

SPARKS-GLENCOE COMMUNITY PLANNING COUNCIL



Preserving our rural heritage

Spring 2011 Newsletter

Dear Neighbor,

Spring is definitely in sight, and with it many of us will be moving out of doors to tend our lawns, our pastures, our crops. It's the time of year when our land and water come into focus as the precious commodities that they are.

This issue we focus on them as well: how to preserve our land, our soil and keep our water clean, not just for ourselves but for the millions more who benefit from our stewardship. We believe there is something in this newsletter for everyone who loves the quality of life that we in the North County are so fortunate to enjoy.

We also want to remind you of our upcoming annual meeting on April 27 (see below for more detail). And please remember that we always need your support, whether you volunteer for activities or make a financial contribution. Without you, this newsletter would not be possible.



The SGCPC Board

Please Come to Sparks-Glencoe's Annual Meeting

*Topics: Water Quality and Zoning
Legislation 2011*

*Featured Speakers: Don Outen, Paul Solomon,
The Honorable Wade Kach*

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 27 at 7 PM

Sparks Elementary School

The New "P" word: Phosphorus

The Prettyboy and Loch Raven reservoirs supply significant amounts of drinking water to Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and parts of Howard, Harford, Carroll and Anne Arundel Counties. Both reservoirs are in violation of the Federal Clean Water Act because they are contaminated with too much phosphorus. The Maryland Department of Environment has been ordered to reduce phosphorus levels in Prettyboy by 54% and in Loch Raven by 50%.

Phosphorus comes from human and animal waste, fertilizers used in lawn and garden care, and agricultural operations if they are not properly managed. Nutrient management plans, when properly implemented, have been largely successful in controlling phosphorus pollution from farms.

Phosphorus contamination is increased by development in the watershed. When development occurs, the natural filtering action of trees is removed from the land and replaced with impervious surfaces such as driveways, roads and rooftops. Stormwater runoff flows rapidly off these surfaces causing soil erosion. Phosphorus bonds to the soil. When the soil is carried into local streams by the stormwater runoff, the phosphorus is carried along with it, eventually finding its way to the reservoirs.

How can phosphorus pollution be prevented?

- Dispose of pet waste in trash cans instead of allowing waste to be washed into streams and waterways.
- Maintain your septic system on a regular basis. Septic tanks should be pumped every two to five years, depending on use, size of tank, and number of people in your household. *(continued on page 2)*

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Phosphorus (continued from page 1)

- Plant trees on your property. Trees provide the best filtration system for the groundwater as it makes its way to the local waterways and ultimately to the reservoir. As the water travels through tree root systems, the roots absorb and utilize the nutrients, and then release the water absent the phosphorus.

Remember, clean water benefits us all!

The Buffer Project: Coming Soon to a Stream Near You

You may have been one of the more than 4,000 North County residents to have gotten a phone call recently asking your opinion about the most effective way to protect the banks of your river or stream. If you did, it's because The Prettyboy Watershed Alliance (PWA) wants to find out what you think about buffering your land if it abuts a waterway.

The PWA hired OpinionWorks, a regional public opinion marketing research team that designs surveys to test attitudes and behaviors on pivotal issues - in this case a buffer project. Before the phone survey took place, OpinionWorks conducted three small group meetings with some of the areas' farmers and other property owners whose land borders streams feeding into Prettyboy Reservoir to discover incentives that motivate landowners to buffer their streams and barriers that stymy such efforts. Information from these discussions will be compiled along with information taken from the telephone surveys to investigate landowners' perceptions about the pros and cons of planting trees, shrubbery or grasses alongside their streams.

SGCPC has been active in supporting this endeavor by the Prettyboy Watershed Alliance. We hope the data collected will indicate a strong interest on the part of our neighbors to pursue programs that offer financial and other incentives for planting a buffer.

The Gunpowder River Has a New Defender!

