



The Queen Anne's Chronicle

CELEBRATING QUEEN ANNE'S COUNTY

INFORMING THE CITIZENS

QAC FARM STANDS – WE HAVE WHAT CITY-DWELLERS CRAVE

By **MARY CAMPBELL**

In Annapolis with some extra time (there had been no Bridge problems), I decided to check out the much talked-about Whole Foods Market. After locating an underground parking place and taking an escalator up into the Market, I found myself in the midst of their very large produce department.

One area was gathering considerable attention from shoppers – the one that featured “local” produce. Above the asparagus was a large sign – “Godfrey Farm, Sudlersville, Maryland.” Folks were filling bags with beautiful looking asparagus. Like them, I couldn’t resist that beautiful asparagus and bought a pound or so. This was clearly an impulse purchase, since I live in the land of wonderful produce farms -- and I certainly don’t have to go to Annapolis for fresh vegetables!

In Queen Anne’s County, “fresh” means so much more than not frozen or canned. It means “just picked” in the field behind you or down the road a bit; it means still full of flavor.

This is the produce that city folks crave, that people are writing best-selling books about. I decided our farm stands clearly deserve a story in a paper that celebrates Queen Anne’s County. While I can list all I know about, I only have room to feature a few.



Kate Mason Kraszewski, with her assistant Annie the Dog, offers a wide range of regular and organic produce from the Masons' 800 acre farm and other local sources. -Chronicle photo

Bob Baer: White Pines Farm

Last year, everything Bob Baer sold at his farm stand on White Pines Lane outside Centreville was grown on his farm. He also sells at the Centreville Market and supplies a number of QAC farm stands with his produce. Tomatoes are a specialty, and his other

home grown produce includes sweet corn, cantaloupes, seedless watermelons, squash, cucumbers and eggplants.

When asked how long he had been in the produce business, Mr. Baer replied with a laugh, “Since I was big enough to walk.” His parents raised and sold produce in Pennsylvania, and he grew up helping them.

Bob Baer bought White Pines Farm in 1979 and personally built his home and barns. Then, like him as a boy, his sons grew up raising and selling produce. With their dad, his boys helped build the farm buildings and fabricate and repair needed equipment like plastic mulch layers and trailers; and they made money for college from working the family produce stand. Rightfully proud, Bob Baer allows that the boys now have engineering degrees.

From his opening around the Fourth of July weekend, Mr. Baer offers a wide assortment of produce including tomatoes and sweet corn. Because he plants in stages, he has sweet corn into October. The farm stand at 300 White Pines Lane is open 7 days a week from 10 – 6, and his big trailer at the Centreville Farm Market sells produce Wednesdays and Saturdays from 9 – 1.

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COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT – FILLING THE AVAILABLE SPACE

Available commercial space in QAC comes in two obvious forms – the buildings that are vacant, and the properties that are zoned commercial but not yet built out. A third category is land that is not now zoned for commercial development but could be.

How should County government and the private sector approach these three types of actual and potential commercial space? Logic, and economics, would suggest taking them in order: first get the empty buildings filled, then develop the already-zoned commercial land, and finally zone more land commercial when it is needed.

Filling the Empty Buildings

Filling the empty buildings in Queen Anne’s County is a big challenge that it will take years to meet. A recent survey by a property management firm shows more than a half million square feet of vacant commercial space in 64 buildings in the County. That’s a vacancy rate of over 15%. And the QAC commercial vacancy rate is projected to rise toward 17% in the next two years, contrary to the national

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Non-Profit Org
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LOCAL PRODUCE STANDS

ARNOLD FARMS
219 Double Creek Rd.
Chestertown
Fresh vegetables
Th, Fri, Sat 10-6

BOB BAER
213 & White Pines Lane
Church Hill
7 days a week, 10-6
Centreville Farm Market
Court House Square
Wed. & Sat. 9-1

BENGUSTA
1214 Barclay Road
Fri – Mon 10-3

CASCIA VINEYARD
1200 Thompson Creek Rd
Stevensville
[Grapes in the fall]

CHARLES BRYAN
4206 Main St.
Grasonville

CENTREVILLE FARM MARKET
Court House Square
Wed. & Sat. 9-1

CHERRY BLOSSOM FARMS
1189 Roberts Station Rd.
Church Hill
7 days a week, 10-7

FARMER JOHN
324 Romancoke Road
Stevensville
Mon - Sat 9-7; Sun 9-6

FRESH MARKET – ALL ORGANIC
711 Main Street
Stevensville
Thurs. eve. 4-7

GODFREY FARM
302 Leager Rd.
Sudlersville
7 days a week, 7-5

HIGGY'S FARM MARKET
N. of Church Hill on 213
Mon. 6-3; Tues.-Sat. 6am-8pm;
Sun. 7-5

KENT FORT FARM
125 Eastern Lane
Stevensville
Produce, U-Pick fruit
W,F,Sat 9-5; Sun 10-4

LOWERY'S PRODUCE
1908 Main St.
Chester
7 days a week, 9-7

MASON FARMS MARKET
1905 Ruthsburg Rd Rt 304
Queen Anne
Wed.,Thurs.,Fri.,Sun. 10-6
Sat. 9-5; closed Mon,Tues.

PERKINS PRODUCE & FLOWERS
301 Wright's Neck Rd.
Centreville, off Rte 18
Mon.-Fri.10-5:30, Sat. 9-5; Sun.
9-4; closed Tues.

PLANMARYLAND MOVES TOWARD END OF PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

The O'Malley Administration's ambitious effort to adopt a State-wide comprehensive plan ("PlanMaryland") will reach its next milestone on September 1, when the 120-day public comment period on the Draft Plan comes to a close.

The Draft Plan was presented to the Upper Eastern Shore in May by Secretary Rich Hall and other officials from the Maryland Department of Planning (MDP) at an "Open House" at Washington College. One of eight such events held throughout the State, the Washington College event attracted attendees representing a broad cross-section of opinion, from the likes of veteran Centreville conservationist Ed Nielsen to Septics Bill foe Senator E. J. Pipkin.

