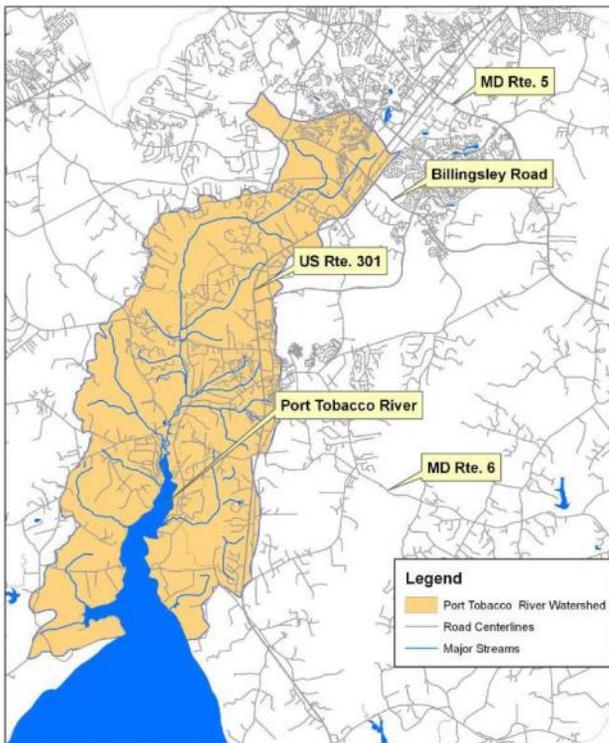


Port Tobacco River Conservancy News

WINTER/SPRING 2016

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Port Tobacco River Watershed



Prepared by the Charles County Planning Division August 2011.

Jerry Forbes to Step Down as PTRC President

Long-time PTRC President Jerry Forbes announced that he will step down from that role effective May 5, 2016. Jerry will remain on the PTRC Board and will help with the transition to new leadership—at least during the months ahead when he is not traveling to Scotland, fishing in Minnesota, attending his high school reunion in Illinois, or enjoying the Monterrey Jazz Festival.

Jerry became active in PTRC in 2004 and has served as Board President since 2010. He managed some of PTRC’s major grant-funded projects, including planting over 1,800 native seedling trees over 4.3 acres providing a 50-foot buffer along eroded banks of two tributaries, building rain gardens at McDonough High School, helping a farmer put in a well and fence his cattle out of a tributary of the Port Tobacco Creek, and constructing a swale that filters water draining off the Hawthorne golf course before it reaches the Port Tobacco Creek.

Jerry is a resident of Port Tobacco and Senior Scientist at The Energetics Technology Center, Inc., in St. Charles, MD, as well as Adjunct Professor of Mechanical Engineering at the University of Maryland, College Park.



“Working with PTRC has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my life,” said Jerry. “Our projects have made a real difference to the health of the Port Tobacco watershed and have given people the opportunity to interact with the river and the watershed in many ways, and to value its natural, scenic beauty. I would like to thank everyone who has managed a grant, organized an event, contributed to our newsletter, helped to raise the funds needed to support our projects, or simply planted a tree. Without you there would be no PTRC.”

You can reach Jerry at jforptrc@comcast.net to congratulate him or to discuss ways in which you can help to support PTRC’s work.

Public Tree Planting Project

Restoring a Natural Community – Port Tobacco River Park

Residents are invited to help plant trees in the new Port Tobacco River Park as part of a month-long celebration of Earth Day. Grab the kids and join us for a few fun-filled hours of improving our local environment!

The Conservancy for Charles County and PTRC have partnered with the Maryland Forest Service and the Charles County Government to develop a natural tree buffer area to help protect the important wetlands that surround the Port Tobacco River. With the assistance of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Charles County recently acquired 149 acres of undeveloped land along the headwaters of this historic river, land that is now known as the Port Tobacco River Park. Initial plans call for converting the existing agricultural fields into natural forest buffer areas to create watershed protection and natural wildlife habitat. This public tree planting is the first step toward that goal. In time, the Port Tobacco River Park will offer public access to hiking trails and outstanding wildlife viewing opportunities.