Maryland has had Riverkeepers on the Chester, Choptank, Patuxent, Potomac, Severn, South, Lower Susquehanna, and West Rhode Rivers. Finally, our local river, the Gunpowder, has a Riverkeeper. Theaux Le Gardeur, owner of the Backwater Angler, and Sparks-Glencoe Board Member, has formed a nonprofit organization, the Gunpowder Riverkeeper, which is dedicated to protecting, conserving and restoring the Gunpowder River and its watershed.

Becoming the Gunpowder Riverkeeper is a natural extension of Theaux's ongoing activities. As an expert fisherman and fishing guide, he is

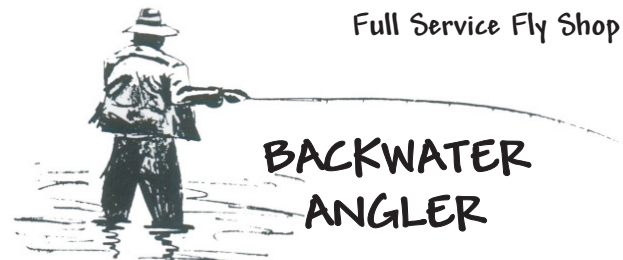


keenly aware of the need for clean river water to support healthy populations of aquatic animals and plants in the Gunpowder itself, and also for the grasses, fish, crabs and waterfowl in the Chesapeake Bay, which is fed by the Gunpowder. He is a member of a steering committee focused

on user group conflicts and issues in the Gunpowder State Park and has promoted awareness of invasive species that affect the health of the river and its aquatic inhabitants.

Protecting the 53 miles of River will require lots of assistance, so Theaux is recruiting volunteers who want to help. For more information, visit the organization's web site: gunpowderriverkeeper.org.

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Your Land: You Can Love It and Leave It

Local couple opts for preservation over development rights

It's been conserved: a 250 year old farmhouse at the corner of Old Monkton and Matthews roads on several acres of wooded rolling hills that border the Gunpowder Falls, counting among its residents black-capped chickadees, spirited horses and maybe even the mature bald eagle that floats in relief against the blue sky. What, aside from its obvious rustic beauty, its spacious pastures for the horses and protective habitat for countless other creatures, motivated the owners, Frank and Kathy Durkee, to preserve this land?

"You need land to ride horses," shrugs Frank, after a day spent in the saddle, chasing foxes through fields and wood. He says his sport depends upon the preservation of hundreds of contiguous acres.

Kathy points to a photo of mud-covered kids. She and Frank purchased this property in 1972, raised three children here, and now share the joys of their riverfront home with their grandkids. The requisite inner-tubes and fishing rods are stored in the loft of the well house, one of a handful of stone outbuildings that include a smoke house and twin-hole outhouse.



Frank and Kathy Durkee on the front porch of their farmhouse.

"We lost our canoe a year ago, in a swift current, up against a tree," Kathy recalls. "We were both in it."

Outdoor adventures, diverse wildlife, giddy grandkids, the contentment of their horses and open space notwithstanding, there are *other* good reasons – practical, economic ones – to preserve land, concede the Durkees, who put their property into a land trust in 1999.

"We made a donation to Manor Conservancy Rural Legacy," Frank says. "We had two development rights at that time; we could have developed two parcels here. I had an appraisal done for before – and after – value. The difference – our donation to the land trust – became a deduction on our income tax."

The couple in 1986 also agreed to a façade easement with the Maryland Historical Trust, pledging not to alter the exterior footprint of the pre-Revolutionary house.

"We're preservation-minded," says Frank, a self-described old-house nut. Kathy adds: "We of course recommend that others consider this. The land is so precious."

Durkees interviewed by Maryalice Yakutchik.

If you would like to explore options for preserving your land, contact Ann Jones, Baltimore County Land Trust Alliance, 410-461-6917; annholmesjones@yahoo.com.

SGCPC Meeting
on **May 11** at 7 PM
at **Broadmead** • 13801 York Road
Topics:
Pollution diet for the Bay
Environmentally friendly gardening

Keep your Lawn (and the Water) Healthy

It's that time of year again when many of us are getting out the fertilizers and mowers, anticipating that thick green weed-free lawn. But before you start applying the chemicals, please remember that if everyone over-fertilized their lawn by just one pound, a huge amount of excess nutrients could end up in your groundwater (drinking water), streams, rivers, the local reservoirs and finally, the Chesapeake Bay. Excessive nutrients cause serious water quality problems.

