



# River Watch



Potomac RIVERKEEPER®

The Newsletter of Potomac Riverkeeper, Inc.  
Volume 5 Issue 3, Fall 2008

Shenandoah RIVERKEEPER®

## Public Health Threatened at Poplar Point! Potomac Riverkeeper will take action if the land is not cleaned in accordance with laws

Potomac Riverkeeper, along with four other environmental groups, including the Anacostia Riverkeeper, filed a notice of intent to sue the United States Army Corps of Engineers, Department of the Navy, Architect of the Capitol, District of Columbia, and National Park Service for threatening public and environmental health at Poplar Point.

Poplar Point is a 110-acre portion of Anacostia National Park on the east bank of the Anacostia River one mile from where it meets the Potomac River. The environmental groups are demanding a clean up of highly toxic pollution, such as arsenic, lead, DDT, PCBs, and petroleum byproducts.

When reporters asked our Riverkeeper about it, Ed said: "it's wrong when our land is treated as a toxic dump, it's wrong when rain water mixes with the toxic chemicals and runs straight into the river, and it's wrong when the people responsible for this do nothing."

The federal agencies and the District of Columbia operated greenhouses, dry cleaning facilities, mechanic's garages, and an ordnance research laboratory, among other things. All of these facilities polluted Poplar Point, threatening human and environmental health, in violation of the Resource Recovery and Conservation Act (RCRA) of 1976.

Government pollution of Poplar Point has contributed to the Anacostia River's status as one of the ten most polluted rivers in the nation. The District has warned residents that eating some fish from the river will endanger their health.



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## SAVE THESE DATES!

*We've got a fall jam-packed with events designed to celebrate the river, as well as events that advocate for ways to restore its health. You can read more about all of these inside, but be sure to join us!*

### NEW RIVERWATCHER VOLUNTEER TRAINING

Saturday, Sept. 6--Front Royal VA

Saturday, Sept. 27--Frederick, MD

Saturday, October 18--Charlotte Hall, MD

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### SCREENING OF FLOW WITH THE RIVERKEEPER

Sunday, Sept. 21--Washington's E Street Theater

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### RIVERBOAT CRUISE ON THE POTOMAC

Thursday, Oct. 23--Departs from Alexandria, VA

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# Let's Build Team Potomac One Friend at a Time

If you are reading this, you probably already understand the importance of the rivers and streams in our watershed. Many of you are helping and supporting our organization's work to improve water quality **today**, not twenty years in the future.

Our approach is that all pollution is wrong. We are known for our aggressiveness in stopping illegal pollution, and we work with our many friends on the longer term goal of removing the "legal" pollution.

For me, the question is how we reach others who don't care—or who don't understand why they *should* care. It's clear that our waters won't become truly fishable and swimmable (as stated in the Clean Water Act) unless we somehow reach those who—as of yet—haven't decided to make cleaner water their issue. Once we can get everyone caring and involved, the rate of positive changes will increase.

So here is one idea to get the attention of those who have never thought about water issues:

- 1 Engage friends who live in the Washington metro area in a conversation about our Nation's River, or any river or stream in our watershed.
- 2 Somewhere in the conversation, say to them **"You know, you are mostly Potomac River – filtered Potomac River – but mostly Potomac River."**
- 3 Wait until the blank expression leaves their face. (I've noticed the above sentence tends to make neural synapses skip a beat.)
- 4 Explain to them that the human body is composed of about two-thirds water and that about two-thirds of that water is from what we drink.
- 5 Then make sure they understand that their **drinking water comes from the Potomac River** and everything that drains into it, and whatever isn't filtered out of the drinking water ends up in them.
- 6 Finally, choose your own method to let them know **the safety of our drinking water depends on the health of our rivers and streams.**

- 7 At this point, your friends may attempt to change the topic. Fish kills, endocrine disrupters, algae, pharmaceuticals, water borne diseases, or bottled water (which is no safer – and may be less safe – than tap water) are some of the more popular ones. Before starting the new topic, make sure they heard you and understand what you have told them.

