



# RIDGE AND RIVER NEWS

Newsletter of the Rockbridge Area Conservation Council (RACC)

Fall 2013

## Free admission to landmark for Annual Meeting at Natural Bridge

A chance to walk the ground that Thomas Jefferson, James Monroe, and perhaps even George Washington may have trod is in the cards for RACC members attending this year's annual meeting, to be held at the Natural Bridge of Virginia on Oct. 27, from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

With the Bridge much in the news, members will also have the opportunity to do that for free, as the management has graciously waived the normal \$20 admission fee for those attending the meeting.

Geologist Ed Spencer, RACC's vice president, will get us started with a geology walk down to and around the Bridge itself. The walk starts at 1:30 p.m., but members should plan to get there early to drop off their potluck dishes beginning at 1:00 p.m. at the Washington Hall behind the Natural Bridge Hotel, where the meeting itself will take place.

RACC has been an active partner in the Friends of the Natural Bridge, a coalition of nonprofit organizations that is encouraging private and public entities to take the vital step of securing the Bridge property so that future generations will be able to enjoy this natural and national treasure. More information is available at [friendsofthenaturalbridge.org](http://friendsofthenaturalbridge.org).

Besides Jefferson – who purchased the Bridge and its surroundings from King George III of England for 20 shillings in 1774 – the Bridge has seen such distinguished visitors as Sam Houston, John Marshall and Henry Clay, and was famously mentioned by Herman Melville in *Moby-Dick*. William Cullen Bryant deemed it and Niagara Falls the two most important natural sites in the United States.

*See Annual Meeting, Page 3*

### Buy your bicycle raffle tickets today!



The RACC Transportation Committee is raffling a new 18" TREK 720 horizontal-bar bike, shown here with new RACC member Clifford Kiracofe and RACC board member Lisa Tracy. Raffle income will be used to purchase bicycle racks for key locations in Lexington. The bike is a \$400 value; tickets are \$1 each, 6 for \$5, or 25 for \$20.

Members and the public can buy tickets at the RACC office, on line with PayPal or a credit card at [rockbridgeconservation.org](http://rockbridgeconservation.org) (click on *Bike Raffle*), or at the RACC Annual Meeting. The drawing will be held after dinner at the meeting; you need not be present to win. (Barbara Walsh photo)

### Update on NB rescue effort

The RACC Land Use Committee, working with the Friends of the Natural Bridge, has determined that the Commonwealth of Virginia is willing to accept a gift of property to become a Natural Bridge State Park.

The state would prefer that the gift include not only the bridge itself, but also some of the surrounding undeveloped land, which features great birding and rare forest ecotypes. The caves are home to several rare subterranean species including the unique Natural Bridge Cave beetle. The Friends are working to find an individual or group willing to purchase the needed properties and donate them to the state in exchange for tax benefits.

*Here is how you can help:*

- Visit the Friends at [friendsofthenaturalbridge.org](http://friendsofthenaturalbridge.org) for more details.
- Act Now by signing the petition, friending the coalition on Facebook and suggesting potential purchasers.
- Buy a RACC t-shirt and a copy of Ed Spencer's book on Natural Bridge.

## RACC display a hit at Community Festival

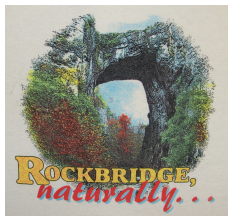


The RACC booth at the Community Festival on August 24 was set perpendicular to the street next to booths for Boxerwood and the Master Naturalists, and featured Mark Cline's 8-foot model of Natural Bridge, a full array of committee and project displays. The effort was highly successful, breaking new ground with an outstanding display, record setting sales of notecards, books, and t-shirts, and the highest number ever of new people signing up for the RACC mailing list.

### RACC Natural Bridge t-shirts for sale

The office has for sale an array of RACC's wonderful t-shirts with the RACC logo over the heart on the front and a full-color painting of Natural Bridge on the back together with the motto "Rockbridge, naturally." Shirts will also be available at the Annual Meeting.

The shirts are 100% unbleached cotton, of course. They are available in sizes from small child to XXL adult for \$16.



## RACC attends VMI meeting of Chessie Trail Steering Committee

VMI's Maj. Jennifer deHart chaired the first meeting of the Chessie Trail Steering Committee in August. RACC members Chris Wise and Lisa Tracy attended, as did officials from the county and both cities as well as a representative of neighboring landowners.

Discussion covered VMI's plans to fund better signage and parking; relationships with landowner neighbors; the role of bicycles, and future positioning of the trail as an eco-tourist destination.

VMI is eager to include more voices in improving the trail and a public meeting is set for 4 p.m. on Tuesday, Nov. 12, at VMI's Hinty Hall conference room, near the Armory off Greenhouse Rd.

Lexington planning director Mike Zehner is at work on completing the link from Jordan's Point Park to the north side of the Veterans Bridge so that the original head of the Chessie Trail in the park will again connect to the rest of the trail -- and to the Woods Creek Trail as well.

### *Give native flowers a chance:*

### Help clear invasives from the trail

Meet at the Mill Creek gate of the Chessie Trail at 9 a.m. on Saturday, October 26, for the second annual Fall Clean-Up Walk! RACC and the Master Naturalists are co-sponsoring a morning's effort to identify and remove alien invasive species such as multiflora rose, privet, English ivy, and non-native honeysuckle. The walk covers the section of the Trail where the greatest number of native wildflowers bloom in spring, and helps them get a firmer footing. Bring gloves and clippers!

