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RIVER CHAT

The Nansemond River Preservation Alliance has been in existence only six years, but already, significant steps have been taken to define issues threatening the health of the river and creeks and to develop strategies for improving the quality of the waterways and the wetlands that surround it.

NRPA 2017 Spring/Summer Newsletter

SEEING IS BELIEVING!!

Please Visit the Environmental Demonstration Sites at Suffolk City Parks

Restoring Suffolk's impaired waterways requires the efforts of the entire community. And to that end, the Nansemond River Preservation Alliance (NRPA) has been working diligently since its founding in 2010 to educate and encourage citizens to be environmental stewards. NRPA is delighted to report that thus far, over 6,000 residents have participated in NRPA's activities, learning about best practices and taking action in their daily lives to restore and preserve our precious waterways.

In addition, over 500 volunteers have responded to the call to actively participate in NRPA's activities, providing hours of their valuable time towards NRPA's environmental education programs and projects. Local foundations and businesses are also important partners in the restoration and conservation movement in Suffolk. Early business supporters of NRPA's mission include BASF, Bennetts Creek Pharmacy, Birdsong Peanuts, Duke Automotive, Lipton Tea, Mike Duman Auto Sales, Volvo Penta, and TowneBank. Keurig Green Mountain joined the effort in 2015, and Dominion Energy followed in 2016. NRPA's solid relationship with the Suffolk Departments of Parks & Recreation, and Public Works has added considerable strength to this city-wide effort. Collaborations like these are central to NRPA's strategy and business plan and have now resulted in Demonstration Sites at Bennett's Creek Park and Sleepy Hole Park. What follows on page two are examples of private-public partnerships – the entire community working together to educate the public on ways they can restore and protect the waterways.



Rain Garden

SOUTHEAST VIRGINIA NATIVE PLANTS: Local native plants provide oxygen and habitat for fresh and salt water ecosystems, or communities. Native plants are adapted to local temperature and rainfall fluctuations. Once established they require less watering and fertilizing, save natural resources, time and money and support more wildlife species than non-native.

RAIN GARDENS: A rain garden is a depressed area in the landscape that collects rain water from a paved driveway or street (impervious surfaces) and allows it to soak into the ground. Planted with native plants and perennial flowers, rain gardens can be a cost effective and beautiful way to reduce runoff from your property. Rain gardens can also help filter out pollutants in runoff and provide food and shelter for butterflies, song birds and other wildlife.

RIPARIAN BUFFERS: Riparian buffers are vegetated areas next to water resources that protect water resources from nonpoint source pollution and provide bank stabilization and aquatic and wildlife habitat. Enhanced buffers will filter sediment and pollutants, supply organic materials which provide food for aquatic invertebrates and these, in turn, provide food for wildlife.

Bennett's Creek Park Demonstration Site Riparian Buffer and Rain Gardens

For the third year in a row, over a two-day period, 75 Keurig employees came to Bennett's Creek Park in Suffolk to participate in the buffer stabilization and enhancement demonstration site project. Keurig provides funding for the shovels, rakes, wheel barrows and native plants, and lunch for their company volunteers.

This year the project had three components:

- 1) establishing five rain gardens (new);
- 2) planting 30 shrubs along the shoreline;
- 3) and spreading 105 cubic yards of mulch.

The Keurig volunteers' work was tested immediately. A fast moving storm poured 1.5 inches of rain in the area following Day One of the project. The rain gardens planted earlier in the day were put to the test and NRPA is delighted to report the rain gardens were effective in reducing the storm water runoff. The riparian buffer is also stabilizing as a result of Keurig's three years of volunteer work.

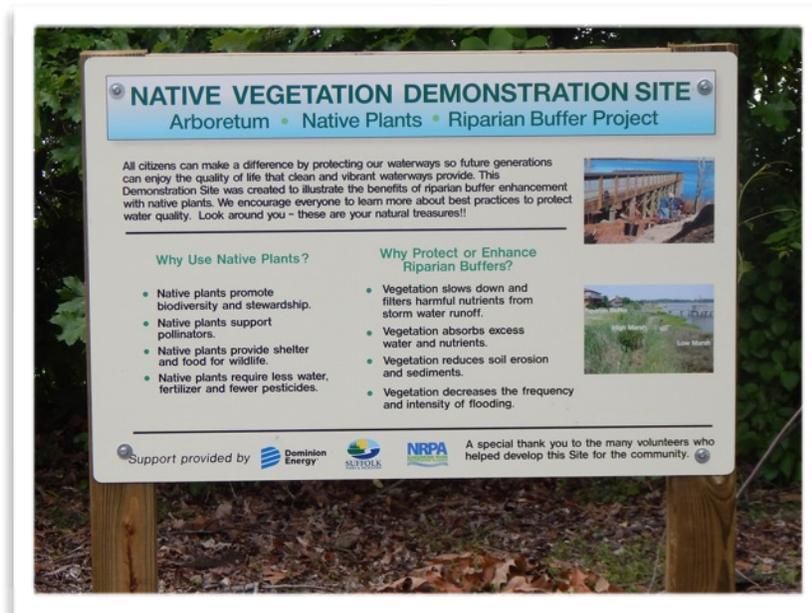
Keurig employees have embraced the project. This year almost half of the employees who participated in the past returned to help again. Several employees new to the program said that this was their first experience volunteering for an environmental project and also their first time planting a native shrub or a tree. Many had never heard of or seen a rain garden and by the end of the day, several were talking about planting their own

Sleepy Hole Park Riparian Buffer and Native Plant Arboretum Demonstration Site

The Sleepy Hole Demonstration Site is located along the Nansemond River and has more shore line and characteristics different from Bennett's Creek.

