

SRA Has Reorganized

At the last annual meeting of members in June 2013, officers and board members were elected. Moreover, new Bylaws were adopted that change significantly how SRA governs itself and operates.

The Board of Directors is smaller, meeting quarterly. Monthly public educational meetings are held separately. These changes are intended to make SRA governance more focused and agile.

The changes were also motivated by a desire to make project initiation and management more effective, to increase the impact that SRA has on public policy and action, and to enhance membership and funding.

There is an expectation that, as we grow in numbers, effectiveness, and funding, one day it may be possible to

professionalize SRA by taking on an executive director who can better marshal our significant volunteer resources to execute more and better projects and secure funding to support them.

The officers are president Lee Meadows, vice president John Wright, treasurer Lynne Rockenbauch, secretary Bob vom Saal, and communications secretary Tom Guay.

The board of directors includes Don Carren, Lisa Bender, Bob Whitcomb, Elizabeth Rosborg, Kurt Riegel, Tom Guay, Ken Hatch, Steve Barry, Sally Hornor, Charlotte Lubbert, Maureen Burt, Miriam Mellin, Mike Robinson.

Complete information on SRA governance, bylaws, officers, board, projects, contacts, and membership is posted on our web site.

- Kurt Riegel

The Severn River Association (SRA) meets monthly, usually at 7 PM on the third Tuesday of each month. Exact meeting times and locations can vary, so consult the SRA web site for the latest information. Meetings free and open to the public, nice people preserving and restoring the Severn River watershed!

severnriver.org

SRA Volunteer Opportunities

Grant Writing: SRA seeks volunteers to help seek grants. Regardless of experience, we mainly need a commitment to the Severn River watershed and an ability to write clearly and concisely.

Clean Stream, and Oyster Growing Volunteers: SRA seeks volunteers for both these important projects. Our annual stream cleaning project needs many hands on a single Spring day. Our oyster growing efforts need people with access to piers to hang, and periodically shake, oyster cages.

Contact Lee Meadows, 410.849.3466
lee.meadows@comcast.net



Debris removed from our watershed at SRA's 2013 Cleanup. Left to right: Dick Spencer, Rick Kissel, Ann Jackson, Stevie Wilding, Fatimah Hassan (story p.3)

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President's Column



Ginger Ellis, the County Administrator for the Storm Water Utility presented the county's plans for the Severn River Watershed at our December public meeting.

The state legislature required Anne Arundel County to develop a dedicated source of income to address storm water that is polluting our rivers and the Chesapeake Bay. Thus, the county has created a storm water fee roughly based upon the amount of impervious surface on property owners' land, including driveways, parking lots, and buildings.

Hard surfaces can't absorb storm water, thereby generating large volumes of water that scour sediment, pollutants and nutrients into our creeks, rivers and the Chesapeake Bay.

The average storm water fee for a house is \$85, and the median property tax is \$2456 so the new tax represents about 3.5% increase for a tax payer with a median home value of \$340,000 in Anne Arundel County.

What does the County plan to do on the Severn with the Storm Water Fees? It will use the fees to amortize a bond issue of \$457 million, spending the money over six years in our county's twelve watersheds.

Watershed	Capital Spending (millions 2014-19)
Severn River	\$45
South River	\$56
Magothy River	\$69
Patapsco Tidal	\$193
Upper Patuxent	\$8.3
Bodkin	\$3.8
Little Patuxent	\$25
Other Rivers	\$0.2
Unspecified sites	\$41
Not shown	\$19
Total Spending	\$461

What will \$45 million accomplish? The county identified \$211 million of projects in the Severn River Watershed. If all were done, we would fully meet EPA's 2025 EPA target reductions for pollutants reaching our river.

Funding only 21% of this will make a dent, but will obviously leaves us with much undone. Ms. Ellis noted an additional \$33 million is committed to the Severn River from 2020 onward. This would help to complete \$83 million dollars of our \$211 million project backlog. This means that roughly 40% of the needed projects may be completed by 2025. For most of us this is too little, too late.

Where will the County spend the money on the Severn River? The County priority maps show five areas receiving most of the projects over the first six years: Odenton's Picture Spring Branch subwatershed, Lake Ogleton subwatershed, Weems Creek subwatershed, Cool Spring subwatershed, and Woolchurch subwatershed.

To speed the program the County is focusing on county owned property where storm water pond improvements and outfall repairs can be made quickly. More difficult stream improvements happen latter.

This improves on the \$0.5 - \$1 million our County was spending annually on Severn River storm water control during the last decade. The county didn't compensate for lax storm water codes and rapid development, causing a backlog of \$211 million in Severn River storm water control projects.