Probably the dominant theme running through the exhibits and presentations at the Open House was the Administration's concern over the rapid rate at which farmed and forested lands are being lost to development. Halting this threat to Maryland quality of life was declared to be the basic purpose of the Plan and the frame for the task ahead. In the words of the Plan's Executive Summary (p. 4):

"Three closely related challenges must be met to reverse current trends and make it possible to realize a sustainable future:

1. The vast majority of residential and business development that occurs in the state must be accommodated in desirable, compact, sustainable communities . . .

2. Critical agricultural, water, natural and living resources necessary to sustain resource-based businesses and employment and support quality of life must be identified and protected.

3. The spread of dispersed low-density residential development and the associated costs to the public and the environment must be minimized."

Notwithstanding the usual careful bureaucratic language, PlanMaryland is actually a bold declaration of war on "rural sprawl". If adopted, it will have a major effect on what life in Queen Anne's County will be like in the coming years.

(To read the Draft Plan on the MDP website, google "planmaryland". Comments can be sent in writing electronically to: comments.plan@mdp.state.md.us, or in hard copy to: Maryland Department of Planning, Attn: PlanMaryland Comments, 301 West Preston Street, Suite 1101, Baltimore, MD 21201. Include your name, return address or e-mail address as part of your comments.)

PLANNING COMMISSION APPOINTMENT MADE

The County Commissioners have made an appointment to fill the remainder of the term (until 12-31-11) of a resigned member of the Planning Commission. The process appears to have been a contentious one, with two Commissioners voting against the appointment.

Out of a half dozen applicants, three "finalists" emerged. One, a Centreville resident, was a professional planner with the necessary degrees and certifications and 20 years of experience in both government and private sector planning positions. The second, a North County resident, was an architect responsible for over 30 years of award-winning designs of all kinds -- residential, commercial, institutional -- throughout the Upper Eastern Shore region.

The third finalist was James J. Moran, a Queenstown resident and the person ultimately appointed to the Planning Commission. Mr. Moran is the founder and president of the leading distributor and installer of decorative concrete products in the Baltimore-Washington Metropolitan area. The jobs done by Mr. Moran's Crofton-based company mainly consist of installation of new colored and stamped decorative concrete



In Queen Anne's County, EVERYONE goes to the Queen Anne's County Fair ~ ~ August 8-13

Jousting, Duck and Goose Calling, Garden Tractor Pulls, Corn Hole, Rodeo 4-H Horse, Beef, Sheep, Goat, Dog, Swine, Rabbit and Cavy Shows Small Pet, Poultry, Llama shows; Sheep dog trials, Milking demo Pretty Animal Contest, Great Music, Rides Shore dinners – crab, chicken, beef, pork barbecue And lots more – see www.queenannescofair.com for info and schedule

products manufactured by Increte Systems of Tampa, FL.

Mr. Moran is a member of Associated Builders and Contractors, the American Concrete Institute, the Maryland Ready Mix Association, and the American Society of Concrete Contractors. He is personally well known to Commissioner President Arentz and, since earlier this year, has served on the County's Task Force on Government Sustainability and the Economic Development Commission.

Mr. Moran's appointment was opposed by Commissioners Dunmyer and Simmons, who stated their belief that the appointment process had not given serious consideration to any of the candidates other than Mr. Moran and that the other two "finalists" were both much better qualified to serve on a Commission charged by law with implementing the County's Comprehensive Plan and its "Overall Community Vision". (For a discussion of the Vision, see Editorial in this issue.)

PLANMARYLAND - THE POLITICAL CALCULATION BEHIND THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST RURAL SPRAWL

What's driving the O'Malley Administration's campaign against rural sprawl is not just the need to save the Chesapeake Bay and Maryland agriculture, but what often matters most in politics: the economy. Governments are finding they can no longer afford, and taxpayers can no longer be expected to pay, the extra costs of unchecked rural sprawl.

Twenty-five years ago, an American Farmland Trust study (Robert Smythe et al., *Density-Related Public Costs*, Washington, DC. 1986) found that the annual service costs for schools, roads and utilities were higher by \$2,000 per household when the houses were in rural sprawl developments rather than medium or higher density developments.

In 1997, Maryland established PFAs (Priority Funding Areas) to encourage (through targeted State funding) development in and around existing towns, cities, and locally-designated growth areas, but this incentives-based strategy did little to stop rural sprawl. Nearly four-fifths of the statewide acreage subject to residential development has been outside of PFAs.

In Queen Anne's County, the PFA, or "Growth Area", strategy has not stopped farmland from being consumed by residential development, and the extra costs of this rural sprawl have had a dramatic effect on County finances. About 7,000 houses have been built in QAC over the past 20 years -- half of them (3,500) outside of our eleven Growth Areas.

An extra cost of \$2,000 per house in 1986 (per the American Farmland Trust study, above) translates to \$4,000 per house in today's dollars, so because of those 3,500 houses outside of Growth Areas, Queen Anne's County is now taking a \$14 million hit to its budget each year. That \$14 million is more than two-thirds of the yawning budget deficit the County Commissioners have recently been trying to close.

And it will only get worse. The Queen Anne's Comprehensive Plan says that under our existing zoning we can build more than 8,000 homes over the next 20 years. Lately, the County has been falling even farther behind on Smart Growth, to the point where we're building not one-half, but two-thirds, of all new houses outside of Growth Areas. Because we have no plans to get serious about Smart Growth and stop rural sprawl, the American Farmland Trust study tells us that Queen Anne's is working toward loading onto County taxpayers another \$21 million in extra costs for schools, roads, and utilities each year.

The O'Malley Administration sees all over Maryland the same kind of trouble that rural sprawl has caused QAC and its taxpayers. As the *Chronicle* has reported, the Governor is making a big bet with his PlanMaryland campaign that avoiding higher taxes and reductions in services will make Maryland citizens ready for major changes in land use policy in this State. Whether he wins that bet will mostly depend, not on the familiar environmental arguments, but on whether he and his Planning Department can get across their message about the economic costs of rural sprawl.

