

## Snapshot of the Spa Creek Conservancy

*A particular strength of The Severn River Association is its member community associations, examples of which are highlighted here from time to time.*

The Spa Creek Conservancy (SCC), a volunteer organization founded in 2004, is dedicated to stewardship of the Spa Creek watershed through education, preservation, mitigation, and restoration.

The 1,640 acre Spa Creek watershed is located in Annapolis. Spa Creek's headwaters start as stormwater runoff from a 6 foot conduit outfall of the Chinguapin Round Rd. industrial complex. It flows through neighborhoods and woodlands to a navigable tidal system below Spa Rd. bridge and thence through Annapolis and the Na-

val Academy to the Severn River and Chesapeake Bay.

Major problems face the watershed including stormwater runoff and the housing, shopping and industrial development with an increasing population. The watershed is already 57% covered by roads, roofs, parking lots and other impervious surfaces. Consequently, water quality conditions in the watershed can be very low, even dangerous to one's health, after rain events. Spa Creek Conservancy's goal is to help return to the fishable, swimmable Bay tributary of old.

Our goals and objectives are in non-tidal and tidal watershed master plans developed with the Center for Watershed Protection and the City of Annapolis. They include:

The Severn River Association (SRA) meets at 7 PM on the third Tuesday of each month at Arlington Echo Outdoor Education Center, 975 Indian Landing Rd, Millersville MD 21108, free and open to the public, – nice people preserving and restoring the Severn River watershed! See the web site for location and agenda:

[severnriver.org](http://severnriver.org)

- Clean up Spa Creek from the headwaters to the Severn River.
- Educate the public on the link between human life styles and the watershed health.
- Reduce/mitigate stormwater runoff, erosion, and pollution in accordance with EPA and Maryland Watershed Improvement Plan II Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL) reduction goals.
- Provide an umbrella 501(c)(3) organization to receive project funding
- Identify sources of damage to the watershed, alert responsible parties and cooperate in corrective actions.
- Enlist businesses and organizations in the Spa Creek Stewardship Program to implement BMPs and measures to prevent runoff.
- Develop plans to repair the damage to the watershed and remediate their sources, working with other organizations and individuals.
- Conduct science-based watershed assessments to determine the level

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Left to right: Mel Wilkins, SCC Projects Director; Alan Hance, Executive Director Chesapeake Bay Trust; Dr. Henry Green, Pastor Heritage Baptist Church; Amy Clements, President, Spa Creek Conservancy.

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## President's Column

As I sailed on Round Bay last week looking at a fabulous sunset I was exhilarated by the beauty and quiet of it all. We are all quite fortunate to live near such a beautiful river. I was thankful for the number of things that your Severn River Association is doing day in and day out to restore and protect the Severn River for all of us who live in the watershed.

Volunteers have been trained to inspect for stormwater code violations. Thanks to Richard Klein of Community & Environmental Defense Services ([ceds.org](http://ceds.org)) working with SRA, we have held a number of educational programs training over 100 volunteers to inspect construction sites, bioretention facilities, and rain gardens.

The goal is to prevent and reduce sedimentation of our creeks and river by becoming better able to recognize code violations when they occur.

Over the years, Anne Arundel County's stormwater inspection staff has been reduced from seven inspectors to maybe just one so this SRA-built community asset can help greatly.

Our sessions have trained over 100 volunteers to date, usefully supplementing county inspectors. The county appreciates our efforts and is cooperative in acting on our findings. Maintenance of our existing facilities is imperative if we are to clean up the river, so this will help.

Oysters spat are due in mid September. Thanks to SRA Vice President Bob Whitcomb we now have over 1200 bushels of spat coming to the Severn.

We believe we have one of the largest programs, if not the largest, on the Chesapeake thanks to all of our communities and home owner volunteers who actually grow the oysters on their



dock. Contact Bob (see Oysters, p.3) if you would like to be part of cleaning up our river. We do need your help to make those oysters start cleaning!

