

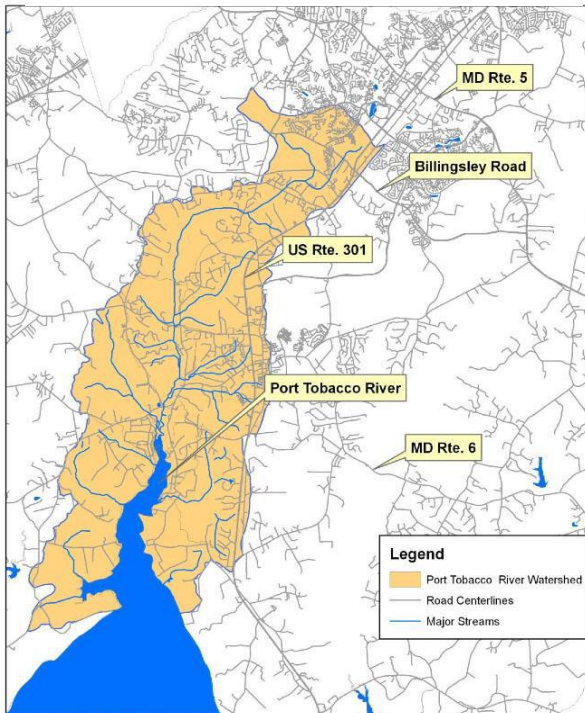
Port Tobacco River Conservancy News



SUMMER 2015

VOLUME 4, ISSUE 4

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*



Proposed Washington Glen development site (rectangular outline in red) inside the 1,100 acres (large outline in red)

More on the 1,100 Acres

Here's the latest on Washington Glen, a proposed 137-acre development of 110 single family homes and 299 townhouses within the 1,100 acre area slated for residential development, but zoned Resource Conservation (Deferred) in the current draft of the Comprehensive Plan. The proposed site of Washington Glen is entirely within the Port Tobacco Watershed and includes over 3,500 feet of headwater streams. The developer has submitted a proposed Zoning Map Amendment to change the zoning to Medium Density Residential from Resource Conservation (Deferred).

PTRC was well represented at the Charles County Planning Commission public hearing on the Zoning Map Amendment request on June 22. President Jerry Forbes, Technical Advisor Dave Gardiner, and long-time members Nancy Smart and Joe Selden testified against the amendment, citing the ecological importance of the Port Tobacco Headwaters and the County's commitments under the Port Tobacco Watershed Restoration Action Strategy and the Chesapeake Bay TMDL. Representatives of the Mason Springs Conservancy, the Mattawoman Watershed Society, the Conservancy for Charles County, and Citizens for a Better Charles County also spoke in opposition to the amendment, and numerous residents testified in favor of controlling growth to protect County residents' quality of life.

The basis for the request is the claim that there has been a substantial change in the character of the neighborhood where the property is located from that existing in 1992, when the last comprehensive rezoning occurred. The applicant, Walton Maryland, LLC, defined the *neighborhood* as not only the Washington Glen site but also areas of residential development north of Billingsley Road and some commercial development just west of Route 301.

The Department of Planning and Growth Management Staff Report posted June 11 found that a substantial change in the character of the neighborhood has not occurred since the previous rezoning of the property because all the developments referenced

1,100 Acres *continued*

by the applicant are consistent with current zoning and the 2006 Comprehensive Plan land uses. As such, the Staff Report recommended denial of the proposed Zoning Map Amendment.

The next steps each involve a 60-day review. Within 60 days of the closing of the record on July 27, the Planning Commission must send its recommendation to the County Commissioners. Within 60 days of the receipt of the Planning Commission's recommendations, the County Commissioners are to hold a public hearing on the application. And within 60 days after the record of that hearing is closed, the County Commissioners are to issue a written decision.

To read the Staff Report and PTRC statements submitted for the record, visit <http://porttobaccoriver.org/advocacy/port-tobacco-headwaters/>

Water Monitoring Update

PTRC's 2015 water monitoring program is up and running. For many years, PTRC volunteers have collected water samples from over 50 sites on the rivers and streams in the Port Tobacco River watershed to assess water quality. This year, the county specified that only 12 sites should be chosen for bacterial testing. Under the direction of PTRC's Technical Advisor, Dave Gardiner, the 12 sites were strategically selected according to historical significance and potential impact from new development.

The first sampling included only analysis for bacterial contamination because our test equipment was being repaired at the MD Department of the Environment. Now that the equipment is available, Tina Wilson reports that testing can include traditional parameters, such as dissolved oxygen, salinity, conductivity, and turbidity.

The water monitoring program will continue through September, and only then will we determine whether the results suggest scientific trends. Please contact PTRC at 301-934-2025 or email ED Julie Simpson at jsimpson@porttobaccoriver.org if you would like to volunteer to help with this program.



Tina Wilson, who is running the water monitoring program, collects a sample,



Collected water samples

COMMUNITY BANK OBTAINS GRANT FOR PTRC FROM THE CHANEY FOUNDATION

On July 23, Mike Middleton, Executive Chairman of the Board of Community Bank, presented PTRC President Jerry Forbes and Executive Director Julie Simpson a \$2,500 check from the Chaney Foundation Fund for Hope.

The Chaney Foundation is part of the Community Foundation of Anne Arundel County, which is dedicated to building a source of charitable funds for addressing current and future needs of the region.

JOIN US FOR NIGHT ON THE RIVER!

PTRC will hold its eighth annual Night on the River at the Port Tobacco Restaurant, 7536 Shirley Blvd, Port Tobacco, on Thursday, August 6, from 7 to 10pm.

