



Sassafras Update

Sassafras River Association
PO Box 333
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November 2005

Preserving Farmland . . . Saving our River



Credit: Wayne Gilchrest

Eastern Shore Land Conservancy Executive Director **Rob Etgen** reemphasized the importance of farm preservation in Chesapeake Bay cleanup at our November meeting.

The greatest threat to the Chesapeake Bay comes from people — too many people — moving into fragile natural areas. As we have converted farmland to housing for an increasing human population, we have too often done it without thought or planning. We have sacrificed farms, where

“best management practices” can control the nutrients that pollute the Bay, for housing developments with septic systems, impervious surfaces that promote run-off, fertilized lawns, and more cars creating air pollution — which winds up in our waters.

Rob focused us on the importance of local zoning in the preservation process — compare agricultural district zoning of 1 house per 30 acres in Kent County with 1 per 5 or 8 acres in Cecil County.

We also learned about the need to protect State programs for preserving farmland and other natural areas. Over the last several years, the State has dipped into “Program Open Space” funds — real-estate transfer tax money earmarked for

preservation — to balance the General Budget. Rob told us about the “Program Open Space Coalition” which works to ensure these funds are used as intended and encouraged the SRA to join.

There’s much we can do; for more information on the ESLC and its programs, visit www.eslc.org or call 410 827-9756

December 13 — “Sassafras Samplers Results”

We’ll have a double bill at our December meeting — presentations that go hand-in-hand. In addition to Mike Naylor’s presentation on SAVs (described below), Ted Carski will brief us on the results of our October 15 water-sampling program.

December 13 — Sub-Aquatic Vegetation

At our next meeting — December 13 at 7:00 p.m., we’ll hear from the Maryland DNR’s Mike Naylor, the “go-to guy” on Sub-Aquatic Vegetation (SAV).

We’ll learn why SAV is both an essential element of Bay — and River — health as well as an indicator of that

health. We’ll also learn what grassroots organizations like ours can do to promote healthy SAV growth.

Bring your questions — What’s native and what’s not? What’s good for the Bay and its inhabitants and what interferes with them?

How can we help as an Association. What can you do?



Harvesting eelgrass seed in Tangier Sound for future planting.

Credit: Maryland DNR

Volunteer Now!

We’ve got a lot of activities and programs that will succeed only if **you** participate. Email mail@sassafrasriver.org (or write us at the PO Box) to tell us how you’ll help.

We also need **your** help to set up SRA programs:

- Septic Forum for Southern Cecil and Northern Kent Counties. We need help setting up this major meeting, which is planned for March.
- Project Clean Stream. Can it possibly have been 6 months? We need to think about planning our clean-up next April.
- Adopt a Shoreline program for homeowners’ associations.
- Examine the impact of the Rte 301/299 weigh station.
- Green Schools. We’d like to set up a plan to partner with some of our local elementary schools.

You’ll be hearing about our annual membership renewal soon.

Membership Milestone — 100 and growing!

More than 100 of your neighbors have shown their commitment to the Sassafras River by joining the SRA.

Visit www.sassafrasriver.org

and download a membership form today. Your contribution is tax-deductible!