

## **Lower Patapsco Watershed Restoration Workshop March 1, 2006**

The third Lower Patapsco Watershed Restoration Workshop was held on March 1 at the Ellicott City Senior Center, with 21 people in attendance. The purpose of the workshop was to present the draft Watershed Restoration Action Strategy Report for the Lower Patapsco and discuss the results from the Rockburn Branch and Sucker Branch subwatershed restoration assessments.

### **Welcome and Introductions**

The workshop began with Mina Hilsenrath (Howard County) welcoming the attendees and asking each person to briefly describe why they were attending the workshop and what they hoped to learn at the workshop.

### **Draft Watershed Restoration Action Strategy Report Rockburn and Sucker Branch Assessments**

Susan Overstreet (Howard County) gave a presentation on the draft Lower Patapsco Watershed Restoration Action Strategy (WRAS) report and the results from the Rockburn Branch and Sucker Branch subwatershed restoration assessments. The Lower Patapsco WRAS will be a workplan to restore and protect water quality and habitat in the watershed. The report will contain: summaries of the water quality and habitat assessments conducted as part of the study; goals and objectives for water quality, habitat and public outreach; and watershed protection and restoration actions that are prioritized for immediate, short-term, mid-term and long-term implementation. The final report should be completed at the end of March 2006.

As part of the WRAS, the Rockburn and Sucker Branch subwatersheds were chosen for additional study to examine issues in a less developed and more urban/suburban subwatershed, respectively. Results from biological water quality monitoring in each subwatershed indicate poor biological health and non-supporting physical habitat in Rockburn Branch, and very poor biological health and non-supporting physical habitat in Sucker Branch. Field assessments identified 31 potential restoration project sites in Rockburn Branch and 19 of these sites were identified as priorities. The majority of these projects are on publicly-owned land. In Sucker Branch, 34 potential project sites were identified and 26 of these were classified as priorities. The majority of these projects are located on private property, so these projects will require landowner interest and cooperation for implementation. Potential restoration projects include stream channel stabilization, riparian buffer plantings, stormwater management retrofits (installing new stormwater management facilities or modifying existing facilities to improve water quality treatment), and public outreach and education. Priority project costs were estimated at \$2 million for Rockburn Branch and at \$4 million for Sucker Branch.

After the presentation, there was discussion about the subwatershed studies. Citizens were concerned about the impact on individual properties from potential projects. County staff explained that the projects are recommended, not required, and will not be implemented without landowner cooperation. Citizens suggested that greater water quality benefits could be achieved by reducing large parking lots rather than planting stream buffers. Citizens also questioned the

timing of the projects and the availability of funding. The County staff responded that funding is limited for project implementation and there are two other priority subwatersheds in the Little Patuxent watershed that also have identified projects.

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

Next steps for the WRAS are to finalize the report and begin implementation. Implementation will depend on landowner cooperation, and County staff and funding resources. Information about the Lower Patapsco Watershed Restoration Action Strategy, including the assessment reports for Rockburn and Sucker Branch, can be found on the Howard County Department of Planning and Zoning Web page:

[www.co.ho.md.us/DPZ/Environment/dpz\\_environmental\\_planning.htm](http://www.co.ho.md.us/DPZ/Environment/dpz_environmental_planning.htm)