



River Watch



Potomac RIVERKEEPER®

The Newsletter of Potomac Riverkeeper, Inc.
Volume 4 Issue 3, Winter 2007

Shenandoah RIVERKEEPER®

FINALLY! CLEAN UP!

After years of stalling, Maryland's Dept. of Natural Resources begins lead removal at Seneca Creek

Nearly four years after Potomac Riverkeeper (PRK) announced it would sue Maryland's Department of Natural Resources (DNR) over DNR's lead pollution in Great Seneca Creek, the state agency has begun cleaning up the lead.

"This is a victory for our residents, rivers, and streams," Ed Merrifield, the Potomac Riverkeeper, said. "Those who use our parks, streams, and groundwater need to be safe."

The lead pollution accumulated over decades when the National Capital Skeet and Trap Club, a concession of DNR operating in the state park, allowed the lead to fall into Great Seneca Creek's wetland and stream. In some areas, the lead is over six inches deep.



DNR has agreed to clean up "hot spots" of concentrated lead and chemically treat additional lead in ten acres of the park to just above toxic standards – but not to residential standards.

The land is in a state park which – according to DNR's website – is for "recreational pleasure," but the agency is only providing clean up just above superfund-level stan-

dards. Despite the limited clean-up, Merrifield says DNR is taking a positive first step toward accountability.

PRK believes that giving DNR the opportunity to get started with the clean up is the best approach at this time. In the settlement agreement, PRK has reserved its right to return to court if there are problems in the future.

See "SENECA" on page 6

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UPCOMING EVENTS FOR VOLUNTEERS & SPONSORS

The Potomac and Shenandoah Riverkeepers' social calendars are filling up fast for 2008. We are planning three events:

Wild & Scenic Environmental Film Festival (early 2008)

Fishing Fundraiser on the Shenandoah (April)

Annual Auction & Party (early June)

We are seeking corporate sponsors and volunteers for each of these events. To join the fun, contact Nadia at NADIA@POTOMACRIVERKEEPER.ORG, or call 202-222-0707.

EZRA VAN DUONG TAKES OUT THE TRASH

Our volunteer Riverwatchers are the backbone of our organization, alerting us of problems along the Potomac and its tributaries. Ezra Van Duong, one of PRK's Riverwatchers, has taken this to the next level and is actively collecting trash and debris from the river. For his hard work, Ezra has been featured in The Washington Post, and is a recognizable face on the river.



Solving the world's problems is tough. Sometimes so tough it can be discouraging, and people feel that they can't do anything because it won't make a difference. But I've learned that's not always true. Every bit does help and even the smallest efforts add up in the end. I made the transition from discouragement to satisfaction by picking up trash.

I've been on the Potomac for two years now and I go out about 2 times a week and pick

up trash on the water, mostly between Fletcher's Cove (above the Key Bridge) and Fort Washington (south of the Wilson Bridge). The amount of trash varies depending on the rains, tides, and wind—but there is always more than I can fit on my boat. I'll fill my boat and stop. I know I can't get everything. Picking up trash doesn't solve all the environmental problems of a river like the Potomac but nevertheless, it is surprising what a difference it makes.

On the Potomac, I can pick up about four bags of trash in an hour using a fishing net. The difference before and after is amazing. To visualize this, just reverse the order. Imagine taking four large trash bags of cups and bottles and dumping them overboard on the river. It gets real messy real fast, so you can imagine the opposite effect of picking up four bags.

I'll admit it's mostly selfish. If I invest an hour every time I go boating for 5 or 6 hours, I enjoy it more because I don't have trash floating around. It's mostly stuff that just ends up in a river because people live by it. I don't believe that people are intentionally throwing trash in the river, but when you have a million people living on either side, that's where stuff ends up. I guess my point is, even a little carelessness can spoil the view—and it's not hard to clean up.

This isn't solving the nitrate, phosphate, or storm sewer problems, but it's solving the trash problem. I'm one person who spends a few hours a week and I really believe that I've made a noticeable, visual difference on the river. There are a few million people who live along the river. I sometimes fantasize what would happen if everyone pitched in.