THE CRABS ARE BACK - AT SECOND HIGHEST LEVEL SINCE 1997

By **RONA KOBELL**

The Chesapeake Bay's blue crab population is continuing to rebound. The annual winter dredge survey for 2010-11 put the signature crustacean's population at its second-highest level since 1997.

The surveyors estimated there are 460 million crabs in the Chesapeake - nearly double the number in 2007, when the population was heading for a crisis. The next year, the governors of Maryland and Virginia, as well as leaders of the Potomac River Fisheries Commission, vowed to reduce fishing pressure through a series of restrictions.

The 2010-11 results were not as good as the 2009-10 numbers, which showed a whopping 658 million crabs in the Bay. But this year presented some major challenges. Warmer than usual temperatures going into the winter intensified the shock when the colder-than-normal December, January, and February hit the Bay, according to Tom Miller, professor of fisheries at the University of Maryland's Center for Environmental Science.

DNR Fisheries Director Tom O'Connell said that the weather pattern killed 31 percent of the adult crabs in Maryland's portion of the Chesapeake, which is generally colder than Virginia's. In comparison, only about 10 percent of the crabs were lost to the cold in 2009-10.

Steven G. Bowman, commissioner of the Virginia Marine Resources Commission, said the changes that the two states put in place in 2008 likely made a big difference in salvaging the population, given the bad weather. "It was a harsh winter and crab mortality was higher than normal. In fact, it was the worst we've seen since 1996," he said in a statement. "Thankfully, we acted when we did in 2008 to begin rebuilding the crab population, or the crab census results we see today would be grim indeed."

Rona Kobell is a former writer for the Baltimore Sun. Her article is condensed and reprinted here courtesy of the Bay Journal published by Chesapeake Media Service.

CHESAPEAKE BAY GRASSES – WHY THEY MATTER

By **KATHY RESHETILOFF**

In the shallow waters of the Chesapeake, Bay grasses sway in the aquatic breeze of the current. Bay grasses, also called submerged aquatic vegetation or SAV, are one of the most important natural resources of the Chesapeake Bay.

There are 16 common species of Bay grasses found in the Chesapeake Bay and tributaries. Their presence or absence is an indicator of the health of a river or creek. Like all green plants, Bay grasses produce oxygen, a precious and sometimes decreasing commodity in the Chesapeake Bay.

Bay grasses also absorb nutrients like nitrogen and phosphorus. Excess nutrients in the Chesapeake Bay promote rapid algae growth known as blooms. Algal blooms reduce the amount of light reaching Bay grasses and when the blooms die and decompose, valuable oxygen is consumed.

In addition, Bay grasses filter and trap suspended sediment, which otherwise cloud the water and can bury bottom-dwelling organisms.

By reducing wave action, Bay grasses also help protect shorelines from erosion.

These plants are a key contributor to the energy cycling in the Bay. They provide food and habitat for invertebrates, fish and waterfowl. Microscopic zooplankton feed on decaying grasses and, in turn, become food for larger animals, such as fish and clams.

Barnacles and scallop larvae attach to the leaves and stems of eelgrass in the salty waters of the lower Bay.

Fish, like bluegill and largemouth bass, live in the freshwater grasses of the upper Bay. Immature blue crabs, minnows and juvenile fish, like striped bass, find protection from larger, hungrier mouths. Bay grasses are also a haven for vulnerable molting blue crabs, shielding them until their shells harden.

In the fall and winter, migrating waterfowl search the sediment for nutritious seeds, roots and tubers. Redhead grass and widgeon grass are favored foods of wigeon ducks, as well as many other waterfowl. Resident waterfowl may feed on different species of grasses year-round.

Bay grasses once formed immense underwater meadows, covering up to 200,000 acres in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. With increasing development and nutrient pollution in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and Tropical Storm Agnes in 1972, the huge grass beds began to decline.

Factors that affect water clarity also affect the growth and survival of SAV. Suspended sediments and other solids cloud the water, reducing the amount of sunlight reaching the plants. Often, sediment covers the plants completely.

Sources of suspended sediment include runoff from farms, building sites and road construction. Shoreline erosion also adds sediment to the Bay.

Excess nutrients promote algae blooms that cloud the water, reducing sunlight, which the plants need to grow. Certain types of algae grow directly on the plants. Major sources of nutrients included sewage treatment plants, agricultural fields and fertilized lawns.

Bay grasses continued to disappear, hitting an all-time low of about 38,000 acres in 1984. Efforts to restore the water quality in the Chesapeake Bay watershed have had a positive effect on the grasses. In 2009, SAV distribution in the Bay was at 85,900 acres with increases occurring in the upper, middle and lower regions of the Chesapeake, marking only the second time such an increase has occurred since 2001. *[See related article for 2010 update.]*

Here are some actions the public can take to help the Chesapeake's underwater grasses:

- Reduce the amount of fertilizers applied to lawns.
- Replace some of a lawn's grass with native vegetation.
- Make sure septic systems are properly maintained.
- Plant strips of native vegetation along shorelines or streams to reduce erosion.
- Divert runoff from paved surfaces to vegetated areas.
- Avoid boating in shallow areas and Bay grass beds.
- Pump boat waste to an onshore facility.

Kathryn Reshetiloff is with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Chesapeake Bay Field Office in Annapolis. Her article is reprinted here courtesy of the Bay Journal published by Chesapeake Media Service.



The Bay's underwater grasses are a haven for blue crabs when they are juveniles or are molting.

-Credit: Chris Guy, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

RESTORING BAY GRASSES – WHERE WE STAND TODAY

Bay grasses are a unique yardstick for measuring the progress of Bay restoration because they are not under harvest pressure and their health is closely linked to water quality.

- ☺ Restoration Goal: 185,000 acres (= historic abundance, 1930's to date)
- ☹ The Low Point, 1984: 38,000 acres (21% of the Restoration Goal)
- ☹ 2010: 79,675 acres (43% of Goal) [down 6,239 acres from 2009].

