

The Severn River Association, Inc.

The Annual meeting was **called to order** at 7:03 PM by outgoing President Lee Meadows. About 50 Members were present including most Officers and Directors.

Upcoming Events:

This Saturday we will sponsor the Historical Tour of Belvoir – Great Estate on the Severn, with tours starting at 1 – 2 and 3 p.m. Belvoir is the largest estate on Severn, created in 1664, and the tour includes slave quarters and the Arboretum. Tickets online at Severnriver.org or at gate - Rockbridge Academy (Sign across from Eisenhower Golf Course).

Tuesday, July 21st at 7:00 p.m. at the DNR building we have an educational meeting featuring Dr. Kennedy Paynter an Associate Professor at the University of Maryland. He works the Center for Environmental Science and will speak about the Health of Severn River Oysters.

Thursday, June 25rd at the Pip Moyer Auditorium – 273 Hilltop Lane (in Truxton Park starting at 6:30 p.m. we will host a meeting discussing the New Forestry Ordinance for Annapolis, triggered by Crystal Springs development proposal. Alderman Jared Littman will explain how the alternative bills being proposed will conserve forests and wetlands when a property is being developed in Annapolis. All are invited. The Forum is jointly sponsored by: Severn River Association and Annapolis Neck Peninsula Federation.

Heron Awards

A **Green Heron Award** is Given to those who have made major contributions to the health of the Severn River in the past year or two. This year’s recipient is Tom Guay.

Tom has served as a champion of the Severn for many years. He is best known for serving as SRA’s Director of Communication. Mr. Communications has worked tirelessly preparing stories and press releases to promote and educate all residents of our watershed. Most recently he has created our presence on Facebook, keeping it updated daily. He is now creating our River Rat patrol to stop environmental violations on our River. Tom noted that our fleet now consists of two boats – a small RIB and a 13' Boston Whaler built in 1967 and now being refurbished (by him with a little help).

A **Blue Heron Award** recognizes many years of contributions to the Severn River’s health and improvement This Years Recipient is Don Carren.

Don is a long-time resident on the shores of Whitehall Creek, and has been a primary leader of SRA’s oyster restoration project through DNR’s MGO Program. He has organized the annual distribution of oyster spat, as well as annual planting of oysters for the Whitehall growers. He has served on the SRA Board of Directors for five years. We are proud to honor Don with our highest award, the Blue Heron, recognizing a long-term commitment to the Severn River Watershed.

SRA Accomplishments in 2014-2015

This past year we led the Severn Headwater Coalition to stop the runoff from Interstate 97 and Route 32 interchange. This major effort was started by Tom Robinson and is now led by Charlotte Lubbert. It has successfully prodded the several government entities responsible to move up the time frame for correcting this major sediment source, from its original 10-year goal to 2-3 years to complete the restoration.

We provided design grants for stormwater retention at five member home owner associations, and helped three communities secure county funding for installation of large raingardens or bio-retention areas to stop stormwater runoff.

We planted over 100 trees in our watershed to stop stormwater runoff

We raised over 1500 cages of oysters at members’ docks to plant in our river. This is over 30% of the total oysters raised in the entire Chesapeake Bay watershed.

We hosted 13 educational meetings on topics related to the Severn’s health. This major effort was spearheaded by John Wright.

Election of Directors

Lee introduced Bob Whitcomb, head of the nominating committee to introduce the board candidates. Bob nominated the following candidates:

- ▶ Tom Guay for a second three-year term
- ▶ Kurt Riegel for another three-year term
- ▶ John Wright for a three year term, replacing Bob Whitcomb as the SRA Rep for Saefern
- ▶ Betsy Love for a three year term. Betsy is a former officer of the SRA and we are pleased that she is again able to devote her energy and skills to helping the SRA achieve its goals. She is presently directing a \$150,000 restoration project.
- ▶ Andrew Muller for two years remaining on the position vacated by Rusty Gowland. Dr. Muller is our featured speaker tonight and brings us a wealth of knowledge and experience about water quality.

Lee then asked if there were any nominations from the floor. There were none, and the above candidates were unanimously elected.

