

the river's voice

The Official Publication of the Friends of the Locust Fork River

Winter 2012

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.

NOTE!!

NEW MAILING ADDRESS

Now send mail to:

The Friends of
the Locust Fork River
P.O. Box 638
Cleveland, AL 35049

WHAT'S HAPPENING ON THE RIVER

January: tba
fossils or eagles?
Check flfr.org...

February 4 & 5
Locust Fork Invitational
Canoe & Kayak Race
First of 3 in Alabama Cup. See
"Off to the Races" in this issue

March 3 & 4
Mulberry Fork Canoe &
Kayak Race

March 24 & 25
Locust Fork Classic
Canoe & Kayak Race

(continued on page 2)

Off to the Races....

The whitewater racing season will begin on February 4th & 5th with the Locust Fork Invitational Canoe & Kayak Race. And as usual, *we need your help!*

The Friends of the Locust Fork River helps produce this race as part of our mission to celebrate the beauty and free-flowing integrity of this wonderful river. You can help by coming out for a morning or afternoon and helping judge and score the whitewater racers.

The three-race Alabama Cup will conclude where it starts, back on our Locust Fork on March 24th & 25th. Volunteers who work both races get a limited edition race T-shirt and the unbridled appreciation of all involved.

We hope you'll take these excuses to come join us on the banks of this lovely river. To volunteer please respond to friends@flfr.org or call Sam at 205-706-4376.

P.S. - for extra credit you may consider volunteering for the Mulberry Fork Races as well - March 3rd & 4th in Garden City (tell Sam).



YA! FLFR Goes Wild ~ by Debra Gordon-Hellman

It was a crisp, cold November morning; winter was back. Our small but lively group of hikers was not surprised more teens didn't respond; and we had just enough.

Beginning our adventure with a tour of a gorgeous and interesting straw-bale solar home on Hamilton Mountain gave the sun a chance to warm the riverside rocks we'd soon be hopping. The boys found the house fascinating and asked thoughtful questions.

From the house we hiked down to Cornelius Falls. Seeing the rocks now hidden under powerful currents showed a striking contrast to the autumn falls where this group played back when it was warm enough to swim.

From there, we "bushwhacked" down river, exploring the many rock ledges and cliffs. Evidence of beavers, deer, coons, and other critters abounded.

Stay tuned for our next adventure, to be posted on the FLFR website.

If you know any teens, spread the word.



New YA!FLFR Outings Leader Chris Cleveland on left, with Andrew Laningham, Nathan Freeman & Wesley Brewer on a recent hike.



YA! FLFR'S Andrew Laningham, Nathan Freeman & Wesley Brewer — all 10th graders at Locust Fork High, and Ringo the Guide at Cornelius Falls. (Hike to the falls in May 2012!)

WHAT'S HAPPENING ON THE RIVER

CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE

April 14

Fun(d) Raising Raft Trip

Rare opportunity to experience the thrill of whitewater from the relative comfort of a 6-person raft – thanks to Locust Fork Expeditions. Four-hour easy trip in the heat of the day, 10 - 2 pm. Bring your brown bag lunch and water — we provide cold drinks for lunch. \$30 per person with all proceeds benefiting FLFR! Limited seats so call now to reserve. Stephen Guesman, friends@FLFR.org, or 205-919-6231/429-4120.

May 26

Memorial Hike to Cornelius Falls

Moderate-difficulty hike downriver to Cornelius Falls as a joint outing of the Sierra Club and FLFR.

Go slow and talk wildflowers or scoot ahead for more playtime at the falls. Your brown bag lunch on the sunny rocks at the falls. Bring wading shoes and swimwear if you like. There's a carpool from Birmingham (check out www.flfr.org/outings for details). Or rendezvous at Tonka Shell in Cleveland at 9:30. Return about 2:30. For more information call Stephen at 205-919-6231.

June 16th

Day on the River

FLFR's award winning river classroom for kids.