What can we do to speed the Severn's recovery? First, we need to insure the politicians don't cut any more from Anne Arundel's Storm Water fees. We can't afford to do less than what is now planned.

We need to push the County to reform its building code to keep more rainwater on a new building's property. Current codes require capturing only one inch of rainfall on the property before it runs off to storm drains and neighboring property. Increasing this to 4" would cost the county nothing, with minimal cost to the builder.

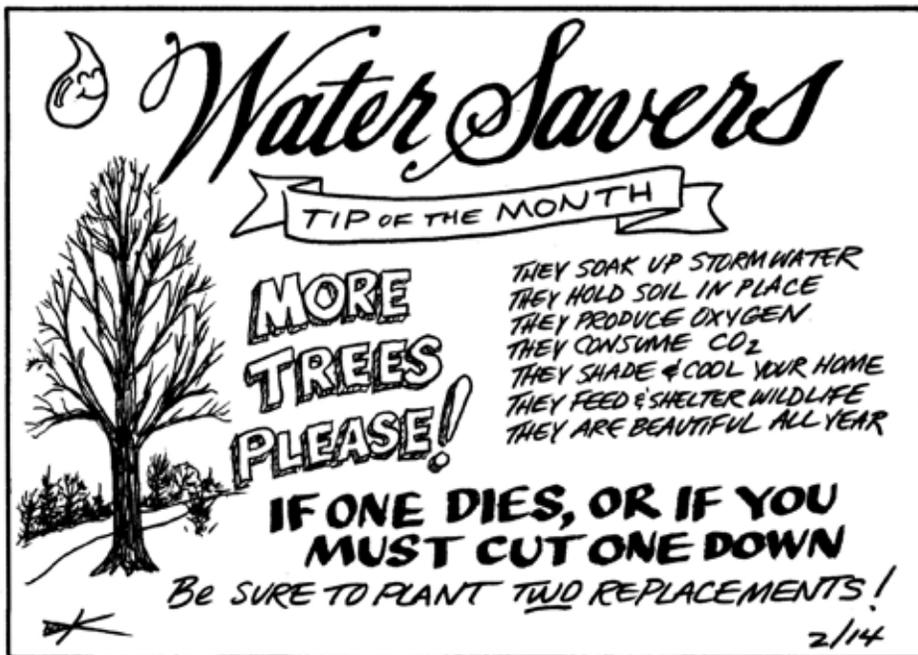
Larger projects need to be held to a higher standard. Building permits for projects of 5 acres or more ought to present no net TMDL additions. I plan to push these changes and hope you will join me.

Existing property owners should voluntarily bring their property to a zero storm water runoff target in a two inch rain. This can be accomplished with rain barrels, rain gardens, and other low cost ways of slowing the water's flow to allow absorption into the ground. SRA, together with the Master Watershed Stewards, can help you plan such changes without any cost.

Home owner associations need to do this same assessment on their property. Again SRA stands ready to help with small planning grants and in securing larger grants available to non-profits for Storm Water bioretention facilities.

Please call me with questions about the County's plans, the SRA, or how you can help.

- Lee Meadows, 410-849-3466
president@severnriver.org



down (literally) and dirty (very) as we remove polluting trash from the watershed. Last year we filled 245 trash bags and two 40 ft. containers, from 5 cleanup sites.

Picture Springs Branch watershed has another ravine with lots of debris and trash for us to tackle. It's just off Telegraph Road (Rt 170), and we'll let volunteers know later where to park and meet.

For nine years SRA has led these annual cleanups, and AA Department of Public Works (DPW) has cooperated with us by hauling the trash away.

We will determine the approximate amount and type of trash that will be removed from each site, and work with DPW to provide suitable containers.

They then haul all these items for recycling or dumping at the County landfill for free (saving us considerable time and money if we or the property owner had to truck it to the landfill and pay for fuel along the way).

We'll broadcast more details in March, and at this time simply ask you to mark your calendar for April 5 and contribute your time that morning to benefit the Severn River watershed.

- Bob Whitcomb

News Bits

- Anne Arundel County and the state are in turmoil over stormwater fees. The state laid a requirement on the counties to levy a fee, and AA county did so after a year of strife, but politicians are battling over whether to eliminate or change this requirement. SRA has consistently supported such fees as essential to repairing damage and in meeting future TMDL limits.

- SRA is nonpolitical and neither endorses nor opposes political candidates. But, as individuals, members sometimes become candidates. Kurt Riegel ran for Annapolis City Council (he narrowly lost) and Scott Hymes is running for AA County Council.

