



Sassafras Update

Sassafras River Association
PO Box 333
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July 2006

Water Chestnut Harvesting

On July 10, SRA members joined staff from the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) in an annual effort to rid the Sassafras of the invasive water chestnut. Under the guidance of Mike Naylor, DNR's Underwater Grass Restoration and Education Program Manager, the boat/canoe/jet ski flotilla set out from the Turner's Creek boat ramp on its "seek and destroy" mission.



"The Water Chestnut (*Trapa Natans*) is now found principally in two Chesapeake Bay tributaries – the Bird River and the Sassafras," Naylor said. "It's important to get out every year to keep the population in check."

According to DNR's website, one acre of water chestnut can produce enough seeds to cover 100 acres the following year. With four, hard half-inch spines that are sharp enough to penetrate shoe leather and large enough to keep people off beaches, water chestnut seeds are major hazards to water-based recreation. Additionally, water chestnut can wipe out native bay grasses from some areas, prevent nearly all water use where it occurs, and create breeding grounds for mosquitoes. It provides only marginal habitat to native fish and birds.

The DNR staff and volunteers piloted their craft through the lily pads of Turners Creek looking for the water chestnut "rosettes" – blossoms that float on the surface from tendrils that reach to the bottom. "They look a lot

like floating strawberry plants" observed Peter Mann, one of the SRA volunteers. They're quite distinctive and easy to pick out among the lily pads."

In a 4-hour stretch, the group harvested about 15 bushels of water chestnut – about 200 pounds, according to Naylor. The DNR's work continued later in the week on other Sassafras tributaries.

More information on the water chestnut is available at DNR's website, http://www.dnr.state.md.us/bay/sav/water_chestnut.asp.

YOU CAN MONITOR WATER QUALITY

We've been asked to repeat the website where you can check on water quality on the Sassafras River. It's www.eyesonthebay.net — an interactive DNR site where you can check local beaches and waterways.

Committees Offer New Volunteer Opportunities!

The SRA Board just finished a strategic planning session to focus our activities for the next several years. To increase our effectiveness and get more members involved, we're committed to setting up an effective committee structure.

We're looking for volunteers to staff (or lead!) our program committees:

- Education and Outreach
- Science
- Advocacy
- Membership
- Volunteer
- Publicity

We'll be reaching out to you, but if there's something that interests you, email us

Membership News

At the July 11 meeting, membership chair Dave Segermark announced that we ended 2005 with 111 memberships; we're at 123 current memberships now.

Your SRA membership lasts for one year. We'll contact you on your anniversary date to remind you to renew. **If you're not a current member**, visit

www.sassafrasriver.org

and download a membership form today.

July 11 SRA Picnic at Turner's Creek

It was a little steamy, but more than 25 people came out for the SRA's annual meeting at Turner's Creek Pavilion on July 11.

The get-together was a great combination of socializing and business. After a bring-your-own picnic supper, we talked about where the SRA has been and where we're headed going into our third year.

Members heard about our proposed partnership with the Chester River Association for administrative support and about the Board's plan to make more effective use of Committees to involve the membership.

We also got some great ideas for the coming year's educational programs: Planning and Zoning 101; What's Happening on the

Susquehanna?; Agricultural Programs to Reduce Nutrients; The Eastern Shore Land Conservancy and Cecil County Land Use Planning; the SRA's long-range plan; Population Density and Water Quality.

Watch for these programs and more as we start our 3rd great year.