

March 1, 2011

Nanticoke Currents



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From the Bridge

It is a new year on the river, and the Alliance has many “new” things to share with you! First and foremost, our new staff. This year we welcome Beth Wasden as our Volunteer and Outreach coordinator. For the past two years we have worked with Volunteer Maryland to develop our volunteer program. We worked with two fine volunteers, Kara Kukovich and Matt Heim. These two spectacular Volunteer Maryland Coordinators helped us create a program that was ready for a full-time professional volunteer coordinator, and Beth Wasden is now in that position. Beth is also our first Delaware resident on staff. We would also like to welcome Lisa Baird, our Programs Assistant. Lisa is a member of the Chesapeake Conservation Corps, a program run by the Chesapeake Bay Trust. Lisa is working on and learning about all aspects of our programs, from the Creekwatchers Program to our Green Infrastructure-based Watershed Management Plan, and everything in between.

We have also moved, again, to a new location- one where we hope to be for a long time! The new office is located in the old Nanticoke Inn in Vienna. Our doors are open from 9-4 every week day, there is always a hot pot of coffee on- please come and visit us, we love to talk about all things river.

We have two new board members, Andy Howard from the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control and Joe Layton who serves for the Dorchester Soil Conservation District, as well as being a member of our partners the Dorchester Farm Bureau and Chicone Ruritan. Joe is also one of the owners of the first Dorchester winery, Layton's Chance.

Finally, we have been expanding our work on the



river. With our partners the Dorchester Soil Conservation District and local farmers, we have been involved in a pilot program that planted 15 miles of buffers on agricultural ditches. There is so much to say about our work, some of which you'll read in the following pages.

As you can see from all the new additions, 2010 was a great year for the Alliance. With our larger staff we expect 2011 to be fantastic as well. Our ability to work towards our mission, conserving the natural cultural and recreational resources of the Nanticoke, has never been better. I'll leave you with this one happy thought- The work our Creekwatchers have done over the past 4 years confirmed something we have all suspected: the Nanticoke River is the healthiest major tributary in the Chesapeake. We hope you will join us in our work to keep it that way! I hope we see you soon on the river!

-EB James, Executive Director

Upcoming Events

- March 11 at 3PM: Creekwatchers Presentation at the Laurel Public Library
- March 18 (9AM-4PM): ESLC's 12th Annual Planning Conference in Easton
- March 26 (10AM-3PM): Creekwatchers Orientation and Training in Vienna
- April 2 (9AM-12PM): NWA's Project Clean Stream Event in Vienna
- April 4-5: Creekwatchers Monitoring throughout the Nanticoke watershed
- April 16 (10AM-2PM): Sussex County Volunteer Fair at the Marvel Museum in Georgetown, DE
- April 19-20: Creekwatchers Monitoring throughout the Nanticoke watershed
- April 23 (10AM-4PM): Earth Day at the Salisbury Zoo
- April 30: Shad Fest in Vienna



NE W Office!

In October 2010, the Nanticoke Watershed Alliance relocated the office

across the parking lot to our new site, The Nanticoke Inn. We have a more spacious work area and have gotten settled in quite nicely.



The Nanticoke Inn

Though as winter came, we soon realized just how cold it can get. We invested in a pellet stove to replace an inefficient propane fireplace and have been toasty every since. Come stop by and check it out!

NE W Chesapeake Conservation Corps Volunteer Lisa Baird

I recently graduated from Salisbury University with a degree in Business Management. Feeling a little different than my money-motivated peers, I wanted to lead my business school studies in the direction of the green community; focusing on the effects business have on the environment, ways to improve energy conservation, and environmental restoration.

I grew up in the Baltimore area and have always enjoyed the outdoors. Spending the past four years on the Eastern Shore, I have truly fallen in love with the friendly, small town aspect as well as the intense beauty the shore has with every angle you look. I developed the motivation to create my career around my passions and making a difference in the state of the environment in an area that I adore. After graduation, I quickly found out just how tough the job search really is...that is until I discovered a newly established program, The Chesapeake Conservation Corps.

I come to the Nanticoke Watershed Alliance as a stipend volunteer from the corps to enhance my professional development and as a young motivated individual getting her foot in the door in the environmental community. The Corps was designed to give green job training and hands

on experience in a host organization. It's about creating domestic jobs that cannot be outsourced because our environment is here. The Chesapeake Bay is here and it needs our help. I am thrilled to be part of a movement that not only helps me in my career but pursues a mission to "save the bay." I am even more ecstatic to be with an organization that focuses on the Nanticoke River, one of the largest and the healthiest rivers feeding into the Bay.

