



July 2008

Update from the Corsica River Conservancy (CRC) Board

Dear Members and Friends of the Corsica:

This is your semi-annual update on actions to help restore and conserve the Corsica River Watershed, in concert with our restoration partners at the municipal, county, state and federal levels. This update is being presented in a bullet format that we think will make it easier to read and digest. The Restoration Project is in its third year and we are seeing real changes in the watershed that will lead to improved water quality and habitat.

The Community's interest and response continues to grow as does our CRC membership, now 425 strong! To those of you who responded to our various outreach efforts, we thank you for your support. 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

- CRC's water quality tests this year show a slightly improving trend
- University of Maryland Center for Environment Bay report card graded the Corsica at "C+", the highest grade of any tributary in the Chester River System and among the highest grades in the state.
- Bacteria levels continue to be generally safe (except after heavy rain)
- Check the CRC website for weekly results including bacteria levels
- Water clarity still not consistently good enough to sustain underwater grasses
- No fish kills in the Corsica since 2006
- We saw a marked increase in schooling menhaden all along the River this season. Menhaden are filter feeders that help water quality.

Restoration

- CRC rain garden program continues to be the banner residential component to the restoration.
- Thus far nearly 100 rain gardens have been installed through CRC.

- The Queen Anne's County Public Works Department installed an extensive rain garden to control storm water from the Centreville Library parking area and is installing similar rain gardens at other County sites including the Senior Center in Centreville.
- CRC plans to have another 50 rain gardens installed by the end of 2008. Contact us if you are interested in having one of these beautiful, river friendly gardens on your property. (contact: corsicariverconservancy@verizon.net)
- CRC provided 35 rain barrels to watershed residents. Many of these were funded through an auction of art created and donated by local artist Jonathan Shaw.
- A very successful stream cleanup was held on April 5. Volunteers collected two large truck loads of trash. Thanks to all who pitched-in!
- Another 20 million oyster spat were deposited on the Corsica's historic oyster beds by Horn Point Laboratory. The beds are now sanctuaries.
- Our partners, the Town of Centreville and Queen Anne's County Public Works are completing significant engineering projects that will help control storm water at sites throughout the watershed.
- The Town's projects include a "coastal plain outfall" near the public works yard, a wetland at the Waste Water Plant (Gravel Run), and a wetland to treat runoff at the foot of Chesterfield Avenue (Millstream).
- The County is completing an extensive storm water management facility at its large Public Works site at Safety Drive.
- County Commissioners followed their recent requirement for denitrifying septic systems in all new construction within the Critical Areas of the County, with an ordinance requiring all conventional septic systems to be pumped out at least every five years.
- The Cover Crop program announced by the Department of Agriculture for 2008 significantly increases payments to farmers for implementing various cover crop options. Once again, there is no limit on funds available for this program in the Corsica Watershed.

Public Information and Education

- CRC sponsored a poster contest for area elementary and middle schools as a way of promoting youth stewardship values and knowledge about the Corsica Watershed.
- Over 250 posters were created and entered. Thirty five finalists were honored at a reception at the QAC Arts Council building. The 2 best in show awardees, Paige Todd and Brianna Johnson were also honored later with a proclamation by the County Commissioners.
- Posters will be displayed at the Bloomfield Farm House during Corsica Watershed Awareness Day, September 20, 12-4pm.
- CRC is participating with Extension and others to develop an after school ecology program at QAC High School.
- We continue to have articles published highlighting the watershed; why and how it must be restored and preserved.

- CRC authored an article for the Record Observer regarding recent DNR findings of water quality in the upper tributaries and linking this to the proportion of land in the watershed covered by impervious surface.
- Using various sources, the percent impervious surface in the Corsica watershed was estimated at 4%. The article stressed that the information needed to be refined as QAC updates its Comprehensive Plan.
- Impervious surfaces nearing 10% or more have been shown to irreversibly destroy underwater habitat in studies of other watersheds.
- CRC continues to make presentations about the Restoration to community groups and other organizations. If you would like to arrange for such a presentation contact corsicariverconservancy@verizon.net
- The Town of Centreville continued its outreach efforts including aisle head displays of river friendly products at local supermarkets and information on river friendly practices in the Record Observer and at the Centreville Library.
- The Town now has a pet waste ordinance and an active Environmental Committee to help guide other practices that impact water quality.
- The County Extension Office conducted an event at Conquest Beach on June 4th. All were invited but the target audience was farmers and operators. Several excellent presentations were given on cover crops, and their effect on ground water and runoff, as well as other practices.

Outreach

- Members who joined us at our Picnic on the River event June 21 enjoyed a beautiful evening and learned much listening to naturalist Nick Carter and joining in a guided kayak paddle up Emory Creek.
- CRC promoted outreach and membership at the Bay Boat Show, joining other conservation oriented organizations there.
- CRC joined with QAC Master Gardeners to produce a “Garden Affair” event the morning of June 21 at the Centreville Library rain garden. It helped demonstrate and spread the word to the public on how effective rain gardens can be.
- CRC is again taking the lead, along with the Town and County to produce another Watershed Awareness Day at Bloomfield Farm. This event promises to be even bigger and better than last year’s which attracted over 500 attendees. See the enclosed flyer and join us!

Outlook

We remained optimistic and energized. It is great to see so many people both inside and outside of our watershed responding to the challenge of restoring the Corsica and bringing our watershed to a state of health. It is especially rewarding to see so many engineering projects being implemented by the Town and the County that we know will improve water quality through improved storm water control. The Town is accomplishing this despite the recent departure of their Watershed Manager. A replacement is being recruited and we hope to meet him/her soon.

At the State level, the Corsica has been designated as a “Priority Watershed”. As such, it will be given additional points in awarding funding from the newly created Bay Trust program. That program is funded at \$25 million for 2009 and \$50 million per year beyond that.

We are pleased to report that CRC is currently working with the Town and County, under the guidance of DNR, to put together a joint proposal for additional funding from the Bay Trust that will help accelerate the restoration.

One of the most significant things that we are demonstrating here in the Corsica is that **it takes a community to save a watershed**. 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. Please continue to support us and to speak up for the preservation of what we have and the restoration of what we’ve lost!

Sincerely,

Corsica River Conservancy Board of Directors

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