



Potomac RIVERKEEPER®
Shenandoah RIVERKEEPER®

RIVER WATCH

The Newsletter of Potomac RIVERKEEPER, Inc.

Volume 6, Issue 3, Fall 2009

Potomac Riverkeeper Sets Sights on Permit Near Mattawoman Creek



Aerial view of Maryland Airport near Mattawoman Creek

Potomac Riverkeeper is monitoring a construction permit near the headwaters of Mattawoman Creek, which American Rivers named one of the most endangered rivers in the nation earlier this year.

The permit in question is the “individual” permit written for the Maryland Airport in Indian Head, MD. The permit covers 90 acres to expand the airport, and was written last year as Potomac Riverkeeper and other Maryland waterkeepers challenged the state’s general construction permit.

During the challenge period, Maryland technically did not have a general construction permit—which meant that all requests for construction permits had to be written on a case by case basis. One such case was the permit for the expansion of the Maryland Airport.

Our problem with this “individual” permit is that it is identical to the old general construction permit. We challenged the general permit because we felt it wasn’t strong enough,

and switching the terms “individual” and “general” was not the type of change we were looking for. Moreover, the utility of an individual permit is that it is “site specific,” while the permit in question is not.

According to Ed, “While being our usual positive yet aggressive selves, we are doing our best to work this out with Maryland so we need not proceed any further.”

It is worth noting that, when our challenge to the general construction permit was settled, we improved protections for Maryland’s rivers and streams. The new permit stipulates that all large construction projects (150+ acres) need an individual permit and, more importantly, smaller construction sites (30-150 acres) may still need an individual permit if there is enough justification to warrant one.

We are weighing a few options on the airport permit with our legal counsel and will keep you up to date on our progress.

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Let’s Get the DIRT Out in Washington, DC!

Take action against one of the biggest problems in our watershed: polluted runoff from construction sites. In our “Get the DIRT Out” volunteer program, residents learn how to evaluate the polluted runoff violations on construction sites, report violations, and help ensure that construction sites are not contaminating our rivers and streams.

Get the DIRT Out

Monday, November 2, 2009 • 7pm - 9pm

Chevy Chase Presbyterian Church
1 Chevy Chase Circle • Washington, DC 20015

Hosted by:

Friends of Rock Creek’s Environment (FORCE)

Register online at:

www.potomacriverkeeper.org

Virginia Makes Bold Move Forward on Stormwater - Also Misses Opportunity

BY JEFF, KELBLE, THE SHENANDOAH RIVERKEEPER

In October, Virginia's Soil and Water Conservation Board approved changes to the permit for controlling stormwater coming off new developments. This promises to be a very important step forward in minimizing destruction of streams from water flowing off of developments. We testified in support of this permit, but as usual, we fought to the end for improvements.

According to the board, 3,421 comments were filed during the sixty day public commenting period that began on June 22, 2009. Even the board acknowledged that "a majority of the comments received were supportive of the proposed regulations." Many of the those comments came from our members, so I want to thank you. We also participated in a coalition of other non-profits in an effort to maintain the original intent of the regulations as construction interests started to lobby the Governor, the Soil and Water Conservation Board, and the Department of Conservation and Recreation.

Despite the broad support for the proposed regulations, the agency decided they needed to compromise in quite a few areas so it would survive this legislative session.

TAKE IT FROM A RIVERWATCHER...

Roger Eitelman, a volunteer Riverwatcher in the Shenandoah Valley, attended one of the five public hearings on stormwater permits over the summer. On July 2, he sent us the following report from the Verona, VA hearing the day before:

Just a follow up. Probably 50-75 people attended. Most were totally supportive as was yours truly. The negatives were polite...

I left at 8:45PM with several speakers yet to speak. My conclusion is the outcome of this hearing was very supportive for adoption.

*One small positive step,
Roger*



Under the new permit there will be fewer concrete channels such as this one used to move rainwater off sites quickly. Water flows at high velocity through these channels and washes out downstream waterways.

The permit does set a very strong long term limit on pollutants from developments within the Chesapeake drainage. This is a win. But we were saddened to see limits for rivers outside of the Chesapeake drainage revert to the old number and to see provisions that allowed localities to revert to the old number in Urban Redevelopment Areas. These are losses. We feel all rivers and streams, regardless of location, deserved protection. These were difficult and legitimate issues the agency wrestled with in an effort to try to encourage redevelopment and discourage sprawl, but we feel the agency went too far in the other direction.

One of our biggest problems is with a ten year grandfather clause. The clause essentially stipulates that any

land purchased and subdivided for development has up to ten years before the new permit applies. Put simply — developers can sidestep the regulations for an entire decade. Ten years is a long time, and this clause applies to projects that haven't even broken ground yet. My fear is that we will have to revisit all of this in ten years when we learn we haven't gone far enough.

