

New River Symposium 2026

**APRIL 9-11, 2026
APPALACHIAN STATE UNIVERSITY
BOONE, NORTH CAROLINA**



Program & Schedule



New River Conservancy



Keynote Speakers

THURSDAY 11:30 AM - 12:30 PM
PLENARY KEYNOTE: PARKWAY BALLROOM

Gayle Manchin, Federal Co-Chair, Appalachian Regional Commission

Manchin believes in the power of partnerships and advocates for collaboration across Appalachia's 13 states. As ARC Federal Co-Chair, her top priorities are to support the creation of greater economic opportunities in the Appalachian Region, increase broadband access and critical infrastructure in all Appalachian communities, and work to restore hope and purpose to lives upended by the opioid crisis, all through a cross-regional, multi-state approach.

FRIDAY 9:00 AM - 10:00 AM
SPECIAL KEYNOTE: GRANDFATHER BALLROOM

Dr. Kathie Dello, Assistant Secretary for Resilience for the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality

Dr. Dello leads the department's efforts to strengthen North Carolina's resilience to withstand increasingly severe weather. She leads the efforts of the Division of Coastal Management, State Energy Office, Albemarle-Pamlico National Estuary Program (APNEP), Flood Resiliency Blueprint and the State Resilience Office.



Schedule at a Glance

THURSDAY APRIL 9, 2026

- 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM • Workshops
- 10:00 AM - 11:30 AM • Registration
- 11:30 AM - 12:30 PM • Plenary Keynote • Parkway Ballroom
- 12:30 PM - 1:30 PM • Lunch • Parkway Ballroom
- 1:30 PM - 2:50 PM • Concurrent presentations and panels
- 2:50 PM - 3:20 PM • Break
- 3:20 PM - 4:40 PM • Concurrent presentations
- 5:00 PM - 6:00 PM • Poster presentations
- 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM • Reception • Turchin Center

FRIDAY APRIL 10, 2026

- 8:00 AM - 9:00 AM • Breakfast • Grandfather Ballroom
- 9:00 AM - 10:00 AM • Friday Keynote • Grandfather Ballroom
- 10:00 AM - 11:50 PM • Concurrent Panels
- 12:00 PM - 1:00 PM • Lunch • Grandfather Ballroom
- 1:00 PM - 3:00 PM • Concurrent presentations
- 3:00 PM - 5:00 PM • Closing remarks • Table Rock
Blue Ridge Ballroom

SATURDAY APRIL 11, 2026

- 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM • New River Paddle Trip • *Optional
Craft and shuttle will be supplied.



Pre-opening Workshops

THURSDAY 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM

*OPTIONAL

- Bioregionalism ~ Plemmons Student Union ~ Rough Ridge
- iNaturalist ~ Plemmons Student Union ~ Beacon Heights
- Urban Ecology ~ Rankin Science West
- Stream Restoration Principles and Practice ~ Rankin Science West

Concurrent Panel Discussions

THURSDAY 2:00 PM - 2:50 PM

Parkway Ballroom ~ Ecological Communities

Hellbender Conservation in the wake of Hurricane Helene

Rough Ridge ~ Cultural Endurance

Transformative Moments - The History of the New River Conservancy

Beacon Heights ~ Recreation Economy

Outdoor Recreation Resiliency in the Watershed

FRIDAY 10:00 AM - 10:50 AM

Grandfather Ballroom ~ Roundtables on Disaster Recovery (Part 1)

From Response to Resilience: Disaster Recovery and Regional Coordination

Rough Ridge ~ Cultural Endurance

Writing the Watershed

Beacon Heights ~ Recreation Economy

Building Forward, Collaborative Resilience in the Southeast

FRIDAY 11:00 AM - 11:50 AM

Grandfather Ballroom ~ Roundtables on Disaster Recovery (Part 2)

From Response to Resilience: Disaster Recovery and Regional Coordination

Rough Ridge ~ Cultural Endurance

TRIBUTARIA:

Poetry, Prose, & Art Inspired by Tributaries of the Ohio River Watershed

Beacon Heights ~ Recreation Economy

Built to Last: Merging Restoration with High Traffic Areas



Panel Abstracts

CULTURAL ENDURANCE: ROUGH RIDGE ROOM PSU 415

THURSDAY 2:00 PM - 2:50 PM

Transformative Moments - The History of the New River Conservancy

Three unique points of view of the history of the New River Conservancy, the Blue Ridge Project dam fight and how a backward glance can inform our understanding of, and help us prepare for, challenges in the present and future.

