



# SUMMARY

## The Alice Ferguson Foundation's Potomac Watershed Trash Summit

March 16, 2006

At: The World Bank • Washington, DC

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### **Summary of Next Steps for the Region (Group Action Planning Wrap-Up Session/Reports from Panel Sessions)**

#### ► **Trash Hot Spots and Regional Successes**

1. Promote Adopt-A-Stream programs, such as the one in Fairfax, as a low-cost, volunteer based tool to put trails in the watershed. These encourage residents to feel a sense of ownership in their neighborhoods and to keep them clean.
2. Time cleanups for the spring and fall, to limit exposure to poison ivy, snakes, extreme temperatures, mosquitoes, and overgrowth of vegetation.
3. Coordinate cleanups and education programs with schools to work around school holidays and include programs in curriculum.
4. Obtain sponsorship for flyers and other promotional materials to aid in advertising.
5. Items such as funny or clever t-shirts (like the t-shirt that the Friends of Sligo Creek group has) are a great way to get people involved and advertise events, behavior, or organizations.
6. Small cities and towns should work together on costly but effective methods of trash control (such as sharing the cost of a street sweeper, like College Park, Berwyn Heights, New Carrollton, and Greenbelt have done).
7. Low- to no-cost solutions like homemade trash skimmers are very effective and are great when used in combination with Adopt-a-Stream programs or with school and youth groups.
8. Small groups can partner with other organizations, cities, or counties to handle tipping fees after cleanups.

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### **Detailed Panel Session Notes**

#### **Trash Hot Spots and Regional Successes**

**Synopsis:** Many local groups are already actively working on innovative methods to get rid of the trash problem in their areas. Learn and discuss efforts to map and monitor trash "hot spots", hear local successes, share ideas, collaborate with peers, and invent new ideas for your own communities to work toward a Trash

Free Potomac by 2013.

**Facilitator:** *Holly Bamford, Program Manager, Marine Debris, Office of Response and Restoration, NOAA National Ocean Service*

**Panel Members:**

- Fred Rose, Branch Chief, Watershed Planning and Assessment Branch, Storm Water Planning Division, Fairfax County Department of Public Works
- Claudia Hamblin-Katnik, Ph.D., Watershed Program Administrator, City of Alexandria
- Debbie Veliz, Izaak Walton League, Executive Assistant for Conservation, Friends of Sligo Creek
- Ed Murtagh, Friends of Sligo Creek Steward
- Dennis Fleming, Chief of Solid Waste, Charles County – Leader of Mason Springs conservation effort
- William (Ed) Pickens, President, Fairfax Trails and Streams
- Robert Stumpff, City of College Park

► **Presentation by Fred Rose**

Fairfax County has mapped trash hot spots in the county to strategically address the problems. The County uses public engagement a great deal and it is two-tracked, using steering committees and public forums. Laura Grape from the county works directly with schools and watershed groups to promote stewardship and encourage citizen groups to conduct cleanup efforts. The County faced 700 cases of illegal dumping last year and removed more than 2,000 bags of trash through volunteer efforts. Fairfax County runs a radio campaign for 2-3 months and is setting a goal to reduce trash and to connect people with storm drains and streams.

- *Is there a strategy to reduce trash in business areas?*  
The Tyson's Corner revitalization plan will incorporate trash reduction strategies.

► **Presentation by Claudia Hamblin-Katnik, Ph.D.**

The City of Alexandria is starting a stream assessment, including a trash survey, to determine trash hot spots. The solid waste department knows where trash hot spots are and the department frequently visits these sites. Cultural barriers prevent a general education and outreach program in Alexandria. Alexandria also has a combined sewage outflow system (CSO) that combines raw sewage and storm water during major rain events. These CSOs, as is the case with many storm water systems, are a direct pathway for litter and trash to enter streams and rivers. The City of Alexandria has a small staff and does not have a large volunteer program; however, they partner with Arlington to complete volunteer-based tasks.