EZRA VAN DUONG

PRK TRAINS 56 VOLUNTEERS, GIVES TESTING KITS

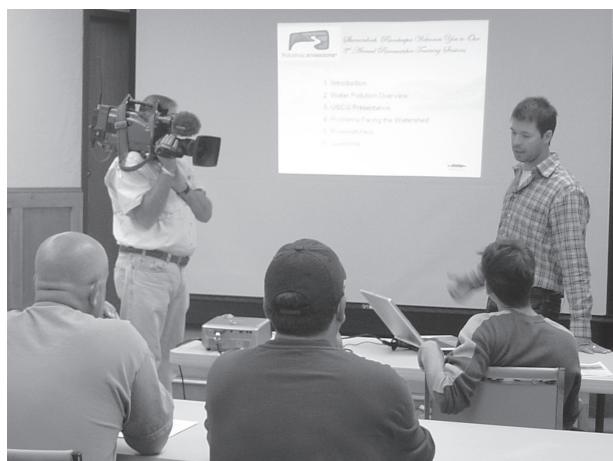
Thanks to everyone who came out to Potomac Riverkeeper's Fall 2007 Riverwatcher Training Sessions. This year PRK trained 56 Riverwatchers—making the Riverwatcher program 200 members strong!

Water monitoring kits were a new addition this year and were made available at each training session. PRK raised \$4,000 to buy the kits through our summer special appeal and annual auction and party.

Many riverwatchers are jumping at the opportunity to test their local rivers and streams. The kits test for dissolved oxygen, nitrates, phosphates, pH and temperature. We have already started receiving reports from around the watershed!

Our sessions may have ended, but you can still request a training session for your community by sending an email to KEEPER@POTOMACRIVERKEEPER.ORG or calling our offices at 202-222-0707.

PRK would like to thank Samuels Library in Front Royal, VA, the Indigo Landing Restaurant in Alexandria, VA, and John Brognard and the Catoctin Fish & Game Protective Association in Myersville, MD for providing the venues for our trainings.



BECOME A RIVERWATCHER!

If you're interested in signing up for PRK's Riverwatcher program, all you need to do is go to our website at WWW.POTOMACRIVERKEEPER.ORG. You can also call 202-222-0707, email KEEPER@POTOMACRIVERKEEPER.ORG, or write to request more information! Our mailing address is:

Potomac Riverkeeper
1717 Massachusetts Avenue NW
Suite 600
Washington, DC 20036



During a recent interview, a reporter asked Ed Merrifield who he thought was the biggest polluter in the watershed. His response: "All of us." In any dense metropolitan area, environmental strain is a concern. The strain is especially pointed in the Potomac watershed, which is home to factory farms, manufacturing plants, and a massive development of land. With all these factors, most people think they can't do anything to ease the strain on our resources. Our response: "Think again."

Q: *I have unused medication that I want to get rid of. I have heard that flushing it down the toilet is bad, but isn't that the best way to guarantee it gets treated? After all, our waste gets treated, doesn't it?*

A: It would be the best way, except its possible for elements of medications to pass through wastewater treatment centers undetected and end up in pipes going out to our rivers and streams. Some of these elements are hormone disrupters, and they have serious impacts on aquatic life. Hormone disrupters short circuit hormones in otherwise healthy fish and impair sexual function and weaken immune systems. The result is reduced fertility and even mutation. Smallmouth bass in the Potomac River and its tributaries now have eggs growing in their testes, according to the United State Geological Survey. The EPA has been funding a program to identify these chemicals for over a decade, and has yet to name a single one—and whether it is in our drinking water systems. Since we don't know which hormone disrupters are causing the damage, wastewater treatment plants don't screen for them, in part because the plants don't know what they're looking for. There are better ways to dispose of your unwanted medications, for a few suggestions, read the section below.

WAYS TO SAFELY DISPOSE OF OLD MEDICATIONS

Getting rid of your unused medications can be a tricky issue. You can't just give them away—even if it's to someone who will dispose of them for you. Potomac Riverkeeper is working with local governments and pharmacies to build collection programs that will keep aquatic life thriving. In the mean time, call the people below and ask them what you can do to safely get rid of unused medications.

Call your local pharmacy and ask about bringing your unwanted medicine to them.

Call your doctor and ask him/her about disposing of your medicine at the doctor's office.

Call your local municipal waste disposal department about a hazardous waste drop-off site, or other ways to dispose of medicines.



SHENANDOAH RIVERKEEPER PUTS NEW POLLUTERS ON WATCHLIST

Shenandoah Riverkeeper Jeff Kelble has made contact with Virginia groups that have exceeded their pollution permits and potentially violated state laws. The violations vary in duration and extent, but generally these facilities have exceeded their Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (VPDES) permits, which set the maximum amount of pollution a group is allowed to discharge.