In the summer it was looking like Virginia was poised to be a leader in curbing polluted runoff from developed lands. Though we can no longer make this claim, the permit will be a step forward.

Our public comments are still on record, and we will continue to represent the interests of our members on this issue.

Welcome New Staff!

Brent Walls: Upper Potomac Manager



In September we expanded our staff to include a full time manager in the Upper Potomac River region. With the addition of Brent Walls, we plan to make some long overdue progress on water pollution issues in this region.

Based in West Virginia, Brent will lead programs that protect and restore the water quality of the Upper Potomac River region. He will focus on increasing public awareness of pollution, on-the-water monitoring, and pursuing enforcement actions against violators of the Clean Water Act and other laws and regulations.

One of Brent's first tasks is outreach to local groups to listen to their concerns and to learn about the condition of their watersheds.

Brent wants you to know that "Real change happens when groups of regular people get involved. I'm here to connect with the people in the communities, and hopefully we can make our waters cleaner together."

Prior to coming to Potomac Riverkeeper, Brent worked for several years as the Watershed Coordinator at the Chester River Association. Brent worked closely with the Chester Riverkeeper, and acted as interim Riverkeeper on two occasions.

You can reach Brent by sending an email to brent@potomacriverkeeper.org.

Alan Lehman: Agricultural Project Manager



We are pleased to announce that Alan Lehman joined us this month as our Agricultural Project Manager in the Shenandoah Valley. He will work on a new agricultural project funded by the Blue Moon Fund and focused on stopping bad agricultural practices like cattle feedlots on riverbanks that pollute our rivers and streams. This project will complement existing programs that work with farmers to improve practices to reduce pollution entering our waterways. We anticipate that Alan will use many tools and tactics to stop agricultural pollution, including when necessary employing the Agricultural Stewardship Act and other legal measures on the worst sites. The first step in the process will often be opening a dialogue with the farmer.

Alan comes to our organization with 25 years of experience in photojournalism project management for one of the largest daily newspapers in northern Virginia.

"I tried to make a positive impact on our community and environment by exposing sources that were negatively affecting, and often illegally polluting, our waters and land," Alan says. "This project is a great opportunity to use my investigative skills, extensive local knowledge, and concern for the natural environment to assist the Shenandoah Riverkeeper with his mission."

Alan describes himself as a recreational kayaker and an avid canoeist. He also makes it a point to collect trash as he's paddling around the Shenandoah Valley.

You can reach Alan by sending an email to alan@shenandoahriverkeeper.org.

2nd River Rodeo

Raises Funds to Restore the Shenandoah

Thank you for making the 2nd Annual Shenandoah River Rodeo a success for the second year in a row. We had great weather, great food, great music and, of course, great supporters! We are very grateful that fishing guides again donated a day out of their crazy schedules to support our work and help us raise money.

We would like to thank Ara "Bundy" Moomjian for yet again cooking up an amazing monster BBQ, Allegheny Blue for providing some awesome bluegrass music, and all the 100+ guests who came out to party (and to protect and restore the Shenandoah River!).

If you missed the party, you can still get your Shenandoah Riverkeeper River Rodeo t-shirt. All proceeds go right back into our local rivers and streams. Get yours at our online store today!



Allegheny Blue entertained Rodeo guests with outstanding bluegrass music.



The "boat line up" after a day on the river.



Bruce Ingram donated proceeds from his fishing books.



Future Riverwatchers enjoying the food & music.

Please Support our Fishing Guides!

Canoe the New Outfitters
Britt Stoudenmire
Pearisburg, VA, (540) 921-7438

Hatchmatcher Guide Service
L.E. Rhodes
Scottsville, VA, (434) 286-3366

Murray's Fly Shop
Jeff Murray, John Coleman
Edinburg, VA, (540) 984-4212

Mossy Creek Fly Fishing Shop
Colby Trow, Brian Trow
Harrisonburg, VA, (540) 434-2444

Mark Kovach Fishing Services
John Hayes, Mark Kovach,
Butch Murphy
Silver Spring, MD, (301) 588-8742

White Fly Shoppe & Anglers Inn
Bryan Kelly
Harpers Ferry, WV, (304) 535-1239

Eastern Trophies Fly Fishing
William Heresniak
Manassas, VA, (571) 213-2570

Smallmouth Specialist
Tim Freese
Leesburg, VA, (703) 443-9052

Riverfish Angling
Duncan McGrath
Bethesda, MD, (301) 943-6392

Chuck Kraft
Charlottesville, VA, (434) 293-9305

Bob Cramer
Dayton, VA, (540) 867-9310



Bill Minarik enjoying a day on the river.
photo credit: Bill Minarik

TAKE IT FROM A RIVERWATCHER...

