access is still open to suggestions**, according to Gary Smith, district engineer for the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT).

GETAWAY

A heavy November rain event caused erosion into the Locust Fork at the US 231/AL 79 bridge construction site north of Cleveland, Smith said, but contractor personnel got the erosion contained, and since then weather has been kind, both for sedimentation concerns and construction progress, he said.

Sediment is a threat to river health when it settles on the bottom and smothers bottom dwellers like the Plicate Rock Snail that clean the waters and riverbed and serve as meals to fish, birds, and mammals.

While bridge construction used to be a disaster zone for rivers, ALDOT is working to improve. The department has created a new statewide office devoted to stormwater management, headed by Barry Fagan. Smith said Fagan is working to make sure so-called Best Management Practices – guidelines for more environmentally-friendly human activities – function well.

While prison breaks do still happen, contractor Alabama Bridge Builders has installed temporary erosion protections during construction. For example, the

southern approach was built up gradually, and rip rap rock has been staged in, instead of only at the conclusion of the earth moving, according to Roger Earley, president.

Earley also said vegetation is seeded in at every first opportunity. While these measures are not 100% prevention of siltation into the river, they are steps in the right direction.

DELICATE SITE

Unfortunately, this time and place are critical to the outcome of a project to re-introduce the Plicate Rock Snail to its home in the Locust Fork. It's an endangered, endemic species, and not far downstream 31,000 young snails were "sowed" into shoals late last summer.

WATER TESTING

FLFR held a public meeting in October to inform the public about the bridge project and begin working toward a very accurate sediment measuring technique known as Total Suspended Solids. We're still working on that in conjunction with Alabama Water Watch. Plans are to test stormwater runoff above and below the bridge project, as well as at a few sites up and down river. Stay tuned for slow but determined progress there.

PADDLER ACCESS

An important topic at that public meeting was paddler access to the river at the bridge site, head of some of the best whitewater river sections in the Southeast. DOT's Smith said personnel met in December to update

(continued on page three)



Locust Fork Invitational

February 3, 2007

Mulberry Race/Festival

March 3 & 4, 2007

Locust Fork Whitewater Classic

March 24, 2007

For more information you can check out www.flfr.org, and for volunteer information, contact Sam Howell at 205-681-4751 or showell@brescoinc.com

FLFR and Locust Fork Racing Organization appreciate the major sponsorship of ALABAMA OUTDOORS for the Locust Fork Races

How To Watch White Water Races

by Stephen Guesman

It's the winter rainy season, and that means its time to race! – whitewater that is. The annual Locust Fork races are coming February 3rd and March 24th. They form 2/3 of the Alabama Cup competition.

HELP!

We hope all you friends will come out to enjoy a day on the river and even volunteer to help FLFR produce the events.

The races are a fine opportunity to enjoy being at a lovely place on the river (Kings Bend). We've been really lucky to have good weather: sometimes chilly but usually clear.

Now in case you'd like to know more about what those funny dressed folks are doing on the river, here's a primer.

SLALOM

Whitewater racing is a slalom race, much like the popular downhill ski races. The object of slalom racing is to negotiate a course of rapid river gates in the shortest time with the fewest penalties. Racers are timed for each run on the course. Gate penalties (in seconds) for touching or missing the gates are added to the running time.

It's a good thing to go fast, go through all the gates in order, and not touch any of the poles.

In most cases it is fairly obvious which paddlers have a great deal of experience and are doing well.

A racer makes two runs for each class and may compete in up to three classes. Each entry in a class gets a unique bib number. The classes are divided into morning and afternoon sessions.

Radios are used to start the racers and report gate penalties to the scoring table.

KAYAK OR CANOE?

In a kayak, the competitor paddles in the sitting position with the legs forward using a double bladed paddle. In a canoe, closed and open, the competitors paddle in the kneeling position using a single bladed paddle. Kayaks (K-1) as well as closed canoes (C-1 or C-2) are considered closed boats and use slightly different rules from their open boat counterparts.