Keeping on Keeping an Eye on the Watershead ~ by Sam Howell

Here are updates on four on-going issues:

Rosa Mine

The Alabama Court of Appeals has denied an appeal from Black Warrior Riverkeeper (BWRk), Southern Environmental Law Center (SELC) and Friends of the Locust Fork River (FLFR) to a previous ruling that those parties had no grounds to sue the Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM) and MCoal, Inc. Isn't that that a mouthful of alphabet soup??

The appeal was denied on a "technicality", as opposed to the merits of our case, according to BWRk's Eva Dillard. While this development jeopardizes the legalities of the case, it opens up other avenues that could be used to ensure MCoal conducts business within ALL parameters of their permit, added Dillard.

Dean's Ferry Mine

A few years back, the Alabama Department of Industrial Relations

(DIR) granted Travis Creek Energy a permit to mine clay. Along the way, Travis discovered coal above the clay line: surprise! The Alabama Surface Mining Commission (ASMC) allowed mining of the coal "obstructing access" to the clay...

...Citizen complaints prompted a DIR investigation, which determined the mining company was distracted by the coal and had almost forgotten about the clay...

Mining was halted and on August 16, 2011 the company's new owners applied to ASMC for a permit to mine the coal too.

Metro Tire Landfill

In August the presiding judge in this case demanded Metro Recycling Inc. submit a landfill cleanup and closure plan acceptable to ADEM within 30 days. Note it's been THREE years since BWRk and FLFR won the case against Metro Recycling based on violations of the Clean Water Act, and THREE ineffective attempts by Metro Recycling to present an acceptable plan to ADEM. *(continued on page 8)*



The huge flotsam and jetsam upriver of Powell Falls: record size of "a good 12 feet deep and 30 feet wide" according to Stephen, who stands in the center of the photo dwarfed by the pile.

A Turn of the Page.... ~ by Stephen Guesman, president



Welcome to the new year. I hope you're enjoying winter as much as I am. I love how the land is laid bare revealing all the exquisite structure that is concealed in more verdant seasons.

In case you didn't know, north Alabama is a geologic wonderland resulting from the collision of three of the continental constituents of the ancient Pangea. This, in turn, accounts for how our favorite river, the Locust Fork, came to be the natural marvel that it is – carving the southern edge of the up-thrusted Cumberland Plateau, which is locally known as Sand Mountain.

For more on the geology of Alabama you might want to check out *HEADWATERS: A Journey on Alabama Rivers*, by our favorite photographer Beth Maynor Young, with very informative text by John Hall. John's four page geology lesson is worth the price of the book, and then you get Beth's great photographs. If Santa didn't bring you a copy, you maybe should help yourself.

We'll be bringing you more on the natural history of our watershed this fall when our friend Jim Lacefield releases the

second edition of his *Lost Worlds in Alabama Rocks*. Jim's the expert who identified the Locust Fork as one of the oldest rivers in the eastern US with his phrase "older than the hills".

Don't let the chill in the air deter you from getting out on this wonderful river in her most revealing season.

Need an excuse? How about one or both of the Locust Fork Canoe & Kayak Races coming up? They're held at the oh, so scenic, and normally private, King's Bend (see *Off to the Races*). Or any of our monthly outings featured in the running side-bar of this newsletter.

And don't forget to tell your friends about the Fun(d) Raising Raft Trip on April 14th. This is a rare opportunity for the novice to experience the wild water wonders that draws boaters to our river from all over the region.

If you managed to respond to our Fall Fund Raising letter before the holiday rush, **thank you very much**. Your generosity literally empowers us. But if you haven't, please dig out that letter from amongst all that holiday clutter and send it along – with a contribution please.

Hope to see you on the river!

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Be environmentally friendly! Switch your subscription to the FLFR newsletter to an e-newsletter. For more info go to our website at www.flfr.org

The River's Reach: Education Committee Report

~ by Debra Gordon-Hellman, Chair of the Education Committee

Hunting the Elusive Teen Adventurer....A New Tack

At its November meeting, FLFR's Ed Com (org-speak for "education committee") took a new tack to hunt up the elusive teen adventurer/activist:

1) First, we turned the YA!FLFR teen action group into a quarterly outings club (because teens are a lot busier than we had thought). The Committee hopes this new style, with opportunities for hiking and exploring, learning kayaking and canoeing, attending the Locust Fork Races in February and March, as well as learning about and acting on different local environmental issues, will attract teens.

