

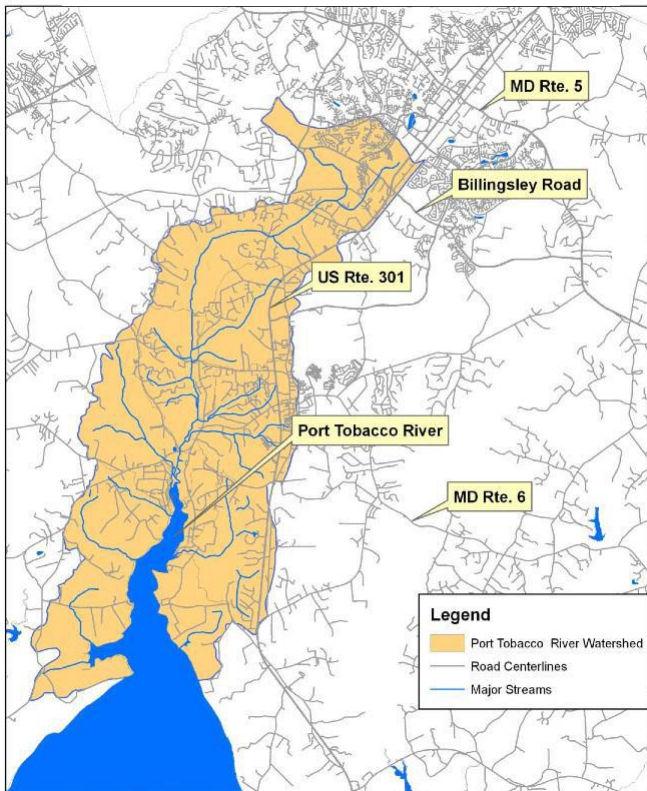
# Port Tobacco River Conservancy News



SPRING 2015

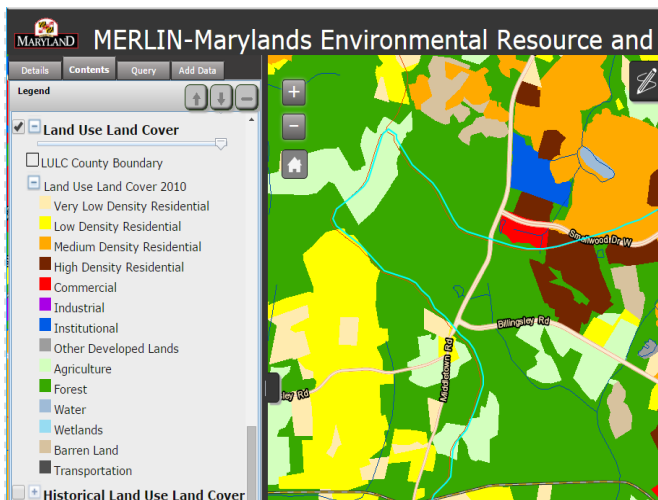
VOLUME 4, ISSUE 3

## Port Tobacco River Watershed



Port Tobacco River Watershed—30,000 acres,  
47 square miles, all in Charles County

—prepared by the Charles County  
Planning Division, August 2011



## More on the 1,100 Acres

There's more bad news about the possible fate of Page's Swamp and 1,100 acres surrounding it. A developer has proposed a 137 acre development of 110 single family homes and 299 townhouses within the 1,100 acre area, but outside the County's development district. The developer has submitted a proposed Zoning Map Amendment to change the zoning to Medium Density Residential. PTRC filed a request for these documents under Maryland's Public Information Act, and will be going through them within the next week.

Readers of our Winter Newsletter will recall that the 1,100 acres, which contains some of the headwaters of the Port Tobacco River, is slated for dense residential development under a new provision of the current iteration of the County's Comprehensive Plan.

The Charles County Planning Commission will hold a public hearing on the Zoning Map Amendment request at its meeting at 6pm on June 22 in the County Commissioners' Meeting Room in the Charles County Government building. This will be your chance to make oral or written comments on this destructive request. Please plan to attend. For more information, go to <http://www.charlescountymd.gov/public-notices/6-pm-public-hearing-zoning-map-amendment-13-48-washington-glen-%E2%80%93-walton-maryland-llc>.

**Background**—The 1,100 acres had been part of the Deferred Development District (DDD). When the maps were redrawn and the DDD became the Watershed Conservation District, the 1,100 acres was carved out with the justification that it was a Priority Funding Area (PFA).

