

The Severn River Log



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Next Meeting: The Board of Directors will meet on Tuesday, Oct. 15, at 7:00 p.m. in the Lobby Conference Room of the Department of Natural Resources Building, 580 Taylor Avenue, in Annapolis. Guest speaker Steve Ailstock will present the results of his kudzu eradication project in Arnold.
Nature Walk: On Saturday, Oct. 5, from 9:00 a.m. to noon, we will visit Carol Jelich's property on Ridout Creek for a workshop on creating a backyard wildlife habitat. Learn how to enhance your yard with native plants and fight the battle against invasive and non-native species. Address: 682 Black Forest Road; call Carol for directions: 410-757-8158

It's the Little Things...

by Steve Carr

Summertime, and the living is easy! Summers along the Chesapeake Bay are a time of great plenty. The Bay is bursting at its seams with life. We have corn, crabs, and peaches, and the rich abundance often seems almost limitless.

Summer is when most of us get out on the Bay and see it up close. Everyone living in the watershed probably manages to get on, or at least next to the water, at some point during the summer. As a result, the images of summer are the ones that stick in our minds and leave lasting impressions. Sailing at sunset. Crabbing off a pier. Dodging the sea nettles. Catching an evening concert at the Inner Harbor or the Annapolis City Dock. Sitting in beach traffic. These are the things we will always remember. But packed inside each of these treasures are little scenes that almost go unnoticed, but which make our experiences so much richer...

Rain bait is one of my favorites. Have you ever noticed when the Bay is calm there are these little isolated circles on the surface that churn like rain? It's a perfectly sunny day and suddenly the water twinkles with excitement.

Editor's Note: This is Steve Carr's last regular essay for The Log. For an appreciation of his evocative contributions over the years, see Duane Wilding's President's Corner column on page two. And watch for Steve's writing to appear soon in the Bay Times!



"The piercing *sckrawk* of an angry blue heron. . ." One of the Bay features so common we take them for granted. Photo by David A. Colburn

I was standing on the Weems Creek Bridge the other morning and there were about 10 such circles, each about the size of a VW Beetle, dotting the surface. What I was seeing were schools of bait fish — rainwater killifish, sheepshead minnows, mummichogs, and silver sides — one-inch-long fish swimming together and being driven to the surface by the larger fish, such as bluefish and rocks.

It's a tough life if you are a little fish living in the Chesapeake. Everything wants a piece of you. When a big fish swims into a school of baitfish it drives them into a frenzy. But they instinctively stick together, knowing it's harder to get at a tightly packed group. They rise as one to the surface in their desperation to avoid the slashing teeth of the predator fish and their escape dance turns the surface of the water into a glittering show that resembles a mini rainstorm.

We may not notice the rain bait, but the seagulls do. The laughing

gulls and terns hang out on the pilings, like street toughs waiting for some trouble. When they see the baitfish churn the water's surface they launch, usually landing right in the middle of the action, where they snatch a fish with a quick stab of their sharp beaks. It's easy pickings.

I never tire of watching this elaborate life and death struggle; the big eat the little, and the birds always get the scraps. There's a lesson there, I suppose, or at least an allegory of sorts. Bay birds are so much a part of our surroundings that we pretty much take them for granted:

Cormorants staking out the channel markers, sitting like frozen sentinels, fanning their wings and dozing in the sun.

The piercing *sckrawk* of an angry blue heron at night as it takes to the air to avoid an approaching raccoon.

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President's Corner

Work Groups Show Promising Cooperation

In the past several months I have been participating in two work groups. Anne Pearson from her Economics of Place summit started one of the groups, The Leadership Coalition. She has an article adjacent to this column giving a brief update on this group, which consists of a mix of developers, conservationists, and County representatives.

David Wallace previously attended these meetings, so I am still getting a grasp on the group's dynamics. But I already appreciate that Anne has organized such a group to promote redevelopment and save precious undeveloped land in the County.

Another group just forming is the Watershed Network, which seeks to combine efforts and programs from all the local environmental and conservation organizations. Evan Belaga spearheaded the need for this group, which is under the aegis of the Lower Western Shore Tributary Team's Chairperson, Ginger Ellis. The first large meeting to bring in all interested organizations was held Sept. 18.

River Keeper – It was previously announced that the South River Federation had received funding for a River Keeper. *The Capital* subsequently reported that several rivers in this area were getting River

Keepers, including the Severn. This was quite a shock to learn.

Upon inquiring to the Waterkeeper Alliance, we were informed that Fred Kelly had applied to be the Severn River Keeper. As you may recall, Fred had offered many months ago to raise funds for the SRA to pay the salary of an Executive Director or other SRA staff. His offer also assumed that he would be the Executive Director. This proposal became controversial and was essentially tabled, because it was near the end of David's term as president. The matter awaits completion of a Business Plan, which would address SRA goals and objectives and fund raising so the mechanism and protocol for having paid staff would be clearly established and approved by SRA members.

This whole affair has now taken an interesting turn in that Fred and others have formed another group, the Chesapeake Rivers Association, and have applied for 501(c)(3) status to allow receiving funding and also become the Severn's River Keeper. Naturally, SRA members have many questions, such as how will the SRA interact and work with this new group?

We hope to have answers soon and be able to present a proposal to SRA members on how the two organizations will interact. This, of course, should benefit SRA in that a River Keeper will now be watching over the Severn River and can report violations and other problems.

Thanks to Steve Carr—As many of you know, Steve Carr is a previous SRA President and for many years has written the front page feature article for *The Log*. Steve recently informed us this month's contribution will be his last. His articles have always been informative, enlightening, and entertaining and reflected his keen knowledge of the River and its environmental and social issues. Not only did he dutifully write his articles, but over the years he has participated in many programs and addressed issues effecting the Severn River. It would be a long list if I were to list his many contributions.

We will truly miss his articles and we offer Steve the utmost thanks and appreciation for his efforts and dedication to the Severn River over the last many years.

—Duane Wilding

Editor's Note: See the Correspondence section of the newsletter for the text of the new rivers organization Statement of Purpose.

News & Updates

Guiding Growth Is Aim Of Leadership Coalition

By Anne Pearson
Alliance for Sustainable Communities
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Last fall's Summit V, the *Economics of Place*, prompted the Alliance to pull together a potential political constituency of influential developers, heads of community associations and County staff, to take up growth issues. For instance, Summit speakers, Chris Miller, Piedmont Environmental Council, and Ed Risse described Loudoun County's successful economic studies that resulted in down-zoning, or down-planning, the countryside.

Ed's maps showed that predicted growth could be accommodated in comfortable densities by redeveloping areas such as single story malls with their accompanying sea of parking. Adding two stories to the one-story mall, for office and condos, a parking garage and converting asphalt to tree shaded central gathering places and bike paths is implemented in some areas.

Chris Miller walked with me and my documentary filmmaker brother around Balston, the "urban village" poster-child, in Arlington, explaining how that entire area had been redeveloped over the past 30 years, using such techniques.

So, the Leadership Coalition, blessed by Bob Walker and staffed by Ron Bowen and Ginger Ellis, has met monthly since last November to reach a consensus that a similar redevelopment scenario in Anne Arundel County could take pressure off undeveloped land. Recently, Rich Josephson, Ron Bowen, and Ginger Ellis met with Dinny White, Don Yeskey, Adam Gordon, and me to discuss potential redevelopment sites.

Dinny is a planner by training and was one of the dedicated members of the Parole Growth Management Committee. Don Yeskey has served on many County task forces, including the General Development Plan, as head of the Generals Highway Council of Civic Associations. Adam Gordon is a very effective staff member of the Baltimore Regional Partnership. Major developers, represented by Tom Pilon

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Be Careful What You Wish For

by Margie Whilden

When I was a kid it was common practice to rip out submerged aquatic vegetation, or seaweed, as we called it. It was creepy walking through that stuff. You couldn't see your feet and a crab might bite you or you would step on a toadfish. Many people in the neighborhood, my dad included, pulled a bed-spring or some other contraption back and forth over the weed beds to up-root the plants and create a swimming area. Too bad we couldn't hire a flock of mute swans back then, but who knew?

