

FAIRVIEW COMMUNITY FOREST — A PLACE TO CONNECT

Your impact at work:

**4 SALUDA GRADE TRAIL
MOVES FORWARD**

**6 LAND PROTECTED ALONG
THE GREEN RIVER**

**8 HENDERSONVILLE ARTIST
CREATES A NATURE PRESERVE**

**10 TIPS FOR A WILDLIFE-FRIENDLY
GARDEN THIS SUMMER**

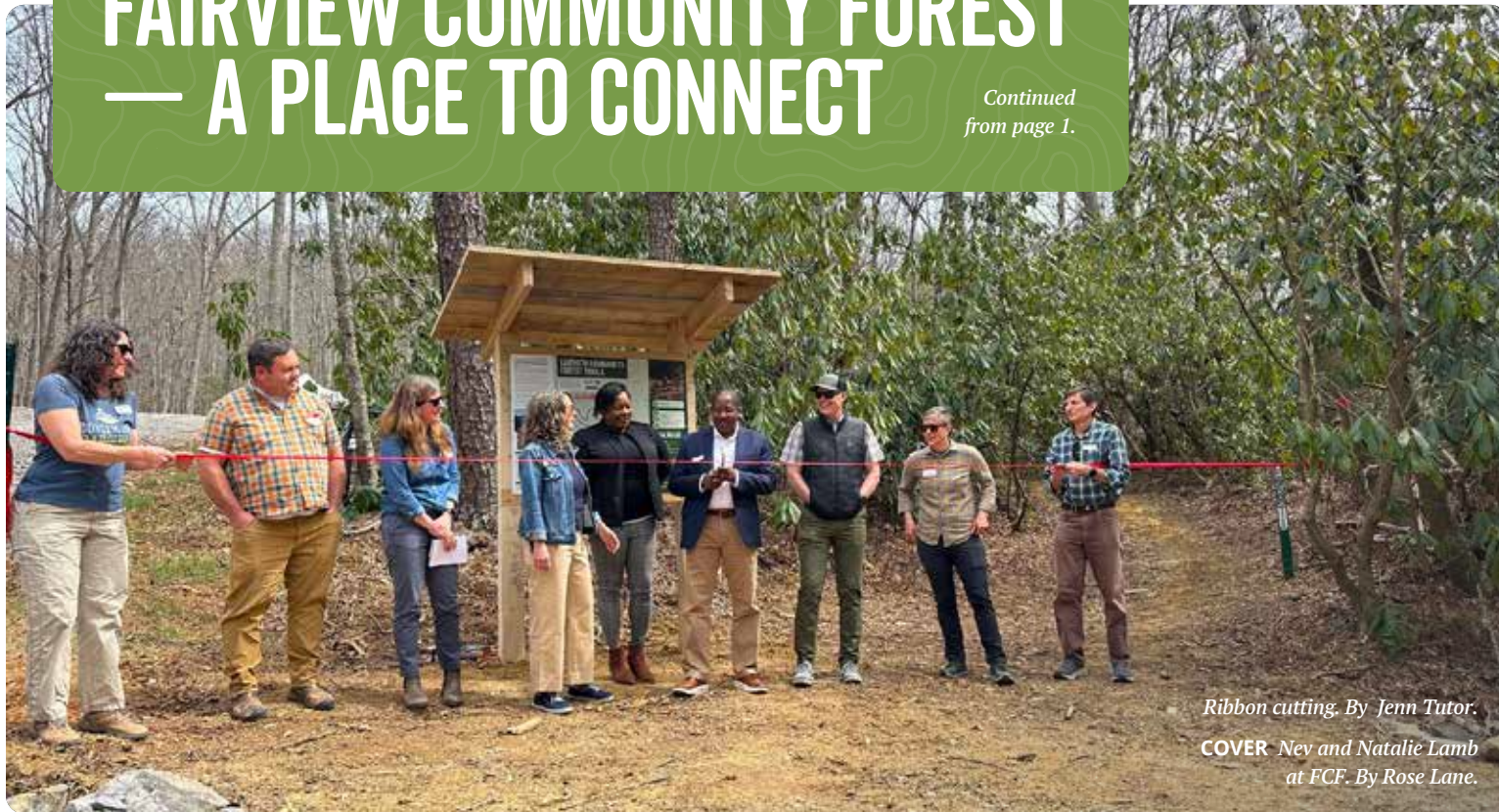
...and more!

