

Severn River Association Minutes

Membership (Annual) Meeting Tuesday, June 19, 2012

The meeting was called to order at 6:54 p.m. by President Duane Wilding

Business Meeting:

Election of At-large Board Members:

The following Members were elected to serve for 2012 – 2015:

Mike Robinson
Dick Spencer
Maureen Burt
Lee Meadows

In addition, Charlotte Lubbert was elected to replace Harold Kumer, serving to 2014

Installation of Officers:

President Wilding introduced the following new Officers who were elected by the Board at the last Board meeting, to serve for 2012-2012:

John Wright.....President
Bob Whitcomb.....1st Vice President
Dinny White.....2nd Vice President
Lynne Rockenbauch.....Treasurer
Bob vom Saal.....Secretary
Tom Guay.....Communications Secretary

A Blue Heron Award was presented to The Capital Gazette Newspaper for its continued outstanding coverage of local environmental matters.

Green Heron Awards were presented to

Richard Klein for his work on the Severn River Watershed Audit which is the subject of tonight's presentation. He has donate his time and talent to hold workshops, document problems, coordinate meetings with the County and elected officials, and play a key role in developing programs for SRA to control sediment loss from construction sites and restore failing stormwater management systems. He continues to help guide the SRA to develop programs to improve water quality in the Severn River and throughout the watershed.

Eloise Ullman for initiating stormwater improvement projects in her community of Winchester on the Severn. She has planned the projects, applied for grants, and managed the work. We recognize her and others in her community for making a difference and working to improve stormwater management and water quality in their community and the River.

Ann Jackson for managing the SRA's Stormwater Action Fund grant program along with doing other projects as a Watershed Steward. She is a dedicated steward of the river and SRA recognizes her accomplishments and efforts toward helping communities and the River.

and **Lynne Rockenbauch** for all her work on SRA activities. As our Treasurer she keeps our books, writes checks, maintains the SRA member database and performs many other responsibilities. She also volunteers for many watershed projects sponsored by the SRA, and is an accredited Watershed Steward. Her father, Marshall Dowling, a past SRA president passed away this month and we also give her our deepest sympathies for her and everyone's loss.

A Special Award was presented to **Walter "Jake" Jacobs**. Jake has been a long time member of SRA and a model participant at our meetings. Over the years he's given us many ideas for programs and is also known to keep our meetings in line if needed. He continues to attend SRA meetings and give us the benefit of his wisdom and experience even though he now lives in the South River Watershed. He spent a career as a Bay Pilot who witnessed many changes to the rivers and Bay. We express our gratitude to such dedication to SRA.

Presentation: Richard Klein, founder & president of Community & Environmental Defense Services
Results of the Severn River Watershed Audit and Where to go From Here

Several examples were shown of construction sites that had not had exposed soil properly stabilized, and the same sites after our efforts yielded the desired results. Exposed soil is a major pollutant, smothering underwater grasses and other marine life. County and state law requires that it be covered with grass and mulch (or stone for driveways) within a week, and that period shrinks to three days next year. The problem is a lack of inspection personnel due to budget cuts.

We are pursuing two approaches to solve this problem – training volunteer inspectors and applying political pressure to increase inspections staff. While the political pressure may yield a long-term solution, trained volunteers have proven very effective in finding and solving problem sites, first with a friendly approach to the developer, with reporting to County staff as a backup approach if necessary (in about half of the cases).

Another failing we have begun to address in a similar fashion is the failure of stormwater management facilities, known as Best Management Practices or BMPs. Again the problem is not design or construction, but lack of inspection and maintenance. There are over 2,000 BMPs in the Severn River watershed, treating about 35% of the stormwater runoff, but at least 1/3 of them have failed to some degree, with failure rates as high as 100% in some areas. Again the solution is increased inspection and enforcement, either by volunteers or by AACounty. The law requires each site to be inspected every two weeks, but budget constraints only permit an average of one official site inspection every 6 years. In many cases, the responsible party is simply unaware of their responsibility and will readily comply once informed of his responsibility and of the failure. While this project is only beginning and requires a large network of volunteers, early results are encouraging. The best inspectors are the neighbors whose property values are most impacted by a failure, but these volunteers must be motivated and trained.