These areas were generally small and the seaweed grew back very quickly, so the process was repeated year after year. It might even have been good

for the beds, sort of like pruning. There did not appear to be any lasting damage because seaweed was just that: a weed from which we could not see much benefit. Never mind that my brother and his band of swamp foxes, who didn't mind running through the weed, caught their best fat crabs in these grassy areas.

You didn't bait crabs to catch them, you chased them. You would push a net on rollers through the weeds, chasing down crabs. The water was so clear over those beds that you could spot the crab and chase it down. Now, that was recreational crabbing! But, when I was a kid, the crab was no big deal, not the King of the Chesapeake like it is today. Back then, rockfish and oysters were King, so it is not surprising that weed beds were not revered as they are now.

As crabs supplanted oysters as the main cash crop, and less weed was around, due to the catastrophic impact of Hurricane Agnes, we began to see utility in sea weeds and a connection between weeds and the health of the fishery. Another, perhaps little-known fact is the State-run practice of killing seaweed. That was only 30 or so years ago. In fact, the statute to permit the harvest of SAV remains on the Maryland law books, although I doubt if a permit is still available.



Too often, land owners who acquire their "Ponderosa" of beautiful natural shoreline want to shore it up with impervious stone. What if the whole river could look again like Winchester Pond, above?

Photo from *Maryland Scenic Rivers: The Severn*

Apparently, through its wrath as a hurricane, nature eliminated the need for a full-blown weed eradication program. Unless you are pushing 50 or beyond, you probably do not remember what healthy seaweed beds look like, or the pain in the neck they can be to some people. In my wiser middle age, I see the error of my youth and very much appreciate a lush bed of SAV.

Recently I was taken on a short tour of the St. Mary's River looking for terrapin activities, and was amazed and delighted by the floats of SAV. So thick were these areas that to approach the beach, we had to kill the motor about 400 feet offshore and row in. It was magnificently nostalgic, looking down through that vegetation and seeing all those critters.

But it dawned on me, as I worked up a sweat paddling to the shore, that not everyone would appreciate this grassy garden and that a full-blown SAV recovery might actually be a problem for many neophytes on the shoreline. Hmm, there's a Chesapeake Conundrum.

The matter became more obvious during a recent visit with a resident of Worcester County on the back bay behind Ocean City. As we strolled along the shoreline discussing death, taxes, and erosion, he complained of the piles of dead, stinking, fly-infested widgeon grass. It's been a great

year for SAV. Widgeon grass breaks off naturally and drifts ashore. After several tides the dead or detached SAV piles up and creates mats sometimes a foot and half thick along what was once a sandy beach. That stuff stays there for the rest of the summer, stinking to high heaven.

If you try to walk on it while it's wet, you'll sink like quicksand. Aside from that, this is a good thing. The owner pointed out that boat traffic is nearly non-

existent in this area because of SAV, shallow water, and a narrow channel difficult to navigate. And that includes jet skis! That SAV bed was so thick that not even a jet ski could take it.

The resident agreed that not many in the tidewater can remember what a lush weed bed looks like. They are coming back in a few areas, such as Assawoman Bay and the St. Mary's River, neither of which have the degree of development which has built up in the Severn. Neither area has the boat traffic yet, which is perhaps a reason the SAV has a chance for a foothold.

The same can be said for oyster bars. Can you imagine what we would have if all those oyster beds, we have been cultivating and nurturing lived? If not plagued by disease and fluctuating conditions, we could have oysters as big as a catcher's mitt. We would have lush oyster reefs breaking the surface at low tide, providing natural wave attenuation . . . and potential navigation hazards.

It's like deer, rabbits and swans: A few are pretty to watch, but if you get a mess of them near a populated area you've got trouble in River City. Too many are downright creepy.

Another example of the "too much of a good thing" conundrum is rockfish recov-

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It's the Little Things...*continued from page one*

A little green heron, standing motionless on a log, waiting patiently for an errant fish to come too close.

Greater-black-backed gulls the size of small dogs perched atop the light poles on every bridge.

Crows being chased by angry mockingbirds.

The high-pitched whistle of the ospreys overhead as they soar above the river hunting for a nice, big fat fish.

So much of Bay life is about hunting. Eat or be eaten. And in the summer, this struggle reaches a fever pitch. Most of us either don't notice, or are too busy hunting — for a rockfish, spot, perch, or blue crab. Everything out there is something else's meal.

Summertime also means camp for many children. These days, camps put a lot of emphasis on teaching children about the Bay. I was at the Sherwood Forest Boys & Girls Camp the other day and it was a hoot to watch the kids trying to handle a long, unruly seine net, the poles of which were bigger than the kids. They stood hip-deep in the Severn as they let the net drift parallel to the beach; then they slowly walked toward shore, herding everything in their path.

This is one of those really eye-opening experiences in life because, when you're swimming around in the soupy water of the Severn, it's hard to imagine that there's anything really in there. Visibility is nil and you hardly see any wildlife at all. That is, until you take a seine net like these Sherwood Forest kids were doing. When the net comes out of the water it is literally teeming with life. There are all those little baitfish I was talking about earlier, and so much more.

There are Atlantic needlefish that look like baby alligators. Sunfish flop about like little rainbows. A bright green eel totally freaked the kids out as each child tried unsuccessfully to grab hold of the slippery devil and return him to the river. The hog chokers were a huge hit, as they puffed themselves up defiantly like sea monsters. The square brown mud crabs were mistaken by the kids for "baby blue crabs". And the sea nettles grossed out everybody. Watching anyone — but especially small children — handling sea nettles is always amusing, but valuable lessons are learned.

...when you're swimming around in the soupy water of the Severn, it's hard to imagine that there's anything really in there.

"They can't sting your hands, so always pick them up with your hands."

That one seine net's bounty taught more lessons to those young children than a zillion books and stories. It created its own magical tales that those kids will remember for a lifetime. And it taught them the most valuable lesson of all: The Bay is chock full of life; life in all shapes and sizes. And just because you can't see it doesn't mean it isn't there, or doesn't matter. Everything matters a lot.

But it's not just the wildlife of the Bay that turns our heads.

The sunsets of summer are golden. Think about it. The rest of the year, our sunsets drip into the water like a strawberry ice cream cone, turning the clouds hot pink and conjuring up visions of the Almighty. I'm sure there's a logical explanation for this, something no doubt to do with refracted light and the fact that the sun is higher in the sky during summer. But the fact is that summer sunsets are almost blinding. The water radiates with a hot, golden glow that is almost mesmerizing, and the clouds are an afterthought. There is only the fierce reflection of saffron light upon the rolling waves that sparkle like diamonds — billions and billions of diamonds. And the sun itself is usually ringed by a hazy corona that hurts the eye.

Summer is tough. It's hot. It's humid. These days it's dry as a bone. And our industrial strength, auto-dependent lifestyles have interjected a brand new player into the summer hit parade: "code orange, bad air days". We're learning new words like "ozone depletion" and "non-attainment areas". But therein lies a new lesson for us all:

Everything is connected. All the little things that seem to be random — the power plant belching smoke in the Ohio River Valley, and the daily traffic jams around the Washington Beltway — they all are linked to one another, whether we see the connections or not.

Sediment runoff from development chokes the underwater grasses, which die off, leaving the little fish with no place to hide, so they get eaten; the big fish die, because there's nothing left to eat; the car exhaust turns to nitrogen when it rains, and the algae grows thick

and uses up all the oxygen in the water; the bulkheads and revetments close off the beaches so there's no place for the terrapins and horseshoe crabs to lay their eggs; the bottom falls out of the clam and oyster fishery, so all the waterman harvest what's left of the crabs. From land to air to sea, it's all inextricably interwoven together like a rich tapestry.

