

A Landowner's Guide to Spout Run

Spout Run is a truly **local** stream. Most residents know that Spout Run, including Page Brook and Roseville Run quite literally flow out of the ground in several clean and cold springs: Saratoga, Prospect, Page Brook and Carter Hall to name a few of the larger ones. Prospect Spring is the source of all public water for Boyce and Millwood, meaning that we literally have spring water coming out of our taps! And because the watershed is so small most landowners live within a stones throw of Spout Run or one of it's major feeder streams.

Local residents who have waded into the creek in the summer know it's **COLD** and clear. This is because the springs that create the stream come out of the ground at a consistent 54°F whether it's spring, summer, fall, or winter. Many residents have an appreciation for Spout Run because they've enjoyed a swim or a break from paddling the Shenandoah under the waterfall at the mouth of the stream.

Legend has it that for decades large trout have swum in the cool waters of Spout Run. It is likely that these trout were introduced to the stream by local landowners; however, we now know that they have been reproducing naturally, creating a self-supporting population of wild fish that are calling Spout Run home. If we look back in history, this shouldn't come as a surprise since many valley spring creeks like Spout Run used to be home to native Brook Trout before man came and changed the land. The land that drains to Spout Run was identified as productive, rich farmland very



soon after settlers from the Tidewater region of Virginia and Maryland came to the area. Grist mills were a common sight in the eighteenth century, with the Tilthammer Mill located right at the mouth of Spout Run. The ruins of the Mill can still be seen today. As landowners strived to improve the productivity of their land, they attempted to drain swampy, wet areas and straighten the stream. In addition, current activities like urban and residential development and livestock with direct access to the stream continue to alter the natural state of this stream. Now that we are working to turn back the clock and reduce our human impacts through the restoration of Spout Run, we are hopeful that one day, native fish like brook trout can once again thrive in the stream.

Great progress has been made in recent years to reverse the negative effects of human activities and restore Spout Run to its natural state. Conservation organizations have worked closely with landowners along Spout Run to plant trees along the stream and exclude livestock. Clarke County and the Towns of Millwood and Boyce have also made significant progress in eliminating sewage from the stream by connecting homes with failing septic systems to new sewer lines. But more work is needed before we can call the job done!

What can you do to help restore Spout Run?

Making small changes to our daily lives will make a **BIG** difference in Spout Run. Everyone who lives in the Spout Run watershed (the area of land that drains to the stream) has the ability to help restore the stream, from doing something small like picking up after your pet, or something large like restoring an eroding streambank. Below is a list of a few things you could start out with:

If you're a **homeowner** in the watershed:

- Regularly maintain and pump-out your septic system to make sure it is working properly. You can start by calling a local septic tank pumper and arranging a pump out (schedule every 3-5 years).
- Pick up your pet's waste. Be prepared by taking bags along with you on your walks.
- If you own land along the stream, plant a streamside buffer. If this is not something you have the time or the means to do, then you can save yourself time and money while helping the stream and just stop mowing to the water's edge (a 35-foot buffer of vegetation is best). You can skip the lawn fertilizer too!
- Install a rain barrel at your downspout to catch some of the water coming off of your roof when it rains. Use the water on your flower garden.
- Install a rain garden to catch and treat stormwater coming off of your rooftop and driveway. Look for low spots in your yard where water seems to collect when it rains.

If you're a **farmer** in the watershed:

- Plant a streamside buffer. You can use native grasses, trees, or shrubs. Maintaining the buffer will take some time and effort at first, but as your trees and grasses grow, they will slowly out-compete undesirable invasive plants like thistles.
- Provide your livestock with an alternative water source like a well and fence them out of the stream. If a well is impractical, you could consider installing limited access points along the stream.
- Plant cover crops and reduce tillage to keep valuable soil on your fields instead of in the stream.
- Use a rotational grazing system to prevent overgrazing and maximize your forage production.

For more information on how to get started:

- Technical and financial assistance with agricultural best management practices
Lord Fairfax Soil and Water Conservation District
website: <http://lfswcd.org/> phone: (540) 465-2424, Ext. 3
- Information about septic system maintenance, repairs and replacements
Clarke County Health Department
website: <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/LHD/LordFairfax/Offices/ClarkeHD.htm> phone: (540) 955-1033
- Expert advice on native plantings for your yard and along the stream
Shenandoah Chapter of the VA Master Naturalist Program
website: <http://www.virginiamasternaturalist.org/shenandoah.html>
- Information about how to install a rain garden and construct a rain barrel
Clarke County Natural Resources Planner
website: <http://www.clarkecounty.gov/planning/environmental-a-water-resource-information.html>

To follow the progress of Spout Run restoration efforts, subscribe to the spoutrun.org website