



july 2014

Prince George's County

DEPARTMENT OF THE
ENVIRONMENT

Green Scene
newsletter



Rushern L. Baker, III
County Executive

The DoE Mission

The Department of the Environment works for a healthy, beautiful and sustainable County through programs that provide clean water, flood control, recycling and waste management, animal management and pet adoption in partnership with residents and other stakeholders.

DIRECTOR'S *Corner*



Dear Friends,

In the last year our agency has been going through a transformation as we become focused on our environmental mission. The establishment of the Department of Permitting, Inspections, and Enforcement (DPIE) has been a major step in this direction as we have shed many of our non-environmental functions, which took most of our time and attention.

Just like DPIE, we are a new agency with a streamlined mission. That is the main reason we are renamed Prince George's County's Department of the Environment (DoE). This decision was made after much discussion among senior staff, guidance from the County Executive's Office and coordination with the County Council.

In addition to the creation of DPIE there are other good reasons to make this change. DER's association with code enforcement and building permits is still dominating in the public mind. This has been made clear during many public meetings and the constituent complaints we receive weekly about tall grass, broken windows, permits and other issues that we do not deal with anymore. It's time to shed that skin.

Secondly, with all respect to our forebears, the concept of our work being about "Resources" is outdated and limited. Our relationship with the earth is not just about extracting items of value (water, timber, minerals and other resources). It is about much more: protection, enhancement, restoration, health, enjoyment and quality of life. The term "Environment" is more than enough to stand on its own without the need to place a monetary value on it.

With our new focus on the environment, we are able to deliver so much more for a clean, green, healthy and beautiful Prince George's County. It is important that we communicate this emphasis as much as possible, as a rebranding and marketing efforts are accompanying the name change. On the cover of this issue is our new logo created by our talented Graphic Designer Kenan Langston. The "sprout" image communicates a fresh start, vitality and optimism. The sprout image also suggests that growth requires us to protect and nurture, as we must do in our environmental work in the County. Finally, it is catchy and attractive.

As we've said before, our success making our County green and healthy requires the active engagement of the public. This rebranding and our new efforts in community outreach, press relations and social media are steps that are both necessary, and - most importantly, if we are going to succeed - fun.

- Adam
Director



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Cover photo: Logo for the new Department of the Environment



LIKE US ON FACEBOOK

The DoE Newsletter is a monthly publication of the Department of the Environment. We welcome story suggestions, photos and special event articles.

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www.princegeorgescountymd.gov/sites/environmentalresources

IN THE BEGINNING: What started in the 70s as the Office of Licenses and Permits (L&P), was changed by an executive order to the Department of Environmental Resources (DER) in 1984. The goal: to create an agency whose mission was to respond to the needs of the public by improving the quality of life through the enhancement and cultivation of nature and the environment.

GROWING UP AND BRANCHING OUT

DER's programs and services were created to consolidate and provide a focal point for County environmental programs. DER's functions included animal licensing and protection, stormwater management, community and property standards, permits and review, and waste management.

GETTING GREENER

In the 80s and 90s, DER grew larger; created more programs and services; forged partnerships with citizens; businesses and other governments; all to create a cleaner and more sustainable environment for all Prince Georgians.

ALWAYS INNOVATING

DER was one of the first Agencies on the East Coast to turn methane gas into electricity; develop stormwater management practices through low-impact development projects such as rain gardens; among the first to create a GIS-based Stormwater Management Model; open a County-owned Materials Resource Facility; introduce single-stream recycling to residents and construct a brand new state-of-the-art animal shelter.

A NEW NAME, NEW LOOK AND NEW FOCUS ON OUR ENVIRONMENT

DER is now known as the Department of the Environment (DoE). In addition to our new name, we have a new logo. Since County Executive Rushern Baker created the Department of Permitting, Inspections and Enforcement (DPIE) which assumed all building and code enforcement duties, our agency has refocused on our core environmental mission: to make Prince George's cleaner, greener, healthier and more beautiful.

In turn, our logo is a refreshed, vibrant and fun reflection of DoE that suggests the fragility of our environment and need for its care - as well as vitality and optimism for the future.