Four separate event dates are available:

Saturday, April 2, 9:00 am - noon.

Sunday, April 3, noon - 3:00 pm

Saturday, April 9, 9:00 am - noon

Sunday, April 10, noon - 3:00 pm

Due to parking limitations, preregistration is required. To sign up, please call the Charles County Parks Division Office @ 301-932-3470 or register online using Volunteer Spot. Go to <http://vols.pt/nZdkcc>

Port Tobacco River Park is located on Chapel Point Road in Port Tobacco, Maryland (approximately 1 mile from Rte. 6). With the exception of special events, this park is not currently open for public access.

April 16 28th Annual Potomac River Cleanup

The Port Tobacco River Conservancy is teaming up with the Alice Ferguson Foundation for the 28th Annual Potomac River Cleanup on Saturday, April 16, 2016, from 9:00 am to noon.

Our cleanup will take place on the Port Tobacco River at Chapel Point State Park, 8160 Pisces Rd, Port Tobacco MD 20677. We will supply bags, gloves, drinking water and snacks. Please come join us to have fun and to help make our river more beautiful.

For more information please visit <http://trashnetwork.fergusonfoundation.org/event/3077/show> or contact Julie at jsimpson@porttobaccoriver.org or Krupa at krupa@porttobaccoriver.org

APRIL 7 PTRC MEETING

Did you know there is a fish ladder in the Port Tobacco Creek at Route 6? A fish ladder is a structure that allows migratory fish, such as yellow perch and river herring, to bypass a barrier, in this case downstream stream erosion, and migrate upstream to their spawning habitat.

Join us on Thursday, April 7, at 7:00 pm, at the Holiday Inn Express at 6860 Crain Highway in La Plata, as Jim Thompson, Fish Passage Coordinator for the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, will talk about the importance of dam removal in Maryland for restoring migratory fish populations. Jim promises to "blow your mind" with information on how dam removals may be one of the best tools to restore the Chesapeake Bay.

The State Highway Administration (SHA) maintains the Port Tobacco Creek fish ladder. Bill Buettner of SHA's Environmental Programs Division will also join us to talk about SHA's efforts to locate sites to minimize impacts to wetlands, streams, forest and wildlife habitat.



Fish Ladder in the Port Tobacco Creek



Chapel Point Cleanup in January

CHOCOLATEFEST 2016

The 2016 ChocolateFest held on February 12 proved to be a sweet experience for all. The Jaycees once again generously provided the hall, delicious hors d'oeuvres, and volunteers to deal games of chance.

Chocolate cake pops donated by Charles Street Bakery awaited everyone at their place at the table. Chocolate fountains flowed, awaiting strawberry dipping. Five lucky people won Chocolate Drinks, and several won cakes after walking, skipping, or dancing around the dance floor during the Cake Walks. Games of chance and Bingo attracted others, and the Landing Mary Band provided a continuous background of soft rock. Luck was part of the sweet experience for those who won the 50/50 Raffle and the Red Wagon of Cheer Raffle.

Thanks to all who attended, to the Jaycees for their continued sponsorship, to our corporate donors ETC and SMECO who smoothed the way for a delightful, successful evening while supporting the efforts of the Conservancy to protect and restore the Port Tobacco River and its watershed. The event netted over \$8,000, and we appreciate your support.



Executive Director's Report

PTRC's first Beer and Movie Night at the Holiday Inn Express was a great success. We recognized last year's water monitoring program volunteers with gifts of the new PTRC beer glasses and watched two short films on the health of the Chesapeake Bay produced by EarthEcho International.

At the request of our volunteers, we held a January shoreline cleanup at Chapel Point State Park. The weather stayed warm and sunny just long enough for us to collect 21 bags of recyclables and 9 bags of other trash. As always, the Charles County Department of Public Works supported our efforts by collecting the bags the next day. We hope you will join us for the Potomac River Cleanup on Saturday, April 16.

