

CHARLES COUNTY LANDSCAPES

Newsletter of the Conservancy for Charles County, Inc.
www.conservecharles.org 301-932-5714

Summer 2014
Volume 6, Issue 1

President's Message

By Hal Delaplane, President

At a recent celebration of Maryland land preservation, Governor O'Malley made some brief remarks on the occasion of a new six-state agreement on fighting pollution in the Chesapeake Bay that he signed the previous day. He commented on the symbolism of the Seal of Maryland which depicts a plowman with a spade and a fisherman with a fish. While few people are more individualistic than farmers and fishermen, O'Malley said the Seal stands not for independence but for the interdependence of land and water and our connection to both.

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Next Annual Meeting Sept. 26- Don't Miss It!

The 2014 Conservancy Annual Meeting will be held on **Friday September 26th**. Invitations for dinner reservations will be sent out in August and reservations must be received by September 19. Plan now to attend- this is our only meeting for the membership and our only fundraiser. It is a great opportunity to spend time with fellow Conservancy supporters. This year we have a special treat- Comedian Robert Mac! For more information, contact Lloyd Bowling, Event Coordinator, at 301-934-4130.

Vivian Mills Receives Conservancy's Heritage Award



Hal Delaplane,
Conservancy
President, presents
the Heritage Award
to Vivian Mills,
Founder and Past
President

*Photos courtesy of
Russ Talcott*

In recognition of her vision and exemplary leadership in establishing the Conservancy for Charles County to preserve forever the county's rural character, cultural resources, and natural treasures for the enjoyment of future generations, Vivian Mills was awarded the Charles County Heritage Award at the September 2013 Annual Meeting. Vivian founded the Conservancy in 1996 and served as President for most of her 17 years of service. As a recognized authority in the organization, governance, and operation of nonprofits in Maryland, she brought her wealth of experience, as well as her passion for the county's open spaces and natural places, to the Conservancy to its great benefit. During her time with the Conservancy, 1,694 acres in Charles County were protected through easement or acquisition, such as saving from development the historic Dr. Samuel A. Mudd farm in Waldorf and

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House Passes Bill for Permanent Easement Tax Incentive

It has been a long time coming, but on July 17 the U.S. House of Representatives passed H.R. 4719, "The America Gives More Act". This bill includes the Conservation Easement Incentive Act, which makes the tax incentive permanent. The measure now goes to the Senate. So far 26 Senators, including Ben Cardin (MD), are co-sponsors of the Rural Heritage Conservation Extension Act, S. 526. For further information on what you can do to help, go to www.landtrustalliance.org.



Recent and Upcoming Conservancy Activities

- 13 easements were monitored this spring and summer
- An overhaul of the website is in progress
- Hollman Award was renewed
- Conservancy Booth at ArtsFest in June
- Upcoming booth at County Fair in September

Conservancy Welcomes New Board Members

Four new Board Members started their service to the Conservancy earlier this year: Rick LaNore, Judy Lathrop, Nancy Schertler, and Lynne Wheeler.

A long-time resident of the county, Rick LaNore lives in Waldorf with his family and started his business, MRW Lawns, in La Plata in 1988. MRW is a corporate member of the Conservancy. He is a proponent for smart growth principles, environmentally sensitive stewardship, and agricultural best management practices. Since 1996 he has been active with the University of Maryland's Charles County Extension, serving on its Extension Advisory Council and Turfgrass Council. A locally known bass-fishing enthusiast, Rick promotes the protection of Mattawoman Creek.

Judy Lathrop is a graduate of the University of California and earned a law degree from the University of San Francisco. After practicing environmental and energy law for about ten years, she founded Atlantic Kayak Company where she designs and leads environmental educational kayak programs. She also volunteers as a naturalist/ environmental educator for other organizations. Judy, her husband, their daughter, and a menagerie of heritage breeds of livestock live on the Geneva Wynn Farm in the Moyaone Reserve in Accokeek, Charles County.

