

SHORE RIVERS ADVOCATE

CHESTER RIVER | CHOPTANK RIVER

MILES & WYE RIVERS | SASSAFRAS RIVER



SPRING 2019



Envision the Choptank

PARTNERSHIP WITH AGRICULTURAL COMMUNITY
ACCELERATES WATER QUALITY IMPROVEMENTS

Chester Riverkeeper

TACKLES STORMWATER IN CHESTERTOWN

Buffers for Habitat

LANDOWNERS PLANT BUFFERS ON FARMS,
BENEFITING LOCAL CREEKS

and more...

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Rivers are focal points around which communities are created. The ShoreRivers community exists because of our love for these rivers, because of the passion and commitment of the individuals who believe in our vision of healthier waterways.

Individuals like Ann Swanson, who was one of the founding board members of the Chester River Association 33 years ago, and of the Sassafras River Association 15 years ago, and who will be presented with the inaugural ShoreRivers Award for Environmental Stewardship at this year's Solstice Celebration.



Individuals like Erney and Margaret Maher, long-time Chester Tester water quality samplers. Individuals like Ray Long, who donates considerable volunteer time recording water quality data for the Sassafras testing program. Individuals like these, and many hundreds more, make up our ShoreRivers community, joining forces to make our rivers vibrant again.

In this edition of the *Advocate*, you will read about how our staff are teaming up with committed individuals and local communities to increase awareness, change behavior, solve pollution problems, and achieve healthier rivers.

We're partnering with agricultural landowners to implement innovative projects on farms (read about the Tilghman family's habitat plantings on page 9).

We're working with community groups to find solutions to urban stormwater problems (read about our project with Habitat for Humanity on page 10 and our partnership with Chestertown on page 4). And we're partnering with neighborhoods to

conduct assessments and engage homeowners in River-Friendly Yard practices (read the article on page 6).

Passionate individuals comprise the community of ShoreRivers—working to protect and restore our Eastern Shore waterways. Together, we will clean these rivers.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jeff Horstman". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Jeff Horstman, Executive Director



ShoreRivers thanks our 2019 Marquee Sponsor, Dock Street Foundation

Clarence "Doc" Kuntz 1924-2019



In 2009, at 85-years old, Doc was the very first member of Midshore Riverkeeper Conservancy. He approached founder Tim Junkin and said he was ready to help clean up the rivers. Over the next ten years, Doc was a passionate advocate for our organization, talking to anyone he could about our mission. We all strive to be like Doc when we grow up: collecting trash from our kayaks at 93-years old (above, right).

Cover photo by JenniferKrafchik.com
All other photos, unless otherwise noted, are courtesy of ShoreRivers staff



STATE OF THE RIVERS

CHOPTANK RIVER Cambridge, Robbins Heritage Center | April 25 | 5:30 pm

CHESTER RIVER Chestertown, Washington College, Hynson Lounge | May 2 | 5:30 pm | *With thanks to sponsor Dukes-Moore Insurance Agency*



CHOPTANK, MILES, & WYE RIVERS St. Michaels, Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum
May 3 | 5:30 pm | *Guest Speaker: Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio, Secretary of Maryland Department of Natural Resources*

CHESTER & WYE RIVERS AND EASTERN BAY Grasonville, Chesapeake Bay Environmental Center | May 16 | 5:30 pm | *Sponsored by Tow Jamm Marine*



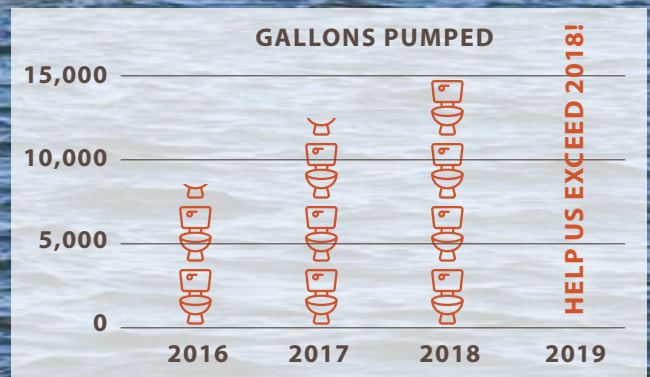
SASSAFRAS RIVER Betterton, Betterton Fire Hall | May 17 | 5:30 pm

