

# Raccoon Creek News

Fall 2021

*Turning Over a New Leaf this Fall!*

## Ribbon Cutting Ceremony at the Moonville Rail Trail

*Amy Mackey– RCP Watershed Coordinator, Ohio University Voinovich School*

September 7<sup>th</sup>, 2021

This fall, be sure to head out to Zaleski State Forest and hike the Moonville Rail Trail! Though the public trail has been around for a long time (thanks to the Moonville Rail Trail Association), the recently completed Moonville Rail Trail AMLER (Abandoned Mine Lands Economic Revitalization) project installed 7 bridges over stream crossings and closed 8 dangerous mine openings adjacent to the trail. Historically, if you wanted to hike the trail, you could only hike sections between stream crossings, or be prepared to get wet as the rail trail crossed Raccoon Creek and Hewett Fork many times and the bridges were removed when the rail line was abandoned. Now, with the new bridges installed, you can hike from Zaleski all the way to the town of Mineral! This is a beautiful section of Raccoon Creek, entirely wooded and surrounded by Zaleski State Forest. No motorized vehicles are permitted on the trail, but foot traffic, bicycles, and horses are welcome!

AMLER funds are to be used “for the reclamation of abandoned mine lands in conjunction with economic revitalization and community development and reuse goals.” AMLER projects address abandoned mine land issues, but also provide economic benefit for the surrounding communities. The Moonville Rail Trail AMLER project closed 8 dangerous coal mine openings (from pre-law underground coal mines) and increased recreational opportunities in Vinton County.

A huge thank you to all the partners who made this project possible including:

Ohio Department of Natural Resources,  
Division of Mineral Resources Management,  
Moonville Rail Trail Association,  
Zaleski State Forest,  
Lake Hope State Park



ATHENS

GALLIA

HOCKING

JACKSON

MEIGS

VINTON



## Raccoon Creek Partnership AmeriCorps Member Farewell

*Kelly Love and Ashley Smith—Past RCP AmeriCorps Members*

Hello everyone! My name is Kelly Love and I had the privilege of serving for Raccoon Creek Partnership as one of their AmeriCorps from 2019-2021. When I started my first term, I didn't know what to expect but I was eager to learn as much as I could. I gained so many new skills and knowledge thanks to Raccoon Creek initiatives, including watershed chemical and biological sampling. I have a new appreciation for the Appalachian Ohio region. Most importantly, I made so many great friends through AmeriCorps. While I was serving, every day was a different adventure. One day I would be at a school fair teaching kids about macroinvertebrates and the next day I would be in the field doing biological or chemical sampling or volunteering at other sites! I was given so many amazing opportunities for learning new skill sets such as archery, first aid, and MAIS. I was given the freedom to create new events and to write weekly educational posts on social media. One of my favorite memories was catching a mudpuppy in the Hocking River.

Serving as an AmeriCorps member for Raccoon Creek Partnership for the past two years has helped me prepare for my next adventure in life. I will be starting my Master degree in Environmental Studies at Ohio University. The knowledge and skills I have gained will help me greatly while I continue to do work involving stream quality. I hope to continue to help out when I can. I wish both Ashley and Kelsey the best on their AmeriCorps Journey!



Kelly Love with mud Puppy found in the Hocking River.

Hi everyone! I'm Ashley Smith and these past two years of serving at RCP has been tremendously helpful in both my personal and professional life. I was able to try out a variety of jobs and tasks which help me nail down what I really want to do in my career and what I want to accomplish as a person.

Days in the field were the best! Sampling for water quality was very rewarding. To see firsthand how restoration and reclamation can make a watershed thrive again gave me a new perspective of how much good a non-profit can do. I will always have fond memories of all the volunteering events we organized. My fellow AmeriCorps members were all great people and always brought positive energy when volunteering with RCP.

I would like to give a big "thank you" to everyone. Without members, RCP would not have been able to support two AmeriCorps, even the educational and outreach programming we do. I would also like to thank the RCP board members for always supporting Kelly and I's ideas and new programming. They were super flexible with all the changes we had to make to our programs. A big thanks goes out to Amy Mackey for being an amazing supervisor, who guided and helped me with both my professional and personal life. Last but not least thanks Kelly Love for being a cool and levelheaded site sibling. I'll miss our fun conversations and Uno games at our office.

I am truly glad I served at the Raccoon Creek Partnership. It helped me take the next step into my water quality career. Currently I am working with the Midwest Biodiversity Institute as a macroinvertebrate tech. It is great to have the opportunity to work with another awesome non-profit that works to improve water quality and aquatic habitat. In the future, I plan to stay connected the RCP and volunteer whenever I can.



Ashley Smith, Kelly Love, and Michelle Shively sampling macroinvertebrates.

