

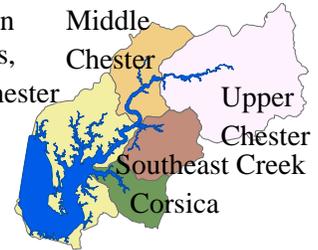
# Severn River Association Minutes

Board of Directors Meeting Tuesday, April 16th, 2013

The meeting was called to order at 7:04 p.m. by President John Wright

**Guest speakers: Ron Melcer, Watershed Coordinator Chester River Association and Barbara Sharkey, President Corsica River Conservancy, "Successes and Initiatives On the Corsica and Chester River."**

**The Chester River** Watershed is 504 square miles, 57 miles long from the headwaters in Delaware to its mouth at Love Point on the Chesapeake Bay. It has 43 named tributaries, in Kent & Queen Anne's Counties in MD and Kent & New Castle, DE.



The area is 53% Agriculture, 20% Forest, 6% Residential, 17% Water, 2% Wetland, and 2% Institutional and Other. Water Quality Concerns are primarily excess nutrients and sedimentation. The main sources of excess nutrients are Fertilizers (both Organic & Synthetic), Septic systems, Wastewater treatment effluent, and storm water run-off.

The main sources of Sedimentation are Erosion from fields, Erosion of creeks & streams, and storm water run-off.

Since more than half the area is agricultural, good relationships with Farmers are crucial to improving water quality. Although urban runoff from towns contributes to the stormwater problems, the major sources are the roadside drainage ditches which carry untreated stormwater from the road and also from the adjacent farm fields. The CRA actively promotes best management practices, such as use of the GreenSeeker, which uses an InfraRed light to determine the state of development of weeds, and automatically adjusts fertilizer to suit. They are also developing markets for switchgrass which is an excellent cover crop. Most chicken manure is now going to Pennsylvania for mushroom farm fertilizer. They are helping homeowners get funding for septic system upgrades.

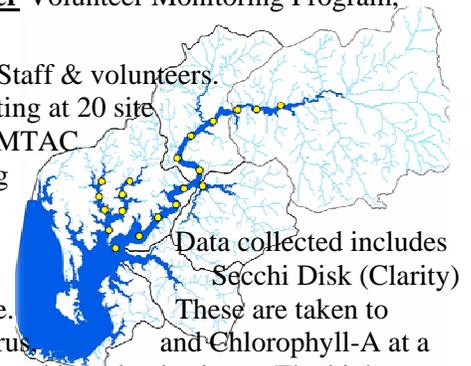
The CRA sponsors two Monitoring Programs: the **Chester River Main Estuary Testing**, covering the Tidal waters of the Chester River and its major tributaries, and the **Chester Tester** Volunteer Monitoring Program, covering Non-Tidal Creeks & Streams.

The Main Estuary Testing is done by boat in the main channel using CRA Staff & volunteers.

We cover a 15-20 mile run from Crumpton Bridge to Langford Creeks, testing at 20 site locations on 14 test dates from April to October. This is coordinated with MTAC

(the Mid Atlantic Tributary Assessment Coalition) and uses uniform testing protocols developed by the University of Maryland. The water column is tested at 1 meter increments with a Hydrolab made by Hach Mini-Sonde. water temperature, depth, dissolved oxygen, Conductivity, Salinity, and a reading. Grab Samples are also taken at 6 Sites, selected by salinity regime.

Horns Point Lab in Cambridge and tested for total Nitrogen, total Phosphorus at a cost of \$12 per test. The salinity is based on conductivity, and is not integrated into the database. The highest salinity occurs in 80% of the river. The total program cost is about \$3500/year including bottles, mailing, etc.



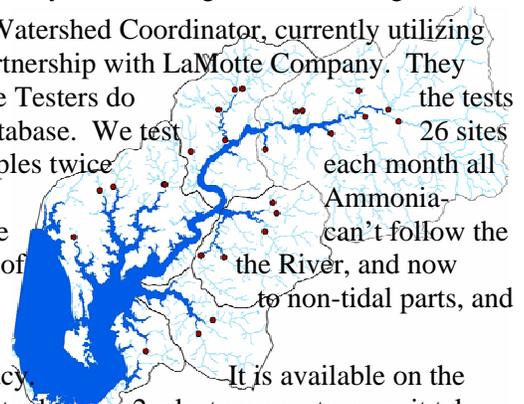
Data collected includes Secchi Disk (Clarity)