Thanks to our State of the Rivers Sponsor
The Easton Group & The Easton Branch at Morgan Stanley

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MAY 4 UNTIL MID-OCTOBER
Weekends and holidays 9 am–4 pm
on the Miles and Wye Rivers

FOR FREE SERVICE, call or text
410-829-4352; or VHF Channel 9





TIM TRUMBAUER
CHESTER RIVERKEEPER

CHESTER RIVERKEEPER TACKLES STORMWATER IN CHESTERTOWN

Rain. Record-setting rain. According to the National Weather Service’s Precipitation Center, most of the mid and upper Eastern Shore received more than 70 inches of rainfall in 2018, or about twice the amount in a typical year. Where does all the rain go?

When rain falls in a forest, most of the rain is absorbed by the forest. What isn’t soaked up by the trees and other plants infiltrates into the ground. Contrast that with an urban parking lot where nearly 100% of the rain runs off and is often conveyed directly to the nearest creek, stream, or river through a series of pipes. If rain falls on a lawn, some may be absorbed, but much will also run off, carrying fertilizer, pesticides, pet waste, and everything else along with it. Runoff from lawns as well as parking lots, streets, and roofs is known as “stormwater,” and untreated stormwater can have a detrimental impact on local water quality. While this untreated stormwater can wash pollutants into the river, the good news is...

Over the past few decades, stormwater science has evolved for the better. While the primary goal of stormwater systems in the past was to move water along as quickly as possible to prevent flooding, new practices, referred to in the industry as “environmental site design” or ESD, provide water quality benefits as well. A site designed with ESD mimics natural processes through the use of rain gardens, naturalized native planting areas, and other proven strategies.

For healthier rivers, we want our public spaces to act more like a forest and less like a concrete parking lot.

Many ESD stormwater facilities also have secondary benefits like creating habitat for insects and birds and improving curbside appearance with native plants. What’s not to like?

ShoreRivers works alongside partners across the Chestertown community including the Town of Chestertown, the Chestertown Environmental Committee, and Washington College, to plan and implement ESD stormwater management projects with the ultimate goal of improving water quality.

ShoreRivers is making a multi-year commitment to improve stormwater management in Chestertown, and we look forward to working with the community to improve the Chester River and all of our waterways across the Shore.



A town founded in 1706 means much of the stormwater infrastructure is outdated or historical. Top: an old stormwater pipe drains directly to the river. Bottom: the infamous drainage ditch at the end of High Street empties into the Chester. Pipes and ditches like these all over Chestertown dump stormwater, trash, fertilizer, chemicals, and more into the Chester River without any treatment.

SHORERIVERS WELCOMES NEW SASSAFRAS RIVERKEEPER; HONORS EMMETT DUKE



Our new office space in downtown Galena will serve as a home base for our SassafRAS Riverkeeper and dedicated volunteers. We look forward to expanding our presence in the community with this accessible and walkable location. Please stop by; look for the "SassafRAS Riverkeeper" sign out front!

111 A North Main Street, Galena, MD 21635, 410.810.7556

ShoreRivers is pleased to introduce **Zack Kelleher**, above on the right, as our new SassafRAS Riverkeeper. As the primary voice for the river, Zack will be a vigilant, on-the-water presence working with local communities to achieve a healthier SassafRAS by using science-based solutions to tackle issues including urban stormwater pollution, harmful algal blooms, invasive water chestnuts, and the Conowingo Dam. Additionally, Zack will expand outreach and restoration programs to four creeks in northern Kent County that flow directly to the Bay: Fairlee Creek, Worton Creek, Churn Creek, and Still Pond Creek. (See map of expanded coverage at right.)