FINER POINTS

First, classes are by boat type:

- K-1 for Kayaks
- C-1 for single Closed Canoes
- C-2 for double Closed Canoes
- OC-1 for single Open Canoes
- OC-2 for double Open Canoes

Secondly, classes are by age:

- Open classes (no age restriction) are Championship, Cruising and Novice
- Masters class is paddlers 40 and older.
- Junior class is paddlers from 15 to 18.

Thirdly classes are by gender:

men's, women's, etc.

*For instance: Men's K-1 Cruising,
Women's C-2 Novice*

THE RIGHT STUFF

If you're still reading this, you likely have the right stuff to be on our team of judges – FLFR volunteers who sit on the banks and keep score as the racers zip by.

For more information you can check out www.flfr.org, and for volunteering, contact Sam Howell at 205-681-4751 or showell@brescoinc.com

BAD NEWS FOR THE DUCK

by April Hall

On November 9, 2006 the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in Mobile issued a permit to the Cullman-Morgan Water District for the construction and operation of a 640-acre water supply reservoir on the Duck River in Cullman County. The proposed 130-foot dam will be located just north of Highway 278 between Cullman and Holly Pond and will flood more than 8 miles of Duck River and its tributaries. The Corps permit contains conditions regarding water quality standards and monitoring, minimum flow releases, and buffer zones.

The Alabama Rivers Alliance, Friends of Mulberry Fork, and American Canoe Association successfully appealed the first permit which was issued in 2000. The federal judge in the case vacated the permit in 2003 and required the Corps to review the water quality issues, cumulative impacts in the Black Warrior basin, and flow impacts to the Mulberry Fork.

In response to the judge's ruling, a supplement to the original Environmental Assessment was prepared in 2005. Based on the additional information, the Corps has determined again that the dam would not significantly impact the environment.

Comments on the supplement filed by Alabama Rivers Alliance, WildLaw, and several other organizations include a request that the Corps complete an Environmental Impact Statement rather than the much simpler environmental assessment. An EIS would allow much greater public participation and would include a more rigorous assessment of the environmental impacts associated with the construction of a dam.

Concerns about water quality, water supply needs, and the age of economic data were also included in the comments.

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access options. *He said they welcome ideas from anyone. Call him at 205-274-2112.* Present plans include retaining the access and parking area upriver north of the bridge, and additional parking will be provided on both south and north highway approach areas of the old bridge. The old bridge itself will be retained, but blocked off for safety, he said.

Access options under discussion are downriver and south of the new bridge site. Call and express your interest in access, and any creative solutions you may have.

PROGRESS

Smith said the project is a little ahead of schedule, aiming for a June completion (in contrast to what may have been understood at the public meeting). Blasting is finished, and one tall pier is complete. In bridge talk, "Once you're out of the ground, you're good to go," he said. In other words, the superstructure aspect usually goes smoothly. It's also good news for sedimentation threats, after the disruption of earth moving, when vegetation can finally become established.

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LESSONS LEARNED

by Cindy Lowry



Easy Canoe Trip *Saturday, April 14*

Join us for an easy canoe trip on Saturday, April 14th. We'll paddle Section 6 of the Locust Fork River, an easy and scenic stretch of the river. We'll see fish, osprey and lots of spring wildflowers. Some canoes available to borrow, no fee. Bring lunch, water, dry clothes. Meet us at the "Park and Ride" at I-65 Hayden/Corner exit at 9 a.m., or the Blount County Road 13 bridge at 9:45. For more info or to reserve a canoe, call Vicky Wilson @ 205-647-6961. Great opportunity for beginners.

When I look back on my life thus far, I can honestly say that I have learned valuable lessons from each adventure. (Please note that I use the term "adventure" loosely due to my not-so-adventuresome nature.) So my recent paddling trip down the beautiful Cahaba River should have been no surprise.

CAHABA ADVENTURE

Guided by veteran paddler and friend, Sam Howell, I knew I was in good hands to embark on my first multi-day kayak trip. I had paddled a handful of times before and even done a couple of overnight trips, but this was to be EIGHT full days on the river. We had all the right gear and plenty of food and water, so the only thing on my mind as we put in was the excitement and anticipation of what the river might bring on our way towards the old town of Cahawba at the mouth of the Cahaba River.