These are taken to and Chlorophyll-A at a

The Chester Tester Volunteer Monitoring Program is coordinated by Watershed Coordinator, currently utilizing 52 volunteer "Citizen Scientists", and is only possible because of a partnership with LaMotte Company. They

provide Technical Support, Equipment & Reagents, and Training. The Testers do themselves at home, then upload completed Forms directly into the database. We test 26 sites in Kent & Queen Anne's Counties. The volunteers collect water samples twice each month all

year, and analyze them for Dissolved Oxygen, pH, Nitrate-Nitrogen, Nitrogen, Orthophosphate, and Turbidity. We use separate tests, so we standard protocol. The program started in 1992, close to the tidal part of the River, and now uses over 2000 volunteer hours each year. In 2006 it was moved back to non-tidal parts, and is done from a boat in the main stem.



It is available on the Internet, and we produce an annual Report Card. The first report card took 2 wks to generate; now it takes

1-1.5 days. When the town of Sudlersville wanted to increase their effluent 3-fold, during the permit process the CRA persuaded them to improve the process so there would be no more effluent than before despite the increase in throughput. The Chester Tester data convinced them to further improve the process to reduce the total effluent.

Chesapeake Commons, a part of Heinz Corporation, assists non-profits, foundations, government agencies, and small watershed organizations to web-enable, map and network their Bay-specific geo-spatial data. They provide

training and licenses for ARC-GMS – the CRA has 100 licenses obtained through them, allowing users to download data into a map at no cost. Users can access USGS layers for overlays. For contact information, contact Ron at [rmelcer@chesterriverassociation.org](mailto:rmelcer@chesterriverassociation.org).

### **Questions:**

Dick Spencer asked if Chester Testers get much respect? Answer – the community is aware and interested. People ask them what they're doing and is it getting better. They now have business cards.

Steve Barry asked if LaMotte is helping credential testers? Yes, but through him CRA won a lawsuit against an industrial polluter by sending to certified lab. CTs are first warning – 6 years data so anomalies show up quickly.

Lee Meadows asked if the number of farmers using buffers had increased as a result of CRA's outreach efforts. Answer – yes, from 1% to 3%. Some areas can't be farmed so they plant switchgrass there. Ducks Unlimited has also helped restore wetlands for hunters while treating stormwater. QA and Kent are now leaders in cover crops.

Kurt Riegel noted that Switchgrass can be used as pellet fuel for stoves. The problem is finding a pelletizer close enough to not need extensive trucking.

**The Corsica River** Watershed is a subwatershed of the Chester River, and is completely within Queen Anne's County, MD, and has only one municipality (Centreville). It is 70 miles long and the watershed covers 25,299 acres, including 1400 acres of open water. The land use is 60% Agriculture, 25% Forest, and 10% Residential, with 5% impervious surface. The main water quality concern is algal blooms caused by excess nutrients.

The Conservancy was incorporated in 2005 to promote restoration efforts outlined in the 2003-4 Corsica River Watershed Restoration Action Strategy. That Strategy was recognized by the US EPA as one of the best in the country. Conservancy Partners include the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE), Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Maryland Department of Planning, Maryland Department of Agriculture, Queen Anne's County Department of Public Works & Planning and Zoning, Town of Centreville, University of Maryland Master Gardeners Program, Queen Anne's County Soil Conservation District, Chester River Association, Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, and the Eastern Shore Land Conservancy. The Partners meet monthly (1 representative each) in Centerville to discuss progress, needs and proposals.

Funding is provided by the Chesapeake Bay Trust, Chesapeake & Atlantic Coastal Bays Trust Fund, DNR, and grants from NFWF for Rain Gardens and the Oyster Recovery Program. Most of the DNR funds slated for the Corsica River restoration have gone elsewhere – it is hard to track where. Projects funded by grants include Bioswales, Shoreline Restorations, Water Monitoring Equipment, Website Development (the Website now has monitoring data posted), a Watershed Audit by Richard Klein (used to develop plan of action), Soil Testing (partnered with Master Gardeners – not very successful), Corsica Watershed Awareness Day (every year since 2006), and 10 Rain Gardens.

The CRC has one of most successful rain garden programs in state and possibly in the country, but has now used all of its grant money and is seeking new funding. Their first grant in 2006 was for 10 rain gardens, and the program has now sponsored 373 residential rain gardens including Kennard Elementary School and St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Centreville, and over 70 in Symphony Village, an over-55 community of closely-spaced individual homes. Many other groups have asked to use their Rain Garden sign. They build 72 signs per panel to reduce scrap. It was designed by the Master gardeners. There are many on-line templates available. Rain gardens can be built in sun, shade, wooded areas and shorelines, but 97% are in sun with a few in shade and none yet on shorelines. Most homes have the rain gardens in the back because it is usually lower than the front. The CRC provided each homeowner with a packet of information on plants, maintenance, etc. More education is needed to teach gardeners that native plants are not weeds. Experience has shown that Rain Gardens increase property values. Queen Annes County now requires all rainwater to stay on site for new development.