The breakdown by region (sadly, our part of the Bay is doing the least well):

- ☺ Upper Bay (north of Chester R.): 21,353 acres (90% of goal)
- ☹ Middle Bay (Chester R. to Pocomoke R.): 35,446 acres (31% of goal)
- ☹ Lower Bay (Pocomoke R. to Hampton Roads): 22,876 acres (50% of goal)

☺ To finish with some good news: in 2010, high-density beds of Bay grasses accounted for 64% of the total acreage of grasses – 6% greater than 2009 and the highest percentage since 1984!

(For more information, go to the Chesapeake Bay Program at www.chesapeakebay.net)

**O Lord, how manifold are your works!
In wisdom you have made them all;
the earth is full of your creatures.
Yonder is the sea, great and wide,
creeping things innumerable are there,
living things both small and great.
Psalm 104: 24, 25 (NRSV)**

EDITORIAL: THE VISION WE SHARE

When the County embarked in 2008 on the effort to update its Comprehensive Plan, the County Commissioners drafted a "Vision Statement" to serve as the overall framework for community discussion and Plan development.

The Commissioners' draft vision statement drew heavily on earlier statements, in resolutions and elsewhere, that began to be offered shortly after the adoption of the previous comp plan in 2002. While the 2002 Plan had dutifully recited the land use planning "visions" in State law, many soon concluded that something was missing. That Plan never stated what was the citizens' vision for our county, Queen Anne's County. As a result, the 2002 Plan's recommendations didn't have to be answerable to any real goal or standard of what was being planned for, and it became too easy for all concerned to oppose implementing any recommendations they disagreed with.

The 2008 Vision Statement of the Commissioners supplied what was missing from the 2002 plan, and that statement survived virtually verbatim throughout the next two years of the Comp Plan process. That process included three Visioning Workshops held throughout the County in which approximately 300 citizens and business owners participated and an On-Line Community Survey with about 800 respondents. Today, the statement is featured on page 2 of the adopted 2010 Plan, under the heading "Overall Community Vision."

The *Chronicle* believes that it is an excellent statement and that its long history of development and acceptance entitles it to be described as "The Vision We Share." We reprint it here in full.

* * * *

The VISION is to continue the ethic that the County remains a quintessential rural community with the overall character of the County preserved as:

- *A predominantly rural county with small towns connected by creeks and county roads through fields and forest – **a great place to live;***
- *A county that encourages agriculture, seafood and maritime industries, tourism and outdoor sports, small business and high tech enterprise – **a good place to work;***
- *A county that is a faithful steward of its natural and cultural heritage – **a good neighbor for the Bay and other Eastern Shore counties;***
- *A county in which development does not impair the quality of life enjoyed by all – **a community that protects the expectations and opportunities of all its citizens;***
- *A county that supports the **highest quality of education** that seeks to fully prepare its citizens for the future.*

LOOKING AT QAC GOVERNMENT

The County Commissioners usually meet the 2nd Tuesday of each month at 9:00 am and the 4th Tuesday of each month at 5:30 pm. To confirm a specific meeting time, email LThomas@qac.org or call her at 410.758.4098. To access their agenda go to QAC.org > Information > Agendas and Minutes > County Commissioners > Agendas. Public comment is no longer scheduled for the beginning and ending of each meeting, but only somewhere towards the end.

The Planning Commission meets in the morning on the 2nd Thursday of the month. To access their agenda go to www.qac.org > Information > Agendas and Minutes > Planning Commission > Agendas. Public comment is scheduled for the beginning and ending of each meeting.

The Board of Education meets the first and third Wednesday of each month. Both meetings are open to the public. The meeting on the first Wednesday is at 6:00 pm where citizens have an opportunity to address the Board near the beginning of the meeting during the "Open Forum." The meeting on the third Wednesday is in the afternoon and is considered a Work Session; generally, there are no Open Forums at the work sessions. Google "queen anne's county public schools" to get to Board of Education on website.

The Ethics Commission meets at 5:30 pm on the 3rd Monday of each month. To access their agenda go to www.qac.org > Government > Boards and Commissions > Ethics Commission > meeting notice > agenda. Public comment is scheduled for the beginning and ending of each meeting.

QACTV-7 broadcasts the meetings of the County Commissioners, Planning Commission, and the Board of Education on a delayed basis. QACTV's website, www.qactv.com, displays their TV schedule. ⇨ **QACTV also has an up-to-date archive of the meetings of the County Commissioners, Planning Commission, Board of Education, Board of Appeals, and other videos that can be streamed to your computer.**



Turtles in the sun

-photo credit: David Godfrey

The Queen Anne's Chronicle

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Chris Pupke – Chairman of the Board

Jay Falstad – Executive Director

Mary Campbell – Editor

Queen Anne's Conservation Association (QACA), a nonprofit 501(c)(3) corporation, is the Eastern Shore's oldest conservation organization. Its mission is to promote stewardship of Queen Anne's County's natural resources and to protect its rural character and small towns while encouraging the management of prudent and sustainable growth.

Queen Anne's Conservation Association

P.O. Box 157 | Centreville, MD 21617 | www.QACA.org

PLANNING COMMISSION: MAY, JUNE HIGHLIGHTS

In February of each year, citizens may request changes to the Zoning and Subdivision Regulations (Chapter 18 of the County Code), called "text amendments". In addition, the Planning Commission itself may initiate text amendments at any time. Within 90 days of submission, the Planning Commission makes a recommendation on each amendment to the County Commissioners, who make the final decision on any change in the law.

May 12, 2011: The Planning Commission gave favorable recommendations for the adoption of two text amendments:

1) allowing, as a conditional use, a "non-profit seasonal, live-performance dinner theatre" on properties zoned agricultural (AG) or countryside (CS), and

2) allowing more than five lots on a private road, subject to approval by the Planning Commission.

The Commission requested an extension of time for consideration of a proposed amendment to permit facilities creating renewable energy for sale.

On a split vote, the Commission gave an unfavorable recommendation on a proposed text amendment to require disclosure of the names of individuals having an economic interest in an application for subdivision or site plan approval. Citizens requesting the text amendment had testified that the amendment was designed to bring greater transparency to the

application process and to give neighboring property-owners identifying information needed to discuss with land-owners any community concerns related to the proposed development.

