

Choptank Tributary Team

June 22, 2005.

About the Watershed:

The Choptank River is the largest river on the Eastern Shore. It drains approximately 700 square miles and covers portions of Dorchester, Talbot, Caroline, and Queen Anne's Counties. The predominant land uses in the watershed are agriculture and forest with growing urban areas in the Towns of Cambridge, Easton, Denton and Trappe. The Choptank Team contends with a wide range of issues associated with agriculture and the growing population within the watershed.



About the Team:

The mission of the Choptank Tributary Team is to reduce nutrient and sediment inputs and to restore habitat in the Choptank Watershed through community participation. The team is a dedicated group of volunteers who are passionate about their river. A large percentage of the members have remained active on the team since its formation in 1995. Members come from a wide range of backgrounds, including farmers, local watershed groups, businesses, and state and county governments. The team generally focuses on seeking legislative and policy change; however, public education and outreach and restoration projects are also important team focuses.

Recent Accomplishments:

- Recognizing the many nutrient and sediment reduction benefits associated with cover crops, the Choptank Team instigated a statewide Tributary Team effort to seek legislation change for Maryland's cover crop program. Through letters and meetings with the Governor and state legislators, the team sought to increase funding for the Eastern Shore program and to establish a statewide program. Although the program was expanded statewide in 2002 and received a funding increase, the team continued to seek full statewide coverage in 2005 and 2006.
- In April 2004, after months of research and debate, the Choptank Team proposed that the Choptank River (from Route 50 bridge to the mouth) be set aside as a restoration project for native oysters. The team believes restoring water quality and other living resources will be extremely difficult without restoring native oyster populations. A decision is pending. This initiative comes on the heels of the team's successful efforts regarding the establishment of Trappe Creek as an oyster sanctuary. At that time, team members met with representatives from the Oyster Recovery Partnership, the Talbot Tongers, and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources to discuss the proposal. In 2002, the parties established an agreement whereby the upper two-thirds of the creek received sanctuary status while the lower one-third of the creek received reserve status. The proposal went into effect in October 2002.



The Choptank Team used more than 100 tons of dredged oyster shell to create an oyster bar in Trappe Creek.

- The Choptank Wade-in is held in Oxford, in June in conjunction with the Boat Bums International Cardboard Boat Races to benefit the MD Special Olympics. To engage elected officials in the team's activities, members invited elected officials to help lead the wade-in. Congressman Wayne Gilchrest, Senator Richard Colburn, Delegate Adelaide Eckardt, Delegate Jeanne Haddaway, Talbot Commissioner Hilary Spence, and Dorchester Commissioner Tom Flowers have responded to the team's call in recent years, and participated in the Wade-in and the cardboard boat races.
- During 2003 and 2004, the team partnered with folks from the Talbot Soil Conservation District to get the most out of water quality Best Management Practices. Together, they developed a set of suggestions for making the Cover Crop Cost Share program more effective. The program changes included an incentive for earlier cover crop planting which provides more erosion protection and nitrate uptake per acre of cover crop. Several of the key suggestions were adopted last year.



Elected officials have become regular participants in the Choptank Wade-In.

For More Information:

For more information, contact Mike Bilek, team coordinator, at 410-260-8988. You can also visit our website at www.dnr.state.md.us/bay/tribstrat/.



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Team Members

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