PTRC is joining Trash Free Maryland in supporting a bill that has been introduced in the Maryland General Assembly, the Community Cleanup and Greening Act (HB31 and SB57). The bill would:

- Ban plastic disposable bags and require most retailers to use only paper
- Charge 10 cents for each paper bag requested by a customer
- Compensate retailers for the elevated cost of the paper bags and contribute additional proceeds to fund fresh food initiatives, bag giveaways, and environmental cleanup efforts
- Incentivize stores to establish credit programs to encourage reusable bag use

The enactment of similar legislation in Washington, DC, has resulted in a 60% reduction in bag use and a 72% reduction in litter. Only 8% of Washington, DC, business owners oppose the law. President Jerry Forbes's letter in support of the bill was published in the *Maryland Independent* on January 20.

I have been attending a series of seminars at the Audubon Naturalist Society in Chevy Chase on benthic macroinvertebrate identification and water monitoring techniques. Benthic macroinvertebrates are animals that live part or all of their lives on substrates of stream bottoms, are visible to the naked eye and have no backbones. They include annelids (worms and leeches), mollusks (snails and clams), crustaceans (crayfish), and some insects. The types and numbers of benthic macroinvertebrates found in a stream can be used to assess the health of the stream. The seminars provide instruction on how to identify aquatic insects to the taxonomic level of family and how to use this information to assess water quality.

Recent Articles of Interest

- A March 15 article in the *Washington Post* titled "[A Softer Way to Fight Beach Erosion](#)" describes an unusual anti-erosion project that DNR's Shoreline Conservation Services helped design in the early 2000s. A failing concrete bulkhead was replaced with jetties shaped to protect marsh grasses, and an oyster reef was placed offshore to help break the motion of waves. Results have been newly deposited sand on the beach and expansion of the marsh seaward, providing important habitat for fish, crabs, and terrapins.
- A March 1 article in the *Washington Post* titled "[Supreme Court Ends Challenge to the Chesapeake Bay Cleanup Plan](#)" reports that the Supreme Court declined to hear a challenge to the Chesapeake Bay cleanup plan. This action ends the American Farm Bureau Federation's attempt to stop the cleanup. It is thought that the attempt to challenge the Bay cleanup plan was aimed at pre-empting federal regulation of pollution from large farms into the Mississippi River.
- A January 31 piece in the *Bay Journal* titled "[Sen. Middleton Named Chesapeake Bay Commission Chair](#)" announced Senator Middleton's election to replace Delegate Scott Lingafelter as CBC Chair for 2016. Middleton cited as his priorities for the year (1) working with USDA to enhance Bay conservation funding, (2) reviewing agricultural phosphorus management indices in use in Pennsylvania and Virginia, and (3) advocating for the Rivers of the Chesapeake Initiative and its continued funding. RCI aims to preserve large-scale landscapes along Bay tributaries.
- On February 2, the *Baltimore Sun* published "[Maryland Lawmakers Take Aim at Chicken Manure](#)," which reports on a recently introduced bill called the Poultry Litter Requirement Act. Manure from the Eastern Shore chicken farms is the single largest source of pollution in the Bay, and the bill would require poultry companies to remove excess manure from their contracted farms.



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WATER MONITORING UPDATE

PTRC is beginning to use a new protocol for our water monitoring program. The new system was developed by technical and scientific experts from the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science, the U.S. Geological Survey, and the Chesapeake Bay Trust, and made available by the Mid-Atlantic Tributary Assessment Coalition. Several watershed organizations in Maryland are also using it. The protocol standardizes indicators and appropriate methods for water monitoring, and we believe it will improve the scientific validity of the data we collect. Our goal is that these data will be used in a report card.

We plan to sample in the Port Tobacco River's two upper subwatersheds where most of the new residential development is occurring. This area includes important headwaters of the river. We have identified sampling points, but further work needs to be done to determine accessibility.

Adopting the protocol has forced us to evaluate the tools necessary to make our program successful. Our water monitoring equipment is old and needs to be replaced. Based on our initial evaluation of equipment needs, we have launched a crowdfunding site to obtain some of the capital we need to start rebuilding our equipment inventory. The site is <https://southernmarylandgives.razoo.com/us/story/Port-Tobacco-River-Conservancy>.

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