Summer is the best time to scope out the Bay; to see and smell the glorious connections; and to let our memories remind us of how much we have to lose. The children sense this truth the first time they stare into the wriggling depths of a seine net. It's the little things that matter most to those who have seen the least. And therein lies an invaluable lesson for us all.

EASTERN MOUNTAIN SPORTS

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Careful What You Wish For... *continued from page three*

ery. In the mid-1980s, the fishery was closed to all harvests. In a concerted sacrifice and a hefty price tag picked up by all of us, the fishery quickly rebounded.

By 1992 or thereabouts, the striped bass fishery had recovered sufficiently to allow a highly regulated harvest and recreational season. Also that year, the Chesapeake experienced its worst crab season on record. Some blamed an over-abundance of rockfish for the decline. Rockfish with their bellies chock full of baby crabs were presented to authorities.

But the science of stomach content analysis proved otherwise. Sampled rockfish did not have large numbers of crabs in their tummy. But the perception persisted. You can't win. Here we had a success story of a fishery recovery and the problem, according to some people, was that we got too much of a good thing and threw the ecosystem off its orbit.

The example that beats them all, although it breaks my heart to retell it, is the one from a waterfront property owner, a greenhorn from the big city. This guy moves into one of our few remaining undeveloped areas and builds his Ponderosa. Whether he needs it or not, he proceeds to encrust the entire shoreline with neat, uniform rock revetment. He tells me how he thinks watermen are catching all his crabs and resents them fishing so close to his property because it wakes him up too early.

He complains that he doesn't bother using a crab pot anymore because it gets so full of terrapins that it floats, when those darned turtles drown in his pot and puff up and stink so bad. Can you believe it? Here we are in the Severn, desperate to have a restored terrapin population so we can simply watch them, and this guy is griping about having too many! How do you factor that one into the restoration equation?

Therein lies the real solution. The authorities certainly recognize it, but can't figure out how to pull it off. The experts know that we have to have integrated resource recovery, or we end up with a feast or famine situation. Truly integrated recovery includes society, with all our perceptions and expectations, right or wrong.

So, the counsel for the month is: Be careful what you wish for. There are no answers here, only piecemeal subjective chronicles and more questions. Are we ready for real restoration? How much SAV, oysters, rockfish, and terrapins are we prepared to deal with? When it comes to real or adequate habitat restoration, maybe we in

the Severn and surrounding areas should be better informed of what we are getting into.

What exactly do we mean by a fully restored river? When the Severn reaches its "restored" status, does that mean we can open it up to commercial fishing again? Not likely. Maybe we should be selecting areas along the Severn and elsewhere along the tidewater where we have the best biological potential for restoration success and the cultural tolerance for successful restoration.

The SRA has the funds to do just that, but we are going to complete this task under a different microscope? The question isn't asked too often, if at all, but how much restoration is enough or how good does it have to get? One thing is perfectly clear:

For the lack of the cultural fortitude to sustain it, some areas are not capable of having a complete and fully restored ecosystem. Restoration requires sacrifice of the status quo.

We do not have consensus. We have scientifically defined targets for water quality that are fairly well accepted and measurable. Let's say we reach those water quality goals; theoretically, all other measurements of restoration should fall in line, including abundant fish, oysters, and grass beds.

Now, overlay the increased population of the Severn River where we have exponential increases in boat traffic, erosion control projects, piers, recreational fishers, and waterfront housing. Are all these competitors going to simply retreat? We may not be prepared for the downside of successful restoration. Let's think about our vision for restoration, then try to imagine how all that can come together.

For the lack of the cultural fortitude to sustain it, some areas are not capable of having a complete and fully restored ecosystem. Restoration requires sacrifice of the status quo. Much of the State has already been sacrificed to human occupation and we can't have our cake and eat it too. The Severn River may be a prime example of one of those areas.

Restorationists, don't despair; the Severn is not selling out and throwing in the towel on recovery. We have miles to go and few good captains to lead us. We must strive for cleaner waters through better control of input nutrients and enhanced natural treatment systems, such as effective septic systems, healthier wetlands along the shorelines, more natural beach strands, pockets of oyster beds, and gardens of lush grass beds.

The Hidden Pond site and surrounding area is an ideal example of what I mean. You have the total package there, biological and cultural. You have adequately treated effluent because of the upstream Howard's Branch Project; the surrounding area channelward of the Pond site is safe from heavy boat traffic; natural SAV beds are growing nearby, adjacent shorelines are poised by innovative techniques, and the first oyster recovery site is close at hand.

Fish and turtles are standing by waiting and when we build it, they will come. (One of those turtles dropped by during a recent site visit, literally swimming right up to us, as if to say, "Let's get on with it." If that's not a sign, I don't know what is.) Most important is community commitment.

Access to the Howard's Branch project is graciously provided by a single landowner. Access to the Hidden Pond site is granted by the Down's neighbors. Sherwood Forest residents encouraged a different approach to erosion control.

We have our cultural tolerance calculated and in the bank. The Hidden Pond area is a good comprehensive project. However, since the resource was sacrificed years ago, the human occupation along other points in the river may not tolerate a fully restored ecosystem. It will make no sense to restore SAV in an area of heavy boat traffic. It would be irresponsible to locate oyster beds in areas which are destined to cause conflict with neighbors and the boating community. It will be a waste of resources to build fishery nurseries near areas where the effluent is not already adequately treated. It would be unthinkable to bring back the terrapin only to have it end up dead in a recreational crab pot.

Our new venture to identify and prioritize watershed restoration efforts must take into account the biological potential for restoration and the available human tolerance level in the immediate area. Without that human or cultural commitment, all our science and technology will fail.

News, continued from page two

(A.A. Co. Homebuilders) will work with the above group to select a site for a Charette led by innovative planners – to demonstrate that good design can create an acceptable new opportunity for growth that is really ‘smart’ because it creates neighborhoods, community needs, and alternatives to the car.

I think we often feel that we are the victims of “Smart Growth” because unrelated uses are thrust into existing areas without concern for their “fit”. Designated growth areas suffer the uprooting of the last remaining trees, widened roads, additional heat island effect, noise, traffic, frustration, and a diminished quality of place. At the same time, since all land is zoned for some use...sprawl in Anne Arundel County continues to happen, leaving us without solace or hope for a future with breathing room and beauty.

The real question is HOW to design for living so that we create communities that delight our senses and satisfy our needs, walkable, bikeable, hospitable places – what regulations, incentives are needed to make that happen? – and how we can use that relocation of density to save the ecosystem Stay tuned!

Editor’s note: Videos (20-minute) are available from the Alliance: “Economics of Place,” “Urban Village,” & “Food: Growing Local.”

Great Local Economies Make Great Cities

by Anne Pearson

A sustainable economy values local ingenuity, emphasizes local scale and diversity, and keeps dollars re-circulating at home rather than being sucked out by a Wal-Mart or other mega-corporation. It is maintaining the “local” economy that will sustain the community into the future. The community’s energy makes success, so we are eager to bring these ideas to Severn River Association members.

Communities with forethought preserve their local character against a takeover by corporations with no interest in the community, the ‘bigger is better’ mirage. To that end, the Alliance for sustainable communities has enlisted the help of Michael Shuman, author of *Going Local, Self-Reliant Communities in a Global Age*. Michael is one-of-a-kind, a much sought-after innovator, a generous spirit, eager to support any effort local people wish to undertake.

With enthusiasm from several local business people, we outlined a project, which we thought could put some of his national savvy to work for Annapolitans.

Since most buyers aren’t aware that it makes a difference where they spend their money, a *Buy Annapolis Directory* of locally owned businesses can be used to draw attention of citizens to the importance of choosing to buy locally. *Buy Annapolis Day*, supported by Mayor Moyer, is a way to launch the project, start some larger connections, and discussion of a pro-active role that can bring together local citizens, business people, and local government. Businesses we’ve met with on West Street, West Annapolis, State Circle, and Maryland Avenue have expressed enthusiasm for the project and have selected Nov. 3, 2002 to debut the concept and the *Directory*. You are invited to join us for a reception on Nov., 2 p.m. at ARTFX to announce the Nov. 9 *Buy Annapolis Day*. We’re planning a scavenger hunt for that day with prizes.