2) We also commissioned our new YA!FLFR outings leader Chris Cleveland — educator and

outdoorsman, and a life-long river rat. He should liven things up a bit!

On Other Fronts

Other Ed Com Activities have members at work on the 8th Grade Locust Fork Watershed Field trip program, the River of Words contest, and renewing our Earth Day Grant for countywide programming.

Our newest proposed project is a Green School Initiative, which you'll be hearing more about. Your Ed Com members are Sherry Brewer, Nancy Caffee, Martha Hunter, Carol Hunt, Marcia Butler, Kelly Matson, Shelley Vail-Smith, Chris Cleveland, & Valerie Miller. You are invited & encouraged to join us. There's more than we can do. Come on!

Stephen's favorite spot on the Covered Bridge River Walk to Powell Falls. This is the old river bed that rejoins the current river channel at Powell Falls.



Blount County Fair: Relay Teaches Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

~ by Eleanor Wright

Two teams of kids at this year's Blount County Fair raced the clock to separate mixed-up recycled cans and bottles. The Red Team won the relay and all the kids won souvenir yellow FLFR bandanas.

FLFR sponsored the Recycle Relay to teach recycling principles to a new generation. All this spontaneous excitement bubbled up between children parading their lambs before judges, and kids petting llamas, rabbits and turtles in a petting zoo.

Wrangling this rodeo to keep it fair-and-square were FLFR members Cindy Lowry, Sara Rose, Keitha Hudson and Chris Cleveland.



Covered Bridge Festival Presentation: *Beth Young* ~ by Leigh Lynn



Who better to celebrate our covered bridges and other river lore and beauty than Beth Young?

Beth's recent and gorgeous book, *Headwaters, A Journey on Alabama Rivers*, features several stunning pictures of our Locust Fork. In her presentation at Hayden Community Center Thursday before the Blount County Covered Bridge Festival, she showed her river pictures, and told wonderful stories about the process of taking the photographs: the ecstasy of rising before dawn to catch the light on the mist above the river or the trudging of camera equipment across cliffs and tributaries. Her talents include storytelling as well as photography.

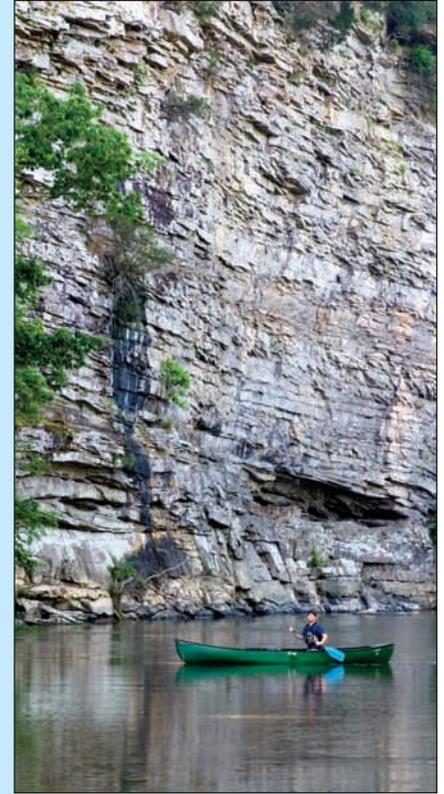
Many thanks to Hayden's Mayor Thelma Smith, Anita Harper and William Parker for providing the Hayden Community Center.

Headwaters won the 2009 Overall Excellence designation from the Southeastern Library Association's

Southern Book Competition as well as the Reed Writing Award, given by the Southern Environmental Law Center. Both the book and gift card sets are available online at her web site: BethYoung.net.

One of the card sets features 6 very different faces of the Locust Fork, plus a map of the river and a bit about its unusual geology, from Jim Lacefield. Also available at Blount Office Supplies and FLFR events.

Note: President Stephen has cited in this issue the excellent short course by John C. Hall about Alabama's extraordinary geology/ecology in the early pages of Headwaters.



