

Watershed Steward:  
St. Joseph's Provincial House

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In the summer of 1997 our office was contacted by Sister Mary Joe Stein of the Daughters of Charity about looking at St. Joseph's Provincial Home property near Emmitsburg to discuss environmental issues relating to the property. We met and toured the grounds looking at forest, fields, and the main campus to discuss issues like tree planting, agriculture, wildlife, forestry, recreation and pest control. From this meeting a Stewardship Plan was generated offering various suggestions on how to meet the stated goals. At this time the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) was in its infancy and I suggested that St. Joseph's inquire into CREP program. The property was evaluated by E. J. Fanning of the Natural Resource Conservation Service office and various conservation practices relating to planting riparian buffers, warm season grass meadows, and reforesting steep areas were addressed and St. Joseph's became one of the earliest landowners to enroll into the new CREP program.

The CREP plantings were conducted on 7 different sites throughout the property in areas that were adjacent to streams and wetlands. In total 9 acres of riparian buffer plantings and 8 acres of warm season grass meadow were established. These plantings have been well cared for under the direction of Sam Long who is the head of maintenance and grounds and Sister Carol Durkin who oversaw the projects immediately following the planting.

This buffer planting along Creamery Lane was one of the seven sites planted. Trees are planted nearest the stream feathering out to a row or two of shrubs. A 300' band of Native meadow exists beyond the shrubs. A controlled burn was carried out in this meadow recently to invigorate the grasses. College Mountain looms in the background.

Other projects that have been completed over the years includes wetland restoration projects, an additional buffer planting along Willow Rill on the main campus, and the adoption of a more integrated management approach to pest management on the campus.

A tree, shrub, and meadow buffer has been established along Willow Rill on the main campus utilizing the Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program or WHIP in 2003.

These environmental enhancements have been integrated in such a way that agriculture is still practiced throughout the property, and the main campus maintains a welcoming appeal.

For their dedication, perseverance, and hard work with these environmental projects and their continued support and involvement in the New Forest Society and Monocacy Catoclin Watershed Alliance; the residents, and personnel associated with St. Joseph's Provincial House are well deserving of the Watershed Steward designation.