June 2, 2011: The Planning Commission and the Economic Development Commission met jointly to consider their shared interest in providing for business development in the County. Two subcommittees were formed, as follows:

1) Subcommittee to consider priorities in the implementation of the recommendations related to economic development in the Comprehensive Plan, and

2) Subcommittee to evaluate the commercial land inventory and to suggest additional elements and use of that inventory.

June 9, 2011: At this meeting, Planning Commission members were briefed on the Department of Planning and Zoning's process for determining school capacity under the Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance and on the Department's intention to modify the way it allocates students between Matapeake Middle School and Kent Island High School in such analyses to more accurately reflect the availability of space in these two facilities. The proposed change would count ninth-grade students primarily housed at Matapeake as part of that school's population and would result in a finding of some excess existing capacity at Kent Island High School.

“A GREAT PLACE TO LIVE AND WORK” – SPREAD THE WORD!

Do you know someone who is starting a business, or thinking about re-locating a business operation? Do you know someone who knows someone who is involved in locating a business?

If so, tell them about the opportunities in QAC. People talking to people is how the County's largest full-time employer came here – because the people making the business location decision decided they wanted to live and work in this great place:

“Fourteen years ago, Winn Krozack helped move PRS Guitars to Stevensville because the location provided a quality of life in keeping with the company's vision and his own philosophy. ‘This is a great place for a business and a great place to live,’ said Krozack. ‘I live, work, play and raise my family in the most beautiful place on earth.’” (*Star Democrat*, Aug. 28, 2010)

So spread the word – let's help each other out in a tough time, and let's see those empty commercial spaces fill up! (And, while we're doing that, let's not fail to protect what makes Queen Anne's a great place to live and work.)

Commercial Development, *continued from Page 1*

trend of declining rates (see www.realtor.org/press_room/news_releases/2011/05/commercial_real_estate).

Some of the prominent structures in QAC currently available for lease or sale include: in Centreville, 152 Comet Drive (67,600 sq. ft.) and 2977 4H Park Road (17,040 sq. ft.); in Grasonville, 225 Hess Road (25,200 sq. ft.); and in Stevensville, 520 Thompson Creek Road (20,000 sq. ft.) and 540 Thompson Creek Road (34,050 sq. ft.).

Log Canoe Circle in the Chesapeake Bay Business Park in Stevensville is the street address of structures with something in excess of 180,000 square feet of vacant space. Pier One Road in the Bay Bridge Marina offers over 22,000 sq. ft.

At Kent Narrows, 1-99 Piney Narrows Road has 53,000 sq. ft. vacant. In the Kent Towne Market, there are 45,000 sq. ft. vacant, including, as we all know, the old Safeway space (6,000 sq. ft.). In Grasonville, a total of over 43,000 sq. ft. is available.

Why Vacancies Matter

Filling these existing vacant structures is important to all owners of commercial property and to citizens generally, not just to the unfortunate developers of the empty buildings. As the AKRF Report (see www.qaca.org) points out (p. 27):

“The extensive vacancies and available capacity in Queen Anne's County ultimately reduce the income potential of commercial properties and hold back their assessable value. It also makes properties more vulnerable to tax assessment challenges based on documented actual income levels for any given property that may be far below the assessment basis.”

In plainer English, all Queen Anne's County taxpayers are suffering directly or indirectly from the glut of buildings that aren't rented out.

As noted above, the prospects for renting out the existing vacant capacity are not good. AKRF finds (p. 24): “In terms of demand for commercial

real estate, conversations with brokers active in the County indicate demand has tapered off since 2008, particularly for office space in comparison with industrial and flex space. Realtors indicate that the market is currently oversupplied and have difficulty leasing vacant office and industrial space.”



The Centreville Service Center, 152 Comet Drive, vacant since 2008

-Chronicle photo

Developing Land Already Zoned Commercial

Data presented by staff to the Planning Commission this past January showed that the County currently has 263 parcels, totaling 819 acres, that are zoned commercial or industrial but have yet to be built on – and that's not counting what is available in the municipalities like Centreville. When one adds this undeveloped commercial acreage to the vacant existing commercial space, the County's capacity to absorb future commercial growth is seen to far outweigh its ability actually to attract that growth.

The numbers in the AKRF Report concerning the County's major business parks (Chesapeake, Centreville, and Thompson Creek) make the point in dramatic terms (p. 27):

“[T]he existing parks alone could absorb about 930,000 square feet of office space housing about 3,800 employees and another million square feet of industrial space accommodating 2,100 employees. In total, the absorption of 5,900 jobs would essentially double the county's current office employment base, almost triple the industrial base and increase overall employment by 45 percent. This represents many years of economic development and means that suitable capacity exists now and into the future without sprawling commercial development into new areas.”

Zoning More Land Commercial

The AKRF analysts take a dim view of increasing the County's acreage that is zoned commercial, for two reasons. First and foremost is, as suggested above, the adverse impact that adding to the over-supply of commercial property will have on the values of existing properties and therefore on tax revenues.

For example, the current proposals for new commercial zoning of hundreds of acres of agricultural land near Wye Mills at Routes 50/213 cannot have any but a harmful effect on efforts

This is the on-site sign for the Centreville Business Park, an 80-acre development with offices, warehouse space, and finished sites for development. The five buildings shown in the middle of the sign (the “Corsica Business Campus”) have yet to be constructed; the buildings will range in size from 14,400 to 30,000 sq. ft. The 67,500 sq. ft. Office/Warehouse (the “Centreville Service Center”) is an existing structure, vacant since 2008, with drive-in and loading dock doors that can accommodate industrial and manufacturing operations and businesses requiring both office and industrial space. The finished sites can be divided from one to 47 acres and will have access to Route 213 via the new Laser Drive.

-Chronicle photo

wholly new development, rather it would be more likely to create a commercial creep, or sprawl. There is certainly evidence of this beginning to occur along the key commercial corridors in the County. There is a long precedent history that such change over time has an adverse effect on many quality of life issues, including traffic and circulation and conflicts with adjacent residential and agricultural areas.”

Bottom Line: What's the Strategy?

