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# RiverScape

The Potomac Conservancy Newsletter

## 2010 State of the Nation's River Report Covers Rural Land Use

Rapid Development in the Potomac River Region Fragments Forests and Consumes Farm Acreage

The Potomac River region is a patchwork quilt of land uses, vegetation covers, soils, and other features. The interaction of these components ultimately determines water quality. In our fourth annual *State of the Nation's River* report (available at [www.potomac.org](http://www.potomac.org)), Potomac Conservancy makes the case for placing a high value on forested lands, and also appropriately scaled and well-managed farms, by recognizing the value of such lands when compared to developed or built environments. We highlight the importance of rural lands in this developing watershed, and discuss the stressors that are currently affecting the health of lands and waters in the Potomac region, including loss of forests and the industrialization of livestock operations.

The Conservancy also looks at the economic and ecological value of wooded and working farmlands, and explores the potential of green infrastructure—a system of connected forests, farms, and rivers—as a way to accommodate human population growth as well as support natural ecosystem function. Collectively, county-level planning efforts can build this network, which will sustain the health and ecosystem functions of the entire Potomac region.

Aimee Weldon, Potomac Conservancy's Senior Director of Restoration and Land, states "We invest so much in our man-made infrastructure, like roads and bridges. Green infrastructure deserves the same investment...that investment in natural networks of connected lands will strongly support wildlife, protect water quality, and provide benefits to human populations."

### Forests: An Endangered Landscape

Slightly more than half the land in the Potomac River basin is forested. Healthy tree cover and streamside forests are critical determinants of water quality. "The health of the Chesapeake Bay—its water quality,

positive economic impact, and ability to provide high quality recreation and a home for wildlife—hinges on the health and extent of its forests," says Erik Meyers, Vice President for Sustainable Programs, The Conservation Fund. "Nowhere is this truer than for the Potomac River, one of the Bay's principal tributaries."

### Farms: An Endangered Lifestyle

US Geological Survey researchers documenting the effect of changes in land use show that concentrations of nutrients (nitrogen and phosphorus) in streams were lowest in woodlands, wetlands, and grasslands, and highest in agricultural and urbanized areas. However, the potential for significant

*Continued on Page 6*



*The Potomac region is a patchwork quilt of land uses. In a perfect world, natural areas would be connected; in the Potomac region, habitat connectivity has largely been lost. Photo courtesy of Ed Neville, [www.edneville.com](http://www.edneville.com).*



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**Potomac Conservancy**

8601 Georgia Avenue, Suite 612 • Silver Spring, MD 20910  
 301.608.1188 • FAX 301.608.1144  
 www.potomac.org • info@potomac.org

**Shenandoah Resource Center**

19 West Cork Street, Suite 201 • Winchester, VA 22601  
 540.667.3606 • FAX 540.667.7748

*Potomac Conservancy protects the health,  
 beauty, and enjoyment of the  
 Potomac River and its tributaries.*

Masthead photo courtesy of Bryan Seipp.



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#8158

**A MESSAGE**

**From the President**



There are many different visions of the Potomac. At the last board meeting, we

asked our directors and staff to name their favorite place in the Potomac River watershed. Of the twenty individuals around the table, almost every person cited a different location, whether it be the tidal waters of St. Inigoes Creek in southern Maryland or the unique and forbidding landscapes of the Dolly Sods wilderness in West Virginia.

In short, people see the Potomac through a different set of lenses, through the prism of their own experience and needs. Occasionally these visions clash. A perfect example of what I think is short sighted vision comes from the folks at Trump National Golf Course in Loudoun County, Virginia. Several months ago, course managers clear-cut more than 450 trees along the main stem of the Potomac. The shoreline, once protected, is now vulnerable to erosion (see photos at [www.potomac.org/site/trump](http://www.potomac.org/site/trump) and on page 3). Important waterfront habitat is now lost, simply so a privileged few can have a river view as they lineup their tee shot.

What makes the situation more intolerable is that, although the Trump managers broke a societal covenant, they broke no laws—the removal of these

riverfront trees was completely legal under current county law. We want to empower the zoning/permitting people in Loudoun County to update their codes and ordinances to reflect the realities of sprawl in the 21st century so this type of travesty does not occur again.