PANEL

MODERATOR: KATHLEEN ARMSTRONG

Emily Kader, Ph.D.; *Anne Belk Distinguished Professor and Curator for Distinctive Collections*

Jack Lynch; *Grassroots community activist in environmental and historical initiatives*

Lisa Stansell - Galitz; *New River Conservancy Communications and Marketing Director*

FRIDAY 10:00 - 10:50 AM

Writing the Watershed

These professors/authors read their pieces on trails systems, hurricane Helene and moving to the New River watershed. They will discuss flood resiliency, recreation for community health, and ways to know to care for a place or river.

PANEL

MODERATOR: RICK VAN NOY, PH.D.

Rick Van Noy, PhD; Professor at Radford University, Author of *Sudden Spring, A Natural Sense of Wonder*, and *Surveying the Interior*.

Zackary Vernon, PhD; Professor at Appalachian State University, Author of *Our Bodies Electric*

Laird Christensen, PhD; Chair of Sustainable Development at ASU, Author of *Teaching about Place: Learning from the Land*



Panel Abstracts

CULTURAL ENDURANCE: ROUGH RIDGE ROOM PSU 415

FRIDAY 11:00 - 11:50 AM

TRIBUTARIA:

Poetry, Prose, & Art Inspired by Tributaries of the Ohio River Watershed

Tributaria is a creative tribute to one of the largest river systems in North America. The Ohio River and its many tributaries, including the New. Tributaria sings an elegy for the living world, even as it celebrates its sacred beauty.

PANEL

MODERATOR: JIM MINICK

Jim Minick; Author editor of eight books, including *The Intimacy of Spoons* and *The Blueberry Years*

Joseph Bathanti; Professor at Appalachian State University, Author of over twenty books, including his new poems, *Steady Daylight*, from LSU Press, was released in February 2026.

Pam Campbell; Author, works appear in, among others, *Ó Bhéal Five Words Anthology*, *PMS&G Literary Journal*, *The Petigru Review*, *Poets for Science*

Jessica Cory; Appalachian State University, Editor of *Appalachian Journal: A Regional Studies Review*

Donna Wojnar Dzurilla; Poet/Writer, poetry has appeared in the *Kaleidoscope*, *The Pittsburgh Quarterly*, *Bridge Literary Arts Journal*





Panel Abstracts

ECOLOGICAL COMMUNITIES: PARKWAY BALLROOM PSU 420

THURSDAY 2:00 PM - 2:50 PM

Hellbender Conservation in the Wake of Hurricane Helene

The premier hellbender researchers in the New River Watershed gather to discuss the after-effects of Hurricane Helene on the hellbender, the largest salamander in North America and who rely on specific stream bed conditions for survival.

PANEL

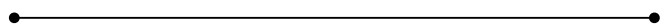
MODERATOR: SHEA TUBERTY

Ranger Joshua McIntyre; Lead Natural Resources Manager New River State Park, Masters in Biology and has worked as a Forester, Environmental Educator, and Natural Resource Manager in Ohio, Vermont, Wisconsin and NC, Hellbender Survey Lead at NRSP

William 'Bill' Hopkins, Ph.D.; Professor Department of Fish and Wildlife Conservation at Virginia Tech, Director of the Global Change Center at Virginia Tech

Michael Gangloff, Ph.D.; Professor at Appalachian State University, Ongoing research projects include impacts of changing land use on Eastern hellbender populations in the Watauga River Drainage

Hannah Woodburn; Mountain True, Upper New Riverkeeper, Master's Degree in Biology from Appalachian State University





Panel Abstracts

RECREATION ECONOMIES: BEACON HEIGHTS PSU 417

THURSDAY 2:00 PM - 2:50 PM

Outdoor Recreation Resiliency -Outfitters, Guides and River Lovers

More than 100 years ago, President Theodore Roosevelt said, “The nation behaves well if it treats the natural resources as assets that it must turn over to the next generation increased, and not impaired, in value.” Today, outdoor recreation is among the largest economic sectors, representing the lifeblood of thousands of communities throughout the watershed. Our panel is on the front lines of this economy.

