

FCPS Schools are Busy Planning Schoolyard Habitat Projects for this Spring

Frederick County Public Schools (FCPS) are currently in the 2nd year of a 3-year federally funded¹ grant to develop schoolyard habitat projects. The grant helps to fund a Schoolyard Habitat Teacher Specialist position within FCPS to assist schools participating in the grant program. Teams of teachers from the participating schools have attended training to learn about transforming their school campuses into outdoor learning environments. Training included information on analyzing soil, choosing appropriate native plants, writing grants, and incorporating activities that use the projects into the existing curriculum. Schools have developed long and short-term project plans.

Last year, Myersville Elementary, Wolfsville Elementary, and Walkersville Elementary, Middle and High Schools participated in the program. Walkersville Elementary and High schools have collaborated on several projects in and out of the classroom. This year, they are submitting their applications for the Maryland Green School Awards Program in April. Wolfsville is planning the first stage of a wildflower meadow by planting trees and shrubs that will be the transition area between the existing tree line and the meadow. Myersville will be putting up bluebird boxes near the wildflower meadow they planted last spring.

This year, participating schools are Urbana Middle, Tuscarora Elementary, Valley Elementary and Heather Ridge. Tuscarora and Urbana completed tree plantings last fall in collaboration with the Potomac Conservancy and are currently working on plans for their next projects. Valley is transforming an existing wet area into a wetland that will provide greater habitat and educational value. They will be planting over 1000 native plants in a newly excavated wetland. Plans include a path, seating area, and storage shed to make the area more accessible and usable as an outdoor learning environment

Many of the projects are being completed with grant funding from the Chesapeake Bay Trust and in collaboration with Heather Montgomery at the Potomac Conservancy, Kay Schultz and Jessica Hunicke from the Frederick County Division of Public Works and Terry Welsh from the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Spring Calendar of SYH Projects at FCPS:

- 3/27/08 - Kemptown ES – Tree Planting
- 4/19/08 - Emmitsburg ES- Tree Planting
- 4/15-16/08 - Valley ES – Wetland Enhancement
- 4/21/08 - Wolfsville ES- Tree Planting

Contact information

April Wells

April.wells@fcps.org

240-236-8157

¹ The grant is provided through the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Bay Watershed Education and Training (NOAA BWET) Program