

HEADWATERS

News & Notes From the Virginia Office of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation

MARCH 2019

General Assembly Concludes

The Virginia General Assembly concluded its 2019 session in late February by approving a budget with robust funding for the Clean Water Blueprint. Specifically, the final budget includes \$10 million in funding for the Stormwater Local Assistance Fund, which provides matching grants to localities for projects that reduce polluted runoff; \$89.7 million in total funding for the Virginia Agriculture Cost-Share Program, which helps farmers install conservation practices like fencing cattle out of streams and streamside buffers; and \$4 million for oyster restoration and replenishment efforts.

Another success this session included a bill to address the proper clean-up of coal ash ponds. Coal ash is the waste byproduct from coal-fired power plants, and much of it is currently stored in unlined pits near waterways and groundwater supplies, where it can leak harmful chemicals and other pollutants into our rivers and drinking water.

Senate Bill 1355, sponsored by Senator Frank Wagner, is a bipartisan agreement supported by CBF and other environmental groups that will require at least 25 percent of ash be recycled, with the remainder disposed of safely in modern, lined landfills. The bill also limits removal costs that Dominion can recover from ratepayers to do this work.

CBF is also pleased that Senate Bill 1588, patroned by Senator Lynwood Lewis, passed. This bill provides guidance to local governments on offering partial tax relief to homeowners and businesses that invest to protect their property from flooding.

Unfortunately, not all of the news was good this session. On the issue of urban trees, CBF worked with Delegate Mark Keam to introduce House Bill 2333. Under current Virginia law, Bay watershed localities may



From left to right: CBF Virginia Executive Director Rebecca Tomazin; Brennan Lane, eighth-grade student; Senator Glen Sturtevant; and CBF Educator Rick Mittler meet to discuss a bill to designate the oyster as Virginia's First Food.

require developers to plant and replace trees, but only up to a very a limited number. House Bill 2333 would exempt localities in the Bay watershed from the tree limits currently in place and help achieve specific water-quality goals. Unfortunately, the bill failed to make it out of committee.

CBF also supported Senate Bill 1573, offered by Senator Bill DeSteph, that prohibits offshore gas and oil drilling. A major spill in the Bay would be devastating to wildlife, the fishing and tourism industries, military operations, and the hundreds of thousands of jobs that rely upon clean water in the region. Despite vocal support for the bill, it was defeated in committee.

CBF also collaborated with a Richmond-area student as he sought to bring attention to the native oyster by designating it Virginia's First Food. Unfortunately, despite teaming up with Senator Glen Sturtevant on Senate Bill 1259, the designation was not approved.

We thank the General Assembly and our diligent advocates for their work this session. It's terrific news that we have strong investments in programs and new laws that reduce polluted runoff and clean up our rivers, streams, and the Chesapeake Bay.

From the Desk of

Rebecca Tomazin

VIRGINIA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



In February, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit upheld a decision requiring that Norfolk Southern Railway Company pay stormwater utility fees to the City of Roanoke. CBF intervened in this case on behalf of the city.

The Commonwealth of Virginia instituted a program allowing localities like Roanoke the ability to assess fees from landowners, including corporations and individuals, to address stormwater carrying pollution that runs into local streams and rivers.

The amount of the fee is determined by how much hardened surface, such as rooftops and parking lots, a landowner has. The city spends the collected fees on projects that help limit and slowdown polluted runoff.

This recent decision is an important precedent, upholding that all of us must do our fair share to reduce pollution to our waterways. Stormwater utility programs can ensure that properties that create polluted runoff help support projects that reduce this pollution.

The health of Virginia's waterways and the Chesapeake Bay depends on the success of the many local stormwater programs across the Commonwealth.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rebecca Tomazin".



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION
Saving a National Treasure

CBF Installs Rain Garden at Hopewell Park

In February, CBF worked with the City of Hopewell, located southwest of Richmond at the confluence of the Appomattox and James Rivers, to install a rain garden at Mathis Park, the most-visited park in the city.

The rain garden is specially designed and located to capture runoff from the nearby concrete parking lot. The garden holds the water and its carefully-chosen soils and plants help filter the runoff before it flows into the park's stream.

As rain water runs off our streets, parking lots, lawns, and other surfaces, it picks up pet waste, pesticides, fertilizer, oil, and other contaminants. If the draining water doesn't evaporate or soak into the ground, it flushes straight into local creeks, rivers, and the Chesapeake Bay, adversely affecting water quality and aquatic life.