The letters are meant to open dialogue between the Shenandoah Riverkeeper and the discharging

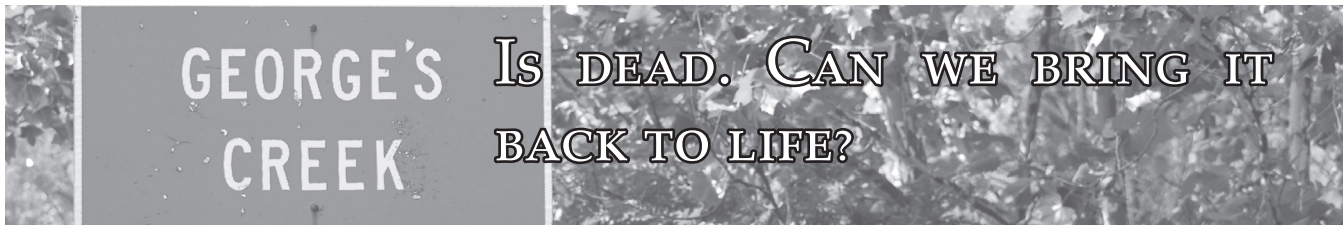
groups. Our goal, as always, is to enforce environmental laws. By making this first contact, we aim to learn why the discharges have occurred above or outside legal limits, and to learn what is being done to address the issues.

As of the printing of this newsletter, Shenandoah Riverkeeper has met with George's Chicken and with the manager for Big Meadows and Skyland Development areas. The meetings went well and though the issues haven't necessarily been resolved, we believe that for now, appropri-

ate actions or studies have been undertaken to remedy the compliance issues. We have not yet heard from the remainder of the facilities.

The Shenandoah Riverkeeper has sent the following groups letters of inquiry.

Apple Mountain Exxon
Aqua Lake Holiday Utilities Inc.
Big Meadows STP
Frederick County Landfill
George's Chicken LLC.
Shenandoah Fisheries, LTD.
Skyland Developed Area
Skyline Swannanoa
Waynesboro STP



Ed Merrifield and the late John Ferguson visited George's Creek in September. What they found was depressing. Two years ago, we reported that the acid that fills a nearby mine had begun to seep out at increasing volume and acidity, and had overpowered the abatement system.

Today, it is even worse. The volume of the seep has increased; it is now literally a waterfall of acid mine drainage running into George's Creek, located in Garrett County in western Maryland. Four miles of the creek runs bright orange to where it meets the North Branch of the Potomac. The once thriving trout stream is now dead.

Acid mine drainage from old abandoned mines is a complex problem which needs political will and public resources to solve. We're sad to report that this has not yet happened for George's Creek.



Acid mine drainage occurs when water dissolves the iron sulfide in mines, creating sulfuric acid. The acid is initially contained in the mine, but leaks out over time.



When the sulfuric acid leaks out, one way of treating it is to mix the acid with lime. Even when viewed as a black and white photo, it is clear that you don't want to be anywhere near this!

Another one of our Riverwatchers, Randy Hartig, visited the Seneca Creek State Park on October 21, 2007. After being told about a false start date, we decided we wanted to get confirmation that the clean up had begun. We called Randy and he said he would check it out for us. Randy sent the following first-hand account the next day.

I was at the site yesterday. They have indeed been working at the site. They have cut a road from the range above the clean up site so no evidence of the work can be seen from Riffle Ford. They have installed silt fence around some of the work area. All low growing vegetation has been stripped from the clean up site. It appears that they have dug along the small waterway where the largest deposits of lead were located.

There is still lead all around the site. I randomly dug about 1 cubic inch of soil at various locations around the clean up site and found 6 to 8 pellets. They have attempted to stabilize the disturbed areas with straw and rye seed then laid green mesh over the areas. They have also spread lime all over the place. With just the small rain we had Friday [Oct. 19] the lime has washed into low areas—so you have no lime in some areas and large deposits in others.

FROM BEGINNING TO END, POTOMAC RIVERKEEPER PRESSED MARYLAND DNR TO CLEAN UP SENECA CREEK. Top left: the lead pellets were six inches deep in some areas around the creek. Top right: fencing was put around the clean up site to contain the lead. Bottom right: piles of lead and dirt being removed from the site.



