

Lower Patapsco Watershed Restoration Workshop Report

Tuesday, June 28, 2005

The second Lower Patapsco Watershed Restoration Workshop was held on June 28 in the Bureau of Utilities Conference Room, with 15 people in attendance. The purpose of the workshop was to present results from recent water quality monitoring and stream corridor surveys, review priority restoration projects, discuss community priorities for the watershed, and provide information on practices homeowners can use to help improve water quality and habitat.

Welcome and Introductions

The workshop began with Mina Hilsenrath (Howard County) welcoming the attendees and introducing the members of the Lower Patapsco Watershed Restoration Planning Team.

Water Quality and Priority Restoration Sites

Susan Overstreet (Howard County) gave a presentation on the results from recent chemical and biological water quality monitoring. This monitoring and other data collection and analysis is being done to support development of a Lower Patapsco Watershed Restoration Action Strategy (WRAS). The WRAS will be a workplan to restore and protect water quality and habitat in the watershed. The presentation also reviewed the process used to prioritize problem sites identified in the stream corridor survey for additional investigation and potential restoration. Restoration activities could include stream channel stabilization, riparian buffer plantings, and/or stormwater management retrofits (installing new stormwater management facilities or modifying existing facilities to improve water quality treatment).

What You Can Do in Your Back Yard

Melissa DeSantis (Tetra Tech, Inc.) gave a presentation on homeowner practices that can help improve water quality and habitat. These practices can include proper disposal of pet waste, minimizing the use of lawn fertilizers, directing roof downspouts to vegetated areas, washing cars on the lawn or at a car wash, and replacing lawn areas with native plants.

Mapping Priorities

Attendees formed two groups to discuss the priority restoration sites and community priorities for restoration in the northern and southern portions of the watershed. Specifically, attendees were asked about water quality and habitat conditions in their local streams, and what they saw as major problem areas. Based on their combination of local knowledge and the planning team's priority sites, what did they think should be the high priority restoration and protection sites/projects? Their comments are presented below.

Northern Portion of the Watershed

- When people just see a pipe, not a stream, they don't realize the effect their actions may have. Storm drain stenciling might help educate them.
- Sucker Branch – in 1996 there was illegal dumping at the art center site.
- Church Road – good that we have green space; have erosion from upstream properties; in heavy storms, get washout at Park Drive; Governors Run contributes some even though it does have stormwater management.

- Sucker Branch – a sewer line runs down Sucker Branch; there was an overflow by the apartment complex (was reported and corrected).
- Sucker Branch – runs under Route 40; most people don't know it's there (also hard to access). Has had crayfish in part of the stream. Need to keep people upstream from causing problems.
- Priority pipe outfall site in Mount Hebron neighborhood – there is a sewage pumping station in this area; does it relate to anything happening in the area? Pipe outfall is probably a storm drain outfall.
- Hudson Branch – lots of problems; developed before stormwater management and environmental regulations; houses along road and stream; what is the priority unusual condition site?
- How does the old relate to the new? When have stormwater management on one site and unmanaged on another site?

Southern Portion of the Watershed

- Involve neighborhood/community associations as much as possible to gain the interest and participation of those that live near possible restoration sites.
- Consider conditions upstream of possible restoration when selecting projects. There was a concern that the success of a project could be jeopardized if, for example, a restoration project was completed but development continued to occur upstream, which could impact the restoration site.
- Near Worthington Way – has seen red flock; spring-fed stream runs along street, comes out at power lines.
- Railroad started a series of twelve fires along the track; were trying to clean off the rust on the tracks; grinding of tracks caused sparks and fires; Howard County Fire Department had to put out fires.
- Tiber-Hudson – look for ways to manage stormwater runoff. Highly visible location for restoration efforts; could be a “show-case” project.
- Rockburn Branch – look at stormwater retrofits on County/State land to control upstream development.
- Develop a cost estimate for all priority project sites to get a sense of the level of effort needed and to prioritize the project list by cost.
- Limit forest clearing – phase it in to limit clear-cut areas and the resulting sediment and erosion.
- Limit waivers for disturbance within stream buffers. To what degree is this occurring?

Wrap Up and Next Steps

Mina Hilsenrath provided information on next steps. The WRAS Planning Team will incorporate the information gathered at the workshop as it moves forward with developing the WRAS. The Planning Team will hold another workshop in November to present the draft WRAS. For more information on the WRAS, attendees can monitor the Department of Planning and Zoning web site at www.co.ho.md.us/DPZ/Environment/dpz_environmental_planning.htm.