Natalie Lamb moved to Fairview nine months before Hurricane Helene. She and her husband came from Dallas with a big, blended family — six children in all, both adopted and biological, as well as her mother. Natalie grew up in Dallas but she says, “I was searching for a place with more nature and more peace.”

When the storm came, her fourteen-year-old daughter Nev says that they were holed up in their house. “We got out a few days later, but we didn’t know what was happening,” she says. “We just thought it was, like, heavy rains. We only had a few fallen trees. Once we got down here, we were in shock because there were parts of the road falling off. One of our neighbor’s yard was totally mud. The road had water all over it.”

FAIRVIEW COMMUNITY FOREST — A PLACE TO CONNECT

Continued
from page 1.



Ribbon cutting. By Jenn Tutor.

COVER Nev and Natalie Lamb
at FCF. By Rose Lane.

Her mother says, “We came down that first day very naive, not understanding the depth. Then we’d run into people and their faces were so serious and panicking.” Right on Garren Creek Road, where they live, people had died. Mudslides had carried homes down the mountain. Broken and covered in trees, their road was cut off from the outside.

In the days that followed, Natalie and her family were hungry. “I would say to my children, here’s a piece of bread you can eat.” Natalie put her elderly mother on a military helicopter, not even knowing where they would take her. She only knew that her mother would die without her medications.

“We also saw a lot of helpers,” Natalie says. The neighbors did everything they could for

each other — cutting out trees, sharing food and equipment, unloading supplies from helicopters, shoveling mud, offering hugs.

Natalie says that she didn’t have a strong sense of community before — and not just because she was new. “We found out that people who had been out here for decades also didn’t have that.”

In this rural area, homes are spread out and there are few places where people meet. After the storm, the neighbors knew they needed a place where they could come together — to keep supporting each other and to share joy.

Since then, the neighborhood has gained two places to connect.

One is a red barn and field that is now home to a new nonprofit, the Garren Creek Foundation. The other, just down the road, is the Fairview Community Forest that you helped to create!

At the red barn, there are now community dinners and jam sessions. There’s a community garden, a farmers market, a food pantry, and free classes from yoga to disaster preparedness.

Dan and Dawn Turner had lived on Garren Creek Road for 27 years before Helene, but they only knew a handful of their neighbors. Now Dawn says of the

foundation, “It’s a place of community, of gathering, of support. It’s ‘What do you need?’ It’s making sure people are clothed and have food. It’s community. It’s friendship. It’s awesome.”

Natalie says that the new trails in Fairview Community Forest, minutes away, expand this space for gathering and community. She says, “The trail system complements the work we’re doing with Garren Creek Foundation and enhances our mission.”

Ironically, the Lambs and many other families chose to live in Fairview because they want to be in nature — but there wasn’t that much access to nature.

“There are no other public trails in Fairview,” Natalie says. “We love it here. It’s so beautiful and pleasant, but it is also really lacking in shared spaces.”

Fairview Community Forest opened to the public in March, after Conserving Carolina helped protect over 250 acres of a former summer camp. We are partnering with the nonprofit Camp Grier, which manages the forest for public access. Camp Grier also runs the WORX Project, an outdoor education program on a campus that is surrounded by the community forest.

This spring, we opened the first three miles of trails, and there are more to come! The plan is for an eleven-mile trail system for hiking and mountain biking.

Natalie says, “You can see in people’s faces they’re just really excited about the prospect of having that nature to go in, right here.”

Amber Palladino with the Garren Creek Foundation says the trail system also gives people a reason to visit Fairview. Some visitors to the forest stop by the red barn when they see the market or a community dinner, growing the circle of connection. Everyone is welcome, she says.

This summer, Nev will also get to experience the forest through the WORX Project. Currently in eighth grade, she will take part for her third summer in a row. “WORX camp is super fun,” she says.

The WORX Project offers vocational education for local public school students and other young people. It opens doors to career paths including jobs in WNC’s outdoor economy—and it also serves as a free summer camp, giving kids a chance to connect with nature.