Restoration projects funded by grants include 2 Shoreline restoration projects (Spaniard Neck and Windy Hill Farm) done in partnership with DNR, and several Bioswales at Symphony Village. The Symphony Village contractor had actually removed topsoil & sold it.

Ongoing projects include Water monitoring (simpler than the Chester – 5 sites 1/wk tested for clarity, salinity, temperature, Dissolved Oxygen and Ph), Maryland Grows Oysters (200 gardeners), Project Clean Stream (80 volunteers this year) and a partnership with the Master Gardeners for Bay-wise Landscaping.

We also sponsor education outreach programs where master gardeners go to schools to teach about caring for the Bay. We have 3-4 Master Gardeners on our Board now. We give away 150 free trees /yr – a very popular program, and sponsor a Corsica Watershed Awareness Day each year – attendance has grown from 250 in 2006 to over 1000 people in the last 3 years and exhibitors include all of our partners plus additional educational exhibits including a 4.5”x5” Passport to Restoration booklet which educates and starts a dialogue.

Future projects include development of a Water Trail and Trail Map for the Corsica and its tributaries, development of a GIS mapping tool for overlays of various restoration efforts (starting with Chesapeake Commons), expanding our education efforts and promoting Bay-Wise landscaping and stormwater management and a Watershed Stewards program, and exploring use of floating islands in Millstream and/or Yellow Bank Branches – two areas where stormwater is difficult to control. Floating islands will at least contain & hopefully filter, taking up Nitrates and Phosphates; they don't seem to need maintenance, but only have 5 years known experience.

For more information, visit <http://www.corsicariverconservancy.org/> or contact the CRC at [Corsicariverconservancy@verizon.net](mailto:Corsicariverconservancy@verizon.net) or by phone at 410-758-8756.

### **Questions:**

Sally Hornor asked why there is only one Riverkeeper for both the Corsica and the Chester? Answer – the Corsica is a subwatershed of the Chester. The Corsica has improved in recent years, probably because of rain gardens. There are 2 Chester Testers sites on the Corsica, and many cross-ties between the two organizations. The Corsica does more extensive upstream testing.

### **Business Meeting:**

#### **Minutes of the February and March Board Meetings were Approved with no corrections:**

Ashly Ricker from the County Executive's office introduced herself. She is replacing Mark Cheney, and her focus will be to provide a direct link between the citizens in West County (District 4) and the county executive's office. She can be reached at [exrick22@aacounty.org](mailto:exrick22@aacounty.org) or at (410) 222-1241.

**Treasurer's Report** – Treasurer Lynne Rockenbauch reported balances of \$29,961.31 in the Checking account, \$45,120.43 in the Savings accounts for a Total of \$75,081.74. The Jonas Green signs were the biggest expense.

#### **Old Business:**

- ***Update on Riverkeeper*** – Bob Whitcomb. At our May 2012 meeting, one Goal adopted was to Merge with the Riverkeeper. Since then we have gained the support of Funding Organizations (who are a major reason for the proposed merger), had multiple meetings with the Riverkeeper, Enlisted the support of an experienced law firm, and recruited a mediator to ensure the merger maximizes the benefits for both parties. The Law firm is helping *pro bono*, courtesy of the Chesapeake Legal Alliance – they have merged 5 organizations on the Patapsco River into one, and have given us the benefit of that experience. Under the proposed new organizational structure, the SRA will be the governing organization, but the Board of Directors will be smaller and stronger, and there will be fewer, more responsible Officers, supervising a paid full-time Executive Director and staff. This is similar to the South River Federation. The new organization will keep the SRA name due to its history. The Board will be responsible for hiring the Executive Director; the Executive Director can hire staff and manage major projects under the oversight of the Officers who will be overseen by the Board. The By-Laws can only be changed by the Members, not the Board, though the Board can recommend changes.

New By-Laws have been drafted to define the new organization, and are now being reviewed by the Executive Committee. Since they will replace both the Constitution and the existing By-Laws, they must be approved by both the Board and the Members. The next Board meeting will be dedicated to a full discussion of them, with the hope that they will be approved (as modified) and then approved by the members at the Annual (June) membership meeting.