- The development at Crystal Spring continues to spark environmental debate. It mostly lies outside our watershed, but City policies/decisions may have repercussions for later developments in the Severn River watershed.

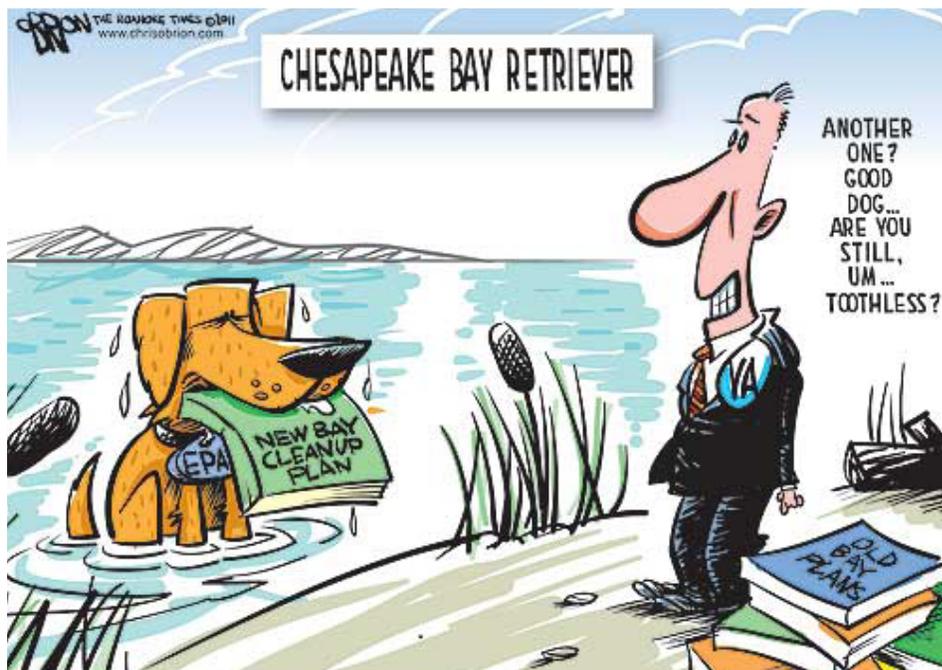
- There was not a single hurricane this past season, sparing our River and Bay from one assault anyway!

- Kurt Riegel

Project Clean Stream

At 9 am Saturday April 5, we'll lead cleanups, sponsored by SRA and the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay. Volunteers are needed.

We'll revisit a steep ravine at the headwaters of Luce Creek, behind the Annapolis Friends Meeting House. Volunteer workers should wear tough boots & gloves, and be prepared to get



The Head of the Severn

Arguably, the most important and sensitive part of the Severn River watershed is the top of the river.

For the volume of water in this shallow portion of the river, more land area affects it than anywhere else. Shallow headwaters are important cradles to many forms of life in our watershed's ecosystem. Nowhere are the effects of ecosystem disruption more tragic than here.

SRA and the Severn River Commission (SRC) have long accorded special importance to this part of the river.

They are a part of the newly formed Severn River Headwaters Coalition, which also includes SRK, AA DPW, MDE, DNR, EPA, SHA, Governor's office, Sen. Vitale's Office, and US-ACE. Collectively, they are calling attention to and working on the growing problems, motivating action to cure them. Here are the main points:

- The Jabez is noted for clean, cool water that supports the county's only native Brook Trout stream, indeed perhaps the only such stream in the coastal plain physiographic region from Florida to Maine.
- The coalition describes the current condition as a "Disaster" and requests emergency attention to preserve this unique ecosystem.
- There is massive stormwater-induced erosion transferring tons of sediment, debris, trash and chemicals into the Severn Run.
- Sediment loadings are visible even above the surface after major rain events, wasting money used for past public and private dredging.
- Shallow headwaters lack sufficient oxygen to support most fish, mollusk and crustacean species during the Summer months.
- Polluted runoff sources include state highways, county land, private devel-



Stormwater effects, head of the Severn: Cory Wilke, Mike Robinson, Heather Calabrese, Heather Hatfield, Stephen Barry, Jessica Seabright, Bill Mercer, Stephen, John Wright

opment projects.

- This problem can only be addressed by coordinated assessment, management and funding by county and multiple state agencies. A task force should be established to address the degradation on the headwaters of the Severn River and its repair.

SRA's Mike Robinson has taken a special interest in this part of the river and led several hikes to get a fix on its status. Steve Barry and Charlotte Lubbert have been instrumental in gathering attention on this problem.

