

Stream stewardship workshop. 11/15/08.

Friends of Lower Beaverdam Creek

**Grant-boosted initiatives...
and motivating impulses that drive our work.**

Grants have been an important factor in the development of FLBC.

Prior to our establishment, a core group identified a central site in our community, CUMC, for potential installation of a parking lot bio-retention structure; a heavy duty raingarden. Invited county and nonprofit reps for a charrette to look at the site. Developed a conceptual plan for the site (UMD landscape arch. student via Neighborhood Design Center).

Sought and received a CBT grant for parking lot retrofits, primarily bio-retention. At the same time recruited the county DER as a partner. They were interested in showcasing retrofit opportunities since most of their LID work was for new development.

Sacrificed two parking spaces in each of two corners. Worked with the county to design and build the two installations. [Sometimes a challenge: during the first site visit by the county design engineers we were asked if we were going to cut the large canopy trees over the corners, since the raingarden plants like sun. The contractor hired by the county was not at all convinced these projects worked; they were what the county wanted and the inspectors were not advocates either.]

Also interested in where the runoff went; where did the pipe empty? This little used "park" had little access, was overgrown with multiflora rose and other invasives. Yet in the center was a beaverpond.

We saw the potential and learned of watershed restoration grants from NFWF. The opportunity for funds for tools, trees, native plants and resources to remove invasives to improve the site was a catalyst to form our local watershed protection group, FLBC. We saw this site as a first step, a case study, to take on a much larger mission.

We recruited partners for advice and support (AWS, MNPS, Prince George's Heritage, Safe Passages (at risk youth program) and the town of Cheverly) and received the \$15,000 grant. And tried valiantly to keep up with the timetable outlined in the proposal. Notice in our town newsletter brought several new participants who provided vital energy and expertise (Salos, Alex, etc.)

To get to the invasives we constructed a low impact linear trail along the stream which largely involved removal of downed trees and the laying of woodchips received free from Pepco's line clearing operations. It was great fun and a real sense of accomplishment to see the trail take shape.

We introduced the trail to the AWCAC community and local officials at a celebration hike and drew attention to it in our community newsletter and led hikes on Cheverly Day. One member hung small ID signs from trees – space ship shaped for invaders. This new trail was appreciated by many who found a small forest oasis within easy walk, even if the Route 50 hiway sounds and sites are sometimes quite intrusive.

With our local garden club we sponsored the visit and talk of native plant expert and grower, Sarah Tangren, and then purchased and planted over \$2000 in plants. Unfortunately we were not prepared for the hard drought following the planting and many of those plants were lost. Still, we have been amazed at the emergence of natives following the removal of invasives.

Monthly work sessions, primarily invasives removal. Also trail maintenance. Birders in our group used the area for the annual Christmas bird count and wrote a guide to the birds of Cheverly that we printed and sold at cost.

As part of the grant we produced a Community Report circulated to all residents in the subwatershed that is piped to our park. It helped to present our work and issues to policy makers and those beyond our community.

We are an annual participant in the AWS Earth Day Cleanup. Sometimes with students earning community service hours. We encouraged the involvement of a neighboring civic association along LBC in the annual cleanup.

We were the beneficiary for the annual Cheverly Day 5K fundraiser resulting in a \$1000 donation we used primarily to install benches. An Eagle Scout project built a kiosk. Other scouts installed plant ID signage. Our county councilmember approved our proposal for a \$5000 grant to continue and expand our work. We celebrated our achievements and that grant.

Others have worked on LBC before us and still do. ECC has brought 300 college students for an alternative spring break cleanup the past two years.

Tomorrow a local Junior Girl Scout troop will walk the trail and plant a sweet bay magnolia as the first part of their commitment to adopt a seep area that they will study and nurture; using it as an outdoor classroom.

Science & Identifying Toxics

From the beginning we were aware of the clam research of Dr. Harriette Phelps that identified PCBs and other toxics in our stream.

Referenced it in our work and Community Report. Volunteered to help her to set out and collect clams. Invited her to speak. Provided \$500 last summer and supported her efforts to generate important publicity (WPost coverage and more) that brought additional interest and a new round of student participation in her research.

We have supported a recent grant proposal by her for \$5000 for additional research and findings publicity from CWP.

Key to our early invasives work was the encouragement of MNPS leaders and the persistent work of Dr. Mark Imlay, now of AWS.

Dr. Matt Salo, a key volunteer from the beginning, has continually kept us grounded in a science-based approach to viewing plant and animal biodiversity and threats to it. He has guided us into a new site, Euclid Woods, largely on M-NCPPC property, but in need of serious invasives and erosion control. He was appointed this week to a Park & Planning advisory committee. (I was appointed to a state task force to develop a No Net Loss of Forest policy for the state.)

“Motivating Impulses Behind Our Efforts”

Different people have different interests and though we are not many, we succeed by supporting each others interests:

- Some are relentless at keeping us working on the unfinished tasks in Woodworth Park (installing a trash “trap,” rebuilding a trail entrance, erecting signage, removing invasives).
- A few inventoried plant and animal biodiversity and voiced concern for threats to it,
- Others relish introducing student groups and giving nature walks.
- Others see the larger threats and policy concerns in the subwatershed and testify at zoning, development and planning hearings, write letters to the editor, are members of AWCAC... Among our major concerns: Smith Recycling operation, 72 acre clearcut for a mine within ½ mile of the Cheverly Metro, a lot scalped by a developer trying to flip a forested industrial park site for a large profit.

A most recent success: Developing Cheverly’s Green Infrastructure Plan

After fighting many frustrating rear-guard actions (including challenging our town at the highest state levels over its use of Program Open Space funds), we took another tac and applied for assistance from the National Park Service to help develop a green infrastructure plan for our town.

We received political support and leadership buy-in for the application, and then to establish a Steering Committee with representatives from our group, Progressive Cheverly, the Garden Club, Parent Resource Center, a business representative from our industrial park, the Ward 4 Civic Association, Planning Board and Tree Commission. The Steering Committee was appointed in May and last Wed. the public part of the process kicked in with a community meeting attended by 40 people with national and county experts setting the stage for the work to occur in our community.

The legitimization of the process by receiving a “grant” from the NPS and their active participation has been a boost.

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