The Conservancy has a clear vision of the future of the Potomac region, with communities connected to their natural spaces, and rivers and lands that are sustained by the communities around them. We propose that this vision become a reality with enactment of strong rules that support wise land management and development practices in every county of

the Potomac.

We have a shared vision, working with partners and other stakeholders to strengthen and implement crystal clear guidelines for future development in our watershed. I hope that you will join the Conservancy in our call to preserve our

forests and better manage our riverfront lands to ensure high water quality throughout the Potomac. We must support better land use practices as a fundamental part of county-level planning. It's an incredibly wise investment in our future.

*The Conservancy has a clear vision of the future of the Potomac region, with communities connected to their natural spaces, and rivers and lands that are sustained by the communities around them.*

## PEOPLE PROTECTING THE POTOMAC

### Joe Richardson

Rarely a moment passes when Joe Richardson is not thinking of innovative ways to build a community that cares for its lands and waterways. Joe is championing environmental efforts literally from the ground up, as the owner of Bar-T Ranch and Mountainside, year-round providers of programming for children and their families in Frederick, Maryland.

Although a primary objective of Bar-T is to introduce youth to their natural surroundings, Joe says it is not a nature camp. “We don’t let on that it’s ‘learning,’” he says. “We want to reconnect kids to nature by letting them get immersed in it. We let kids muck around in the streams...try out ropes courses...zip-line...”

When it comes to protecting the environment, Joe sees great value in partnerships. His philosophy centers on empowering individuals with the necessary expertise, resources, and support from partner organizations like Potomac Conservancy. He believes the greatest environmental impacts come from small community efforts. “We’re



*Joe Richardson’s ultimate goal is to go off the grid and create one of the greenest, self-sustainable sites in the Baltimore/Washington area*

disconnected from nature,” he says, “but everyone is still worried and wants to do something to help the environment. They just don’t know how or what.”

Joe took over Bar-T Ranch 26 years ago. In 2002, he purchased the Ranch’s more rustic sister site, Bar-T Mountainside in Urbana, Maryland.

Today, Joe strives to be a good steward of the land. He has planted indigenous plants, built rain gardens, restored streamside buffers and old buildings, and eliminated invasive plants on his properties. Several buildings at Bar-T are equipped with solar panels, and earlier this year, Joe installed a 10kw windmill.

Potomac Conservancy has partnered with Joe on a variety of conservation projects. In April 2009, they helped him enroll in the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program to restore Bar-T’s streamside riparian buffers. Most recently, the Conservancy’s Senior Director of Restoration and Lands Aimee Weldon collaborated with Joe to host a rain garden workshop.

In the near future, Joe is planning an executive retreat to teach business executives about going green, and a workshop to teach homeowners’ associations about native landscaping. Joe sees himself as a “link between the private sector and private landowners.”



**BEFORE**



**AFTER**

## Trump Golf Club Cuts Shoreline to Stumps

This past summer, Trump National Golf Club in Loudoun County clear-cut 450 trees from approximately 1.5 miles of the Potomac shoreline. Potomac Conservancy received an influx of calls and messages from supporters who shared in our dismay.

There’s no excuse for Trump National’s clear cutting of river front trees—in fact, this would have been illegal if it had occurred just a mile downstream in Fairfax County or in any of the other counties in Virginia that are required by state law to protect the Chesapeake Bay.

Potomac Conservancy met with the club’s management to press for a reforested riverfront, and the Loudoun County government issued a stop-work to address the loss of shoreline vegetation. To date, Trump National has ignored the Conservancy’s repeated requests to stabilize the riverbanks with trees before rains and winter snow erode the exposed soil.

Contact Trump’s environmental manager, Ed Russo, at [ERusso@trumpnational.com](mailto:ERusso@trumpnational.com) with your thoughts on the decimation of the river shoreline; call on him to replant trees now before winter arrives.



Photo by Curtis Nelson



Photo by Curtis Nelson

# Jammin' Along the Potomac

Potomac Conservancy's 3rd Annual Potomac River Jam was held on a perfect October day at the River Center at Lock 8. Around 175 river fans joined in the festivities.