Duane Wilding asked How will the Riverkeeper fit under the SRA? Answer, Fred will retire and the new SRA Executive Director will hire his replacement. Bob Whitcomb will also be retiring from SRA office, though he expects to remain active. The goal is to merge in about 2 years, though Fred has no firm retirement date. We are still trying to get letter of commitment from the Riverkeeper. This merger is their goal also. The merger needs approval by the WaterKeeper Alliance. Fred has the Waterkeeper license – there is no oversight process to revoke a Waterkeeper's license. The merger depends on us getting funding to support paid staff.

Kurt Riegel said that this goal is also his goal, but he was rebuffed by Fred when he approached Fred as SRA president. While he is happy to see it progressing he is concerned that the short schedule may not leave enough

time for a thorough review by the full board, and feels the June deadline may be too soon and the member vote should be deferred to a later special membership meeting. He also wants confirmation that the books of each organization must be mutually open for due diligence. How much value is provided by the RiverKeeper? Contracts? Fundraising? We should not be slaves to an arbitrary deadline.

Dick Spencer said that Bob's work is critical to the SRA even if the merger fails – we must grow larger and more professional to survive. This is a precursor to the merger, but does not require the merger. We need to learn from the RiverKeeper also. The Executive Committee believes the May/June deadlines will work. Lee Meadows agreed that we need to update the bylaws regardless of the Merger.

Tom Guay asked what is driving this? Bob Whitcomb said the need is that the funding organizations don't support either of us because of the separation; they want to hear from a unified river representative. Dick Spencer pointed out the waste of having two water testers who don't communicate, competing restorations, etc.

Kurt said that a By-Laws review is always good, but a broad review & consensus is needed. He moved to send the By-Laws to all Board members (community Reps) for review before the meeting. Motion passed. John Wright will distribute the draft, working with Lynne to assure correct distribution.

- **Project Clean Stream** (Bob Whitcomb) – 165 volunteers cleaned 5 sites. At Luce Creek, 75 volunteers (including 50 Midshipmen) filled 1.5 dumpsters with trash, plus metal, tires, etc. Other sites were Maynadier Creek, Boulder's Way, Pitcher Springs Branch in Odenton, and Cabin Branch (joint effort with the Severn RiverKeeper. In all we collected 342 bags of trash, a boat trailer, several water heaters, etc. All had been rural dump sites for many years. The AACo Department of Public Works provided 2 trucks for 3 days. Tires and metal were separated and recycled.

- **Direct Mail Fundraising Test Letter** (Lee Meadows): The objective for this project is to test Direct Mail as a means of driving membership, funds, and volunteers. Currently we have 61 Home Owner Associations and sub-watershed Organizations and about 250 individual members. Our ambition is to grow to 2000 individual/household members, out of a total population of 112,000 in 44,000 households in the watershed. Targeted test mailings are planned for Dock Owners (800 households), Boat Owners (1000 CG registered), Large land owners (>10 acres) (200), Critical area residents (1000), and Watershed residents (1000 random), with a mix of 25% north, 50% south, and 25% west for each mailing. We are trying to avoid spending \$500 for software to get addresses from property tax numbers, and hope to use SRF's software for the test mailings. The mailing is planned for Mid June to tie in with the Oyster mailing to Dock Owners, and the start of the Boating season. The mailing cost is about \$3000 – at an average of \$40 each we need 75 new members (1.9% response) from the test mailing to break even. If anyone would like to help or has questions, please call Lee Meadows @ 410-849-3466.

- **Jonas Green Park** (Bob Whitcomb) – signs are done & they are now deciding on final precise placement.
- **Annual meeting** – (John Wright) – We need nominees for Heron awards.

### **New Business:**

- Dick Spencer asked how can we assure that the Severn gets its fair share of funding from the new Storm Water fee bill? No answer – the bill isn't signed yet.

- Dick Spencer announced that Saturday 10-2 is Earth Day and there will be a big event at Severna Park Middle School.

- Tom Guay announced that Winchester is planning a third rain garden. They have gotten AACo to fix 2 major storm drains, and are hardening the shoreline near the outfalls to reduce erosion. Chase Creek cove is silting in – it used to have 6' draft, but is now much less.

- The SRA thanked Steve Barry for all his help over the last several years. We are sorry to see him retire from Arlington Echo and the AACo school system as well as the SRA, and wish him all the best.

### **Meeting Adjourned at 9:05 PM, followed by a small party to celebrate Steve Barry's retirement.**

**Next Meeting:** will be on **May 21**, with no presentation – the meeting will be devoted to election of officers and discussion and vote on adoption of new By-Laws.

Respectfully submitted,

Bob vom Saal