To focus energies, we expect a work group to be established. For instance, one long-term business owner thought it might be possible to join the various business associations, individual merchants, businesses, citizens, and government in a PRO-ACTIVE, GOAL-ORIENTED COLLABORATION that encourages a ‘take-charge’ initiative to:

1. Identify the importance of buying from locally owned businesses, because profits are re-spent in the community, strengthening local jobs, income, community-wide prosperity.

2. Determine what kinds of businesses are missing – businesses that add local character and satisfy needs; develop a collaborative agenda to fill the gaps. (Not just let things happen)

3. Use information from national sources like the Institute for Local Self-Reliance and VT Sprawl, to adapt methods that are working elsewhere to attract a loyal customer base – as competition grows from outlying Big Box out-of-state-ers.

4. Develop more active participation in business associations by inviting a pro-active discussion of such issues.

We hope for your ideas, your ingenuity!

Weems Creek Conservancy Elects New Officers

A new slate of officers and directors was installed at the annual general membership meeting of the Weems Creek Conservancy Sept. 19.



Evan Belaga, recently re-elected president of the Weems Creek Conservancy, is also a “turtle dad,” as he showed at a recent SRA meeting.

Evan Belaga remains as President; Corinne Reed-Miller was elected Vice President; Joan Leanos, Treasurer and Sheila Bloom, Secretary. Board members include: Liles Creighton, Matt Devlin, Carolyn Groobey, Sarah Findlay, Julie Johnson, Elizabeth McWethey, Steve McKerrow and Cary Rea.

The Conservancy is currently conducting an Oyster Gardening project on Weems Creek, with all owners of piers invited to participate. For information, contact Nancy or Cary Rea: (410) 263-4849

Ccrea@hotmail.com

Minutes, Aug. 20

President Duane Wilding called the meeting of the SRA Board to order at 7:06 p.m.

David Wallace Award

Duane began by presenting an award to David Wallace for his service as president of the Association for the past two years.

Duane talked about David’s active involvement in, and work on, various projects during his term. Personally, Duane noted, David provided a lot of help with Crownsville Stormwater Management project. David’s aerial photograph of the sediment plume coming from Severn Run

has created a strong push for investigation and action.

At the June meeting, Carol Jelich spoke about David's contributions to the SRA and his leadership, and Bob vom Saal cited David's valuable, but unsung, contribution to the Ben Oaks sewage pumping station: David identified a technical, crucial point that caused the County to change its position on the project.

"We really appreciate his hard work, professional expertise and willingness to volunteer his time on our issues of concern," said Duane.

Guest Speaker

In lieu of an outside guest, Duane made a presentation on the Crownsville Stormwater Management Project, which he has been working on for several years. SRA sponsored and received a grant from EPA/DNR for the Crownsville Stormwater Management Project (CSWMP) and Duane was the manager of the project.

Duane used a PowerPoint presentation to illustrate his speech. The areas included in the study were the communities of Arden, Herald Harbor, the MD Veterans Cemetery, Severn Run Environmental Area (DNR), and various Anne Arundel County land (Arlington Echo Education Center, Arden Ball Field, etc.) EPA and DNR funded the grant. The SRA was the grant recipient and sponsored the project with management by the MD Environmental Service. We used the grant funds to hire the engineering firm of John E. Harms, Keith Underwood and Associates, Eileen O'Brien, and Earth Resources Technology. J.E. Harms provided a field investigation team that identified problem areas and existing stormwater structures, Keith helped identify the significant environmental areas, Eileen O'Brien provided the educational program for the residents of the communities, and Earth Resources developed a Stormwater Geographic Information System (GIS). The project also had a Stormwater Management Team with representatives from the communities, SRA, Department of Public Works, Veterans Cemetery, and the Arlington Echo Center.

Why study this area? Duane noted the area has no centralized stormwater systems, combined with the high density housing plus small lots, roofs, driveways, etc. combine to give a high percentage of impervious surfaces. The causes a situation where there is a lot of run-off. These areas also include highly erodible soils, sensitive habitats, and septic systems. The septic systems can leach out and release pollutants into the stormwater.

In total, 27 problem areas were identified in a 1.8-square-mile area. Harms' field

Educating residents on how they can treat stormwater on their properties was always a part of the project, but after further studying the area, the importance of this became even more apparent.

staff identified 16 of the sites and the remainder were identified by residents from the communities. The focus was on 16 primary problem areas, which were ranked based on the severity of erosion and environmental damage.

Eight of the sites were selected for sampling and engineering evaluation to devise solutions to solve the problems. The list of additional problem stormwater areas were identified by residents and consisted primarily of flooding and erosion problems.

Shown in slides were photos of some of the sites:

Site #1 Old Herald Harbor Rd. - The existing drainpipe under the road is in bad shape. It has eroded a deep pool, which is now eroding the stream banks as it flows to the headwaters of Gum bottom.

Site #4 Arden - Severnview Driver - This site is on privately owned property. When Hurricane Agnes came through it created a channel through this person's yard. The county installed a drainpipe after that but erosion has continued. Where the pipe discharges there is severe erosion and the sediment has caused downstream damage and killed the Atlantic White Cedars that grew there.

Site #5 Arden Ball field vs. Gumbottom Drainage - This location has two pipes discharging. One drains the Gumbottom wetlands and the other from the ball field area. The photo shows cloudier stormwater coming from the ball field area as compared to the Gumbottom.

Site #5 - Minor Road Ravine - Several years ago when it was discovered that run-off from the ball field was discharging to the bog, it was proposed to divert the stormwater to a treatment system that could be constructed in the ravine near Miner Rd. in Arden. This would be a series of plunge pools to dissipate the energy and settle out sediment and could also serve to create beneficial habitat. The ravine as shown in

the photo is a problem and the construction of the stormwater system will turn the ravine into a stormwater system and improved habitat.

Site #6 Herald Harbor - end of Oak Trail. This site has severe erosion where the installation of several silt fences has helped but the problems continued. The eroded soil here is going into Old Place Creek.

Site Near Veterans Cemetery - Here a private property owner without an appropriate permit was placing soil material in a fill area. The area was not stabilized and was eroding.

Site #3 - In Arden, this section of the road used to flood after storms. After residents complained the County installed an inlet and drainpipe to alleviate the flooding on the road. However, now the water discharges down a ravine and eventually flows near one of the beaches and discharges into the river. The stormwater from the inlet combines with other flows such that the flow becomes excessive and is creating an eroded ravine and closer to the River has eroded away and created a ditch through the beach.

Eight sites were selected for designing corrective actions. The estimated costs for the corrective actions ranged from \$11,000 to \$82,000, for a total of just under \$400,000. The corrective actions emphasize the use of Low Impact - non-centralized systems that can be constructed in the existing areas, facilitate the infiltration of the stormwater, and, thereby reduce some of the flows. These systems also create beneficial habitat and treat the stormwater.

A slide showed a photo of Kay Dambach sampling at Site #2 in Herald Harbor. We sampled for nitrates, nitrites, total suspended solids (TSS), total volatile solids, turbidity, pH, and phosphorus. Concentrations for nitrate ranged from non-detectable to 9.7 mg/l, TSS ranged as high as 150 mg/l and turbidity as high as 497. Phosphorus was also detected with concentrations ranging from 0.06 to 0.51 mg/l. The average concentrations were compared to DNR's Tributary Team ratings and indicated that the nitrate had a poor assessment rating with very poor for phosphorus.

Samples were also collected during dry periods to compare wet weather concentrations to those found during dry weather. This was interesting and did show that nitrates, TSS, and turbidity increased significantly during wet weather.