Nancy Schertler, a resident of Newburg, is a lighting designer for stage productions on and off Broadway. Locally, she has a long-standing association with Arena Stage. She and her husband Howard Dent have been oyster gardeners for the Chesapeake Bay Foundation for the past thirteen years and she serves as vice president of her neighborhood homeowners association. She is a vocal advocate for the need for increased public access to the Chesapeake Bay and watershed. In addition, Nancy has been active in the current Charles County Comprehensive Plan process and works to raise awareness about the plan and how land use decisions made by the county affect daily life.

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Lawn to Woodland Program Provides Free Trees to Landowners

Through a new statewide program, the Maryland Forest Service can plant native trees on your property free of charge if you have more than one acre of turf. Converting just some of the almost 1 million acres of residential lawns in the state to wooded areas can clean our air and water, cool air temperatures, and provide wildlife habitat. It can reduce the time you spend mowing, provide recreation, reduce energy costs, improve property values, and create sound and visual buffers.

Per a brochure produced by the Maryland Forest Service, by converting part of your lawn to trees – with no binding easements or property restrictions – you will receive at no cost:

- Expert advice: A visit by a professional forester to discuss the planting possibilities on your property. Guidance is provided on low-effort, effective maintenance.
- Free trees: These are bare root, nursery-started seedlings approximately 2–3 feet in height. You help select the species of trees that you desire and that are suitable for your climate, soil or other site factors identified by the forester.
- Free planting: Planting is done by contractors, at no cost to you (unless you prefer doing the planting yourself). Tree tubes, sometimes called tree shelters, and grass control will be placed around all new trees to give them the best chance for survival.
- Trees where you want them: You determine where trees are planted. At your discretion, trees will not be planted where they might obstruct a desired view or otherwise interfere with current uses.
- Monitoring assistance: Assistance is provided to monitor the success of your new woodland, and free replacement trees will be planted for any that do not survive the initial planting.

For more information, go to [arborday.org /lawntowoodland](http://arborday.org/lawntowoodland) or www.dnr.maryland.gov/forests/

Maryland's Rich Botanical Heritage

Did you know that there are over 2500 native species of plants found in Maryland? Or that 710 of these species, about 28%, are considered to be rare, threatened, endangered, or extinct? What can explain this diversity and the threats to it? How can we attempt to stem the loss of species and assist the rare species to become more common?

For answers to these questions and more, the recent report of the Botanical Heritage Work Group is a great start. This work group was formed by law late in 2013 to define challenges, explore opportunities, and make recommendations about the preservation of species native to Maryland. Kirsten Johnson, Maryland Native Plant Society, chaired the group of state employees, NGO members, and state representatives who explored plant conservation issues over several months.

The report, completed in January 2014, includes a fascinating introduction to the rich flora of Maryland, which has been influenced by our mid-Atlantic location, diversity of habitats in the state, climatic changes, and Native American influences over thousands of years. Next is a summary of challenges to maintaining our plant diversity, including habitat loss and fragmentation, overabundance of white-tailed deer, and impacts of non-native invasive plants.

Recommendations to address these challenges include the need for additional resources for botanical work by state agencies, which is currently very poorly funded; support for the Norton Brown Herbarium at University of Maryland, College Park; reduction of deer overabundance primarily through hunting; and prevention, early detection, and rapid response for non-native invasive plant species. There are also recommendations for the use of native plants in restoration and landscaping through state agency planting practices and discussion of the potential for an enhanced native plant and seed industry in Maryland.

Learn more about our botanical treasures and what we can help do to maintain them! To see the full report, go to http://www.dnr.state.md.us/wildlife/Plants_Wildlife/pdfs/011514_BHWG_Report.pdf

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Some of us in Maryland's land preservation movement were drawn to it at least in part out of concern for the Bay. The decades-long struggle to reverse the decline of the Bay has made only modest gains that are daily imperiled by overpopulation and overdevelopment in the Bay region. Hopefully, we can learn from our mistakes and disappointments and persevere, but we must not overlook an equally important struggle to preserve our disappearing farmland. We must find ways to help agriculture in Southern Maryland return to profitability. Sustainable, profitable farming and a healthy Bay are two sides of the same coin.

