



Environmental and Conservation Organization ♦ www.eco-wnc.org ♦ 828-692-0385 ♦ July-September 2009
"Working to protect WNC's natural heritage since 1987."

Tour of Green Homes Not to be Missed!

Western North Carolina is considered a green building jewel amidst the Blue Ridge Mountains. In August, ECO members and friends have an opportunity to find out for themselves. ECO Energy Committee volunteers have worked hard scouring the countryside to find homes that not only demonstrate the finest in green technology but are beautiful as well.

Green Home Tour

August 22nd, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Tickets are \$15 each or \$13 each for Carpooler Special (3 or more in car). Tickets are available online at www.eco-wnc.org, the ECO Office or at the Hendersonville and Asheville Visitors Centers.

Many of the homes have solar components, radiant heating and water conservation measures. A number feature native gardens as well.

Why should you go? Never before have there been so many financial incentives to create your own green home. Federal and tax benefits coupled with manufacturers' rebates could lower the cost of high-end green technology to less than 65 percent of the original cost and there are plenty of incentives to make a brown home greener. But seeing is believing, and this tour is a great opportunity to witness for yourself how you can save money and cut your energy footprint. ■

Saving Rural Character Begins With Citizen Action

By Harrison Metzger

To launch its campaign to play a larger role in environmental public policy, ECO held a forum in May to discuss how citizens could get more involved in protecting the county's rural character. The focus was on saving the rural character that makes our area's quality of life so great, as well as specific policy initiatives that would offer greater land protections while bringing a positive impact to county coffers.

ECO's Green Infrastructure Committee held the meeting to bring together several experts on ways to protect our natural heritage. In addition to ECO Executive Director David Weintraub, the speakers were D.J. Gerken, a senior attorney for the Southern Environmental Law Center; and Mike Egan, who has drafted many of the key land-use ordinances that have made Jackson County one of the pre-eminent counties in WNC with strong environmental protections.

ECO's campaign to protect rural spaces started about a year ago and has

so far involved town hall meetings in Edneyville, Green River and Hendersonville, Weintraub told an enthusiastic group at the May 19th event.

Green Infrastructure is loosely defined as the natural attributes such as forest and farm lands, wetlands, streams and rivers, and undeveloped mountain ridges. The Green Infrastructure Committee grew out of ECO's effort to guide development in Henderson County in such a way that it does not destroy these natural treasures.

Weintraub pointed to some recent



successes, such as the county commissioners' vote to tie future development
Continued on page 7

➔	INSIDE
•	Director's Corner ... pg. 2
•	Recycling Committee ... pg. 2
•	Calendar of Events ... pg. 6
•	Regional News ... pg. 4

Recycling Committee Update

The ECO Recycling Committee has been busy! On April 25th, it assisted the county Solid Waste staff with an E-Waste (electronics) recycling event at Blue Ridge Community College, where approximately 24,000 pounds of mostly old computers were dropped off for reprocessing. This long-overdue event demonstrated the need for the county to manage this type of waste on a regular basis to keep it from the land-fill. ECO continues to push for more of this resource recycling.

On May 20th ECO spoke at a public hearing on Henderson County's 10-Year Solid Waste Plan that is submitted to the state every three years as an update. ECO monitors the county's actions toward waste reduction, and the current plan looks quite promising.

ECO's Recycling Committee hosted an ECO-tour on May 29th,



which visited three locations in upstate South Carolina, where our county recyclables and metals go to be processed, as well as where our garbage goes to be buried. The educational tour group included ECO members, Times-News reporters, county Solid Waste Advisory members, county staff, and Rainbow Recyclers from Black Mountain.

Most likely in July, the county commissioners will hear from consultants who will propose a redesign plan for our county transfer station. This comprehensive plan will map out big changes for the facility that will affect our waste and recycling system in many ways. ECO will be there every step of the way! ■

DIRECTOR'S CORNER

ECO's Profile Grows with Expanded Media Focus



This issue of ECO VOICE is our first step towards raising the quality of ECO's image throughout our media. Staff and interns and our newly formed Marketing Committee are busy at work creating a new website under the leadership of intern Allison Evans. The website will feature an interactive blog, podcasts of our forums and programs, photographs of recent events, and much more.

In addition, our logo is evolving and our new insignia will be coming soon under the guidance of marketing expert Stephanie Lowder. And finally, the newsletter itself will be spiffed up and expanded with the help of Nancy Tanker, our newest board member. All of these changes will be reflected by the end of summer and certainly in the next newsletter.