With our new focus, we are taking innovative and sustainable approaches to our environmental challenges, including: a new organics composting program; a zero waste, resource recovery approach to our waste stream; cost saving public-private partnerships (P3) for clean water that create green infrastructure and jobs; increased partnerships to boost animal adoptions, pet foster families and low cost vet services; major investments in renewable energy generation like solar farms and electric charging stations.

However, we can only be successful in meeting our green goals by engaging and empowering residents, businesses, and nonprofits in our common efforts. So expect to find us at community meetings, on social media, and in the news in the years ahead. We look forward to your partnership as we move ahead together.

Welcome to YOUR Department of the Environment

A
NEW
NAME;
NEW
LOOK
& NEW
FOCUS
ON OUR
ENVIRONMENT

DoE BOOSTS GREEN BUSINESS

On May 20, the Chesapeake Sustainable Business Council (CSBC) hosted over 100 green business leaders, advocates and officials at its kick-off breakfast at Busboys and Poets in Hyattsville. The event demonstrated strong interest among business leaders in supporting sustainable local business. Speakers at the event included State Senators Paul Pinsky, Victor Ramirez and Jamie Raskin, Montgomery County Councilmember March Elrich and owner Andy Shallal. DoE Director Adam Ortiz made a strong case that with its 40 percent local procurement requirement, massive contracting opportunities in stormwater, energy and resource recovery, and mix of industrial and commercial properties near transportation networks make Prince George's County the best place in the region for green industry.



NEW ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF WASTE MANAGEMENT DIVISION

The Department of the Environment is pleased to welcome Roger E. Merritt, Jr. as Associate Director of the Waste Management Division. Roger joins DoE at a very unique time for Prince George's County as it prepares to close and replace the Brown Station Road landfill with a resource recovery system and expand recycling programs.

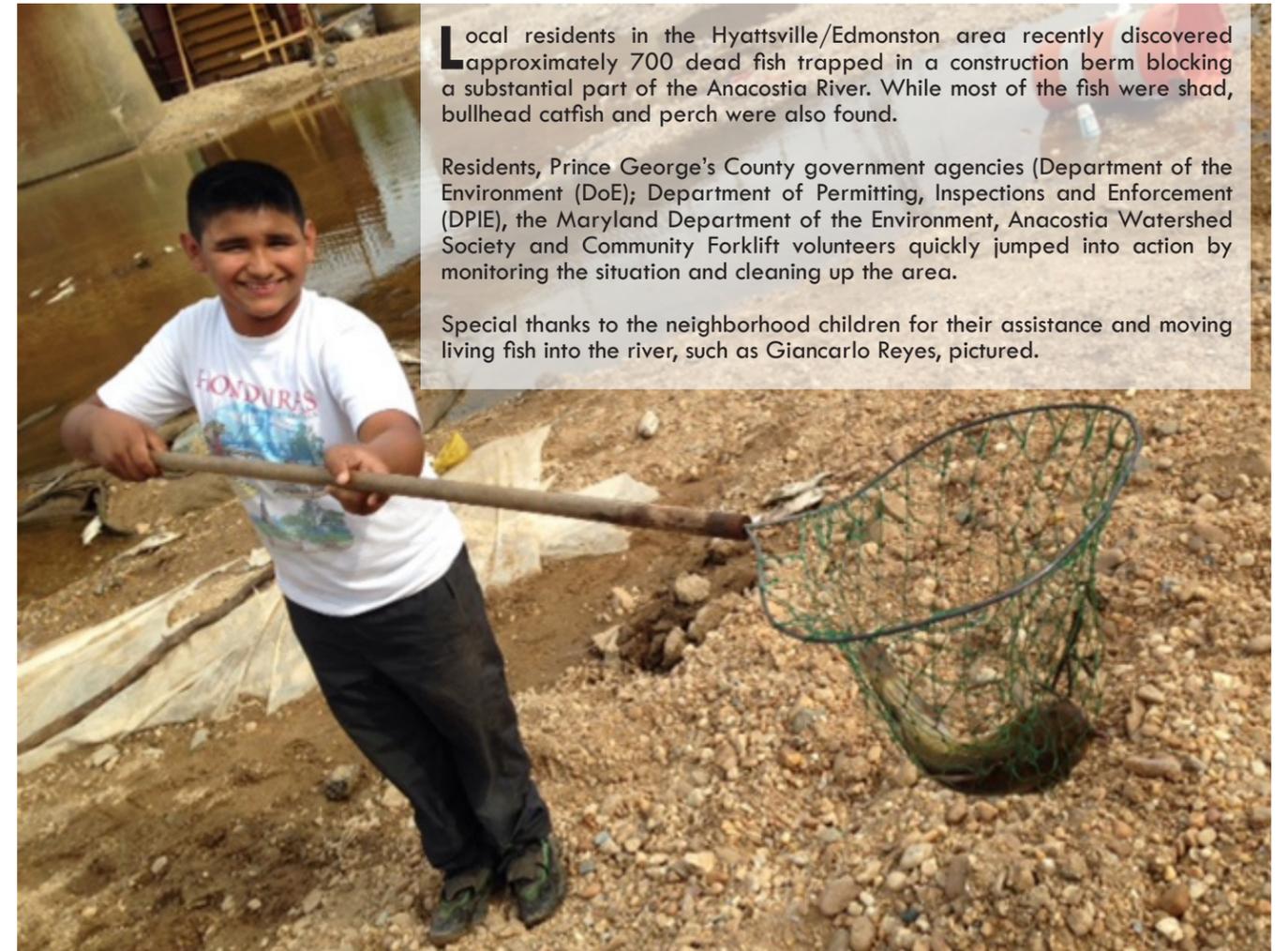
Roger's career in the municipal solid waste industry is extensive. He served as an environmental engineer for the State of Georgia's Environmental Protection Division, Commercial and Industrial Solid Waste Unit where he was responsible for three construction and demolition waste landfills, and eight municipal solid waste landfills.