Potomac Riverkeeper and Shenandoah Riverkeeper have hundreds of volunteer Riverwatchers throughout our large watershed. When they spot pollution or are otherwise out on the river, we encourage them to let us know what they see. Whether it is good news or bad, we're always interested in hearing from them. Check out the following report from Riverwatcher Bill Minarik:

"Things were different this year than last. Subtle, but important progress has been made in the river. The foul smelling water that we encountered last year was not to be found on this year's journey down the South Fork. The absence of the dead or lesioned fish of 2008 quickly became a memory. Healthy underwater grasses in some areas were heartening to see and most importantly the fishing has remarkably improved. The size of the smallmouths were consistently bigger than last year and the fish in the photo is one of the 42 that I caught that day. My friends also tripled the numbers of catches and we began seeing the Shenandoah in a whole new light. Indeed you get a sense of the river regaining its place back among the great American Rivers.

"The progress that has been made should not be taken for granted, I work closely with many groups on the water quality of the Inner Harbor here in Baltimore and can appreciate the hard work in making water quality improvements. I also understand that things can change quickly for the worst and vigilance, especially during the good times, is even more important."

Bill Minarik, Senior Director National Aquarium

Downstream Project's EcoVenture



Mountains, trails, and the Shenandoah River became the classroom for students and faculty from Shenandoah University who joined The Downstream Project field crew this month for an EcoVenture. Along the way they involved other professors and experts, including Jeff Kelble, from a wide range of fields. They used the latest in Web-based technologies—including live video feeds, Webcasts, online GPS

tracking—to chronicle their adventures in "real time." Anyone with access to the Internet was able to share in this compelling and educational EcoVenture. Check out the latest reports from them at <http://www.thedownstreamproject.org/ecoventure.html> and follow them on Facebook <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Shenandoah-Ecoventure-2009/129892003534>.

**Report
Pollution:
Call 301-POTOMAC
(or 540-837-1479
for the Shenandoah)**

**Email
keeper@potomacriverkeeper.org**

News in Brief

Smelly Algae: Thank you to everyone who sent in reports about algae in the locks above Great Falls. It's called oscillatoria and gets bad when there is a very rainy early spring followed by drier spells. This is the first year the Great Falls area has been hit hard. When this algae dies, it turns brown and it really stinks.

Mattawoman Pollution: Potomac Riverkeeper submitted public comments regarding a pollution permit for the Mattawoman Wastewater Treatment Plant. We would like the permit to be clearer in some areas, tougher in others, and overall we want to make the permit enforceable. The Mattawoman Creek is already strained. It was named one of the most endangered rivers by American Rivers. In addition, the wastewater treatment plant has a history of violating its pollution permits. In one instance alone, we found the facility dumping waste with 1200% more chlorine than allowed. Already, changes have been made to the permit that reduce by 25% the oxygen used up by the pollution load from the plant. This will mean more oxygen in the water for aquatic life.

Chesapeake Bay Program to be Reauthorized: On October 19th, Senator Ben Cardin (D-MD) released a bill to reauthorize the Chesapeake Bay Program. Maryland Congressman Elijah Cummings will be introducing a similar bill. Sen. Cardin's bill gives the federal government authority to compel the states to act to bring nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment loads down to acceptable levels. The Choose Clean Water Campaign will be working to ensure that these bills bring real accountability to cleaning our rivers and streams. Related to these bills are the seven draft reports released in response to the Executive Order issued in May. These draft reports will be used to develop a single, integrated strategy across federal agencies that defines actions necessary to restore the Bay. This strategy will be released for public comment on November 9. Visit www.choosecleanwater.org and <http://executiveorder.chesapeakebay.net> for information.

Widespread Occurrence of Intersex Found in Bass: Intersex in smallmouth and largemouth basses is widespread in numerous river basins throughout the United States is the major finding of the most comprehensive and large-scale evaluation of the condition, according to the latest U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) research. Previous studies showed 80% - 100% of bass in areas of the Potomac and Shenandoah Rivers were intersexed. [USGS studies can be found in the Resource section of our website www.potomacriverkeeper.org.]