Help to reduce sediment in your community is available. Our recent strategic planning and goal setting meeting has SRA focused on the reduction of sediment and erosion into our creeks and the river. We do need your assistance in identifying problem areas within your respective communities. We can assist your communities by doing an audit of your community areas of concern.

We have people and some resources to help both technically and financially. We are quite familiar with the grant process and feel we can help in securing them with you. In short, we can give you a road map to help guide your community in working together to make cleaner water flow.

We will be reaching out to certain communities along the Severn and seeing if we can set up a convenient time to get together and meet. See the article immediately to the right on this page for further details on our Marshall Dowling Memorial Stormwater Action Fund.

— John Wright

## Marshall Dowling Memorial Stormwater Action Fund

Does your community need funds for a stormwater management project? SRA grants up to \$2,500 per project for stormwater management projects in the Severn River watershed.

We recently renamed this fund in memory of Marshall Dowling, a former President of the Severn River Association who was very involved in stormwater management issues. His daughter, Lynne Rockenbauch, is presently the SRA Treasurer.

Grant funds can be spent on stormwater project design and for partial-funding of the project itself. Projects which decrease or slow stormwater runoff to reduce erosion and increase filtration are eligible. Examples are:

- Planting native species
- Repair of eroded streambeds or shorelines
- Rain gardens
- Restoration of natural shorelines where stormwater reaches the river
- Removal of non-native invasive species

Recent recipient projects were:

- Winchester on the Severn Circle Drive Ravine Mitigation System, \$1000 for design of a FilterSoxx mitigation project on a steep slope.
- Severna Park Baptist Church, \$1000 for Stormwater Runoff Mitigation System to address a serious problem dumping soil, sediment, nutrient and toxic pollutants into the Severn River.

The Severn River Association is eager to encourage projects that can make a difference in the Severn River watershed, so if you have a project that might be eligible please contact Ann Jackson at [ajax.tmm@verizon.net](mailto:ajax.tmm@verizon.net) or telephone 443-223-7236.

— Ann Jackson

*(Continued from "Snapshot", P.1)*

of biological impairment, and recommend solutions

SCC is small but highly active, with half of the primary team having been on-board since day one. Officer positions and committee leads have rotated among the 7-8 dedicated volunteers over the years but key players are being lost so we actively/urgently seek individuals to become Officers, Committee Chairs, Project Leads, and At Large Volunteers.

Our team has significant accomplishments and is still fully engaged. SCC has obtained over \$2.5 million in grant and in-kind funding. Most recent is a \$880,000 grant from MD Department of Natural Resources, Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal Bays Trust Fund 2012 for three priority projects in partnership with the City of Annapolis. Ninety-nine percent of the funding has been dedicated to watershed projects – SCC doesn't even have a phone number.

Past and ongoing projects include:

- Business & Organization Stewardship Program – Annapolis Hyundai and Rich Morton Lincoln Mercury (now Koons Toyota)
- Rain Gardens and Bank Restoration at Heritage Baptist Church
- St. Mary's Parish Parking Lot
- St. Martin's Lutheran Church
- St. Anne's Church Parish House
- Aleph Bet Jewish Day School
- Fish Surveys and Submerged Aquatic Vegetation Survey
- Spa Creek Baseline Assessment: Water Quality, Stream Habitat, Biological Diversity
- St. Mary's High School Watershed Laboratory and Partnership
- Annual Project Clean Stream and special debris clean-ups
- Lincoln Drive Rain Garden
- Comcast, WNAV, and WRNR Public Service Announcements, YouTube videos, Facebook, etc.
- Bike & Hike Trail Rain Gardens
- Riparian Woodland Planting (500+

- trees) & Clean-Up
- Invasive Species Eradication & Wetland Restoration
- Spa Creek Water Quality Data Collection/Monitoring
- Amos Garrett Park Restoration
- Rain Barrel Lessons & Sales
- Oyster Gardening
- Annual Fall GreenScape Native Plantings
- Living Shoreline & Bog Creation
- Stream Bank Restoration
- Annual Make-a-Difference-Day Watershed Projects
- Watershed Nature Trail, Chesapeake Children's Museum
- BayScapes Native Plant Conservation Landscaping
- Developed Best Management Practice Site Evaluation Tool
- Educational signage in Watershed
- Rockfish Restaurant Parking Lot, Upcoming Fall 2012

Participants in the Spa Creek Stewardship Programs can earn the coveted Champion Crab Plate award designed by a local watershed artist for SCC.

