




**MONTGOMERY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PARKS**  
THE MARYLAND - NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION


**MCPB**  
**Item # 9**  
**June 14, 2007**

**MEMORANDUM – Information Item**

Date: June 6, 2007

To: Montgomery County Planning Board

Via: John E. Hench, Acting Chief, Park Planning and Stewardship Division 

From: Doug Redmond, Principal Natural Resources Specialist,  
Park Planning and Stewardship Division   
301-650-4367

Subject: Audubon Naturalist Society Water Quality Monitoring Program

**Recommendation:**

This item is presented for information only. Volunteer monitors will be participating in the presentation.

**Background:**

In 1990, two Audubon Naturalist Society (ANS) members (Ginny Barnes and Randy Slovic) informed Neal Fitzpatrick that in 1980 Montgomery County had suspended its water quality monitoring program for physical and chemical parameters. They suggested that ANS take a lead role in establishing a citizen's monitoring program in the county. ANS invited Maryland Save Our Streams to a meeting and discussed the possibility of using the SOS protocol and collaborating with them to get a program off the ground. Maryland SOS didn't have the resources to start a new program here; they have run a program in the Baltimore metro area since the 1980s. ANS decided to establish their own monitoring program, work with an advisory committee, develop their own protocol, and train citizens. M-NCPPC staff (Keith Van Ness) participated in the technical advisory committee that developed the protocol and quality assurance/quality control standards.

The program's goal is to heighten public awareness of the vital need to protect healthy watersheds and restore degraded ones. The ANS protocol focuses on aquatic insects and their function as a "living" report card on the health of watersheds; it is a modified version of the EPA Rapid Bioassessment Protocol. ANS collects data three times a year (May, July, September) with an optional winter monitoring session.

The protocol used is appropriate for citizen monitors; it is less rigorous than the one used by M-NCPPC and DEP staff as part of the Montgomery County government water quality data collection.

1992 was the first year ANS collected data. They submit their data on an annual basis to MC DEP and to M-NCPPC staff when they request it. The data is incorporated into the Countywide Stream Protection Strategy. The data is also submitted to Maryland DNR who seeks data from various sources to compile the 305(b) report, a regular water quality inventory required under the federal Clean Water Act. Because of the large number of sites monitored by ANS volunteers, and the fact that each site is visited several times every year, this program is a good source of “early warning” information about problems in the watersheds.

ANS and M-NCPPC received a grant from the Maryland Department of Natural Resources and the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency to collect water quality monitoring data in rural watersheds. Five sites in agricultural areas were monitored – four of them on parkland which was leased for agriculture. M-NCPPC staff (Doug Redmond and Claudia Donegan) worked with ANS staff and volunteers to collect the data.

This spring (2007) ANS is monitoring fifteen sites in Montgomery County. Fourteen of those sites are located in Montgomery County parks. The only non-park site is on a tributary of Ten-Mile Creek on farmland owned by Norman Mease. Each site is assigned a team of three – six individuals, including a team leader.

Since the inception of the ANS Water Quality Monitoring Program, M-NCPPC has been an active partner with ANS in this highly beneficial effort, and it is hoped that this relationship can continue for many years to come.