

## Recent Data Show Severe Declines in Health of Upper Paint Branch

Data released recently from state and county regulatory agencies indicate a deterioration of water quality, loss of aquatic habitat, and increased sedimentation and erosion in the tributaries of the Upper Paint Branch watershed. Eyes of Paint Branch and local experts believe that unless immediate action is taken to address these problems, the long-term viability of this unique, high-quality, cold-water ecosystem is at risk.

The ecological system in the Upper Paint Branch is an interdependent system of tributaries, with each tributary contributing complementary characteristics that are necessary for the integrity of the overall resource. For example, the Right Fork, which is a particular concern right now, has historically had the coldest water and highest water quality of all the streams in the Paint Branch system.

The Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) monitors various aspects of the tributaries to document their conditions over time. Its data indicate a marked decline in the health of aquatic insects in these streams, measured by both species diversity and Index of Biotic Integrity scores, particularly in the Right Fork tributary. Monitoring results from the Timberlake-Siebel monitoring station, located just downstream on the



*Freshly exposed roots in this streambank on the Good Hope tributary are irrefutable evidence of significant erosion.*

Right Fork's main stem, show that this section has been severely impacted by recent development taking place upstream.

The health of streams can also be gauged by monitoring the fish communities. Data from the Maryland Department of Natural Resources show that the wild brown trout population is at its lowest level in the 23-year history of monitoring. Also, the redd count--the number of trout nests observed--is down significantly. Other troubling signs of declining stream health are also apparent. For example, embeddedness--the degree to which fine sediment particles fill the voids in the gravel substrate (and interfere

*continues on p. 2*

*Severe Declines (continued)*

with aquatic insects and smother trout eggs)--is increasing in severity and becoming more prevalent. Embeddedness is typically an indication of increased sedimentation into the stream through increased erosion of stream banks and/or local soils. The erosion of stream banks is alarming at some locations.

Changes in land cover in the watershed are equally troubling because these changes directly affect the health of the streams. For example, in spite of the 10 percent limit on impervious surfaces (such as pavement and rooftops) for new development in the county's Upper Paint Branch Environmental Overlay Zone, there has been a drastic rise in the projected imperviousness, as high as 18 percent in the Columbia Tributary of the Right Fork when fully built-out. Not surprisingly, this tributary is showing significant signs of degradation. Data from the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (MNCPPC) predict that there will be significant increases in imperviousness in the Right Fork, Left Fork, and Main Stem subwatersheds.

State and county regulatory agencies have made the following specific observations with regard to the outlook for the stream health in the watershed:

- The impacts of development both during and after construction cannot be adequately mitigated under current stormwater management and sediment and erosion controls.
- Since 1995 there has been a widening trend in the tributary channels. There has been measurable loss of overhead tree cover accompanying this channel widening, resulting in stream segments that are shallower and more susceptible to warming.
- The Left Fork, with its higher imperviousness, sustains more frequent and higher changes in temperature. The Right Fork is susceptible to rapid stream widening, destruction of streambed, and wider fluctuations in temperature.
- The Right Fork will probably not be able to withstand the same level of imperviousness as currently existing in the Left Fork due to its smaller base flow.

Eyes of Paint Branch expressed concerns about these observations in a letter to Councilmember Marilyn Praisner in December. In early February we met with Councilmember Praisner and the regulatory agencies to discuss these issues. Later in February we joined with several other organizations in a letter to Councilmember Marilyn Praisner requesting that a number of immediate actions be taken to arrest the degrada-

tion evident in the Upper Paint Branch watershed. The Audubon Naturalist Society, the Potomac-Patuxent chapter of Trout Unlimited, and the Anacostia Watershed Society also signed this letter. A number of other groups also wrote their own letters supporting our requested actions. Our letter is available in the Action Alert section of our Web site at [www.eopb.org](http://www.eopb.org) if you would like to know more about the specific actions requested.

Probably the most important request was to reconvene the Upper Paint Branch Technical Work Group to address these concerns. This 7-agency group of experts from local, state, and regional organizations defined the Special Protection Area, parkland expansion program, and Environmental Overlay Zone to protect the Paint Branch back in 1995. We hope Councilmember Praisner will call on this group once again to address these current important Paint Branch issues. We also would like stakeholder participation, including EOPB.