Stormwater contributes about half of the nitrates which are causing algae blooms and dead zones, slowly killing the bay. The other half is from septic systems and sewage treatment plants, which are being effectively addressed by recent legislative and budget actions. To achieve the goal of a swimmable bay by 2020, stormwater treatment must be improved, requiring both volunteer inspectors and funding increases for County inspectors. With the help of CEDS, the SRA can be instrumental in achieving that goal. The next step is to get many volunteers to attend the two upcoming (free) workshops to learn how to identify & correct problems. These will be held at the Annapolis library Saturday, June 30th, 9:30 am – Noon and Wednesday, July 11th, 9:30 am – Noon.

Now it's up to you.

For more information or to volunteer to help, visit <http://ceds.org/audit> or call Richard at 410-654-3021.

State of the Severn:

President Wilding first thanked all the officers, Board members, and volunteers who have worked so hard to make this year a good one for the SRA. He then mentioned some of the speakers featured at our monthly Board meetings, especially the speaker from Talbot County who talked about their program to have “fish sanctuaries” where aerators are used to increase the oxygen levels during periods of very low dissolved oxygen. That speaker also talked about mechanical means to remediate bottom sediments to remove oxygen depleting materials and help to restore life to the benthic community. Measures like these may be needed if we are to fully restore the River's water quality.

The SRA program Operation Clearwater continues to find high levels of bacteria at our beaches. The levels are especially high after rain events. There are also reports of other very harmful bacteria (Vibrio, etc.) that can cause serious human health problems. To better understand how often these incidents are occurring, the cases can now be reported via our website with the data being tracked by Dr. Sally Hornor.

In spite of obvious problem signs, the River seems to still give signs of hope. Although the submerged grasses are much less abundant than they once were, they continue to come back each year in many areas. SRA's oyster program is showing that oysters can do quite well at our reef and obtain good spat growth at

most locations. During my visits to our community beach, I frequently see schools of minnows, and other fish breaking the surface.

In 2002, the SRA sent out a questionnaire to get feedback from members on SRA priorities. We specifically asked if they thought septic systems and stormwater runoff were a problem. That was 10 years ago and now it is widely known that septic systems and stormwater runoff are problems. To help curb pollution from septic systems, the State now has a grant program that pays the costs for homeowners to install advanced treatment units. The State has also revised its stormwater management requirements to further reduce pollutant discharge.

So in addition to our current issues, what will be the major concerns ten years from now?

- Micro-pollutants (pharmaceuticals, personal care products, etc.)
- Nanoparticles
- Pesticides and Herbicides
- Other unknown bacteria
- Sea level rise

The SRA continues to sponsor programs that can help restore the River and watershed. Our recent work with Richard Klein is addressing the quality of stormwater runoff both from active construction sites and other residential and commercial areas. The SRA's oyster growing program is very successful thanks to the work of Bob Whitcomb and many other volunteers. Our Stormwater Action Fund continues to promote and foster projects to improve stormwater management, stop erosion, and correct problem areas.

I want to leave you with a story and a challenge. There's a parable about an older man and a young girl walking on a beach who spot thousands of fish that had washed up on the beach. The young girl runs down and starts picking them up and throwing them into the water. The old man says "why waste your time, there are so many you can't possibly make a difference". The girl replies as she's tossing one back into the water "but I made a difference to that one".

So please, let your actions make a difference to the river, even if it is one small act. If we all help out we can make a change. Go out and observe just around your house during a storm or in your neighborhood to look for problems. Connect with your subwatershed. Pick up a fish....

Meeting Adjourned at 8:45 PM.

Next Monthly (Board) Meeting: will be at 7pm on Tuesday, July 17, 2012 at a special location, the [Annapolis Maritime Museum, 723 Second St, Annapolis, MD 21403](#). It features a new film "SHELLSHOCKED: *Saving Oysters to Save Ourselves*" which describes efforts to preserve wild oyster reefs by scientists, government officials, artists and environmentalists. Chris Judy, DNR's Manager of the Marylanders Grow Oysters Program, will comment and provide an update of the MGO Program.

Respectfully submitted, Bob vom Saal