

Severn River Association Minutes

Annual Membership Meeting Tuesday, June 18, 2013

The meeting was called to order at 7:15 p.m. by President John Wright. John introduced guests Councilman Dick Ladd, Councilman Chris Trumbauer, and County Executive assistant Dave Cordle. After dinner, John introduced the Guest Speaker.

Guest Speaker: Al Todd, Executive Director, Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, *“Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay - A Leader in Restoration for more than 40 years”*

The Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay is one of 5 groups dedicated to protecting and restoring the Chesapeake Bay, including the Chesapeake BayTrust, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, the Chesapeake Bay Commission, and the Oyster Recovery Partnership. Most of these groups focus their efforts on the Bay and its immediate tributaries. What sets us apart is that we are a regional non-profit working throughout the watershed, finding solutions through collaboration, consensus, & partnership. Our focus is on local rivers & streams and we are dedicated to building local capacity to act. We provide a neutral voice: we advocate but do not litigate or lobby.

In the words of hydrologist Luna Leopold, “The strength of our commitment to the health of the land and to each other is written in the quality of water we send downstream.” Our mission is to bring together individuals, organizations, businesses, and governments to find collaborative solutions, to build a strong commitment to stewardship, and to deliver innovative, broadly-supported programs that benefit the land, waters, and residents of the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

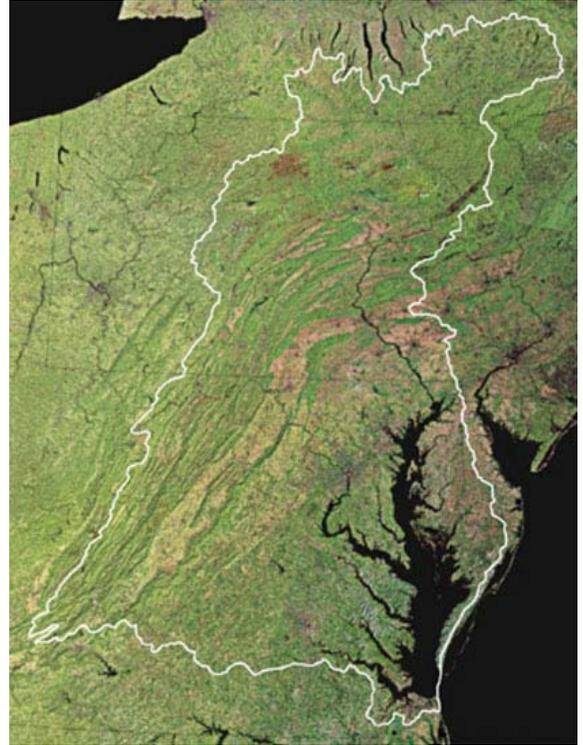
One of our goals is Engaging Communities. In 1970 there were only 40 Watershed protection groups; there are over 400 today. We help citizens and local governments gain access to policy makers and the Bay Executive Council. We help local governments come together to address local water quality issues like stormwater management. Over 350 watershed and citizen groups gather annually to learn, share experiences, and gather new ideas. Individual landowners can achieve a 50% reduction in water quality problems – we have helped thousands of forest landowners learn stewardship of Backyard Woods. We help policy makers, scientists, businesses, and citizens come together to find common ground

Another goal is connecting people to the Bay & its rivers. We have established the Chesapeake Watershed Network, and sponsor Project Clean Stream every year (SRA participates). We enable public review of river water quality by sponsoring and training Citizen scientists who post water test results on www.chesapeakebay.net. We sponsor River sojourns and Bay-themed Cultural Events. As a result of these efforts, over 4500 committed individuals regularly network and collaborate online. Citizen Scientists monitor over 40 local streams in Virginia. Over 6000 volunteers participate in stream clean-ups & restoration projects each year, and over 1 million teachers, students, and citizens gain access to the largest online resource of Bay watershed information each year.

Our third goal is Healing the land & water. We support Bayscapes & Rain Gardens, restoration of Streams and buffers, Forests & tree canopy. We help institute Green infrastructure stormwater practices, and Community-based solutions.

Over 1000 homes in DC have installed measures to eliminate stormwater runoff through the RiverSmart Homes program. DC does stormwater audits, and subsidizes homeowner’s improvements. For example, they grant \$1200 to install a raingarden, and several contractors will now install one for that price. They also subsidize replace pavement with pervious pavers, though this program is not as popular. A similar program was started in Howard County via church groups wanting to employ local youths. We helped start a program to use them to design & install rain gardens on community properties such as libraries, churches, and Community Colleges. The program also educates youths. It has been very successful – the kids are hard workers and very motivated. The kids became ambassadors, and we are now funding it for 5 years & expanding it, under the name Green Jobs.

