

# The CLUE

## Calendar of Events

**Thursday, March 11, at 6 pm**

Public Information Meeting on the draft Charter Government proposal (County Admin Building)

**Monday, March 15, at 12 noon and 7 pm**

Planning Commission (County Admin Building)

**Tuesday, March 16, at 7 pm**

Board of County Commissioners (County Admin Building)

**Thursday, March 18, at 6 pm**

CLUA Board and Environment Committee (Perryville library) *Stancill quarry discussion, all welcome*

**Thursday, March 25, at 7 pm**

CLUA Charter Government Committee (Perryville library) *all welcome*

**In This Issue:** Please pay your dues! (p. 1); Charter government (p. 1); Light pollution test (p.3); Watershed Watch (p. 3).

## Dues Due

If you haven't paid your 2101 CLUA dues yet, please do so. Yes, we do have expenses, and the CLUA Board is developing some interesting plans for this year. The dues are only \$10, and they haven't risen since CLUA was founded. Please make your \$10 check out to "Cecil Land Use Alliance" and mail it to CLUA, P.O. Box 215, Colora, MD 21917. Thank you!

---

## What d'ya think about Charter?

If no one has asked you yet, they probably will sometime over the next six months. A Charter Board was established in 2009 by the Cecil County Commissioners. A draft proposal is now ready for review and comment at a set of meetings running from March

through May at locations around the county. And the final version is expected to be put to the voters in November.

In the meantime, our state legislators have provided good ammunition for supporters of Charter by well-publicized efforts to impose control over the county commissioners' management of the County. And a group supporting charter, "Friends for Charter", has formed to do public education on the initiative. CLUA members Rupert Rossetti and Nancy Valentine have met with the chair and treasurer to share ideas.

What does Cecil County need in the way of leadership, accountability, efficiency, openness, and transparency in local government? Is it the County Executive/County Council approach of the Charter proposal? Will it be better for the citizens of Cecil County?

Trying to take a rational approach, CLUA has put together a committee to review the Charter Draft, suggest changes, and develop a position proposal for CLUA on Charter. Initial committee members are Wyatt Wallace, Steven French, Ken Wiggins, Bill DeFreitas, and Nancy Valentine. The group will have its first meeting at **7 pm Thursday, March 25 at the Perryville Library.**

In the 2008 educational cycle on home rule options, CLUA chose to support Code Home Rule for increased local control without a dramatic, possibly costly, change to government form. Now we'll take a close look at Charter.

A little background: Local government authority has been established in Maryland to manage affairs that the General Assembly deem better addressed by counties and municipalities. The basic local government form is the commissioner form which we have in Cecil County today and which has limited local control. Two other forms are Charter Home Rule and Code Home Rule. Both were devised to make it easier to stem the flood of local bills coming before the legislature by granting some of the legislative authority to the counties and municipalities.

In Cecil County, there have been five attempts between 1968 and 1996 to bring home rule to Cecil County. Three were Charter efforts which involve the creation of a charter document that describes how the new government will operate. Two were efforts to implement Code Home Rule which is initiated by decision of the county commissioners to put Code Home Rule on the ballot and voters approving the change. All of the five home rule efforts failed. The closest vote occurring in a 1991 special election on a Charter Adoption. It failed by 286 votes or 4% of the votes cast.

In 2008, the County Commissioners held a number of educational meetings on the two home rule options led by Victor Tervala of the University of Maryland Institute for Governmental Services. The County Commissioners chose not to put Code Home Rule on the 2008 ballot but took steps in 2009 to start a Charter effort.

For more information, join our committee, go to the first public forum on **Thursday, March 11 at 6:00 p.m. in the County Administration Building**, and/or take a look at these sources:

**Public Forums schedule and draft charter:**

[www.ccgov.org/commissioner/charterboard.cfm](http://www.ccgov.org/commissioner/charterboard.cfm)

**Home Rule Options in Maryland** by Victor K. Tervala, available at Cecil County Libraries. Includes history and analysis of the two types of home rule along with details on all MD counties and their home rule efforts.