Please tell me about your conversations with non water-conscious friends. I'm convinced that the changes we need won't occur until we create a larger community of those who care. Understanding and caring must occur before action, and with your help we will realize our dreams of cleaner and healthier waters.



Ed Merrifield



# MD's Attorney General Takes Our Cause

Gansler Pursues Case After PRK and EIP Intend to File Suit, Seeks \$126 million

In May, Attorney General Douglas Gansler filed a complaint against Mirant Mid-Atlantic, LLC for illegal discharges of toxic heavy metals from its Faulkner fly ash disposal site into the Zekiah Swamp in Maryland. The action was in response to a threat from Potomac Riverkeeper to sue if the state did not take action.

Potomac Riverkeeper (PRK), the Environmental Integrity Project (EIP), and area citizens filed a notice of intent to sue Mirant for nearly 13,000 Clean Water Act violations in April.

The Attorney General's complaint seeks injunctive relief and civil penalties that can total over \$126 million. The complaint also seeks to prevent further disposal of fly ash at the Faulkner site until Mirant cleans up existing pollution caused by years of unregulated waste disposal. The complaint was filed in the Circuit Court for Charles County, Maryland on Friday, May 30, 2008.

The severity of the penalties alleged in the complaint demonstrates that the state of Maryland is serious about cleaning up the Zekiah Swamp, and stopping the illegal discharges at the Faulkner fly ash landfill. The Zekiah Swamp has been described by the Smithsonian Institute as one of the most important ecological areas on the East Coast.

On Thursday, August 21, 2008, PRK and EIP filed a motion to intervene in this case. If approved, it will allow us to be present at the legal proceedings, including the settlement.

## More Action Needed at Seneca Creek!



Based on a settlement with PRK, Maryland's Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has spent a great deal cleaning lead contamination in Great Seneca Creek State Park. DNR does not want to ensure that its major investment has been thorough or will remain effective, however, citing "no legal requirements or reasonable ecological benefit" in doing so.

This is a problem because we were told that the system used to clean up the lead was never used in an area of streams and forests exactly like this.

DNR said they would get the job done, and now they're telling Maryland residents that they won't check their work.

We feel the actions are disappointing, but remain hopeful that DNR will change its position soon.

Potomac Riverkeeper has been pressing DNR to remove the lead for five years. The lead entered the Creek and the Creek's floodplain over five decades when the land was a shooting range.



*Above, with the creek in the background, the Riverkeeper points to lead clearly in the floodplain. Left, a close up of the lead pellets.*

June 1, 2008

# Annual Event Raises over \$31,000 for the Potomac Watershed!

Members, new and old, got together and raised over \$31,000 at our annual auction and party, "At the River's Edge," at the Potomac Boat Club. Members and guests viewed one of the American News Project's first online news videos, "EPA's Troubled Waters," which featured the Potomac Riverkeeper (you can watch the video at [WWW.POTOMACRIVER-KEEPER.ORG](http://WWW.POTOMACRIVER-KEEPER.ORG)).

The video highlighted the troubled state of our river and the critical need to stop all pollution flowing into our waters.

A special appeal was made to pay for one water test at an intake pipe that supplies drinking water in the Washington area. The cost to set up and test for herbicides, insecticides, pharmaceuticals, PCBs, PAHs, hormones, and other organic chemicals is approximately \$10,000.

Thanks to everyone who came out!