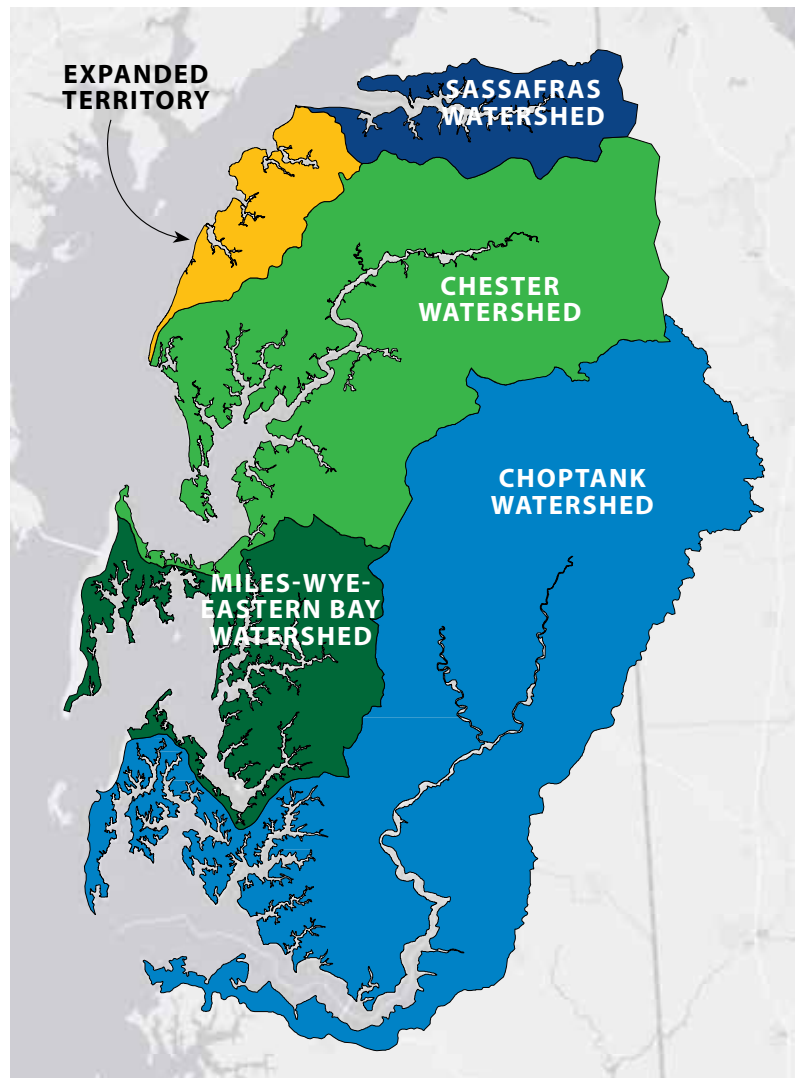
A native Marylander, Zack learned to appreciate the rich cultural heritage and immense beauty of the Eastern Shore while hunting, fishing, and crabbing on Harris Creek in the Choptank.

"It's an honor to become the SassafRAS Riverkeeper and be a part of an inspiring and effective organization like ShoreRivers that fights tirelessly for Eastern Shore waterways," said Zack.

"I'm incredibly humbled to be the voice of the SassafRAS, its natural bounty, and its community. I'll see you on the water!"

After six and a half years as your SassafRAS Riverkeeper, Emmett Duke will be moving on to his next adventure. While advocating on behalf of the river, Emmett became a well-known and much loved member of the SassafRAS community. He worked diligently every summer to pull invasive water chestnuts from the river to prevent the spread of this destructive plant. Whether he was smoothing out a conflict or responding to a harmful algae bloom, he was always ready to come to the aid of the river and the people who love it.

"Working with the dedicated board of directors, staff, and volunteers of first the SassafRAS River Association and then ShoreRivers has been a thoroughly enjoyable experience," says Emmett. "I've loved representing the SassafRAS River on land and on water; it was an honor to do so."





ELLE BASSETT
MILES-WYE RIVERKEEPER

WORKING WITH LOCAL COMMUNITIES FOR CLEANER WATER IN COX CREEK AND PROSPECT BAY

ShoreRivers is a science-based organization, so when water quality data from our 2017 testing season showed a significant decline in water quality in Eastern Bay, I focused on bringing new restoration and outreach opportunities to the surrounding communities to address the issue.

ShoreRivers was recently awarded two grants from the Chesapeake Bay Trust to fund a water quality assessment of Old Love Point Park, which drains to Cox Creek, and to fund education and restoration in the Prospect Bay Country Club community, which drains to Prospect Bay.

OLD LOVE POINT PARK WATERSHED ASSESSMENT

In partnership with the Chesapeake Bay Foundation and Queen Anne’s County, ShoreRivers will complete a watershed assessment of Old Love Point Park, a 30.5-acre site adjacent to Kent Island High School in Stevensville that drains directly to Cox Creek in the Eastern Bay watershed. Currently, there are almost no water quality protection practices on the property. The park is heavily used by residents and visitors alike, offering excellent educational opportunities.