## Raccoon Creek Partnership New AmeriCorps Members Welcome

*Kelsey Daniels and Ashley Grace– Current RCP AmeriCorps Members*

Hi everyone! My name is Kelsey Daniels and I am one of the new AmeriCorps members serving for Raccoon Creek Partnership. I just graduated in the spring of 2021 from Ohio University with a Bachelor's degree in marine, freshwater and environmental biology and a certificate in global leadership. I had so many opportunities in my undergraduate career that propelled my interest in aquatic biology and conservation and has led me to where I am today. I have traveled to Cambodia to gain my SCUBA certification and build artificial coral reefs and I have traveled to the Bahamas to expand my knowledge on Caribbean island geology and biology. Through my classes at OU, I have learned valuable field skills such as biological and chemical sampling in aquatic habitats. Field work has always been my favorite part about my biology classes.

In just a short time serving for Raccoon Creek Partnership, I have already learned new water quality sampling techniques while getting knee deep in muck. While it's dirty work, it's also fun work. I joined AmeriCorps because I wanted to make a difference within the community. I am excited to help in the conservation efforts at Raccoon Creek, as well as help to educate youth on the impacts humans have on watersheds and shape them into more environmentally conscious people. I am excited for this year and my AmeriCorps journey, and I know I will learn valuable skills to excel in my future careers in environmental conservation.



Kelsey Daniels holding a Black Crappie from the Hocking River.

Hi folks! My name is Ashley Grace and I'm an AmeriCorps member serving with Raccoon Creek Partnership! I'm a nontraditional OU and Hocking College student and second term AmeriCorps member, having served with Nelsonville Community Engagement last term. I've been volunteering with Raccoon Creek events for a couple years now and I'm delighted to have been offered this position!

I'm not currently enrolled, but hope to finish my bachelors degree in Wildlife Management in the next couple years (Only three classes left)! My service with AmeriCorps has provided invaluable experience both personally and professionally, which I hope to apply to a future career in wildlife conservation or restoration work. In the meantime, I'm excited to learn everything I can about watershed restoration and get my hands dirty! I'm exactly the kind of crazy that loves working outdoors in all conditions, but I'm also looking forward to learning more about the in-office side of things, like grant writing and event organizing.

My experience with field work includes my previous term as an AmeriCorps member and an OU internship studying Hooded Warblers, as well as a lifetime spent playing outdoors. I've taken classes like Ichthyology, Wildlife ID, Aquatic Ecology and Dendrology and can't wait to apply and expand on what I've studied! On most days off you can find me at home, cooking, reading or hanging out with my cat but whenever I get the chance, I like to head outdoors to hike, camp, or road trip! I hope to see you out there!



Ashley Grace holding a kick net for macroinvertebrate sampling.



## History of Lake Hope Nature Center

*Shelby Reeves– Intern at Lake Hope State Park*

The Lake Hope Nature Center is a must see for anyone visiting the area. It hosts over 3,000 guests each year providing an insight into the wildlife that lives around the lake. This nature center has gone through major changes over the years to become what guests see today. The Nature Center originally started out as a shelter house on what is now Lake Ridge Group Camp. It was brought up to its current location near the camp office in the early 1970's. After walls were built around the shelter, naturalists were able to begin teaching visitors about local wildlife through a variety of programs. As the years went on the Nature Center would feature many different local animals like box turtles, snakes, sliders, snapping turtles, fish, bees and even birds of prey.



The most recent renovations to the Nature Center took place all within the last year. Workers put on new roofing, fascia boards and gutters, painted and replaced siding, added an air conditioning unit and habitat activity board. The Friends of Lake Hope group helped cover the cost of new flooring and a new display wall for the snakes as well as more comfortable seating outside. The most recent addition is a 180-gallon fish tank which, with the help of Raccoon Creek Partnership, houses several green sunfish, long-eared sunfish, a hybrid of the two, and a grass pickerel!

With each improvement to the Nature Center naturalists can better educate those who come to visit and locals about the wildlife in the area as well as how to help preserve the park.

## Buckeye Trail

*Jean Vandervort– Marketing and Communications for Buckeye Trail Association*

Leaves and twigs, fallen from the autumnal winds, crunch under your feet as you hike along the trails. The splashes of red, orange and yellow blanket the ground, some flowing like boats down the nearby stream. The trail brings one a sense of serenity and excitement at what can be found. Mushrooms peek or stand tall from the dense pile of leaves. Birds call above your head. There's much to learn if one slows down to listen. And it is trails that open up this wonderful world that we can explore. Nature has been shown to not just help our physical health, but also our minds and emotional well-being. Some would argue it fills our souls. For what are we without some connection to the land we tread upon?