Public support for the Paint Branch is extremely important, particularly in this election year. County Council needs to hear from its constituents on this issue. Please take a few minutes and write a few short paragraphs on why these degraded conditions in the Paint Branch are a concern to you. Write to: Steve Silverman, President, Montgomery County Council, 100 Maryland Avenue, Rockville, MD 20850

*Featherbells (Stenanthium gramineum), a plant species on the threatened list, that occurs naturally in the Thompson Seeps area of the Paint Branch watershed.*



Photo courtesy of Robert Ferraro

# Are Trout More Important than People?



*Fish Ladder at Maydale Nature Center*

We sometimes hear comments like "some people care more about trout than about people." Admittedly Eyes of Paint Branch makes much of the wild brown trout in the Paint Branch. However, those who make these kinds of remarks have missed the most important part of our message.

A stream that supports a wild trout population also means healthy places for children to play in, a diversity of plants and animals and birds for people to enjoy looking at and living with, and working wetlands that naturally avert the flooding of homes and filter out pollutants. Our intent is to make this a little better place for people to live. Look for more on this topic from us in the near future.

## Land Lost

by Jed Feffer

I want to talk about the sloping land  
tree shaded by oaks,  
that like a woman's shoulder ran  
and sloped with walkways,  
interspersed by trunks,  
whose umbrella'd branches show-  
ered down.

I do this for memories' sake;  
For soon the red clay flattened  
and concrete foundation of our  
church  
will be all that our memory  
will have of this piece of land.

It had a sway to it;  
the hill held fast by roots  
unknown to us  
save that they kept the land intact.

The trunks rose in undulating forms  
that overreached our grasp,  
but that our hands had place  
to lay themselves against,  
as we leaned to talk,  
or gaze about the vast shadows  
cast by spreading branches.

The leaves fell on us  
in forms that spread  
to pin like tips  
and mapped a clean course  
for sap and travelling water to run,  
matting the dampening earth  
to soften the tread our feet took.

In spring their buds danced tenderly;  
In summer the cool flat leaves  
blew green above our heat.

Do not then forget the way  
the land lay before the cuts  
of plow, dozer, pick, and spade  
changed its flow.

For it is not simply sentiment  
that causes me to record this loss,  
but the land that calls us to itself,  
and in our fondness for it  
we recall it as a friend  
to gladly gather in.

*The author, a resident of the watershed,  
wrote this poem following the loss of a  
treasured grove of trees in the vicinity of  
Valleybrook Drive.*

# EOPB Offers Three-Lane Alternative for Route 198 to Protect Headwaters

The State Highway Administration has started a study to widen Route 28/198 between Georgia Avenue and Route 29. This project would cut through the headwaters of the Right and Left Forks of the Paint Branch in the Special Protection Area (SPA) near Spencerville. The SPA mandates strict limits on the percentage of impervious surface--such as pavement and rooftops--allowed in the protected area, but the Highway Administration has not formally agreed to abide by the regulations of the SPA.

The County Master Plans describe a possible four-lane road with limited right-of-way in this area. Because of the possibility of devastating impacts to the SPA, EOPB has formally asked the State Highway Administration to study a three-lane alternative for the Route 28/198 Project. The severe deterioration of stream health in the SPA (see related article) necessitates that every effort be made to limit increases in imperviousness from this project.

Eyes of Paint Branch has also joined with the community representatives on the Focus Group for this study in their unanimous expression that

any design must conform to the Master Plans and stay on the present alignment of Route 198.

The State Highway Administration will present the various alternatives for this project at a public workshop in June. Watch the Calendar at [www.eopb.org](http://www.eopb.org) for time and place.



*Extensive clearing for the 28/198 extension at New Hampshire Avenue.*

## Gum Springs Community Tree Planting

Join with several groups in planting native trees along the Paint Branch, the home of metropolitan Washington's only long-term wild brown trout population. Forested buffers help slow soil erosion, improve water quality, and provide wildlife habitat. This event is for adults, families, groups, and individuals. Come for an hour or the whole morning. Refreshments provided. The holes for the trees will be bored in advance. Bring a shovel and work gloves if you have them. Follow the dirt road at the end of Gladbeck Drive (Colesville/ Good Hope area) to the planting site.

Saturday, May 11, 2002  
9am till noon

Sponsored by:  
Eyes of Paint Branch  
Chesapeake Bay Foundation  
Metropolitan Washington Council  
of Governments  
Maryland-National Capital Park  
and Planning Commission  
Potomac-Patuxent Trout Unlimited

Contact David Dunmire at [ddunmire@eopb.org](mailto:ddunmire@eopb.org)  
or 301-989-0331.

# New E-mail Distribution Lists for EOPB Members and Friends

EOPB has two new e-mail lists to allow our members and friends to stay informed of environmental issues affecting the Paint Branch watershed and EOPB events.