[spacreek.org](http://spacreek.org)

– Mel Wilkins

## Contributed Articles Wanted

We publish this SRA Log four times a year to keep our individual and organization members informed and motivated to keep working for our watershed.

Good articles, photographs, cartoons and other art are welcomed to its pages, especially from our members.

Let us be a creative outlet for your insights into our watershed issues!

Editor: [kurt.riegel@gmail.com](mailto:kurt.riegel@gmail.com)

## Oysters are Coming to the Severn

Maryland selected the Severn River as a sanctuary for oysters and initiated efforts to grow and plant oyster beds to filter water and improve its quality. In 2009 the Governor launched the Marylanders Grow Oysters (MGO) Program ([oysters.maryland.gov](http://oysters.maryland.gov)) and the Department of Natural Resources Shellfish Program selected the Severn River Association to lead the MGO Program on the Severn River.

If you live on the Severn and have a dock or access to one DNR will provide, FOR FREE, small cages with oyster spat on shell to be placed under docks for a year. We need more volunteers to become Oyster Growers, share their underwater dock space with the oysters, look after them for a year, and then return them for planting. Spat can be picked up at four locations in early September. You will care for them until next June when they will be planted on a sanctuary reef in the Severn.

In 2010 the SRA worked with DNR and the Army Corps of Engineers to select a location in the Severn River suitable for planting our growers' oysters. Substrate was laid down in areas between the Route 50 and 450 bridges and one area was designated the SRA Oyster Sanctuary. For three years' we've planted mature spat on our Sanctuary reef and divers found almost all of them thriving last August.

SRA continues to welcome new volunteer growers to nurture the spat through their first year and then plant them on the Sanctuary.

Please read the Oyster Grower Invitation at [bit.ly/TwOFpi](http://bit.ly/TwOFpi) for more detail, and the Guideline for Caring for Your Oysters at [bit.ly/TwPGhe](http://bit.ly/TwPGhe) and then contact SRA to volunteer by emailing [sraoysters@comcast.net](mailto:sraoysters@comcast.net)

– Bob Whitcomb



## Case Study in Community Involvement for Stormwater Control

### It Starts with One Voice

Winchester-on-the-Severn (WOS) has a long history of stewardship of our community-owned property, but stormwater control did not become a priority until the ravine path to one of our docks became unusable due to erosion.

Even so, erosion continued until adjacent homeowner, Eloise Ullman galvanized other homeowners, including SRA's Tom Guay, to seek a solution. EnviroSite Design Services' Mel Wilkins and Anne Guillette mentored Eloise through the process of identifying a plan and obtaining grants to put the community on a path of effective community stormwater management.

### A Joint Effort

In response to appeals from Eloise, the Chesapeake Bay Trust, Unity Gardens, and SRA generously contributed funding for the community's stormwater plan, supplemented by the community association and individuals.

The first phase of the project, the Circle Drive Rain Garden was constructed in August, 2010 and is described in an earlier issue of the SRA Log.

[bit.ly/Ni7bPR](http://bit.ly/Ni7bPR)

### Success

In just under two years, a remarkable change has occurred in the clarity and usage of our creek. Silt and pollution carried into Chase Creek, a tributary of the Severn River, is impressively and visibly reduced.

