



# ROCKBRIDGE CONSERVATION: A YEAR IN REVIEW AND WHAT'S NEXT

AUGUST 2024

## WATERSHED

*Hands-on fieldwork and water-related problems in local waterways!*

**Maury River Alliance (MRA):** Ensuring responsible water management practices, promoting public awareness, and engaging with relevant stakeholders to foster the vitality and safety of the Maury by focusing on the regulatory, political, and governmental dimensions to improve resource-management practice at Lake Merriweather, a key feature of the Goshen Scout Reservation.

**Friends of Woods Creek (FoWC):** Restoring and protecting Woods Creek and trail with Rockbridge Area Master Gardeners to remove invasives and raise awareness of the watershed.

**Septic and Well Assistance Program (SWAP):** Managing a \$300,000 VDH grant, to help eligible local families improve septic and water facilities. Helping spread the word, applications from residents, and bids from contractors are encouraged!

**PFAS:** Raising awareness of “forever chemicals” by water/sediment samples analyzed by Virginia Tech.

**Water Monitoring:** Active water monitoring of micro-invertebrates in the Rockbridge Waterways and reporting findings to Izaak Walton League/Save our Streams and to River Trends/Alliance for the Bay. Working with impaired streams using chemical-biological testing in cooperation with the Chesapeake Bay Alliance made a significant advance in testing for E. coli bacteria. Rockbridge Water Monitors will be the first group in the state to try out CBA's new method. Training available!

**Interested in working on watershed projects?**

Contact John Pancake, [john.pancake@rockbridgeconservation.org](mailto:john.pancake@rockbridgeconservation.org), or Sandra Stewart, [sandra.stewart@rockbridgeconservation.org](mailto:sandra.stewart@rockbridgeconservation.org)

## TRAILS & LAND STEWARDSHIP

*Maintaining trails and promoting best land management practices!*

**Uncas Trail:** This year the committee improved a section of the Uncas Trail to provide a better grade and some directional signs were added. There is now a bike rack and informational kiosk.

**Sunnyside Preserve:** Continued improvements to the property by removing old farm fences and cleaning up existing property line fences, with help from Kendal Maintenance Department who generously mow the meadow path which leads to Boxerwood. An informational kiosk will be installed in the future with maps and information on the history and management of the property.

**To get involved please contact:**  
[chris.wise@rockbridgeconservation.org](mailto:chris.wise@rockbridgeconservation.org)

## ENERGY & CLIMATE

*Taking action to reduce the energy footprint and increase climate resilience of our community!*

**Residential Solar:** Adding solar power panels to local Habitat for Humanity houses.

**Solar Consultation:** Connecting residents and businesses with information about going solar.

**Commercial-Scale Solar:** Advising the County on best practices for siting, construction, and operation of commercial-scale solar arrays.

**Carbon Sequestration:** Researching techniques for increasing carbon in agricultural soils as a means of reducing atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub>.

**Electric Vehicles:** Raising awareness of EVs and increasing the number of public charging stations.

**To get involved contact:**  
[bob.biersack@rockbridgeconservation.org](mailto:bob.biersack@rockbridgeconservation.org)

## LAND USE PLANNING

*Zoning, comprehensive planning, and green infrastructure planning!*

If you are interested in helping the Rockbridge area develop wildlife corridors and comprehensive planning for land regulations, please get involved and contact [info@rockbridgeconservation.org](mailto:info@rockbridgeconservation.org).

## WASTE PREVENTION

*Protecting our natural environment by preventing waste!*

**Waste Reduction:** Reduced waste from the Rockbridge Area Health Center Bull & Oyster Fest, with 900 attendees, by 90%, as well as significantly reduced waste at the Balloons Over Rockbridge with 10,000 attendees. Partnered with Rockbridge CAN dinners and traded plastic utensils for metal and implemented composting.

**Caught Green Handed:** Awards feature local businesses, organizations, institutions, and individuals who have taken significant steps to become more energy efficient, reduce waste, or otherwise improve the environmental well-being of the Rockbridge community. Any community member can submit a suggestion for a possible recipient.

**Waste Reduction Consulting Service:** Consultation Service to help other interested organizations find ways to reduce their waste.

**Recycling Container Loan Program:** Recycling containers available to borrow for community, organization and private events for free.

**Food Recovery Pilots:** Two neighborhood pilot projects to reduce landfill methane by collecting compost and returning nutrients to local farmland. Partnering with Rockbridge Area Master Gardeners to provide composting education at Kerr's Creek Farmers' Market.

**"Ocean Protector Program":** In partnership with Boxerwood, students learned about the connection between litter and harm to wildlife from Sandy the Sea Turtle resulting in pledges from 470 3rd & 5th graders to help keep our community litter-free.

**Annual Community Clean-Up:** Reducing litter in the county each March by about 10 tons.

WE WELCOME ANYONE'S IDEAS AND PASSION TO JOIN THIS COMMITTEE.

**To get involved please contact:** [melody.tennant@rockbridgeconservation.org](mailto:melody.tennant@rockbridgeconservation.org)

### ROCKBRIDGE PARK Rx

RC affiliated organization

*"Nature Prescriptions"*

*For better health for you and your family!*

Local project using the National Park Rx America platform to write "nature prescriptions" for people of all ages.

#### **Ongoing Activities:**

- Introduction to all local medical providers and community organizations
- Upload Parks, Trails, and green spaces to the National Park Rx America website
- Lead and Collaborate on local outdoor activities

**New and exciting:** Rockbridge Park Rx will be collaborating with RARO on their new quarterly "Activities and Wellness Guide" to launch Fall 2024

**Growing our group:** Looking for volunteers to lead outdoor activities and write and enter information for community education on the benefits of being outdoors. Regular meeting are held during the Rockbridge Outdoor meetings (1st Wednesday of odd months- 10:30 A.M.)

**To get involved please contact:**

Susan Meister at  
[susan.meister@rockbridgeconservation.org](mailto:susan.meister@rockbridgeconservation.org)

### FRIENDS OF BRUSHY HILLS

RC affiliated organization

*Working to preserve the natural integrity of Brushy Hills for the benefit of the public!*

Designated stewards of Lexington's City-owned Brushy Hills Preserve, 500-plus acres of native woodland with over fourteen miles of trails.

#### **Ongoing Activities:**

- "Adopt-a-Trail" program: maintaining trails
- Controlling invasive species
- Producing educational materials
- Sponsoring nature walks

#### **New and Exciting — The Tree ID Project:**

A half-mile self-guided Tree Loop with labels on 26 trees identifying each species, with a QR code linked to more info. And more to come: labels IDing more species throughout the Preserve

**Learn about Friends and volunteer opportunities!**

Contact: Alexia -

[friendsofbrushyhills@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofbrushyhills@gmail.com)

**Volunteer Opportunities  
and Learn More at**

[www.rockbridgeconservation.org](http://www.rockbridgeconservation.org)