You will also notice a questionnaire in this issue about how you would like to receive your copies of ECO VOICE. We will not be stopping the printing presses anytime soon, because our print newsletter gives us an effective way to reach our community, but we would like to lower our print and paper footprint. The best way is to migrate to a more digital format. Frequent ECO VOICE readers already know our newsletter (and archives for the past two years) can be found on our website, www.eco-wnc.org, but we'd like to know whether you'd like to get our newsletter solely in digital form in the near future. We can email you a link to the newsletter or send the newsletter itself by email as a growing number of environmental groups are doing. If you appreciate receiving the newsletter by mail, let us know that as well. You can send your response to us via email or snail mail.

If you are on our email list, you will have already received our email notifying you of our Summer Splash Mini-Fundraising Campaign. 2009 has not been a kind year to nonprofits of all stripes, but we are fortunate not to have made any cutbacks on staff or programs as of yet. But with donations and dues, sponsorship and fundraiser income all down, we need your help to be able to keep doing our valuable work. Some members are giving less given their economic circumstances, but we hope those who can afford it can pitch in more. Your support is very much appreciated. Thank you and happy summer. ■

MORGAN WALKER WINS ECO SCHOLARSHIP

Morgan Walker, a recent graduate of Hendersonville High School was awarded a \$1,000 Environmental Scholarship from ECO at a ceremony on June 10, 2009. This fall, Walker plans to attend the UNC Wilmington, where she will major in marine biology with a focus on coral reef ecology.

"I am very appreciative to ECO for this opportunity and am looking forward to beginning my journey in the environmental field of marine biology," she said upon learning of the award.

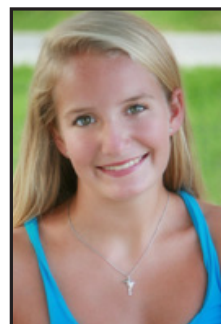
The ECO-Dennis Honnold Environmental Scholarship, an annual

competitive award, is available to high school seniors in Henderson and Transylvania Counties who are pursuing careers in environmental sciences as well as college students in those counties who are majoring in environmental sciences.

ECO has awarded the \$1,000 scholarship to a deserving high school graduate in the region each year since 1999, supported by a grant

from The New York Times Foundation and by donations from Steven Honnold, Tom Fazio and others.

Donations to the fund are welcome and are tax-deductible. ■



Revisiting the French Broad: An Upcoming ECO-Tour

By Harrison Metzger

"The French Broad River is like a hidden jewel that reflects the rich history, culture, environment, economy and future of the people of the mountains of Western North Carolina."



It has been more than six years since I wrote those words upon embarking on a 116-mile canoe trip down the French Broad River in North Carolina. Photographer Chris Clevenger and I paddled the river from its Transylvania County headwaters to Paint Rock on the Tennessee state line to document it for our series, *The French Broad: Past & Currents*, in the *Times-News*.

Chris and I no longer work at the newspaper, but our friendship and our interest in paddling rivers continues. Recently I thought it would be interesting to take a closer look at perhaps the most hidden part of the hidden jewel of the French Broad: the section that flows through Henderson County.

Here the river meanders through some of the richest farmland in the mountains. But unless you are a farmer or a fisherman, you might not notice. The river is much more prevalent in Transylvania, Buncombe and Madison counties, where it flows through the towns of Rosman, Brevard, Asheville and Marshal, and where whitewater and quiet water outfitters

and RiverLink do much to publicize it.

The recent push to establish a greenway trail on the unused rail line between Brevard and Hendersonville is interesting to me for many reasons, but most especially for the proximity between river and rail line. Many of the most popular trails with tourists, cyclists and active, outdoor-oriented families are abandoned rail lines along rivers. On the East Coast, some great examples include the Virginia Creeper and New River trails in Virginia and the Greenbrier River Trail in West Virginia.

Having bicycled these trails, I believe that a trail following the French Broad along much of its length through Horse Shoe, Etowah and Pisgah Forest

would be a hugely popular tourist draw. Imagine being able to canoe from Brevard to Horse Shoe, then pedal your bike along and over the river to Hendersonville or Brevard.

Later this summer I plan to canoe the French Broad again between Penrose and Mills River to see how it has changed and how it is has stayed the same. Chris and I will then present a program updating our 2003 river trip for ECO on Tuesday, October 13th at 7 p.m. at the main library.

