

SassafRAS Update

SassafRAS River Association
PO Box 333
Georgetown, MD 21930

June 2007

Ordinary Point: The Full Story

More than 60 people came out on Tuesday, June 16 for a fantastic double-bill SRA meeting.

Our first presenter was Hunter Harris of Aloft Aerial Photography in Easton, MD. Hunter, who grew up on the SassafRAS River, gave us his unique aerial perspective on the SassafRAS and other Chesapeake Bay watersheds. Hunter's work — in addition to being drop-dead gorgeous photography — dramatically illustrates the negative impact we are having on the treasures we all enjoy. You can see some of Hunter's work at his website, www.flyaloft.com.

The second presentation, by Gene Slear of Environmental Concern, Inc. in St. Michaels, brought home the same message about the need to preserve the unique area in which we live. EC has been working

the last several years on a major shoreline restoration project at Ordinary Point, the SassafRAS River's most distinctive landmark.



Over the years, Ordinary Point has suffered significant erosion, both from natural processes and, more recently, from boat wakes, to the extent that, in places, the point was only 12 feet wide and in danger of washing out.

The project, funded privately by Ordinary Point Farm owners Jim and Frances Bayard, has protected more than 6,000 feet of shoreline by placing a stone

sill, backfilling with sand, and planting grasses. When the grasses mature, the area behind the sill will be a tidal wetland that can absorb the energy of boat wakes while providing habitat for SassafRAS River marine life. Our hats are off to Jim and Frances for preserving this special piece of the SassafRAS River watershed.

In addition to restoration projects, EC conducts educational programs and was the nation's first wholesale wetland plant nursery. Visit EC at www.wetland.org.

SassafRAS Samplers

We've got a two-page format this month to report on the results of our spring testing. Scroll down or turn the page to see the latest results. You can visit www.eyesonthebay.net, the DNR website, for the latest on River water quality.

July 10 — Picnic and Annual Meeting

The SRA got its start 3 years ago at Turners Creek Pavilion, when a group of us got together to talk about our love for the SassafRAS and to share our concerns about its well-being.

Each year since, we've returned to Turners Creek in July to take stock of our progress during the preceding year and to make plans

for the year upcoming. Members' input at the annual meeting really does drive the Board's planning process, so come express your views. If you can't make it, send us your thoughts via email or the P.O. Box.

We'll start at 6 pm with a picnic (the SRA will provide drinks, grills, utensils and

dessert, bring your own supper). After eating we'll talk about our plans for the next year. **Hope we'll see you there!**



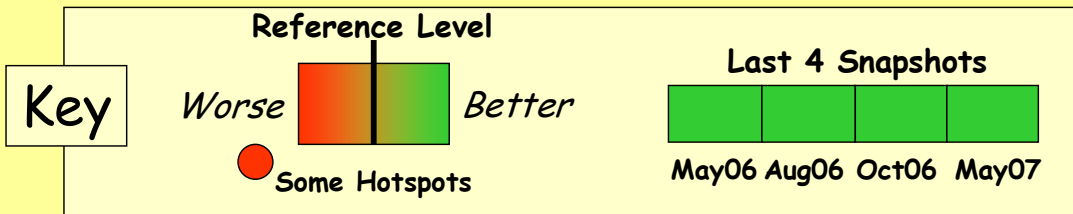
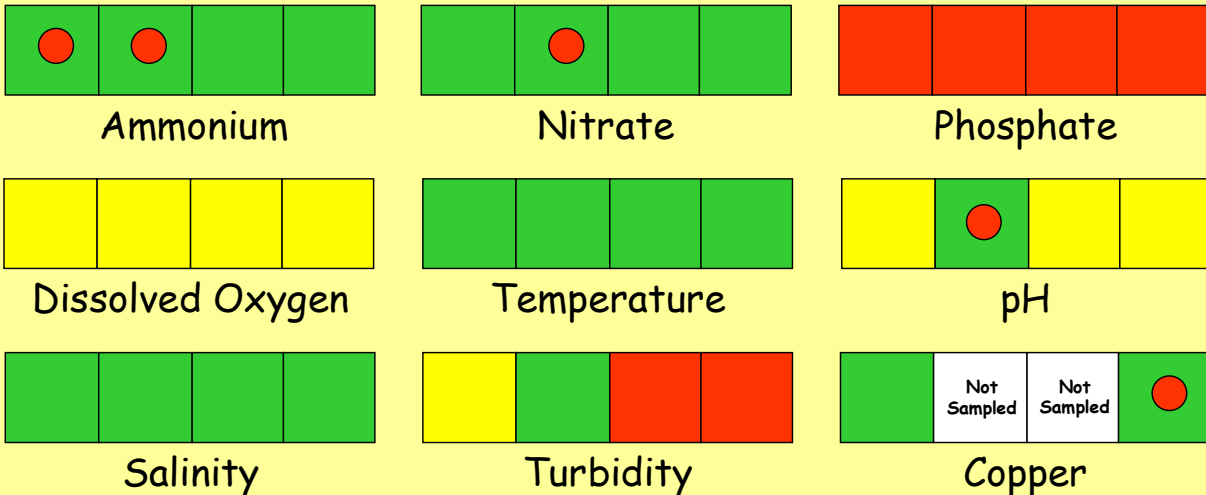
"Reaching for our Riverkeeper"