We support the TreeBaltimore program, which is expanding tree cover to 40%. Farmers and homeowners are restoring streamside buffers in Pennsylvania with our help. Homeowners are helping to solve stormwater problems in Howard County, Harrisburg, PA and Richmond, VA with our help.



We are working to ease the homeowner's interface with the multiplicity of laws & programs, focusing on reforestation. Responsibility for watershed management has now shifted down to local governments, but many local officials have no training or background in watershed management.

New work underway includes the Green jobs mentioned above, plus promoting River Wise Communities and Local Government Watershed Leadership, Banking/Mitigation & Water Quality Trading, improving drinking water, Businesses for the Bay, and Faith-based leadership & cultural diversity programs.

For more information, please visit our website, www.allianceforthebay.org

Questions:

Does the Chesapeake Bay Institute still exist? Sally Hornor said it does not – it used to be part of JHU.

Is agriculture a major contributor to Bay pollution? Al said it is less now than when they started, because suburban land use keeps growing and now has surpassed Agricultural use. Sediment comes mostly from suburban areas. Suburban is the fastest growing usage pattern.

What will happen to the silt behind Conowingo Dam? That is a challenge. The only solution is to remove the sediment in the basin for the short term, and focus on prevention upstream for the longer term.

How does ACB prevent conflicting with other programs? There is no conflict, but some overlap. We coordinate with other groups and often sponsor joint projects. We try to find our own different niche, especially by focusing our efforts upstream rather than in the main rivers close to the Bay.

How do you measure success? A very good question. We measure organizational health & output (number of volunteers, rain gardens installed, trees planted, etc), but it is very hard to measure the value of that output. There is no good measure now. We have measured the results of our Project Clean Stream by a questionnaire assessing behavioral changes of the volunteers.

President Wright thanked Mr. Todd for an excellent presentation.

Presentation of Heron Awards: The SRA's major initiative this year was the installation of new signs at Jonas Green Park. Sally Hornor and Bob Whitcomb (both past recipients of Heron Awards) had major roles in this project, but it could not have been done without tonight's two Green Heron award winners:

- Terry Coker Peterson designed the 6 signs, selecting or creating and assembling the artwork, graphics, photos and narrative for each, and coordinated the project and applied for the grant from the Chesapeake Bay Trust. Her attention to detail and many hours of painstaking work are evident on all of the signs, and will enhance the enjoyment and understanding of the Park's features for generations to come.
- Jay Fleming contributed eleven of his exquisite photographs of Chesapeake Bay animals in their natural habitats. These photographs will provide a lasting impression on park visitors, and further the SRA's goal of educating the public about our precious ecosystem.

State of the Severn: – Many thanks to all the volunteers who helped make this year's projects successful. Bob Whitcomb coordinated our Oyster Recovery Program and the Signs at Jonas Green Park, and Project Clean Stream. Lee Meadows ran meetings in my absence and has spent many hours organizing a campaign to significantly increase our funding and volunteer base. Charlotte Lubbert helped organize this meeting and generally kept things moving, Kurt Riegel kept our website relevant, edited The Log, and spent many hours rewriting our ByLaws. Tom Guay put out many excellent press releases to publicize our activities and bring our volunteers, Bob vom Saal kept excellent minutes of meetings, helped revise the ByLaws, and chaired the Nominating Committee. Sally Hornor ran our Operation ClearWater and provided invaluable technical advice to make the signs at Jonas Green Park technically accurate. Ann Jackson managed our Stormwater Action Fund. Directors, Steve Barry, Dick Spencer, Duane Wilding, and others provided invaluable assistance in keeping our many Board and Committee meetings civil and organized despite the controversial issues being considered and the passions they aroused. Thistle Cone helped organize this meeting, checking in guests and organizing the 50-50 fundraiser raffle.