Here are some tips for maintaining a healthy lawn without overdoing it:

- Have your soil tested (there are kits you can buy) before seeding a new lawn and test it every so often after that to determine its needs.
- Consider whether all areas are suitable for turf. Ground covers, bushes or flower beds may be more desirable in shaded areas (and reduce mowing).
- Drought tolerant grasses are recommended for this area.
- Most experts agree the best time for fertilizing in this area is early fall; consider using phosphorous-free fertilizer which has now hit the shelves.
- Leave grass clipping on the lawn to help feed it and reduce the amount of fertilizer needed.

Information from A Homeowner's Guide to Improving our Environment and Drinking Water, Baltimore County.



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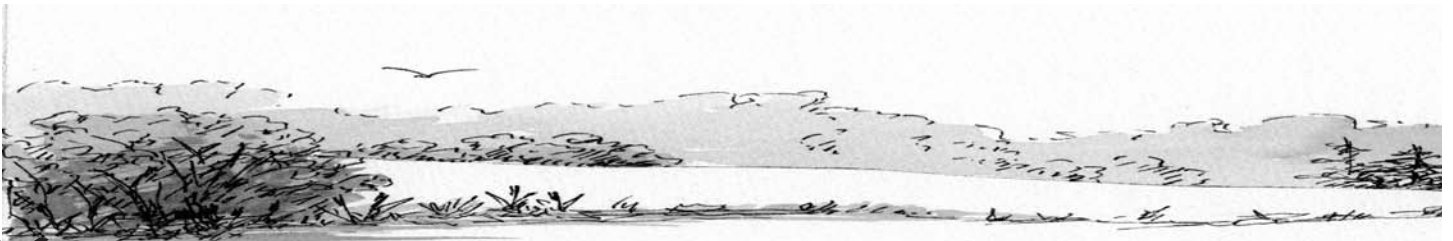
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* BECOME A MEMBER OF SGPC *

We need your support to carry on our mission of protecting our rural environment. We are a tax-exempt organization, so your contribution beyond the cost of membership is tax-deductible. Please be as generous as you can! **Remember: we accept matching contributions from your employer.** Our tax ID# is 20-3888970.

Basic membership: ____ (\$35) Family (2 adults in the same household): ____ (\$50)

I wish to make an additional donation of: ____ \$50 ____ \$100 ____ \$200 ____ Other

Please make check out to SGPC and mail to: P.O. Box 937, Sparks, MD 21152

If you'd like to get more involved with our work, choose a committee that interests you:

_____ zoning; _____ land preservation; _____ membership & fundraising;

_____ communications; _____ web site; _____ monitoring county hearings,

or let us know how you can help: _____

Name _____

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City, state, zip _____

Thank you for your support!

SPARKS-GLENCOE COMMUNITY PLANNING COUNCIL BOARD 2011-2012

Goals

- ◆ Educating residents and land use representatives about the natural resources in northern Baltimore County;
- ◆ Encouraging the protection and preservation of the rural, historical, and agricultural environment of northern Baltimore County;
- ◆ Promoting responsible community planning which maintains the rural character of the area;
- ◆ Advocating growth in keeping with the level of public services available in the area.

Contact us at our website: www.sgpc.org at info@sgpc.org

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Election to be held at the April 27th Meeting.



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* New Board member Carol Stevenson, a Monkton resident, is retired as a Financial Manager with the NSA. Carol and her husband, Phil Gay, operate “Trout and About,” a fly fishing and guide service. She also co-founded *Chesapeake Women Anglers* and is an instructor for *Casting for Recovery* which teaches fishing skills to breast cancer survivors. She volunteers for DNR’s **Sport Fish Advisory Commission**, for the **Stream Wader** program, and for two local farms—one alpaca and one sheep and goats.

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