The evening will feature live music by the Byx Bullock Trio with Jennifer Cooper, a silent auction, and raffles for a Cooler of Cheer and gift cards, not to mention the beauty of the Port Tobacco Restaurant's location on the River.

Tickets are \$50 each or 10 for \$475 and include heavy hors d'oeuvres (enough for dinner), desserts, and one free drink—beer, wine or soft drink. Buy your tickets online at porttobaccoriver.org. You also can purchase tickets at the door.

Check out our website porttobaccoriver.org for a complete menu and list of auction items.



PTRC volunteers seining on the Port Tobacco River



June PTRC Green Drinks at the Port Tobacco Restaurant



PTRC volunteers picking up trash at Chapel Point State Park

Report from Executive Director Julie Simpson

Fish Surveys to Resume in Port Tobacco River—Have you ever wondered what swims beneath the water's surface? The Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Fisheries Service, has issued PTRC a Scientific Collection Permit for monthly sampling to monitor fish resources in the Port Tobacco River. Fish will be collected in nets, counted by species, and returned to the water alive. Our data will be reported to the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to help them track fish abundance around the Bay. The last time PTRC conducted the surveys, in 2008, the top species collected were menhaden, white perch, bay anchovy, comb jelly, croaker, and Atlantic silverside. That was prior to the snakehead invasion, and it will be interesting to see how populations have changed since that time. Contact Julie or Krupa at ptrc@porttobaccoriver.org if you are interested in volunteering.

Port Tobacco River Park—PTRC is working with Charles County Parks, the Conservancy for Charles County, and the Maryland State Forest Service to develop a plan for planting native trees and shrubs on the site of the future Port Tobacco River Park. The County worked with the Trust for Public Land and the federal Fish and Wildlife Service to purchase the site, which covers over 150 acres off Chapel Point Road south of the Port Tobacco Courthouse. The plantings will create a buffer between the Park and an adjacent residential area, and with planned land stewardship, will provide an attractive woodland with wildlife habitat. Planned amenities for the site include canoe and kayak access to the Port Tobacco River. Planting is expected to take place in spring 2016. We will be looking for volunteers, so stay tuned.

Recent PTRC Events by Krupa Patel

Green Drinks—Green Drinks is an organic, self-sustaining network to connect those interested in protecting the environment. It's a great place to make friends, discuss important issues, and expand your network. PTRC started a Green Drinks in Port Tobacco to grow our network and connect with others who would like to get involved. The next Port Tobacco Green Drinks will be held at the Port Tobacco Restaurant, 7536 Shirley Blvd, Port Tobacco, on Thursday, August 27, at 6:30pm. Come join us—it's fun, and the restaurant donates part of its proceeds from the evening to PTRC.

End-of-Summer Beach Clean Up—PTRC volunteers collected 28 bags of trash at our August 1 clean-up at Chapel Point State Park. The Park is enjoyed by many visitors, and we expect to hold another clean-up in a few weeks. Contact Krupa at krupa@porttobaccoriver.org or Julie at jsimpson@porttobaccoriver.org if you would like to help out.

Recent Articles of Interest

A July 31 Maryland Independent article titled "[Think Twice About Joining Clean Chesapeake Coalition](#)" reports that despite its name, the mission of the Clean Chesapeake Coalition, which was formed by a Baltimore law firm, is to undermine efforts to improve water quality in the Chesapeake Bay.

A July 29 *Maryland Independent* article titled "[Bay Watershed States Gather to Reaffirm Commitment to Cleanup](#)," reports on a recent meeting of the Chesapeake Bay Program Executive Council. The Council endorsed the recommendation of the State Riparian Forest Buffer Task Force to increase forests on agricultural land to filter runoff and agreed to draft letters in support of improvements to keep livestock from watershed streams.

In a July 10 *Washington Post* opinion piece titled "[Why Haven't We Cleaned Up the Bay?](#)" William Ruckelshaus, former EPA administrator, cites the limited progress in cleaning up the Chesapeake Bay since the first Chesapeake Bay Agreement was signed in 1984. He points to nonpoint source pollution as the largest uncontrolled source of pollution and to lack of public interest as the reasons that more progress has not been made.

A July 10 *Washington Post* article titled "[VA Cattleman Keeps Herd Out of River, for Bay's Sake](#)" describes a Virginia farmer's voluntary efforts to reduce pollution levels in the Buffalo River by fencing his herd off from the River.

A July 10 *Maryland Independent* article titled "[Federal Appeals Court Upholds EPA's Bay Cleanup Measures](#)" reports that the Third Circuit Court of Appeals upheld a lower court decision that affirms the legality of the Chesapeake Bay cleanup effort. The American Farm Bureau Federation and its allies had challenged EPA's Chesapeake Bay Clean Water Blueprint, which establishes a total maximum daily load for pollution that enters the Bay each year.

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PTRC's Executive Director, Julie Simpson, was one of seven people honored recently by the Charles County Board of Commissioners for completing the 2015 Leadership Southern Maryland (LSM) program. LSM is a 9-month program designed to build a cadre of informed regional leaders, addressing common issues and bringing long-term benefit to their neighbors and communities. LSM participants engaged with leaders in education, health care, government and industry and focused on leadership development by highlighting pertinent regional issues.

Pictured left to right: Karen Smith (College of Southern Maryland); Commissioner Amanda Stewart (District 3); Dr. Dianna Abney (Charles County Department of Health); Commissioner Vice President Ken Robinson (District 1); Julie Simpson (PTRC Executive Director); Brendon Moon (Charles County Board of Appeals); Nancy Schertler, Planning Commission Member; Commission President Peter Murphy; Commissioner Debra Davis, Esq. (District 2); and Commissioner Bobby Rucci (District 4).

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