*Guests dined on snacks courtesy of Whole Foods at the Potomac Boat Club in Washington, DC. Thanks to everyone who came!*



## RIVER PROTECTORS

Peter Bross & Lisa Rarick  
Avis Ogilvy Moore & Bill Moore  
Mac Thornton & Molly Carr

## RIVER DEFENDERS

Linda & Stan Collyer  
Sally Davidson  
James & Nicole Fary  
Cabell Williams

## RIVER SPONSORS

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Linda Collyer  
Stan Collyer  
Josh Fernands  
Kristin Frykman  
Janis Johnson  
Kim Matthews  
Donna Merrifield  
Linn Oaks  
Stan Oaks  
Mary Ellen Olcese  
Mac Thornton  
George Wyeth



July 19, 2008

# Shenandoah Rodeo Reins in \$20,000

Proceeds Benefit the Shenandoah Riverkeeper and the Restoration of the River

Thanks to you, our inaugural Shenandoah River Rodeo on the banks of the river was a huge success! Fourteen local fly fishing guides sponsored the event and rode in our first annual fishing contest. Special thanks to Ara Moomjian for the home-cooked BBQ and to the Shenandoah Valley's own Briery Branch band for the sweet sounds of their bluegrass music. Also a special thanks to Rich Coffman and Money Mailer for getting the word out throughout the valley and for help with the BBQ.



*Above, guests dined on a traditional, home-styled BBQ thanks to Ara Moomjian (photo credit Joe Ellis). Left, the Shenandoah's Briery Branch band sings a tune (photo credit Donna Merrifield). Below, our fishing guides and participants in the Shenandoah River Rodeo (photo credit King Montgomery).*

**\*\$20,000 raised to fight pollution in the Shenandoah River!**

**\*over 200 attendees**

**\*135 new memberships**

## Special thanks to our fishing guides!

John Coleman  
Bob Cramer  
John Hayes  
William Heresniak  
Jeff Kelble  
Brian Kelly  
Mark Kovach  
Chuck Kraft  
Duncan McGrath  
Jeff Murray  
LE Rhodes  
Britt Stoudenmire  
Brian and Colby Trow  
Dusty Wismath



# FLOW Movie Screening with the Riverkeeper!

September 21 \* Washington, DC \* 3pm

Join the Potomac Riverkeeper, PRK staff, and environmentalists from around the metro area at Washington, DC's famous E Street Theater for the premier of Flow, Irena Salina's award-winning documentary. The film premieres Friday, September 19, but the Potomac Riverkeeper will be available for a question and answer session at the end of the 3pm showing on Sunday, September 21.

In her documentary, Salina builds a case against the growing privatization of the world's dwindling fresh water supply with an unflinching focus on politics, pollution, human rights, and the emergence of a domineering world water cartel.

Interviews with scientists and activists intelligently reveal the rapidly building crisis, at both the global and human scale, and the film introduces many of the governmental and corporate culprits behind the water grab, while begging the question: can anyone really own the water?

The documentary opens on September 19 and shows through September 25. Ticketing and other information will be available at [WWW.POTOMACRIVERKEEPER.ORG](http://WWW.POTOMACRIVERKEEPER.ORG). Be sure to check it out for the latest news!



## Get Our Potomac Gear!

Did you know you can go to our website, [www.potomacriverkeeper.org](http://www.potomacriverkeeper.org), and buy Potomac Riverkeeper and Shenandoah Riverkeeper hats? It's easy! Just go to our home page click the "Support Us" tab on the top menu. When you get to the page, scroll down to the online store!

## Special Riverboat Cruise!

Thursday, October 23, 2008 \* Alexandria, Virginia \* 6-9pm

Save the date for a special riverboat cruise departing from Alexandria. Join us for a guided tour with a bridge engineer giving the story of the Wilson Bridge, from demolition to construction. Special thanks to the Potomac Riverboat Company for donating the Miss Christin for the event. Go to [WWW.POTOMACRIVERKEEPER.ORG](http://WWW.POTOMACRIVERKEEPER.ORG) for event and ticketing information! **\$50/Individual \* \$75/Couple**

### PRK STAFF:

Ed Merrifield  
*Potomac Riverkeeper & Exec. Dir.*  
Jeff Kelble  
*Shenandoah Riverkeeper*  
Robin Broder  
*Director of Operations*  
Nadia Elguindy  
*Programs & Development*  
Damien Power  
*Communications & Outreach*

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*River Watch is designed and edited by  
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## Sewage Right to Know Passes House

The Sewage Right to Know bill (HR 2452) passed the U.S. House of Representatives on Monday, June 23. This bill would require publicly owned treatment works to monitor their systems for spills and then alert the public when there is the potential to affect public health. There are currently no such requirements nationwide.