Applying the concentrations of the various pollutants to the stormwater flows estimated by the hydraulic modeling provided a means to estimate loadings of the pollutants being discharged to the Severn River. These calculations were done for

four of the sites and the estimated loadings equaled 1,995 lbs of nitrate, 185 lbs of phosphorus, and 267,570 lbs of suspended solids discharged per year. That amount of suspended solids is equivalent to 134 tons/year or approximately 7 large dump trucks. Extrapolating these loading rates to the entire Severn River watershed gives total loadings from the watershed of 112,390 lbs for nitrogen and 7,415 lbs for phosphorus.

Educating residents on how they can treat stormwater on their properties was always a part of the project, but after further studying the area, the importance of this became even more apparent. Some of the sites are severe enough that the County will have to take some corrective actions, but we also need help from the public. We need everyone to help out. So if many of the residents could create small systems that infiltrate the stormwater, we could go a long way toward reducing stormwater problems. The use of rain barrels, downspout infiltrator systems, elimination of gutters, use of rain gardens, etc. can all be used to help manage stormwater.

Joann Robinson commented that Steve Barry is coming to Arden to do a presentation about rain barrels. At the Arlington Echo Center, he and his staff have created a couple of bog gardens. He also is a great spokesman for stormwater management and is educating the children that come to the center on stormwater management.

Someone asked for the definition of a rain garden? You start by making a depression in the soil. Rough up the surface of the soil. You mix in materials to increase the soil's permeability, some sand and peat so water percolates into it and so it can and will absorb phosphate and nitrates. You need to select vegetation that is suitable, and have the discharge from the rain garden is several feet wide, so that the over-flow goes out in sheet flow, so it does not create erosion.

John Flood added that if you want to see some examples, there is a bio-retention garden at the County's Riva Rd. offices, in the lower part of the parking lot. They dug down deep, put in various size stones, so it will absorb the rain water, along with the phosphates and nitrates, topped it with peat and soil, then planted the types of plants that will thrive in these conditions.

Anne Pearson asked whether recommendations have been made for the amount of funding needed for making the corrective actions?

Duane said the County has funded the top three sites for the design phase, and we want to continue to have the Stormwater Management Teams work with the county to continue to allocate funding to correct the other problem areas.

Anne: It should be considered important to assist the county in establishing a stormwater utility across the board, so that it would encourage homeowners to participate and would create a fund that would / could be applied to those areas which need remediation. We could encourage further involvement. There are many different organizations and groups dealing with the same issues. Right now, they work in relative isolation. A goal of this new group is to bring them together to form teams to work on specific issues and coordinate the efforts of people from various groups. For example, many groups are concerned about stormwater management, building on sub-standard in-fill lots, grading violations, etc. We need to have effective action and re-think the way to achieve more. Were we are right now is to identify the common interests, then develop core groups, composed of individuals from various associations, to press the issue jointly in order to achieve results. Another advantage of working as a team is the reduction of redundancy. With the stormwater utility, it can be discussed productively by the group.

John Flood: Another commonly held concern is the shoreline hardening issue. The county wants input from environmental groups. By creating this new coalition they can hear from many groups on a specific issue at one time.

Nature Walk

The walk on Aug. 17 took place at the Medical Boulevard Crossing at Cowhide Branch. (See photos from this walk on opposite page.) The next walk was announced at the Horizon Dairy Farm (old Navy Academy Farm) on Sept. 14. This will be a light 2.5 mile walk around the farm.

Sally Hornor described the Cowhide Branch nature walk:

We walked the site and saw the rounded bottomless culvert. It looks like they have made a tremendous effort to reduce the impact of the project on the creek. They installed an elaborate system to remove sediment from the stormwater. Their total suspended solids data show they are improving the water quality. They have used a (chemical) system called PAM and a really big silt bag. The bag spreads out in a flat sheet to remove the sediment and discharge the water.

Anne: PAM is a coagulant, an organic chemical. It is being used at some sites and we don't know for sure if it may have other effects on the environment, particularly any long-term consequences.

Treasurer's Report

Duane said Scott Hymes would be late due to his speaking at a variance hearing.

Duane passed around an e-mail account of our balance for review. Scott has also been meeting with an accountant for our tax return and preparing for the audit/review.

Walter Jacobs: Scott spoke eloquently about the problems of in-fill lots before the County Council, focusing his comments on the problems in Herald Harbor.

upon his arrival, Scott said we are using Sandy Bouley to prepare our tax returns. We expect to have an audit completed in the next couple of months.

Old Business

Community News

Arden on Severn: Joanne Robinson said the community organization is having Steve Barry do a presentation on Rain Barrels. They are also having a master gardener identify and show native plants and shrubs in critical areas. The Seeds to Trees project involves planting vegetation raised from seeds, such as river birch, magnolia, etc., and learning how to propagate from cuttings and collected seeds.

Discovery Village: John Flood announced the oyster factory at Discovery village is in operation. In two days they will have 900-bushel bags and half of our production goes to watermen. They will be active managers and will also benefit from the program. Half of the oysters raised go to watermen and the other half to conservation organizations. If you come there to make bags, you get one bay for every two bags you make. This is a good time to get together with DNR to get set up for establishing more areas in the Severn.

David Wallace: We need to have people see this process. Is this suitable for one of our nature walks? Is there an opportunity to participate or see oyster bagging? John Flood: The work is all done manually and yes, it would be very suitable for the SRA to come and participate.

Margie: There are many groups involved with oysters. The Corps has a five-year plan for their Oyster Recovery Plan. We can help them knit this together. The Corps comes into play under the permitting process.

Duane: It might be helpful to have a speaker to help define the discussion. Where do we expect to be in seven years? Where do we expect to have reefs? Where are the expenditures of funds going to be most effective?

Severn Run Discharge

A number of members got involved to try to find the sources of the recent sediment plume. One area that was brought to our attention by Mike and Joann Robinson

*Nature
Walk at
Cowhide
Branch*



The State Highway Administration is employing an unusual "bottomless culvert", rather than a conventional bridge, where Medical Parkway is being extended to cross Cowhide Branch, north of the Anne Arundel Medical Center. Viewing this construction was the goal of the August Nature Walk, as shown in these photos. Above, a view of the culvert from the hospital, looking across the stream to the Scott's Landing housing development. At right, a closeup (with hospital in background) shows the free-flowing width of the stream, and at lower right is a multi-tank sediment filter to be installed within the culvert. The filter is intended to keep water as clean as possible when it discharges to flow, as shown below left, beneath U.S. 50 and into the upper reaches of Weems Creek. Participants in the walk saw a variety of wildlife, including fat bull frogs!

Photographs by Jim Martin



recently was the Hog Farm Road crossing of the Jabez Branch. On the Saturday we visited the site, there was very little sediment control/silt fences in place and clearly no fish passage system. Duane has since received a call from Lina Vlavianos, who had talked to the County. She reported that the proper sediment control is now in place and that the system that is being constructed is what should be there according to the DNR fisheries. Prior to the construction, the old site also did not have a fish passage, and evidently they do not want one there now because you don't want pickerel or other fish coming upstream and eating the trout.

During one storm, John Flood and Jim Martin went to Dicus Mill Road as they did further searching for the sources of these sediments. At the last bridge before it goes under Route 97, then up to Gambrells Road was not too bad. However, near the Benfield Industrial Park they found muddy water. In the upper half of the reach (off Old Oak Road?) they found some suspicious activity. John has since met with the inspector in the area to discuss the sites. The County has also sent up people in the helicopter to see the sites. One site is a church that placed dirt on ball fields, etc.

John and Jim also found a horse farm that has a butler building for a suspicious trucking activity very near the Severn Run. The inspector reported the county is in the middle of a legal action with these people. He asked that we continue to go into the field and report any findings.

John asked for additional volunteers to serve on this committee to be vigilant to check for sediment in the waters of the creeks and river. Joanne Robinson volunteered to serve on this committee to monitor the water after storm events.

Jim Sullivan reported he was flying over Weems Creek and observed a sediment problem and emailed out the photograph of the plume.