The Chesapeake Bay is the heart and soul of the state of Maryland and I have already gotten so much satisfaction knowing I am helping to conserve the Nanticoke River in the heart and soul of the Delmarva Peninsula. I am looking forward to playing a key role in many wonderful projects we are doing as well as developing projects of my own. I wake up every morning honestly excited about my job because I truly am following my dream and doing something I love!



Words From Beth, Our NE W Volunteer & Outreach Coordinator!

No matter where you go on the Delmarva Peninsula, you're stepping a toe into some waterway (and frequently a knee into the muck). While I no longer work on an island in the middle of the Delaware River or on a nature center on the mid-Eastern Shore, I'm just as stoked to have the beautiful Nanticoke always in view from my office window.

(Since I'm originally from Georgia, I'm even more excited to not have to contend with cotton mouths on or near the water.)

The Nanticoke Watershed Alliance is my third volunteer management position. For two years, I served as an AmeriCorps volunteer coordinator at Fort Delaware State Park. My initial service year in the Delaware State Parks AmeriCorps Partners program ignited my passion for working with volunteers after I figured out what I was doing and why, so I signed up for a second year. I worked mostly with maintenance volunteers, volunteer groups from some of the Wilmington-based corporations such as Astra Zeneca and



MBNA/Bank of America, and living history interpreters who occasionally blew up stuff.

Next, I managed volunteers for three years at Pickering Creek Audubon Center in Easton, Maryland. Since Pickering Creek is a 400-acre facility, the volunteer program focused on habitat restoration and service on-site. We held several work days during the year, operated citizen scientist programs that focused on nesting boxes, and participated in educational stewardship programs such as LIFE (Legacy Institute for the Environment).

As a volunteer manager, I discovered that I have one of the best positions in existence, no matter the where or the what. Not only am I expected (and indeed, paid) to work with other passionate, service-minded folks who love the water, I am able to watch you grow, to be re-energized by your spirit of service, and to learn new things constantly. Not only do you improve yourself through service, you also make the community better (that includes us). Volunteer

"Anyone can be great because anyone can serve."

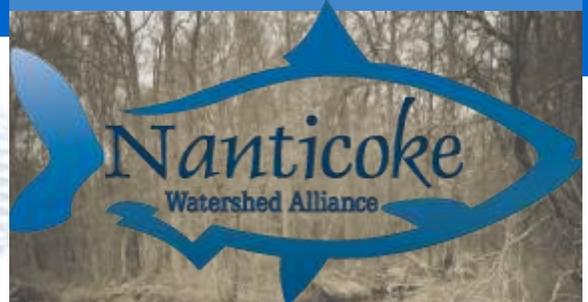
~Martin Luther King Junior

management is a pretty awesome opportunity and a pretty hefty responsibility.

I'm looking forward to working with our Creekwatcher volunteers, developing our outreach volunteer program, and establishing new volunteer programs in the coming months and years. Please let me know if there's anything you need. And while the tundra swans are swimming on the water, make sure you watch your step but enjoy the Nanticoke's beauty all the same.



Make a difference in your community! Join the Creekwatchers volunteer corps 2011!



Do you:

- Enjoy kayaking, fishing, bird watching, or boating on the Nanticoke?
- Want to preserve (and improve) the healthiest major Chesapeake Bay tributary?
- Wish to spend more time outdoors and near the water?
- Enjoy learning new things, including high-tech water monitoring gadgets?
- Want to be a part of an award-winning, highly motivated, well-trained, and energetic volunteer corps?
- Have time to volunteer every other Tuesday or Wednesday from April through November?

The Nanticoke Watershed Alliance is currently seeking new Creekwatchers for the 2011 season.

Take the first step in becoming **Creekwatchers-certified** by attending the annual Creekwatchers training on March 26.



For more information, visit the Alliance website at www.nanticokeiver.org, or contact Volunteer and

Outreach Coordinator, Beth Wasden, at

bethwasden@nanticokeiver.org or at 443.994.1175.





Volunteer Corner



While you may be aware of our Creekwatchers program, you may not realize how your unique skills might help the Alliance.

Photographers, writers, graphic designers, artists, and others can help us develop outreach materials



and produce content for our website and our newsletters. Gardeners can assist us with maintaining our rain gardens and help with future plantings. If you have a unique skill that you believe may be beneficial for the Alliance, please contact Beth to discuss how we can work together.

We are also in search of a couple of awesome outreach assistants to help



us staff booths at volunteer fairs and community events and always have need of new volunteers who are only interested in one-day, special events such as clean-ups and plantings.

Programs Spotlight!

Welcome to the Program Spotlight, where we highlight one of our many exciting projects and allow you to get the "inside scoop" on the kinds of work we are involved in. It's an opportunity to share information, progress, and my other exciting news related to our programs. For our inaugural "program spotlight," we'd like to discuss our Flexible Agricultural Buffers Program!