AKRF sums up (pp. 27-28):

- “While new commercial activity in newly zoned areas may add to the tax base (as would activity in existing parks and other commercially zoned areas), it would likely come at a twofold expense: further weakening and undermining the existing commercially zoned areas; and creating higher than typical new County expenditure requirements to provide services to an extended area.
- “The extensive vacancies and available capacity in Queen Anne's County ultimately reduce the income potential of commercial properties and hold back their assessable value.
- “Economic development efforts should focus on finding potential new commercial users to fill existing capacities, including vacant built space and vacant or underutilized parcels in already zoned lands.”

HOW'S IT GOING WITH THE CORSICA RESTORATION PROJECT?

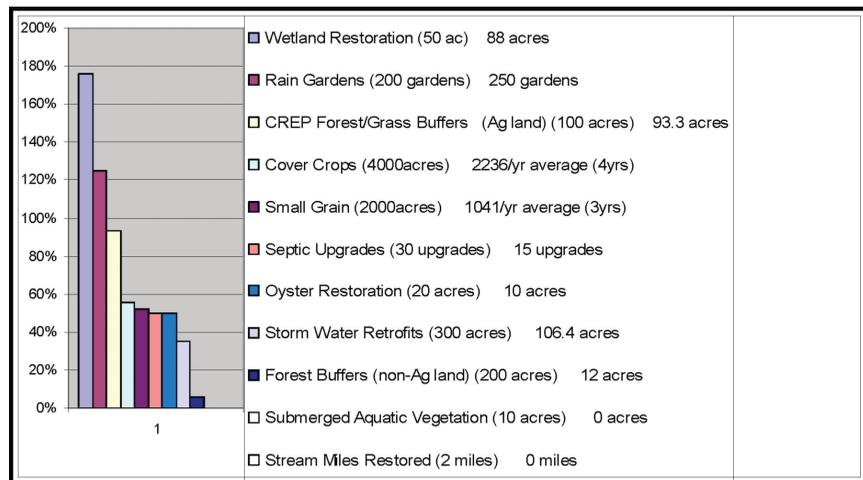
Special from JIM MALARO, Centreville

The Corsica River Conservancy (CRC) sponsored a public meeting at the end of May to provide watershed residents and other interested parties with an advance look at a report being prepared by the consortium of government and non-profit entities working on the Corsica Restoration Project. The keynote speaker at the meeting was Kevin Smith of the MD Department of Natural Resources (DNR) who coordinates this project along with Eva Kerchner, Centreville Zoning Administrator/Watershed Manager. The following is a status report based, in part, on that presentation.

The Corsica River Restoration Project was formally initiated in 2005. Its objectives are to (1) restore the Corsica River and remove it from the EPA list of impaired waterways and (2) provide guidance to other watershed restoration projects in the Chesapeake Bay. \$19 million was budgeted by the State for this project but so far only about \$5 million has actually been allocated. However, this has been supplemented by substantial volunteer efforts from many local partners and participants.

The Project has been carried out in accordance with a Watershed Restoration Action Strategy (WRAS) that has been recognized as one the best plans out of hundreds reviewed from across the nation. The WRAS identified 13 specific goals which, if met, would likely restore many aspects of Corsica River water quality, habitats, and living resources. The immediate objective of these goals was to reduce the levels of pollutants (principally nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P) and sediment) entering the River and its tributaries.

Percent of WRAS Goals Achieved



Progress during the past 5 years toward meeting the goals is shown in the graph. Although results are mixed, substantial progress has been made in many areas.

We are beginning to see tangible improvements in the health of streams which feed the River. In fact, the Three Bridges Branch was the most improved tributary in the entire Chester River complex in 2009. However, this has not yet led to tangible improvement in the health of the River itself. There are two basic reasons for this lag: (1) legacy pollution and (2) threshold effects.

Legacy Pollution

Pollutants enter the River through air deposition, surface runoff, and groundwater migration. Pollutants entering the River from air deposition and runoff will cease almost immediately if the source of the pollution is cut off. However, migration of pollutants through the groundwater is extremely slow. It may take pollutants which enter the groundwater several years to migrate into the River.

This means that pollution introduced into the groundwater will continue to migrate into the River for years even after the source of the pollution has been eliminated.

Threshold Effects

In a complex ecological system, many effects only become obvious after a threshold has been crossed. For example, Submerged Aquatic Vegetation (SAV) is critical to the health of fish, crabs, oysters, and other aquatic life. SAV produce oxygen (through photosynthesis) and provide food and shelter necessary for their survival.

SAV need sunlight to survive and grow. So if a river is six feet deep, but sunlight can only penetrate two feet, there can be no SAV. If water clarity is increased to the point that sunlight can penetrate five and a half feet, SAV still cannot survive. However, a small additional reduction in the pollution level that increases water clarity another six inches will have a dramatic effect. This is commonly referred to as a threshold or "tipping point."



Corsica River downstream toward the Centreville Wharf

-Chronicle photo

Report on Corsica Ecology

In October 2009, the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science (UMCES) published a report for DNR entitled "An Ecological Assessment of the Corsica River Estuary and Watershed". The UMCES Report suggests we are indeed approaching a "tipping point" where an additional 50% reduction in N loading would produce:

- 70% decline in summer chlorophyll-a (i.e., algae blooms)
- 75% improvement in water clarity
- 95% increase in sediments that could support benthic (i.e., bottom-growing) algae
- 60% increase in SAV habitat
- 80% reduction in hypoxic hours (i.e., duration of reduced oxygen) at the river bottom

According to the Report, currently only 10% of the River bottom has sufficient light to support SAV, and only about 28% receives enough light to support benthic algae. A relatively small change in water clarity would greatly increase the area of bottom receiving adequate light for growth of beneficial plant communities. This should return the river to a bottom dominated (benthic) system.

The Report also asserts that if both septic systems and storm water runoff were effectively treated to remove N, and an aggressive cover crop program were instituted, N loads to the river could be reduced an additional 50%.

The Bottom Line

The bottom line is that we are making progress, but that restoring the health of the Corsica River is not a short term project. In order to reap the fruits of our labor, we need to continue, and perhaps temporarily increase, our efforts. If we can cross the appropriate "tipping points" and restore the natural resilience of the ecosystem, we can then maintain the health of the River by continuing efforts at a much lower maintenance level.