I grew up enjoying nature and hiking. It was only these past few years that I came to appreciate the effort and passion put into building and maintaining the very trails that give us the opportunity to appreciate nature. While most of the Buckeye Trail runs outside the Raccoon Creek Watershed, it has volunteers - like RCP's - who believe in this mission, this passion. Buckeye Trail Crew Work Parties and Trail adopters organize events for people to gather, working together to create the trails we love. There's the leaf-blowers and/or rakers to clear fallen leaves ahead of the benchers (benching is digging into the ground with a pulaski to level it out for easy walking), and finishers who smooth the trail out with McCleods. It takes hours at a time and several days often but the hard work builds a sense of camaraderie and friendship among those there.



If this sparks your interest, we invite you to join us at Buckeye Trail events: <https://buckeyetrail.org/events.php>

We will also be building more of the John Knouse Trail in Canaan Preserve on September 26th, 9am -2pm in honor of John Knouse, who did so much to protect the environment in Athens County. Meetup place is at Strouds Run Equestrian Trailhead (Near the end of Lake Hill Road, a small road off East Scatter Ridge Road at a sharp bend in the road. GPS coordinates: 39.3486, -82.0122).

## 2021 Fall Events

### Lake Hope Events

**Oct. 16th– 42nd Annual Fall Hike (10am):** Enjoy a 3.2– mile hike along the water’s edge, surrounded by autumn’s golden hues. Slurp up some bean soup before being shuttled back to your vehicle. Meet at the Shelter House.

**Nov. 6 & 13– Tunnel Vision (10am):** Caravan in your own vehicle from the Hope School House to the Moonville (11/6) or Kings Hollow (11/13) railroad tunnels to hear about the history of the rail line, the latest project, and plans for its future. 1-mile hike included.

**Nov. 7– Native American Storytelling and Song with Steve Free (2 pm):** It’s national Native American Culture Month! Join Grammy nominated recording artist Steve Free for an afternoon of music and storytelling to discover the rich heritage of the Native American and Appalachian cultures. Explore the interconnectedness of man, nature, and spirit with chants and songs. Meet at the Nature Center.

### Other Events

**Oct. 1 (5pm-8pm) & Oct.2 (10am-6:30pm)– Hunter Education Course :** The Hocking & Vinton Soil and Water Conservation District are holding a hunter education course at On Guard Defense Training Center in Vinton County. Participants are required to attend all sessions. Pre-registration required. Youth 10 yr old or younger must be accompanied by an adult. To register go to <http://oh-web.s3licensing.com/Event/>. Registrants must specify Event Type as “Hunter Education” and Class Activity as “Classroom”. There are only 20 spots available so don’t miss out! If you have any questions, contact David Runkle, Vinton SWCD (740) 596-5676 or Danielle Gill, Hocking SWCD (740) 385-3016. )

**Date and location to be announced \_\_\_\_\_ Raccoon Creek Partnership Annual Dinner**

Stay up to date with changes on our Facebook page: <http://www.facebook.com/raccooncreekpartnership/>.

Or e-mail [raccooncreekpartnership@gmail.com](mailto:raccooncreekpartnership@gmail.com) or [mackey@ohio.edu](mailto:mackey@ohio.edu)

Check-out RCP’s Instagram: [@raccoon\\_creek\\_partnership](https://www.instagram.com/raccoon_creek_partnership)

To help support Raccoon Creek Partnership select us as the organization you would like to support on AmazonSmile or on Kroger Community Rewards and a percent of your purchase will be donated to RCP. For more information visit [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com) or <https://www.kroger.com/i/community/community-rewards>

## Belgian Coke Oven

*Sarah Maj– RCP Treasurer*

This summer, I went on a hike to find the elusive Belgian Coke Oven Ruins in Vinton Furnace State Forest. The ovens were used to process coal into coke to fuel the Vinton Furnace. The hike took us along the forest roads which I really enjoyed. Getting up close to the different research plots was so interesting!

Eventually, we made it to the ovens and they did not disappoint. After exploring them for a bit, we walked down the hill and cooled off in Elk Fork. An out and back journey of about six miles, it was a great way to spend a sunny summer afternoon. Definitely bring a map, and I recommend doing some research online beforehand as well.



**Raccoon Creek Partnership**  
 c/o Amy Mackey  
 Voinovich School  
 The Ridges, Bldg 22

Place  
Postage  
Stamp  
Here

**Send To:**



*Printed on post-consumer recycled paper*

*Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Affairs*  
*Raccoon Creek Partnership*  
**and send to:**

*Raccoon Creek Partnership*  
**Please make checks payable to the:**  
*Your contributions are tax deductible.*

Name	
Address	
Phone	
E-mail	

*Yes, I (we) would like to help protect Raccoon Creek*

	Creek Chub	\$ 15
	Johnny Darter	\$30
	Channel Catfish	\$ 50
	Grass Pickerel	\$100
	Spotted Bass	\$500
	Paddlefish	\$1000

*A local partnership working towards conservation, stewardship, and restoration of the watershed for a healthier stream and community*