### Continuing on the Path

Thus inspired, the Winchester community association created a committee to pursue other projects, including a second Winchester Road Rain Garden in September 2011 with generous grants with Chesapeake Bay Trust and Unity Gardens. Funds were also provided by the community association and members. This active committee

has identified and completed a number of other projects:

- Seeking funding to restore the rest of the Circle Drive ravine in 2012
- Commissioning a Watershed Action Plan for the community
- Sponsoring a rain barrel initiative
- Creating a special community fund for stormwater projects
- Installation of two private rain gardens in 2010
- A community member is certified as a Master Watershed Steward

### Lessons Learned

WOS offers these tips for a successful community stormwater control initiative:

- Enlist a mentor to help identify sites where stormwater control projects might be especially effective, using AACounty resources like the Watershed Stewards Academy or firms like Mel Wilkins' EnviroSite Design Services.
- Identify one community member as leader for each project
- Confirm support of the community's Executive Board and identify advocates to serve on that board.
- Form a community committee on stormwater control and other environmental projects
- Confirm funds to match grants funding requests, from community associations and/or donations from individuals
- Conduct a fund-raising campaign for stormwater control projects. Make donations tax-deductible by creating a community nonprofit or-

ganization or using an existing nonprofit organization as a fiscal agent

- Identify a stormwater control project that would give definite and visible improvement. The project can be on community or private property. Select a relatively small and inexpensive first initiative in order to create a "track record" with funding organizations.
- Encourage homeowners to adopt rain barrels and manage the stormwater on their property (rain barrel initiative, eco-fair, "green" table at events, information, etc.).
- Commission a community Watershed Action Plan to provide a road map for future projects and prioritize them for funding
- Seek a volunteer to attend the Watershed Stewards Academy.

Winchester-on-the-Severn is fortunate to have its long history of caring for our community property, as well as a supportive Executive Board and community association.

Education is paramount and small steps (such as rain barrels and small rain gardens) can lead to major projects that will allow all of us privileged to live near our beautiful waterways to care for and protect the Severn River and Chesapeake Bay.

— Sharon Lawson



## SRA Updates Mission Statement & 5-year Strategic Plan

At our July Meeting newly elected president John Wright secured Board adoption of a Mission Statement and 5-year Strategic Plan. Work started by past president Duane Wilding was completed during a series of meetings facilitated by Philip Favero.

His report, 21 pages of responses by those attending a work session along with email contributions from members who were not present, was condensed into a 2-page summary.

### The SRA Mission Statement

*The Severn River Association, a group of individuals and community organizations, advocates, educates, and acts to protect and improve the health, ecological integrity, and quality of life for humans, flora and fauna living in the Severn River Watershed.*

During a March work session, participants suggested SRA goals and ranked them as follows:

- Improve Stormwater Management
- Reduce Critical Area Violation
- Improve Land Use and Zoning
- Increase Stream and Habitat Restoration
- Increase Enforcement of Regulations
- Limit Impervious Areas
- Limit Growth
- Decrease Bulkhead and Hardened Shorelines

Members see the role for communities and their designated representative in advocating, educating and taking actions to achieve these important goals.

More public visibility for SRA will attend programs that implement our mission. Action plans in chosen program areas will help to improve and protect the Severn River. SRA needs public recognition as the "river expert" and we need to work more closely

with regulatory agencies charged with enforcing or implementing watershed improvement programs. To do so, we must become a central source of information about programs/plans, and educators using studies, events, and other efforts to halt watershed decline.

SRA program areas are categorized as: Promotion, Organization, Membership, Projects, Coordination, and Funding.

The Board formally voted to adopt this strategy and has established one-year actions and a 5-year Plan to build the organization into a powerful voice and force for the Severn River.

Implementation is staged as follows:

1. Adopt the two page summary as SRA's Strategic Plan
2. Appoint committees for each Program Area
3. Initiate a process to merge SRA

- with the Severn Riverkeeper
4. Move to establish Permanent Staff/ Stronger Funding
5. Recruit members to help with Implementation
6. Initiate an SRA Education Program.

The Board wishes to thank Mr. Favero for his patience and help in facilitating and compiling the ideas and concerns of the member participants, and for his leadership in the work session in which these ideas were brainstormed and discussed.

While SRA has a big job to make progress on the plan, most planners know that the biggest job is to put a plan on paper and to obtain agreement of all in the organization. With that behind us, committee work begins. Those interested in participating in one or more of the 6 program areas, please contact John Wright.

– d. white



*Duane Wilding, Diane Evans, and John Wright admire flowering crape myrtles donated by SRA to Jonas Green Park on the Severn River.*