The EOPB-Announce mailing list is used by EOPB officers to notify members and friends of EOPB events, and to distribute environmental action alerts. To join the EOPB-Announce list, send an e-mail to:

dolist@thetechguru.net

with the words join eopb-announce in the body of the message. You will receive a confirmation message and instructions for additional list commands.

The EOPB-Discussion mailing list is for our members and friends to discuss issues affecting the watershed in general. To join the EOPB-Discussion list, send an e-mail to:

dolist@thetechguru.net

with the words join eopb-discussion in the body of the message. You will receive a confirmation message, instructions for posting messages to the list, and additional list commands.

Please contact Alan Burnstine at alan@thetechguru.net with any questions.

## Spring Creek Foundation Awards \$10,000 Grant to EOPB

EOPB is pleased to announce that we have received a \$10,000 grant from the Spring Creek Foundation of Washington, D.C. The grant will fund the Paint Branch Watershed Conservation Project, which encompasses numerous exciting outreach and education activities, including this newsletter. Plans include expanding our programs beyond the headwaters area to include the entire watershed, as well as our neighboring watershed to the east, the Little Paint Branch. As we carry out these activities, we look forward to fostering cooperative relationships between EOPB and other civic and environmental groups throughout the watershed and in neighboring watersheds, and helping other groups with similar objectives to get started.

Here are just a few of the activities that we will be undertaking in the coming year:

- Significantly upgrade the educational component of our Web site.
- Address the pressing problems in the Little Paint Branch tributary.
- Purchase a new Brownie-the-Trout costume.

- Design and produce upgraded graphics for our EOPB display board.
- Develop a video on the Paint Branch watershed, to include description, geology, personal perspectives from long-time residents, and interviews with joggers, bikers, and public officials.
- Build an environmental kiosk in College Park.
- Establish a major donor program to help fund EOPB efforts.

### CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS

Now that we have received this generous grant, we need lots of help to carry out our plans. This ranges from leading a task to volunteering an hour or so for a specific activity. We welcome any support you are able to provide, and are happy to assist students in fulfilling community service hour requirements. One particular need is for volunteers to help distribute our publications in specific neighborhoods. If you are interested in lending a hand with any of the above projects, please contact David Dunmire at 301-989-0331 or Robert Ferraro at 301-890-1998.

# We Keep Growing

We added 43 dues-paying memberships to our roster following our fall 2002 membership drive. Most of these were family memberships. We depend on the financial support we receive from our members because most grants do not cover our public advocacy work, which is integral to our efforts to protect and restore our watershed. Thank you to all who responded to our membership drive, and welcome to our new members.

## University of Maryland Joins Anacostia Restoration Efforts

The University of Maryland has formally agreed to partner with the Anacostia Watershed Restoration Committee in the efforts to restore the Anacostia watershed. The Partnership Agreement, signed in March, will include possible collaboration in stream monitoring, stormwater management projects, stream restoration projects, applied research in these areas, and watershed-based public outreach activities.

We applaud this environmentally sensitive action by the University. EOPB contributed to this process early-on in several ways, and looks forward to working with all parts of the University community to help in this effort. Our first project will be to construct an environmental kiosk along the Paint Branch hiker/biker trail on the campus. We will need lots of volunteers. Contact: Bob Ferraro at 301-890-1998 or [ptbrnchbob@eopb.org](mailto:ptbrnchbob@eopb.org).

## EOPB Elects New Officers

The Eyes of Paint Branch Board of Directors, which is elected by the general membership, has elected the new officers for the year. They are Robert Ferraro, president; David Dunmire, vice president; Laura Appelbaum, secretary; and Martha Lanigan, treasurer.

The five members of the Board of Directors are Julie Carlston, David Dunmire, Robert Ferraro, Joan Novell, and Kenneth Price. Contact information for officers and board members is given on our Web page at [www.eopb.org](http://www.eopb.org).



*My Backyard* is published quarterly by Eyes of Paint Branch, a grassroots organization dedicated to preserving, protecting, and restoring the Paint Branch and its watershed.

This issue of our newsletter was published and distributed with funding from a grant from the Spring Creek Foundation.

