



RIDGE AND RIVER NEWS

Newsletter of the Rockbridge Area Conservation Council (RACC)

June 2017

Earth Day Celebration planned for June 17

Lexington's first annual Earth Day Celebration will take place June 17, 4:30-8:30 p.m., on Hopkins Green at the corner of Nelson and Jefferson Streets (the original date in May was rained out). A variety of activities and exhibits will emphasize Earth's beauty and how to preserve it.

RACC's display will include materials on local land, water, and energy conservation, a fun, dynamic model of surface- and groundwater-hydrology, and updates on RACC's Arcadia Project (now part of the state's Outdoor Plan). Other exhibits will emphasize bees, birds, solar power, watersheds, local organic gardening, Farmer's Markets, hiking clubs and Friends of the Chessie Trail. Local musicians will play and light snacks will be for sale.

Activities for kids will include making "seed bombs" for gardens that attract birds and butterflies, an Earth Day Parade around Hopkin's Green, and a free showing of "The Lorax" at around 8:30 p.m. (bring blankets to sit on). Everyone will learn about solar power, native planting for residences, and how to measure and reduce a family's carbon footprint.

The afternoon will offer opportunities to learn about the importance of honeybees, the kinds of wildlife found in our region's state and national parks, how local park rangers fought the Goshen wildfire, and how to identify the birds found in Rockbridge County.

In addition, there will be a working model of a solar panel, information about which lightbulbs are most environmentally friendly, and efforts to protect regional groundwater. There will be an information booth for contacting legislators, and a "commitment tree" for pledging individual efforts to improve the environment.

A special feature of the festivities will be the March for Life Resilience: participants are invited to arrive at the celebration under their own power by walking, biking, or skateboarding to honor the beauty and fragility of our environment. For more information on the March, contact Eli Fishpaw, belifishpaw@rockbridge.net.

If it rains, the festival will move to Lexington Presbyterian Church's Dunlap Auditorium (enter from Randolph Street).

Everyone is welcome to attend this free, family-friendly event, sponsored by the Climate and Environment Committee of 50 Ways Rockbridge with support from RACC and others. For more information, contact Susan Caba, cabasue@gmail.com or sign on to Facebook and search for "Earth Day Festival."



Expert warns of endocrine disruptors in skin care products

Joseph C. Dinardo recently discussed chemicals in personal care products in a talk at Lylburn Downing Community Center, co-sponsored by 50 Ways Rockbridge, the local chapter of NOW, and RACC. Mr. DiNardo has worked in the personal care industry for more than 40 years as a toxicologist, product formulator and specialist in regulatory affairs.

Mr. DiNardo pointed out that endocrine-disrupting chemicals permeate modern life: they are in food packaging, soft plastics, and many personal care products. Increasing bodies of research show that these chemicals are associated with a variety of cancers, diabetes, allergies, obesity, reproductive disorders and early puberty, according to the World Health Organization's statement, "Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals 2012." They act like hormones in our bodies and are dangerous to ourselves, our children, our environment, and to life in our rivers, lakes and oceans.

Fortunately, we can learn the names of these chemicals, check product labels, and avoid or limit their presence in our lives. Smart-phone apps are also available to help the careful shopper.

See Endocrine disruptors, Page 2

Comprehensive Plan critical for city zoning

The RACC Land Use Committee is working to improve Lexington's zoning ordinance, land use and planning process. It is also continuing work on the Arcadia Project to conserve the regional landscape in southern Rockbridge and northern Botetourt County.

The committee notes that a state-mandated revision of Lexington's Comprehensive Plan needs to be done first and should be used to inform a number of important projects now before City Council, including: revision of city zoning maps and ordinances; setting rules for short-term rentals and home businesses; deciding the fate of the city's Spotswood property; adding a green infrastructure plan; and developing a community vision for the future of the city.

The regular meeting of the Land Use Committee takes place the second Thursday of each month at 4 p.m. at the RACC office; all members of RACC are invited to attend and assist.

'Braiding the Way' sets prizes

Progress continues on this project, a cooperative effort led by the Tourism Office with support from the National Park Service as well as RACC and other local organizations. The goal is to create a braided network of trails, blueways, bikeways, and parks to support community health and conservation goals, as well as linking the region's cultural, historic and natural attractions.

You are invited to fill out a survey on line to be used in an economic analysis to help increase local opportunities for outdoor recreation. The survey website is surveymonkey.com/r/outdoorrecreationrockbridge.

Participants can enter a drawing for prizes listed on the first page; completing the survey takes under ten minutes.

Ridge & River News

is published quarterly and edited by Sally Nunneley

Send suggestions, articles or letters to RACC@rockbridge.net or mail them to the address shown on the cover.

>> Printed on 100% recycled paper <<

Endocrine disruptors

Continued from Page 1

Mr. DiNardo shared a list of endocrine-disrupting chemicals and suggested the mnemonic *Bad For People Places Planet* to help avoid products whose ingredients contain the terms Benzo, Fragrance, Parabens, Phthalate, or PEG/PPG.