PERFECT

There were beautiful moments of 70-degree sunny days on sparkling, still water as we followed the graceful Great Blue Herons that guided our way down the meandering river. There were crisp cool evenings by the fireside with the bright moon shining as the calming voice of the shoals hummed us to sleep. Lesson #1 – *Nature is magical and spiritual.*

ANOTHER KIND OF PERFECT?

Then there were the shoals. The unseasonably shallow shoals that refused to let me pass through in my loaded-down kayak. There were the jutting, hidden rocks that seemed to jump out of nowhere just in time to grab onto my boat and not let go. There were the islands forming their mazes of rocks and gravel requiring mental as well as physical concentration to maneuver...and you best pick the right path or you're going to have to walk it through. On the river you move at the river's pace, not yours. Lesson #2 – *Patience is a virtue.*

AND NOW WHAT?

On the 5th and final day as we looked back up Hargrove Shoals, the entire length of which we had dragged our boats the day before, we loaded up - one more time- with sore muscles and ripe clothes, and set off to see what lay ahead. Lo! and Behold! the waters were mostly flat, with only tiny shoals, affording easy passage through. We even managed to achieve that 3 to 4 mile-per-hour pace that had eluded us the previous four days. The Cahaba had once again narrowed, providing a magnificent alley through great rock bluffs to usher us back into civilization a mere 3 days early and some 75 miles short of our original destination. Lesson #3 – *It's not the destination, it's the journey that counts.*

FULL

The bustling town of Centreville brought a much-welcomed hot meal, and running water. Exhausted and full, we pulled away from the Cahaba, already contemplating Phase II, and reflecting on the lessons learned.

FLFR River Clean Up Effort Continues To Grow

by Susie Wilkerson

It was a cold, overcast morning on Friday, October 20 when FLFR teamed up with Alabama Power's Miller Steam Plant and Renew Our Rivers project to clean about six miles of the lower Locust Fork. Our section included the put-in at Porter Road in West Jefferson to the Hwy 269 take-out at Birminghamport, along with the put-in and take-out areas and both sides of West Jefferson Lake.

The cold, cloudy day did not deter 85 volunteers from Miller, FLFR, and the community from getting out at 8:00 that morning and helping remove 6.3 tons of trash from in and around the river. Miller plans to make this river clean up an annual Renew Our Rivers event.

In 2007 FLFR will continue our efforts to keep the upper Locust Fork clean by sponsoring a third annual river crossing

clean up in partnership with Southern Company Employees. This will be our second annual Renew Our Rivers project. If you have a river or creek crossing (in Blount County) that needs cleaning, please let us know.

On May 11 Locust Fork Volunteers will meet at the Park-n-Ride at I-65 North Exit 284 (Hayden/Corner) at 8:00 a.m. Teams will disperse to sites along the river.

To volunteer: contact Donna Hill, Southern Company Services (205) 257-5234 or Susie Wilkerson, Friends of Locust Fork River (205) 492-1745 or Locust95@aol.com.

Come on out and join us for a fun-filled clean-up day on the beautiful banks of the Locust Fork River. We have some Hooray! stuff planned after we get through with the cleaning up chores.

FLFR'S WISH LIST

All-purpose plastic canoes or kayaks with life left in them (any brand)

Paddles

PPD's.

Digital Camera

Projector screen

An Intern who specializes in Organizational Development

Your River Tale or River Appreciation story (send to njackson@urisp.net) for upcoming newsletters: Tell us all about it!

Eco-tourism hits Alabama's Waterways

by Cindy Lowry

"Alabama Waterways and Tourism" was the topic at a meeting held by the Alabama Bureau of Tourism and Travel on December 4. The meeting was attended by many interested citizens and organizations from all across the state.

DESTINATIONS

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss ways that Alabama's 77,000 miles of rivers and stream channels can become recreation destinations, thereby boosting the state's economy through tourism.

