



For Immediate Release

INSERT DATE

Contact: Jason Halbert, Coordinator (804) 347-5337 cell

Alan Weaver, Fish Passage Coordinator, DGIF (804) 305-4284

Garrett Russo; American Rivers Press Secretary (202) 243-7073

**Serena McClain; American Rivers Associate Director River Renewal
(202) 347-7550**

Dam Removal Grants Woman's Wish

Tye River to Flow Free Again

Charlottesville, VA— A Virginia family, is honoring the memory of their mother, by granting one of her final requests, to help restore the Tye River in Nelson County. In the 1950's, Elizabeth "Bess" Quinn, of Charlottesville, inherited a dilapidated former mill dam on the river from her father, William Knight Smiley of Lynchburg. The dam was abandoned for many years and damaged by hurricane Camille. Several years ago Ms. Quinn thought the river could be improved if the dam was removed. When the dam is completely removed, more than 20 miles of the river will run free for the first time in roughly 100 years.

"I'm certain, that somewhere Bess is smiling today," said Rebecca Quinn, daughter of the late Bess Quinn and, with her sister and two brothers, the current owner of the dam.

"Her generous gift will help restore a living river, and that's something millions of Virginians will be able to enjoy, long after all of us are gone," said Rebecca Wodder, President of American Rivers, one of two major funders of the removal. The other is the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service.

The Tye River is home to dozens of species of fish and other aquatic life, including American eels, small and largemouth bass, and native mussels. American eels are catadromous, meaning they live as adults in freshwater, return to the Sargasso Sea to spawn, and the juveniles ascend freshwater rivers such as the James and Tye to grow out to adults and perpetuate the species.

“Removing the dam will increase the passage possibilities, and hopefully the populations of all these species. It will also allow for increased access for anglers, paddlers and boaters,” said Alan Weaver, Fish Passage Coordinator with the Department of Game & Inland Fisheries and one of the leaders of the removal effort. The DGIF is conducting a before and after fish population monitoring project to document the effects of dam removal, which are anticipated to be positive.

The multi-year project is a partnership of many organizations. American Rivers, NOAA, Natural Resource Conservation Service, VA DGIF, and local non-profit Virginia Organizing Project all teamed up to accomplish this task.

“Removing this dam will give the Tye River a much needed shot in the arm,” says Jason Halbert, volunteer coordinator of the project “This really was a team effort and I especially want to thank Ben and Lisa Barber of Madison Heights. They are the adjacent property owners and they have been most cooperative in allowing the heavy equipment to access the dam through their property.” he continued.

Tourism is Nelson County’s leading industry. The project site is adjacent to the partially-completed Virginia Blue Ridge Railway Trail, a seven mile trail with four bridges over the Tye and Piney Rivers. The trail will eventually connect the James River with the Blue Ridge Parkway/Appalachian Trail if all goes according plan. The first 2 miles opened in the spring of 2005 and are very popular.

“A healthy river can be the engine that fuels a thriving community around it,” adds Wodder. “It was once a dream for the folks living near the Tye, but thanks to Bess Quinn, it will soon be a fact of life”

The Tye River/Piney River corridors are part of Nelson County’s master plan for a network of greenways, blueways and trails this project will only enhance the ability of tourists and residents to utilize and enjoy the Tye River. The opening of the Tye River to recreational boating could be a tremendous opportunity to heighten awareness of this beautiful part of the Virginia piedmont. From Crabtree Falls and the headwaters of the Tye River in the George Washington National Forest to the old rail depots to the dam site all the way down to the James River, the area is rich in cultural and ecological history.

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American Rivers is the only national organization standing up for healthy rivers so our communities can thrive. American Rivers has more than 65,000 supporters nationwide, with offices in Washington, DC and the Mid-Atlantic, Northeast, Midwest, Southeast, California and Northwest regions.

www.AmericanRivers.org

The Virginia Organizing Project (VOP) is a statewide grassroots organization dedicated to challenging injustice by empowering people in local communities to address issues that affect the quality of their lives. VOP especially encourages the participation of those who have traditionally had little or no voice in our

society. By building relationships with individuals and groups throughout the state, VOP strives to get them to work together, democratically and non-violently, for change.

www.virginia-organizing.org

The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries is dedicated to restoring American shad to the James River watershed. All of the several dams in Richmond have been breached, notched or retrofitted with a fishway to allow migratory fish access to the upper James River watershed including the Tye River.

It is the mission of the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries to maintain optimum populations of all species to serve the needs of the Commonwealth; to provide opportunity for all to enjoy wildlife, inland fish, boating and related outdoor recreation; and to promote safety for persons and property in connection with these outdoor activities. For more information, visit the Department web site at

www.dgif.virginia.gov.



DIRECTIONS TO SITE:

From North or South: Take Rt. 29 to Nelson/Amherst County Line and bridge over Tye River. Entrance to site is on northbound side on the south (Amherst) side of the river. There is a turn lane from the southbound side.

From East/West: travel to Rt. 29 either via I-64 to Charlottesville, Rt. 6, Rt. 60 and then turn toward the Nelson/Amherst County Line on Rt. 29.