► **Presentation by Debbie Veliz**

Homemade trash skimmers are being used in Maryland on Sligo Creek and in Tennessee. The skimmers are low- to no-cost and can be easily assembled. They are made of empty plastic milk jugs wrapped in construction netting (the plastic, orange kind) and tied with string or cord. These long, floatable skimmers then rest on the surface of the water keeping trash from flowing past. Students and youth groups can easily make these and maintain them. The skimmers need to be cleaned after any rain event.

► **Presentation by Ed Murtagh**

The Friends of Sligo Creek have worked with the Izaak Walton League on the litter skimmer and they also have their own trash reduction strategy. The FOSC breaks the watershed into segments, each one having its own steward. They conduct education and outreach and also use chain linked fence, submerged partially in water, to trap trash before it flows downstream. Students and community organizations can easily monitor and maintain the trash traps after rain events.

- *How do the litter skimmers/trash traps perform under heavy flow?*  
They work well but need to be cleaned after any rain event.

► **Presentation by Dennis Fleming**

Dennis has long been a Potomac Watershed Cleanup volunteer at the same site in Charles County. After years of seeing a particular piece of property on Mattawoman Creek inundated with trash, he and a group of twelve citizens decided to purchase the property to clean it up and maintain it permanently. The county prevents development along stream valleys.

- *Suggestions for cleanup recruitment:*  
Use print and radio media to attract volunteers by offering community service credits. Community service is a great alternative to fines for teenagers who litter or otherwise break the law.

► **Presentation by William (Ed) Pickens**

The Rails to Trails program in Fairfax has been extremely effective on Pimmit Run. They use media publicity, face-to-face contact, and phone calls to gather support for cleanup efforts. Their cleanup efforts, including Adopt-a-Stream, involve citizens in several ways: using educational efforts such as “What is a watershed?” media campaigns; doing stream monitoring with high school students; and using trails to get people to the stream valley. Building new trails is a great way to create a vested interest in people so that they feel a connection to the area and to maintaining it.

- *Suggestions for cleanup activities:*  
Schedule cleanups for the fall or spring before poison ivy, mosquitoes, vegetation overgrowth, snakes, and extreme temperatures/storms make cleanups difficult. Also, it is important to consider school schedules when involving youth. Waders are often useful for removing submerged trash and trash in streams and creeks. Partnering is important: for example, through a partnership with FCPA, all the trash collected is hauled away.

The most common problem items found in Pimmet Run during cleanups are plastic bottles, cans, and tires. Another problem for Pimmet Run is a lack of enforcement for illegal dumping and littering. For example, signs are not allowed in the right of way, but there is no enforcement and signs become trash.

- *Are cleanups picking up historical trash (i.e. trash that is embedded in the stream)?*

Cleanups used to be that way, but now 80 percent of the trash picked up is new.

- *Is leaf fall an issue in your fall cleanup?*  
Not really.

► **Presentation by Robert Stumpff**

The cities of College Park, Berwyn Heights, Greenbelt, and New Carrollton, Maryland, have a unique collaboration. They share a street sweeper. By sharing the street sweeper, each jurisdiction is only responsible for one quarter of the cost and maintenance. New sweepers cost about \$100,000.00: too much for many jurisdictions to take on alone. The cities have determined that the program works best by keeping a designated street sweeper operator, who rotates with the machine. This cuts down on maintenance issues and increases efficiency. Instead of training four operators, they train one. The debris removed by the sweeper in a 3-4 week period fills a ten-yard container! The sweeper is used to clean business districts and residential areas.

► **Presentation by John Galli**

The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments conducts a trash survey to monitor trash accumulation on the Anacostia River. This data is used to look at trends in tidal trash hot spots and to determine where attention needs to be paid. The Anacostia Trash Reduction Strategy was written in 2001 to address the trash problem in the Anacostia Watershed. The strategy has served as a model and starting point for the overall Trash Free Potomac Watershed Initiative.