



Opequon Creek Project Team

Newsletter

Spring 2008



OCPT Volunteers at the Mill Creek buffer planting

Mill Creek Riparian Buffer Planting

On April 19, the Team planted 147 native trees and shrubs along a stretch of Mill Creek on land belonging to Dave and Rhonda Webber.

Riparian buffers such as this one help filter storm water runoff, provide shade for the creek, bank stabilization and wildlife habitat. All trees were planted with protective shelter tubes.

Our thanks to the Webbers for their stewardship of Mill Creek and their hospitality in hosting the event. A special thanks to Gary and Diane Sylvester for driving their truck and trailer to Union

Bridge, Maryland, to pick up 81 of the trees from a conservation nursery which we used in this buffer planting. By volunteering their time and use of their vehicles we saved hundreds of dollars in shipping charges that can be applied as a match for the Stream Partners Grant which funded this event. And our thanks to everyone who turned out on the 19th to plant the trees and shrubs.

A week after the buffer was in the ground, the Eastern Panhandle experienced a record rain storm with over three inches of rain falling in a 24-hour period. Fortunately only a few of the newly planted shrubs were uprooted and Dave was able to find them hung up in some downstream debris.



Mill Creek buffer planting after the storm

Contact Us:
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OCPT is a West Virginia, citizen based, non-profit group dedicated to the protection and restoration of the Opequon watershed. The watershed needs your help. If we act now we can reduce the contamination entering the creek and preserve the Opequon for our enjoyment and that of future generations. Your interest and participation in the OCPT can make all the difference! Contact us or visit our website at opequoncreek.org to learn more about our projects and how you can help.



Volunteers at the Judicial Center

Update on the Judicial Center Rain Garden

In the spring of 2006, OCPT, along with Berkeley County Master Gardeners, planted a demonstration rain garden in a corner of the parking lot of the new Berkeley County Judicial Center. The garden has since garnered awards and praise, both for its beauty and function. The purpose of rain gardens is to serve as a filter for storm water runoff from impervious surfaces, such as roof tops, streets and parking lots. By retaining and filtering storm water, rain gardens reduce the amount of pollution entering our creeks and return clean water to our ground water. These gardens filter pollutants such as wild animal and pet waste, lawn fertilizers, car exhaust and leaking car fluids like antifreeze and oil, to name just a few.

On May 3 and 6, a small group of Team members and Master Gardeners weeded the garden, removed invasive plants, and installed 240 feet of 6X6 landscape timbers for retaining walls on the slope above the garden. Once top soil is delivered, native plants will be put in on the landscaped slope.

Special recognition goes to Peter Palmer who volunteered his backhoe, his building expertise, and his muscle to put the retaining walls in place. Thank you Pete!

Rain Garden on Baltimore Street

Mark your calendar for May 17! The Team has purchased over 600 native trees, plants and shrubs that will be planted at the new demonstration rain garden site on Baltimore Street next to the Kilmer Water Treatment Plant. We need your help to get all these plants into the rain garden.

Thanks to Steve Knipe and the City of Martinsburg for doing all the site preparation. 153 tons of special bio-filter soil has been placed four feet deep at the rain garden site. It is already doing its job of retaining and filtering storm water runoff from the heavy rains we have had in April and May.

Now we are ready to put in the plants so come on out and learn about rain gardens and enjoy the day with Team members and Master Gardeners! Remember that you can install a rain garden in your yard. For more information, contact our website at www.opequoncreek.org and a Team member will send you the information and answer any questions you may have.

Rain Barrel Workshop

On April 5, the Team hosted a rain barrel workshop. Rain barrels are part of our efforts to control storm water runoff by capturing rain water from downspouts for later use, such as watering your lawn during dry spells. The team has rain barrel kits for sale at a cost of \$65 each. These 50 gallon plastic barrels can be painted by you to blend in anywhere. We sell the barrels at our workshops where you will also learn first hand how to install your barrel. If you are interested in having a rain barrel, please contact our website www.opequoncreek.org or Gary Sylvester at 304-263-6449.