Following that, we will arrange a fall canoe tour for those willing and interested along the rarely paddled Henderson County section on Sunday, October 18th.

See the next edition of the ECO VOICE newsletter or check in at www.eco-wnc.org for more details. ■

Biomonitoring Uses New Methods

Utilizing intensive biomonitoring training received in March, 39 ECO volunteers collected samples in April and early May throughout six watersheds. The new approach not only permits more precise identification of invertebrate families (an indication of water quality) but also allows the data gathered to be combined with results obtained by other organizations in Western North Carolina. This provides a more comprehensive picture of water quality trends of our streams in this mountain.

The data collected will be analyzed by our recently hired biologist, who will assemble a report that will help ECO, water monitoring agencies and policymakers better understand the consequences of development and growth on our waterways.

Volunteers are always welcome to join the Water Quality Committee effort. In addition to biomonitoring, the Committee's work includes chemical testing, Adopt-A-Stream, Big Sweep and newly added SWAT teams (Stream Watch Action Teams) to follow up on red-flag streams. Bacterial testing is also planned this summer.

Call ECO today to volunteer: 692-0385. ■



WANTED!! Office Volunteers!

We need volunteers to assist with data entry and other office tasks. No need to be fast, just accurate! Become a volunteer for the leading force for conservation and preservation in the mountain region! ECO's efforts are long-term and ongoing and we need your help! Call today: 692-0385.



ECO Earth Day Expo Draws 200

The second annual ECO Earth Day Expo began to hit its stride as it filled larger facilities at Blue Ridge Community College in April. Speakers, workshops and exhibits gave participants the opportunity to learn more about green energy and energy conservation.

Steve Smith, of the Southern Alliance for Clean Energy, spoke about the urgency of taking action to protect against the harmful effects of global warming, including how pivotal North Carolina would be in the debate.

Vanir Energy discussed the colossal solar thermal unit they are completing in Fletcher that has created nearly five dozen jobs. Two dozen green vendors were available for consult to interested attendees. A half-dozen green cars were on display, including electric cars.

It was a team effort with 29 ECO members and helpers staffing the event, along with eight Americorp volunteers. The event is sponsored by the

Energy Committee and is dedicated to educating the public on energy issues. Sponsors of the tour included Progress Energy, Duke Energy, NC Dept. of Environment & Natural Resources, and Mast General Store.

One of the highlights of the Expo was the student science projects on display from Hendersonville and Apple Valley middle schools. Awards were presented to:

- First place, Sydney Levitt, project on solar energy, Hendersonville Middle School

- Second place ties: Charlotte Clarke, "Earthopoly"; Neva Catlett, "Recycled Kudzu"; Jessica Strickland and Kayla Hyden, "Solar Oven," all of Hendersonville Middle School

- Third place: Jannet Cruz, Savannah Kicklighter and Haylee Wilkie, "Windmill," of Apple Valley Middle.

Next year is Earth Day's 40th anniversary. Stay tuned for plans of a major festival being organized for 2010! ■

Going to Bat for Bats

Bats are underappreciated, often feared creatures, yet their benefits to the ecosystem are incalculable.

Seventeen species of bats live in North Carolina, seven of which are currently listed as endangered or threatened. Most bats in North Carolina hibernate throughout the winter and nest in maternity colonies during the warmer months. Others are known to migrate to warmer areas of the country for the cold winter months.

In the animal community, bats control night-flying insects. Consuming at least half their weight in insects, bats are the best pest control especially with the mosquito population.

They also are known to spread seeds, pollinate flowers and their droppings (guano) can be used as fertilizer. Guano is such an excellent fertilizer that some people build bat houses near their gardens.

In recent years bat populations have been declining. The number-one reason for this is the destruction and disturbance of their habitat. Because people are unaware of nesting locations, human disturbance to hibernacula and maternity colonies is common, harming bat populations. The use of pesticides is another factor harming bats. Pesticides not only reduce the insect population but also harm bats, which eat only insects, creating a lethal result for both.

Global climate change has also been attributed to the slow disappearance of bats. With warmer weather stretching later into fall, bats are postponing their hibernation habits. In the fall the insect supply is less, which

makes it more difficult for bats to store fat for their survival during hibernation of the winter months. Less fat in reserve leads to starvation.

Bats also play a major role in agriculture in North Carolina. They are a natural pesticide, known to feed on cucumber beetles, june beetles, stinkbugs and leafhoppers. They're also frequent pollinators of plants, which means farmers and gardeners benefit highly from the presence of bat colonies.