PANEL

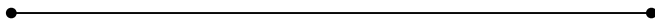
MODERATOR: ANDREW DOWNS

Kelly McCoy; owner and creator of RiverGirl Fishing, Todd, North Carolina, established in 2006; Marine Biologist

Mac Cornish; owner Zaloo’s Canoes, Jefferson, North Carolina, established 1976

Jen Otey; Friends of Southwest Virginia, Outdoor Recreation Development Manager

Ryan Robinson; Mast General Store, Inc, Corporate Responsibility & Community Partnerships





Panel Abstracts

BUILDING AND RESTORING: BEACON HEIGHTS PSU 417

FRIDAY 10:00 - 10:50 AM

***Southeast Landscape of the Future Initiative:
Building Forward, Collaborative Resilience in the Southeast***

Focusing on strategic coordination of recovery and long-term sustainability efforts in the New River watershed and the Southeastern US following Hurricane Helene, a distinguished group of experts will explore the critical need for strategic, landscape-scale coordination to reduce fragmented efforts and maximize the impact of these historic investment opportunities.

INVITED PANELISTS

MODERATOR: MALLORY MARTIN

Laura Belleville - Senior Director Conservation Programs, National Forest Foundation (VA)

Doug Besler - Helene Restoration Division Chief, NC Wildlife Resources Commission (NC)

Sara Gottlieb - Southern Appalachians Freshwater Director, The Nature Conservancy (GA)

Tracy Minton - Superintendent, New River State Park (NC)

Edward Wright (Ed) - Mt. Rogers National Recreation Area Ranger, USDA Forest Service (VA)





Panel Abstracts

BUILDING AND RESTORING: BEACON HEIGHTS PSU 417

FRIDAY 11:00 - 11:50 AM

Built to Last: Merging Restoration with High-Traffic Access

Featuring experts who plan, design, and build flood-resilient structures that protect natural resources and support public recreation, this panel will share case studies showing how smart planning and site management create access points built to last. These examples demonstrate how better infrastructure protects our waterways and communities while keeping the local economy strong.

INVITED PANELISTS

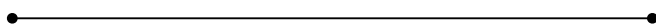
MODERATOR: PAUL STAHLSCHMIDT

Paul Stahlschmidt - Instructor in the Recreation Management program, Paul teaches with focus areas in recreation site and facility management, planning, natural resources, and administration.

Ivan Vazquez -Landscape Designer at Destination by Design, Ivan is dedicated to creating impactful public spaces. Growing up in Western North Carolina inspired his passion for transforming rural communities through landscape architecture.

Caroline Stahlschmidt - Senior Project Manager at Destination by Design, Caroline is skilled at creating systems that ensure community projects succeed. She excels at making connections and helping clients achieve their goals.

Carrie Caviness, PhD, PE - Principal Engineer and Owner at Interface Engineering & Consulting, PLLC, With over 22 years of experience in environmental design and permitting, Carrie performs civil and environmental engineering in public and private sectors, specializing in stormwater management, stream restoration, and recreation design.





Panel Abstracts

ROUNDTABLES ON DISASTER RECOVERY: GRANDFATHER BALLROOM PSU 137

FRIDAY 10:00 - 11:50 AM (In 2 Parts)

From Response to Resilience:

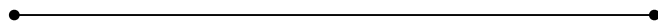
Facilitated Roundtables on Disaster Recovery and Regional Coordination

This two-part session straddles Cultural Endurance and Recreation Economy. This interactive session with presentation and discussion engages participants in guided roundtable conversations focused on real-world recovery and resilience challenges, highlighting shared barriers and opportunities for improved regional coordination. Data collected from this session will be included in a report determining the feasibility of creating an Appalachian Resiliency Network.

PRESENTER/ MODERATOR

Michael Clark; Owner Oxbow

Michael Clark is a parks and recreation strategy and planning consultant with more than 25 years of experience supporting outdoor recreation systems, trail networks, and community-based outdoor economies. His work focuses on connecting public spaces, recreation assets, and local economic development.





