

**Grant Report – Pure Water Forum to Valley Conservation Council
for Kites and Critters event on April 13, 2104**

VCC’s Kites and Critters event held April 13, 2014 at the Moore farm on Bells Lane was quite successful. Our intent was to offer citizens, especially suburban and urban dwellers and young families, a chance to visit a local farm and see the kinds of conservation practices that can protect water and habitat. The response was extraordinary. Approximately 300 people visited the farm and by all accounts had a wonderful time. The kites helped draw in families, while the setting and the display encourage participants to also learn about conservation. The conservation tour included stream buffers, streambank restoration, and trout release. Many conservation partners participated to design the event and provide educational stations.



Huge kites swelled above the farm. (S. Abbot)



Kids flocked to meet Annabelle. (M. Deaton)



Kites above and riparian buffer in foreground (J. Tompkins)



This trout is headed for release in Poague Run.
(J. Tompkins)



Friends of Middle River displayed critters that live in the creek. (J. Tompkins)

From a mom:

I've attached a photo of Mateo looking at the "critters" that live in the creek. Although he did not touch any of those bugs that day, we stayed at that station for about 45 minutes because he was so enthralled with the bugs and watching people handling them. We've noticed a huge change in his attitude toward bugs ever since then. He no longer freaks out when he sees flying insects and instead watches them with great interest. Yesterday he surprised us by picking up a centipede! We are so thrilled about his new-found interest in insects.

Thank you for sponsoring the Kites and Critters Day. It made a big difference in the life of one little boy.



Mateo looking at the critters.

From a volunteer:

“My favorite and most heartfelt moment was watching a little boy go inside a barn for the first time. It was his first time visiting a farm and he just looked around in awe. That "day on the farm" opened his eyes to a whole new world.”

“Kites and Critters” ACTIVITIES

Day at the Farm on Bells Lane, Moore Farm / April 13, 2014 from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

Kites – On knoll above barn. Bring your own kite or enjoy what the kite experts are flying.

Guided Conservation Tours at 1:30 p.m., 2:30 p.m., 3:30 p.m. Meet at the gate.

Conservation Stations (visit stations in any order at any time, or join a guided tour)

Station 1: Riparian Buffers – Hardwood trees and shrubs have been planted in riparian (streamside) areas where livestock have been fenced out. Buffers filter pollutants and provide wildlife habitat.

Station 2: Warm Season Grasses – Native grasses have been reestablished to offer nesting habitat for birds like quail and make a “pollinator corridor” providing food for diverse insects and other species.

Station 3: Quail Habitat – Northern Bobwhite Quail numbers have declined dramatically due to loss of habitat. Nesting sites, food, and safe cover are provided through plantings of native grasses and “quail doughnuts,” brushy thickets for fleeing predators and taking flight from a central clearing.

Station 4: Tree Planting and Maintenance – Try your hand at planting and learn about ongoing management to address invasive plants, deer browse, voles, and weeds. [Virginia Department of Forestry, Headwaters Soil and Water Conservation District, and Conservation Services founder]

Station 5: Stream Restoration – Heavily eroded stream bank was stabilized once cattle were fenced out. Poague Run is gradually repairing itself, restoring the stream conditions necessary for trout. [Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries]

Station 6: Trout Release – Release a fingerling Eastern Brook Trout into Poague Run. [Pure Water Forum and Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries]

Station 7: Stream Critters – Clean streams have many water insects (invertebrates) living under the rocks. Examine macro invertebrates up close and try your hand at using water sampling kits to test water quality for trout. [Friends of Middle River]

Station 8: Livestock Watering Systems – Along with the investment to fence livestock out of streams, farmers must provide new water sources. Here the livestock watering system uses troughs.

Displays at the Barn: Malcolm’s Farm / Lambs / Fish Touch Tank / Enviroscape / Watershed Maps

Educational displays by Friends of the Middle River, VA Departments of Forestry and Game and Inland Fisheries, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Augusta Bird Club, Headwaters SWCD, and more.



Thank you to host Carolyn Ford and to funders Pure Water Forum, Cadence, Inc., USDA Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry Program, and Keith Campbell Foundation.

Organized by Valley Conservation Council www.valleyconservation.org / 540.886.3541

“promoting land use that sustains the farms, forests, open space and cultural heritage of the Shenandoah Valley region”

Survey Results - KITES AND CRITTERS

April 13, 2014

Surveys received: 20

By Locality/County: Staunton: 12 County: 3 Waynesboro: 1 Other: 2

Type of setting in which you live: Urban: 7 Suburban: 7 Rural: 2

How much did you enjoy the event (1-5 with 5 as the highest): (5) highest: 13 (4) very high: 7

Your favorite thing about Kites and Critters:

Efforts of VCC and other groups, lamb, bird walk, macro invertebrates, releasing fish, kites, nature walk/talk with Bobby, diverse exhibits that were interesting to both adults and children, getting a VA fish poster.

Any surprises on the farm:

Amount of manure that ends up in a stream, the high attendance to the event, tree planting, wetland grasses, kissing a fish, the pretty scenery and views, # of non-native plants, progress of the farm's conservation efforts, conservation issues.

Did you go on the Conservation Tour:

Yes: 12/20 No: 8/20

The most interesting thing you learned:

Quail are returning, native and non-native grasses, how to plant/protect a tree, conservation issues, larva stages of flying insects/macro invertebrates, everything, storm water/rain runoff, release of trout into stream, issues caused by fescue, stream water quality improvements (30 years ago compared to present).

Name of the creek closest to your home:

Lewis, Buttermilk Spring, Meadow Run, Mason's Creek, Middle River, South River, Middlebrook, no idea.

Do you recreate outdoors?

Yes: 18/20 No: 0/20 N/r: 2/20

Favorite places to recreate/outdoors:

Blue Ridge/Appalachian Trail, Forest in Highland, Buffalo Gap, hiking, picnics, Sherando Lake, Gypsy Hill Park, Shenandoah National Park, pond on own property in Augusta County, everywhere, Chesapeake Bay, camping, city parks, our yard, Bells Lane, Swoope area, mountains.

Ranks these by how important they are to you:

	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
Protection of natural resources			1	2	16
Clean streams				1	18
Access to natural areas	1		1	4	13
Native wildlife			1	5	13
Scenic quality			3	7	11
Local Farming			1	2	16
Open space			2	4	12

Familiar with Valley Conservation Council:

Yes: 11/20 No: 9/20 Member: 0/20