

St. Mary's River Watershed Restoration Action Strategy

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SECOND PUBLIC MEETING NOTES 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM, September 3, 2008 Southern Maryland Higher Education Center

Attendees were encouraged to sign in and review the maps and information on display. Sandwiches, drinks, and deserts were available.

St. Mary's River Watershed Association (SMRWA) President Joe Anderson called the meeting to order at 6:21 PM. Attendees included:

Len Zuza, Southern Maryland Oyster Cultivation Society
Dan Ichniowski, St. Mary's County Metropolitan Commission
Bob Lewis, SMRWA Executive Director
Dudley Lindsley, Potomac River Association board member
Bob Paul, project co-director and SMRWA vice president
Tom Mattingly, St. Mary's County Commissioner District 3 and his spouse
Chris Tanner, SMCM Professor of Biology
Sue Veith, project co-director and SMRWA board member
Georgia Wheeler, volunteer coordinator Chesapeake Bay Field Lab
John "Barne" Wheeler, chair, St. Mary's County Commission on the Environment
Ray de Leon, SMRWA Board member
Jesse Yeatman, reported for The Enterprise
Michael Wayman, SMC Water Policy Task Force
Steve King, St. Mary's County Metropolitan Commission
Dick Myers, representing Senator Mikulsky
Francis Woodburn, community member
Three other community members who did not sign in

Mr. Anderson brief the attendees on what is a WRAS and how will the WRAS affect public policy, regulatory development, and environmental health. He reiterated that St. Mary's River is the largest river in Maryland wholly contained within one jurisdiction. Therefore, it is solely our responsibility.

Project co-director Bob Paul briefed attendees on the development of the first phase of the two-year WRAS program. Via a PowerPoint presentation, he walked attendees through the deliverables: 1) watershed characterization, 2) synoptic survey, 3) stream corridor assessment, and 4) stakeholder outreach; and then proceeded to present the findings of the first three deliverables. Of note: It takes about 2 days for water to travel from the airport (furthest headwaters) to the river's mouth.

The floor was then opened to questions and comments:

- Where are the most impacts?
The upper watershed is quite impacted while the tidal portion has little impact.

- What is an “inadequate buffer?”
No shoreline vegetation, or lawn going to the water’s edge. All streams need shade. The buffer catches nutrients and pollutants and tree-buffers help to keep water temperature lower.
- What is an “unusual condition?”
Foul orders, odd objects, foam, and discoloration.
- Of the erosion sites, how much is natural and how much human induced?
Difficult to say but much of the erosion may be “legacy sediments” traveling through the system. Much of the erosion is a result of the soil types and soil types in combination with slope. Clay soils cause excessive runoff since they do not allow water to filter down into the ground. On the other hand, friable soils on slopes are also problematic. Sue Veith noted that it is believed that Maryland had more than 15,000 beaver dams in pre-colonial times. Dr. Paul noted that the St. Mary’s River watershed hosts over 100 dams today. “There are twenty dams alone on the middle Hilton Run tributary.” Ms. Veith noted that the 1996-2002 Center for Watershed Protection study attributed most of the erosion to legacy sediments. As land is developed, stream flow is reduced overall and yet storm flows are increased. This variability lends to unstable stream banks and bottoms. CWP recommended that the county focus on the rate that runoff leaves developed sites.
- How many problems are associated with roads?
There may be quite a few. Rte. 5 and Church Creek site has an open top culvert which speeds the runoff (both volume and velocity) on into the stream. Storm water ponds at Exploration are failing also causing flows to vary widely.

Attendees were invited to stay and continue to discuss the program and watershed while feasting on the refreshments. The formal meeting ended at 7:44 PM although informal discussion continued until 8:05.

Respectfully submitted,
Bob Lewis
September 4, 2008