Maryland's 1997 Priority Funding Areas Act was designed to influence economic growth and development by directing state funding to existing communities and places where local governments wanted state investment to support future growth. Priority Funding Areas were established to meet three key goals: (1) to preserve existing communities, (2) to make the best use of state infrastructure dollars by building on past investments, and (3) to reduce development pressure on critical farmland and natural resource areas by encouraging projects in already developed areas.

## 1,100 Acres *continued*

Charles County's Priority Funding Areas include Waldorf and White Plains on both sides of Rte 301 from Marshall Corner Road north to the county line. However, because it was part of the deferred development district, much of the land in the 1,100 acres has not been developed and is in forest and agricultural use, and therefore does not meet any of the goals of the PFAs. In addition, the Indian Head Rail Trail runs through it, and if the developers have their way, bikers and hikers will be going through a dense residential area instead of the forests and streams that they now go through.

In proposing the Watershed Conservation District, which includes most of the area within the Mattawoman Stream Valley, county planners recognized that the area includes protected lands, steep slopes, and wetlands. It also acknowledges that it is a sensitive natural resource with long-term value to the community for its ecological, aesthetic, scenic, recreational, and economic value. The 1,100-acre area that includes headwaters of the Port Tobacco River has many of the same characteristics as the Mattawoman Stream Valley and is unsuitable for residential development for the same reasons. Therefore, the 1,100 acres should be included in the Watershed Conservation District, not the Development District, and the comprehensive plan should be amended to reflect that.

## Tree Planting at Ellerslie

Over 20 students and teachers from North Point High School participated in PTRC's April 29 reforestation project at the historic Ellerslie property in Port Tobacco. Following guidance from Charles County Project Foresters, the students planted nearly 550 white pine trees, which will create forest buffers to protect the health of the Port Tobacco River and its watershed.

The Port Tobacco Watershed Restoration Action Strategy (WRAS), developed in 2007, sets out specific goals for protecting the river and its watersheds, including the Hoghole Run subwatershed where the Ellerslie property is located. The WRAS recommended forest preservation as the major protection strategy for Hoghole Run, using funds such as the Charles County Forestry Grant program, which funded this project. The North Point team made a significant contribution toward achieving the goals of the WRAS.

Originally patented in the 1660s, Ellerslie once belonged to Daniel of St. Thomas Jenifer, a nationally prominent political figure who served as a member of the Continental Congress from 1778 to 1782 and signed the Constitution of the United States for Maryland in 1787. The current owners, Kevin and Denise Grote, thanked the students for their work, saying, "It is greatly appreciated and a step forward in maintaining an environmentally sensitive outlook at Ellerslie as we take this property into its 4th century."

## STREAM RESTORATION PROJECT

The ongoing project that will restore a now dry wetland just south of the Port Tobacco Bridge on Route 6 is now in the budgeting and permitting process. While we don't expect any problems obtaining budget approval, permitting could take 12 to 18 months.

The project will reconnect a 2,800-foot section of the Port Tobacco Creek to the 30-acre wetland. Once reconnected, excess stormwater and the pollution that goes with it will go to the wetlands instead of the Port Tobacco River. The wetlands will filter out pollution before it reaches the River.

Stay tuned for updates on this project, which will do much to restore the health of the Port Tobacco River.

## "ALL THINGS NEW" AT CASINO ROYALE FUNDRAISER

PTRC's annual spring fundraiser, renamed *Casino Royale* because it would feature gaming with real money instead of fake money, was a great success. Held March 27 at the Jaycees center in Waldorf, attendees seemed to appreciate the change as they enjoyed the free glass of wine, beer, or soft drink included with their ticket. The Sam Grow Band electrified the audience with rock tunes that inspired several couples to dance for most of the evening and fans to keep time to the music by clapping and shouting support.

Many thanks to the Greater Waldorf Jaycees Foundation for providing the venue and the delicious food, to the Jaycee volunteers who manned the games, and to all who attended and supported PTRC by participating in the games, raffles, and Silent Auction bidding and purchasing.

Please join us for our summer fundraiser Night on the River to be held at the Port Tobacco Restaurant on August 6 at 7:00 pm. Your financial support is vital to ensure our continued efforts to protect and restore the Port Tobacco River Watershed.

## MEDICINE DISPOSAL REMINDER

A friendly reminder that medicines should not be put down toilets because they pollute the water, even for homes with septics. Instead, you can dispose of unneeded or outdated medicines at collection bins which can be found at every Sheriff's Department station in Charles County.