Lee then introduced the new Officers recently elected by the Board:

Lynne Rockenbauch, President, is a Master Watershed Steward and the immediate past Treasurer of the SRA. She has been a lifelong active volunteer on the Severn, and recently helped her community of Ben Oaks secure a major county grant for storm water management. She will be the second generation in her family serving as president of the SRA – her father is Marshal Dowling, a past president. We wish that he had lived to see her take on this new challenge.

Lynne then introduced the other three officers:

- Rusty Gowland, Vice President, is also a Master Watershed Steward. He served as a Director of the SRA for this past year, and has spearheaded the effort to define the new SRA communication strategy. He has also designed and built storm water projects in his community of Linstead.
- Lee Meadows, Treasurer, is the immediate past President of the SRA, and is also a Master Watershed Steward.
- Bob vom Saal – Secretary, will serve a second term as Secretary and is also a Past President of SRA.

Lynne thanked Lee for his hard work as President, and also thanked John Wright for his service as Vice President and his work organizing our educational meetings. She also noted that Rusty Gowland, our new VP, regretted being unable to attend this meeting due to a family event.

New Business

There was no new business.

Scheduling Meetings

The next Board meeting will be the 6/18 Annual Board meeting at 2:00-4:30 at the usual location

Business Meeting was Adjourned at 7:25 PM.

Educational Presentation

The speaker tonight is Professor. Andrew Muller of the US Naval Academy. Dr. Muller holds PhD & Masters degrees in Oceanography from Old Dominion University. He regularly monitors the health of the Severn and South River using some of most sophisticated equipment in the nation, and does regular waterway assessments for D.O.D across the country. He also teaches midshipmen about our oceans and waterways.

Dr. Muller gave a spirited, exciting presentation on the state of the Severn River. He explained how the Severn River is in rather poor shape, especially during the summer, due to a growing dead zone, particularly in Round Bay, that chases fish out of the river and kills aquatic life that can't move around – oysters and SAV (grasses). The dead zone is created by explosive algae blooms that feed on the overloading of pollutants from leaking septic systems, leaking sewer pipes, pollutant-laden storm water and pollutant-laden sediment)

Dr. Muller's research is based on unique state-of-the-art monitoring data he collected using a remote-controlled submarine loaded with data collection capabilities. he also linked this with satellite and other continuous monitoring data collection devices.

The key problem is low-dissolved oxygen that is suffocating fish and aquatic life. This is NOT caused by inflow from the Susquehanna River. The problem is coming from the CREEKS! Yes, the problem comes from all the communities living in the watershed, from our leaking septic and sewer systems along with storm water runoff from lawns, roads, parking lots etc that dump pollutants into the river. The dead zone phenomenon is now lasting nearly all summer long and for physical

reasons in the Severn River, Round Bay cannot flush the pollutants out, so they remain all summer and get worse and worse and worse and

Also hurting the Severn River's ability to cleanse itself are our beautiful cliffs. As all sailors know on the Severn, the bluffs block the wind and the wind is a critical factor in helping flush Round Bay and the entire river. This is totally different from the South River, which has only low bluffs and is much more windy than our scenic Severn River.

To help the Severn, to make it more resilient to surviving pollutant overloads and dead zones, Dr. Muller says we need to fix the creeks first. Control storm water runoff, fix leaking septic and sewer so we can encourage more SAV and oysters etc to provide a natural cleansing capability to our river.

As we stand now, 2015 is shaping up to be a horrible year for the Severn River. El Nino effect will bring hotter than normal weather this summer and the heat will provide the incubator that will encourage gigantic algae blooms.

There is also a link between the arrival of sea nettles and poor health of the river. Sea nettles like heat and salinity and these are the very conditions that create the dead zone expansion AND the arrival of the VIBRIO infection risk.

We also need to better monitor restorations to decide which should be re-engineered. For example, Step Pool filtration systems can trap road salt and other pollutants, then release them more slowly. It is not clear if the longer exposure to lower levels is better than a shorter exposure to higher levels.

While the bad news is that the health of the river is not improving, the good news is that it is not getting markedly worse. The corrective actions being taken appear to be ameliorating the effects of increased development.

In summary, there is much more work to be done, and some hope that the river’s health will improve.

Respectfully submitted,

Bob vom Saal