SCENIC WATER TRAILS

The meeting agenda included talk of a 651-mile scenic water trail from where the Coosa River enters the state to its connection with the Alabama River, and from there to the Mobile River and Mobile Bay. It also included discussion of promoting the Tenn-Tom Waterway, the Cahaba

River, the Tensaw Delta and the Sipsey Fork of the Black Warrior River. Although these locations were highlighted, the Bureau of Tourism and Travel is open to promoting any waterways that will help bring tourists, and thus dollars, into our state.

FLFR'S TAKE

The Locust Fork River is already a prime Alabama destination for whitewater paddling on any "good water" day, and attracts many paddlers from other states during the annual canoe and kayak races. The Friends of the Locust Fork River recognizes that while tourism may help raise awareness and understanding about the need for protecting our valuable river, it may also bring greater wear and tear on this fragile resource. As an advocate for the river, FLFR will only support and/or promote tourism activities that will benefit the river and its watershed.

The Locust Fork Headwaters Hike

Saturday, January 13

To the headwaters! Meet at Charlie B's in Oneonta for a short drive/hike to where the Locust and the Blackburn head up. Bring water and snack/lunch. Charlie B's serves a good breakfast, so come at 8:30 for that, or about 9:15 ready to roll. Charlie B's is In Oneonta on US 231 in first block south of intersection with Ala 75, on east side. For info, call Sam Howell, 205-681-4751, or showell@brescoinc.com.

MY RIVER

by George Merkel

When one gazes at the Locust Fork with all its beauty and serenity, it's no wonder that people start to identify it as "mine". The more we visit or use the river, the more personal it becomes. Deep inside, we all realize that we can never own it, - the river itself would not let us - but we continue to try... with the best intentions.

As a FLFR board member, I am entrusted to protect the river as well as educate people about it and its watershed, and that makes it even more personal.

My conflict is about sharing my river with others. In order to protect the river, I need the aid of everyone. While educating people about the river and its watershed, I am sparking a flame of curiosity about my river. In both

cases, I am inviting people to use my river.

Maybe I am just plain selfish: this river is in my backyard, my county, my state...so it's mine. Should I just want my river for paddling...maybe just fishing? Wait, how about just serenely sitting along the bankor a tranquil tube float? Do I invite anyone else? Allow outsiders to enjoy it too? If I do bring others, how many is too many? How do I control how they act?

As a steward of the river, I do consider it mine. Mine to share and enjoy with as many others as my river can handle. Its multi-purpose functions can lead to conflicts if everyone does not respect its use by others. If everyone - be it landowner, paddler, fisherman, or tourist, practices the golden rule on the river and is good to the river, maybe "my river" will continue to flow and be enjoyed by everyone for a long time.

Festival, Groundwater - Blount County

b. Oct 2000 - d. Oct 2005

Mr. Groundwater Festival quietly passed away at his home in Blount County after a long battle with burnout. He is survived by FLFR's Day on the River, and National River Clean Up.

During his short life, Mr. Festival helped scores of Blount County 4th graders learn about groundwater and water conservation through activities in a yearly one-day festival. The children made "rain-sticks", slurped edible "aquifers" to learn about groundwater filtration, and acted out wetland dramas.

He got the children involved with a groundwater T-shirt design contest. Groundwater Festival informed children of the hazards of pollution and how to properly dispose of waste. He ended each

festival with an ecological magic show that delighted both young and old.

Friends of Groundwater Festival ask that in lieu of flowers, you practice water conservation, be good stewards of the land, and volunteer at one of the many eco-friendly programs in your area. May he rest in peace.... he will be missed.

George Merkel

(Editor's note: George was FLFR rep to the Groundwater Festival, initiated by EPA/ADEM and sponsored by area water boards, educators, and scores of citizen volunteers. FLFR will look for other ways to educate our youth, continuing Day on the River, and cooperating with schools. RIP, indeed.)

Membership Meeting

Sunday, January 21st

Your board here at Friends of the Locust Fork River (FLFR) set a goal to have a membership meeting and program every three months or so. (The last meeting was on the 79 bridge project) We thought we had a presenter lined up to show and talk about the scenic beauty of the Locust Fork, for Jan. 07, as a prelude to coming out to the river for the races. *Had* is the key word there.