## RECENT ARTICLES OF INTEREST

In an April 27 *Washington Post* article titled “[Blue Crab Numbers Climbed Slightly This Year from a Near-Catastrophic Low](#),” reports that despite a second straight harsh winter, the overall crab population in the Chesapeake Bay increased 38% over last year. Limits on commercial fishing of blue crabs remain in effect, however, since for the crab population to recover, more breeding-age females are needed—there are now 101 million, and anything below 215 million is considered unhealthy for the population.

An April 24 *Maryland Independent* article titled “[Bay Trust Grants Available for Tree-Planting Programs](#)” discusses recent initiatives by the Charles County government and the Chesapeake Bay Trust to provide funding for reforestation projects in the County. They are awarding grants of up to \$20,000 to homeowners associations, schools, and private landowners to increase the tree canopy and enhance water quality in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. PTRC’s 2013 tree-planting grant was cited as an example of the types of forestry grants that can be funded under this initiative.

## Recent PTRC Events *by Krupa Patel*

**Celebrate La Plata Day**—This year La Plata Day was on April 2—a really cold day! Nonetheless, a good many people stopped by our table. Many were very interested in PTRC, and we gave them our brochures. A number of kids came by to make seed balls, and many people wanted to learn about the benefits of rain barrels after seeing the one we had on display. It was a successful day.

**Green Drinks**—Green Drinks is a social network for those who are in the environment field. It’s a great time to make friends, discuss important issues, and expand your network. PTRC opened a Green Drinks in Port Tobacco to grow our network and connect with others who want to get involved. Port Tobacco Green Drinks will be held at the Port Tobacco Restaurant at 6:30 pm on the fourth Thursday of every month. Watch for updates via emails and social media.

**Port Tobacco Market Day**—This year PTMD was on May 2. It was a beautiful day! We passed out more brochures and information about PTRC. Again, kids enjoyed making seed balls.

**Stream Waders**—Julie and Krupa took Stream Wader training in February at Jug Bay. The Stream Waders Program is designed to educate the community about land use and its connection to stream quality, provide high-quality information to public agencies, and encourage local initiatives to improve watershed management. There was an indoor presentation and outdoor hands-on instruction on how to properly get samples. Afterward, PTRC took samples from three sites and turned them in on May 1. We’re looking forward to receiving the results.



*Rain barrel, seed balls, and the PTRC booth at Market Day*

## Report from Executive Director Julie Simpson

**Two New Laws to Help River Clean-Up**—Governor Larry Hogan has signed two bills passed by the Maryland General Assembly that should help efforts to clean up local waterways, including the Port Tobacco River. One new law bans microbeads used in personal care products. Products on store shelves will start changing in 2018, with all plastic microbeads off the shelves by the end of 2019. At this time, the Maryland ban is the strongest in the country. The beads, used to exfoliate dry skin or add color to products, are too small to be captured in most wastewater treatment plants and instead are released into rivers and the Chesapeake Bay. Because of their chemical makeup, they attract other petroleum-based chemicals like pesticides and fertilizers, becoming as much as one million times more toxic than the water around them.

Governor Hogan also signed legislation requiring local jurisdictions with federal stormwater permits, including Charles County, to fund stormwater pollution-reducing projects to meet federal Clean Water Act requirements. The law allows local governments to fund required projects through a stormwater fee or other methods. It also requires these jurisdictions to demonstrate that they have adequate funding in place to meet their obligations under their stormwater permits.

**Potomac River Cleanup**—More than 50 volunteers participated PTRC’s annual Potomac River Cleanup at Chapel Point State Park on April 11. Members of Boy Scout Troop 424, Cub Scout Pack 415, and the Riot youth group from New Life Church, as well as employees of SMECO and many individual volunteers collected over 60 bags of trash and 19 tires on a beautiful, sunny day. Members of Charles County Dive Rescue used one of their boats to transport bags of trash and other debris from along the beach to the collection site—we could not have done it without them! Many thanks to all our volunteers, and hope to see you next year.



*Cub Scouts at the Potomac River Cleanup at Chapel Point State Park*



*Charles County Dive Rescue team transporting trash at Chapel Point State Park*

**Port Tobacco River Conservancy**  
PO Box 104  
Port Tobacco, MD 20677

301-934-2025  
[jsimpson@porttobaccoriver.org](mailto:jsimpson@porttobaccoriver.org)  
[www.porttobaccoriver.org](http://www.porttobaccoriver.org)



### PTRC BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Jerry Forbes, President  
Rebecca Turner, Vice President  
Heather Zdobysz, Secretary  
Carlyle Lancaster, Treasurer  
Kathy Babiak  
Joyce Dean  
Chuck Jackson  
Mark Stancliff

**Executive Director:** Julie Simpson