

The Severn River Log



SEVERN RIVER ASSOCIATION • BOX 146, ANNAPOLIS, MD 21404 • severnriver.org • 443 926 5924 • MAY 2007

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Annapolis Roads Property Owners
Anchorage Swim Club
Annapolis Yacht Club
Arden Civic Association
Bayberry Hill Property Owners
Bay Ridge Civic Assn
Bellevue Estates Civic Assn
Belvoir Farms Homeowners Assn
Bembe Beach Assn
Ben Oaks Civic Assn
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Burley Creek Community Assn
Bywater Church & CrabCreek Assn
Carrollton Manor Improvement
Chartwell Garden Club
Chesapeake Bay Foundation
Chesapeake Harbor Community
Chesapeake Landing Condo
Civic Association of Palisades
Colechester Community Assn
Downs Property Owners Assn
Dreams Landing Condominium
Eastport Civic Association
Eastport Yacht Club
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Linstead Community Assn
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Luce Creek Conservancy
Murray Hill Residents Assn
Olde Severna Park Imprv Assn
Oyster Harbor Citizens Assn
Palisades Civic Assn
Pines Community Improvement
Point Field Landing Community
Riverview Manor Community Assn
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Rugby Hall Community Assn
Saefern Saddle & Yacht Club
Severn Sailing Assn
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Sherwood Forest Club
Shipley's Choice Community Assn
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St. John's College
Sturbridge Homeowners Assn
Venice Beach Citizens Assn
Ward One Residents Assn
Wardour Garden Club
West Annapolis Civic Assn Inc
Whitney's Landing Community
Weems Creek Waterfront Assn
West Annapolis Civic Assn
Whitehall Beach Community Assn
Whitney's Landing Community
Winchester on Severn Assn

Meetings of the Severn River Association are held the 7 PM, 3rd Tuesday of each month, Calvary Methodist Church, 301 Rowe Blvd, Annapolis MD 21401, except for the upcoming

Annual Meeting, 6:30 PM Thursday June 14, 2007, Epping Forest Clubhouse, 354 Severn Road, Annapolis, Maryland 21401, Speaker: Tom Horton, "*Growth is Good*" *Spells Disaster for the Bay*

July 17, 2007 Meeting Speaker is Kevin Smith, Chief of Restoration Services for DNR, on *Living Shoreline*, at West Severna Park Community Association.

Saving our Severn: Public Good and Private Interest

The ecological health of our Severn River and its larger watershed weighs heavily on our minds these days.

This magnificent river and its tributaries are the reason many of us came here, and stay – and we're worried. The Severn River is doing badly now and is getting worse – and the health of the Chesapeake Bay depends on every river that feeds it.

The river itself suffers many direct assaults. Development and mowed lawns now go down to river's edge, native vegetation has been displaced by exotic species and large and frequent waves from boat wakes disrupt shoreline habitat essential to the cycle of aquatic life. Most natural shoreline has been developed and shut off from both public view and public use.

Even more injuries accumulate from a thousand dispersed and indirect insults to its befouled tributaries.

Parking lots, roads, rooftops and driveways disrupt the natural hydrologic cycle by intercepting rainwater and disgorging huge volumes promptly into streams. Petroleum, salt, fecal and chemical pollutants wash from those

surfaces into streams, as do lawn, garden and agricultural fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides.

About 60 billion gallons of rainwater fall annually onto the Severn watershed's 81 square miles.

Prior to the present era of intensive development, that water was processed naturally by forests. Trees and shrubs broke the fall of rain on its way to the ground, grew roots to hold the soil tenaciously against erosion, and provided leaves to transpire much of the water back into the atmosphere. Excess rainwater mostly filtered through absorbing soil to become groundwater that was conducted cleanly and gently to the Severn River and the Chesapeake Bay. Only a very small fraction of the watershed's rainwater input flowed promptly to the river and its surface tributaries.

That's all changed.

Inexorably, poor public and private management practices are destroying critical forest and natural shoreline habitat. Physical disruption and chemical pollution combine to kill submerged aquatic vegetation and tear apart the web of life essential to the living qualities of the river and bay.

Without the protective vegetation that once interposed itself between the sky and surface streams, gushing stormwater now tears soil and pollution from the land, rips submerged vegetation from its roots, smothers aquatic life with silt, and dumps pollutants into the aquatic environment.

Some of us are trying to do something about it. One SRA project used available public grant funds to replace invasive, non-native vegetation with native plants along a segment of a public right of way – the popular Baltimore and Annapolis Trail, a rail bed transformed into a wonderful bicycle and walking trail from Glen Burnie to Annapolis.

