



Magothy River Association Summer 2020 Newsletter

Amidst this horrible COVID-19 pandemic, the MRA still has some good news to report. Even though our monthly meetings are taking place on Zoom, our activities, such as water monitoring, construction monitoring, living history videos, etc. continue to take place--- outdoors, and with social distancing and masks! Kudos to the dedicated members who continue to participate in promoting the MRA mission of saving the Magothy River for future generations to enjoy!

Officers Election and Annual Picnic

Our annual picnic has been canceled this year. We plan to resume the picnic next year.

The election of MRA officers for 2021 will be held at our annual meeting in September, which will be held over Zoom. If for some reason we cannot have a meeting, we will do the election by email.

Marsh Landing Victory

In June, the AA County Board of Appeals overturned the County's approval of the Marsh Landing subdivision, blocking the subdivision from moving forward. This is a huge victory for the MRA, the Chesapeake Legal Alliance, the Berrywood community, and GSPC. Our witnesses argued that the stormwater controls proposed by the developer would not protect the very sensitive Cattail Creek wetlands and would undo the nearly \$1 million Cattail Creek

restoration project spearheaded by the Berrywood Community Association and recently completed. In the 16-page ruling, the Board of Appeals noted that evidence presented by the MRA at the hearing was so "compelling, and developers' stormwater calculation errors were so glaring in not meeting county codes." The BOA was left with no alternative but to conclude that the stormwater controls would not work and further noted that the county neglected to review the Marsh Landing plan with reasonable scrutiny.

This ruling demonstrates that citizens can take developers to court and WIN. We must not be bullied into thinking that we cannot challenge the county or any developer when protecting our quality of life.

The Enclave at Severna Park

The MRA, Berrywood Community Association, and the Greater Severna Park Council have all opposed The Enclave at Severna Park, a 12-home development, to be built next to the fragile Cattail Creek (see Marsh Landing above) and is beside the busy intersection of Ritchie Highway and Route 648. We are all concerned about the potential runoff into the creek and wetlands because of the steep slopes, with 10 of the 12 homes to be built directly over the natural drainage path to the creek. We are

also worried about where the school bus would stop to pick up children in the development.

As with Marsh Landing, the HOA is to be responsible for maintaining stormwater controls as well as forested land.

The developer held a Zoom meeting via the County's Community Meetings website on July 27. 49 residents attended. At the meeting, it was reported by the project engineer that the developer would be requesting 4 modifications to the County code so the Enclave project can move forward. The most significant modification involves allowing the developer to disturb the stream buffer to discharge stormwater into the wetlands. We must oppose this. The stream buffer is a protected area, for a reason—to protect the creek. Cattail Creek has the worst water quality year after year. It desperately needs all of the protections afforded by the County code. We implore the County to deny any modifications, especially one that actively degrades the stream buffer.

County Executive Steuart Pittman has stated many times that he does not want code modifications to facilitate development, and county residents strongly agreed. We have asked Planning and Zoning to hold to the County code and take a stand to protect our watershed.

Living History Project: New Videos

Charles Germain, our volunteer MRA filmmaker, has just produced the **Goshen Farm** video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wBi_iZ_6WjY&t=18s>, documenting the history of this Cape St. Claire farm built in 1783 and lived in continuously for 230 years. The president of the Goshen Farm Preservation Society, Louis Biondi, walks us through this fascinating home

and surrounding farm, which is still used for open-air music concerts (pre-COVID) and community gardens.

Charles has also released a documentary about the **Robinson House/Old Stone House**, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wh3RUcyUvEM&t=10s>> which was built in the 1740's, and is still privately occupied. The owners graciously allowed us to have a private tour of this beautiful home. Dr. Stephen Hittle provides us with a wonderful history of the home and the original tract of land known as Huckleberry Forest. In 1687, Lord Baltimore granted Richard Beard 1,611 acres called Huckleberry Forest, where the Berrywood and Berrywood West communities now exist. A total of 706 acres were conveyed to Thomas Robinson by Richard Beard on October 29, 1702 for the sum of 10,490 pounds of tobacco. Thomas Robinson's son, Oneal, constructed the house in 1740.

The Robinson house evidently was an important landmark and center of its community and may have functioned as a tavern. In 1837, the house and 500 acres were conveyed to John Tydings for \$2,000, thus ending five generations of Robinson family ownership.

Following the completion of the Old Stone House video, the next project will be the **Potapskut Sailing Association**, which is on Black Hole Creek, and was established in 1938.

Stormwater Committee

This committee monitors construction on the Magothy. Brad Knopf reported that it is a little quiet these days in the construction industry due to the pandemic, so our efforts to keep an eye out for stormwater control lapses are easier than usual. There is a robust crew of

volunteers and advisory support. The approach is to work closely with the inspection supervisors, as they are the ones that can make things happen when needed. Diane Scherer, Brad Hill, and Mike Gomez watch over Severna Park. Phil Ourisson and Brad monitor Cape St. Claire, while Randy Bruns monitors Arnold and Del Dizon is our man in Pasadena. John Peacock provides advice. This monitoring is an essential activity on all parts of the Magothy and its creeks.