The day started with several nature walks, followed by an afternoon of music, dancing, canoe rides, lockhouse tours, face-painting, kids' games, and refreshments. For the first time, an exhibit featured the work of local artists, Loriann Signori and Curtis Nelson.

We'd like to specially thank the volunteers who donated their time to make this day possible, as well as our sponsors: MOM's Organic Market, Bethesda Co-op, Costco, Harris Teeter, and Safeway.



Photo by Anne Sundermann

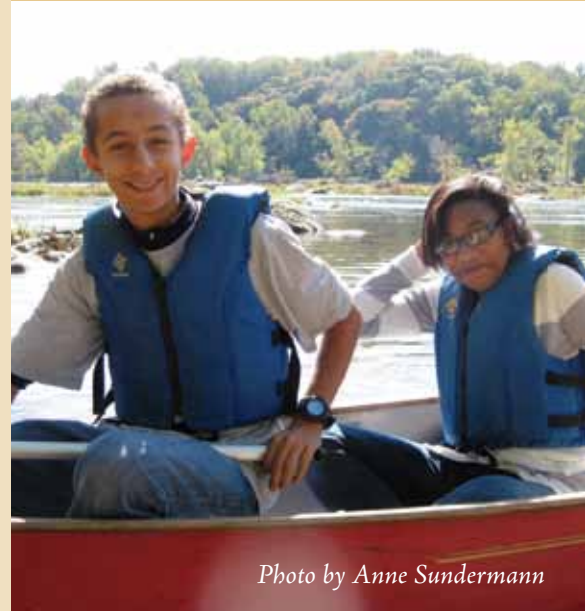


Photo by Anne Sundermann



Photo by Ed Tenney

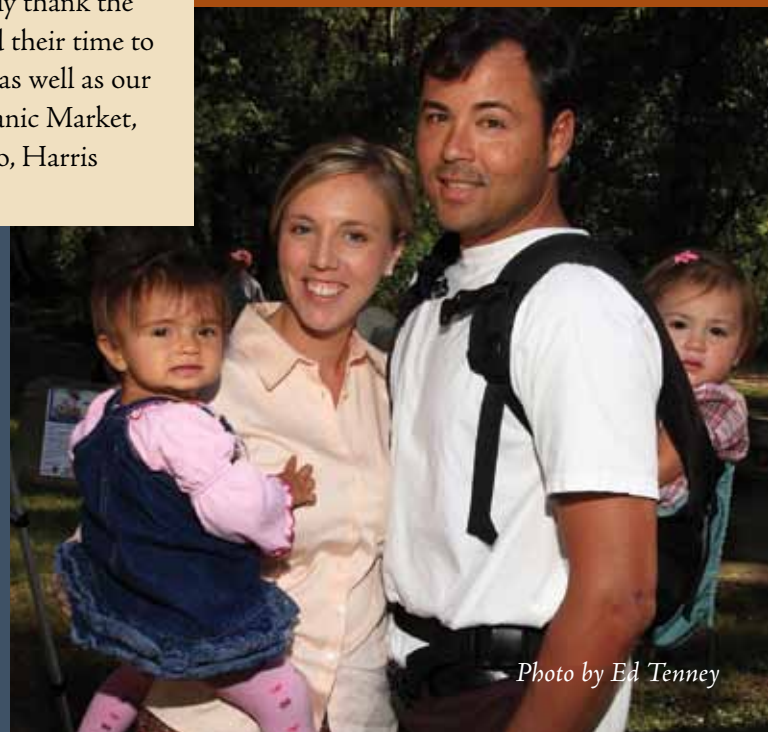


Photo by Ed Tenney

## Project Roundup

### Conservancy Calls Out Weak Virginia Cleanup Plan

Potomac Conservancy has called upon Governor McDonnell to strengthen Virginia's Watershed Implementation Plan by regulating urban pollution and matching farmers' efforts to keep pollution out of waterways. The Environmental Protection Agency has required the Bay jurisdictions to prepare such plans as part of the recent effort to finally restore the lands and waters of the Chesapeake Bay. Several dedicated members joined Potomac Conservancy in urging for a more detailed plan with clear commitments for compliance from urban development, and support for an upsurge in agricultural conservation practices. Virginia's final plan was due November 29.

