

# CREEK VOICE

## No Dumping-This Water Drains to Richland Creek Watershed

Parent (Mrs. Amann) Directs Storm Water Stenciling Project For West End Middle School Students and RCWA



Fall brought back the stormwater-stenciling collaboration project with West End Middle School students. Many stakeholders were reminded of the importance of this program this summer when two different illicit discharges were observed in the Creek that consequently killed fish and

polluted Richland Creek. RCWA will help guide others to begin a stenciling project in their neighborhood. Young and old stakeholders get to help protect their community's water resources while learning about their watershed. Contact RCWA as a group leader and get started next spring!

## Mayor Dean's Green Ribbon Committee Seeks Input

Mayor Karl Dean's Green Ribbon Committee initiative continues to study the best short-term and long-term steps towards making Nashville the "greenest city in the Southeast." Two of his sub-committees invited RCWA to submit suggestions (a kind of wish list) to the Natural Resource and Mobility Subcommittees. The Committee not only sought input from various organizations, like RCWA,

but also held public meetings throughout Nashville during November inviting the whole community to contribute their vision for a greener Nashville.

To read more about the initiative go to the Mayor's website at [www.nashville.gov/mayor](http://www.nashville.gov/mayor) and click Green Ribbon Committee. You can read the RCWA submissions on our blog at <http://rcwa.blogspot.com>.

### VOLUME 1, ISSUE 3

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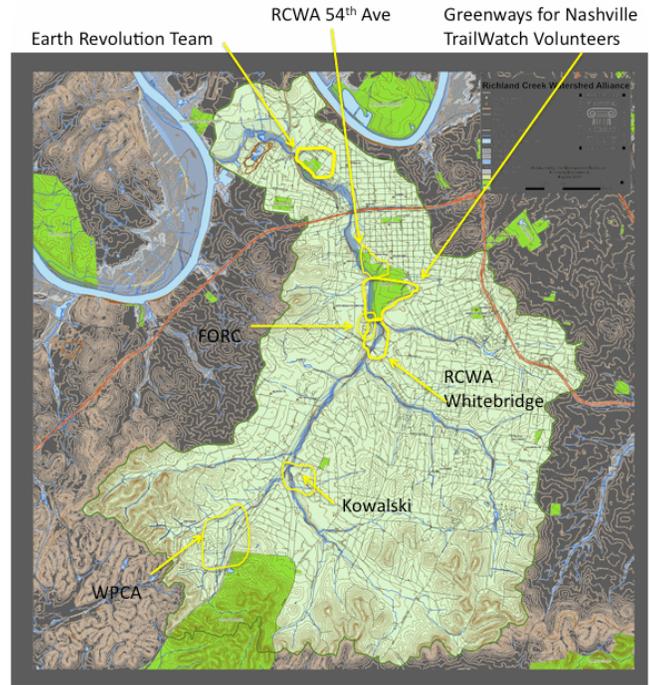
*Together ~ We Make a Difference*

# First Annual Watershed-Wide Clean Up – 7 Locations

Animated by the tagline “get the trash before the creeks do,” RCWA expanded upon last year’s fall clean-up collaboration with Greenways for Nashville TrailWatch volunteers by including more locations throughout the watershed in 2008. An alliance-building venture was born.

The groups and volunteers consisted of those that have worked with RCWA before, those that have been working on cleaning up the Creek for years, and those joining in for the first time. A big thanks to Greenways for Nashville, Earth Revolution, Kowalski Chiropractic Warner Park Community Association and Friends of Richland Creek for hosting events and; to Montgomery Bell Academy for recruiting so many volunteers.

Metro’s *Adopt-A-Stream* Program and Metro Parks helped to sponsor the event by providing gloves, trash bags, trash removal and other support. RCWA volunteers and Greenways for Nashville TrailWatch coordinators developed a promotion and recruitment plan for groups to host clean up site locations. H.G. Realty donated a \$200 Publix gift card, which RCWA used to purchase water, apples and re-useable Publix grocery bags for event participants. The result – seven locations for volunteers



Richland Creek Watershed Alliance  
Watershed-Wide Clean Up: October 25, 2008

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## Reflections from our Board and other RCWA Members

Continuing from our Summer *CreekVoice*, here are two more reflections from RCWA members when posed the question, “why did you decide to join RCWA?”