Oyster Reef in Whitehall Bay

Duane said we need to ask the CBF to give the SRA information of this project, e.g., what are the benefits, how successful has this sort of project been in other places, what is the predicted survival of the oysters, etc. Possibly at the same meeting, may want to invite the Meredith Creek community to explain to us why they are opposed to it. Duane will contact Bill Goldsboro from the CBF to ask for them to present the project to the SRA members.

Naming Our Streams Project

Sally Hornor reported on the current status of the project. Peter Bergstrom re-

ceived a grant to identify the names of the various creeks and water bodies in the Severn. He and Paula Jasinski have worked with SRA to find people who know the old names for these locations. Part of the reason for this project is to increase stewardship of all of the waters in this area. If a place has a site-specific name, people do act more carefully to protect it because it has a single identity.

Another reason for this project is that maps are inaccurate. Incorrect names have been applied to various sites. Sally presented the map and explained that Peter has finished the Magothy and Severn Rivers. On this new map Peter has prepared, everything that is red is a new name. This is one of the last times it will be on display for comments and corrections before it will go out and become official. The next step is Paula Jasinski will file this document in Washington DC and it will go on road maps, such as the ADC maps.

Sally also introduced her student, Christina Mohs, who has been sampling for the Operation Cleanwater project.

Septic Systems

A letter has been drafted for sending to the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) with a copy to Janet Owens. The letter addresses concerns about the use of septic system dry wells and installation of septic systems in communities on the Severn, such as Herald Harbor and Arden. Currently, the county allows septic systems to be installed on very small lots and permits the use of dry well disposal systems. These dry wells are used in lieu of drain fields and can be as deep as 50 to 60 feet deep. Since these systems are deep, they cannot receive the oxygen needed biodegrade or assimilate the waste. In contrast to drain fields, which are essentially a gravel bed under a pipe, maybe 100 to 200 feet long and typically shallow and in the root zone where wastes can be assimilated.

The county also allows these dry wells to be installed close to water wells. There is concern that over the long-term what leaches from these drywells will migrate into the water wells, resulting in health problems. Because of the structure of the soil layers the materials will also travel laterally and to ravines and out crop onto beaches and streambeds

The letter requests MDE/County to stop the installation of drywells for new construction in Arden and Herald Harbor until a study can be completed that can show they are not causing any problems.

Discussion took place regarding the indicators of this problem, how sewers create sprawl, and the extra costs for installing

advanced treatment septic systems. It was also mentioned that the HHCA president, Janet Clauson was in a recent newspaper article saying that the source of the high enterococcus counts could be the ducks, rather than failing human septic systems. Enterococcus is now used as the bacteria indicator organism because it has a better correlation with human waste than E. coli, the old standard.

The letter was passed around and a motion was made that this letter be sent. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously. Scott Hymes added that there should be a restriction on new construction such that shale and sand filters are permitted for existing houses where the systems have failed, but they should NOT be used on NEW construction!

Living Shorelines

Margie Whilden reported she is working on an SRA brochure of Living Shorelines and a possible workshop. The Living Shoreline approach is good because it produces good, viable habitat. Much discussion followed on this topic and how in order to protect turtles and other species, the SRA has to be more active to promote this.

SRA Web Site

Duane expressed appreciation to Carol Jelich for updating the SRA website. Sally has also been regularly updating the bacteria counts.

Mute Swans

DNR has invited comments on their Mute Swan Management Plan. Comments are due by Sept. 20. Duane passed around a copy of the plan. John Flood gave a brief overview of the plan. The main features are to maintain a total bay population of 500 birds and establish swan-free areas where there are SAV beds. This specifically includes the Severn River and South River. The plan could permit lethal elimination.

Fiber Optic Cable

Clearstream Communications has made an application to the Corps of Engineers to install 310 miles of fiber optic cable in the Bay, Magothy, Severn, and South Rivers. The cable would be buried 1.5 to 10 ft. below the bottom, using a plow that would create a fissure. They would also use directional drilling and will also install 100 concrete cylinders 2 ft. tall by 4 ft. diameter under the bottom to anchor the cable. In the Severn the cable follows the main channel then goes into Spa Creek, on to the Naval Academy, and then up Weems Creek. Much opposition to this project has



More Oysters for Severn at Weems

In August, for the second year, the Weems Creek Conservancy and the Oyster Recovery Partnership seeded a new oyster bed on the Severn River at the mouth of the creek with larval oysters. At left, Evan Belaga of the Conservancy shows (from left) Del. Virginia Clagget and County Executive Janet Owens a sample of the "spat" about to be planted on the year-old oyster bar. Below left, community residents in canoes and kayaks dump bags of oysters and then watch as the vessel Robert Lee unloads. Below, some volunteers watch or participate from the deck of the vessel.

Photographs by Debbie Rosen McKerrow



now been voiced by local politicians and was reported in the paper.

Compost Berms

Anne Pearson reported on a joint project with the Severn River Land Trust and others to demonstrate a new technology to control the small colloidal-sized particles that get through sediment control fences on construction sites. Anne explained that the compost berms were installed at a construction site in Edgewater for the new Police Station. A series of berms was installed and demonstrated the effectiveness for removing the colloidal particles. The compost material was also blown into place on the sides of the sediment control pond. The placement on the sidewalls prevented erosion of the walls. This project is demonstrating the effectiveness of using compost material for erosion control.

Oyster Planting

Gail Smith from the County executive office reported on oyster planting that will be done at the mouth of the Weems Creek in Wardour on Saturday, Sept. 14. This will be further planting on the nearby bar.

Board of Appeals

Walter Jacobs noted that last week the former president of the SRA, Billy Moulden, chaired the meeting of the Board of Appeals on a matter involving Cape St. John, with such skill and we were all impressed.

Attendance:

Duane Wilding, President
 Alison Burbage, Member + OSPIA
 Barbara Donahue, Member
 John Flood, Director
 Sally Horner - Director
 Scott Hymes, Treasurer/Herald Harbor
 Walter Jacobs, Member
 Julie Johnson, Secretary
 Lauretta Martin, Guest
 Mike Maszczenski, Severn
 Christina Mohs, Guest
 Anne Pearson, ASC
 Joanne Robinson, Arden
 Bob Shade, Belvoir Farms
 Mary Searing, Guest, County DPW
 Gail Smith, Guest, County Executive
 Jim Sullivan, Burley Creek
 Bob vom Saal, Member
 David Wallace, Past President
 Margie Whilden, Member

—Minutes sincerely submitted,
 Julie Johnson
 Recording Secretary

Minutes, Sept. 17

The SRA meeting was called to order at 7:08 P.M. by president Duane Wilding, who immediately introduced our guest speaker. William “Bill” Goldsboro is the senior scientist of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, who spoke about CBF’s proposed Whitehall Bay Breakwater oyster reef and oyster restoration project, along with some biology of oysters and related topics.

Bill pointed out that oysters are in serious trouble, but the good news is we are orders of magnitude ahead of where we less than five years ago. The situation is still challenging but funding is available. The oyster population is struggling with a couple of parasites that cause high mortality in certain circumstances, and the ongoing drought has created high salinity levels that affect up to 80 percent of the oysters in some areas.

In 1999 Bay oyster scientists put together a consensus document of what needs to be done. One of the recommendations was an oyster sanctuary approach. This works because even with diseases with very high mortality rates, some oysters will survive.

“Oyster reef sanctuaries are the best chance for rescuing the oyster population,” Bill said. He provided a brief lecture on the biology of oysters, noting that after birth they take a “free-swimming larvae” form for a few weeks and need to find something solid to which to become attached. This is when they are “spat,” as Bill demonstrated with a cluster of 8 to 12 spat on a “set” of oyster shells. In some areas, such as the old Fort oyster bar opposite Annapolis, such communities “can be as productive as a coral reef.”

Bill noted a number of places where oyster replenishment is under way, including Lake Ogleton, Tolly Point, College Creek and Weems Creek. If these new colonies are not exposed to disease, “they will persist pretty much forever.”