Water Trail Trivia Game

The “Severna Park Voice” published an article about the Magothy River Water Trail Trivia Game in its July issue. Playing this family-oriented game will give players a unique way to learn about local history and the environment within the Magothy River watershed and the Chesapeake Bay. Special thanks go to the students at SPHS and MRA member Brad Knopf. Sales of the game have been brisk and are available for a \$40 donation to the MRA at Cindy Bateman’s Antique Shop in downtown Severna Park. To purchase a game, call Cindy Bateman at 540-222-4969.

Don’t Cut Your Dead Trees Before You Read This!

Over the last several years, you may have noticed an increase in dead and dying trees in our watershed, particularly oaks. There are a number of factors at play, including soil compaction during development, old trunk wounds, storm damage, environmental stressors such as heat and drought, opportunistic diseases and insects, and just plain old age. But before you cut down your dead trees, consider this.

Dead trees and trees with decaying wood provide important habitat for about 25%

of the forest wildlife species in the northeastern US. More than 80 birds in North America are cavity-nesters, including 10 species of owls, 7 ducks, 2 falcons, all 21 woodpeckers, and about 40 songbirds. They raise their young in hollowed out sections of dead and dying trees. In addition to providing a place for birds to nest, cavities also protect birds from predators and offer shelter from the elements.

Logs on the ground also provide food and shelter for small mammals and insects, including pollinators like wasps and bees. Decaying logs retain moisture and nutrients that aid in new plant growth as well. Logs in streams slow down the waterflow so that it becomes less destructive, reducing erosion. The logs also provide shelter for crabs and small fish, especially in areas where there are no SAVs (submerged aquatic vegetation).

So long as safety is not a concern, consider letting nature take its course. Native trees, alive and dead, play a vital role in our environment and contribute to the health of the Magothy watershed.

Lightning Bugs— Nature’s Tiny Fireworks

Many of us have childhood memories of catching lightning bugs (fireflies) and putting them in a jar with holes to observe their little yellow lights. Did you know that they spend the first two years of their lives in the ground? These amazing creatures are actually a type of beetle. Their larvae live underground, feeding on snails, slugs and pill bugs. They mature during spring and emerge in early summer. They love warm, humid weather. The more moist or damp the soil, the more plentiful their food will be. It’s the adult fireflies that flash, mostly as a way to attract mates.

If you want your yard and gardens to be good habitat for fireflies, retain leaf litter and create a wild area where you don't have to mow. The grasses are resting places. Plant native shrubs to provide shelter and provide a source of clean water. Of course, don't use pesticides in your lawn and gardens. Pesticides kill both the fireflies and their food, as well as many other beneficial insects, such as bees, butterflies and dragonflies. The pesticides also kill our birds.

Nature's "tiny fireworks" are a wonderful summer treat---enjoy!

2020 Partners in Education Award

The Magothy River Association received the Partners in Education Award for our commitment to Broadneck High School and our ongoing support for the students, teachers, and families across Anne Arundel County Public Schools. Thanks to Lise Crafton for all your hard work with BHS! Lise was instrumental in helping BHS students find internships and service opportunities, such as the Floating Gardens Project and the Invasive Species Removal Project. By participating in such projects, these students are learning to become stewards for a better environment. Congratulations!

Plant a Native Tree

Native trees in our watershed play many important roles, from limiting erosion to filtering run-off to supporting wildlife to shading and cooling our hot, humid Chesapeake summers.

There are three native cherry trees: black cherry (*Prunus serotina*), pin cherry (*Prunus pensylvanica*), and chokecherry (*Prunus virginiana*). The black cherry can grow 50-60 ft tall. It is intolerant of deep shade and is found in forest openings. Besides its value for furniture, the cherry trees offer remarkable value to wildlife.

The fruits of these trees are important food for numerous species of songbirds, game birds, red, fox, black bear, raccoon, opossum, squirrels, and rabbits. Native cherries are the preferred fruit of American robins and northern mockingbirds, and black cherry sap is a favorite of the yellow-bellied sapsucker, a type of woodpecker.

But it's not just fruit that supports our native wildlife. Cherries, along with other plants in the genus *Prunus*, are larval host plants for 456 lepidoptera (butterflies, moths, and skippers) species.

Birds love caterpillars, which are high in protein—a necessity for baby birds and a critical requirement for migrating birds fueling up for those impossibly long flights. Cherry trees are particularly attractive to several species of moths whose larvae are known as "tent caterpillars." These moths often defoliate your trees, and homeowners try to get rid of them with pesticides. However, pesticides work their way up the food chain to the birds that eat the caterpillars. Defoliated trees typically recover and produce new leaves in a matter of weeks, so please do not use pesticides!

Native trees, like the cherry, are huge contributors to the health of our environment and the Magothy River.

To view the full articles, please see the Magothy River Association Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/search/top?q=magothy%20river%20association>