One of the photographs of the Locust Fork River from the book.

Make One "For The Birds" ~ by Eleanor Wright

Kids had lots of fun making food treats for birds at the FLFR booth for the 28th Covered Bridge Festival in downtown Oneonta. Stringing cheerios as tree garlands, and rolling pinecones in peanut butter and birdseed were offered by FLFR's Education Committee.

The children completed their projects with help from committee members Debra Gordon-Hellman and Chris Cleveland, along with Day-on-the-River Queen, Sharon Cook, and a few others. These popular projects occupied and delighted children while their parents discussed river lore and issues with FLFR booth staffers and browsed an array of river information.

FLFR is a proud participant in the annual Covered Bridge Festival, holding a public meeting — this year with distinguished photographer Beth Maynor Young; leading the River Walk along the banks of the Locust Fork River; presenting information and children's activities at the Festival.



A pinecone stuffed with peanut butter and birdseed and its proud creator at the Covered Bridge Festival FLFR kids' booth.

Recycling in Blount County!

We residents of Blount County now have recycling options close to home. Thanks to county administrator Ralph Mitchell, there are three locations around the county.

Recyclables

Recyclable materials include:

- **“tin”**
(such as canned goods containers)
- **aluminum**
(such as soft drink cans)
- **paper**
(like newsprint, notebook paper),
- **cardboard, and plastics.**

Sorry, no glass.

In addition to the common recyclables, the West Blount (old landfill) location will recycle any metal objects such as appliances, bikes and yard furniture.

No, Thanks

Other types of waste including household garbage, cooking oil, construction waste, old furniture, etc. should **NOT** be placed in or outside recycle bins. That will create a problem for the program.

Separate and Rinse

“For this to be successful, we need for people to be diligent in separating materials into the proper recycle categories and not use the recycling bins for household garbage and other non-recyclable materials,” Mitchell said.

“It would help if cans were rinsed out to be reasonably clean — not washed out — just rinsed to remove all of whatever was in them,” he said.

(continued on page 7)

Alabama’s River Resources

By Mitch Reid, Alabama Rivers Alliance program director

Our rivers provide our drinking water and a healthy environment for swimming, hunting, fishing and enjoying nature. Worldwide they play unique ecological roles. Water resources are also essential for farming, manufacturing, and navigation. We need good resource protection and management to ensure these waters are there for everyone.

Water Resources Key to Economic Opportunities

Alabama’s cities and towns continue to explore ways to attract industry and provide for increasing populations.

Alabama’s agricultural community is excited about the Alabama Irrigation Initiative, which will dramatically increase farm irrigation and redefine the relationship between farmers and water resources.

Plentiful water supplies are necessary to capitalize on these and other opportunities; ensuring this supply will require proper planning.

Like a Budget

Planning water supply is the same as planning the family budget: You plan for tough times (such as this year’s drought in South Alabama), and you tighten the belt to keep the family afloat during those times.

Compared to states out west, Alabama is

blessed with abundant water. But we must do a better job of managing it. Increasingly our water resources are at risk from droughts, unbalanced distribution and conflicts with neighboring states. Regardless of political affiliation or location, everyone in the state is a stakeholder in good resource management.

Higher or Bigger

Alabama’s current system favors those who happen to live upriver or have the biggest pump. Whether you are looking to invest in irrigation for your farm or want to bring a business to your town, you must have a predictable, secure source of water. That security cannot be found under Alabama’s current system.

Comprehensive Plan Needs:

- **Monitoring and Management of Water Withdrawals** – Enhance the current certificate program to ensure more accurate monitoring and management of water withdrawals on a statewide basis.
- **Protection of Minimum Flows** – Put in place procedures for science to determine the amount of flows needed in our river systems and groundwater resources in order to sustain all of the demands for water withdrawals, while ensuring the natural system remains healthy and sustainable.
- **Management of Interbasin Transfers** – Manage the exchange of water from one basin to another to maintain and protect the health and flows of each natural system involved in the transfer.
- **Conservation and Efficiency Programs** – Implement statewide programs incentivizing and requiring money-saving and water-saving conservation and efficiency programs.
- **Regional Decision-Making Structure** – Make decisions about the implementation of a comprehensive water plan at the watershed level in order to achieve the greatest benefit and avoid long-term problems statewide.