It's a new year, and we're calling 2007 the year of "Reaching for our Riverkeeper®." That reflects our hope to raise the funds we'll need to join the Waterkeeper® Alliance and hire a "SassafRAS Riverkeeper." Your membership contributions will be an important part of the effort!

Quick Takes

- **June 25 & 26.** We're all set to join the MD DNR in a repeat of last year's water chestnut removal. The SassafRAS is one of just two rivers on the Bay which is home to this invasive plant. We'll head out in canoes and small boats from Turner's Creek at 8:30 am. If you can help, contact Ellyn Vail, (410) 648-6994 or vaile@crosslink.net.
- **July 4.** Plans are under way for the SRA's participation in the annual Georgetown Harbor Boat Parade. As usual, John Burke has some wonderful ideas — think "Subaquatic Vegetation Tango" — and can use help with the execution. You can reach him on (443) 206-3727 or at jburke@dmv.com.
- **August 30.** Watch your mail or email for information about the SRA's summer highlight — dinner and a moonlight cruise on the River!

Sassafras Samplers Snapshot May 2007 Results 'Dashboard'



Sassafras Samplers Dashboard

Thanks to Ted Carski for assembling our Sassafras Samplers data in such an easily reviewed format. These data are based on samples taken on May 19, 2007. The dashboard shows clearly that our most significant and consistent issue is the level of phosphate in the water. That's consistent with the data the State regularly collects and with our own experience — phosphate is the most important factor contributing to the annual summertime algae blooms on the River.

We sample 20 sites each time we go out, so the data represent the state of the River's tidal waters from the headwaters near Route 301 to the mouth at the Chesapeake Bay. "Hotspots" indicate that while most samples were within acceptable limits, there were one or more locations where the levels were higher.

We only sample for copper in the spring, since that's when it's most likely to be found after boaters use copper-based bottom paints before launching. This year there were two "hotspots" for copper on Back Creek on the Cecil County side of the River. Here are Ted's thoughts:

Surprisingly, we detected copper (Cu) at the two Back Creek sites. This is the first time we've detected Cu in our sampling program. Cu is primarily used as an antifouling paint for boat hulls, so we might have expected any detections to be nearer the marinas, and only in the Spring. Janet [Rühl] and I did go back out 3 days later, sampling above, at, and below the Back Creek sites; we **did not** detect any Cu. We also notified DNR of the detections. The current 'best guess' explanation is someone spilled, or dumped, hull paint, creating a transient plume which we happened to detect. Since the levels detected were low and transient, it is much too early to become alarmed, but we will now monitor Back Creek for Cu for the rest of the year.