This year, ShoreRivers will develop a park master plan identifying restoration opportunities to improve water quality, enhance native habitat, and educate visitors. Our goal is to construct projects that will directly reduce nutrient and sediment runoff from the park while also providing aesthetic and educational benefits to park visitors. Through our ongoing *Students for Streams* educational program with 9th graders at Kent Island High School, we will include students in developing the assessment and in the ultimate restoration process, giving them hands-on experiences and environmental education opportunities.

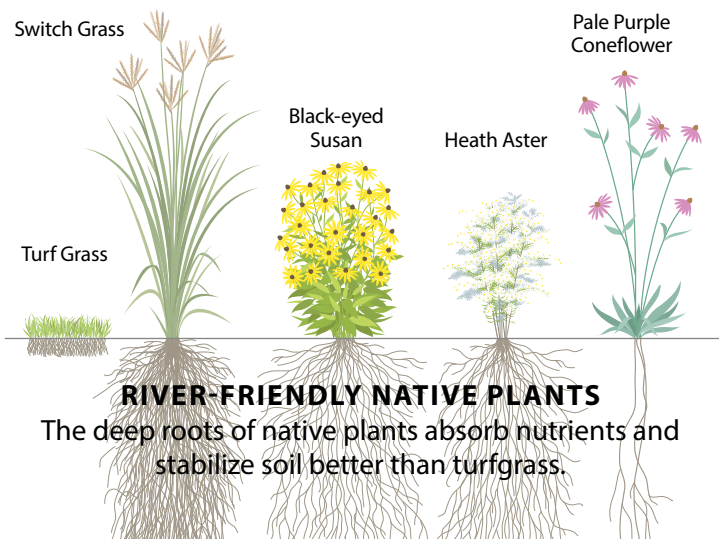
PROSPECT BAY COUNTRY CLUB COMMUNITY EDUCATION AND RESTORATION

This community, located in Grasonville, is home to over 300 residences and an 18-hole golf course that drains to both Prospect Bay and Greenwood Creek within the Eastern Bay watershed. What initially began as a single homeowner reaching out to create a more environmentally-friendly yard has turned into a community-wide education, awareness, and restoration program with the potential to significantly reduce pollution to surrounding creeks.

ShoreRivers will provide multiple workshops for residents and identify opportunities to implement River-Friendly Yard practices, which are designed to slow runoff before entering ditches and waterways, filter nutrients and sediments, and create native habitat. Practices may include rain gardens, native plantings, ditch retrofits, rain barrels, or buffer enhancements. We will also work with the golf course to implement pollution-reducing practices.

These two projects in the Eastern Bay Watershed showcase our expertise: using scientific data to identify a pollution issue and then working with local communities to implement solutions that will improve the health of our rivers while educating the next generation of environmental stewards.

IF YOU’D LIKE TO GET INVOLVED IN THESE PROJECTS OR VOLUNTEER IN YOUR AREA, PLEASE CONTACT REBECCA MURPHY AT RMURPHY@SHORERIVERS.ORG OR COMPLETE THE VOLUNTEER FORM ON OUR WEBSITE AT SHORERIVERS.ORG/VOLUNTEERS.



ENVISION THE CHOPTANK PARTNERSHIP ACCELERATES WATER QUALITY IMPROVEMENTS



MATT PLUTA
CHOPTANK RIVERKEEPER



On my first day as Choptank Riverkeeper, I attended a meeting with local, state, and federal organizations and agencies to develop a partnership that would work to find collaborative solutions to support healthy oyster reefs and restore fishable, swimmable waters to the Choptank River while working to meet the needs of the local communities. Five years later, *Envision the Choptank* has over 70 community partners, a 15-member steering committee on which I participate, and has recently received a million dollar grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to implement agricultural projects that accelerate water quality improvements in our river.

We have identified three practices that will have the most impact on water quality in the Choptank: wetland restoration, waterway buffers, and drainage ditch management practices. Over the next three years the *Envision* partnership will work with local counties, Soil Conservation Districts, and agricultural landowners to prioritize locations and implement restoration projects to improve local water quality.

Year 1: Engaging Landowners and Prioritizing Projects

In the first year, with our project partners including the Chesapeake Bay Foundation and The Nature Conservancy, we will work with each county in the watershed to develop maps that prioritize restoration project locations and are specific to each county's needs.