SENECA (cont. from page 1)

DNR had fought the cleanup for four years. Settlement talks began only after a court rejected DNR's argument that it was not responsible for the lead.

The effects of lead contamination in the creek are heavily documented. In 2004, a two-part risk assessment was completed. The assessment stated that lead concentrations in the water were high enough to cause adverse health effects for plants, birds and mammals in the area. Groundwater

tested beneath the firing area had dissolved concentrations of lead above 100 ug/L, which is 4000 percent more than the ecological screening value set to protect aquatic life and 667 percent more than the EPA's action level for drinking water to protect human health.

"This should be simple," said Merrifield, "Clean up all the pollution and let's move on. It appears that the state finally agrees the clean up is their responsibility."

Lead shot in Seneca Creek is fairly easy to spot. The signs of chicken waste entering our rivers and streams come along with certain side effects, too. But what about the invisible threats? Sometimes, pollutants get into our air, water, and earth and cause problems without our knowledge. Two such instances, sewage spills and potent acid rain, are written about below.

'RIGHT TO KNOW' LEGISLATION GAINS MOMENTUM

Significant progress is being made on a national Sewage Overflow Community Right to Know Act. On October 16, the House subcommittee on Water Resources and the Environment had its first hearing on the bill.

The bill would require publicly owned sewage treatment facilities to notify residents and public health authorities within 24 hours of an overflow. At the hearing, officials said Maryland's system of

notifying the public of raw sewage overflows could be an example for the rest of the nation.

Maryland began requiring overflow reporting in October 2000. Since 2001, Maryland's Department of the Environment (MDE) has received 11,120 spill reports, said Robert Summers, deputy secretary for MDE.

While the state law requires uniform reporting, the process of

informing the public varies from county to county. Anne Arundel County has its own hotline, website, and email notifications for sewage spills, while Montgomery and Prince George's counties require the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission to update its website.

In either case, the important element is notifying people when sewage spills occur, and doing so quickly, said Katherine Baer. Baer is the director of river advocacy for American Rivers and a PRK board member.

"This is a simple and common-sense concept that not only keeps people safe, but also builds much needed public support for the continued investment needed to maintain well-functioning sewers," Baer said.



SHENANDOAH RAINS 10 TIMES MORE ACIDIC THAN NORMAL

Many streams in Shenandoah National Park are vulnerable to acid rain, according to the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS).

"Because of acid rain, Shenandoah is the third most contaminated park in the national park system," said Karen Rice, the USGS scientist who led the study.

"About 14 percent of the park's watersheds will have 3-day episodes of acidity sufficient to kill native fish such as brook trout. These high acid episodes occur at least once every two years."

Acid neutralizing capacity is an important factor in stream-water quality and biologic health. In Shenandoah National Park, the rains are typ-

ically ten times more acidic than normal rainfall. You can view the original USGS report by going to <http://pubs.usgs.gov/sir/2005/5259/>.



PHOTO CREDIT: ED NEVILLE

FUNDRAISING, THE DEMOCRATIC WAY

In October, Vanessa King contacted our offices to let us know about a special fundraising event at **lululemon athletica**, the exercise outfitter. Lululemon creates components for people who want to live healthier lives—that's why they support our mission to clean up drinking water in the Potomac watershed.

The fundraising event, held at lululemon's Tyson's Store on November 4, was an opportunity for customers to vote on which organizations would receive contributions from lululemon. Potomac Riverkeeper would like to thank lululemon athletica for their generous support and, of course, thank everyone who voted for PRK!

PATAGONIA AND PRK TO BRING FILM FESTIVAL TO DC

This winter, when it is cold outside and you are dreaming of being out on the water, we invite you to join us and enjoy the **Wild & Scenic Environmental Film Festival**. Along with **Patagonia** of Georgetown, our corporate sponsor, we are hosting this environmental film festival to bring you a variety of films that explore the rivers and wildlife of the world. Stay tuned for details on date and location.



The South Yuba River Citizen's League started the Wild & Scenic Environmental Film Festival as a fundraiser in 2003. The festival's namesake is in honor of successful lobbying to gain Wild & Scenic status for the Yuba River in 1999. The festival, now in its sixth year, is a testament to the power of one grassroots organization to raise awareness for the protection of our world's natural places.

If you would like to be a corporate sponsor or volunteer to help for this event, please contact Nadia at NADIA@POTOMACRIVERKEEPER.ORG, or call 202-222-0707.