### Farm Bill Guide Helps Farmers Tap Valuable Resources

Potomac Conservancy, in partnership with other farming, sportsmen, and habitat conservation groups recently released a new guide to the federal Farm Bill, *Conserving Habitat Through the Federal Farm Bill: A Guide for Land Trusts and Landowners*.

The guide will help more people access the programs set forth in the Farm Bill, leverage government dollars, influence local policies and learn valuable lessons from the experiences of others. The 2008 Farm Bill is a package of food, farming and conservation legislation that includes more than \$23 billion in conservation funding for land protection, habitat restoration and incentive programs to help farmers improve land management.

The Farm Bill holds a wealth of opportunity for farmers and will encourage good farm practices in the Potomac River region. Limited hard copies are available; please contact Aimee Weldon at

[weldon@potomac.org](mailto:weldon@potomac.org) for a copy, or visit [www.potomac.org/site/wp-content/uploads/pdfs/FarmBillGuide.pdf](http://www.potomac.org/site/wp-content/uploads/pdfs/FarmBillGuide.pdf).

### Building a Community of Land Stewards

This fall, Conservancy staff members have focused on promoting sound land stewardship in Potomac area communities. In October, Land Director Kelly Watkinson met with residents of Star Tannery (VA) and members of the Fort Valley Ruritan to discuss community goals and land conservation options, while Emily Warner presented to landowners at a Conservation Open House in Augusta (WV).

The Conservancy visited and evaluated several new properties this year, including a farm on the North Fork of the Shenandoah River and forested properties in Cedar Creek (VA) and the Cacapon River (WV). With strong landowner enthusiasm and staff dedication, the Conservancy expects to close conservation easements on several West Virginia and Virginia properties, including a family-run cattle farm, tucked-away woodland, and wetland mitigation project.

### Spotlight on Corporate Connections

Building corporate partnerships has been a major focus for Potomac Conservancy in 2010. Some recent corporate partners include REL, Aveda, Mirant, and Fairfax Water. The Conservancy's outreach programs offer many opportunities for corporate employees to volunteer their time, and the Conservancy is always looking for new sponsors to support our work.

If you are interested in exploring how your business can become involved with Potomac Conservancy, please contact Deanna Tricarico at [tricarico@potomac.org](mailto:tricarico@potomac.org).

## Fish Mystery Goes to Washington

### Potomac Conservancy Delivers Campaign Results to Congress

The *Fish Mystery* campaign has captured the attention of the Potomac River community, and with the help of Representative James P. Moran (D-VA), our petition signatures have made their way to Congress.

Potomac Conservancy launched the *Fish Mystery* campaign in April, calling for the government to fund research into why more than 80% of male bass in the Potomac River are now exhibiting female traits. A team of volunteers spent the summer canvassing the Potomac River region to spread the word about the *Fish Mystery* and to gather signatures for the campaign's petition. By Labor Day, more than 5,000 signatures were collected, and weeks later, presented to Representative Moran.

Moran expressed his gratitude to petition signers and Potomac Conservancy for voicing our concern about the health of the Potomac River and promised his continued support for this issue. Earlier this year, Moran introduced important endocrine legislation, championed federal funding to understand the link between intersex fish and endocrine disrupting chemicals, and hopes to have money appropriated for research in this year's Interior spending bill.



*Potomac Conservancy Board Chair Bob Hurley (left) and President Hedrick Belin (right) present Rep. Moran (center) with petition signatures*

## State of the Nations River - Continued from Page 1

pollution from agricultural lands does not diminish the cultural and economic importance of farming. Pollution from nutrients, disease-causing organisms in manure, and endocrine disrupting compounds from antibiotics, herbicides, and pesticides can be lessened with adherence to best management practices. Cost-share programs and technical assistance will help farmers implement practices that keep polluted runoff out of our local streams.

### Wise Land Use, Healthy Rivers

There are many examples of land use practices, good and bad. Fortunately, there are practices that alleviate or diminish the negative effects of farming and livestock operations on

local water quality. For example, 85% of farmers in the North Fork of the Potomac in West Virginia watershed worked together to construct animal waste storage facilities, establish riparian buffers, and implement a range of other practices that 'cured' the river of its impairment by fecal coliform bacteria.