Having more shoreline property makes it an ideal location for a broad range of environmental projects that will educate the public on best practices. The vision for the Site is to have an established riparian buffer, native plant arboretum, living shoreline and a walking path strategically placed in the upland with viewing areas so residents and visitors can relax and enjoy the river view. The arboretum and nature trail adjacent to the Demonstration Site will include interpretive signage for citizens to learn about native plants and trees and serve as a guide to plant similar vegetation on their property.

Phase I of the Demonstration Site located adjacent to the pier, was completed and opened to the public in April 2017, and includes a Riparian Buffer and Native Plant Arboretum (small scale). Over 200 volunteers, preteens through seasoned adults, participated in the planting and spreading of mulch at the sites. Monthly maintenance of the Site will be conducted by the Kings Fork High School Ecology Club and JROTC. Partial funding for the Phase I native plants was provided through a Suffolk City budget allocation. Additional funding for Phase I and all of Phase II is supported through two DominionEnergy grants received by NRPA. NRPA expects the Demonstration Site to be completed in 2018.



Sleepy Hole Park- located near pier

Water Wise Homes

Join Your Neighbors in
Protecting Our Waterways



The Water Wise Program acknowledges residents who have made changes in their daily practices that protect the environment. A citizen enters their contact information, checks off the 5-7 activities they agree to do, retains the check-off list for their reference and mails the contact information portion to NRPA. NRPA will mail the official weather-resistant Waterwise Home decal to the new member.

Update on the Aliff Family's Phragmites Eradication and Living Shoreline Project

Last year in the Fall River Chat, NRPA reported on Lee and Mike Aliff's family challenge to eradicate the 15-18 foot high phragmites "wall" that replaced the beautiful cattails along their 190 linear foot Chuckatuck Creek shoreline. Their journey began two year's ago when the Alliffs, after consulting with NRPA, cut back the phragmites and hired a VA DEQ licensed professional to



2014



2017

administer a systematic herbicide to the roots. Last summer Lee and Mike, along with their grandson, two boy scouts and their mother planted 1440 sprigs of *Spartina Alterniflora* and *Patens*, new shoreline grasses. NRPA visited the Aliff's property in May and spoke with Lee and Mike. The couple's enthusiasm was palpable. A majority of the *Spartina* grasses were flourishing as well as other natural shoreline grasses. Mike commented a pocket of phragmites appears periodically which he quickly removes. Lee enjoys seeing the flocks of shore birds; ospreys, eagles, herons, plover, sandpipers and woodducks who are now regular visitors. When the shoreline was stacked with

phragmites, bird sightings were limited. The couple also noticed a significant increase in the number of oysters along the shoreline. The Alliffs understand that it will probably be another two years before the shoreline view they had in the early 1990's will be restored. They're considering having a homecoming party to celebrate.

Classroom Connections

*Nansemond Watershed Initiative
(NWI): Connecting Classrooms with
our Environment*

The Nansemond Watershed Initiative program has reached 4,300 students since it was launched in 2013. A program description follows:

Suffolk 7th Grade Science: The NRPA designed curriculum has two components. First, our staff and trained volunteers go into the classroom with hands-on activities introducing students to our local watersheds. The second component is the outdoor hands-on field studies conducted at a local salt marsh and onboard a boat on the Nansemond River. In all, each Suffolk student receives seven hours of a hands-on classroom and outdoors watershed experience. The school program has a multiplier effect - students share information about the environment and ways to protect the Nansemond River and our local creeks with friends, siblings, parents, grandparents hopefully motivating them to become environmental stewards. **Participation: 1000 students, yearly, from all four of Suffolk Public Middle Schools.**

Expanded Outreach to Other Grade Levels:

Kindergarten: A 30-minute, in school hands-on experience where the students touch and feel "river critters" and learn about stormwater runoff.

Participation: 100 students, Nansemond Parkway Elementary School.

Fourth Grade: A three-hour hands-on Salt Marsh Field Study Program at various locations along Bennett's and Chuckatuck Creeks. Students learn about the important role of oysters, marine life, natural habitats, and water quality.

Participation: 130 students from Suffolk Public Schools, Nansemond Suffolk Academy, and Nansemond River Garden Club's Ecology Camp.

High School: NRPA is starting a new program in 2017 to get students involved in local environmental community service projects. Projects include the Riparian Buffer Demonstration Sites and Clean the Banks of the Nansemond River.

Participation: 100 students from Nansemond Suffolk Academy (Upper School), Kings Fork High School Ecology Club, and JROTC members.

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National Park Service
NOAA
Virginia Department of Environmental Quality
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Tidewater Master Naturalists

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Nansemond Suffolk Academy
Old Dominion University
Tidewater Community College
VIMS



You are invited to become a member of NRPA and join the over 350 citizens, businesses, foundations and government agencies that are making a difference in Suffolk.....

DONOR LEVELS:

SUSTAINING	15,000	CREW	250
BLUE RIVER	5,000	PATRON	100
ADMIRAL	3,000	FAMILY	40
CAPTAIN	1,000	INDIVIDUAL	25
COMMANDER	500	STUDENT	10

Your gift is tax deductible to the extent allowed by the law.

Please make your check payable to NRPA, *or donate on-line*
P.O. Box 6090, Suffolk, VA 23433
NansemondRiverPreservationAlliance.org
Elizabeth Taraski, President / CEO *taraski.nrpa@gmail.com*

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Your email address allows us to send you important updates and information about activities and events.

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