North Carolina has worked in conjunction with the Nature Conservancy to find and preserve prime bat habitat and protect it from human disturbance. The Cranberry Iron Mine in Avery County and a cave on property in Bat Cave in Henderson County are two examples of land preservation efforts that will ultimately protect bats.

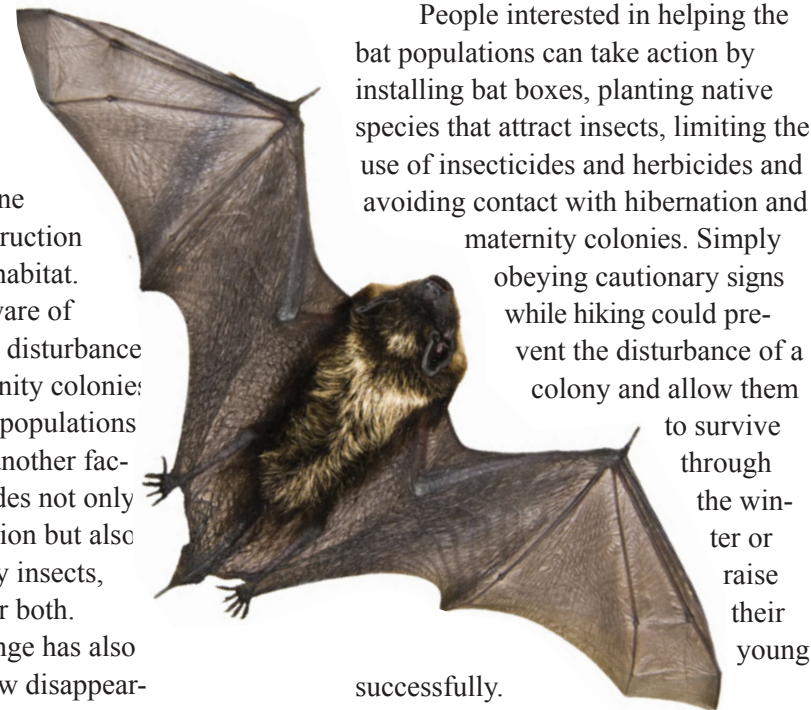
People interested in helping the bat populations can take action by installing bat boxes, planting native species that attract insects, limiting the use of insecticides and herbicides and avoiding contact with hibernation and maternity colonies. Simply

obeying cautionary signs while hiking could prevent the disturbance of a colony and allow them

to survive through the winter or raise their young

successfully.

Taking a stand as a human will help bats thrive and continue to support the animal and agriculture communities. ■



Spotlight on Local Green Business:

CAMP KANUGA BECOMES BETTER STEWARD

ECO VOICE focuses on local businesses who have made important strides in environmental stewardship.

Kanuga Conferences has had a longstanding commitment to environmental stewardship dating back to the 1920s, when trees felled to build the community. Kanuga Conferences began its first solar hot water installation in 2008 in four buildings. The cost savings from propane to solar was instantaneous, leading them to take their success to the next level.

Discussions with FLS Energy in Black Mountain led to a solar thermal leasing agreement, which created a real win-win. The camp leased 131 panels on 11 buildings, while FLS owns the equipment and reaps the tax

benefits along with the extra power generated from the installation.

Camp Kanuga is already seeing the costs savings. In its estimate, the Camp will save \$700,000 over the next 25 years.



That's an enticing proposition for other schools, retirement communities and non-profits that might benefit the environment and their budgets by following in the green footprints of Kanuga Conferences. ■

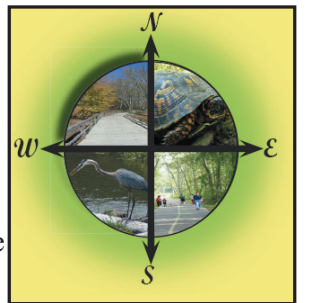
Oklawaha Greenway Grows, New Trail Guide Printed

ECO created the Jackson Park Nature Trail in conjunction with Henderson County Parks & Recreation nearly 20 years ago to bring attention to this treasure chest of significant natural gems. The park contains wetlands, pine wood forests, a rich diversity of flora and fauna and a large migratory bird population. The Oklawaha Greenway was constructed in the 1980s and the final connection between Jackson Park and Patton Park will be completed by late summer.

