

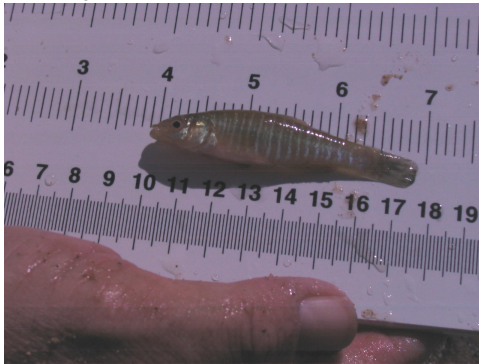
Sassafras Update

Sassafras River Association
PO Box 333
Georgetown, MD 21930

March 2008

March Meeting Double-Header

We got a double dose of water quality issues on Tuesday, March 11.



Chris Wiggins, a Master's degree candidate at Drexel University in Philadelphia, led off with the results of the fish survey he conducted on the River last summer.

Chris' study provides a baseline assessment of the shoreline fisheries of the Sassafras River and examines fish populations and water quality data along the entire length of the River.

April/May Activities — Get Outside!

As spring arrives, we try to move the SRA's activities outdoors — and this year is no exception. On the reverse of this month's update is an announcement about *Project Clean Stream*, our annual River Clean-up, carried out in conjunction with the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay. Call one of the site captains today to volunteer at a Cecil or Kent County location near you.

Chris used a seine at 5 locations on the River on 3 separate days over the course of the summer to net shoreline fish; captured fish were then identified by species, counted, weighed and measured. Chris measured water quality at all the sites.

The preliminary findings? The August sampling effort was the most productive, collecting 1,403 individuals, followed by July (1,054 fish) and September (510 fish). Eight fish types accounted for over 90 percent of the catch: *Alosa* sp., White perch, Gizzard shad, Atlantic silverside, Striped bass, Blueback herring, Spottail shiner, and Atlantic menha-

On April 26, from 10 to 4, we'll join Washington College and others for the annual Earth Day celebration in Wilmer Park in Chestertown. Help us celebrate the spirit of environmental action.

On May 10th we'll sponsor our **3rd Annual "Run for the River" — 5K Run/Walk**. Contact John Burke on (443) 206-3727.

We'll soon put Chris' full presentation on the SRA website, www.sassafrasriver.org.

Chris' study is important because it adds to our knowledge of the marine life on the River and creates a baseline for future studies. Our thanks to Chris for his tremendous efforts on behalf of our River.

The second presentation was by **Diane Stoecker** and **Jeff Cornwall**, both of the University of Maryland's Horn Point Research Laboratory. We first met Diane last summer when she and one of her graduate students did testing on one of the Sassafras River's recurring algae blooms.

Diane and Jeff have applied for a grant to study algae blooms on the Sassafras — what starts them, what keeps them going, and what ultimately causes them to collapse. They want to examine the mechanics of the cycle by which the blooming algae's photosynthesis produces oxygen, raising the pH (or alkalinity) of the water, which causes phosphorus — which feeds the cycle — to be pulled from the sediments and made available for further use.

We'll update you as we learn more from Jeff and Diane.

"Backyard" Booklet Nears Completion

For almost a year, the Sassafras River Association has been partnering with the Cecil and Kent Soil Conservation Districts on development of *From My Backyard to Our Bay*, a resident's guide to cleaning up the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries.

The booklets will be distributed free to residents in both Counties and describe the practical steps we all can take in our everyday lives to reduce the pollution of our precious waters. It expands on the theme of personal responsibility that we emphasized in our March 2007 "Backyard" program.

After publication, the booklet will be made available on the internet, with active links to a wide range of online resources.

Riverkeeper Search

We're working hard to identify our Sassafras Riverkeeper. Our advertisement in local papers and on the internet generated 20 applications.

We're now arranging interviews with the most promising candidates and we hope to make a selection by mid-April. That should let us have our Riverkeeper on board by May . . . and on patrol on our River shortly thereafter.

SAVE THE DATE!

April 5, 2008

Project Clean Stream, an annual stream and shoreline clean-up, takes place Saturday, April 5, 2008, 9am to Noon. Sassafras River sites include: Turners Creek Public Landing, Sassafras River Natural Resources Management Area, Fox Hole Public Landing & Colchester Farm shoreline in Kent County and Mt. Harmon Plantation & another site to be announced in Cecil County. Volunteers are needed to help as general clean-up crew. Please let us know what site you can help at so we make sure we have enough volunteers at each site.



Gloves, bags, first aid supplies, and site sign provided by the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay. Water, cookies and T-shirts will be provided by SRA. In 2007, over 2,500 volunteers turned out at more than 100 clean-up sites throughout Maryland!

Sponsored by the Chesapeake Bay Trust. Partners include local watershed associations and local government staff.

For more details or to volunteer, contact Ellyn Vail or the site captains listed below: Ellyn Vail - SNRMA, 410-648-6994 or vaile@baybroadband.net

Carol Droge - Turners Creek, 410-348-5017 droge52@yahoo.com

Lynn Mead - Fox Hole, 410-755-6922 nlmead@baybroadband.net

Theresa - Colchester Farms, 410-648-5609 colchesterfarm@friend.ly.net

John Vail - Mt. Harmon Plantation, 410-648-6994 or john.vail@baybroadband.net

John Burke - TBD, 410-275-1471 jburke@dmv.com