Sara Jarrell, director of the WORX Project, says, “**The Fairview Community Forest will give our students something you just can’t replicate in a classroom — a living, breathing space to learn, work, and grow.** At the WORX Project, we focus on hands-on experience and real-world skills, and this forest becomes an extension of that mission. Students will have opportunities to engage in conservation work, develop job skills, and build a

How to Visit Fairview Community Forest

You can find Fairview Community Forest in Google Maps. Three miles of trails are currently open, dawn to dusk, for hiking and biking.

deeper connection to their environment. It’s not just about education — it’s about confidence, purpose, and seeing themselves as capable contributors to their community.”

Teens at the WORX Project use the trails for hiking, birding, and plant i.d. — and Sara says they want to expand these activities to include mountain biking, trail building and maintenance, and forestry.

Nev says, “**The trails add another way to not only get exercise but also see more nature, like all these plants and animals out there that we didn’t know existed. And it just adds a fun place to go instead of driving thirty minutes to experience nature.**”



Wildflowers at Fairview Community Forest. By Rose Lane.



Nev Lamb at the Garren Creek Foundation.
By Rose Lane.



Students at the WORX Project.
By Kiko Salazar.



Trail in Fairview Community Forest
By Rose Lane.



Display at spring forum.
By Kiko Salazar.

MOVING THE SALUDA GRADE TRAIL FORWARD

On April 23, over 300 people came out to our spring forum at Polk County High School to get updates on the Saluda Grade Trail — and we had a lot to share! Since Conserving Carolina and our SC partners bought the historic 31.5-mile rail line last summer, the trail has been moving forward on multiple fronts.

Getting the trail built — and making sure it’s the best version of the trail for our local communities — is a big job. That’s why we recently hired a Saluda Grade Trail Manager, Summer Flynn. Summer was already experienced as a volunteer on the trail advisory committee — and now she’s working full-time to make this trail a success!

She says, **“While engineers focus on the physical design of the trail, my mission is to build and sustain what I think of as the human infrastructure — the relationships, trust, communication channels, and volunteer networks that will carry this project forward for years to come.”**

Learning the Local Vision for the Trail

With a grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission for Stronger Economies (ARISE), we took on a new phase of community engagement and planning. We did in-depth outreach to learn more about local residents’ goals and concerns. Some key findings were:

- The trail has broad support, with 96% seeing positive outcomes.
- Safe recreation is the #1 goal, followed by safe transportation, health and wellness, and protecting natural areas.
- Economic growth is welcome, as long as it is well-managed and prioritizes local businesses.

Deliverables from this project will include recommendations for community engagement, economic development, destination marketing, and trail corridor governance.

Moving Toward Construction

Conserving Carolina is actively seeking grant funding for design and construction of two sections of the trail in NC: Saluda to Bell Park, and Tryon to Landrum, SC.

We are also taking steps that need to happen before construction can begin. We are working with landslide experts to assess damage from Helene and learn how to reduce future risk. We are identifying assets and hazards along the rail line. We are also completing a required environmental review.

South Carolina has a \$6M federal appropriation for design and construction. Our project partner PAL: Play, Advocate, Live Well has hired SeamonWhiteside, a local engineering firm, to develop the design plans for the 15 mile SC section of the trail.

Get Monthly Updates on the Trail!

We’ve started sending monthly updates to the Saluda Grade Trail email list — about the progress of the trail and how you can get involved.



If you don’t already get Saluda Grade Trail emails, you can sign up at saludagradetrail.org.

YOU ARE PROTECTING SPECIAL PLACES!

Galef Nature Preserve: Streams, Wildflowers, and Salamanders

When Vic and Mimi Galef transferred 18 acres to Conserving Carolina, they not only created a special new nature preserve in Hoopers Creek; they also created access to another preserve. Back in 2018, Joe Thomas donated 98 acres of long-held family land to Conserving Carolina. He named the land Youngblood Farms Preserve, in honor of his mother’s family. But we didn’t have any way to bring people there, since we didn’t have direct road access.

Now, the Galef Nature Preserve gives us that road access! This means we can now offer guided hikes. This new preserve also has two headwater streams, rare wildflowers, and rock outcrops that are likely home to rare salamanders. We are thankful to the NC Land and Water Fund and the Stanback family for supporting this project.