Nancy Valentine, Chair, CLUA Charter Committee

**Light Pollution Test Reminder:**



If you're planning on doing the nighttime light pollution test using the stars in Orion, described in last month's newsletter ( [http://cecillanduse.org/clua/Newsletter\\_201002\[nopix\].pdf](http://cecillanduse.org/clua/Newsletter_201002[nopix].pdf) ), now is the time! Pick a clear night before March 17, when the Moon returns to the evening sky. Tips:



- Make sure the sky is completely clear — not even any thin wispy clouds
- Go out between 7:30 and 8:30 pm (add an hour after the daylight time change)
- Orion will be somewhat west of south, about halfway from horizon to zenith
- Avoid local artificial lights nearby or in your line of sight
- Allow at least 5 minutes for your eyes to adapt to the dark, longer if possible
- The faintest stars are often best seen if you don't look directly at them
- Make the best match of what you see with one of the diagrams at [http://www.globeatnight.org/observe\\_magnitude.html](http://www.globeatnight.org/observe_magnitude.html)

Please also report your results (date, place, chart #) to [gkaplan@zoominternet.net](mailto:gkaplan@zoominternet.net) . Thanks!



**Cecil Watershed Watch**

March 2010

Rupert Rossetti  
([RupertRossetti@aol.com](mailto:RupertRossetti@aol.com))

**Upcoming Events:**

1. **Cabin Fever** - Moore's Chapel, 392 Blake Rd, Elkton.  
Sat 13<sup>th</sup> Mar, 11 am - 2 pm  
"Learn where you can go outside and play; Free fun for all ages"  
*I'll be there manning a booth with the Upper Western shore Tributary Team.*
2. **CLUA Environmental Committee** Inaugural Meeting  
Thurs 18<sup>th</sup> Mar, 6 - 8 pm, Perryville Library  
*Contact me if you are interested in joining the committee, or have an environmental issue you'd like to bring to our attention.*

**Mark your calendars:**

**3. Cecil Wade-In**

Sat 10<sup>th</sup> July at North Bay Environmental Education Center

*Senator Bernie Fowler initiated the annual Wade-Ins 20 years ago on the Patuxent River to test water turbidity and bring attention to declining water quality. This will be the first Wade-In in Cecil County. It is being organized by Cecil DPW Sediment and Stormwater Branch and co-sponsored by North Bay and the Upper Western Shore Tributary Team.*

**4. Sassafest (including Wade-In)**

Sat 17<sup>th</sup> July at Betterton Beach, on the Sassafras, organized by the Sassafras River Association.

**Local Watershed Activities:**

**Sassafras Watershed Action Plan (SWAP)**

(Reprinted from the most recent SRA Update)

More than 100 stakeholders gathered at the Galena Fire Hall on Tuesday evening 23rd February to receive a copy of the SWAP Executive Summary ([www.sassafrasriver.org/swap/20100218\\_swap\\_es\\_online.pdf](http://www.sassafrasriver.org/swap/20100218_swap_es_online.pdf)) and listen to SRA staff outline the necessary steps to turn the completed plan into action.

Ken Staver, Research Associate at Wye Research Center, provided the keynote, discussing nutrient movement in the ecosystem. Dr. Staver provided insights on the relationship between temperature, water volume and runoff. Run-off from cropland and impervious surfaces, such as roads and roofs, contribute significant amounts of nutrients to the Bay and its tributaries every year.

Kascie Herron and Josh Thompson highlighted restoration efforts currently underway. SRA efforts in 2010 include incentives to increase participation in cost share programs, septic testing for homeowners in the critical area, free soil testing, as well as workshops focused on lawn care, rain barrels, and rain gardens. Other efforts target the watershed's youth, promoting stewardship and responsible recreation. Expanded water quality monitoring and a Sassafras River Report Card are also in progress.

SWAP recommendations can be found on SRA's website.

