

Wetland Research Beginning in
Bennett Creek Watershed

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Scientists detail numerous ecological services that wetlands provide for both water quality and habitat. However, not enough is known about how effectively wetlands treat storm water in the Piedmont region. In fact, the Maryland 2000 Stormwater Design Manual bases its storm water wetland designs on wetland effectiveness from the Coastal Plain region that has very different geology.

For that reason, Frederick County's Watershed Management Section sought and has been awarded \$247,800 from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) 319(h) program to develop an Urban Wetlands Program in a pilot watershed, Bennett Creek. Funds come through the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) and will be available beginning this fall for a two-year period.

The Urban Wetlands Program, Bennett Creek Watershed Pilot will develop a mechanism for Frederick County Government's Watershed Management Section to establish wetland assessment standards and protocols, update and map the nontidal wetlands GIS overlay for Bennett Creek, define characteristics for benchmark nontidal wetlands in the Piedmont hydrophysiographic province in order to improve water quality and wetland habitat, provide regulatory guidance for land use change relating to wetlands, conduct education and outreach to Frederick County public School teachers and students about wetland functions, and establish two stormwater wetland restoration/enhancement projects.

The Watershed Management Section plans to partner with local groups such as the Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage, US Fish & Wildlife Service, Windsor Knolls Middle School, the Western Maryland Resource Conservation & Development Council (RC&D), Environmental Concern, Inc., among others. One of the stormwater wetland restoration/enhancement projects is planned for the stormwater pond at Windsor Knolls Middle School. Watershed Management Staff are working with teachers from Windsor Knolls Middle School and staff from the US Fish & Wildlife Service to involve the students in the restoration project.