Joseph C. DiNardo based products on ourselves and our children, and they then wash off to contaminate our pools, lakes, rivers and oceans.

Avoid these chemical sunscreens, DiNardo advised. Select instead those that are mineral-based (i.e. zinc oxide alone or combined with titanium dioxide) and preferably minerals in "non-nano" form. Such sunscreens have lower SPF's, but are much safer for ourselves and the environment. A search through dozens of sunscreens in local chainstores found only two that were solely mineral-based; Amazon lists many sunscreens as 'non-nano mineral-based' with no ingredients from the BFPPP list.

House Mountain trial scheduled

The suit defending the agreements of the House Mountain Preserve is scheduled for a hearing on July 20-21. RACC's counsel, Jared Jenkins, is making plans to proceed with the necessary discovery and depositions.

Solar co-op seeks members

With support from RACC, the Mountain and Valley Solar Co-op is moving forward with more than ninety members from Rockingham, Augusta and Rockbridge counties. Twenty-one contracts have been signed with Sigora Solar as members decide to "go solar" for a portion of their electricity needs.

The co-op will remain open through July 15; new members can obtain an evaluation of their site without obligation. For more information, go to vasun.org and click on Mountain and Valley under "Join a solar co-op."

RACC supports dam removal

After careful consideration, RACC's Watershed Committee has written to Lexington expressing "wholehearted support" for removal of the aging dam at Jordan's Point. The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries has offered to plan and implement the removal, requiring only supporting services from the Lexington.

The committee noted that dams change the way rivers function, trapping debris and negatively affecting wildlife habitats downstream. Benefits of removing the dam include restoring the natural riverine habitat; improving water quality; reinstating the natural passage of debris to maintain habitat downstream; eliminating unnatural variations in water temperature and flow; and re-establishing the connectivity that is vital for preserving abundant and healthy populations of fish and other wildlife. Safety is also an issue, as the dam has a number of physical defects that could lead to catastrophic failure at some future time.

If the dam is removed, the river will rapidly reestablish a natural flow regime and ecology, so that plans should be made for riparian zone planting as well as control of upstream erosion and downstream deposition of mobilized debris. Watershed Committee members David Harbor and Paul Low, both with geology expertise, have offered to assist with planning.

For more information on issues related to dam removal, go to americanrivers.org and click on "Restoring Damaged Rivers."

RACC forms Energy Committee

Dedicated RACC volunteers have been working to facilitate the purchase and installation of photovoltaic systems as the most effective renewable source of electricity now available to area homeowners and businesses. The same volunteers are also keeping abreast of ongoing improvements in solar and wind technologies for generating electricity.

Energy is the key factor connecting all aspects of climate change. RACC is therefore forming a standing committee on energy to help the organization address its core values in conserving local land, water, and energy resources.

RACC's Board of Directors challenges our members to join this Energy Committee to promote science-based programs and help Rockbridge citizens understand the implications of our energy use today and the need to implement better options for the future.

If you are interested and ready to work, please contact Lee Merrill at merrill@rockbridge.net.

RACC hosts 50 Ways committee

RACC continues to host meetings of the Climate Change and Environment Committee of 50 Ways Rockbridge at the RACC office on the 2nd Wednesday of each month at 5:30 p.m.

Kendal crew helps with best-ever Community Cleanup



Kendal residents lined up to go after trash as part of the RACC-sponsored Community Cleanup the week of March 25 (photo by Ted Burrowes).

RACC outreach in the community

- ◆ Co-hosted a local showing of “Won’t Pipe Down” with a panel discussion of the Atlantic Coast Pipeline (ACP) and a comment-writing workshop.
- ◆ Endorsed the extensive comment package on the ACP written by the Southern Environmental Law Center.
- ◆ Received a letter of support for the Arcadia Project from the Botetourt County Supervisors.
- ◆ Cooperated in the City of Lexington’s plan to conduct monthly counts of *E. coli* in Woods Creek.
- ◆ Worked with VCC on a conservation easement session in the Buffalo Creek/Purgatory Mountain/Arcadia area.
- ◆ Appointed representatives to attend meetings of the VCN’s Land Use, Transportation and Energy Working Group.

Have you contributed to RACC for 2017?

The calendar insert gives information on supporting us.

RACC donors will be honored at the Community Festival in August.

Telephone: 540-463-2330 * Website: rockbridgeconservation.org * Facebook page: Rockbridge-Conservation

RACC BOARD MEMBERS
RACC Board Members
Julie Youngman
Chris Wise
Charles Winder
Mike Pelton
Jay Lewis
Cliff Kiracofe
David Harbor
Nathan Bowden
Paul Bryant
Bob Biersack
Co-Secretary, Rosalie Bull
Co-Secretary, Adrienne Hall-Bodie
Co-Treasurer, Bruce Byrmar
Co-Treasurer, Larry Evans
Vice President, Conrad Matluk
Co-President, Lee Merrill
Co-President, Gregg Amonette

Rockbridge Area Conservation
Council (RACC)
P.O. Box 564
Lexington, VA 24450

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
LEXINGTON, VA 24450
Permit No. 17