Hello MPEA Friends & Volunteers!

Much like last month, the big news still has to be about the goats but I assure you that other activities did take place in the MPEA. For instance: the Howard County Bird Club led a group of nature center guests on a bird watching excursion, a troop of Girl Scouts made us a supply of bird boxes, and a small number of volunteer events were also hosted. As the temperatures heat up, people visit the environmental area less frequently but it is also when we get great weather to get our work done. There's plenty of work to carry us through the summer, some of which we already started in June.

Bon voyage

May and June of 2015 will go down in infamy as the “Time when we had the goats“. Having the Eco-goats on site caused a mini-sensation and people still ask about them daily. The Saturday afternoon outreach event was well attended and more families showed up than we realistically had parking for. Thankfully everybody was willing to work together to make room for one another to park. Even though the goats left early on this month Davey still has his hands full with the remainder of the project. Much follow-up work is still necessary within the goat treatment area and his Weed Warrior volunteers are being used for that purpose. Thank you to the Chesapeake Bay Trust for supplying the grant that made it all happen!

Fieldwork

Aside from renting goats we have been using people to control non-native, invasive plants lately too. Staff has been working extensively on control of Wavyleaf basketgrass (*Oplismenus hirtellus ssp. undulatifolius*) using a combination of mechanical and chemical control methods. Canada (*Cirsium arvense*) and Bull thistle (*Cirsium vulgare*) have been on the target list too. Paid contractors were also hired to perform our annual treatment of invasive plants growing in our 18 acres of meadow. By the way, the milkweed seedlings planted by volunteers last month are doing well although a number of them were eaten by unknown critters.

Right now is the best time of year to hand-pull any Wavyleaf basketgrass that you find. In a few short weeks the grass will develop seeds that are sticky and easy to spread around. At that point you should really avoid walking through it. This is just one of many great tips we learned from Dr. Vanessa Beauchamp, the region’s go-to researcher for questions about basketgrass. Dr. Beauchamp and a group of Master Gardener volunteers braved the heat to remove basketgrass and Japanese barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*) from the South Wind Trail during the June Conservation Stewardship program. Keep in mind that the program is on hiatus during July and August, returning on September 22nd when all are welcome to attend, not just Master Gardeners.
Trail News

Several thunderstorms lately have really packed a wallop on a couple of trail sections. The spots are easy to find because they are either washed out or filled with water. The rest of the trail system is drying up nicely and we’ll be able to proceed with repairs soon without causing further damage. Soil and stone will be stockpiled in the same locations as last summer, close to the first trail split. The staging area can get a little messy during our work but so far the park users have been very supportive of the trail repair work and realize that sometimes we have to make a mess to fix a mess. Trail projects are slated to be taking place throughout the entire summer.

Construction

Before you come out for a visit please keep in mind that there is a detour in place on Trotter Road. The portion of Trotter Road which is closed is 1 mile south of our main entrance, and also south of the traffic circle. Road construction will take approximately 6 weeks after which the road will be reopened. Immediately adjacent to our main entrance is the material staging area for this road project. Be extra cautious as you drive past because there are large construction vehicles entering and exiting the roadway.

Interesting Links

There are two items to share this month. The first is a glimmer of good news surrounding the disease White Nose Syndrome which is killing bats:


The last item concerns putting an end to volcano mulching:


I hope to see you out in the MPEA,

Jeff

That’s no weed. It is Milkweed! One of several hundred seedlings of Asclepias syriaca that volunteers planted.
The Middle Patuxent Environmental Area (MPEA), established in 1996, is 1021 acres in size and contains a diversity of habitat types. There are upland and bottomland hardwood forest, fields, wetlands, ponds, and riparian (riverine) habitats. The primary components of the MPEA's mission are natural resource management, education, research and recreation. **Successfully delivering our mission depends on the efforts of volunteers such as you!**

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**Conservation Stewardship Project**

**No experience necessary, one-time volunteers are welcome.**

**Vine Cutting & Tree Shelter Repair**

**September 22 / South Wind Circle Trailhead**

Hundreds of native trees and shrubs have been planted by our volunteers and our meadows are also surrounded by mature stands of native hardwood trees. These majestic meadow neighbors and our volunteer planting sites are succumbing to the ill effects of several different invasive vines. Come navigate the meadow edges and de-vine the mature trees. Then progress to maintenance on a small glade of Cedar trees and/or a riparian buffer planting site.

**Autumn Olive Cutting**

**October 27 / South Wind Circle Trailhead**

Autumn olive shrubs are an unwelcome remnant of the game farm that once existed in this area. On this morning come continue our efforts to rid the trail edges of this woody invader. Olive is a formidable foe so we use a variety of methods over the course of several events. To reward you for your vigorous efforts, we've invited Sara Tangren to teach about autumn tree identification and the reasons for the different colors of fall foliage.