

Trail gets ramp, markers

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FREDERICK -- A group of local nature lovers and the National Park Service want to get people onto the Monocacy River.

Community Commons, a nonprofit organization, has partnered with the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network, a program of the park service, to create a water trail along the river as it runs through Frederick County. The project identifies 20 places where people are permitted to access the river in a guide.

"Some of the access points didn't exist before this project," said Rod Torrez, a project coordinator of the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network, which gave \$19,500 for the water trail.

Community Commons, which matched the money with in-kind volunteer time and financial donations, coordinated with local landowners to allow public access to the river, Mr. Torrez said. The group also encouraged Frederick leaders to create a boat ramp in a park along Monocacy Boulevard near Gas House Pike, said Maggie Kline, Community Commons' president of the board of directors.

The final component of the water trail is the placement of display markers at six access points, Ms. Kline said.

The markers will be unveiled at 10 a.m. today at the Monocacy Boulevard boat ramp during a short ceremony.

Markers are at the boat ramp on Md. 77; the Creagerstown Park boat ramp on Md. 550; Frederick City Park on Monocacy Boulevard, Pinecliff Park on Pinecliff Park Road; Buckeystown Park and the Monocacy Aqueduct boat ramp. Each marker includes historical information about the area surrounding it, Irene Kirilloff of Kirilloff Designs said. Some markers that aren't flush with the river give directions to the access point.

The local water trail is part of the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network. To date, 150 museums, parks, water trails and other sites have joined the network, which extends from New York state to Norfolk, Va.

The network's goal is to help people develop ties to the Chesapeake Bay in hopes they will want to protect the bay's health, Mr. Torrez said.

"It's an awareness program that could have major ramifications," Ms. Kline said.

The Monocacy River water trail helps people make the connection that what happens on land influences the health of small waterways, the Monocacy River and eventually the bay, Ms. Kline said. The Monocacy River feeds into the Potomac River, one of the Chesapeake Bay's largest tributaries.

"It's helping people know that our water doesn't end here. Everything drains into the bay," Ms. Kirilloff said.

Water trail maps are available at Community Commons, 49 S. Carroll St. in Frederick. For details, call 301-662-3000 or visit www.communitycommons.org and www.baygateways.net