There is still more to do. You can help by urging you US Senators to pass the Sewage Right to Know Act. For more information, go to [www.american-rivers.org](http://www.american-rivers.org).



**Potomac RIVERKEEPER®**  
**Shenandoah RIVERKEEPER®**

Look for Potomac Riverkeeper, Inc. this fall in the United Way, Combined Federal Campaign, and the Commonwealth of Virginia Campaign:

UNITED WAY # 9335  
COMBINED VIRGINIA CAMPAIGN # 8455  
COMBINED FEDERAL CAMPAIGN # 87828

## Check Out the New Website!

Our website has had a facelift! If you haven't been to [www.potomacriverkeeper.org](http://www.potomacriverkeeper.org) in the last few months, check it out! In addition to looking better, our website is more user friendly! We now have:

- \*Information on Potomac River Conditions!
- \*A calendar listing events from PRK as well as events going on around the watershed!
- \*An online store where you can buy Potomac and Shenandoah Riverkeeper hats!
- \*Online resources where you can search for polluters in your area, read studies, and find links!
- \*Online membership, renewal, and donation pages!
- \*A "contact us" tab where you can sign up to be on our list-serv!

Be sure to drop by [WWW.POTOMACRIVERKEEPER.ORG](http://WWW.POTOMACRIVERKEEPER.ORG) and check out these features. Don't see something you'd like to see? Send us an email at [keeper@potomacriverkeeper.org](mailto:keeper@potomacriverkeeper.org) or click the "Contact Us" tab on the homepage!

**YES! I want to protect and restore the Potomac River! Enclosed is my tax-deductible membership gift to help POTOMAC RIVERKEEPER and keep our Nation's River clean!**

☐ \$35 Regular   ☐ \$50 Family   ☐ \$100   ☐ \$250   ☐ \$500   ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

How did you hear about us? \_\_\_\_\_

- ☐ Please send me information about your Riverwatcher program today!
- ☐ Do not trade my name
- ☐ I want my donation to go to the Shenandoah Riverkeeper

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Please make checks payable to **Potomac Riverkeeper**. Thank you!  
1717 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Suite 600 Washington DC 20036  
To become a member online, go to [WWW.POTOMACRIVERKEEPER.ORG](http://WWW.POTOMACRIVERKEEPER.ORG)



# Riverwatcher Training Sessions!

New Volunteer Program for Members New and Old!

*Some developers are ignoring or breaking environmental laws when they bulldoze the land and build on it. This fall, learn to identify those types of sites and report them to the Potomac and Shenandoah Riverkeepers. We'll take your work and use it to enforce the law!*

*The current state of runaway development is unsustainable--the amount of developed land in the Potomac Watershed has doubled over the past 40 years! Help make sure our rivers and streams are protected.*

## Join us at one of these locations!

**Saturday, Sept. 6**

**10:30am-12:30pm**

Samuels Library

538 Villa Avenue

Front Royal, VA 22630

**Saturday, Sept. 27**

**10:30am-12:30pm**

Urbana Regional Library

9020 Amelung Street

Frederick, MD 21704

**Saturday, October 18**

**10:30am-12:30pm**

Charlotte Hall Veterans Home

29449 Charlotte Hall Road

Charlotte Hall, MD 20622



For more information about the training sessions, venues, and registration, please visit us online at:

**[WWW.POTOMACRIVERKEEPER.ORG](http://WWW.POTOMACRIVERKEEPER.ORG) or [WWW.SHENANDOAHRIVERKEEPER.ORG](http://WWW.SHENANDOAHRIVERKEEPER.ORG).**



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