Rough Ridge Room - Cultural Endurance Track

THURSDAY: APRIL 9, 2026

1:30 - 1:50 PM

Representing Watersheds Through Sound

Nicholas Cline

3:20 - 3:40 PM

Archaeology of Resilience along the Upper New River

Alice Wright

3:50 - 4:10PM

Reading the Woods: Environmental Hermeneutics in the Field

Joey Aloï

4:20 - 4:40PM

Wildlife Corridors: Paths to Resilience

Nikki Robinson

FRIDAY: APRIL 10, 2026

1:00 - 1:20 PM

*Planning the High Country:
Community leaders share insights before and after Helene*

Elizabeth Shay

1:30 - 1:50 PM

*Supporting Recovery After the Flood:
Learning from Experiences in the New River Valley*

Tete Eteh-Benissan
Emily Gard
Maggie Kidd
Sarah Soltani

2:00 - 2:30 PM

River Ranger Buckets for River Exploration

Rebecca Adcock

2:40 - 3:00 PM

*Understanding Current Bioregional
Energy Generation and Consumption Patterns for a Resilient Future in
the Upper New*

Danielle Hewell



Parkway Ballroom - Ecological Communities Track

THURSDAY: APRIL 9, 2026

1:30 - 1:50 PM

*Severe storm response in Central Appalachian Streams:
Focusing on Benthic Macroinvertebrate Community dynamics* Quinn Weigel

3:20 - 3:40 PM

*Pollinator habitat restoration and impacts
on surrounding ecosystems* Alice Wright

3:50 - 4:10PM

Cane Train- River Cane Restoration Program Jonathan Hartsell

4:20 - 4:40PM

*Post Helene populations assessment of the
federally listed *Spiraea virginiana** Matt Estep





Three Top Mountain - Ecological Communities Track

FRIDAY: APRIL 10, 2026

1:00 - 1:20 PM

A multi-century streamflow reconstruction of the New River Basin using tree rings

Mackenzie N. Casteel

1:30 - 1:50 PM

The AppAqua Research Cluster Initiatives in the Upper South Fork New River and Beyond

Shea Tuberty

2:00 - 2:30 PM

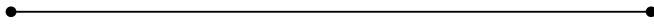
New River: Data, Contaminants, and Community Health as Pillars of Watershed Resilience

Naveen Joseph

2:40 - 3:00 PM

Assessing the Aquatic Macrophyte Community in a Small Reservoir in Southern WV

Rafael Castañeda-Saldaña





Beacon Heights - Recreation Economies Track

THURSDAY: APRIL 9, 2026

1:30 - 1:50 PM

New River Water Trail: Headwaters to Confluence

Kathleen Armstrong

3:20 - 3:40 PM

Stream Stewardship and Restoration in Boone NC

George Santucci

3:50 - 4:10PM

Shulls Mill and Wards Mill Dam Removals

Jake McLean

4:20 - 4:40PM

Stream and Floodplain Restoration Lessons Learned Following 2024 Helene Flooding

Greg Jennings

FRIDAY: APRIL 10, 2026

1:00 - 1:20 PM

Building the Darkway: Blue Ridge Rising and Dark Skies Tourism Along The Blue Ridge Parkway

Benjamin Erlandson

1:30 - 1:50 PM

High Definition Stream Survey: Prioritizing Management Decisions in the New River.

Brett Connell

2:00 - 2:30 PM

Stirring the Water: Exploring the Effects of Giles County's New River Water Trail

Tim Thornton

2:40 - 3:00 PM

Keeping Tires out of Rivers: Why and How

Felicia Etzkorn



Poster Presentations – Turchin Center

THURSDAY: APRIL 9, 2026 5:30 - 9:00 PM

Atrazine in the New River: Monitoring Gaps and Ecological Risk
Student Presenters: Emily Blankenbeckler & Aylin Bradford ~
Radford University

Olivine Weathering and Water Chemistry in Cane Creek, North Carolina
Student Presenter: Jason Hunter ~ Radford University

PFAS Regulation in the New River: Evidence-Based Pathways to Policy
Student Presenter: Kouso Bennett ~ Radford University

Environmental and Social Determinants of Health Among Older Adults in
Appalachia: Student Presenter: Michael Koory ~ Radford University

Pre-post assessment of Hurricane Helene on Western North Carolina
Stream Macroinvertebrate assemblages: Does a 1000-year flood impact
productivity, diversity, and functional feeding groups?
Student Presenter: Spencer Bechtol ~ Appalachian State University

Crayfish Response to Hurricane Helene in the New River
Student Presenter: Katharine Winiewicz ~ Appalachian State University

Who Serves the Watershed? Mapping the Nonprofit Support Ecosystem of
the New River Region; Student Presenter: Stella Cybulski ~ Clemson
University

Invasive Species Impacts on Branchiobdellidan Communities on Native
Crayfish in the New River; Student Presenter: Amy Hamer ~ Appalachian
State University