Our Goal is to once again make the Severn safe for fishing and swimming. Unfortunately the Severn is not measurably improving and still has a long way to go to achieve that goal. The community of Saefern was approached this year by a neighboring community who asked to use their pool because the river is so often unsafe to swim in. Uncontrolled stormwater is the #1 culprit, causing erosion and siltation, which smothers oysters and underwater grasses, and increases the nutrients which fuel algae blooms and deplete dissolved oxygen. There are some bright spots, and the health of the SRA is one. We are growing stronger and more effective at educating the government and the media. Passage of the Rain Tax should begin to reverse the damage from uncontrolled stormwater, and is the result of many years of patient education by the SRA and others. We have 400 Oyster growers, and 165 volunteers came out to support Project Clean Stream this year, both record numbers. The new signs at Jonas Green Park are the result of a cooperative effort of 5 or 6

groups working together, with government funding for construction and installation. So there is hope on the horizon, but much work still ahead.

Business Meeting:

Members Present: Steve Barry, Lisa Bender, John and Kim Boris, Don Carren, Robert and Divina Cloney (new members), Marty Cohen, Thistle Cone, Erik and Jeanne Elion (+Christopher), Tom Guay, Ken Hatch, Sally Hornor and Tom Caperna, Ann Jackson, Walter "Jake" Jacobs, Charlotte & Bob Lubbert, Marshall and Estella McLean (new members), Lee Meadows, John T. Menocal, Gene Milgram and Vicky Owens, Robert Murphy, Kurt Riegel, Michael Robinson, Lynne Rockenbauch, Richard Spencer, Al Todd, David and Christina Vieglais, Bob and Lorraine vom Saal, Bob and Ann Whitcomb, Duane and Stevie Wilding, and John and Karen Wright. A quorum was present.

New Officers:

The new SRA Officers elected 5/21 by the SRA Board for 2013-2014 were introduced:

- President – Lee Meadows
- 1st Vice President – Mike Robinson
- 2nd Vice President – Dick Spencer
- Treasurer – Lynne Rockenbauch
- Secretary – Bob vom Saal
- Communications Secretary – Tom Guay

Election of At-Large Directors

Bob vom Saal, chair of the Nominating Committee, reported that at the last (5/21) Board Meeting the following five nominees were approved for the four vacant At-Large Director positions: Don Carren, Lisa Bender, Bob Whitcomb, Kurt Riegel and Tom Guay. After some discussion about the pros and cons of having an election to pick four of the five, Kurt Riegel withdrew his name, and the other four were elected unanimously.

Introduction of New By-Laws (Presentation by Bob Whitcomb)

A Pro-bono outside review of our Constitution and By-Laws found that they were out of date, cumbersome, and may not even comply with current Maryland law in some ways. A committee was therefore formed to propose new By-Laws to replace both existing documents, in order to adopt a modern organizational structure, enable streamlined decision-making, fund-raising, and staff management, and provide a stronger base for building a staffed organization.

The proposed new organizational structure includes a smaller, stronger Board of Directors, fewer, more responsible Officers, a paid Executive Director, and paid Staff. The four Officers are elected and supervised by the Board, and may be paid at the Board's discretion. The Board is reduced from the current unwieldy size of about 80 or more, most of whom are not active, to a number between 8 and 16, with the exact number to be determined by the Board. Officers are no longer also Directors, but the President and Treasurer can vote at Board meetings. This will support strong fundraising and the hiring of an Executive Director who can hire staff and manage major projects.

The new By-Laws were presented to the Board on 5/21/2013, discussed, and adopted subject to ratification by the Membership at this meeting, since they replace the Constitution. The Board recommended ratification tonight.

Motion to Adopt New By-Laws

Kurt Riegel made the following motion: "As recommended by the SRA Board of Directors, I move that the SRA Membership adopt new Bylaws that revise, consolidate, and replace the old constitution and bylaws as the sole governance document for the Severn River Association." The motion was seconded by John Menocal and passed unanimously with no discussion.

Nominations for New Board Membrs

Since the adoption of the new By-Laws eliminates the existing Board and new Directors can only be elected by the membership, Bob vom Saal nominated the following slate of former Directors as new Directors: Don Carren, Lisa Bender, Bob Whitcomb, Kurt Riegel, Tom Guay, Ken Hatch, Steve Barry, Sally Hornor, Charlotte Lubbert, Maureen Burt, Miriam Mellin, and Mike Robinson. Seconded by Bob Whitcomb ?? Steve Barry asked if Mike Robinson is eligible since he is 1st VP. Bob vom Saal responded that Mike would not accept nomination for VP at the next Board meeting, and Dick Spencer, Lee Meadows, Bob vom Saal and Lynne Rockenbauch were not nominated because they intended to accept nominations for the four new offices. All were elected unanimously.

Meeting Adjourned at 8:58 PM.

Respectfully submitted, Bob vom Saal