

## NNWB Activities Summary 2013

**Our mission : To protect, promote, and restore the health of the Northwest Branch through environmental education and direct action, and to enlist broad-based public participation in these goals and activities.**

Education and outreach:

- We hosted **educational presentations and walks**:
  - **March 3, Rob Gibbs**, Natural Resources Manager for Montgomery Parks, discussed the wildlife that call our parks home. At our annual meeting, we honored him with our **Great Blue Heron Environmental Neighbor Award** for his many years of dedication to our parks and his extraordinary willingness to educate park users.
  - **June 4, Christopher Lewis**, geologist and former construction engineer, showed maps of the underlying geology of the watershed and discussed formation of the area. **David Schaefer**, chronicler of the history of Springbrook Forest, detailed what is known about the 1880s Gilmore mica mine under that neighborhood, described the uses of mica at that time, and displayed items using mica.
  - **June 22, Joe Howard**, founder of the Montgomery County Champion Tree Program and tree guru, led a field tour of impressively large trees in the Northwest Branch watershed on parkland and private property.
  - **Aug. 6, Fred Seitz**, amateur expert on bats, provided an overview of the diversity, biology, and severe threats to these amazing creatures.
  - **Dec. 3, Katie Basiotis**, Mid-Atlantic Regional Biologist and **Corinne Lackner Stephens**, Certification Manager/ Biologist made a presentation about the Wildlife Habitat Council, its certification program, and certified programs in Maryland. They also discussed how to provide backyard native wildlife habitat.
- We participated in the **H2O Summit** sponsored by the Montgomery County DEP and WSSC. Our **NNWB table** displayed maps, posters, brochures, relevant literature, and a cycling slide show of the beauty of the Northwest Branch and its challenges. (Mar. 15)
- We organized a **tour of 7 of the sewer remediation sites** in the Northwest Branch Stream Valley, led by WSSC reps and project engineers from Black and Veatch. While we want these pipes fixed, we are concerned about potential tree loss and erosion from heavy remediation equipment. (April 9) (See report at <http://www.neighborsnwb.org/WSSCSewerTour.htm>.)
- We partnered with the Montgomery County Dept. of Environmental Protection to educate the Middlevale-Layhill neighborhood by gluing **“Drains to the Chesapeake” markers** on all storm drains in the neighborhood and leaving explanatory doorhangers at all residences. (Nov. 9)
- With permission from the Parks Department, we helped residents of the Kemp Mill neighborhood **reroute a trail into the park** from its historic route, which crossed privately owned woods, to a route entirely on parkland.

- We developed a **pictorial review aimed at encouraging appreciation for both the beauty and challenges of the Northwest Branch, and a desire to help restore its health**. So far we have presented this show to two civic associations bordering the Northwest Branch (11/12/13, 1/29/14).
- We kept members up to date on the **stream bank recovery project at Kemp Mill Road**, log jam removal, and **pedestrian bridge replacement** through a sequence of pictorial reports on our website. (3/15--5/2) (<http://www.neighborsnwb.org/KempMillProject2013.htm> and <http://www.neighborsnwb.org/KempMillProject2013-2.htm>)

#### Direct actions:

- Some **120 volunteers cleaned trash** from the Northwest Branch at 7 sites, on Feb. 18, Apr. 20-21, and Nov. 2, hauling out over 200 bags of trash, including about 56 bags of bottles and cans that could have been recycled, and large items, e.g., 14 tires, 4 shopping carts, a soggy mattress, a bike, an A/C unit, home siding, chainlink fencing, sleeping bag, and miscellaneous metal. **Winter cleanup** was from Broad Acres E.S. down to the NWB. **Spring cleanups** at W. Hyattsville Metro and Burnt Mills were in cooperation with the Anacostia Watershed Society. The Green Club of Springbrook H.S. cleaned a local stretch of the NWB, and residents of Kemp Mill cleaned the Lamberton trib of the NWB. **Fall cleanups** counted on the Blair H.S. Crew Team, working at the county line for the 3<sup>rd</sup> time; volunteers at Burnt Mills; and a father-son pair in middle NWB.
- We supported monthly **invasive plant removals**, March through October (4<sup>th</sup> Saturday mornings), with a special attack on wineberry (4/6).
- Under Montgomery County Parks supervision, we planted native flowers and grasses provided by Parks just above the Burnt Mills Dam amid the stilt grass. (11/23)
- Our **stream monitoring team** counted the benthic macroinvertebrates (primarily insect larvae that live on the bottom) four times, in warm weather and freezing cold, following the Audubon Naturalist Society protocol.
- In addition to the usual monitoring, we compared macroinvertebrate numbers and variety in water **above the confluence with Bel Pre Creek and then IN Bel Pre Creek** to try to understand the marked decline in water quality between a monitoring site at Ednor Rd. and the NNWB monitoring site just below Randolph Rd. Bel Pre Creek was found to be nearly dead. (3/23)
- We adopted the **reforestation site** between Old Randolph and New Randolph roads, where we are responsible for removing vines and recaging the young trees which long ago we helped to plant.

#### Advocacy:

- We testified in favor of the **Montgomery County roadside tree bill, 41-12, and the tree canopy preservation bill, 35-12**. (1/17/13) ([http://www.neighborsnwb.org/PDF/TestimonyBill35\\_12n41\\_12.pdf](http://www.neighborsnwb.org/PDF/TestimonyBill35_12n41_12.pdf)). Enacted.
- We testified in **opposition to Bill 10-13 reducing applicability of the bag fee** to cover only stores with gross food sales greater than 2%. (6/18) (<http://www.neighborsnwb.org/PDF/TestimonyOpposeBagRollbackBill20130618.pdf>). On hold.
- We contributed to efforts to **save Ten Mile Creek**--our last best stream and only clean source of our emergency drinking water supply--through repeated email alerts to members, speaking at the press

conference outside the Planning Board HQ (6/6/13), and an extensive letter to Council members (1/13/14) (<http://www.neighborsnwb.org/PDF/TenMileCreekLtr20140113.pdf>).

- We partnered with the Sierra Club, Prince George's County Group, to perform a **survey of bag use by shoppers exiting major chain grocery stores in Montgomery and Prince George's counties**. Our Montgomery results, when compared with those of Prince George's County, demonstrated conclusively the effectiveness of Montgomery County's 5 cent carryout bag fee in changing behavior. We joined the Sierra Club in testimony in the Maryland Legislature in favor of HB 718, which would enable other counties and municipalities in Maryland to enact a similar fee (2/21/14) (<http://www.neighborsnwb.org/PDF/HB718TestimonyBagFee20140221.pdf>).

**How well did our activities advance our mission? We welcome your suggestions! Please send your comments to [anambler@gmail.com](mailto:anambler@gmail.com). Thank you for all you do!**