Youngblood Farms Preserve. By Rose Lane.



Susan McHugh and Jenn Tutor walk on protected land. By Gordon Tutor.

A Place of Wonder Next to the Green River Game Lands

Tom McHugh has spent time in the woods near the Green River since he was a boy. “It was like a fantasy land,” Tom says. “We’d work in the garden in the morning and then we’d have the afternoon to go and play in the woods.” Later, Tom and his wife Susan made their home there, adjoining the Green River Game Lands.

We are deeply grateful to Tom and Susan for donating a conservation easement on 18 acres in December, adding to 125 acres they already added to the Game Lands. Back in 2018, when nearby land was targeted for a shooting range, the McHughs and their neighbors worked together to find a conservation solution instead — and many went on to protect their own land! Together, they created 251 acres of new public land plus 44 acres of private conservation land — nearly 300 acres protected forever!

A Restoration Project in Progress

How do you transform a riverside property into a natural floodplain? To show the process, we’ve been holding a series of tours at Deerwoode — a property on the French Broad River near Brevard — that show the site before, during, and after restoration work. The final tour will be held on June 18. Here, in April, earthmoving was underway to create depressions that will be home to new wetlands.

The restoration will enhance 38 acres of natural floodplain on a conserved private property. This project includes bank stabilization, restored wetlands, a fish habitat slough, and invasive species removal. The end result will be rich wildlife habitat, cleaner water, and more resilience to floods and droughts.



By Kiko Salazar.

FROM THE BLACK FOREST TO THE GREEN RIVER



Christel Walter on newly protected land. By Rose Lane.

Christel Walter's love for her land by the Green River goes back to her roots, growing up near the Black Forest. "We come from Germany," she says. "Forests are something we feel spiritually connected to and deeply appreciate. Owning a woodlot, like owning a home, instills a sense of pride and responsibility."

After moving to the U.S. at nineteen, Christel still felt that way about forests. Eventually, she and her husband Manfred were able to buy beautiful mountain land on both sides of the Green River. Coming from Germany, where most land holdings

were tiny, it was unbelievable that their family could own a large expanse of woods. She says their relatives didn't believe it until they came and saw for themselves.

Every spring, Christel looks for spring beauty, showy orchis, and trilliums popping up on the forest floor. Flame azaleas glow in the woods. Among the trees, silverbells, serviceberry, and dogwoods all bloom white. Spring is a time of beauty in the woods. This year, it was also a time of coming back from the disaster of Helene and a great personal loss.

During the flood, the Green River rose a staggering 32 feet, leaving devastation behind. On Christel's land, trees were down everywhere. The ruins of someone's



The aftermath of Hurricane Helene.

cabin washed up on the riverbanks. A blue and white checked couch sat among the wreckage.

And the storm came only four months after Manfred, Christel's husband of 62 years, passed away unexpectedly.

Then, the land suffered another blow. Debris removal contractors hauled off the flood debris, but the heavy machinery also left wide, bare swaths along the river. They cleared woodlands that Christel and Manfred had stewarded so carefully. Banks where trees used to shade and cool the water, where wildflowers had bloomed, were now bare mud bleeding into the river.

Christel says, "When I first went down there, I was crying, I was devastated."

Still, she is a doer. And Conserving Carolina has been working with her to restore her property, where we hold conservation easements.

Last spring, our Stewardship Manager, Hans Lohmeyer helped sow seed to stabilize the



banks. This spring, he came back to help plant new trees via live staking. Because many landowners find themselves in the same predicament as Christel, we also created a landowners' guide to live staking on our website.

The land is showing its resilience too, with some trees that were snapped or crushed now growing back. "A lot of silverbells are coming up along the river," Christel says. "It's going to be gorgeous. I'm really looking forward to that."

This land will continue to offer beauty and resilience for generations to come, thanks to the Walter family's ethic of stewardship. Christel and Manfred first donated a conservation easement on 66 acres in 2014. Then this winter, their family generously donated an easement on another 69 acres, for a total of 135 acres protected forever!

Their private conservation land provides clean water, with over 2 miles of streams and half a mile of river frontage. It preserves beautiful scenery on both sides of the river. And it's home to special wildflowers and wildlife.