Roger joined Waste Management where he was the district manager of the Live Oak landfill, which processed 1.1 million tons of municipal solid waste annually. During his tenure at Waste Management, Roger was promoted to area engineer and oversaw the closure of the 130-acre Live Oak landfill, and capital spending for seven operating landfills in the Atlanta area.

Roger also worked as an environmental manager for Allied Waste. He prepared and managed budgets for the opening and closing of landfills in Georgia, Florida and Alabama. He oversaw consultants and contractors during landfill site development, and ensured that the sites met state and federal compliance regulations. Recently, he served as the director of Landfill Engineering for EnviroSolutions Incorporated (ESI) where he was responsible for managing environmental and construction programs at landfills located in Virginia, Kentucky and West Virginia.

Roger has been recognized by the Georgia Solid Waste association of North America as an "Outstanding Solid Waste Professional." He holds a B.S. degree in civil engineering from Texas A&M University and an executive M.B.A. with a concentration in finance from Clark Atlanta University.

NEIGHBORHOOD RESIDENTS TO THE RESCUE!



Local residents in the Hyattsville/Edmonston area recently discovered approximately 700 dead fish trapped in a construction berm blocking a substantial part of the Anacostia River. While most of the fish were shad, bullhead catfish and perch were also found.

Residents, Prince George's County government agencies (Department of the Environment (DoE); Department of Permitting, Inspections and Enforcement (DPIE), the Maryland Department of the Environment, Anacostia Watershed Society and Community Forklift volunteers quickly jumped into action by monitoring the situation and cleaning up the area.

Special thanks to the neighborhood children for their assistance and moving living fish into the river, such as Giancarlo Reyes, pictured.

WE'VE MOVED!



We are excited to announce that DoE and the Office of Recycling have moved to new locations in Largo. DoE is now located at **1801 McCormick Drive, Suite 500**

and Recycling is housed at **9200 Basil Court, Suite 300**. Our new offices are located about less than a mile away from our former offices' locations – which served us well but we couldn't be more excited about our new space. We view our new location as the start of another chapter in our history. We're still working on getting settled in and adding artwork to the walls, but if you're in the area, feel free to stop in and say hi!

Rodney C. Taylor
DoE Associate Director

3750 Brown Station Road
Upper Marlboro, Maryland 20772

STUDENT ARTISTS ILLUSTRATE HOW TO Be KIND to ANIMALS



The winning entries of the Department of the Environment (DoE) Animal Management Division's 21st annual "Be Kind to Animals" Poster Contest were recently announced during a special awards ceremony hosted by the Prince George's County Animal Services Facility in Upper Marlboro.