Recycling *(continued)*

No cooking oil, please

Mitchell said cooking oil had been left at one location, and could not be used as part of the county program.

He noted that Oneonta Utilities has a program for collecting cooking oil that people can recycle by bringing to the utility's Oneonta location.

3 Sites

West Blount – (also takes anything metal and household garbage) at the county landfill, located off Hwy 160 in the Sugar Creek area. Hours: 7:30 a.m. – 3:15 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday; closed Sunday and Monday.

Central Blount – located at intersection of Ala 79
(continued on page 8)

A Long Time Coming

As long ago as 1990, the Alabama Water Resources Study Commission warned that without action, water would become the limiting factor for growth in Alabama. Our current law, the Alabama Water Resources Act, does not give the Office of Water Resources authority to protect water. In response to of the catastrophic droughts of 2007, the Alabama Legislature formed the Permanent Joint Legislative Committee for Water Policy and Management to develop a sustainable plan for Alabama.

A comprehensive water plan is the only way to protect our water resources and the people of the state. The Joint Committee is working towards this goal. It needs the support and leadership of the Governor and constituents to move forward.

While Alabama's water resources are abundant, they are not unlimited; they must be carefully managed to meet longterm needs. The absence of a clear plan for allocating and accounting for the state's water is jeopardizing our water security and environment. The Alabama Rivers Alliance is diligently working to make a comprehensive water plan a reality in Alabama.

(cut form here to mail back in)

membership form

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**

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual — \$20 | <input type="checkbox"/> Please include me in the FLFR e-mail network for outings and Locust Fork river alerts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family — \$30 | <input type="checkbox"/> Call me to help with FLFR activities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Friend — \$50 | <input type="checkbox"/> Please dedicate this contribution of _____ to the RosaMine.org Watch Dog Committee |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Patron — \$100 | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Donor — \$250 and above | |

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 638, Cleveland, Alabama 35049

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.

Recycling *(continued)*

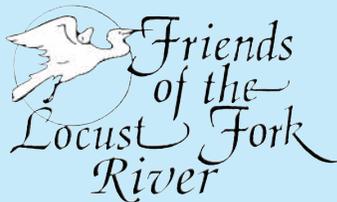
and 160 at Cleveland on property owned by Blount County Water Authority (across from Tonka Supply). Available to public 24/7.

East Blount – located at Straight Mountain Volunteer Fire Station on County 29. Available to public 24/7.

Allied Waste Republic Services provides and maintains the receptacles. Recently when overflowing bins were reported, they were cleaned up by the very next day. Thanks! To report overflow of these bins, please call 205-923-1650.

A fourth location at Hayden School is used as a teaching aid for conservation education, and the public is asked not to use the container there.

THANKS FOR RECYCLING!



The Friends of
the Locust Fork River
P.O. Box 638
Cleveland, Alabama 35049

EVERGREEN-ER



Our newsletter is
printed on 100%
recycled paper
with soy-based ink.

Sam's Keeping and Eye on the Watershed

(continued from page two)

The legal system, including the 3-year-old proposed penalty, moves verry SLOWLY. However, we have assurance that the cogs in the so-called wheels of so-called progress are indeed moving.

Northern Beltline Highway Project on Hold

The 4.7 billion dollar proposed project (\$90 million per mile) was put on HOLD by the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) shortly after the public comment period ended. No particular reason was given other than pending future studies.

FLFR's comments in the public forum were "against" the project. There were many reasons cited in the opinion: excessive cost, lack of need, and anticipated environmental damages at many sites in the Locust Fork River Watershed.

Thanks to Black Warrior Riverkeeper (BWRk) and Southern Environmental Law Center (SELC) for bringing suit against ALDOT to either stop the project or ensure ALL studies would be completed before construction would begin.

Their cogent comments brought to attention some very important concerns — concerns that have stopped the project for the time being.