When we can, we seek public good that is also in private interest, sometimes finding projects

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that combine public and private resources in ways that give win-win benefits to all. In this small case, a portion of trail along a public right-of-way was restored to a natural and ecologically healthy state, as a private citizen stepped up to the ongoing need for its protection and maintenance.

Other projects include community cleanup projects like that for the Jabez Branch, and we're running a public speakers series as a forum for builders, bankers, developers, civic organizations, even a few politicians, who are involved in protecting and restoring the Severn River watershed. From time to time, we join with community organizations to address specific problems threatening their portion of our watershed.

We hope to amplify these efforts a thousand fold throughout the Severn River watershed. Citizens can do a wonderful public service, even as they derive the private benefit that comes from living in a nicer neighborhood, by volunteering to work with groups seeking to improve environmental quality in the Severn watershed.

Worthwhile as these projects are, they are small even added all together, amounting more to band-aids against pain rather than to victory over disease.

Real solutions are likely to come only

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from fundamental changes that are as tough to swallow in the short term, as they are fully justified for the long term. Even if we could complete all needed restoration projects, many would quickly be undone, unless we assert control over stormwater runoff generated by parking lots, roofs and streets.

Rainwater needs again to permeate the ground, to be released only slowly into streams as clean water.

Public and private financial disincentives against covering the ground, coupled with financial incentives for retrofitting sound stormwater management solutions to existing surfaces, are badly needed.



When individuals and organizations have the right mixture of carrot-and-stick signals, together with practical technical solutions, they will make wondrous reforms and repairs.

The legislature considered a few such proposals in its last session, enacted little, and so needs to revisit old proposals and consider bold new ones.

For example, a portion of the real property tax that we all pay could be made proportional to area covered with impermeable surface, with a rebate against that tax according to what corrective actions (rain barrels, rain gardens, porous pavement, bioretention ponds, etc.) the property owner installs.

If we continue with worthwhile environmental projects, and if we implement effective financial incentives and disincentives, we can restore the Severn River watershed to the healthy natural treasure that tried to slip away from us.

– Kurt Riegel & Thistle Cone

President's Column

Living Shorelines

Of the many good things you can do for the Severn River, installing a so-called "living shoreline" is one of the best. If you have a failing private or community bulkhead (hard wall between soil and water), consider replacing it with a living shoreline.

Living shorelines are simple alternatives to old-fashioned hardened shorelines, such as rip rap (stones piled at water's edge) and bulkheads.

The biggest environmental benefit is that living shorelines are wildlife-friendly. A gradual slope and natural materials make the transition from water to land easier for animals like turtles to navigate. Restoring native grasses along the high tide line creates habitat for tiny fish, small crabs, and other life – essential safe haven.

Most living shorelines are simple to install, and are usually less expensive than a hardened shoreline. If your community would like to install one, volunteer labor can make it even less expensive. Funding assistance is available for living shoreline projects, especially to help pay for the native plants used.

Want to learn more about living shorelines? Attend our SRA Annual Meeting on June 14 and meet experts. They'll describe action-oriented projects you can participate in to protect and restore the Severn River.

SRA is also sponsoring a free open house at the newly installed living shoreline (see Page 1 or the SRA web site for details.)

Please join us for this event!

Thistle Cone

Jabez Cleanup



Just a few of our extraordinary cleanup volunteers! (From the left: Kurt Riegel, Pierre Henkart, Bob Whitcomb, Scott Hymes, Bruce McPherson, Allison Buckalew, David Tibbetts, Fred Kelly, Robin Ireland, Pete Robinson)

On March 31, 2007 the Severn Riverkeeper and the Severn River Association sponsored a stream cleanup as part of the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay's annual "Project Stream Clean."

Over sixty volunteers donated their time and muscle to cleaning tires and trash from Jabez Branch.

This stream has been notable for its reproducing population of brook trout, said to be the only one within Maryland's Coastal Plain.

Volunteers assembled at Strayer University and B&B Heating & A/C and cleared trash near these properties.

The targets were the two dump sites containing tires and metal. The County provided a winch to lift the tires up the steep slope, but it broke down after only 25 tires.

We then created a human chain of vol-

unteers to remove most of the loose tires, passing more than 275 more tires up the human chain, plus metallic and other trash. (Items remaining were either embedded in the soil or were too heavy for volunteers to lift.)

