



Sassafras Update

Sassafras River Association
PO Box 333
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August 2008

SRA Alerts County to Rubblefill Plan

In a July 25 letter, Sassafras **RIVERKEEPER®** Kascie Herron and SRA President John Vail alerted the Kent County Commissioners to a proposal to convert Kent Sand and Gravel, in the headwaters of the Sassafras

Swantown Creeks — both tributaries of the Sassafras.

The County permit authorizing the gravel pit calls for it to be converted to a fishing lake when mining is completed.

mats, brush and limbs, logs, topsoil, vegetation . . . rock . . . paper or cardboard packaging, . . . building materials . . . paint containers, caulk containers, or glaze containers.”

Our letter expressed the SRA’s “deep reservations” about the proposal and its potential effects on the environmentally sensitive site.



The proposal—which had not previously been made public—would instead turn it into a processing site and repository for construction rubble: “wood, metal, bricks . . . and masonry, cement and concrete, glass, shingles and roofing material, plaster and plasterboard, carpets, floor and wall tile, asphalt, insulation material, pipes, wires, and appliances, and debris derived from land clearing operations, such as tree stumps, root

mat, brush and limbs, logs, topsoil, vegetation . . . rock . . . paper or cardboard packaging, . . . building materials . . . paint containers, caulk containers, or glaze containers.”

Copies of the SRA letter were sent to the Kent County News, which ran a page 1 article on the proposal on July 31 and to our State legislative delegation. Delegate Dick Sossi responded that he is contacting MDE about the plan.

We’ll be keeping a wary eye on this proposal. While the Kent County Comprehensive plan permits only County “owned or operated” rubblefills, we need to be alert to an attempt at a zoning text amendment.

River, into a privately-run “rubblefill.”

The gravel pit is located in northern Kent County, just off US 301 at the MD 290 exit. It lies between the headwaters of Jacobs and

Sunset and Moonlight Cruise — September 18

Our most popular annual event sets sail on Thursday, September 18. After a wonderful dinner at the Granary, we’ll board an historic oyster buy boat to watch the sunset and then a full moon rise over the Sassafras.

On board with us this year will be Dr. John Seidel, professor of Anthropology at Washington College. Dr.

Seidel will share his knowledge of Native American settlements along the River and describe the scene as it must have appeared to John Smith as he explored the Sassafras 400 years ago.

The cost is only \$60 per person and space is limited, so make your reservations early with Ellyn Vail — (410) 648-6994 or vaile@bayroadband.net.



RIVERKEEPER’S WISH LIST

Kascie needs a serviceable **kayak** to get into River’s shallow creeks — preferably a relatively short one that she can carry on the boat. If you have a kayak that’s gathering dust somewhere and that may fill the bill, please email or phone Kascie. The SRA will acknowledge your tax-deductible gift.

New SRA Office

At last our **RIVERKEEPER** has a place to hang her hat!

It took longer than we would have liked, but Kascie is now ensconced in the new SRA Office, located on the second floor at Sailing Associates, Inc, 78 George Street, in Fredericktown.

Many thanks to Silver and Bill Kneppshield for outfitting Kascie with office furniture.

Please stop by for a visit!

Contact the RIVERKEEPER

The **RIVERKEEPER**’s telephone number is (410) 708-3303 and her email address is riverkeeper@sassafrasriver.org.

Watershed residents and visitors with concerns about the state of the River or specific issues are encouraged to call her.



RIVERKEEPER'S®

Corner

What an exciting second month it's been! The water chestnut campaign continued in July with the eradication of at least 30 bushels from Turner's Creek. There was also the discovery of a large quantity of water chestnuts in Swan Pond (the tidal pond across from Ordinary Point in the Sassafras Natural Resource Management Area). We spent another day pulling another 30+ bushels of chestnuts, with plans to go out another day to finish.

On these days I also patrolled the River, just going from creek to creek, up as far as I could in the boat. In the remaining warm months I plan to kayak up each creek as far as I can to really observe and get a better picture of the River. I did get a chance to take a plane ride over the watershed, focusing primarily on the headwaters of the Kent County side. The River looks a lot different from the air, and it sure is impossible to hide certain sources of pollution.

Things are moving along on the science front, as we are currently applying for a grant to cover equipment costs. I met with staff from the LaMotte Company in Chestertown and received a quote for water quality sampling kits that I think will be a nice transition from the current kits we use to do the Snap Shots. I have also been in contact with a sales representative from the YSI Company that designs highly accurate multi-use instruments that I can use while on patrol.

With help from the Science Committee, I have developed a list of equipment that I believe will get us well on our way to conducting a full assessment of the River. I have also been doing research on what data has been collected on the Sassafras as a step towards developing a report card for the Sassafras as well as a WRAS (watershed restoration action strategy). I accompanied DNR on their monthly

continuous data flow run of the Sassafras and learned what parameters are currently being measured and monitored on the River.

Unfortunately through my research and conversations with people from DNR, I have discovered that the WRAS program's funding was pulled, the departments that analyze data and produce report cards are understaffed, and getting anything done would take years at this rate.

BUT, there are many ways we as a group can evaluate, measure and observe current conditions and characteristics of the River. We can conduct our own assessment of the watershed which needs to be done before any such restoration efforts are made. I met twice with the science committee to discuss ideas on how this assessment can be done and what projects we can conduct over the next year to get a good start.

This month I continued to meet with many key players from various county and State departments. I talked and got information from John Beskid at the Kent County Health Department. I met with our DNR police officer Ray Price. I visited Nancy Metcalf and Karen Miller from Kent County Soil and Water Conservation District as well as the folks from Eastern Shore Land Conservancy.

I sat in on the Farm Bill listening session in Annapolis, attended a Cecil County maps training, an Environmental Crimes training, and attended the Eastern Shore Alliance Retreat in Cambridge Maryland. I also met the new GIS program director at Washington College who is very busy with various projects right now, but let me work in the lab and borrow a computer with the ArcGIS software as well as various data sets.

I attended my first Betterton Beach Day this year and met many different people from the area who were very interested in what the Sassafras River Association does. We even gained a few new members that day!

This was also a big moving month for me. Not only did I move into a new apartment, I also moved into the office! I have been spending time organizing paperwork, installing software on the computer and generally just getting settled. I urge you to stop by for a visit sometime. If I'm not in the office I have a calendar and board where you can leave me a message.

I have also created a very basic database for entry of citizen complaints and pollution reports. Please call me if you see pollution or anything that looks like it might be compromising the health of the River. I am always on call to respond to whatever you might see and report it to the appropriate person. Just this month I received two calls concerning problems I could not address, but was able to alert the people who could. Horse manure was observed floating down the River from the Sassafras Natural Resource Management Area. I called the manager of the area, John Ohler, who notified the people horseback riding that day. I received a call about suspicious construction on Swantown Creek, notified the chief inspector from the Kent County planning office, and he addressed the issue the very next day. So please let me know if you see something, because even if I might not be able to do anything myself, I will find someone who can. Remember that we are all eyes and ears of the River.

Kascie Herron
Sassafras **RIVERKEEPER**