

## **Lower Patapsco Watershed Restoration Workshop Report**

Saturday, October 23, 2004

The Lower Patapsco Watershed Restoration Workshop was held on October 23 in the Bureau of Utilities Conference Room, with 36 people in attendance. The purpose of the workshop was to inform the public about development of the Lower Patapsco Watershed Restoration Action Strategy (WRAS), a workplan to restore and protect water quality and habitat in the watershed, and to encourage public participation in this process.

### **Welcome and Introductions**

The workshop began with Mina Hilsenrath welcoming the attendees and introducing the members of the WRAS Planning Team. Ursula Lemanski then asked attendees what they valued about their watershed. The following was their response:

- Wildlife
- Forests
- Natural areas
- Fish
- Family and history
- Recreation
- Sanctuary for living things
- Kayaking
- Walking through historic Ellicott City & Patapsco Valley State Park
- Hiking & birding
- Accessibility to natural areas
- Cultural and natural together
- Ability to do environmental restoration

### **Patapsco Watershed: A River's Legacy**

After viewing "Patapsco Watershed: A River's Legacy," a short video about the rich history of the Patapsco River valley, attendees were asked if they had comments or had learned anything new from the video. The following was their response:

- Seeing changes in Rockburn Branch - some algae and harder to see the bottom.
- Sucker Branch has mud flows from construction sites and flows over Park Drive.
- In Ilchester, when I was young, I could drink the water in the tributaries, but in the 1960s the color of the main stem was gray or pea green.
- On a canoe trip from Avalon to the Baltimore Harbor, the water clarity was pretty good. Water quality was degraded earlier in the 1900s from paper mill.

### **Why Watersheds?**

Rebecca Winer of the Center for Watershed Protection gave a "Why Watersheds?" presentation. This presentation provided information about the definition of a watershed, why watershed health is important, the impacts of impervious cover on stream quality, and what communities

and individuals can do to help improve their local streams. The presentation included information about the following eight tools of watershed protection:

1. Watershed Planning
2. Land Conservation
3. Aquatic Buffers
4. Better Site Design
5. Erosion & Sediment Control
6. Stormwater Management
7. Other Pollution Sources
8. Watershed Stewardship

### **Current Watershed Conditions**

After a short break, Susan Overstreet gave a presentation on current conditions in the Lower Patapsco River watershed. This presentation included information about the WRAS planning process, current and projected impervious cover along with expected stream conditions, and the results from recent biological monitoring and a stream corridor assessment survey. A summary of this information can be found in the Lower Patapsco WRAS Fact Sheet, which is available on the DPZ web site.

### **Visioning Session**

The attendees formed two workgroups to brainstorm about their ideas for what should be done to protect and restore the watershed. Specifically, the workgroups were asked: What do we need to do to restore and protect water quality and habitat for ourselves and for future generations? After generating ideas, workgroup members formed teams of two and prioritized their ideas. These priority ideas were written in short, five-word descriptions and then categorized. After the brainstorming session, the workgroups reported back on their categories for future action. A full list of all the ideas generated is given at the end of this report. The following is a summary of the key categories presented for future action:

- Public outreach, education and participation
- Land preservation
- Planning and regulation
- Enforcement of regulations
- Regulations for water quality improvement
- Stormwater management
- Point sources
- Water quality and habitat management
- Enhance riparian buffers
- Funding for restoration and management

### **Wrap Up and Next Steps**

Mina Hilsenrath provided information on next steps. The WRAS Planning Team will refine the ideas generated at the workshop as it moves forward with the WRAS process. Anyone interested

in participating on the planning team should contact Susan Overstreet. The Planning Team will hold a series of workshops in 2005 to look in more detail at various tributaries of the Lower Patapsco, and to identify specific priorities for protection and restoration. The Team hopes that all of the workshop attendees will be able to attend and continue their participation in the WRAS process. Attendees were encouraged to monitor the Department of Planning and Zoning web site at [www.co.ho.md.us/DPZ/Environment/dpz\\_environmental\\_planning.htm](http://www.co.ho.md.us/DPZ/Environment/dpz_environmental_planning.htm) for more information on these workshops.

## **Visioning Session Ideas**

### **Group 1**

#### Land Preservation / Management

- Land preservation
- More land preservation
- Additional acquisition/protection of open space

#### Funding

- Dedicated mitigation fund
- Restoration plan and program and projects
- Regional management and funding
- Action target – vendors that assist/profit remediation
- Market incentives to encourage behavior change

#### Water Quality / Habitat Management

- Deer control
- Dam and fish passage obstruction removal
- Plant more trees – expand canopy
- Restoration of streams
- Stream monitoring
  - Water quality
  - Stream stability
  - Habitat quality

#### Education /Action – Public Participation

- Educate kids and adults
- Citizen education and outreach – energize for action
- Raise awareness of lifestyle choice (house size, car, divorce, lawns or not)
- Involve schools
- Action target – citizens own stream

#### Regulations [for] water quality improvement

- No more loss of forest or wetlands within 100 feet
- Adopt LID [low impact development] regulations for County capital project and private development

- Limit development
- Alternatives to impervious surfaces

### Enforcement of Regulations

- Better enforcement of existing development regulations
- County: model and enforce
- Assessment and ongoing monitoring of progress
- Prioritize Solutions
  - Practicality
  - Effectiveness
  - Sustainability

## **Group 2**

### Education and Outreach

- Community project
  - Manage effectively
  - Communicate results
- Educate public
- Encourage public education and participation
- Citizen outreach and involvement
- Monitor
- Learn more
- Educate others
- Educate homeowners (to incite indignation)
- Coordinate efforts
- Train citizens to help enforce regulations

### Managing Runoff

- Manage stormwater on-site
- Retrofit to reduce runoff
- Reduce impervious surfaces (existing and proposed)
- Stormwater management – implementing
- Repair erosion - help nature heal

### Land Conservation

- Promote forest / habitat protection (habitat management)
- Conserve land
- Preservation – what can be saved
- Protect green space with land trust easements

### Point Source and Industry

- Industry and utilities buy-in
- Leaking landfills
- Identify point sources

- WWTPs [wastewater treatment plants]

#### Enhance Buffer

- Promote stream buffers
- Plant natural buffers - remove invasives
- Increase buffers
- Restore and increase riparian buffers
- Reforestation / restoration buffer
- Remove invasive species

#### Planning and Regulation

- Good development planning, sensitive zoning
- Sustainable development
- Better site design (planning)
- Implement LIDs
- Better site design
- Commit more public resources to problems
- Enforcement of sediment control regulations
- Learn the regulations & enforce them