Jim Malaro is the President of the Corsica River Conservancy.



Crabbing off Grandma's Pier

-Courtesy John O'Neill

TUCKAHOE STATE PARK – JEWEL OF THE EASTERN SHORE

Queen Anne's County shares a rare jewel with Caroline County. That's Tuckahoe State Park – a “stream and valley” park divided by Tuckahoe Creek, which runs the length of the park's 3,800-acres.

Once home to Nanticoke Indian villages, today it offers a 60-acre lake for fishing and boating and 20 miles of hiking, biking, and equestrian trails. Once the Underground Railroad ran through it, today it is crossed by the coast-to-coast American Discovery Trail.

Tuckahoe State Park has 51 camp sites, 33 of which have electrical hook-ups, and a central bathhouse with showers and toilets. Four youth group camp sites, popular with scouts and other organizations, accommodate 30 people each. The Park has two picnic pavilions, each with an 80-person capacity. Four camper cabins that sleep four are available for rent.

The popular Challenge Course boasts a 40' climbing wall, a 25' pumper pole, 50' giant swing, a tube net, and a zip line. Fishing rods, canoes, kayaks, and mountain bikes can be rented.

Educational programs abound at Tuckahoe. Interested groups are instructed on subjects ranging from the Secret Life of Owls to Canoeing 101 and Mountain Biking 101. There are Adventure Day Camps for students ages 7 -14.

Events of varying kinds occur frequently at Tuckahoe. Last month, for example, there was a Triathlon, with a 2-mile run, 10-mile bike ride, and 1-mile canoe paddle.

Equestrian Center

The Park leases land within it to the Equestrian Center, a group now having a major influence on the equine community in the state of Maryland. The Center promotes equestrian activities such as 4-H, games days, trail riding, driving, jousting, parades, and horse shows which include jumping, dressage, and English and Western equitation.

The Equestrian Center features a barn with several stalls, a clubhouse, tree-shaded picnic area, a 300' x 150' outdoor arena with a permanent raised announcer's stand, lighted jousting path, permanently installed audio system which covers the entire grounds, and 15 miles of trails throughout the state park.

The Equestrian Center is known for its many special events throughout the year. Upcoming, among others, are a Night Joust at 7 pm on Saturday, July 16 and Speed Shows on Sunday, July 31 and Sunday, August 31. Then there is the First Annual “Saddlin' Up for the Cure Ride” on Saturday, September 10 and the famed “Haunted Walk” on October 29.

Stargazers and Archers

Each month, members of the Delmarva Stargazers gather at the Equestrian Center to enjoy the star-studded night skies – Tuckahoe being in fact the darkest night location on the Atlantic Coastal Plain between northern Georgia and southern Vermont. (Light pollution here would be a major environmental loss!) See related article by Stargazers President Jerry Truitt on this page.

Another group making regular use of the Park is the Tuckahoe Bowmen, archery enthusiasts

who starting in 1986 turned an old gravel pit into a handsome range for traditional and compound bows. The range is regularly open to the public on weekdays, and there are several competitive shoots during the course of the year.

On the second Saturday of every month, the Bowmen host special “3-D shoots” with 20 to 30 realistic animal targets approached as if in a hunt. Last May the Bowmen successfully held their first Youth Day, with certified instructors and equipment for the Scouts and other youngsters in attendance. Club president Sam Durner welcomes inquiries from interested persons, especially youngsters who may want to try out the sport; call his answering machine at 410-479-3475.

Adkins Arboretum

Nestled into Tuckahoe is Adkins Arboretum, the only public garden that focuses solely on plants native to the mid-Atlantic coastal plain. Adkins has its own four miles of walking trails on 400 acres containing over 600 species of native shrubs, trees, wildflowers, and grasses – and its own full calendar of events and activities! (For example, check out the “Marvels of Milkweeds”, food source for the Monarch Butterfly, with ecologist Dr. Sylvan Kaufman on Wednesday, July 27.)

Is it any wonder that there were 65,000 visitors to Tuckahoe last year (and that's not counting the Equestrian Center or Adkins Arboretum), of whom about 15,000 were overnight campers and users of the cabins? Spacious and well laid out, the Park easily absorbs them all, providing the kinds of experiences of the natural world that are ever rarer in most people's daily lives.

Further information about Tuckahoe State Park is available at their website, www.dnr.state.md.us/publiclands/eastern/tuckahoe.asp; about the Equestrian Center at www.tuckahoequestriancenter.net; about the Delmarva Stargazers at www.delmarvastargazers.org; and about Adkins Arboretum at www.adkinsarboretum.org.



Summertime fishing at Tuckahoe Lake

-Chronicle photo



Kayaking at Tuckahoe Lake

-Chronicle photo

THE DARK SKIES OF TUCKAHOE – STARGAZERS' DELIGHT ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Special from JERRY TRUITT, Chesapeake City

The Delmarva Stargazers, an amateur astronomy club founded in 1993, quickly realized that we were lucky enough to have access to a place that is friendly to our activity. Tuckahoe State Park offers us some of the darkest skies on the east coast.

In an effort to use Tuckahoe to our fullest advantage, the Delmarva Stargazers hold two regional “star parties” each year at the Equestrian Center. Our star party events may attract a 100 or more star-gazers from near and far who come to enjoy Tuckahoe's dark skies. Our club members also meet at the ball field every new moon that weather permits.

We use the park for meteor showers, eclipses and other astronomical events on many other nights too. Our members may be at Tuckahoe as many as 20 times a year, and we are frequently joined by members of the Howard Astronomical League.

While the Delmarva Stargazers appreciate the dark skies for our activity, we are also aware of how important it is to the many creatures of the night that share the darkness with us. We know that ambient light disrupts the life cycles of many of our night-time friends, including mosquito-eating birds, bats, frogs, and toads, to name a few. All are adversely affected by a night sky full of light.