The *Envision* partnership recently hired a Landowner Assistance Coordinator to engage with agricultural landowners and provide assistance with project implementation. The coordinator, with the support of partners including the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Maryland Department of Agriculture, and Adkins Arboretum, will host a series of educational field days to showcase projects and engage new landowners.

Years 2 and 3: Implementing Restoration Projects

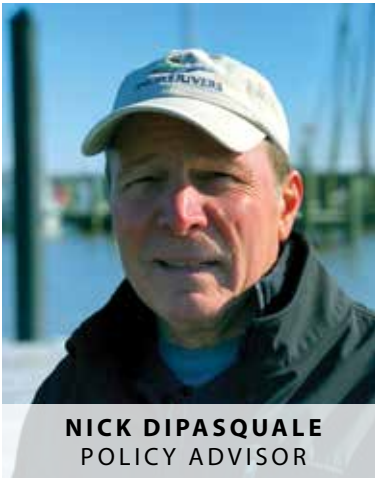
In the final two years of this project we will focus on implementing over 200 acres of wetland restoration, waterway buffers, and drainage ditch management practices throughout the Choptank watershed.

Agriculture is the dominant land use on the Eastern Shore, and, as a result, is the dominant source of pollution to our waterways. However, this also means agriculture provides the greatest opportunity to protect and restore. It's my goal through the *Envision the Choptank* partnership to further engage farmers and landowners in these clean water efforts. By taking on every source of pollution and utilizing every tool as a solution, we can envision a future with clean water all the way up our small streams and creeks, fish and oyster communities that are once again thriving, and communities that enjoy and actively engage in protecting our natural resources.



Drainage ditch management is one of the priority restoration practices we have identified to improve the quality of water running off fields. Left: a two-stage ditch under construction. Right: a completed two-stage ditch acts as a mini stream and floodplain, allowing for stormwater to slow down and percolate through plants and soil, removing nutrient and sediment pollution.

SHORERIVERS PROTECTS OUR RIGHT FOR CLEAN WATER



NICK DIPASQUALE
POLICY ADVISOR

ShoreRivers works on the local, state, and federal levels to ensure that laws and regulations reflect what is best for the health of our waterways. From working with county staff to enforce a

Critical Area violation to visiting the U.S. Capitol to advocate for increased Chesapeake Bay Funding in the federal budget, ShoreRivers staff are working to ensure our right to clean water. Here are a few of the recent advocacy issues we've been working on in Maryland's General Assembly and at the federal level:

Agriculture: ShoreRivers advocates for full implementation of the Phosphorous Management Tool and increased funding for the Maryland Department of Agriculture to hire the staff needed to meet the demand for inspectors and nutrient management specialists. We support tracking the transport and application of chicken manure around the Shore to understand its impact on water quality. We support water quality testing at large poultry houses to monitor outflow, and we support additional testing in waterways on the lower Eastern Shore to track progress in reducing levels of legacy phosphorus.

Development and Enforcement: ShoreRivers works to eliminate detrimental impacts to water quality from construction activities, outdated stormwater systems, and failing wastewater systems. We support requiring local jurisdictions to increase enforcement actions on erosion and sediment control laws and to provide annual reports on their enforcement activities. Additionally, ShoreRivers has grave concerns about the negative environmental impacts

from a possible new Bay bridge crossing and the resulting increase in stormwater runoff, air emissions, and litter.

Oysters: The Oyster Stock Assessment from 2018 showed that the oyster population in the Bay dropped 50% in 20 years. ShoreRivers supports permanently protecting oyster sanctuaries like Harris Creek, Tred Avon River, and the Little Choptank. We also support the continued use of alternative substrate, such as concrete, for oyster restoration because it has been shown to function as well as or better than oyster shell substrate.

Submerged Aquatic Vegetation: ShoreRivers supports fishery management regulations that protect underwater grasses. Our current regulations, however, do not adequately protect our expanding grass beds from the soft shell and razor clam fishery. ShoreRivers supports an assessment of these populations to better understand the effects of the fishery and to develop management plans that balance the clam's economic and ecological value.

Conowingo Dam: Pollution released from behind the Conowingo Dam poses a significant threat to water quality in the Chesapeake Bay. ShoreRivers advocates that Exelon, the operators of the Dam, be held partially responsible for this pollution by paying for a portion of the costs to clean it up.

