



Eyes of Paint Branch

Grassroots Conservation, Education, and Action for the Paint Branch and its Watershed

Summer 2023 Update on EOPB Activities

Eyes of Paint Branch volunteers have been busy protecting our local watershed. Our Board of Directors would like to highlight for you some of our recent activities.

Become a Weed Warrior! Eyes of Paint Branch is currently conducting a joint project with Friends of Maydale and the Montgomery County Parks Department, to reforest a site in the Upper Paint Branch Stream Valley Park. Years ago the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) conducted a stream restoration project on the upper Good Hope tributary, and needed to clear some mature forest to gain access for equipment and materials. After the stream restoration, they planted trees, many of which did not survive. A primary cause of the low survival rate was the influx of large numbers of non-native invasive (NNIs) species of plants, particularly the vines: honey suckle, porcelain berry, and winter creeper. This site is on both sides of Good Hope Road between the intersections of New Hampshire Avenue and Cape May Road.

Ellen Mann coordinates Weed Warrior activities for Friends of Maydale, is leading the removal of invasive plants at this site Good Hope in preparation for reforestation. We had two Weed Warrior work sessions in April and two in May, and one each month since then. Our next work session is on Thursday, September 14, from 10 to 11:30 a.m. To volunteer, register with the Parks Department at the following link: [Weed Warrior Workday at Upper Paint Branch SVP - Montgomery Parks](#),



Ellen Mann (2nd from left) and Weed Warrior volunteers at reforestation site

where additional details are available. The number of participants is limited, so it is important to register. We hope to build a base of certified Weed Warriors from throughout the watershed who volunteer from time to time for this incredibly rewarding activity.

The Montgomery County Parks Department is developing a reforestation plan, providing the trees, and preparing the holes for planting. Look for more details on this tree planting event as they become available on the Montgomery Parks web site at the following link: [Montgomery Parks - Volunteer \(samaritan.com\)](#). All three organizations are very enthusiastic about this joint project.

Become a Stream Monitor. We recently received a generous donation of aquatic insect identification equipment from a local entomologist who is retiring. This includes two professional-grade microscopes, lab supplies, and technical reference documents. In addition to use in public educational programs, we hope these resources will help us establish an ongoing

stream monitoring program within Eyes of Paint Branch. If you are interested in stream monitoring, we would like to hear from you at info@eopb.org.

Celebrating Our Local Environment.

On Saturday, May 20th Friends of Maydale and the Parks Department hosted their annual WaterFest community event. Highlights included a touch tank, a variety of crafts and activities, and an opportunity for people of all ages to learn about their local watershed.

The Eyes of Paint Branch table included a variety of live aquatic insect species collected from the adjacent Left Fork Tributary of the Paint Branch, gear for aquatic insect identification, maps of the watershed, and pictures of the nearby stream restoration before, during, and after construction.



EOPB live aquatic insect identification table at Friends of Maydale's recent WaterFest community event

Keeping an “Eye” on the Paint Branch. We’ve noticed declines in stream conditions at some locations within the Upper Paint Branch Special Protection Area (SPA), which is the headwaters area north of Fairland Road, so we set out to learn more. We first reviewed the annual SPA reports published by the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to see if there were any trends. Then we requested the latest data from DEP’s annual stream monitoring. Our analysis of this data identified some concerns, which prompted us to walk the streams to see first-hand what was happening at the areas of concern.

On Monday, July 24, we presented the initial results from our analysis to DEP. We had an excellent 90-minute discussion which was both informative and frank. We applauded their cooperative spirit and willingness to work with us. DEP shared some new data which made the water quality ratings not as bad as initially feared. Further, we agreed that the stormwater management facility upstream of where Piping Rock Drive crosses the Good Hope Tributary (just east of NH Ave) was not functioning properly. DEP sent inspectors out to investigate on the day of our briefing, and a contractor started repairs the next day. Now the Good Hope is clear once again!

We also highlighted a problem with road salt spillage as the trucks leave the maintenance facility on Cape May Road. Again, DEP took immediate action and corrections are being made. Great work, Frank Dawson, Amy Stevens, and their staff at DEP! Contamination from road salt is a widespread issue, so we are interested in getting volunteers from throughout the watershed to participate in the Isaak Walton League’s Salt Watch program. We encourage everyone to let us know of any concerns you have regarding conditions in the watershed by contacting us at info@eopb.org.

DEP finds New Species in the Paint Branch! At our recent meeting with DEP, they told us about two new finds in the Upper Paint Branch SPA. DEP found a four-toed salamander

(*Hemidactylium scutatum*, [Four-toed salamander](#)) in the wetlands adjacent to the Right Fork Tributary of the Paint Branch. This is the only record DEP has for the species, and there were no other Montgomery County records on iNaturalist. The species is more common in western Maryland, and there are small populations in the coastal plain to the east. Here is a link to the page about that species at the Maryland Biodiversity Project:

<https://www.marylandbiodiversity.com/view/459> and, here is a link to a range map of where it has been found in Maryland: <https://www.marylandbiodiversity.com/quad/459>.

DEP also found an unusual crayfish, although that situation is a bit more complicated. As per the DEP specialists who discovered the organism, *“Currently state biologists and professors from Marshall University are working to separate a widely distributed crayfish into several species. This species complex is being called “Cambarus acuminatus” or the Acuminate Crayfish. Here in Montgomery and Prince Georges counties, they have identified some key differences in both their physical characteristics and their genetics. Based on these observed differences, the crayfish we have here is a new/different species that is endemic to the Washington, D.C. metro area. This new/different species has not been officially named yet, and is currently referred to as “species x” in literature. DEP expects this new species to be named and described by next summer.”*

Help Us Protect the Paint Branch! We are in the process of rebuilding our organization. We need your help! Please reach out if you are interested in helping advance our cause as a volunteer, such as social media admin, EOPB representative at community events, restoration participant (invasive plant removal, new plantings), water quality monitoring, “watching” your part of the watershed, or other role. Feel free to forward this update to anyone who may be interested. We welcome your input.

Did you know? The “pupil” in the eye of our logo is in the shape of the Paint Branch watershed? The northern boundary of the watershed roughly follows the path of Spencerville Road, and the watershed extends in a generally southeasterly direction down to south of College Park where it joins the Northeast Branch of the Anacostia River.

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