At the same time, Christel's family still owns the land. They set aside a part of it where her children or grandchildren can build houses if they want. She can still go for walks, hunt chanterelles, and teach her grandchildren how to identify trees. And she can do what she loves most out in the woods — "I just breathe."

She says, "When I sit by the Green River on the Aldo Leopold bench that Manfred made and that miraculously survived Helene, I am in awe and incredibly grateful that we are able to protect and steward this land."



LADY SLIPPER AWARDS

Here are our spring and summer award-winning volunteers!

JIM NEAL

Volunteering For: 30 years.

Volunteer Activities: Finance Committee; former board member, including Treasurer and President.

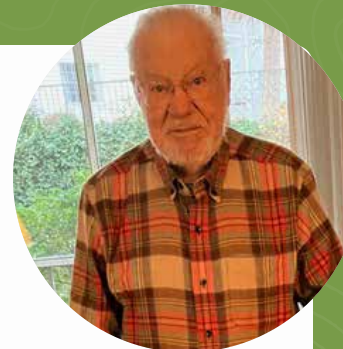
Home: Hendersonville

Career: Worked for NASA, purchasing equipment including a lunar module and spacesuits.

Hobbies: Spending time with his best friend, reading, watching sports.

Hopes That Conserving Carolina Will: Continue to save land and protect it in perpetuity.

One Rewarding Volunteer Experience: Putting up personal assets as collateral and challenging others to do the same, so Conserving Carolina could buy the 1,500+ acre World's Edge tract that we added to Chimney Rock State Park.



PAT CAFFERTY

Volunteering For: 8 years.

Volunteer Activities: Serves on committees; former board member and past President.

Career: Semi-retired environmental lawyer.

Hobbies: Golf is his #1 passion. He and his wife Eileen also love to travel, read, and go to Flat Rock Playhouse.

Favorite Conserving Carolina Projects: Ecusta Trail and Saluda Grade Trail, stream restorations.

Hopes That Conserving Carolina Will: Continue to restore streams and wetlands, create rail trails that everyone can access and enjoy, and expand hiking trails, especially in the Hickory Nut Gorge.

One Guiding Principle: "I truly believe in 'paying it forward.'"





DEEP ROOTS IN BEAUTY

Karen-Eve Bayne with her artwork. By Rose Lane.

Karen-Eve Bayne grew up in a close-knit community in the mountains near Zirconia, on a small farm on the headwaters of the Green River. “If somebody fell sick, we took them food,” she says. “If you had an operation, we took your kids in. If something happened with my parents, we’d go stay at the neighbors’ house for a while.”

Her voice breaks a little when she says, “It was very community minded. And I was disappointed later when I grew up and found out that’s not how the world operates.”

Still, that is the way *she* works.

Her ethic of community is why she founded a nonprofit called Storytelling, Education, and Arts Programs (or STEAP) that features local storytellers and artists, especially lesser known or minority artists. It’s also why she conveyed 62 acres bordering the Green River Game Lands, near Saluda, to Conserving Carolina with a vision for future public access.

Karen-Eve’s family has lived in these mountains since the early 1800s. When she

decided to conserve her land, she felt that’s what her mom and dad would have wanted. And it’s what her seventh-great-grandfather would want — the one who first came here, when he was exiled from Scotland. At the same time, she was thinking of generations to come.

“I want my great-grandchildren and anybody else’s great-grandchildren to be able to walk or have a picnic on this property,” she says.

Karen-Eve grew up working hard on the family farm. She also lived in a world of natural wonders. From her mother, she learned the names of wildflowers like ladyslippers, bloodroot, and ghost pipe. She shared the woods with snails and salamanders, bears and foxes.

When she was young, she says, she couldn’t wait to get out of Henderson County. Her mother taught her to be curious. She even got the first bookmobile to travel way up Green River Road — and through those books, Karen-Eve knew there was a big world out there.

Her curiosity and her career took her to England. But then, when she was 42, her husband got the flu. That became pneumonia and in less than three weeks, at the age of 49, he was gone.

Karen-Eve says, **“So there I was a widow, in the middle of doing a degree, 3,000 miles away, with a four-year-old.”**

She stayed in England, but those were hard years. A friend asked what would make her change her life — a person, a place, or a profession?