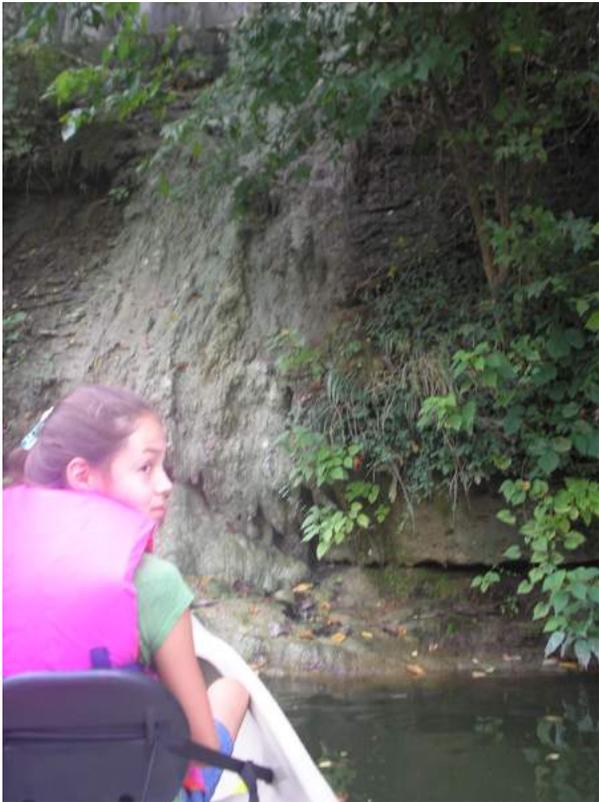
*“Where I was raised, waterways large and small are embraced...”*

**Kip Campbell- RCWA Member**

Sometime in the mid-1990s, before there was a Richland Creek Greenway, I recall hiking along a utility access road down to Richland Creek. Until then, I don't think I knew that the stream even existed. It was interesting to see the Creek and the natural area around it and to figure out, geographically, from where it came and where it flowed. Where I was raised, waterways large and small are embraced; developed areas and parks are oriented toward rather than away from them. Richland Creek seemed to me to be hidden among, almost shunned by, our relatively populous community. While parts of the Creek and the area around it were nearly pristine, much of the area looked neglected. Trash and junk marred most views. Evidence of illegal dumping was abundant. I could only wonder about the quality of the water flowing by.

*“I wanted to instill a feeling of ownership and stewardship in my children for the environment.”*

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Commentary by RCWA Executive Director

## DOWNSTREAM "out of sight, out of mind"



*Outdated behaviors sacrifice stream sustainability*

We have all heard the saying "*out of sight, out of mind.*" With the help of a college professor's photos, I would like to return into sight and mind the negative effect of this truism on our water resources.

Shown in the above photo left is the polluting effluent (wastewater) from the Rogers Group Inc. (Reostone Nashville Quarry Sales) on Robertson Avenue shedding the stream-bank to Richland Creek and, in the above photo right, the cumulative result of nutrient overloading, pollution and trash from upstream sources on downstream water quality, near the mouth of Richland Creek. These compelling pictorial truths remind me of how starkly different it should look and the seemingly overwhelming task of changing behavior before any improvement can occur.

These illustrated impacts spawn from two different kinds of pollution challenges but both have lasting and devastating consequences to our water resources and our quality of life. The first pollution challenge is a *regulated industrial use (left)* and the second is the *collection from non-point source pollution*- multiple sources of polluting human

behaviors channeled to creeks by storm run-off.

The first photo is either a non-compliant discharge or there is a dire need for a policy change to the regulation. I have not read a quarry permit requirement yet, but during my professional industry experience, regulated polluting effluents were "point-source"- outfalls extending out from the stream bank by a pipe. A pipe requirement here would reduce stream bank erosion and collection of silt (dirt) from the stream bank. Silt is considered the number one polluter. The addition also of a pre-treatment/filter system here of this wastewater before releasing into the stream, would reduce or even eliminate this pollution. In this case, one industrial stakeholder could eliminate this behavior and impact. My question - is this illustrated practice compliant with regulations?

The latter - collection of non-point source pollution downstream, on the other hand, must be addressed by a multitude of stakeholders (us) in the watershed. This is a culmination of nitrogen loading by turf chemicals and sewage collection failure; trash entering the streams from bad housekeeping practices or intentional dumping and, from our *out of sight, out of mind* unconscious behaviors. But- this is also an opportunity.

**Continued...**

**Downstream *continued***

Because we are the cause we have the power to change the results – change our behaviors. We can **choose** - to not use polluting chemicals on our turfs, plant more absorbing trees and flowers to reduce non-point source pollution, harvest rain water, compost our yard waste, call for a strict disposal ordinance, invest in our water infrastructure and secure watershed protection.

It is now more commonly discussed and known that unsustainable practices cannot continue if we are to sustain us, or our water resources. A brilliant documentary recently on WNPT was *Liquid Assets*. It explained in troubling detail this ignored and convoluted calamity that has been knocking at our doorstep, unheard.