[www.sassafrasriver.org/swap/](http://www.sassafrasriver.org/swap/)

It was a great turn out and an informative evening. Plus, there are already projects in the implementation stage. Way to go, SRA!

## Stone Run Watershed Assessment

As I reported the past two months, the Octoraro Watershed Association (OWA) is working with the Center for Watershed Protection ([www.cwp.org](http://www.cwp.org)) as technical partner, to conduct a Watershed Assessment of Stone Run, in and around the town of Rising Sun. The goal is to identify and prioritize ten to twenty "in the ground" projects that can be implemented to improve water quality and reduce Stormwater run-off. Funding has been provided by a grant from the Chesapeake Bay Trust ([www.cbtrust.org](http://www.cbtrust.org)) and the Department of Natural Resources ([www.dnr.state.md.us](http://www.dnr.state.md.us)), and is dependent upon an in kind volunteer match.

We finally got back out in the field on Thurs 4<sup>th</sup> March, and the Whig did a great front page article on Friday 5<sup>th</sup> which sums up the day very well.



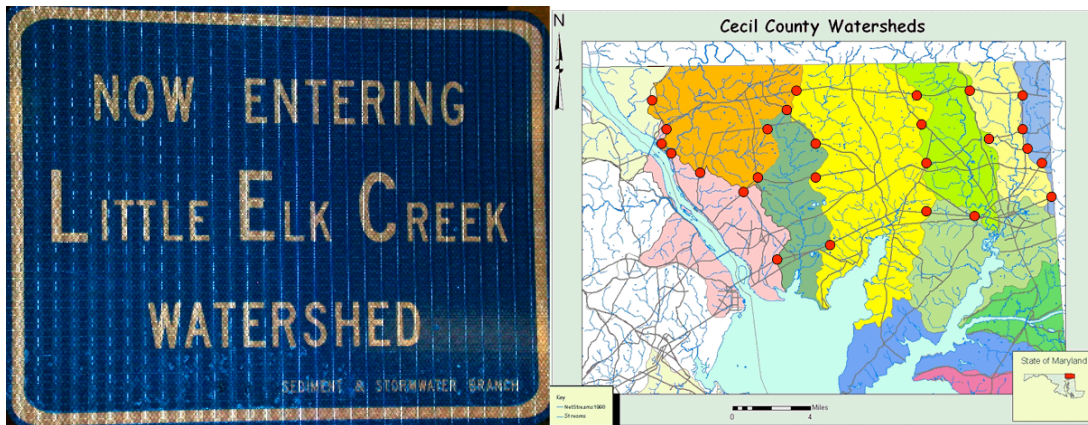
Carrie Decker (DNR) & Bryan Seipp (CWP) investigating sites on Thursday

Next steps are for CWP to write up the results of the Stream Corridor and Upland assessments and prioritize the potential implementation projects. We will also be working with other local stakeholders on securing grants and permissions to actually do the implementation - and thereby improve water quality in Stone Run, the Octoraro and the Bay.

## Watershed Signage

Watch for new watershed signage coming to a road near you as part of an outreach campaign by the County's Sediment and Stormwater Branch in compliance with their MS4 Permit.

The Upper Eastern & Upper Western Shore Tributary Teams were asked to provide input regarding locations. Here is an example of the signs and the locations we submitted for the northern tier.



## Stormwater Workshop

On 23<sup>rd</sup> February, a joint Cecil /Harford workshop for design engineers and plans reviewers was held at the County Administration offices in Elkton. The workshop, "Implementing Environmental Site Design at the local level: A Training Workshop", was conducted by Tom Schueler of the Chesapeake Stormwater Network ([www.chesapeakestormwater.net/](http://www.chesapeakestormwater.net/)).

It is intended to get the local practitioners and plans reviewers ready to implement the new Stormwater Regulations, when they come into effect on May 4<sup>th</sup> 2010. It includes a spreadsheet which computes the degree to which a particular design meets the requirements of the Stormwater Management Act of 2007, addressing stormwater run off through the use of Environmental Site Design to the Maximum Extent Practicable<sup>1</sup>. In layman's terms, that means designing so that Stormwater stays on site rather than being conveyed downstream.

