

Water Quality Improvement Projects Continue in the Bennett Creek Watershed

Submitted by: Bryan Seipp
Director of Restoration, Potomac Conservancy

Projects continue to develop in the Bennett Creek Watershed as more landowners and land managers look to work with the Potomac Conservancy and its many partners to accomplish on the ground projects that will address water quality improvement goals in the Monocacy River Watershed. The Potomac Conservancy has been working very closely with NRCS and the Frederick County Soil Conservation District to encourage private agricultural landowners to take advantage of the many cost-share programs available to them through the USDA. Several landowners are going to take part in the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) which will result in the removal of several hundred dairy cows from tributary streams in the Bennett Creek watershed. Other landowners are opting to fence their livestock and horses out of the streams on their property using funds the Potomac Conservancy secured from the Chesapeake Bay Trust. These landowners sign a letter of agreement stating that they will maintain the materials, such as fence supplies, trees, tree tubes and in some cases monitoring equipment. The Potomac Conservancy purchases the materials needed to complete the project and will help manage and install the project with the landowner.

The Potomac Conservancy's efforts go beyond just working with private landowners, most notably Windsor Knolls Middle School which has participated twice in tree planting this past year. The students at Windsor Knolls proved that careless vandals will not stop them and their conservation efforts, after vandals on ATVs destroyed several acres of newly planted trees. This fall hundreds of students came out to replant the vandalized area. Thanks in large part to the efforts of Charles Metz of Metzscapes and his son as well as the Maryland Landscape Contractors Association, the students were able to replant over 200 trees.

This winter and spring will be especially busy for the staff at Potomac Conservancy; follow-up meetings with landowners will be conducted in the hopes that others will follow the example of their neighbors and work to improve stream health in the Bennett Creek watershed. Demonstration rain gardens will be installed at both Kemptown Elementary and Windsor Knolls Middle Schools. At Kemptown Park the Potomac Conservancy is teaming up with the Center for Watershed Protection and Frederick County Parks and Recreation to create plans for an innovative bio-retention garden that will absorb water from a parking lot and road before it has a chance to enter Fahrney Branch.

If you are interested in learning more about the Potomac Conservancy's efforts in the Bennett Creek Watershed please contact Bryan Seipp, Director of Restoration at seipp@potomac.org.