

The Rockfish Valley Foundation

Environmental Literacy Project

Founded in 2005

The Rockfish Valley Foundation (RVF) endeavors to develop greater environmental-sustainability awareness and deliver environmental-education content to residents and visitors of the Rockfish Valley. RVF provides and maintains three valued community facilities in the heart of the valley: the Rockfish Valley Trail System, Spruce Creek Park (SCP), and the Natural History Center. Through these facilities, RVF undertakes informative environment-related projects highly valued by the people of Nelson County and appreciated throughout Virginia.

EnLit History

RVF's Environmental Literacy Project (EnLit) is the heart and soul of the foundation's efforts to broaden environmental science knowledge in the region. In addition to EnLit, RVF currently has other projects in the conception or action phase, including the future preservation and development of its archaeology site. Now in its sixteenth year, RVF's education committee seeks to form stronger relationships with the local teachers, school children, and community.

From 2012 to 2018, with funds from the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, RVF completed major improvements at foundation facilities, which included the creation of the Kids in Parks TRACK Trail, the development of the Children's Nature Trail at SCP, and the construction of a bridge over Spruce Creek.

The Next Phase: More Engaging Content both Online and Off

Looking forward, the future is bright for RVF, as our funding will enable EnLit to expand its environmentally relevant programs beyond exhibits, signage, and limited school programs on water, rocks, plants, and animals. The new content will be interactive, playful, and age appropriate. The content will be published in various formats to allow for viewing online from a library, home, or classroom; via a mobile device anywhere on the Rockfish Valley Trail System or in Spruce Creek Park; in print form at kiosks throughout the park and trail system; as well as at Natural History Center exhibits.

Mobile content along trails will be accessible via a wireless network, utilizing NFC (Near Field Communication) technology—a technology similar to Bluetooth that is built into most modern mobile devices. Trail programs will be enhanced with teaching aids and amenities such as benches and pet-waste receptacles.

Content Development

RVF will develop its environmental science-content modules in partnership with its many affiliates within the environmental community, including Virginia state agency staff, local school and college teachers, Virginia Master Naturalists, Virginia Conservation Network member organizations, Garden Clubs around Virginia, members of environmental conservation groups, RVF volunteers, and the public.

Material will be designed to engage viewers and presented using best practices in graphic design, video, sound, and media. In order to standardize and clearly organize instruction for use in many formats, RVF will develop content templates with teaching objectives to be used by all content developers.

As RVF develops EnLit material, the intent is to share it with all our collaborators around Virginia and create marketing and public-relations opportunities that will attract visitors and students far and wide.

RVF Collaborator Organizations and Funders

- **Jefferson-Madison Regional Library** – In partnership with the local Nelson County branch of the library system, RVF will be installing “Storywalk” boxes along the Children’s Nature Trail at Spruce Creek Park. The boxes will display pages from children’s books and lead children on a mental and physical adventure as they follow the story from one Storywalk box to the next.
- **Nelson Middle School Ecology Club/Nelson Schools** – Study, improvements, and content development will be undertaken for Spruce Creek and its buffer.
- **William and Mary College Rockfish Watershed Geology Field Study** – Led by William & Mary Structural Geologist Chuck Bailey, PhD. Content development to produce signage, maps, a mobile app, video, and other deliverables is underway.
- **Blue Ridge School Rockfish Trail Work** – Content development to produce an environmental story with signage is underway.
- **Spruce Creek Native Plant Walk** – The Rivanna Garden Club, Piedmont Landscape Association, Emanuel Episcopal Church Foundation and others are supporting the design and plantings for Spruce Creek Park.
- **Virginia Museum of Natural History (VMNH)** - It supports the Natural History Center and its exhibits. RVF has been one of the few affiliates with VMNH since 2012.
- **Funders include Charlottesville Area Community Foundation, Bama Works Fund, Community Foundation of the Central Blue Ridge, Chesapeake Bay Restoration Committee, Schaeneman Foundation, Nelson County Community Fund, Emmanuel Episcopal Church Foundation and Rivanna Garden Club.**