



In the aftermath of Tropical Storm Fred, River's Edge Park in Clyde was flooded. . . by design as an off-channel flood storage area to help mitigate damage downstream. Among the survivors of that flood were some recently added plants and an old friend: river cane.

Planted at River's Edge Park earlier this year, this native species used to grow in abundance in this area and the long, straight shafts of the plant were used historically by Cherokee people for making baskets and other objects used in everyday life.

River cane replenishes itself and spreads laterally through a thick network of rhizomes which stabilize the stream banks that it favors and prevents sediment from entering the waterway.

The advent of farming and development depleted up to 98% of the canebrakes that existed when the Cherokee Nation thrived here in their birthplace. Those that remain, the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indian, increasingly found it difficult to find enough river cane to make their traditional baskets and pass this skill to the next generation.

When the national Episcopal Church offered grants focusing on making reparations for environmental racism, Grace Church stepped up to apply for a grant on behalf of Lake Logan/Camp Henry. Not only would Lake Logan/Camp Henry serve as a place to plant river cane, the grant would augment the studies of Cherokee culture currently taking place at Camp Henry as a cooperative venture with the Museum of the Cherokee Indian. A partnership was formed with Haywood Waterways, the Revitalization of Traditional Cherokee Artisan Resources, and the Western North Carolina Climate Action Coalition through the Youth Conservation Corps to network resources and apply for the grant, which would enable Cherokee artisans to harvest the river cane when it is large enough to be cut for traditional purposes.

In July, Lake Logan/Camp Henry was awarded a grant of \$23,000, one of ten national grants given out by the Episcopal Church. In addition to planting river cane and learning about Cherokee culture, Camp Henry attendees will also learn about native pollinators that will be also be planted. Signage at the cane brakes will explain the importance of this indigenous plant that played such an important part in the history of our region and its importance today as a "riparian barrier" that keeps erosion in check and sediment out of the waterways.

Services honoring both Cherokee culture and Episcopal liturgy are planned at planting sites, as a way to make reparations for the past and give thanks for the river cane that preserves our cultures and offers protection for our waterways.