Mike has viewed culverts shooting huge volumes of scouring water down slopes, in old-style conventional "treatments." He thinks we need to implement current best practices to improve on clearly inadequate measures implemented by the SHA.

Although many parties have hurt the watershed, SHA has a particularly unfortunate role. All polluted runoff from the intersection of highways 97, 32, and 3 runs directly into one small creek, Jabez Branch 3 (also called

Warfield Branch.)

A failed storm water pond dumps everything along the highway into eroded stone swales. It blew out a tunnel through wetlands along Morris Tongue Rd., and now sends the entire volume across I-97 via a 9 foot pipe and back into Jabez Branch 3, at Hog Farm Rd.

Tremendous storm water force is tearing out the valley floor, sending tons of sediment into the critical headwaters of the Severn River. This is most evident downstream, below Strayer University, in the Severn Run Natural Environmental Area. Eroded gullies, over 15-ft deep and 50-ft wide, run for hundreds of yards, trees toppled everywhere.

Yes, problem sources are many but repairing failed SHA management features are needed now as a precondition to restoration. For more info & images, visit: goo.gl/OhqwP5

– Kurt Riegel & Mike Robinson

Oyster Growing: Winter Update

The oyster is recovering in certain parts of the Chesapeake Bay, thanks to both mother nature and man's intervention. Growing/harvesting in lower Maryland, and aquaculture in Virginia are showing positive signs. Maryland now has almost 3,500 acres under lease for oyster aquaculture.

In Crisfield, MD (a town built on oyster shells), this Fall's harvest of oysters from, overwhelmed the shucking houses. For the first time in 25 years, Crisfield EXPORTED oysters to the Gulf of Mexico instead of importing oysters from the Gulf or Puget Sound.

How about the Severn? Recovery of the oysters in Tangier Sound suggests that the native oyster might be developing immunity to MSX and other diseases. Aquaculture-created oyster reefs are attracting natural spat, to set and grow in a natural oyster environment.

Army Corps of Engineers' (COE) and Oyster Recovery Partnership have placed substrate and spat near Tilghman Island on the Eastern Shore. Maryland's DNR is helping by purchasing of 50 railroad train carloads of fossil oyster shell from Florida for use in Harris Creek and the Little Choptank River, and will get around to the Severn River as they work towards the 2025 goal of restoring oys-

ter habitats in 10 tributaries.

These projects' goal is to restore the oyster to a self-sustaining population in selected tributaries. That's a challenge for the Severn, a northern tributary on the Western Shore with salinity too low for oyster reproduction.

While the Severn historically had productive oyster reefs, I believe that the urbanization of our river now contributes too much fresh water (from stormwater runoff) to allow a self-sustaining oyster population.

That's yet another reason to double up on our efforts at growing oysters because we'll need continuous seeding of our oyster reefs.

The Severn really needs restored oyster reefs to filter our waters (a mature oyster can filter 50 gallons/day) if we are ever to achieve our goal of restoring our river to be fishable and swimmable.

If you have access to a pier where you could "nurse" oyster spat in a cage hung from that pier, and want to help with SRA's oyster growing program, please contact me.

— Bob Whitcomb
sraoysters@comcast.net



Barge and crane prepare a Severn oyster reef to receive oysters that were grown by SRA volunteers

SRA Outings

Now and then SRA organizes outings like hikes, not only because it puts us in closer touch with the Nature we are trying to protect and restore, but also because it's fun and draws our members together.



In a hugely eroded stream

During the past year Mike Robinson led outings taking us to the head of the Severn, an area that is so important to the health of the river.

Past outings have included raft-ups of our boats in pleasant gatherings, some even staying overnight.

Keep in touch with us via our web site, and if you'd like to volunteer to lead an outing of your own design, please contact Mike Robinson at biomike123@gmail.com

Contributed Articles Wanted

We publish this SRA Log to inform and motivate our individual and organization members 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

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CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

Join the Severn River Association, memberships/donations tax deductible. SRA is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization.

(Circle membership category right)	Person	Organization
Regular	\$ 25	\$ 55
Patron	\$ 50	\$ 125
Benefactor	\$ 125	\$ 200

Use the Click and Join Checkout button on the SRA website at severnriver.org or send this form & check to:

The Severn River Association, P.O. Box 146, Annapolis, MD 21404-0146

Name:

Mailing address:

Telephone number(s):
(Specify home/work/cell)

E-mail address(es):

Your Community or Organization if any:

For Community Association members, please provide the name of your Representative who will sit on the SRA Board of Directors, with their phone, address, and e-mail):