CRUISING WITH THE RIVERKEEPERS ON THE POTOMAC



Charlotte Hall of the **Potomac Riverboat Company** surprised Ed Merrifield a few weeks ago by offering one of its tour boats, the *Miss Malory*, for a river cruise. So on October 19, despite the call for thunderstorms, PRK staff and board members were joined by some of our generous donors for a two hour cruise down the Potomac.

Guests viewed the river and DC monuments by night (as well as Ed's pollution tour) and enjoyed a delicious assortment of hors d'oeuvres provided by **Clyde's Restaurant of Georgetown** and drank at an open bar provided by the **Potomac Riverboat Company**.

Thanks to everyone who made this a great evening!

Cleaning up our nations river, and ensuring its waters are safe for its many uses, is a job shared by many people. Our staff and board help enforce provisions of the clean water act and spread awareness, our members test water quality and provide us with financial assistance, and our funders allow us to continue to grow into our role as "Protectors of the Potomac and its Tributaries." At any given moment, there are hundreds of people and organizations we could thank. The staff and board would like to make special notice of a few groups below, for their support of Potomac Riverkeeper.

SPRING CREEK FOUNDATION

The Spring Creek Foundation, which funds Potomac Riverkeeper, will be closing its doors on December 31, 2007. The foundation's website says that "although we have received tremendous satisfaction from serving the nonprofit community, the Board of Directors has decided it is time for the foundation to sunset."

Even though it is closing, the foundation has set up a trust for some of its projects so that those projects will be funded after December 31. Potomac Riverkeeper is one of the beneficiaries of the trust, and we would like to thank the Board of Directors at the Spring Creek Foundation for their continued generosity.

We have enjoyed working with Kelley Ellsworth, the foundation's executive director, over the years and wish her well in her future endeavors.

SIDNEY BERNSTEIN

The staff and board of Potomac Riverkeeper, Inc. would like to express their gratitude to the family of the late Sidney Bernstein for a bequest of \$10,000 in support of the Shenandoah Riverkeeper. We would also like to extend our sympathies to the family for their loss.

THE CURTIS AND EDITH MUNSON FOUNDATION

The staff and board of Potomac Riverkeeper would like to thank the Curtis and Edith Munson Foundation for making a \$250 contribution in memory of John Ferguson.

FOUNDATION SUPPORTERS

Agua Fund
The Bancroft Foundation
Keith Campbell Foundation for the Environment
Chesapeake Bay Trust
Chesapeake Bay Funders Network
The Hopewell Fund
MARPAT Foundation
Curtis & Edith Munson Foundation
Norcross Wildlife Foundation
Prince Charitable Trusts
Spring Creek Foundation
Town Creek Foundation
Anonymous



PHOTO CREDIT: ED NEVILLE

WHERE THERE'S A WILL, THERE'S A WAY...

Let clean water be your legacy! Please remember PRK in your will. For information, call Robin at 202-222-0706

THANK YOU

IN MEMORY OF JOHN FERGUSON

Potomac Riverkeeper lost a great voice in our organization in September. John Richard Ferguson, chair of PRK's Upper Potomac Advisory Commission, suffered a fatal heart attack on September 18. He was 73 years old.

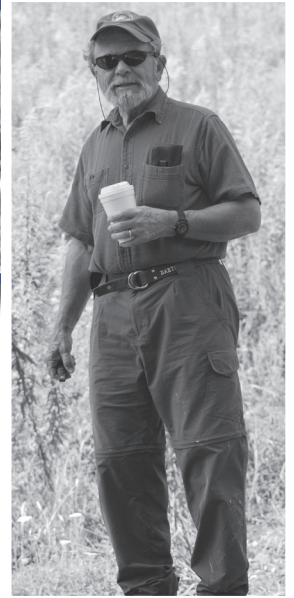


John graduated from Ohio State in 1956; one year later he joined the Marines. In 1963, John graduated first in his class from Case Western Reserve University Law School and began practicing antitrust law.

In his personal life, John was an outdoor enthusiast, traveling the world to fly-fish and helping to found the Babine River Foundation in British Columbia. In the weeks just before his death, John had traveled to the North and South Branches of the Potomac with Ed Merrifield, where the two documented and discussed approaches to acid mine drainage, mountain-top removal (strip) mining, and poultry industry pollution problems.