How we develop our built environment, what we do and how we get there everyday affects this sustainability.

I wrote this commentary not because I want to create a controversy or point the finger at any particular industry but to bring into *sight* our future sustainability. The looming water crisis has concerned me for a long time and why I returned to college for a degree in water resources. I see problems now as a chance to contribute and be a part of the solution. My guess, when we are not out of mind, we all feel similarly.

- Monette Rebecca -

**Watershed-Wide Clean Up *Continued***

to pitch-in and contribute to this clean up effort on Saturday, October 25<sup>th</sup>.

Our watershed originates in Forest Hills of southern Davidson County and flows northward to the Cumberland River. Richland Creek and its five primary tributaries encompass 28.5 square miles of land area to include ridge tops, spring fed creeks, wildlife, parks, green spaces, diverse urban neighborhoods, commercial sectors and industrial areas.

Our streams are threatened by unsustainable urban development, inadequate infrastructure investment, “grandfathered in” regulatory variances and our everyday behaviors. These oversights have caused habitat alteration, sewer collection failure, nutrient loading and non-point source pollution- causing tons of trash and contaminants to be carried to our streams. These impacts degrade streams’ water quality and threaten the life dependent on them, including us. **Thanks** to our participating groups and 92 volunteers:

**Greenways for Nashville**  
**Richland Creek TrailWatch Volunteers**  
[www.greenwaysfornashville.org/trailwatch.htm](http://www.greenwaysfornashville.org/trailwatch.htm)

**Earth Revolution**  
[www.earthrevolution.org](http://www.earthrevolution.org)

**Warner Park Community Association**  
[www.wpca-nashville.org](http://www.wpca-nashville.org)

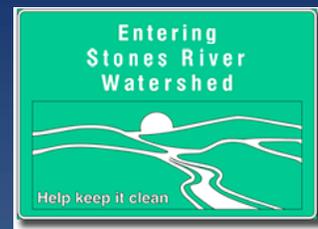
**Kowalski Chiropractic Center**  
 108 Harding Place - Suite 102 - 352.1234

**Richland Creek Watershed Alliance**  
[www.richlandcreekwatershedalliance.org](http://www.richlandcreekwatershedalliance.org)

**Friends of Richland Creek**

*This alliance-building event fosters our goal towards watershed sustainability.*

**TDEC & TDOT  
 POST SIGNS FOR  
 STEWARDSHIP**



“We all live downstream from someone”

RCWA member, State Senator Douglas Henry, has submitted a request to this Tennessee Department Partnership (Environment Conservation & Transportation) that Richland Creek Watershed be included as an unique watershed for designation.

*“.. a Watershed of tremendous historical value...subject to gross pollution because the City has built up around it.”*

**RCWA Partners to Build Two Rain Gardens**



Tennessee Environmental Council (above) and Cumberland River Compact (below) supplements costs for collaborative rain gardens.



*Reflections continued*

In the late 1990s, plans for a greenway in the vicinity of Richland Creek started to pick up steam. In October 2000, nearly 400 people attended a greenway "rally" held at McCabe Golf Course clubhouse even though the greenway was still just an idea at the time. Among the festivities at the rally were hayrides from the clubhouse to the Creek. Representatives of Greenways for Nashville greeted attendees creek-side and kids were wowed by the various critters that were caught and released before their eyes. In April 2001, a Creek "friends" group--a kind of predecessor group to Richland Creek Watershed Alliance--held a Creek clean-up, which was staged from the Knights of Columbus property near Saint Thomas Hospital. Approximately 100 people showed up and pitched in to clean-up the Creek. Word of the coming greenway in that very area seemed to fuel interest in the clean-up effort, as it was a great way for people to explore and see the area up close. Other organized clean-ups followed in addition to individual efforts.

Of course now the Richland Creek Greenway is mostly complete and its namesake has already been viewed from the Greenway by thousands who otherwise would never have seen the Creek or perhaps even known of it. I am convinced that the Creek benefits from the Greenway and vice versa. I think greenway users and others view the Greenway and natural area around it, including the Creek, as a public asset or treasure--an amenity worth protecting and preserving. I support Richland Creek Watershed Alliance because its mission and goal is to do just that. Through RCWA, I've learned about the larger span and scope of Richland Creek, the important role of the Richland Creek watershed, and the threats to its health and the wildlife that depend on it.

-END-

**Vicky Amann- Secretary and Education Officer**

I have been a resident of Nashville, for the past 12 years. We have lived all of those years in the Sylvan Park neighborhood. It was with great anticipation that our family awaited the opening of the [Richland Creek] Greenway behind McCabe [Golf Course]. Our family had been driving to

Shelby Bottoms to enjoy the greenway there, and we could hardly wait for "our very own" trail to open.