This rain garden was installed using grant funding provided by the National Fish and



Volunteers help install a rain garden at Mathis Park in the City of Hopewell.

Wildlife Foundation, through the Chesapeake Bay Program, to work with the city to decrease the amount of runoff flowing into local waterways.

Join us in March for our next Hopewell activity: A Stream Walk and Talk! We will visit the recently-restored Riverside Park to see wetlands, a stream restoration, permeable pavers, and other conservation practices that slow down and filter polluted runoff. Check out the Calendar section to learn more.

CBF Outreach in the Shenandoah Valley

Last month CBF joined our partners from the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay and Virginia Department of Forestry for a field day on a farm in Middlebrook, located near Staunton. In advance of spring, the group protected tree saplings located in a streamside buffer by staking them and placing protective tubes around them. This will help prevent deer from eating the young trees and allow the buffer to more effectively filter polluted runoff before it enters local streams.

Additionally, CBF Watershed Restoration Scientist Matt Kowalski presented to members of the Shenandoah Valley's Pure Water Forum. Matt discussed the health of the Bay as reflected in the recent release of CBF's biannual *State of the Bay* report. The report's score decreased one point this year to 33. The drop was largely due to increased pollution and poor water clarity caused by record regional rainfall.



Staff from CBF, Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, and Virginia Department of Forestry join together to clean up a streamside buffer on a farm in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley.

CBF works with citizens, especially farmers, in the Valley to promote water-quality initiatives and install conservation practices such as streamside buffers. Taken together, these efforts will hopefully help improve the Bay's score on our next report.

CBF in the Community COMMUNITY

Buffers for Hunters

Thursday, March 7, 6:00-8:00 p.m.

Weyers Cave Community Center

682 Weyers Cave Road, Weyers Cave

From white-tail deer to wood ducks and turkeys, riparian buffers provide habitat for a wide variety of wildlife. Featured speaker Roger Rohrer will discuss how he manages his farm to attract a diverse mix of game and bird species. Other experts will be on hand to share the technical and financial resources available to install a buffer without breaking the bank. Dinner will be provided and registration is free! To register, visit cbf.org/buffersforwildlife.

Stream Walk and Talk

Thursday, March 14, 3:30-5:00 p.m.

Riverside Park

1051 Riverside Avenue, Hopewell

Join us as we walk along the stream and adjacent wetlands and survey critters that call Riverside Park home. From caddis flies to catbirds and fish to frogs, we'll see what lives in this newly restored habitat and talk about the role each species plays in a healthy ecosystem. Meet at the lower entrance of the park, on Riverside Avenue, across the street from the Hopewell City Marina. To register, visit <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/streamwalk?fbclid=IwAR2kt775-g5z-5D5R8-bTBrXAUywhqYBZfovmlujJYAKd5GPyLjyBtyihgA>.

Slurp and Learn

Tuesday, March 19, 6:00-8:00 p.m.

Väsen Brewing Company

3331 West Moore Street, Richmond

Have you ever wondered where the oysters on your table come from? More and more, these delicacies are being produced on oyster farms, where they contribute to improving the Bay's water quality and habitat before hitting your table. Join us to learn more about this growing industry from oyster grower Big Island Aquaculture. This social and educational event features local beer and all-you-can-eat oysters. Tickets cost \$10. Register by visiting cbf.org/slurpandlearn.

Blacks Run Clean-up Day

Saturday, April 13, 9:00 a.m.-noon

Ice House Roundabout

217 S. Liberty Street, Harrisonburg

Join staff from the city of Harrisonburg, local citizens, and CBF to pick up debris along Blacks Run. After the clean-up, enjoy lunch and visiting the featured educational booths, including CBF's. To register, visit harrisonburgva.gov/cleanstream-cleanup-day-registration.



CHESAPEAKE BAY
FOUNDATION

Saving a National Treasure

CBF.ORG

VIRGINIA
1108 East Main Street, Suite 1600
Richmond, VA 23219
804-780-1392
CBF_Richmond@cbf.org

HAMPTON ROADS
Brock Environmental Center
3663 Marlin Bay Drive
Virginia Beach, VA 23455
757-622-1964

CBF HEADQUARTERS
6 Herndon Avenue, Annapolis, MD 21403
410-268-8816
Membership information: 888-SAVE-BAY