Karen-Eve found her answer: “I’m the person, I will create a profession, but the place is North Carolina.”

She says, “I think the epigenetics are built into me to migrate back to where I am from and where my people came from.”

Back in North Carolina, Karen-Eve draws on her knowledge of the Appalachian woods as a fabric artist. In 2017, she married fellow artist Peter Gollup, a furniture maker. In their Hendersonville home, there are few objects that are not a work of art.

At one point, Karen-Eve thought she would build on the land that she owned next to the Game Lands in Polk County. Instead, in December, she conveyed a 62-acre parcel to Conserving Carolina, generously donating

the lion’s share of its value. Additional funding came from the NC Land and Water Fund and the Stanback family. Called Bayne Ridge Preserve, this land has rocky cliffs, abundant wildflowers, and streams that flow into the Green River. It also has potential for a future public access point to the Game Lands.

Now, Karen-Eve says, “There’s a mountain that will always have wildflowers and deer and bear and salamanders on it, that people will be able to go and enjoy for free.”

“I was raised very much that we are our brothers’ and sisters’ keepers. We are responsible for each other. And I’ve held onto that,” she says. “My core values are all about sharing and generosity and helping each other. And beauty — the beauty of the land and the beauty of nature.”



*Bayne Ridge Preserve.
By Rose Lane.*



A LOVE OF NATURE, THROUGH GENERATIONS

Esten Walker and Esten Mason with friend Penn Owen.

Esten Walker remembers her mother, Esten Mason, by sharing, “She had a sense of purpose — to interact with, love, enjoy, and, where necessary, steward nature. Nature was her grounding.”

This sense of purpose extends even beyond her lifetime. When Esten Mason passed away, she left a generous estate gift to Conserving Carolina.

In their family, a love of nature is passed down through generations. Esten Mason’s mother, Et, was a renowned gardener who ran a nursery. She raised her children on a 100-acre farm among animals, gardens, and open space. Inspired by her mother, Esten Mason raised her own children outdoors. She was a talented gardener whose home in Charlotte was featured in garden tours. Gardening became her way of giving back, creating beauty, and bringing people together.

The family became involved with Conserving Carolina through Esten Mason’s sister, Stuart Evans, who lived in Tryon. Esten Walker and her husband supported a conservation project in the Hickory Nut Gorge, to her mother’s delight.

After Esten Mason passed away in 2025, her daughter chose Conserving Carolina as one of two conservation organizations to continue her legacy. This estate gift is already making a powerful difference — advancing conservation projects and supporting our long-term stewardship. We are so grateful!

Do you want to leave a legacy for nature? Please reach out to Planned Giving Officer, Sierra Hoisington at sierra@conservingcarolina.org or (828) 697-5777 x. 220.



*Carolina allspice at Bayne Ridge
Preserve. By Kiko Salazar.*

HOW ARE YOU PLANTING HOPE?



By Rich Stevenson.

If you want to see **hummingbirds**, try coral honeysuckle. They can't stay away from it! Hummingbirds also love bee balm, trumpet vine, crossvine, cardinal flower, red columbine, jewelweed, salvia, and fire pinks. The reason why many hummingbird favorites are red is that bees are red-green colorblind. So, when plants want to attract hummingbirds as pollinators, they package sweet nectar in red flowers that hummingbirds will easily spot and bees may miss.



By Sharon Mammoser.

Did you know that **goldfinches** are vegetarians? Most birds eat worms, caterpillars, and bugs, especially when feeding their young, but goldfinches eat only seeds and fruits. Coneflowers are one of their favorites. Other good choices: sunflowers, black-eyed Susans, bee balm, asters, goldenrod, and Joe Pye weed. Goldfinches also love to build soft, downy nests with fluffy seedheads from plants like milkweed and thistles.



Ever tried to plant milkweed for **monarchs** and it didn't work? The seeds need cold-moist stratification to germinate. Try placing seeds in a damp paper towel in the refrigerator for four weeks before planting. That simulates being in the ground over winter. Milkweed is the only plant that monarch caterpillars can eat. But as adults, the butterflies love liatris (blazing star) so much it's been nicknamed "monarch crack"! They also need late blooming plants like goldenrod to support their fall migration.