To receive our monthly Enews, send an email to keeper@potomacriverkeeper.org

Contact Us

Potomac RIVERKEEPER

1717 Massachusetts Avenue, NW • Suite 600
Washington, DC 20036
P: 202.222.0707 • F: 202.783.0444
keeper@potomacriverkeeper.org
www.potomacriverkeeper.org

Shenandoah RIVERKEEPER

P.O. Box 405 • Boyce, VA 22620
P: 540.837.1479 • F: 540.837.1479
jeff@shenandoahriverkeeper.org
www.shenandoahriverkeeper.org

Staff

Ed Merrifield
Potomac Riverkeeper & President
Jeff Kelble
Shenandoah Riverkeeper
Robin Broder
Vice President
Brent Walls
Upper Potomac River Manager
Alan Lehman
Agricultural Project Manager
Nadia Elguindy
Programs & Development
Damien Power
Communications & Outreach

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Named "one of the best small nonprofits" by the Catalogue for Philanthropy



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as of 10/15/09

Support Potomac Riverkeeper at Sushi Zen Nov. 18th

Enjoy lunch or dinner at Sushi Zen and support Potomac Riverkeeper at the same time. On Wednesday, November 18th, Sushi Zen in Arlington will donate 20% of your meal proceeds when you mention Potomac Riverkeeper. See you there! Location: 2457 N. Harrison Street (www.sushizen.com).

Looking for the Next Big Party Idea?

If you are interested in sharing your passion for protecting the Potomac and Shenandoah Rivers, and perhaps raising a little money, consider hosting a House Party for Potomac Riverkeeper or Shenandoah Riverkeeper! Invite your friends, neighbors, and business acquaintances for food, drinks, and the chance to dialogue with the Potomac Riverkeeper.

The House Party could be a great way to celebrate your birthday, the holidays, or other special events. Give us a call at 202-222-0706 for more information. You can also find House Party information on our website under "Support Us."

Two big thank yous go out to Cabell and Kathy Williams and Andrea and Dendy Young for hosting the first two House Parties for Potomac Riverkeeper!

When it's time to renew or give a holiday donation, go paperless!

Save a tree, a stamp, and time all at once. Renew your membership or make your end of year donation online at www.potomacriverkeeper.org. It's easy! Just click the "Become a Member" button on the homepage! And don't forget – you can make your donations recurring every month, quarter, or year.

IRA Rollover Gifts Can Support Potomac Riverkeeper

Unless congress acts to extend the current provision, 2009 will be the last year in which people can make tax-free gifts from their traditional and Roth IRAs. If you or a loved one is 70 1/2 years of age or older, this is a great way to support Potomac Riverkeeper.

To complete an IRA gift, you must provide written instructions to your plan sponsor to make a charitable distribution to Potomac Riverkeeper under the terms of the Philanthropy Protection Act of 2006. The plan sponsor should make the check payable to Potomac Riverkeeper and remit the check to you. You then send the check to us with a letter explaining it is a gift from your IRA. What an easy way to make a great big difference! Talk to your tax advisor to see if this is right for you.

Get our Gear

Can you think of a better way to support Potomac Riverkeeper than to wear it? Check out our online store. We have hats, shirts, and car magnets. Go to www.potomacriverkeeper.org and place your order today!

We're Everywhere...

You can follow and support Potomac Riverkeeper on:

Facebook: facebook.com/PotomacRiverkeeper

Twitter: twitter.com/potomacriv

Flickr: flickr.com/photos/potomacriverkeeper

It's United Way & Combined Federal Campaign season!

Remember to select Potomac Riverkeeper!

United Way: # 9335

Combined Federal Campaign: # 87828

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

\$35 \$50 \$100 \$250 \$500 Other \$ _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____



- I want to be a Riverwatcher, send me information today!
- I would like to designate Shenandoah Riverkeeper!
- I can't contribute, but please put me on your mailing list!

Please make checks payable to Potomac RIVERKEEPER and mail to:
1717 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Suite 600, Washington, DC 20036
Or visit www.potomacriverkeeper.org and click on "Support Us"

Fall 2009



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1717 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Suite 600
Washington, DC 20036

Emerging Contaminants

Modern toxicology doesn't typically test chemicals for what they do at low doses. But, sometimes, small amounts of substances can be harmful to human health, especially when it comes to the hormone-mimicking chemicals known as endocrine disruptors.

In the Potomac and Shenandoah watersheds, it is widely believed that endocrine disruptors are causing the "intersex" phenomenon.

Pete Myers, chief scientist of Environmental Health Sciences, recently appeared on the Living on Earth radio program where he explained the dangers of not testing endocrine disruptors at low levels. [For Myers' report go to <http://www.loe.org/images/090904/lowdose.pdf>.]

"What hormones and these contaminants do is at very low doses they turn on and off genes...If the genes get turned on or off at the wrong time, that's going to lead to a problem" Meyers says. "You're going to lack a protein that might be important, for example, in suppressing a tumor or in controlling the growth of your heart. And the body's control system for these genes is designed to function at really, really low levels."

The interview underscores why it is important that we know what is going into our rivers and streams, and how we can keep endocrine disruptors and other emerging contaminants out of drinking water.

Scientists in the past used to say "the solution to pollution is dilution." With so many of the chemicals in our waters meant to work in micro amounts, this is no longer the case.



Courtesy of Tom Toles of The Washington Post