The gate is just below Old Buena Vista Road about 1.8 miles east of Veterans Bridge over the Maury. Parking is available by the chain link fence at the state highway site directly across the road, or in the pull-off across from Lincoln Road just before Mill Creek.

### *Ridge & River News*

is edited by Sally Nunneley and published quarterly

E-mail letters, articles or suggestions to [RACC@rockbridge.net](mailto:RACC@rockbridge.net) or send them to the address shown on the cover.

>>Printed on 100% recycled paper<<

*RACC's mission is to promote the wise stewardship and sustainable use of natural and cultural resources through education, advocacy and action in order to protect and enhance the quality of life for present and future inhabitants of Rockbridge County.*

Contact RACC at 463-2330 or [racc@rockbridge.net](mailto:racc@rockbridge.net), or visit our website at [rockbridgeconservation.org](http://rockbridgeconservation.org)

# Annual Meeting

*Continued from Page 1*

RACC seeks to hold the annual meeting in a different quarter of the county each year, and is especially pleased that we will be gathering at this historic location at a time when Natural Bridge itself faces an uncertain future.

The council is also grateful to the owner of the bridge and hotel for use of Washington Hall and for the generous offer of free entry for the geology walk.

Our schedule:

**1:00 p.m.** Arrive at Natural Bridge. Drive uphill onto the hotel's back lot, adjacent to Washington Hall. Drop off dinner items and pick up name-tags for Natural Bridge entry, then either walk down to the Gift Shop or drive to its parking lot to meet Ed Spencer and fellow walkers at the gift shop's front entrance.

**1:30 p.m.** Ed's walk will take us along the edge of Cascade Creek and down to Cedar Creek, the small stream that carved a mighty landmark. He will explain how that process evolved over millions of years, creating the deep gorge and the bridge itself. If there's time, RACC members

may want to continue farther up the creek to the Monacan village and other features of the gorge.

**3:30 p.m.** Return to Washington Hall for our potluck feast and the meeting itself. Bring friends, family, a favorite dish to share, and dinnerware (see box). Signed copies of Ed's *Guidebook to the Natural Bridge and Natural Bridge Caverns* will be available for purchase, along with RACC notecards and the *Field Guide to the Chessie Nature Trail*.

**4:00 p.m.** The business meeting, over dessert, will include our annual Conservation Awards, election of members of the Board of Directors, and the drawing for RACC's bike raffle! The nominees for the Board of Directors are Amy DeHart, Arthur Bartenstein, Ed Spencer, and Chris Wise.

**5:00 p.m.** Help cleaning up will be much appreciated: We'll load compostables into a container to be handled by RACC's Zero Waste committee; collect RACC's cloth napkins; pack up our dishes, and leave no trace behind.

See you at the Bridge on October 29!

## Meeting at a glance

**Time:** Sunday, Oct 27, 1:00 to 5:00 p.m.

**Place:** Natural Bridge Hotel's Washington Hall (park in back)

**Bring a dish and place settings (zero waste)**

**Free admission to landmark with RACC name tag**

**1:30 Geology walk with Ed Spencer**

**3:30 Potluck dinner**

**Short meeting and conservation awards**

## Special note: Bring your own ...

Washington Hall does not have kitchen facilities, emphasizing our aim for Zero-Waste.

Please bring a dish to share (places to plug crock pots will be available) as well as your own plates, cups/glasses and utensils together with a bag to carry everything home for washing. RACC will provide beverages and cloth napkins.

## Lewis and Clark ceremony set for Lexington on Oct 18

A plaque commemorating the "Eastern Legacy" of the famous expedition will be dedicated at 4:30 p.m. in Old Courthouse Square, 2 S. Main Street, to honor William Clark's visit to Lexington in 1809 en route to report to Jefferson at Monticello. RACC is among several organizations that sponsored the marker under an initiative by the National Park Service.

The Rockbridge Historical Society will host an open house beginning at 2:00 p.m. and invites the public to visit Campbell House before the courthouse ceremony and view the current exhibit there, historian Ed Dooley's images of Lexington's Main Street as of 1867.

## Photo enthusiast needed

RACC has a long history of selling blank notecards featuring beautiful images of the area, thanks to Patte Wood. We need someone to take over selecting the photos and getting the cards printed for packaging by volunteers. If interested, please contact Barbara at RACC office.

## Rockbridge Grown reinvents itself

The organization that promotes the sustainable production and consumption of local agricultural products in our area has reorganized with updated statements of mission, purpose and vision. It remains under the umbrella of the RACC 501c(3) nonprofit status. For detailed information, visit their website, [rockbridgegrown.org](http://rockbridgegrown.org).

## RACC memberships for 2014

Members receive the quarterly newsletter as well as a weekly e-mail calendar listing local and nearby conservation events.

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Send the completed form with check made payable to RACC, to: RACC, P.O. Box 564, Lexington, VA 24450

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Check here to receive newsletter by e-mail only \_\_\_\_\_

Check one:  New Member  Renewing Member

Membership category (check one):

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\$25 Individual Member

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\$60 Business/Organization

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Additional donation: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ for (check one)  Endowment or  Other (please explain) \_\_\_\_\_

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

### RACC BOARD MEMBERS

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