

SWAP Stakeholder/SRA Annual Meeting Minutes  
July 21, 2009, 6:30 pm  
Turner's Creek Pavilion

Kim Kohl, Executive Director, opened, welcoming the crowd of approximately 110 and provided a brief history of the Sassafras River Association (SRA), including highlights of the past 12 months which included hiring staff, purchasing a vessel, establishing an office, advocacy efforts, and securing funding and gathering a Core Team for the development of the Sassafras Watershed Action Plan. The Plan is expected to be completed by December 2009 and presented to the public in early 2010. Kim mentioned that SRA had already begun seeking funding to implement restoration recommendations.

Chesapeake environmentalist and author Tom Horton spoke next, delivering a message of optimism through regeneration and restoration. Tom recalled Henry David Thoreau's alarm at the decline of Concord's forests in the 19th Century as a result of human impact through cultivation. By 1975 those same forests resurged, and covered 50% of the land, as agriculture decreased and conservation increased. Tom praised the beaver in its role of creating ponds and wetlands that increase biodiversity while filtering silt and nutrients that would otherwise enter the waterways. Tom also referenced the impressive success of oyster restoration in the 64 square mile Lynnhaven River Watershed in Virginia — 1/1000th the size of the Chesapeake Bay's 64,000 square mile watershed. Lynnhaven's success has led to the creation of an 80-acre oyster bar in the Little Wicomico River that currently produces approximately 20% of all the oysters in Maryland's waters.

Paul Sturm, biologist with Center for Watershed Protection and a key member of the Sassafras Watershed Action Plan (SWAP) Core Team, presented 28 restoration strategies for the Sassafras which would result in significant reductions of nitrogen, phosphorus and sediments. Top priorities include the upgrade of Galena and Betterton's Waste Water Treatment Plants to ENR (enhanced nutrient reduction), implementation of 100 denitrifying home owner septics and an increase of 5,000 acres in cover crop on current ag lands. Stakeholders were receptive to the strategies and appreciated the comprehensive approach. Paul remarked that SRA will continue working with the Core Team to prioritize and identify funding opportunities for project implementation.

Joanne Throwe, Associate Director of University of Maryland's Center for Environmental Finance and SWAP partner, facilitated a short Q & A session. In addition to clarifying SWAP recommendations, stakeholders addressed individual concerns such as failing septics, increased development and zoning violations at Indian Acres.

John Burke presented an award to SRA co-founder and first Board President, John Vail. Vail's four years of service as President were acknowledged as well as his ongoing commitment to the organization.

The meeting was adjourned at sunset.