Resilience, Revitalization, and Recreational Economies of the Upper New
River Watershed; Student Presenter: Trevor McKenzie ~ Appalachian State
University



Poster Presentations – Turchin Center

THURSDAY: APRIL 9, 2026 5:30 - 9:00 PM

The AppAqua Research Cluster: Long-term Aquatic Monitoring and Assessment of Land Use & Land Cover Impacts on Water Quality in a Southern Appalachian Headwater Catchment; Student Presenter: Lauren Lever ~ Appalachian State University

Tracing Human Fecal Contamination in Upper New Surface Waters Using HF-183 Genetic Marker; Presenter: Hannah Woodburn ~ MountainTrue

Community Water Quality and Public Health Implications in the a Tributary of the Lower New: Focus on Montwell Commons, Lewisburg, WV; Student Presenter: Matthew Williams ~ West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine/Greenbrier River Watershed Association

Resiliency of Stream Breeding Salamanders to Extreme Rainfall; Student Presenter: Jacob Twersky ~ Appalachian State University

West Jefferson Stormwater Improvement Projects; Presenter: Paige Patterson ~ Blue Ridge Resource Conservaton and Development

Private Wells and Human Health: Building Resilience in Rural Communities of Western North Carolina; Student Presenter:Eden Vigus; Appalachian State University

Effect of road salt application on long-term riparian aquifer contamination: A case study of Boone Cree; Student Presenter: Ethan Cannon ~ Appalachian State University

Restless Claws: Ecophysiological responses of Appalachian crayfish in dynamic environments; Student Presenter: Grace Parton ~ Radford University



Poster Presentations – Turchin Center

THURSDAY: APRIL 9, 2026 5:30 - 9:00 PM

New River Users' Awareness of Aquatic Invasive Species and their Equipment Cleaning Practices; Student Presenter: Nicole Rekrut ~ Appalachian State University

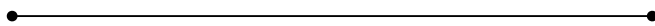
A comprehensive ecological assessment of Elkhorn Creek to evaluate stream ecosystem health and identify environmental factors influencing biological integrity; Student Presenter: Kaleb Meadows ~ Concord University

Monitoring the health of multiple eastern hemlock groves for the presence and resistance to wooly adelgids; Student Presenter: Karsynn Davis ~ Concord University

Data-Driven Insights into Vulnerability and Healthcare Strain after Hurricane Helene; Student Presenters: Caleb Blackburn & Quinn Keefer - Appalachian State University

Prototyping Local Watersheds; Presenter: Benjamin Erlandson - The Upper New (Founder)

Appalachian Future: Bioregional Building in The Upper New; Presenter: Benjamin Erlandson - The Upper New (Founder)

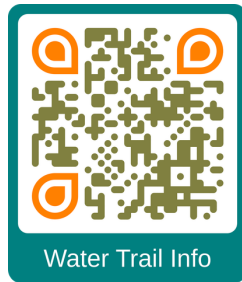




For more information:



NRC
Membership



Water Trail Info
New River
Watertrail

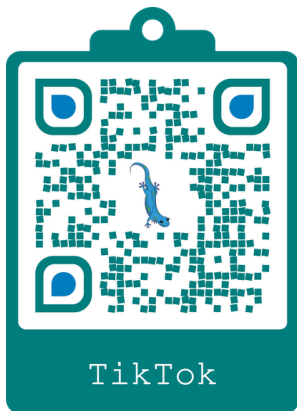


NRX26
New River
Expedition



REGISTER
New River
Canoe Race

For Presenters: In collaboration with the symposium organizers, Virginia Tech's online repository, VTechWorks, is collecting presentations, posters, and other materials so that they can be shared and preserved for all who might benefit from them. Filling out this form and uploading your file will add your work to the New River Symposium collection



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Thank you!

We would like to thank the following departments at Appalachian State University that have generously donated funding, or helped garner funding in order for all students that attend New River Symposium to attend free.

Goodnight Family Department of Sustainable Development

Appalachian Heritage Council

Center for Appalachian Studies

College of Arts and Sciences

Quality Enhancement Plan: Pathways to Resilience
The Biology Dept at App State

The Research Institute for
Environment, Energy and Economics
for funding use of our spaces and services for
Symposium

and

The Turchin Center for the Visual Arts for hosting our Thursday evening reception and poster session.



Thank you to our Sponsors



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Program Committee Chair ~ Kathleen Armstrong*

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New River Conservancy