To celebrate the milestone, ECO led a team of biologists, naturalists and birders to complete a bioassessment of the greenways and nature trail

to develop a new greenway guide, a video and a dynamic web tour of Jackson Park in collaboration with the Hendersonville Planning Department.

The greenway guide has just been printed and is available at the ECO office as well as at City Hall and other locations. The brochure and webtour will be available soon on the ECO website, www.eco-wnc.org. ■



ECO CALENDAR OF EVENTS

July-September 2009

Board of Directors meetings are held the fourth Wednesday of each month, 12:00 - 1:30 p.m. **Recycling Committee** meets the second Tuesday of the month at 4:30 p.m. **Water Quality Committee** meets the second Wednesday at 4:30 p.m. **Energy Committee** meets the second Thursday at 4:00 p.m. and the **Green Infrastructure Committee** meets the third Thursday at 4:00 p.m. All meetings are held at the ECO office. Visitors are welcome. Contact ECO for details.

JULY

Thurs. 2 **Urban Walk with Walk Wise, Drive Smart.** Enjoy an urban walk 1 to 1½ miles long in Hendersonville. Call Michele Skeele at 828-551-6415 with questions or visit www.walk-wise.org for the location and time.



Tues. 7 **Crab Creek Town Hall meeting:** An opportunity for Crab Creek to plan for its future so that its open space is protected. The program will include a panel discussion, presentation of a short film and a community discussion on where the county is currently headed. Meeting will be at 7:00 p.m. at the Crab Creek Community Center on Jeter Mountain Road. Cosponsored by the Crab Creek Community Center and ECO.

Sat. 11 **Guided Bird Walk.** 8 a.m. Jackson Park, Hendersonville. Cosponsored by ECO and Henderson County Bird Club.



AUGUST

Thurs. 6 **Urban Walk with Walk Wise, Drive Smart.** Enjoy an urban walk 1 to 1½ miles long in Hendersonville. Call Michele Skeele at 828-551-6415 with questions, or visit www.walk-wise.org for the location and time.

Sat. 8 **Guided Bird Walk.** 8 a.m. Jackson Park, Hendersonville. Cosponsored by ECO and Henderson County Bird Club.

Thurs. 20 **ECO Open House.** Noon - 6 p.m. Come visit our office, enjoy refreshments and talk with staff and board members about ECO's current and upcoming projects!

Sat. 22 **Green Home Tour.** In conjunction with the Southeast Energy Expo (SEE Expo). Come visit homes that demonstrate sustainable use of resources and a reduced impact on human health and the environment. Tickets can be purchased online, from the ECO office, or the day of the event at the SEE Expo.



SEPTEMBER

Thurs. 3 **Urban Walk with Walk Wise, Drive Smart.** Enjoy an urban walk 1 to 1½ miles long in Hendersonville. Call Michele Skeele at 828-551-6415 with questions or visit www.walk-wise.org for the location and time.

Fri. 4 - Mon. 7 **Apple Festival.** Volunteer to help spread the word about ECO's work at the festival. Contact the ECO office for more details.

Sat. 12 **Guided Bird Walk.** 8 a.m. Jackson Park, Hendersonville. Cosponsored by ECO and Henderson County Bird Club.

Fri. 25 - Sun. 27 **Flat Rock Music Festival.** Your assistance is needed to staff an ECO table to promote ECO's work. Contact the ECO office more details.

Sat. 26 **Big Sweep Community Stream Cleanup Day.** 9 a.m. - 1 p.m. Teams and individuals clean streams across WNC. ECO coordinates this statewide effort in Henderson County. Call ECO to join a team!

UPCOMING EVENTS

Oct. 3	Flat Rock Art & Wine Festival	Oct. 13	"The French Broad - Yesterday & Today," Lecture with Harrison Metzger
Oct. 9-10	ECO Environmental Film Festival at Flat Rock Cinema	Oct. 18	ECO Tour: Canoe Trip down the French Broad River with Harrison Metzger

Join Us!



Help make a difference, join our committees! It's a great way to get involved!

