



SassafRAS River Association

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August 20, 2009

The Honorable Martin O'Malley of Maryland
Office of the Governor
State House
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Governor O'Malley,

Thank you for the opportunity to meet with you Monday, August 17, to discuss the pressing environmental issues confronting all Marylanders. We appreciate the many efforts your administration has undertaken to address these issues, including your GreenPrint and AgPrint initiatives, and want to do our part to ensure a cleaner, healthier Chesapeake Bay.

The SassafRAS River Association (SRA) is a not for profit watershed organization, representing over 500 members, whose mission is to protect, restore and advocate for the health of the SassafRAS River. SRA's key deliverable for 2009 is a SassafRAS Watershed Action Plan, a scientifically robust plan which includes restoration strategies to address impairments and restore the health of the SassafRAS. SRA has raised private funding and partnered with more than 25 public and private entities with expertise in watershed planning to guide the development and execution of this plan. 28 preliminary strategies have already been identified. Two of our top strategies include the upgrade of Galena and Betterton WWTPs to Enhanced Nutrient Reduction (ENR) technology.

As you know, in the state of Maryland human waste (septic and waste water treatment plants) accounts for approximately 35% of the nitrogen pollution to the Chesapeake Bay, and approximately 19% of the phosphorus pollution (<http://www.baystat.maryland.gov/sources2.html>.) In the SassafRAS River waste water treatment plants and septics account for approximately 30% of nitrogen pollution. Because of the inability of the dated technology used to treat sewage at both Galena and Betterton WWTP's, these sources deliver a disproportionately large amount of both nitrogen and phosphorus to the SassafRAS River. The SassafRAS River is on Maryland's 303 (d) list of impaired waters for nutrients. Due to the increased number of algal blooms that have been occurring within the River in recent years, a total maximum daily load (TMDL) for phosphorus was written to address this impairment. Unfortunately, the TMDL has been written to allow both point sources (Betterton WWTP and Galena WWTP) to contribute roughly half of the phosphorus load that is delivered to the River, despite the fact that the two WWTPs treat wastewater from less than 600 homes and businesses and that the urban areas served by these municipal treatment plants make up less than 5% of the total watershed area. In order to address this pollution, both WWTP's must be upgraded to ENR now.

SRA's restoration strategies cover a wide spectrum, from increasing cover crops and upgrading homeowner septics to addressing storm water run-off from Highway 301 and educating youth groups,

homeowner associations and business on best management practices. Each of us has a role to play in restoring the River and ultimately, the Bay. Upgrading Galena's and Betterton's WWTP to ENR decreases nutrient loading immediately and also serves as a motivational signal to other stakeholders in the watershed that it's time to do their part. After reviewing the state's list of prioritized WWTP upgrades, it appears that upgrading a number of smaller plants, such as Betterton and Galena, would significantly reduce nutrient loading to the Chesapeake ecosystem, perhaps even more so than a larger WWTP.

Galena and Betterton with populations of 504 and 354 respectively and total permitted discharge of 60,000 and 200,000 gallons per day fall below the threshold for prioritization. SRA recognizes the resource constraints placed upon small towns such as Galena and Betterton and has taken on the role of advocate to assist both towns in securing the successful combination of grant/loan funding that will guarantee ENR technology. As you stated on Monday the biggest public health challenge in the State is the Chesapeake Bay. Similarly, the biggest public health challenge in our watershed is the Sassafras River and we need your support to ensure these small towns can do their part to address this issue.

Sincerely,



Kascie Herron
Sassafras RIVERKEEPER



Kim Kohl
Executive Director

Cc: A. Valis, Governor's Special Assistant
H. Pisapia, Mayor Galena
C. Sorge, Mayor Betterton