Regarding Whitehall Bay, Bill said that when CBF acquired the Holly Beach Farm property it commissioned a shoreline study. This identified one high priority area, to the north of an existing pier on the property, where a shoreline bulkhead is deteriorating and erosion threatens the stability of the only road onto the property.

CBF has proposed to remove the bulkhead in favor of a “softer shore” with native

vegetation that is friendlier to bio-access. About 100 yards offshore, they wish to create a 3-D structure to be seeded with spat in hopes of building an oyster community.

Bill noted that the supply of oyster shell is running out, so they have been investigating materials to underlie an oyster reef. Riprap such as that found under the Naval Academy Bridge did not work well, but a marine limestone, or “marl” from North Carolina has proven successful in tests at the CBF headquarters in Bay Ridge. This fossilized aggregate would be set with spat, then dumped on a quantity of conventional stone riprap to fill in the gaps.

“The hope would be that the oyster spat would blossom into an oyster reef,” Bill said, and he showed a chunk of such oysters that have been grown in a tank at Horn Point. He said CBF applied for a permit last year for two rows of hills of material in four feet of water parallel to shore, offset from each other, similar to the way that bricks are offset. These rows of materials create a zone behind for plants.

Bill took questions from a group of Whitehall/Meredith Creek area residents, who were invited to the presentation.

Jerome Parks, a developer and marina builder who lives in Holly Beach, said many residents fear the oyster project would adversely affect the narrow channel entrance to Meredith Creek, which already suffers from sedimentation. Specifically, it is feared that strong storms could relocate the material from the reef and block access to the channel.

“Your project’s great, but it’s in the wrong location. It should be on the Bay side,” he said.

Tom Munz, who owns the property adjacent to Holly Beach Farm, agreed, noting that 30 boats require channel access to Meredith Creek, including a CBF workboat used for educational outings.

He said he fears erosion to his own soft shoreline, and noted he has worked with Margie Whilden on turtle habitat there.

Robert Bowen, who lives on Meredith Creek, said he never expected to be in the position of opposing a CBF project, but said the narrow channel already is shifting and he opposes anything that might increase that problem.

Duane noted that CBF had hired an engineering firm that said the oyster project was not likely to increase sedimentation. But Tom Munz said he spoke to one of the engineers and challenged him to pledge to dredge the channel if it is affected. He was told, “we’re not *that* sure.”

Bob Poor, president of the Whitehall/Meredith Association, said the group is not opposed to oysters, but “I’m appalled that

a permit might be issued without residents knowledge."

Bill responded to these concerns by noting he is very familiar with the problems at the mouth of Meredith Creek, having led many trips through there. He said he was surprised by residents' concern, because the reef project is aimed at reducing problems and stabilizing the shoreline. "We are interested in neighborly relations," he said, noting he has asked the Maryland Department of Environment to freeze any action on the permit until objections can be aired.

Margie said the "sheer magnitude" of the project scares her, and she is concerned the plan has not taken into account the potential of storm damage.

Jim Sullivan asked if the SRA could review the engineer's report and was told yes.

David Wallace showed aerial photos of a similar project at the Horsehead Wetlands Center on the Eastern Shore, and told Mr. Munz the CBF project mostly likely would help his shoreline, not harm it.

Bob Clay asked if hearings have been scheduled. When told no, he made a MOTION that SRA urge the MDE and the Army Corps of Engineer to hold "thorough and complete hearings." After brief additional discussion, the motion was APPROVED.

Bill said the project would likely not proceed until next summer anyway, and thanked the group for the chance to talk about the project.

Old Business

Nature Hike

Stevie Wilding said that no one showed up at the planned nature hike the previous Saturday at Horizon Dairy Farm. She said the trip could be re-scheduled if people are interested. She also said the next hike on Oct. 4 will be combined with a workshop on native plantings at Carol Jelich's property.

Stevie also said she is investigating starting an email newsgroup for nature hike information.

Treasurer's Report

Scott Hymes noted "the stock market has not been friendly to the SRA," but said our balance is currently \$77,883. David Wallace asked how much of that is obligated and Scott did not immediately know. David asked for a report of that information at the next meeting.

Community News

Saefern: Bill Colbath introduced Bob Whitcomb, president of the Saefern Association, who noted that he has established his own oyster bed and there is no question that oysters are viable in the Severn River.

Weems Creek: Gail Smith of the County Executive Office and Steve McKerrow of Admiral Heights talked briefly about the second planting Sept. 14 of oysters on a new bed at the mouth of Weems Creek. Gail also announced the Sept. 19 general membership meeting of the Weems Creek Conservancy.

Living Shorelines: Duane noted he was on the river the previous weekend and was struck by the fact "you just see more and more hardening" of shorelines.

Margie Whilden said the issue is now current on the Chester River, where concerned residents do not want to see what has happened on the Severn. She said Governor Glendenning has brought the issue to the top of his environmental agenda, but state agencies "are not getting the message." Duane asked Margie to prepare a fuller presentation of the issue for a future meeting.

Amberley: Julie Johnson noted that the Circuit Court has set Dec. 9 as the date of its hearing on the proposed development by the White Group at the headwaters of Whitehall Creek, on the issue of whether to hear the developer's appeal of a lower level decision against its proposal.

New Business

Crownsville Property

Duane said the Severn River Land Trust and Maryland Environmental Trust are meeting to investigate the chance that a piece of land at Crownsville State Hospital might become available for a conservation easement.

SAV Workshops

Duane announced that CBF is holding workshops on underwater grass restoration workshop Oct. 11-12 at their facility in Dorchester County near Tangier Sound. (For information, visit the web site: jbieri@savethebay.cbf.org.)

Shipley's Choice

Keith Underwood announced that the second stage of a project at Shipley's Choice is under way, and there will be a celebration at the school in mid-October. Details will be

forthcoming. A new planting of Atlantic white cedars is planned on Oct. 19.

Chesapeake Rivers Association

David Wallace announced the formation of this new group, with Jim Sullivan and Fred Kelly. He said it is aimed at continuing his efforts, when he was SRA president, to create a paid staff for engineering and legal support for community conservation efforts. He said the group is not intended to compete with SRA but to cooperate with it, in pursuit of the goals of the Chesapeake 2000 document. He passed around the group's statement of purpose. (See the full text in Correspondence section of the newsletter.)

Attendance:

Bob Whitcomb, Saefern
 Bill Colbath, Director, Saefern SRA Rep.
 Charlotte Lubbert, Herald Harbot
 Sally Horner, Director
 Anne Pearson, Director
 Bob Shade, Belvoir Farms
 Pat Winn, Round Bay
 Jeff Goldring, Anchorage
 Joe Friend, Glen Oban
 Duane Wilding, President
 Paul Inglis, Guest
 Stevie Wilding, Director
 Tom Munz, Community Rep.
 Liz Munz, Community Rep.
 Bob Poor, Whitehall-Meredith Creek
 David Wallace, Past President
 Phyllis Wright, Community Rep.
 Carol Jelich, Director
 Jerome Parks, Holly Farms Beach
 Robert Bowen, Meredith Creek
 Edwin Weber, Member
 Gail Smith, Guest, AA County Executive's Office
 Marguerite Whilden, Corresponding Secretary
 Scott Hymes, Treasurer/VP
 Keith Underwood, Epping Forest
 Kerry Kehoe, Director
 R. Speyser, Member
 Julie Harding, Palisades
 James Sullivan, Vice President
 Julie Johnson, Secretary
 Bob Vom Saal, Vice President
 Steve McKerrow, Admiral Heights

—Minutes sincerely submitted,
 Julie Johnson
 Recording Secretary

Chesapeake Rivers Association

Correspondence

This is the text distributed at the Sept. 17 SRA Board meeting by David Wallace:

Statement of Purpose

The Chesapeake Rivers Association (the CRA) was founded in the spring of 2002 to support community-based initiatives that protect and restore the rivers and tributaries of the Chesapeake Bay. The CRA is a non-profit organization incorporated in the State of Maryland and headquartered on the Severn River in Annapolis.

