



# City of Harrisonburg, Virginia

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## New Purcell Park Stream Restoration Signage

HARRISONBURG, VA – The City of Harrisonburg’s Parks and Recreation Department installed four interpretive educational signs in Purcell Park that tell the story of the Blacks Run. Blacks Run is an 11-mile stream that runs through the City’s downtown, through Purcell Park, and feeds eventually into the North River, Shenandoah River, and Chesapeake Bay.

With grant awarded by the Canaan Valley Institute, the City created and installed the educational signs that describe the stream restoration project in Purcell Park, illustrates what a healthy stream looks like, what insects and animals live in and around the stream, and what residents can do around their home to help improve the health of our local streams.

The stream restoration project occurred in spring 2009 and was funded by the Virginia Aquatic Resources Trust Fund, managed by The Nature Conservancy and the US Army Corps of Engineers. In collaboration with the Canaan Valley Institute, the Valley Conservation Council, and others, the City restored approximately 4,750 linear feet of Blacks Run and two tributaries in Purcell Park. The land, like much of the City, was once farmland and at some point in its past the stream was straightened. This straightening was a serious contributor in the erosion and decline in the health of the stream.

The stream restoration project used natural channel design and included a riparian buffer that was planted with native shrub and tree species. The benefits of these restoration efforts are improved water quality and enhanced habitat for fish and animals living in and around the stream. There are many birds present today that were not there before, such as the Green Heron, Great Blue Heron, and a variety of riparian song birds. Pools that have been created by in stream structures are supporting many fish species such as Black Nose Dace, Common Shiner, Blunt Nose Dace, Banded Killifish, Bluegill, Bullhead Catfish, Largemouth Bass, and Green Sunfish. Reptiles and amphibians also benefit from the riparian buffer; eastern painted turtle and snapping turtles have been observed nesting within the riparian buffer.

The City also donated a conservation easement on the project area to the Valley Conservation Council, a regional land trust, ensuring the permanent protection for the restored area and its future use for public education about the value of riparian buffers and natural ecosystems.

Today, the project area is checked on and maintained by the City’s Stream Health Coordinator Wes Runion. “The planted trees and native vegetation within the easement are continuously growing and thriving,” says Runion. “It is estimated that there is around a 70% survival rate with planted trees, which is awesome in terms of survivability. Many native wildlife species benefit from the easement in Purcell Park, and I’m glad to be a part of the movement to help conserve our native riparian buffers in the area. I encourage everyone next time they are in Purcell Park to take a closer look at the easement and environmental interpretive signs that are along Blacks Run.”

*Purcell Park is a 67 acre park located at 41 Monument Avenue on the east side and on South Main Street on the south side of the park. There are two entrances to the park - one from Monument Avenue and the other from Miller Circle off of South Main Street. The park has three softball/baseball fields, four tennis courts, two playground areas, three picnic shelters, several restrooms, and a 1.5 mile walking trail.*

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