This will be the first of several workshops put on by the two counties for their Design Engineers and Plans Reviewers, and was the first of 50 training events that Tom has planned across the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

*Disclaimer: I've known Tom for several years, and am a member of his Board, representing the Environmental Advocate and Bay Resident communities. If you go onto his website, there are toolboxes in the upper right hand corner for each of the stakeholder groups, with the Plans Reviewers and Designers the most complete. If*

---

<sup>1</sup> See also the item on Stormwater in the Legislative Update.



*you have additional tools you'd like to see in the Bay Residents Tool Box, I'll pass them on to Tom.*

### **State Legislative Session – an Environmental Perspective**

Extracted from Jennifer Bevan-Dangel's<sup>2</sup> most recent weekly update.

Budget – We are through the budget hearings, and all DLS recommendations on changes to the proposed agency budgets are online:

[http://mlis.state.md.us/2010rs/budget\\_docs/all/Operating/Operating\\_Analysis\\_doc.htm](http://mlis.state.md.us/2010rs/budget_docs/all/Operating/Operating_Analysis_doc.htm). A few proposals that we are particularly tracking and working to avoid (please note these are highlights not a comprehensive list):

- Eliminate all state funding to the Maryland Environmental Trust
- Cut in half funding to Community Legacy and Neighborhood Business Works
- Cuts to the 2010 Trust Fund and the Bay Restoration Fund
- \$1 million cut to the DNR fisheries service
- Almost \$2 billion cut to MARBIDCO and eliminating 7 soil conservation positions
- Elimination of 7-8 employees at MDP
- Further transfers of energy efficiency funding to bill assistance

Budget decisions will start on the 15<sup>th</sup> in Budget and Tax subcommittees. By then we should have the March revenue estimates in and know a bit better how much needs to be cut from the Governor's introduced budget. Don't forget, this budget was drafted in December – the budget experts look at how the economy has been performing over the last few months since then and correct their estimates, either up or down, based on more recent numbers. Luckily, we are not expecting drastic corrections this year. Subcommittees should report their budgets to full committee by the 18<sup>th</sup> and the full committee will start voting the 18<sup>th</sup>. The budget will then go to the House.

**Stormwater** – the stormwater utility fee legislation (SB 686 and HB 999) had a great hearing March 2<sup>nd</sup> in Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs and will be heard March 10<sup>th</sup> in Environmental Matters. That legislation would help clean up our existing stormwater infrastructure. The conversation on the regulations for new development has made tremendous progress thanks to the leadership of the House Environmental Matters committee and the hard work of a group of stakeholders. This group is working on language that could become emergency regulations, ending the need for legislation on the issue this year. As a result, the hearings scheduled for March 10<sup>th</sup> in Environmental Matters on HB 1125 and HB 964 have been cancelled. The language

---

<sup>2</sup> Deputy Director, 1000 Friends of Maryland. [www.friendsofmd.org](http://www.friendsofmd.org)

being drafted addresses concerns around both grandfathering and redevelopment. The environmental community is watching carefully to make sure that the language alleviates concerns without undermining the regulations.

---

**Let us hear from you!** The CLUE belongs to you. We'd like to know what you have to say. What are your concerns and interests regarding Cecil Land Use? Tell us about your pet peeves, your ideas for improvement, people you'd like to praise, process suggestions, new problems identified, new opportunities arisen, or new challenges to face. Speak up, and share with us. Write to the editor at [gkaplan@zoominternet.net](mailto:gkaplan@zoominternet.net).

*The Cecil Land Use Alliance newsletter is published periodically under the auspices of the Board of Directors. It is provided to all members, directors and available to the public at large. Suggestions and articles are welcome. They should be submitted to the editor by e-mail to [gkaplan@zoominternet.net](mailto:gkaplan@zoominternet.net), or by mail to P.O. Box 215, Coloma MD 21917. We encourage our readers to visit our website at <http://cecillanduse.org>*