

Thursday, April 10, 2008

Scouts plant trees to help Bay

by Connor Adams Sheets | Staff Writer

Walking among knee-high saplings, volunteers at an Adamstown tree-planting exuded a pervasive environmental awareness that many say is on the rise in Frederick County.

“Talking with my son and talking with some of the other guys, when the Bay gets a C- or a D water quality grade, you figure it’s the runoff from the creeks,” said Ralph Montfort, an adult leader of Boy Scout Troop 204, which sent seven boys to volunteer at a Saturday event. “So if you plant trees, you can kind of prevent the runoff.” Two major spring-cleaning environmental events brought out dozens of volunteers last weekend - a tree-planting in Adamstown aimed at slowing erosion, and clean-up efforts as part of the 20th Annual Potomac River Watershed Cleanup.



Tom Fedor/The Gazette

Volunteers such as Bob Bailer of Adamstown and his two sons, David, 6, and Peter, 9, pitch in to do some stream buffer tree planting in Adamstown on Saturday morning. When completed, the project will restore a 50-foot wide buffer along 9,600 feet of stream banks on Tuscarora Creek. The Bailer boys are also members of Cub Scout Pack 651.

The tree-planting was a huge success this year, according to Rob Schnabel, a watershed restoration scientist and Chesapeake streams manager at the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, one of the tree-planting’s main organizers.

“I think there’s so much awareness within the community of what people can do to help clean up water and air,” Schnabel said. “I say the number of volunteers coming out is twice what it used to be. We had 200 people come out today, and usually we get about 80. And also now it’s all ages.”

The volunteers arrived at Hope Green’s 175-acre farm in Adamstown at 9 a.m., Saturday, ready to work. They proceeded to plant about 1,450 sycamore, tulip poplar, red maple and oak trees and native shrubs to create buffers to help slow erosion from the farm’s fields along 9,600 feet of Tuscarora Creek.

The trees cost a total of \$14,500, which, along with other expenditures, was funded mainly by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, a Department of Natural Resources Landowner Incentive Program grant and the Chesapeake Bay Trust.

Local Girl Scout troops coordinated with environmental group The Future of Life to take part in the event. Through this collaboration, at least 95 Girl Scouts took part in the planting, according to Amanda Benner, the group’s program director.

“It was really fun to know that you’re helping everything around you,” said sixth-grader Meghan Weeks, a Junior Scout in Troop 81437. “We planted, sheltered, and staked trees and shrubs.”

Sixth-grader Danielle Wood, who is also a Junior Scout in 81437, added that the best part of the event was “getting dirty and knowing it’s for the right reason - the environment.”

Boy Scouts also did their part for the environment Saturday morning.

“We planted shrubs. It was pretty sweet. It was a great teamwork experience overall,” said 16 year-old Life Scout Adrian Hagerty, Troop 204’s Senior Patrol Leader. “It was great to see all the people coming out and doing it because it shows that everyone wants to come out and help the Bay.” The annual Potomac River Watershed Cleanup, which is led by the Alice Ferguson Foundation, is a coordinated effort with 298

work sites throughout the Potomac watershed. The Point of Rocks Ruritan Club coordinates a site annually through this initiative. Marcel Aillery, a member of the Point of Rocks Ruritan Club environmental committee, which helped to facilitate the event, agrees that mindsets are changing regarding environmental issues.

∴The ethics have changed ó in past years people were more apt to use isolated areas and woods to dump their debris, and I don't think that occurs today to the same extent,ö he said.

∴There are some areas where debris has been there for years. I think most of it is people who are just a little bit careless at the day use area and also garbage that is washed down during floods ... I think that the county has made a commitment to recycling and I think folks are aware of the challenges associated with managing our county landfill and our solid waste stream, and I think generally there is a heightened environmental awareness.ö

The 18 volunteers who attended the event picked up about 40 large bags of garbage, 12 tires and a number of other large objects near the Lander Boat Ramp in C&O Canal National Historical Park. The volunteers combed the riverbed near the ramp and also nearby sections of the C&O Canal path.

Overall, the message at the events was that the environment is on more people's radars than ever before, and that a healthy number of people truly want to help protect the Earth.

∴I think [environmental volunteerism] is starting to pick up momentum,ö said Linh Phu, a natural resource biologist at the Maryland Department of Natural Resources. ∴I think in the last couple of years it's picked up a little bit. I think the main thing is to spread the word. People are usually more than willing to help, they just need to know about it.ö