When he died, John was fishing on Kispiox River in British Columbia, and had just caught a great silver steelhead. His wife recounted later to the Washington Post: "earlier in the day, he had said that it wasn't often that a man could choose the way he left the world, and if the choice could be his, he wanted to die with a fly rod in his hand and a steelhead on his line."

John is survived by his wife, two brothers, two sisters, five children and five grandchildren.



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Shenandoah Riverkeeper
Robin Broder
Director of Operations
Nadia Elguindy
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Shenandoah RIVERKEEPER®



Potomac RIVERKEEPER®

Spot Pollution? Dial Our Hotline At:

301-POTOMAC

And then...

If you are in WASHINGTON, DC, call

WASA Hotline (202.612.3440)

if you see sewer leaks (please have a cross street ready).

DC Water Quality Division (202.535.2194)

if you see oil or hazardous substances.

DC Watershed Protection Division (202.535.2240)

if you see sediment/dirt from a construction site or a cement truck washing into the street or storm drain.

DC Department of the Environment (202.535.2615)

for any problem.

If you are in VIRGINIA, call

Northern Regional Office (703.583.3800)

for all pollution.

Tidewater (Southern VA) Regional Office (757.518.2179)

for all pollution.

Piedmont (Middle VA) Regional Office (804.527.5020)

for all pollution.

Department of Emergency Management (804.897.6500)

for all pollution after hours, on weekends, and on holidays.

If you are in WEST VIRGINIA, call

Emergency Spill Line (800.642.3074)

for all pollution.

Open Dumpster and Litter Line (800.322.5530)

for backup.

If you are in MARYLAND, call

MD Department of the Environment (866.633.4686)

for all pollution.

If you are in PENNSYLVANIA, call

PA Department of Environmental Protection

(800.541.2050) for all pollution.

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 _____ Phone _____

☐ Please send me information about your Riverwatcher program today!

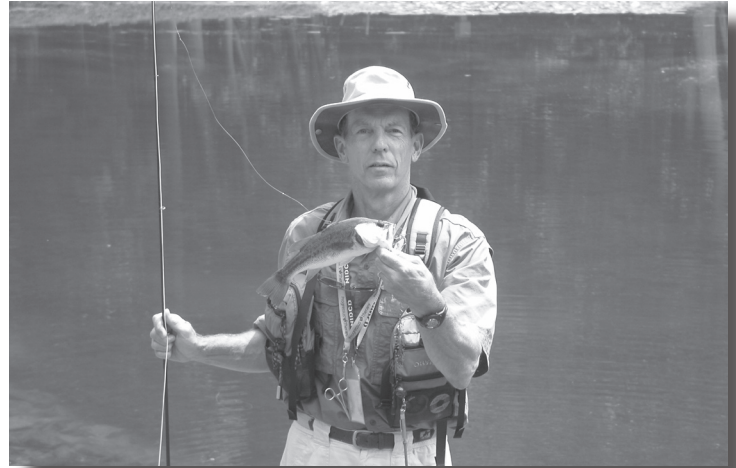
Please make checks payable to **Potomac Riverkeeper**. Thank you!

1717 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Suite 600 Washington DC 20036

To become a member online, go to WWW.POTOMACRIVERKEEPER.ORG

PRK BOARD ADDS STAN OAKS TO ITS RANKS

Stan Oaks retired from the US Army in 1990, as a Lieutenant Colonel, after 20 years of service as both a clinical and research microbiologist, as well as a program manager for vaccines. From 1990-1992, Stan was Study Director/Senior Program Officer at the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences, directing and publishing studies on malaria and emerging infectious diseases. He moved to the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in 1992, as a Scientific Review Administrator responsible for peer review of grant and contract proposals. He retired from the NIH in May 2007.



Stan's environmental credentials are also impressive. He is a Life Member of Trout Unlimited (TU) and the North American Fishing Club, a member of the Federation of Fly Fisherman, and he has held many leadership positions with the Seneca Valley Chapter of TU and their Mid-Atlantic Council. In his spare time, Stan volunteers at Black Hill Regional Park, assisting with fishing and kayaking workshops.

Stan has both a B.S. and M.S. in Microbiology from the University of Arizona, as well as a Ph.D. in Microbiology from the University of Maryland, College Park. He has been married for 40 years to Linn Oaks, and has two daughters and two grandchildren. In addition to fisheries conservation, Stan's interests include recreational kayaking, fly and spin fishing, kayak fishing, nature photography, birding, woodworking, and world travel.



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