Nature isn't just for nature preserves. Wild things need space to thrive throughout our landscape — so our yards and gardens are a big part of the picture. When you grow native plants, you're inviting more joy, beauty, and surprises into your everyday life. Here are a few tips.

Beaver Wetlands & Rivercane Planting

At our Pleasant Grove restoration in Etowah, we restored some wetlands by the French Broad River. Then beaver partners took it to the next level! Flooding from beaver dams did mean that our volunteers needed to don waders to walk to the site of a new rivercane planting. Rivercane is a once-common plant that has been almost completely driven out of our landscape — but you are helping to bring it back!

This native bamboo loves to grow along waterways and its thick roots protect banks from erosion. If you've seen our streams and rivers struggling with steep, crumbling banks you know how much they need that! Canebrakes are masterful at absorbing floodwater, calming flows that would otherwise rush downstream in harmful floods. Rivercane also provides rich wildlife habitat and important resources for traditional Cherokee crafts.



By Kiko Salazar.

MEET OUR NEW TEAM MEMBERS



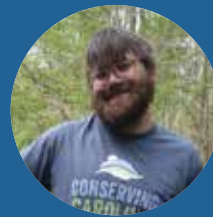
Jenn Ramsdell
Development Coordinator

Jenn supports fundraising, so we can protect the places you love. Outside of work, they love printmaking, reading, and leisurely hikes. Jenn lives in Asheville with their partner, two cats and some treasured houseplants, including a cutting that came from their grandmother.



Lexi Gioia
Habitat Restoration Associate

Lexi is often in the field, bringing back all kinds of life at our restoration projects. She grew up in Wisconsin, now lives in Hendersonville, and is looking forward to learning local native species. She also loves to hike, rollerblade, bake, act, and geek out on films.



Ben Henderson
Habitat Restoration Associate

Ben also works to restore healthy natural habitats. He is passionate about trees, and once worked measuring some of the most northern spruce trees on Earth, in Alaska. He's into hiking, hunting, skiing, and backpacking. A native of Aiken, SC, he now lives in Brevard.



Summer Flynn
Saluda Grade Trail Manager

Summer is moving the Saluda Grade Trail forward, with a focus on community engagement. She loves digging in the dirt, growing vegetables and flowers. She's also passionate about books and still has her first library card. She has one child and a dog who thinks he's human.



Wood Robinson
Restorations Manager

Wood heads up our restoration projects. He also plays double bass, banjo, and guitar, and he toured as a musician for 15 years. He can often be found outdoors — hiking, trail running, fishing, and mountain biking. Originally from Greensboro, he lives in Asheville with his wife and baby daughter.

SAVE THE DATE FOR CONSERVATION CELEBRATION

WHEN Saturday, September 19, 4:30-7:30
WHERE Blue Ridge Community College in Flat Rock

Hear a captivating keynote by Leigh Ann Henion, author of *Night Magic: Adventures Among Glowworms, Moon Gardens, and Other Marvels of the Dark*. Watch an inspiring short film exploring conservation stories that you make possible. Enjoy a delicious dinner, locally crafted beverages, live music, and a chance to connect with your fellow conservationists!

Reservations will be available starting in late July.



By Jeff Shields.

RIVERFEST IS JUNE 20!

WHEN Saturday, June 20, 10:00-3:00
WHERE Champion Park in Rosman

Join us for the annual family-friendly festival at the crystal-clear headwaters of the French Broad River. Free tubing, live music, hands-on activities and more!

Let's Connect in Person!

Our online calendar is full of opportunities to connect. Pick an event that speaks to you!



- Volunteer workdays
- Speaker series
- Guided walks and outings
- Forest bathing
- Festivals, films, and more!

CONSERVINGCAROLINA.ORG/CALENDAR



US POSTAGE
NON PROFIT
PAID
ASHEVILLE, NC
PERMIT NO. 575

CONSERVATION MEANS CHOOSING JOY



By Kiko Salazar.

You are choosing to protect places that bring so much beauty and wonder into your life — and the lives of others. Will you make a donation today, to bring more joy?

 www.ConservingCarolina.org
 828.697.5777
 info@conservingcarolina.org

