



July 2007

Update from the Corsica River Conservancy (CRC) Board

Hello to all of our CRC members and to everyone else living and playing in our beautiful Corsica River Watershed. CRC is now 230 members strong. During the first 6 months of 2007 our members devoted more than 1900 hours to restoring and preserving our watershed. As with our past semiannual updates, I want to bring you up to date on the status of the Corsica Restoration and CRC's efforts in advancing it. For those of you who responded to our various outreach efforts, we thank you for your support and your continuing interest in the state of the Corsica watershed. For those of you just finding out about us, we ask that you visit us at www.corsicariverconservancy.org and join us in our mission to restore and preserve our watershed.

Overall Progress

The water quality characteristics we are seeing on the River this season are generally the same as in the past. While we would like to see results in the water sooner, the CRC Board is satisfied that the project is making satisfactory progress towards its goals. Some of the specific actions that lead us to that conclusion and in which CRC members have been directly involved are listed further below by program area.

However, there are many other actions being taken by the state, county, town and other organizations. CRC has asked for a comprehensive status report for the overall project and it is currently being developed by DNR with input from all participants. That report should be available by late September. We will notify you at that time and provide access information.

In the meantime, you should know that there has been a very successful signup for the Cover Crop program this season for farms in the watershed. This is probably the most important program in the restoration in terms of reducing excessive nutrients in the river. The Oyster Recovery Program has committed another million oyster spat to be deposited in the River later this summer. There has been a substantial increase in wetlands designated for restoration in the near term and we are seeing more acreage protected through easement programs and bio-retention techniques. The Town and County are making significant strides in watershed management through its planning, ordinances, and building of stormwater management facilities. The Centreville Town Council recently established an Environmental Committee as an ongoing function to monitor impact and advise the staff and Council members. The County is also making good progress in developing new stormwater management and low impact development (LID) ordinances.

Water Quality and Safety

CRC proudly began our third season of taking weekly water quality data and samples out on the River. We started this program with a handful of volunteers and some borrowed equipment. We now have 20 trained volunteers involved. Thus far this season, our biggest

problem has been poor clarity in the water column most likely from continued algae blooms. We need better clarity before we can expect critical underwater grasses to flourish again.

Our other indicators are following much in suit with previous years with acceptable levels of Dissolved Oxygen and infrequent bacteria problems.

In January, a crew of researchers from Woods Hole visited the Corsica to gather data for a study of ground water influences on Water Quality near the mouth of the River. The participation of this world renowned institution is another indicator of the widespread interest in the Corsica Restoration and the level of expertise being devoted to it. The resulting research is expected to complement related work being conducted by the University of Maryland to analyze the interaction of the Corsica with the Chester River.

Ground water in the Corsica watershed is also the subject of a study by the state that is getting national recognition at EPA. It will be the subject of a presentation by MDE staff at an upcoming conference in Austin, Texas.

On June 19, CRC held an informal reception for Maryland Secretary of Environment Shari Wilson. Secretary Wilson was on a field trip to review MDE activities in this area. We persuaded her to put in at the Sharkeys' pier at Sycamore Point and spend some time discussing the Corsica Restoration. We think this was a very valuable discussion that will pay dividends in the future for the Restoration.

Restoration

The key word here has been rain gardens and lots of them. We have installed thirty gardens this Spring and have approximately forty more scheduled for this Fall. We hope to have 200 residential rain gardens in place over the next three years. If you are interested, please contact the Conservancy by e-mail at corsicariverconservancy@verizon.net. With your help, we can do even better. There are about 1500 residences in our watershed.

QAC's Department of Public Works recently partnered with Master Gardeners and CRC to establish a great rain garden (bioretention facility) at the rear of the Centreville Library. This garden is soaking up runoff from the roof and parking lot, thereby helping to recharge the aquifer and avoid runoff into the river. Stop by to appreciate its beauty and function.

There were some opportunities in the last few months for CRC to work with property owners considering actions along their shorelines and tributaries that could affect wetlands and habitat. CRC is continuing to work with these individuals and organizations to make sure they are fully informed about approaches having the most beneficial effects on water quality and habitat.

This year, the Town of Centreville is planning and actually implementing several projects to restore buffers and improve the management of storm water flowing from the town into the Corsica. Chris Clark is the full time Corsica Watershed Manager and a member of the CRC Board. We expect to get information about these projects and an opportunity to tour them out to members later this year.

