



January 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. On behalf of the CRC Board, 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. We look forward to your continuing interest in the state of the Corsica watershed along with your support and participation in CRC restoration actions. 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.

Water Quality and Safety

The close of 2006 marked the end of the first year of the Corsica River Watershed Restoration Pilot Project (Corsica Restoration Project). No significant improvements were seen in any of the key water quality indicators. Water clarity actually appeared worse as extensive algae blooms continued throughout the summer and fall. The lack of clarity continued to inhibit the growth of underwater grasses.

The good news is that a number of the projects funded under the restoration are now in place and being staffed-up. These include projects to stem nutrients from agriculture (cover crop program), increase wetland acreage, reduce residential stormwater effects, and improve buffers.

Much of the historic oyster bed areas near the mouth of the River were restocked with seed oysters that should improve filtration and nutrient uptake.

State offices put in place an extensive network of water quality monitoring facilities throughout the watershed. The data will clearly indicate the state of water quality as the restoration progresses.

In August, CRC organized a tour of installed nutrient reducing septic systems following a workshop it held earlier in the year. The Corsica Restoration Project has been granted funds by the state to install approximately 30 of these systems which will significantly reduce nutrient levels in ground water.

In October, CRC completed its second full season of weekly water quality monitoring along the main stem of the River. This included monitoring for potentially harmful bacteria levels.

CRC made a significant contribution to public knowledge and safety by weekly publishing its data in the QAC Record Observer and by holding a public meeting in September with Maryland Dept of the Environment (MDE) officials to clarify if and when observed bacteria

levels are harmful, as well as what precautions to take. This meeting became a focal point of an exclusive article in the Evening Capital titled: *The Corsica – Can this River be Saved*.

Restoration

Extensive wetland restorations were put in place by the state at the County's new Bloomfield Farm preserve. CRC joined in the planting of trees on this property, the trees having been grown at QAC High School through a CRC supported project. Other wetlands have been identified for restoration.

No underwater grasses were restored in the river in 2006 due to the lack of clarity, however oyster beds were re-seeded as noted above. CRC participated in the annual identification of underwater grasses with the Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS).

In December, CRC wrote to the QAC Planning Commission to voice its support for expanding the County Rural Legacy Program to include key properties throughout the Corsica Watershed where conservation easements could improve water quality and habitat. CRC met with QAC staff, as well as the Eastern Shore Land Conservancy (ESLC) to establish working relationships in this regard.

Throughout the summer and fall of 2006, CRC volunteers participated with state experts in monitoring the habitat and health of streams in the watershed. Results were good in several of these areas.

In October, CRC reviewed the plans for the proposed overpass at Rt 301/Rt 304. CRC then wrote the State Highway Administration voicing support for construction alternatives that would minimize any adverse effects on Corsica headwaters and maximize restoration opportunities. During the Summer and Fall, CRC volunteers joined QAC Master Gardeners to help cleanup, protect and restore buffer areas along Millstream.

Also during this period, CRC held a public workshop and helped develop demonstration sites for implementing improved stormwater treatment techniques on residential properties. This effort has started with ten properties within the Town limits and is being expanded to hundreds more throughout the watershed through a national grant and with the help of the Alliance for the Chesapeake and QAC Extension and Soil Conservation offices. Homeowners in the watershed can get free landscape planning and up to \$2,000 to construct raingardens and other stormwater control measures. Interested residents should contact CRC at 410-758-8756 or CorsicaRiverConservancy@verizon.net.

CRC also helped develop a brochure of relevant conservation practices for homeowners in the watershed. This brochure is being published through the QAC Soil Conservation District and will be distributed to all residences in the watershed.

Education and Public Outreach

In April, CRC sent a letter to all riparian residences in the watershed informing them of the restoration project and their special opportunities to help support its objectives. This was followed in October with a letter to 1300 residences in the watershed with basic information about the restoration as well as the Corsica Awareness Day event (see below).

In May CRC volunteers joined Maryland Dept. of Natural Resources and others to support the Kennard School "Bay Days" program where all of the 3rd, 4th and 5th grade classes participated in hands-on activities, presentations and field trips that relate to restoration of the Chesapeake Bay.

In May CRC became party to an MDE grant awarded to QAC Dept. of Public Works. The grant will assist the county in developing a Low Impact Development Manual for managing development in new and existing communities in a way that will best preserve the Corsica River. The grant will also assist the county and the CRC to develop a comprehensive public outreach and education program.

During the summer CRC developed and staffed exhibit booths at several community events where volunteers communicated with residents about the restoration and enlisted their participation.

In August the CRC webpage www.Corsicariverconservancy.org was established to better communicate with members on the status of the Corsica Watershed restoration.

During the Fall CRC began targeted outreach presentations with various community and neighborhood groups including Symphony Village, QAC Sportsmen's Club, and Church groups.

In November, CRC, along with QAC Parks and Recreation and the Town of Centreville, sponsored a Corsica Watershed Awareness Day at Bloomfield Farm. Over 400 attendees saw 25 exhibits describing various aspects of the Corsica Restoration Project underway, as well as wetlands restorations and plantings around the 240 acre farm. Over one hundred containerized trees were given to participants who pledged to plant them in the Corsica Watershed. The event also enjoyed extensive coverage in local newspapers.

Voice for the Corsica

In February 2006 there was a proposal in the Maryland General Assembly to significantly cut the budget for the Corsica Restoration Project. As CRC President, I was asked by the Governor's office to participate in a Press Conference with him to defend the budget and oppose the cuts. This appearance was instrumental in fending off the proposed cuts and further publicized the merits of the project.

In September, I appeared before the Centreville Town Council on behalf of CRC to address issues raised in its letter to the Council requesting that the Town's Comprehensive Plan reflect the Corsica River's impairments and resulting nutrient limits established for the river as real constraints in its growth planning process. CRC also requested that the Council assure that plans for developing the Centreville Wharf area take into account potential impact on the health of the River and achievement of the restoration goals to which it has pledged support.

In December, CRC representatives met with incoming QAC Commissioners to stress the need for their strong support for the Corsica Restoration Project. This meeting ultimately resulted in a strong letter of support from the QAC Commissioners to Governor-elect O'Malley, his transition team and General Assembly representatives. CRC sent its own letter

to the Governor-elect's transition team requesting strong, continued support for the Restoration Project.

Monthly Project Meetings – Throughout the year, CRC continued to participate extensively in the monthly project management meetings of the various organizations involved in the Corsica Restoration Project. CRC normally has at least four representatives at these meetings to communicate its activities, coordinate with other agencies and to help assure that the project stays on track.

CRC Objectives for 2007

All in all, we think 2006 was an extremely active and successful year for CRC in getting off the ground and having a positive impact on the Restoration. That impact was probably greatest in building awareness and support for the restoration throughout the community. CRC membership has already grown to over 130. We have a very ambitious program of activities laid out for 2007. These will include more public meetings that will increase your opportunity to learn and participate in this very worthwhile endeavor as well as more hands-on restoration projects. We need your involvement.

The Corsica is worth saving and restoring for ourselves and for future generations. We believe it can be done, and in doing it, we can show a path for others around the Bay to follow. Please join with us.

Sincerely,
Corsica River Conservancy Board of Directors

Frank DiGialleonardo, President

Myron Richardson, Vice President

Lew Gayner

Anne Nielsen

Steve Sharkey

Barbara Sharkey, Secretary/Treasurer

Jim Malaro

Don Pusey

Jeffrey Woodworth