Conservancy President Hedrick Belin believes that "by using the proper practices to alleviate polluted runoff and implementing thoughtful codes and ordinances, county, state, and federal agencies can work with local partners and communities to build a strong network of natural and working lands. These investments are critical to the future quality of our waters and for land conservation and restoration in the Potomac region."

## An Agenda for Forests and Farms

The 2010 "Potomac Agenda," promotes regulations and funding to preserve our forests and better manage our farmlands in a sustainable fashion. The agenda provides recommendations for state and federal government agencies to collaborate on more cohesive regulations and practices that will protect our water supply.

Potomac Conservancy recommends the following actions:

- **Preserve Forests** – There should be no net loss of forests.
- **Permanently Protect Land** – Placing land in conservation easement is a useful tool to protect land from sprawl, keeping the ecosystem intact.
- **Expand Conservation Farming** – All agricultural land would benefit from "conservation plans" designed to determine which practices best fit each farm and optimize the economic and ecological value of the land.
- **Reduce Runoff** – Reduce pollution from nutrients, sediment, pesticides, or excess salinity to a level that streams can absorb.

- **Improve Farm Compliance** – The Environmental Protection Agency and the Chesapeake Bay states must vastly improve the inspection and compliance of factory farms.
- **Fund the Farm Bill** – As more is expected of farmers, they should receive commensurate support from federal and state governments.
- **Research Chemicals** – We need to know the effects on human health of pesticides, insecticides, and antibiotics from runoff from agricultural land.
- **Provide Small Lot Incentives** – State and federal incentives and technical assistance should encourage small lot (1-10 acre) forest landowners to increase and enhance forest coverage.
- **Promote Wise Land Management** – It is essential that we promote green infrastructure in all 40 counties of the Potomac watershed.

## Gathering 'round the Potomac Table

What do you get when you ask a group of local community leaders to take a moment from their busy lives to collect a bottle of water from the Potomac? As Potomac Conservancy discovered at the November Potomac Table: An engaged and in-depth conversation about the health of the river, its history, and the challenges facing it.

Potomac Conservancy planned a special evening in early November at the historic Potomac Boat Club in Georgetown for a handful of local philanthropists to enjoy a salon-style dinner prepared by leading chefs. As a twist, guests were asked to collect a bottle of water from the Potomac to bring with, and then asked to share their unique experience of fetching the water and how it changed their perspective and connection with the river.

The Conservancy was inspired by the great response, excited about the new friends and partners gained, and thankful to everyone who made the Potomac Table an event to remember.

*Guests collected bottles of Potomac River water to bring to the Potomac Table >>*



## Growing Native Celebrates Ten Years

Potomac Conservancy's 10th Growing Native season has come to an end. With results still pouring in, it is apparent that this was another successful year of collecting native seeds to reforest Potomac waterways.

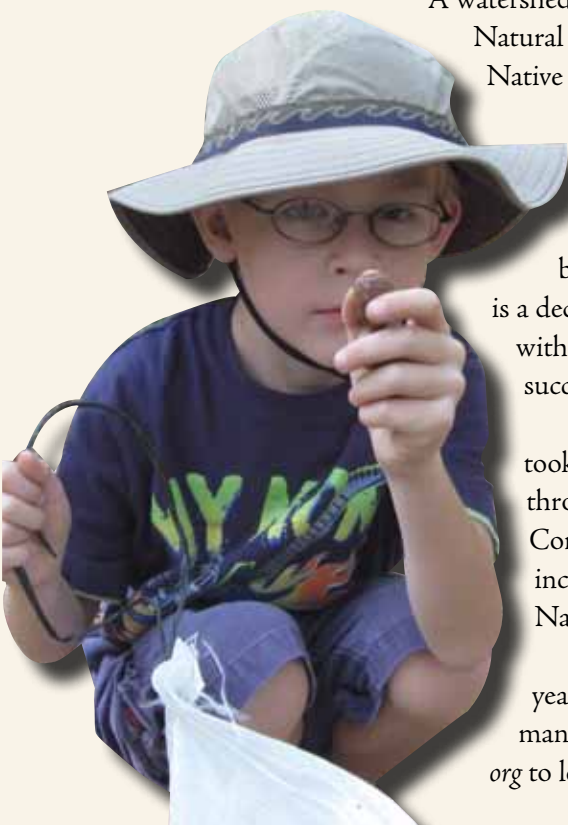
The success of the Growing Native program comes from dedicated volunteers, site coordinators, and foresters, working together in partnership. Tim Culbreth, for example, went out of his way this year to set up additional seed drop-off sites throughout Maryland.