Climate Change: Climate change—and the resulting sea level rise and increased storm frequency and rainfall—will affect how nutrient and sediment pollution enters the Bay and its tributaries. Because of this, we have grave concerns regarding infrastructure developments associated with carbon-based energies. We are currently advocating that Maryland be required to conduct a full 401 Water Quality Certification review for any pipeline proposal, including the proposed natural gas pipeline running from Rising Sun, Maryland, south into Virginia.

Better Together

WITH YOUR SUPPORT, SHORERIVERS HAS ACCOMPLISHED MORE FOR OUR RIVERS AND COMMUNITIES THAN EVER BEFORE.

CONTINUE THE MOMENTUM BY CONTRIBUTING TO CLEAN WATER TODAY THROUGH THE ENCLOSED ENVELOPE OR BY GIVING INSTANTLY AT SHORERIVERS.ORG

LANDOWNERS PLANT BUFFERS FOR HABITAT; LOCAL CREEKS BENEFIT

by Dan Small, Natural Lands Project Coordinator,
Washington College

Agriculture is the primary land use on the Eastern Shore, and therefore has the potential to make the greatest impact on water quality. In 2015, Washington College's Center for Environment & Society partnered with ShoreRivers to launch the Natural Lands Project—a restoration initiative working on agricultural lands to balance the needs of declining wildlife and for-profit farming while improving water quality.

By the end of this year, we will have installed 541 acres of native meadows, planted 15,000 native shrubs, and created 52 acres of wetlands on private farms in Kent, Queen Anne's, and Talbot counties.

In addition to working on private farms, we have collaborated with Maryland Park Service to create an 83-acre grassland on Sassafras Natural Resources Management Area, one of the largest grasslands on

public land on the Shore. This year we will add 47 acres of native trees, shrubs, and grasses to highly degraded farmland in the Management Area, further preventing nutrient and sediment runoff from entering the Sassafras River. This beautiful native habitat, and the wildlife in it, is accessible to the public through the Management Area's extensive trails.

These restoration efforts are already paying off. We are seeing an increase in wildlife species using the newly created habitat: monarch butterflies and grassland birds are moving into the wildflower meadows, waterfowl are tolling into the wetlands, and avian and insect species are using these new habitats as staging areas for migration. Our local streams and rivers are benefiting as well: Natural Lands Project plantings prevent 3,758 pounds of nitrogen, 246 pounds of phosphorus and 195,227 pounds of sediment from entering our waterways every year.

Funding for the Natural Lands Project comes from Maryland's Department of Natural Resources and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. Project partners include Ducks Unlimited and the Maryland Park Service.



Adding strategically placed buffers around the periphery of farm fields helps reduce nutrients and sediments from entering local waterways. The Hermitage Farm in Queen Anne's County recently planted 51 acres of native warm season grasses to protect their waterways and create habitat.



Interested in making a difference on your farm? Want to see more insects like bees and monarchs or grassland birds like the charismatic Northern Bobwhite? Habitat is the missing piece of the puzzle. **Landowners across the Shore are planting habitat—add your property to the effort.** For more information, contact Dan Small, Natural Lands Project Coordinator, at dsmall2@washcoll.edu.

PARTNERING WITH HABITAT FOR HUMANITY

to Educate New Homeowners and Increase Green Spaces in Cambridge



SUZANNE SULLIVAN
DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
& OUTREACH

Swimmable, fishable rivers are the life force flowing through so many of our Eastern Shore communities, and Cambridge Creek, flowing through

the City of Cambridge in Dorchester County, is a prime example. Cambridge Creek is an artery to the heart of the city's downtown center, supporting the local economy through dockside restaurants, seafood packing houses, and marinas. Residents and tourists alike wade, fish, and kayak from water access points like Great Marsh Park, Sailwinds Park, and the Bill Burton State Park fishing pier. The Choptank River is the common denominator in Cambridge's unique identity and the river's health is a direct reflection of how individual actions build to create a larger community impact on local water quality.

For the past two years, ShoreRivers has been growing a partnership with Habitat for Humanity Choptank, whose mission is very literally to build communities through affordable housing. ShoreRivers and Habitat Choptank are taking a community approach to clean, healthy neighborhoods by educating new homeowners about river-friendly landscaping, applying the "clean and green" approach to vacant lots, and sitting on a neighborhood

revitalization committee to plan neighborhoods that incorporate green spaces and green infrastructure.