In 2010, we kicked off year one of a three-year project to assess the interest and feasibility of farmers for installing narrow agricultural buffers, thereby potentially engaging more farms in this Best Management Practice (BMP) for excess nutrient removal. After each season, surveys will be conducted with participating farmers to gauge satisfaction and support for this practice. We are also collecting water samples from these agricultural ditches throughout the season, to be analyzed for nitrogen and phosphorus levels.

Why is this an important project? Because Farm Bill programs require 35 feet of

vegetative buffers on either side of an agricultural ditch in order to be eligible for cost-share assistance. These requirements are for both nutrient removal and wildlife habitat, but with the lack of improvement in the state of the Chesapeake Bay, folks are looking for creative solutions to getting excess nutrients out. In addition, taking a whopping 70 feet of cropland (buffers on both sides of a ditch) out of production creates a pretty heavy financial burden on

farmers. So we are piloting a project with the Dorchester and Wicomico Soil Conservation Districts to see if narrower buffers on more land might be a more viable option for all involved! We enrolled more farmers than expected in this first year, and more are joining up in 2011. We are proud to say that in 2010, we planted 15 miles of buffer strips in one small sub-watershed area. As the

What is a Buffer?

A strip of grass or other close-growing perennial vegetation that is used to absorb nutrient runoff before they pollute our river.



vegetation grows, our Chesapeake Conservation Corps volunteer Lisa Baird goes out to collect samples. Over the course of the year, we will see what happens – stay tuned for any updates in future currents!

Megan Ward



This is just one buffer strips that has been planted

For more information about this or any of our exciting programs, please contact Programs Manager Megan Ward at (410) 873-3045 OR meganward@nanticokeriver.org



Our Natural Helper in the Watershed

As mentioned previously, the Nanticoke Watershed Alliance began a Flexible Agriculture Buffering Research Project. We are testing the effectiveness of smaller buffer strips where the farmers will be protecting the watershed and the Chesapeake Bay by reducing runoff while not sacrificing too much land needed for production. Un-buffered fields can degrade fisheries and threaten public health, recreation, and drinking water in nearby wells and streams. Rainwater can pick up animal wastes, fertilizers, and pesticides, and carry them from farms to streams, just as it takes toxic chemicals from parking lots and lawn fertilizers from back yards. Everyone can do their individual part in the watershed to help, but we also have a natural helper working in our favor—the **beaver**. At one of the sites where I collect water samples and measure water depth for the agricultural buffers research, I stumbled upon a larger beaver dam—well, actually back-to-back beaver dams as you can see in the photo [to the right]. These species modify the natural environment in such a way that the overall ecosystem builds upon the change. The ponds, wetlands, and meadows formed by beaver dams increases bio-diversity and improves overall environmental quality.

This is the second beaver dam at this sampling site. The back-to-back beaver dams make the creek look like a stairway of different water levels.



ABOVE: The snow makes it easily visible how the beaver dam re-directed the water-flow to the right of the dam. (It could end up one big wetland some day)

BELOW: Shows the beaver inside its dam.

Benefits Of A Beaver Dam In The Watershed

- Development of new wetlands
- Reduction of sediment loading in streams and rivers
- Increased biodiversity including a better environment for fish and waterfowl
- **Reduces channel scouring and stream bank erosion. (aka the “ditching effect” which further lowers the water table, negatively affecting vegetative cover, and increases runoff rates)**
- Longer land water retention time in water cycle
- A more stable water supply for wildlife, and vegetation (more water retained)
- Flood mitigation due to increased ground water holding capacity
- Dampening of stream flow rate variations and stream charge during drought cycles.
- Formation of natural lakes and ponds and maintenance of existing ponds.



By damming streams, beavers raise the water level to surround their lodge with a protective moat, and create the deep water needed for winter food storage. While other wildlife endure wintertime cold and hunger, beavers stay warm in their lodges with an underwater food cache of branches nearby. We will be keeping a close eye on this dam every two weeks when we go **out for testing... hoping to see the critters in action.**

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We're On The Web!

www.nanticokeriver.org

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Mission:

"Fostering partnerships and progress in conserving the natural, cultural, and recreational resources of the Nanticoke River watershed through dialogue, collaborative outreach, and education."

Goals:

-Monitor river health through collaborative relationships with regional experts, local volunteers, and the scientific community to disseminate objective information.

-Develop and promote innovative approaches to management and conservation of the watershed, engaging partners, policy makers, and the public through outreach and education.

-Support and promote the conservation initiatives of organizations within the Nanticoke River watershed.



Alliance staff at a recent field trip to see the Tundra Swans. We'd like to thank Tom Horton for taking us out to see them before they head North.



Wish List!

- Computers
- Copier machine
- Picnic table
- Laminator