Annual memberships in Eyes of Paint Branch are \$15 for individuals, and \$25 for families. Our community action programs depend entirely upon membership dues and contributions. Send your tax deductible check today to:

**EOPB**  
**P.O. Box 272**  
**Burtonsville, MD 20866.**

Visit us online at: [www.eopb.org](http://www.eopb.org)

**EOPB Officers**

**President**  
 Bob Ferraro

[ptbrnchbob@eopb.org](mailto:ptbrnchbob@eopb.org)  
 301-890-1998

**Vice President**  
 David Dunmire  
[ddunmire@eopb.org](mailto:ddunmire@eopb.org)  
 301-989-0331

**Secretary**  
 Laura Appelbaum

[l-appelbaum@mindspring.com](mailto:l-appelbaum@mindspring.com)  
 301-388-0351

**Treasurer**  
 Martha Lanigan  
[Martha.Lanigan@verizon.net](mailto:Martha.Lanigan@verizon.net)  
 301-384-9559

**Webmaster**  
 Lewis Kozlosky  
[lewis@eopb.org](mailto:lewis@eopb.org)

**Newsletter Editor**  
 Roseanne Price  
[roseanne@eopb.org](mailto:roseanne@eopb.org)

Designed and produced by  
 Andrew Dunmire of



Copyright © 2002  
 Eyes of Paint Branch

# Eyes of Paint Branch Upcoming Events

April 20

**Washington Regional**

**Earth Day Cleanup**

**& Celebration • 8:30am - 12:30pm**  
 at Seafarer's Yacht Club. Local dignitaries invited. Cleanup held at 4 sites along the Anacostia River. Trash Sculpture Contest, Poster & Poetry Contest, Waterfront "Cookout" courtesy of Seafarer's Yacht Club, Alternative Energy display, Eyes of Paint Branch display. For directions and more information:

<http://anacostiaws.org/> or call Anacostia Watershed Society at 301-699-6204.

April 27

**Rally to Reject the ICC • 10am**

Meet at Lake Needwood picnic area #3. Council members Blair Ewing and Phil Andrews will speak at the beginning of the rally.

From Georgia Ave. (Rt. 97), go west on Norbeck Rd. (Rt. 28). Make immediate right onto Muncaster Mill Rd (Rt.115). Travel approx 3 miles and go left on Needwood Rd. At bottom of hill go left on Beach Drive. Picnic area #3 is 1/4 mile on right side. Magruder High School may also be available for parking with a short shuttle to the rally site.

May 4

**Annual Kid's**

**Fishing Day • 7:30am - 1pm**

The Potomac-Patuxent Chapter of Trout Unlimited is hosting its annual kid's fishing day at Martin Luther King Jr. Park pond. An extra heavy stocking of trout guarantees plenty for all, but come early for the best fishing. Members will be available with bait, terminal tackle (hooks, shot, bobbers), and advice. Bring your own rods and kids. To get to the pond from the Beltway, drive north on New Hampshire Ave to Jackson Road, where there is a sign.

May 5

**Guided Birdwalk • 7:30am**

Norm Saunders of the Maryland Ornithological Society will lead a birdwalk through the Good Hope subwatershed. Meet at the corner of Cavendish Drive and Gladbeck Drive in Colesville. Attendance limited and advanced registration required, 301-890-1998.

May 11

**Gum Springs Community**

**Tree Planting • 9am - noon**

Join with several groups in planting native trees along the Paint Branch. Follow the dirt road at the end of Gladbeck Drive (Colesville/Good Hope area) to the planting site. Contact David Dunmire at [ddunmire@eopb.org](mailto:ddunmire@eopb.org) or 301-989-0331.

May 18

**Colesville**

**Strawberry Festival • 10am - 4pm**

This festival has become a part of community life in Colesville and is always well attended. Enjoy fresh strawberries and ice cream with friends and neighbors, and join us at our booth to hear about what is happening in our area. East side of New Hampshire Avenue at Hobbs Drive in Colesville.

May 21

**EOPB Quarterly**

**Public Meeting • 7:30 - 9pm**

Join us in planning future EOPB activities and discussing the health of our watershed. Time will available for public input on specific concerns. Eastern Montgomery Regional Services Center, 3300 Briggs Chaney Road, Silver Spring, Maryland, 20904 (past the auto park on the left)

# myBACKYARD

Inside this Issue

- Recent Data Show Severe Declines in Health of Upper Paint Branch
- EOPB Offers Three-lane Alternative for Route 198 Widening
- Gum Springs Tree Planting
- New EOPB E-mail Distribution Lists
- EOPB Receives Spring Creek Foundation Grant
- UMD Joins Anacostia Restoration
- New EOPB Officers
- Upcoming Events
- Land Lost - A Poem

myBACKYARD

Eyes of Paint Branch  
P.O. Box 272  
Burtonsville, MD 20866  
[www.eopb.org](http://www.eopb.org)



*Conservation, Education, Action for the Paint Branch and Its Watershed*