On May 10, CRC members attended a briefing by QAC Department of Public Works and its contractor, Ecosite to hear about their progress in completing a Low Impact Development manual for the County. This project, funded through an EPA/MDE grant, is critical to fostering

new techniques that can significantly reduce runoff and improve the quality of water that does reach the River. The county seems to be making excellent progress in this effort.

CRC helped to coordinate a grant request to MDE/EPA for funds to use a Low Impact stormwater technique called Bioswales. CRC is participating with QAC Public Works and the Soil Conservation District in this request that could lead to more innovative and effective techniques being used in our watershed.

Education and Public Information

We had another successful day this May participating once again in the Kennard School “Bay Days” program. CRC volunteers conducted several classes of fun instruction for children in understanding the River, the watershed and their role in its health.

Watershed Awareness Day 2007! Mark your calendars for a reprise of this outstanding event at Bloomfield Farm on Saturday, September 15, noon to 4pm. We plan to have even more fun and informative activities for children and adults. This is a great way to spend a fall afternoon exploring a wonderful environment and learning about the watershed, its restoration and your role in it.

In March, CRC participated in a briefing to the QAC Commissioners on the status of the Restoration. John McCoy, the DNR project manager conducted the briefing and CRC made a statement describing some of its supporting activities and advocating the continued strong support of this effort by the Commissioners.

In June, CRC representatives were interviewed by Joel McCord, radio personality for WYPR (88.1FM). He was interested in telling listeners about the Corsica Restoration in the context of overall Bay restoration status.

On June 23 CRC and the Corsica River Yacht Club (CRYC) jointly hosted a paddle up Emory Creek for members. This was a fine day for sharing and appreciating our River’s wonderful resources.

Interested in seeing large scale restoration techniques in use to restore nearby Poplar Island? Check www.corsicariverconservancy.org for information.

Outreach

In March, CRC was pleased to conduct a public forum on the restoration with our Co-sponsors, the QAC League of Women Voters. The presentations by State, County, Town and CRC representatives did an excellent job of portraying the close teamwork that is developing among these groups in making the Restoration a success. The event was video recorded for later repeated playback on QACTV Cable Channel. A DVD of the event is also available as well as copies of the presentation power points on the CRC website.

CRC provided exhibits and staff at the Arts Council “Art of the Deal” event and at the Wade-in event in June.

Also in June, a group of volunteers made a targeted distribution of Corsica Restoration information, including the Backyard to the Bay instruction booklet, to residents in the Claiborne Fields, Three Creeks and Lently Farm communities – over 200 residences in all. These are a few of the developments that make up our watershed community. CRC is trying to get each

community to have a presence in the Restoration by having volunteer representation and an informal communication network. Most have a tributary running in or near their community that needs to be “adopted”. Anyone interested in helping to form these groups, should contact CRC by e-mail at corsicariverconservancy@verizon.net, or by phone at 410-758-8756.

Raise your Voice for the Corsica

We are all getting increasingly familiar with the State’s pending budget deficit. Anticipating possible reductions in funding, CRC has been meeting and corresponding with key decision-makers to make sure that the merits of continuing the Restoration Project are fully appreciated. In January, CRC briefed members of the Eastern Shore Delegation in Annapolis. More briefings are being scheduled. Your emails and letters to the Governor, his cabinet, and your elected state representatives will help assure that funding is maintained.

In March, several CRC members attended a Smart Growth Forum in Baltimore featuring the new Secretaries for Natural Resources, Environment, Planning and Transportation. We were able to make the point that successful preservation and restoration in the Corsica, as elsewhere, very much depended on timely enforcement of regulations, especially things like sediment controls. The review of enforcement practices by the incoming administration is very much appreciated.

Look for copies of CRC correspondence with the Governor, his Cabinet and other key officials at www.corsicariverconservancy.org later this summer. A healthy watershed is not only great for the River, it is great for all of us living here who treasure our quality of life and precious natural resources. Speak up for the preservation of what we have and the restoration of what we’ve lost!

Please stop by and see us at Bloomfield Farm on September 15, 12 – 4 p.m. We would love to talk with you and hear your thoughts on the Restoration.

Sincerely,
Corsica River Conservancy Board of Directors

Frank DiGialleonardo, President	Myron Richardson, Vice President
Barbara Sharkey, Secretary/Treasurer	Chris Clark
Lew Gayner	Jim Malaro
Anne Nielsen	Don Pusey
Steve Sharkey	Jeffrey Woodworth

*P.O. Box 235
Centreville, MD 21617
www.corsicariverconservancy.org
e-mail: corsicariverconservancy@verizon.net*