Growing Your Chesapeake Community—This spring we hosted a workshop for future and current Habitat Choptank homeowners. Participants learned about the many benefits of native landscaping in their yards, including improving the value of their homes and neighborhood and improving the health of the river the community depends on. Homeowners received native trees and rain barrels for their properties to kick-start their stewardship actions.

Clean and Green Vacant Lots—This spring a team of volunteers will clear invasive species, clean up trash, and plant native plants on a vacant lot in Cambridge. This approach, already commonly used in cities like Philadelphia and Baltimore, aims to maintain clean vacant lots, reduce trash dumping, and prevent erosion and stormwater runoff while also increasing neighborhood pride and local aesthetics. Our goal is to turn blighted, vacant lots into a planned corridor of community green space.

Neighborhood Revitalization Committee—ShoreRivers participates on this Habitat Choptank committee, which seeks to improve the quality of life in Cambridge neighborhoods through partnerships with local leaders, nonprofits, businesses, and residents who will work toward

a united community vision. ShoreRivers provides expertise in, and support for, increasing access to green space, pollution reducing practices, and funding opportunities.

We are grateful for our partnership with Habitat Choptank and our ability to engage with local communities to restore the towns and rivers we love. This program has been funded in part by Chesapeake Bay Trust and Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development grants.

Volunteers participated in a "clean and green" effort on this vacant lot. Chalkboards were placed on vacant lots in Cambridge and residents were able to write what they wished for their community, including what they would like to see vacant lots become.





NICK DIPASQUALE
Policy Advisor

Nick contributes to ShoreRivers' advocacy program, working on regional policy issues that affect water quality in our rivers and Bay.

Nick has over 35 years

of public policy and environmental management experience in both the public and private sectors. Most recently he served as director of the Chesapeake Bay Program Office from 2011 to 2017, coordinating and providing support for the overall Bay watershed restoration effort and ensuring the six states and the District of Columbia meet their pollution load reduction targets.



COURTNEY LEIGH
Administrative Assistant

Courtney supports ShoreRivers in membership, communications, event fundraising, and education. Courtney

comes to ShoreRivers after working 11 years with the Chesapeake Bay Environmental Center in Grasonville where she served in many different roles engaging citizens of all ages in environmental education and stewardship. Courtney has a degree in Marine Biology from Bloomsburg University, Pennsylvania.

New
HIRES



REBEKAH HOCK
Director of Development

Rebekah works collaboratively with the staff and volunteer teams to raise funds and awareness for clean water advocacy throughout the

Shore. A graduate of Washington College, Rebekah served with the college's Advancement Department in leadership roles from 2006-2016, and succeeded in raising annual fund dollars and engaging the alumni community through volunteerism and events. More recently she has supported adults with diverse abilities as Administration & Development lead at the Kent Center.



ZACK KELLEHER
Sassafras Riverkeeper

Zack is the primary spokesperson for the Sassafras River, advocating for its protection and restoration. Prior to

joining ShoreRivers, Zack spent almost three years with the Chesapeake Bay Trust, working his way up from an intern to a Program Assistant for the Outreach and Education team. Zack graduated from the University of Maryland with degrees in Psychology and Sustainability.



— ShoreRivers Pentathlon —

CINCO DE MILER **May 5**, 9 am, Terrapin Park, Kent Island

MARYLAND FREEDOM SWIM **May 11**, 7 am, Sailwinds Visitor Center, Cambridge

SWIM FOR LIFE **July 13**, 7 am, Rolph's Wharf, Chestertown

RIDE FOR CLEAN RIVERS **September 15**, 7 am, Chesapeake College, Wye Mills

RUN FOR CLEAN RIVERS (5K and 10-miler) **November 2**, 7 am, Chestertown Marina, Chestertown, as part of Downrigging Weekend

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The staff at ShoreRivers are deeply touched and grateful for the donations made in memory of Elizabeth (1992-2018). The \$25,000 donated by over 165 friends and family will be used to create the Elizabeth Brown Summer Internship Program, to provide a paid professional development opportunity for local college students, and to place a memorial bench in the rain garden Elizabeth planted at Waugh Chapel in Cambridge, Maryland.

Elizabeth was an esteemed colleague and a beloved friend, and we miss her dearly.



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