A noteworthy outcome of last winter's tragicomic opera that was the six-person Tier Map/Comp Plan Work Group was the sudden emergence of politically palatable Purchased Development Rights (PDRs). Other jurisdictions, notably Calvert County, have had successful PDR programs for years in which a county purchases a Transferable Development Right from a landowner and retires it. This gives farmers another option and preserves farmland without increasing development density elsewhere. Draft legislation has been reviewed by the Agricultural Land Preservation Advisory Board and presented to the county commissioners for consideration and referral to the Planning Commission after a public hearing.

Under the current bill, the county would set a PDR price annually and fund purchases through the budget process. The bill would allow a maximum of three unrestricted lots (i.e., not limited to family) on a parcel 120 acres or more. In lobbying for a PDR program, the Smarter Growth Alliance for Charles County noted that counties less wealthy than Charles spend millions of their own money every year to protect agricultural land from development and retain rural character.

An equitable solution that preserves farmland while treating farmers fairly would be a wonderful step forward. Then we could move on to the next elephant in the room—providing opportunity to young people to succeed our aging farm population in pursuing farming. But that's a story for another day.

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securing the protection of parcels on the Potomac River within the Mount Vernon viewshed. Vivian's eloquent words were heard at many a public meeting in support of the Conservancy's mission, and the respect that she earned by working well with a diversity of partners helped those words to have more impact. On her retirement from the Conservancy Board, we were pleased to honor her with this well-deserved award.

***Board Members, continued from p. 2***

Lynne Wheeler was born and raised in Indian Head, and is a graduate of the University of Maryland. Retired from a career in medical technology, she currently is an officer with the Southern Maryland Audubon Society, serving as Secretary. Her hobbies are gardening with perennials and native plants, birding, reading, dogs, nature, and good wine. She resides in Chicamuxen with her husband John Wheeler, an Indian Head business owner.

Retiring from the Board after 12 years of service was Dale Flowers of Welcome, who is thanked for his many years of support. Continuing board members for the 2013–2014 term include Lloyd Bowling Sr., Gwen Brewer (Vice President), Brian Clark, Ellie Cline (Secretary), Hal Delaplane (President), James B. Hooper, Al Stewart, and Richard C. Viohl Jr. (Treasurer).

Editor's Note:

Please contact me by November 15 if you have a story, photos, or announcement to share for the winter newsletter, due out in December 2013.

Gwen Brewer

glbrewer@comcast.net, 301-843-3524

There's still time- please renew or join for 2014!

Please indicate payment of your membership dues only, donation only, or both when you send in the form below. Remember that your dues and donations to the Conservancy are tax deductible. Your dues and donations are critical to continue our work.

Don't let your membership lapse- we need your help to preserve the natural and historical landscapes of Charles County!

Please join us to help preserve Charles County's natural and historic landscapes. Fill out the form below to become a member or otherwise contribute.

Annual dues—

___ individual \$35 ___ family \$50 ___ student \$15 ___ organization \$100

Dues and contributions are tax deductible. The Conservancy is listed as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit tax-exempt organization with the State of Maryland.

Name(s): _____

Organization (if organization membership): _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Tel: _____ Fax: _____

E-mail: _____

Please send the Newsletter by e-mail only to conserve resources _____

Annual dues enclosed \$ _____

Added contribution \$ _____

Total \$ _____

Please make your check out to "Conservancy for Charles County, Inc." and mail with this form to:
Conservancy for Charles County, P.O. Box 1358, Waldorf, MD 20604

**Conservancy for Charles
County, Inc.**

P.O. Box 1358
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Phone:
301-932-5714

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info@conservecharles.org

**Quiet forests.
Green and golden fields
crisscrossed with streams.
Historic homes, silvery
cedar barns, scenic roads.
All worth preserving for
today and forever.**



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for Charles County, Inc.

We're on the Web!

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