The Richland Creek Greenway was opened and it was fabulous, beautiful, very close to our house, and a wonderful opportunity for our family to get to the 'great outdoors' without getting in the car. However, I began to notice the trash along the creek, and the film on the surface of the creek, even as I was delighted to see fish in the creek and Herons along the creek. It occurred to me how fragile Richland Creek was, and I felt I would like to help maintain and improve our neighborhood treasure. Soon after the Greenway opened I met Monette Rebecca and learned just how fragile the creek truly was, with large segments on the Impaired Waters List. I decided that Monette was truly a 'voice in the wilderness' and that helping Monette develop this fledgling neighborhood organization was something I wanted to do. I also wanted to instill a feeling of ownership and stewardship in my children for our fragile environment, so I became involved in reaching out to West End Middle School Students, and Hillsboro High School Students to encourage their involvement as an active steward of our watershed. Our environment is fragile, and requires an active awareness that will help preserve and maintain it, instead of allowing it to be damaged through benign neglect. Through Richland Creek Watershed Alliance (RCWA), stormwater drain stenciling with Metro Water services, the construction of Rain Barrels, and neighborhood Rain gardens, I hope to help our neighborhood achieve a more active awareness of the beauty and fragility of our neighborhood treasure, Richland Creek.

-END-

If you missed the previous issues email us at [rcwa@comcast.net](mailto:rcwa@comcast.net) and request one. Also, please submit your writings to us for our winter CreekVoice issue (*Why did you join RCWA?*).

The **Third-Annual Richland Creek Run/Walk** will be held April 4, 2009. For information or to register, go to [www.richlandcreekrun.com](http://www.richlandcreekrun.com).

**CREEKTALK***Your Creek Stories or Comments*

As a way to share comments and history about our watershed between stakeholders, here are more submitted comments from RCWA readers.

This comment missed our last edition – **06-11-08 Martha wrote** after the Tennessean article about our May 31<sup>st</sup> Clean Up- “Enjoyed [the] article on Richland Creek. Reminded me of a time long ago at the age of 13 when I did a science experiment on the water from the creek. Would love to be a part of protecting this beautiful watershed.”

Comments we received after the toxic and illicit discharges that

resulted in the fish kill and impairing cement plume last Labor Day weekend follows. To see our follow-up reports and photos, check the RCWA website News page.

**Brian wrote 09-08-08** “Terrific photo to capture the gray cloudy plume in the same shot with the ducks. It’s enough to make even non-environmentalists mad. Did Metro Water Services ever determine what was entering the storm drain in Sylvan Park? Were the water samples analyzed to determine pollutants? Was the pollutant discharge investigated to

determine cause and fault? Were fines levied? Often, it seems fines and penalties are required for the “education” to matter to some people. This would make for an interesting story on the television news. Keep up the great work, and please keep us informed with any follow-up, action and enforcement.”

**Claudia wrote 09-19-08** “So no one knows what happened and no one is held responsible???”

**Lisa wrote 09-20-08** “Thanks so much for keeping us informed. It’s very scary that causes could not be determined for either issue.”

Submit your creek story or comment to [rcwa@comcast.net](mailto:rcwa@comcast.net).

*JOIN RCWA - TO SHARE AND LEARN MORE*

*SUBMIT YOUR ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP OF \$10 BY SNAIL MAIL OR VIA PAYPAL FROM OUR WEBSITE AT*

**[WWW.RICHLANDCREEKWATERSHEDALLIANCE.ORG](http://WWW.RICHLANDCREEKWATERSHEDALLIANCE.ORG)**

**WE NEED YOUR DONATION OR TIME TO ENABLE OUR EFFORTS - THANKS AHEAD OF TIME**

*REQUEST UPDATE EMAILS OR TO SUBMIT QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS BY EMAILING US AT [RCWA@COMCAST.NET](mailto:RCWA@COMCAST.NET)*

*FOR MORE DETAILS, PHOTOS OR TO COMMENT GO TO OUR BLOG AT [RCWA.BLOGSPOT.COM](http://RCWA.BLOGSPOT.COM)*

You can call us RCWA (pronounced *rec-wa*)

### **RCWA 2009 How-to Workshop Announcements**

Rain Barrel February 23<sup>rd</sup> 6-7:30 PM

Rain Garden February 25<sup>th</sup> 6-8 PM

Register at the Cohn Adult Learning Center for either workshop

4805 Park Avenue or call– 298.8050 –\$10 each



**Richland Creek Watershed Alliance**

P.O. Box 92016 Nashville, TN 37209

*A community-supported volunteer organization promoting environmental sustainability for the Richland Creek Watershed*