

SassafRAS Update

SassafRAS River Association
PO Box 333
Georgetown, MD 21930

November 2007

SassafRAS River Watershed Plan

More than 30 interested citizens turned out on Wednesday, November 14, for a presentation by Angler Environmental, Inc. on the plan for a SassafRAS River Pilot Watershed Plan.

The Plan is being developed by Angler Environmental for the Cecil County Government through a grant from the Maryland Department of Natural Resources under its Coastal Communities Initiative.

What is the Watershed Plan? At the highest level, it should be a strategy for removing the SassafRAS River from the State's list of impaired waters.

The first step is to assemble all of the available information about the watershed — land use, zoning, extent of forests and forested buffers, scientific data about water quality, population

trends, farming practices — and to develop a comprehensive view that identifies all of the issues that potentially affect water quality.



With the assessment in hand, the next objective is to develop specific tools — changes in County comprehensive plans and zoning ordinances, use of agricultural best management practices, restoration projects — to address the challenges identified in the assessment.

During the session, the Angler Environmental representatives heard a number of ideas from the audience,

such as providing County assistance in applying for Bay Restoration grants for upgrading septic systems.

There will be more opportunities for public input, including another public session as the plan progresses toward completion in April.

Send your ideas for preservation of the SassafRAS River watershed to Scott Macomber (smacomber@anglerenvironmental.com) and watch this space for more information.

SassafRAS Samplers

We've got a two-page format this month to report on the results of our fall 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.

December 11 — What's in the Water?

We'll return to the Granary Restaurant at 7 p.m. on December 11 for our next meeting.

We'll have two science-based presentations. Our own Science Committee Chair, Ted Carski, will talk about the results from the October 6 SassafRAS Samplers (shown on the next page) and give us a sum-

mary of the program over our 3-year history.

The second act in our "double bill" will be Chris Wiggins, who is working on his master's degree in Environmental Science at Drexel University. Chris planned and has now completed a study of the effects of land use on fish communities of the SassafRAS River.

Chris will give us some interesting information about how development and other practices affect the diversity and abundance of aquatic life. **Hope we'll see you there!**



"Reaching for our Riverkeeper" Special Appeal

You will soon find in your mailbox a letter with a special year-end appeal for contributions toward the SRA's Riverkeeper campaign.

As part of the campaign, we have been seeking grant funding from several foundations. The Shared Earth Foundation of Chestertown has generously given the SRA a \$10,000 challenge grant. The Foundation will match — up to \$10,000 — the contributions we can raise in a special year-end appeal to you, our members and supporters.

We hope you will consider a donation to the SRA as the end of the year — and tax time — approach.

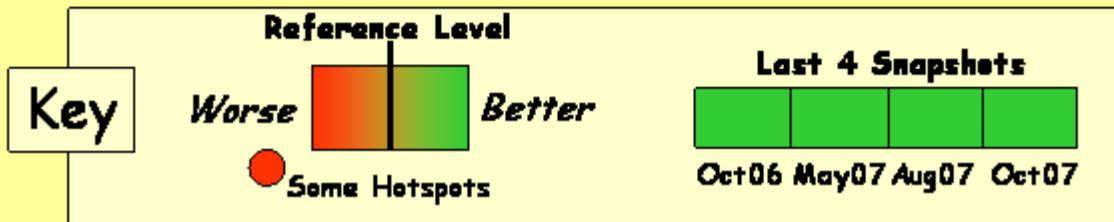
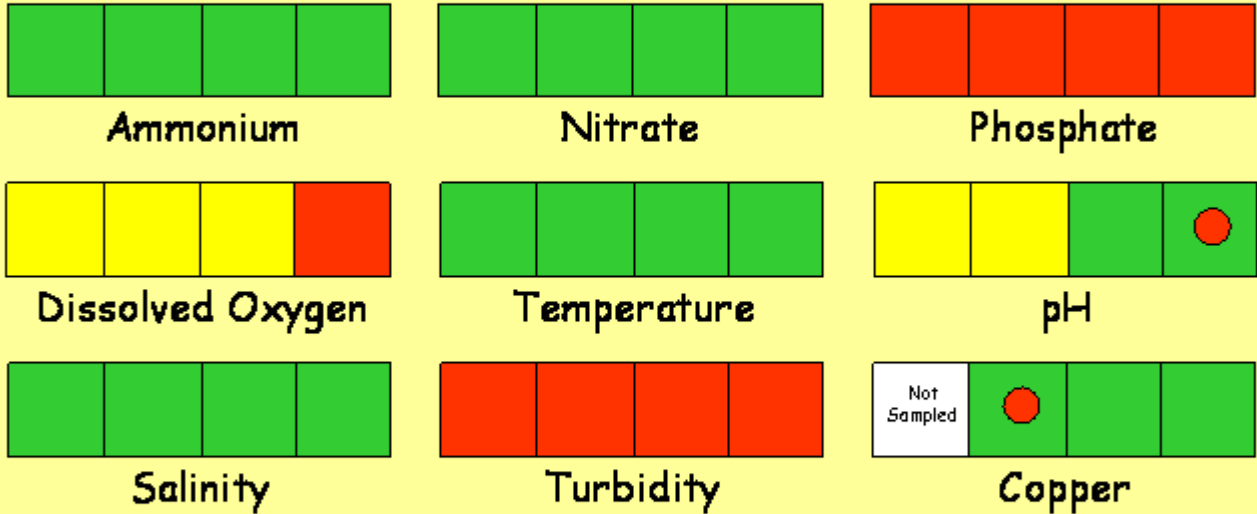
2008 Calendar of Events

The Outreach and Events Committee has been busy putting together the SRA's Calendar for 2008. Among the events:

- **January.** What's happening on the Susquehanna
- **February.** SassafRAS marinas and their role.
- **March.** A detailed look at our Riverkeeper.
- **April.** Project Clean Stream.

The full calendar will be in the December *Update*.

Sassafras Samplers Snapshot Oct 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 October 6, 2007. The dashboard shows clearly that our most significant and persistent 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. Our other regular issue is turbidity — suspended sediments in the water that block sunlight and inhibit the growth of underwater grasses.

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.