___ Energy ___ Fundraising
 ___ Recycling ___ Water Quality
 ___ Events ___ Green Infrastructure
 ___ Membership ___ Marketing

Please check your category of membership:

Corporate \$	_____	Maple	_____ \$65
Chestnut	_____ \$500 or more	Hemlock	_____ \$40
Sycamore	_____ \$250	Oak	_____ \$25
Dogwood	_____ \$100	Redbud(student)	_____ \$10

Please contact me about special funding opportunities

Phone number _____ (day) _____ (night)

Name _____ email _____

Address _____

Clip and mail with your check to: **ECO, 121 Third Avenue West, Suite 4, Hendersonville, NC 28792 (828) 692-0385 or join online at www.eco-wnc.org**

Saving Rural Character, from page 1

to available water, and a change in land-use rules to encourage developers to conserve parts of the tracts they develop. The more "green" design features included in new development, the fewer problems will occur with stormwater runoff pollution in streams, Gerken said.

The Henderson County Board of Commissioners' move to assure that there is adequate water before allowing more large new projects was unprecedented in Western North Carolina, Weintraub said. The fact that the commissioners passed the measure against the recommendations of the Planning Board was also noteworthy, he said.

ECO's goal for this year is to build support for such rules to protect the environment in preparation for 2010, when three seats on the Board of Commissioners are up for election.

The focus, Weintraub said, will be on ordinances that are most effective and achievable with public support and leadership. Key advocacy areas include open space, stormwater runoff, wastewater treatment and protecting steep slopes.

A key to effective ordinances, Gerken said, is giving the public and the county leverage that can be used to encourage responsible development.

Because Henderson County has taken the step of regulating housing density with countywide zoning, that allows the county to encourage good development by awarding density bonuses to projects that protect important

natural features. Density bonuses allow developers to build more densely in some areas in exchange for leaving other areas green.

"With countywide zoning in place you have carrots to offer to encourage conservation design," Egan said.

The county can and should require major subdivisions to preserve open space, he added. Jackson County, for instance, requires major developments to reserve 25 percent of their area as open space. Other counties have even taken the step of removing sensitive natural areas such as streams from the total acreage that can be developed.

Gerken also discussed the proliferation of small "package" wastewater treatment plants in the French Broad River valley. There are 112 such plants upstream of the intake where Asheville and ultimately Hendersonville will draw water from the French Broad, Weintraub said.

One solution is to tie the multiple small sewage treatment systems into a centralized treatment system such as Asheville's Metropolitan Sewerage District. Larger sewage systems are better monitored and less likely to experience malfunctions that can release untreated sewage into rivers. Some counties have effectively outlawed any package sewage plants to protect water quality.

Egan, who formerly served as attorney for the City of Hendersonville, said any effective effort to protect

open spaces should include a plan to preserve farmland. Henderson County, he said, should consider purchasing agricultural conservation easements from willing farmers, as Jackson County has done. Jackson County set aside \$200,000 to purchase development rights from farmers. Egan has written two ordinances to help localities protect steep slopes from being developed and is now helping Polk County develop such a law.

Limiting development on steep slopes can help protect against catastrophic landslides and keep views of undeveloped ridges from being obliterated by dense development. Protecting steep slopes also has a positive effect on preserving underground water supplies, Egan said.

"The steeper the slope, the less dense development should be," he said.

Ordinances to protect steep slopes from overly dense development should be tied to a "comprehensive watershed analysis," Egan added. More information on protecting slopes is available in a comprehensive study by Land of Sky Regional Council, available online at www.LandOfSky.org.

Residents interested in learning more about how to protect Henderson County's rural spaces are invited to attend meetings of the Green Infrastructure Committee. The committee meets at 4 p.m. on the third Thursday of each month at the ECO office. Call 692-0385 or visit www.eco-wnc.org for more information. ■

**THE ENVIRONMENTAL AND
CONSERVATION ORGANIZATION**
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Members who sign up or renew this summer
at the \$100+ level receive one free rafting trip!

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Harrison Metzger, Russ Robinette and
Nancy Tanker — Directors

David Weintraub, Executive Director,
ECO VOICE editor
Alexandra Meyer, Administrative Assistant
Nancy Tanker, ECO VOICE Designer
Brendan Kelley and Carson Westall, Interns

Mary Jo Padgett, Founding Executive Director

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SUPPORT ECO'S

SUMMER SPLASH MINI-FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN!

Help ECO weather the economic storm while continuing to be the voice for the environment in the mountains! When you support our **SUMMER SPLASH** fundraising drive (of \$100 or more) we'll send you the recently released DVD, *A Sense of Wonder*, about Rachel Carson as a thank-you gift.

Donate online at www.eco-wnc.org or mail your pledge to us at:
ECO, 121 Third Avenue West, Hendersonville, NC 28792