The South River Current

Promoting interest and collaboration for watershed stewardship

October 2020 Volume 1 Issue 4

River Restoration

Photo from rivercountrynews.com

Restoring the South River and keeping it clean is not just a job for engineers and biologists. In fact, good water quality relies on actions from all residents of the watershed community. Farmers can especially play a key role in preserving river water quality by making sure that contaminated water does not flow into the river. Farmers face the challenging task of balancing the production of agricultural products (such as the food we all eat) with the implementation of practices to protect waterways and water quality. This balancing act includes keeping excess nitrogen and phosphorus from fertilizer away from waterways. Many farmers in our watershed are working hard to keep these nutrients on their fields. A growing number of farmers are participating in Resource Management Programs (RMPs) that promote the use of conservation practices to improve farming operations and water quality and help reduce runoff pollution.

Did You Know?

- In 2019, more than 100 RMPs (over 25,000 acres) for farms in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed were certified and 24 new RMPs (more than 4,000 acres) were developed.
- One EPA study estimated that 27% of the phosphorus and 60% of the nitrogen entering the Chesapeake Bay originate from cropland.
- U.S. Geological Survey monitoring results from 2009 to 2018 show improving trends for nitrogen and phosphorus in the North and South Fork Shenandoah Rivers and for nitrogen in the majority of monitored Shenandoah River tributaries.

Take a Walk Back

The year 2010 - you may remember it for the Winter Olympics in Vancouver, Canada or maybe the year Lady Gaga wore a dress made entirely of meat to the MTV awards. Or, maybe you are simply astonished that 2010 was indeed a decade ago! Well, 2010 was a memorable year for the Chesapeake Bay area because it was when the EPA established the landmark Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL). The Chesapeake Bay TMDL is a federal "pollution diet" that sets limits on the amount of nutrients and sediment that can enter the Bay and its tidal rivers to meet water quality goals. Each of the seven Bay jurisdictions (DE, MD, VA, WV, PA, NY, and District of Columbia) has since created a series of Watershed Implementation Plans that spell out specific steps that will be taken to meet these pollution reductions by 2025. The South River Watershed is included in this strategic plan; Virginia's Potomac-Shenandoah River Basin is discussed in Virginia's Phase III Watershed Implementation Plan, so we are a part of history in the making.

Connections

If social media has you traveling down rabbit holes, take a break and check out the Headwaters Soil & Conservation District website. Headwaters SWCD exists to help people build on their knowledge and practice of conserving our natural resources. On the District's website you can explore all sorts of programs, news, and events that are designed to improve water quality. There are links to Virginia conservation assistance programs, agricultural best management practices cost-share programs, and conservation easement resources. A detailed definition of TMDLs and the TDML process (see Take a Walk Back for a hint) is also included. The District's 10-minute video for kids about the Underground Classroom is fun and educational. Be sure to check it out!

HEADWATERS SWCD SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

south river SCIENCE TEAM

The Current is a publication of the South River Science Team (www.southriversciencesteam.org). To be added or deleted from our distribution list, contact KB at kbaldino@writingunlimitedllc.com