The purpose of the CRA is to promote local, river-by-river action to support state, regional and national efforts to achieve the goals of the Chesapeake 2000 agreement. Specifically the CRA's purposes are scientific and legal and are to:

- Provide scientific and engineering support to community based river organizations and to government agencies working to achieve the goals of the Chesapeake 2000 agreement dealing with habitat restoration, water quality restoration and species recovery projects;

- Provide legal assistance to citizens, citizens' groups, local and state governments in protecting and restoring the natural resources of the Bay's rivers;

Design and implement on-the-ground river restoration and recovery projects in collaboration with citizen organizations and government agencies;

- Support the Waterkeeper Alliance and the Chesapeake Bay's River Keepers in their efforts to monitor Chesapeake Bay river conditions and to defend the environment.

The current Directors of the Chesapeake Rivers Association are Frederick L. Kelly, James B. Sullivan, and David J. Wallace.

Mr. Kelly is an environmental attorney with over 30 years of experience in environmental issues. Beginning as the first staff attorney for the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, his resource and wetland protection work is well known. His defeat of the Douglas Point Nuclear Power Plant saved the third most critical striped bass spawning area on the East Coast, and his "Citizens Manual for Protecting Chesapeake Bay Wetlands" has helped save wetlands throughout the Bay Watershed.

James B. Sullivan has a PhD in Oceanography and has a distinguished record of accomplishment in the environmental field. As Associate Assistant Administrator of

the U.S. Agency for International Development, he served as the U.S. Government's senior career officer concerned with U.S. Government environmental protection programs in developing countries. He was appointed by President Jimmy Carter to the scientific and policy oversight committee for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. He has served as a Trustee of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation and on committees of the National Science Foundation, the National Academy of Sciences and of numerous environmental and citizen organizations. He founded the Center for Science in the Public Interest in Washington, DC, which was instrumental in eliminating lead in gasoline, curbing air pollution, and establishing more stringent requirements for environmental impact statements. He is currently the First Vice-President of the Severn River Association.

David J. Wallace is a professional engineer and the immediate past president of the Severn River Association. David has served as chief engineer for numerous habitat restoration and species recovery projects on the Chesapeake Bay. He has published aerial surveys of submerged aquatic vegetation in the Bay and documents on shoreline resource protection and invasive non-native species control. With over 7500 hours of flying time over the past 25 years in the Bay Region, he possesses a unique perspective on area trends and growth, including many hours in seaplanes performing water sampling and underwater grass surveys.

The Chesapeake Rivers Association is funded by private donations and by foundation, government and corporate grants.

Operation Clearwater

The following letter was sent on Aug. 28 to Merrylin Zaw-Mon, Acting Secretary of the Maryland Department of the Environment:

Dear Ms. Zaw-Mon:

The Severn River Association (SRA) is very concerned about high bacteria counts and excessive nutrients in the Severn River. The SRA initiated a program many years ago called "Operation Clearwater" that provides monitoring of bacteria levels at various locations along the Severn River. Frequently the bacteria counts are well over acceptable levels for recreational use of the River. This has been observed for many years. Similarly, recent stormwater sampling in the communities of Arden and Herald Harbor, found high levels of nitrates and phosphorus.

In addition to this scientific evidence, there are many anecdotal reports from residents who report getting ear aches and other health related problems after swimming in the River. Residents also report witnessing plumes of polluted water and odors that suggest septic system discharges. The SRA is alarmed that even with the severity of these existing problems, new septic systems continue to be installed. This increases the down gradient migration of contaminated groundwater to creeks, feeder streams, and to the Severn River. We are concerned that this problem is getting worse as new systems are added and the compounded effect of concentrated septic systems in several of the communities will result in increasingly degraded water quality.

Until a comprehensive study can be conducted that addresses the full impact of septic systems in the Severn River watershed, we feel that two actions should be implemented immediately: 1) place a moratorium on the use of dry wells for new home construction, and 2) restrict the installation of septic systems on small lots. The justification for taking these actions is explained in the following paragraphs.

At this time, the Anne Arundel County Health Department allows the installation of dry wells on lots where there is insufficient land available to allow a properly configured drain field or where the "perkable" soils are very deep. Often times these dry wells can be as deep as 50 to 60 feet. These systems do not allow the proper treatment of septic wastes and discharge deep into the ground and in many cases are also installed near residential wells. The seepage from these dry wells can contaminate drinking water and due to the soils in these areas also flows down gradient and eventually out crops into streams and the Severn River.

Septic systems in the Severn River Watershed are being installed on small lots. In the densely populated communities of Arden and Herald Harbor, these lots were platted over 50 years ago, and can be as small as 25 ft. wide. Variances are now being granted to allow home construction on small lots where there is insufficient area for even a primary drain field. This should not be allowed in the Severn River watershed. The number of septic systems that now exist in these communities may exceed the assimilative capacity of the groundwater and the degradation of the water quality of the Severn River would be inevitable.

The SRA is committed to improving the water quality of the Severn River. Since there are no point dischargers in the Severn, any improvements to water quality will

have to come from other sources. We believe that septic systems are a significant contributor of nutrients and other pollutants and we believe it is necessary at this time to disallow the use of septic system dry wells and the installation of septic systems on small lots. If lots do not have sufficient area to allow a properly sized drain field along with the necessary reserve areas, then building permits should not be issued.

We appreciate your consideration of our request and would welcome an opportunity to discuss this matter further with you and Anne Arundel County representatives.

Sincerely,
Duane A. Wilding, P.E., President

Mute Swans

The following letter was sent on Sept. 17 to the Maryland Mute Swan management Plan of the Department of Natural Resources Wildlife & Heritage Service:

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is forwarded to give our support to the proposed Maryland Mute Swan Management Plan. The Severn River Association is dedicated to protecting the Severn River and as such, we recognize the importance of restoring and maintaining submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV). SAV beds are valuable habitat for fish and crabs and are necessary for the successful spawning and reproduction of many species. We also understand that in addition to the destruction of SAV, Mute Swans can also be harmful to the nesting activities of native birds.

The proposed plan will designate "swan free zones" and we support designating all or parts of the Severn River as a swan free zone. We are also interested in assisting and cooperating with DNR as much as possible to implement the plan in the Severn River.

Please contact me at 410-923-3074 to discuss our involvement and participation.

Sincerely,
Duane A. Wilding, President

More News

Land and Water Trails Map Available From State

The Maryland Greenways and Water Trails Program announces the availability of the new Statewide Recreational Land and Water Trails map.

The map shows the status of major land and water trails in Maryland, and reflects information supplied by each county in the state.

Maps are free while supplies last. Call: 410-260-8780, or send an email request to: lgutierrez@dnr.stte.md/us

Join the SRA and Save the River and the Bay!

We are the oldest organization dedicated to the preservation of a river in America. We are Anne Arundel County's largest and oldest civic group. Your support is very important especially because today's problems are tougher to solve and to manage than they have ever been. Your support gives our voice the strength to help protect your community, your watershed and your river, please join and make a difference! Your membership donation is fully tax deductible.

I/we would like to become a:

Regular (couple/individual) at \$20 _____ Benefactor (couple/individual) at \$100 _____

Patron (couple/individual) at \$25 _____ or Community (organization) at \$40 _____

I would like to make an *additional* contribution of: \$ _____

Couples or Individuals or Community's President:

Name: _____

Your Community's Name: _____

Street: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone : _____ E-Mail: _____

Community Associations: (we need both President's info above and Rep's info below)

Name: _____

Street: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone : _____ E-Mail: _____

We begin collecting membership donations in the fall for the following calendar year.

Memberships recieved after the annual meeting in June apply to the next year.

Checks should be made payable to: The Severn River Association, Inc., P.O. Box 146, Annapolis, Maryland 21404-0146

THE SEVERN RIVER ASSOCIATION, INC.
P.O. BOX 146
ANNAPOLIS, MD 21404



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