So we've got Sunday afternoon, January 21st. reserved at the Oneonta

Library and we're working on a new program on boating the river – but we don't have the commitment yet. We'll send out the monthly e-bulletin and give you the details as soon as possible. Stay tuned . . .

January 21st, Boating on the Locust Fork (tba): Membership meeting, public is welcome. Sunday afternoon, 2pm, Oneonta Public Library. Look for confirmation in your e-mail or call Stephen Guesman, 205-429-4120.

From the pages of... *Locust Fork Yacht Club's Creek Bankin' Recipes*

RANDY'S BEEF JERKY MARINADE

1 lb. beef (flank, sirloin, round steak or other lean beef)

Trim fat, cut across the grain into strips or leave whole and cut after marinating

- 1 tbsp. brown sugar
- 1/2 tsp. garlic powder
- 1/2 tsp. black pepper, fresh ground if possible
- 1 tbsp. soy sauce, low sodium
- 2 tbsp. Worcestershire sauce
- 1 tbsp. steak sauce, your favorite
- 1 tbsp. ketchup

Mix all ingredients in a bowl. Adjust seasonings to suit your taste. Put beef in a zip lock baggie. Pour in marinade and let rest in the frig for 4-24 hours.

Insert toothpicks through the ends of each strip of beef. Hang from your oven's rack. Be sure there's a pan below to catch the dripping or you'll have a heck of a mess to clean up. Put oven temp on low and let cook all day or over night. Don't peek! If you really want a smoky-tasting jerky, do the same prep method, but hang from the grate in a smoker or use a grill with top, but use the indirect heat cook method. Jerky should be pliable, unlike typical store-bought jerky. It's possible for it to last up to three months, but I bet it's gone by the time you get to the take-out on your next trip down the river. Enjoy!

Membership Musings

Hello Friends.

I'm Stephen Guesman, FLFR's membership chairperson.

I think we've figured out how to do bulk e-mails from FLFR — e-bulletins we're calling them. We intend to only use the e-bulletins to remind you of our monthly outings and in cases of urgency.

Of course you'll only be getting any e-mails from FLFR if you have given us your e-ddress. If you'd like to be sure FLFR has your e-ddress - or if you'd like to get off our e-mail bulletins – please e-mail me at members@flfr.org.

*Or use the handy Membership Form in the back of this newsletter. There's a space for your e-ddress right there next to your contribution amount. **Hint, hint** . . .*

*Stephen Guesman,
Membership Chair*

If you have a favorite creek bankin' recipe, send it to us, Attention: Easy Eddie Eats. It might just get in the next issue of the Friends of the Locust Fork River's newsletter! It might just get in the next edition of the yacht club's cookbook with your name next to it.

membership form

The Locust Fork has been compared to the Yellowstone and the Gallatin in Montana. Unlike those rivers, the Locust Fork doesn't enjoy the protection of flowing through a national park. It flows through Alabama. It is our treasure, and only the people of Alabama can save it.

As a member of Friends of the Locust Fork River, your contribution will help in the fight to preserve and protect one of our state's rarest and most beautiful natural treasures.



The Friends Of The Locust Fork
P.O. Box 245
Hayden, Alabama 35079

You can find us on the web at
www.FLFR.org

FLFR and Locust Fork
Racing Organization appreciate
the major sponsorship of
ALABAMA OUTDOORS
for the Locust Fork Races

Yes, I want to help the Friends of the Locust Fork River preserve our local treasure:

I am a new member or a renewing member (check expiration date on label) **please check one**

Individual — \$20

Family — \$30

Friend — \$50

Patron — \$100

Donor — \$250 and above

Please include me in the FLFR
e-mail network for outings and
Locust Fork river alerts

Call me to help with
FLFR activities

Name _____
(if mailing label is correct you just need to enter your name)

Address _____

City, State and Zip _____

Phone number _____ e-mail address _____

All contributions are tax deductible and gratefully appreciated! Please return this form to:
The Friends Of The Locust Fork, P.O. Box 245, Hayden, Alabama 35079



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