The county Department of Public Works crew worked hard to remove all this trash, providing a loader and several trucks. Ten truckloads of trash weighing 15,260 pounds went to the landfill from Jabez, including about 300 tires.

We also cleaned areas along Saltworks Creek not reached at last year's cleanup, removing about 1,000 pounds of trash.

This was a great effort by all, generating a sense of accomplishment, camaraderie, and full tummies from too many donuts. Everyone is congratulated for their part in cleaning up this valuable tributary!

Membership

A 2007 goal is to recruit every community association on the Severn River into active membership, presently numbering 57.

That's good, but there seem to be over 100 neighborhoods fronting the Severn River – so how many of them have community associations? While the County has identified many communities, there is no official list of communities on the River.

We've used maps and other published data to compile a list but find that many of them are neighborhoods in name, but without any official association to join, pay dues, and designate an official SRA representative/ board member.

So where does that lead us? Many people are extremely interested in protecting the River, and we encourage them to join SRA as individual members.

At the same time, we are a federation of communities on the River, wanting to work together, and it's easier to identify community leadership when there are established associations.

In any event, we'll strive to establish relationships with more communities by every device we find.

Would you like to help us to do so?

Won't you contact me and become an "ambassador" connecting us better to your community, and help us increase the number of advocates for a protected and restored scenic Severn River?



– Bob Whitcomb

Treasurer's Report

BALANCE SHEET (1 April 2007)

Checking	9,155
Money Funds	8,066
Securities	26,055
Accounts Receivable	6,000
Loan Crownsville Conserv	2,105
ASSETS	\$51,381
Equity/net assets	51,381
LIABILITIES	\$51,381



Bob
vom Saal

2007-8 Nominating Committee Report

Office	Nominee
President	Kurt Riegel
1st Vice President	Scott Hymes
2nd Vice President	Bob Whitcomb
Treasurer	Bob vom Saal
Recording Secretary	Richard Falk
Corres. Secretary	Thistle Cone

– Bob vom Saal, Sally Hornor,
Charlotte Lubbert, and Pat Lynch

Annual Meeting!

6:30 PM Thursday 14 June 2007

Food, drink, fun, action for our River, and the best dang people you'll find in these parts!

Speaker: Tom Horton, "*Growth is Good*" *Spells Disaster for the Chesapeake Bay*.

Epping Forest Clubhouse (Crownsville), 354 Severn Road, Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Ed/OpEd Column

(Please send candidate submissions to editor@severnriver.org)

How Much Is Enough?

We take so much for granted as we conduct our workaday and family lives, but sometimes we're jolted by events into an entirely new perspective.

For much of the 23 years that I've lived at the Severn River, I had assumed that my vote, with others, would cause government and business to act mainly in the public interest.

Contradicting my glib assumption, however, is the undeniable fact that the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries are now listed as severely degraded.

My wake-up call came last summer, when my community's beautiful Plum Creek became so contaminated that a dear friend and neighbor fell ill after swimming in waters he'd used his whole life.

I loved to watch him swim by my house each Saturday. He was, and still is, quite the athlete – he seemed to swim as naturally as any aquatic species.

But after swimming with an insignificant scratch on his leg, he became so ill that he had to be hospitalized, nearly losing his leg and his life.

Now he kayaks rather than swims, having no fondness for Russian roulette. We both feel a great loss.

I'd long read the reports of lesions on fish, the growing summertime Bay dead zone, and a few reports of illness after exposure to water – but I somehow "believed" the problem was being addressed.

Yes, that all changed for me last summer when my dear friend fell ill and I got yet another shock from a report in

The Capital about a sailor in the West River who became so ill that he died!

The more I read about beaches closed because of a health hazard, the more I feel a personal call to action. How can we allow unhealthy water to remain, indeed worsen, over the decades? Where is leadership in government, business and other institutions? Where is the outrage?

We can't afford to elect people who merely talk the public interest during campaigns, only to yield when in office to other forces.

If politicians vote against provisions essential to the Bay's health, out of concern for overspending and taxes, we must remind them that they must first take care of the basics – public and ecological health.

Moreover, a decline in the natural qualities of the Severn River and the Bay is accompanied by financial losses from a withering of the resource that watermen depend on for their livelihood, that residents and tourists depend on for recreation, and from escalating costs to remediate damage and to treat illness.

Just as Cleveland cannot live down the day the Cuyahoga River caught fire, we should not have to live down the loss of the native oyster and other gems of aquatic life.

Yes, we're all busy, but we can no longer assume that our vote is enough. We must find time to become personal trustees of our waterways.