A watershed forester with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Tim has been involved with Growing Native for two years. He also coordinated the pickup and drop-off of hundreds of pounds of seeds from these new sites to Maryland nurseries.

Collecting seeds for Growing Native is fun, and engages individuals of all ages and backgrounds. And, behind each seed collection is a dedicated individual like Tim Culbreth, working with Potomac Conservancy to ensure the program's success.

This year, more than 75 private seeds collections took place in backyards, local parks, and/or forests throughout the Potomac watershed. Potomac Conservancy also held eight public seed collections, including the annual collection at Arlington National Cemetery in October.

An estimated 15,000 pounds of seed was collected, bringing the Conservancy's 10-year total to more than 165,000 pounds of seed collected. The Conservancy thanks the many volunteers who made this a great year for Growing Native. Visit [www.growingnative.org](http://www.growingnative.org) to learn more about Growing Native in your community.



To get involved with next year's program, contact Deanna Tricarico, Outreach Coordinator, at [tricarico@potomac.org](mailto:tricarico@potomac.org).

## Calling Volunteers Become a Canal Steward Today!

Hundreds of volunteers have assisted Potomac Conservancy this year in caring for the land and shoreline surrounding the River Center at Lock 8. They've removed trash, cleared impediments from the towpath, and maintained river access trails.

As part of the National Park Service Canal Stewards program, the Conservancy "adopted" miles 8 and 9 of the C&O Canal towpath and now engages volunteers in maintaining the landscape each month at a Canal Stewards cleanup day. Volunteers of all ages are welcome to join in the effort to clean up and beautify the Potomac. Contact Deanna Tricarico at [tricarico@potomac.org](mailto:tricarico@potomac.org) to participate.



Starbucks baristas along the towpath

You can help out! Our next cleanup dates are Sunday, December 12 and Sunday, January 16.  
All events are from 10 am until noon.



8601 Georgia Avenue, Suite 612  
Silver Spring MD 20910

## Give the Gift of Membership this Holiday Season



Looking for a unique and memorable gift this season? Introduce your family, friends, or co-workers to Potomac Conservancy with a gift of membership.

Your recipient will receive our quarterly *RiverScape* newsletter, monthly *RiverUpdate* e-newsletter, and invitations to special events—like those at our River Center at Lock 8 in Cabin John, Maryland.

When your gift is received, Potomac Conservancy will inform the honoree of your thoughtful donation with a special note sent on your behalf. Consider making a donation in honor of a departed loved one or friend. Donations are tax-deductible

and make a lasting difference in safeguarding the lands and waters of the Potomac.

Potomac Conservancy depends on your generosity to continue to protect the watershed, from the West Virginia mountains, to the Chesapeake Bay. Your donation goes directly to our land preservation, clean water policy, and regional outreach endeavors.

Contributions can be made online at [www.potomac.org](http://www.potomac.org), over the phone, using the envelope in this newsletter, or by mailing Potomac Conservancy, (see address at top of page). For more information, contact Melissa Diemand at [diemand@potomac.org](mailto:diemand@potomac.org), 301-608-1188 x209.

Remember to make your gifts by December 31 to receive 2010 tax credit. If you donate via the United Way, our number is #8158.

## Potomac Snapshots

### River in Autumn

by Curtis Nelson

**Description:** Curtis captured this image of the Potomac River on a beautiful fall day from the banks of the River Center at Lock 8 during Potomac Conservancy's fourth annual Potomac River Jam.

**Location:** Potomac River, C&O National Historical Park, Cabin John, Maryland

**Camera:** Nikon D 90.

**We are looking for a few good shots!** If you have an interesting photo from the Potomac River watershed, please email it to Lydia Tukarski, Communications Associate, at [tukarski@potomac.org](mailto:tukarski@potomac.org). Submissions should be at least 2 MB, jpeg or tiff format.