Mill Creek Watershed Based Plan Progress Report

The final draft of the Mill Creek Watershed Based Plan has been submitted to DEP for review and will soon be sent to U.S. EPA for approval. Now we are able to submit a project proposal for "Section 319" funding for projects that reduce nonpoint source pollution (Mill Creek's pollutants are fecal coliform and sediment). The majority of the activities we will carry out are septic system upgrades and pumping, and natural streambank design, or NSD. These are also the most expensive of the suite of practices that we are proposing. In addition, we will be looking for sites for rain garden demonstrations, grass and forest buffer plantings, and fencing to exclude livestock from streams. Please contact OCPT if you would like to suggest a site for any of these projects. Funding is expected to be available to us in the summer of 2009, and we are beginning to lay the groundwork now. Fifteen attendees of a May 1 workshop in Bunker Hill helped us to identify sources of matching funds for the Section 319 grant, volunteered to perform various outreach activities, and in general gave us a great feeling of momentum and community will to get us started. The OCPT has already begun implementing projects in the Mill Creek watershed this spring, including the planting of a tree buffer on private property near Gerardstown at no cost to the landowner. The Mill Creek endeavor is a great opportunity for OCPT to use the outreach and project management skills of its members to achieve water quality improvements on a priority tributary of Opequon Creek.

Volunteer Monitoring Program in the Opequon Watershed

OCPT continues to monitor the Opequon watershed once a month at 20 sites. Volunteers then incubate the water samples in their homes using the Coliscan gel method to determine fecal coliform bacteria levels. This monitoring has helped OCPT establish a water quality baseline condition so that the Team can quantify water quality

improvement after projects. The monitoring data will also provide scientific information to use as a tool when communicating with the public about the creek's health.

Once funding is obtained for lab fees and materials, OCPT will add 19 monitoring sites on Mill Creek, the OCPT priority watershed. However, funding is not the only obstacle to the expansion of this monitoring program. Volunteers are needed who live in the southern part of the county to help with this project. Anyone interested in learning more about Mill Creek and in spending just an hour or less taking samples each month is encouraged to contact OCPT.

Freeman Foundation Grant

OCPT is the recipient of a grant in the amount of \$2,500 from The Carl M. Freeman Foundation. The awards for the Eastern Panhandle inaugural FACES (Freeman Foundation Assists Communities with Extra Support) program were announced on April 7. On May 12, a luncheon hosted by the Freeman Foundation was held at the Berkeley County Senior Center on High Street in Martinsburg. Grant recipients were invited to receive their checks and were entertained by the talented Berkeley County Strings Program.

OCPT will use the funds from the FACES grant to plant a riparian buffer in the Opequon Creek watershed this fall. Buffers help preserve wildlife habitats, reduce erosion and protect water quality.

In all, the Foundation awarded a total of \$50,000 to 12 Eastern Panhandle organizations through its FACES program, which supports small nonprofit organizations. The Foundation only provides grants in areas where the Carl M. Freeman Companies do business. It has established a presence in the Eastern Panhandle since the Freeman Companies purchased Coolfont Resort in Berkeley Springs and developed Potomac Towne Center in Ranson.

Spring Cleanup

On April 12, OCPT held its annual spring cleanup. This year 12 volunteers, including Boy Scout Troop 137 participated. The weather was perfect and although some good Samaritans had cleaned up the spot we had originally selected, we simply walked a ways upstream and downstream and found loads of trash to keep us busy the entire morning.

At two separate sites (the stone bridge on Golf Course Road and downstream along Blairton Road) we collected 40 bags of trash, 5 tires and over 300 lbs. of loose, unbagged trash which included four deer carcasses, five dog carcasses, a window air conditioner, a bench car seat, two car exhaust systems, a rabbit case, a large swimming pool liner, 4 car shocks, barbed wire, and a television.



Part of the April 12 Cleanup Crew

Join our Project Team!

You can help become a steward of the Opequon watershed in a number of ways. If you can help us by lending your time and talents, a good way to start is to join us at our monthly meetings held the first Wednesday of each month. Even if you can't make the meetings mark your calendar for our upcoming project events and come out to lend a hand. You can help protect our watershed and have some fun as well. If you volunteer some of your time to take water samples for our monitoring program you can make a great contribution to understanding where and what kind of pollutants are entering the watershed.

The OCPT also accepts donations. We are an all volunteer, non-profit, registered 501(c)(3) organization and all contributions are tax deductible. We rely on grants for most of our funding but we have recurring expenses which are not funded; to pay them we rely on contributions from our supporters and folks like you who care about our watershed. Please make your check out to The Opequon Creek Project Team and mail it to OCPT, P.O. Box 4248, Martinsburg, WV 25402.

The Opequon and most of its tributaries do not meet the standards set by the Clean Water Act. We want to get our watershed off the "impaired" list of waters and restore it for the benefit of all of us who live here.

Upcoming Events and Projects:

March 17 – Planting of the Baltimore Street demonstration rain garden beginning at 8:30 AM

June 4 – OCPT Meeting at James Rumsey beginning at 6:00PM

July 3 – OCPT Meeting at James Rumsey

August 6 – OCPT Meeting at James Rumsey

August 16 – Annual clean up of the Opequon by boat

August 30 – For Fun Float on the Opequon by canoe, kayak, raft or tube