Enough is enough!

– Betsy Love

SRA Minutes Digest

March and April, 2006.

The Hidden Pond project is completed and SRA has a grant of \$100K to plant white cedars in Cypress Branch.

Nominating Committee is vom Saal, Hornor, Lynch and Lubbert, who will present proposed slate of officers and outside directors at May meeting. Membership Committee goal is for every riverside community to become a member.

A strategic plan was proposed, for development in 3 meetings in March and April.

Legal actions are considered at Board meetings, active role being taken in the form of letters of support/ monetary donations – candidates are Arrow Cove, St Margaret's Rd., and Gundy Pier in Olde Severna Park. Jabez Branch cleanup, organized by Bob Whitcomb on March 31.

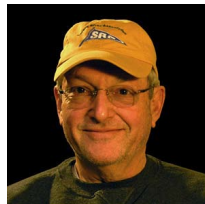
Chesapeake Ecology Center, "Earth Day/Greenscapes Day" April 21 - SRA sponsored raingarden. SRA will display at Maryland Maritime Heritage Festival on May 4. Board approved writing a letter to the Chesapeake Rivers Association in support of the Coastal Plain Outfall project for Saefern.

Speaker Series included:

March 20 Anne Arundel County Councilman Jamie Benoit on Naval Academy, legislation limiting the footprint of "big box" stores., opposition to the Chesapeake Terrace Landfill proposal, future of Crownsville Hospital grounds, Stormwater Management & environmental legislation he favors.

April 17, 2007 Michael Furbish, whose company specializes in the installation of "green" systems, presented "Sustainable Building Approaches",

including Living roof & walls, Solar/Geothermal Radiant floors/HVAC, Straw bale wall systems, & Composting toilets. Plans are being laid for June 14 Annual Meeting, at which Tom Horton will speak.



– Richard Falk

Speakers Series

Our fascinating series of Save Our Severn (SOS) speakers is continuing, some having already appeared at our SRA monthly meetings (see column left.)

The next two speakers to appear after our June 14 Annual meeting will be

July 17, 2007. *Living Shorelines*, at West Severna Park Community Association. **Kevin Smith**, Chief of Restoration Services for DNR.

September 18, 2007. Al Gore's slides: Global Warming and what we can each do to reduce its impact, presented by Annapolis **Mayor Ellen Moyer**.

October 16, 2007. *The Fast Bus System*, how and where it works so the car stays home, presented by **Klaus Philipsen**.

See severnriver.org for details and the latest information, and use the series as yet another good excuse to join us in our monthly SRA meetings.

Annual Meeting

The Severn River Association, cordially invites you to attend our 96th Annual Meeting, to be held at the Epping Forest Clubhouse, 354 Severn Road, Annapolis, Maryland 21401, on Thursday, June 14 at 6:30 PM

This lovely setting, looking out upon the Severn River, is just right to set the mood for this year's general gathering.

Our guest speaker will be Tom Horton, acclaimed author and columnist for the *Baltimore Sun* speaking on the topic, "Growth is Good" *Spells Disaster for the Chesapeake Bay*.

We will also be presenting Green Heron Awards for outstanding service to the Severn River, and Blue Heron Awards for lifetime commitment to the Severn River Watershed.

A brief business meeting and a Severn Snapshot will precede the program.

A social hour with delicious *hors d'oeuvres* and an invitation to become an activist in our Save the Severn Campaign will follow.

Directions (E3 on ADC AACo map 20): From Maryland Route 178, General's Highway, turn on Epping Forest Road. After passing through gates, proceed around circle to third street, Severn Road, turn right and follow to Clubhouse.

Map and precise directions are also at the SRA web site severnriver.org

For non-members, a \$15 donation is suggested to help defray meeting expenses. Member donations in any amount are always greatly appreciated.

Please RSVP by May 31 to Charlotte Lubbert at 410-923-6425, or cblubbert@comcast.net

Legislative Progress

Our keen concern about the impact of new development and the need to revise stormwater rules has succeeded!

The STORMWATER MANAGEMENT ACT, passed by the Maryland House and Senate has been signed into law by Governor O'Malley.

The Act requires Maryland Department of Environment to adopt rules and regulations which establish criteria and procedures for stormwater management in Maryland.

It also empowers MDE to set the minimum content of the local ordinances or the rules and regulations, and a Model Ordinance whose implementation will be mandatory for local jurisdictions.

The stated goal is to maintain after development, as nearly as possible, the predevelopment runoff characteristics, and to specify the minimum requirements which shall apply to lower levels of government.