Our desire to protect the dark skies of Tuckahoe is only the beginning. We all need to think about the lighting that we use, and we need to let our political leaders know we think dark skies are important. The right lighting uses less energy, saves money, directs the light where it's needed -- not in the sky -- and prevents the life of nocturnal creatures from being disrupted.

Jerry Truitt is President of the Delmarva Stargazers.



Cantaloupes: Bob Baer anticipates a bountiful crop, in time for the Fourth of July opening of his farm stand
-Chronicle photo

Kate Mason Kraszewski: Mason Farms Produce

For twenty years, Bill and Susanne Mason sold their home-grown vegetables at a stand attached to their old dairy barn. Three years ago they replaced it with a new building, big enough to house their increasingly large and diverse offerings.

The timing was perfect, as daughter Kate, who sold at the stand as a youngster and went on to earn a master's degree in agricultural economics, decided that the Eastern Shore and the family farm was where she wanted to be. She now operates the stand, which is supplied from the Masons' 800 acre farm and by other local farmers, including the Godfreys.

The Masons' 800 acre farm includes 500 certified organic acres, enabling it to sell both regular and

organic produce. In addition to fruit and vegetables, their farm stand carries Eastern Shore yogurt, ice cream, pies, bread, cheese, free range chickens and chicken and duck eggs, along with grass-fed beef from their in-law's family farm in New York. The stand is a favorite stop for beach-goers — and those of us who live here are lucky to have this wide variety of farm-fresh products so near-by.

The Masons' farm stand is located at 1905 Ruthsburg Rd. (Route 304), in Queen Anne. They open May 1st and this year Kate is planning to extend the season into November with fall and winter veggies. Closed on Mondays and Tuesdays, the stand is open from 10 — 6, except Saturday, when the hours are 9-5. Their website is www.masonsheritage.com

Tom Godfrey: Godfrey Farm

Like Bob Baer and Kate Mason, Tom Godfrey (of Annapolis Whole Foods fame!) has been raising and selling vegetables since he was a child, learning the business from his parents. In fact, he is the third generation in the produce business; his grandparents were vegetable farmers in New Jersey.

Tom and Lisa Godfrey sell their produce both retail at their farm stand in Sudlersville and wholesale to supermarkets like Whole Foods and Grauls and to other farm stands. In addition to their asparagus, tomatoes, sweet corn, cucumbers, melons (including honeydew and canary), the Godfreys also feature a "pick-your-own" option on their 250 acre farm. Strawberries, blueberries, and tart cherries are available for picking in the late spring/early summer, and peaches from late June until early September.

The Godfreys' farm stand is located at 302 Leager Road in Sudlersville and is open 7am — 5pm 7 days a week beginning in mid-April through mid-September/early October. Their informative website is www.Godfreysfarm.com.

Phyllis and John Perkins: Perkins Produce and Flowers

Phyllis and John Perkins sell their own early tomatoes as well as locally grown fruit and vegetables at their stand on Wright's Neck Road, just off Route 18 between Centreville and Queenstown. During the summer months, John Perkins is up and out early, visiting local farms to select just-picked sweet corn and other fresh produce for their customers.

The Perkins back up what they sell, telling folks to return anything that doesn't measure up to expectations. (Living nearby, I'm a regular customer of theirs and I've never had any cause to complain about a purchase.) Their hours are Monday, Wednesday-Friday 10-5:30; Saturday 9-5; Sunday 9-4, closed Tuesday.



David Godfrey of Grasonville has kindly given the Chronicle permission to publish images from a marvelous collection of photographs that he has taken locally. This picture is of a raccoon swimming near Wye Island.

People have mixed emotions about raccoons, because they love sweet corn and fruits, they can carry rabies, and they are sometimes uninvited guests in poultry houses. On the other hand, they were here before we were (the word "raccoon" itself was recorded on Captain John Smith's list of Powhatan words as *aroughcun*), they are very smart, and they have been prized throughout American history, not only for their famous fur, but also as a food source.

Barbecued raccoon was a traditional food on American farms. It was often a festive meal: US President Calvin Coolidge's pet raccoon Rebecca was originally sent to be served at the White House Thanksgiving Dinner. The first edition of Irma Rombauer's *The Joy of Cooking* (1931) contained a recipe for preparing raccoon.

SEE OUR PRODUCTIVE COUNTRYSIDE — VISIT THE SOURCES OF QAC'S ABUNDANCE!

[Queen Anne's County Farm Trail, Saturday and Sunday, July 30 and 31, 12 to 4](#)

All of the farms and farm stands listed on the front page of this issue of the *Chronicle* will take part in the Farm Trail (with the exception of Charles Bryan and Fresh Market).

Also welcoming visitors from noon to 4 on July 30 and 31 are:

An Eastridge Garden

533 Dulin Clark Rd.
Centreville
Retail garden center and gift shop

Cassinelli Winery & Vineyard

3830 Church Hill Rd, Church Hill
Grapes and other fruit

Cedar Run Farm

320 John Powell Rd
Sudlersville
Naturally raised beef, pork, chicken

Homestead Farm

2250 Millington Rd.
Millington
Organic vegetables and grain

Lowe's Bayshore Nursery

703 Love Point Rd.
Stevensville
Plants, shrubs, trees

Nash's Plant Farm

108 Indian Trace
Stevensville
Retail plant farm

Party Animals

105 Wayne St.
Sudlersville
Mobile petting zoo and pony rides

Pintail Point

511 Pintail Point Farm Lane
Queenstown
Farming, fishing, hunting, harness horses

Sugar Magnolia Farm

1021 Damonstown Rd.,
Queen Anne
Alpacas and alpaca yarns

Univ. of MD Extension

Courthouse Square, Centreville
Learn about farming in QAC

Unity Church Hill Nursery

3621 Church Hill Rd
Church Hill
Trees, shrubs, perennials, rain garden

Wildflower Nurseries

915 Romancoke Rd.
Stevensville
Plants, shrubs, trees

Note: The University of MD Extension Service will be at the Courthouse Square in Centreville Saturday morning only. Master Gardeners will answer plant-related questions and kids can explore crops grown in QAC. For further information about the QAC Farm Trail call 410.604.2100 or visit www.discoverqueenannes.com.