The Ordinance will require the use of Environmental Site Design and Low Impact Development Best Management Practices (living roof, rain gardens, planted roadside swales, porous paving, cisterns, etc.)

A *caveat*: the phrase "to the extent possible," in the Act is the weak link, so we will need to be vigilant in its application.

We hope a model ordinance will merge Sediment & Erosion Controls (S&E) and Stormwater Management so that we reduce the following problems:

- Current rules mandate the use of sediment traps (basins) to catch and hold stormwater runoff during construction. When these traps are full, the water flows through narrow stone channels, frequently eroding the channels and carrying a load of clay particles.

- These particles are so fine they remain suspended for weeks, clouding the receiving Creeks and Rivers; when they finally coagulate, they form a sticky ball which grows algae.

If clearing is minimized on construction sites, 'sheet flow' can be directed to 'forest save' areas rather than into sediment traps.

The manager of AA Soil Conservation District reduced cleared areas to 20 acres in AA County (still too great an area), specified compost berms, and ordered Parole developers to implement the most extensive S&E Controls ever considered. It still failed to cure the problem, so better rules are needed.

The Green Fund did not pass this year, but we hope for sufficient funding next year, for a state match to local funds for Stormwater Utilities.

– Anne Pearson

Better Development Practices

- Prohibit mass clearing and grading
- Preserve natural contours and hydrology
- Move trees to buffer areas, and don't just bulldoze
- Use signs to indicate wetlands and forest buffers & restrictions to alert & educate homeowners
- Preserve wooded wetlands and streams
- Use shorter and shared driveways, reduce lot size & street width.

Operation Clearwater

This project begins its 33rd year in 2007.

Now that spring is here, can the swimming season be far away? It's now time to plan for this summer's water quality monitoring program.

Operation Clearwater will supply valuable information on the bacteriological quality of water.

Recognized by the Sierra Club in 2003 as an important tool in assessing and improving water quality, the program will again this summer monitor the group of bacteria known as enterococci.

The occurrence of these indicator organisms has been shown to be the best predictor of the chances of contracting gastrointestinal illness while swimming.

At community beaches and marinas throughout the Severn River watershed, we collect water samples on Wednesday mornings and provide data on counts of enterococci by Thursday afternoons. Data are accessible via the SRA web site severnriver.org

Communities may sign up for the full 14 week program (May 23 - Aug 22) at a cost of \$332 or may elect to be sampled every other week at a cost of \$171.

Applications for this program were mailed to waterfront communities, are available via the SRA web site, or contact me at sghornor@aacc.edu, work 410-777-2842, 410-647-6254 home.

– Sally Hornor

Volunteer !

With no paid staff, your Severn River Association depends on volunteers to accomplish its goals.

Here's your chance to contribute your energies, intellect and skills to an admirable cause – improving the Severn River watershed.

We need people, for action projects, for writing articles & letters, participating & testifying at public forums, membership & office tasks, coordi-

nating other volunteers, fund raising, for example:

- Manager for sales items, purchase & mail order fulfillment
- Regulatory & legal affairs manager to follow action & prepare testimony
- Logistics manager for meetings, displays and promotional materials
- Newsletter editor/layout with *Adobe InDesign* knowledge.

Do come to our next meeting, introduce yourself, and tell us how you want to pitch in.

And bring a friend, and/or send a note to **volunteer@severnriver.org** telling us of your skills, interests and enthusiasms.

Join the SRA and Save the River and the Bay!

We are the oldest organization dedicated to the preservation of a river in America, Anne Arundel County's largest and oldest civic group. Your support is very important especially because today's problems are tougher to solve than they have ever been. Your support gives us voice and strength to help protect your community, your watershed and your river, so please join and make a difference! Your membership donation is fully tax deductible. Click-to-Join on our web site at **severnriver.org**, or fill out the form below and mail it in.

I/we would like to become a:

Regular (couple/individual) at \$25 _____ Benefactor (couple/individual) at \$125 _____
 Patron (couple/individual) at..... \$50 _____ or Community (organization) at \$55 _____

Couples or Individuals or Community:

Name: _____

Your Community's Name: _____

Street: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phones : _____ E-mail: _____

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

Name: _____

Street: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phones : _____ E-mail: _____

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

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

Make checks payable to: Severn River Association, Inc., P.O. Box 146, Annapolis, Maryland 21404-0146

Telephone (443) 926-5924 or Click-to-Join on our web site at **severnriver.org**