Student artists in kindergarten through sixth grade submitted more than 2,100 poster entries

into the contest, which recognizes elementary school students for their poster designs inspired by everyday acts of kindness, consideration and respect of animals. Of those, 22 students and their creative posters were honored during the ceremony.

Emphasizing the importance of having pets spayed or neutered, and feeding animals a healthy diet, grand prize poster contest honoree Ana Fernandez of Montpelier Elementary School received a \$200 gift card and a commemorative prize bag. Honors were also presented in first, second and third places, which included \$100, \$75 and \$50 gift cards respectively, and commemorative prize bags.

(story continued on next page)



Grand prize winner Ana Fernandez, Montpelier Elementary School; Chief Rodney Taylor, associate director, DoE Animal Management Division.



Grand prize winner Ana Fernandez and Mrs. Clamage of Montpelier Elementary School; Corey Smedley, Special Assistant to the DCAO of Public Safety.



"I am proud of all of you! These posters clearly demonstrate your outstanding knowledge of how to be kind pet owners," said DoE Associate Director Rodney Taylor. He also recognized and thanked Ms. Mary Jacobs, and Mr. Roger & Judy McClain for their generous contribution and ongoing sponsorship of the "Be Kind to Animals" Poster Contest and Awards Ceremony.

Showing their support, principals, teachers and parents of the honorees attended the ceremony, which included welcoming remarks from DoE Deputy Director Larry Coffman. On behalf of Prince George's County Executive Rushern L. Baker, III, Special Assistant to the DCAO of Public Safety Corey Smedley addressed the winning students and congratulated them on a job well done.

Honorees of the 2014 "Be Kind to Animals" Poster Contest include:

Grand Prize:

- Ana Fernandez, 3rd Grade, Mrs. Clamage, Montpelier Elementary School

FIRST PLACE

- Taylor Gilmore, Kindergarten, Mrs. Parker, Barack Obama Elementary School
- Ashley Dixon, 1st Grade, Ms. Paden, Woodridge Elementary School
- Nate Luttrell, 2nd Grade, Mrs. Tull, Tulip Grove Elementary School
- Celestine Karn, 3rd Grade, Mrs. Clamage, Montpelier Elementary School
- Kylee Bolden, 4th Grade, Mr. Magnaye, William Paca Elementary School
- Melvin Vides, 5th Grade, Mr. Koogle, Flinstone Elementary School
- Adeoluwa Fatukasi, 6th Grade, Mrs. Lohrmann, Glenn Dale Elementary School

SECOND PLACE

- Kayla Tatum, Kindergarten, Ms. Howell, St. Ambrose Catholic School
- Amirah Abdullah, 1st Grade, Ms. Gates, Woodmore Elementary School
- Gabrielle Johnson-Prince, 2nd Grade, Mrs. Ayala, Jericho Christian Academy
- Betzy Ramirez, 3rd Grade, Ms. Ace, Beltsville Academy
- Katelyn Ruyter, 4th Grade, Mrs. Razler, Kenilworth Elementary School
- Sanaa' Wilson, 5th Grade, Mrs. Wilson, St. John the Evangelist Catholic Elementary School
- Alexandria Patrick, 1st Grade, Ms. Gates, Woodmore Elementary School

THIRD PLACE

- Kyndal Fenwick, Kindergarten, Mrs. Parker, Barack Obama Elementary School
- Jin Hao, 1st Grade, Ms. Stern, Woodmore Elementary School
- Adrean Walls, 2nd Grade, Mrs. Tull, Tulip Grove Elementary School
- Allyssa Britton, 3rd Grade, Mrs. Clamage, Montpelier Elementary School
- Diana Sanchez, 4th Grade, Ms. Rowley, Ridgecrest Elementary School
- Miya Lenae Virgil, 5th Grade, Ms. Loudon, Perrywood Elementary School
- Jarrold Holcomb, 6th Grade, Ms. Fletcher, Robert R. Gray Elementary School

PET SAFETY



Knowing first aid for your pet can be helpful during an emergency. To assist Prince George's County residents learn how to properly administer first aid and CPR to their pet, the Department of the Environment (DoE) Animal Management Division recently hosted an American Red Cross Pet First Aid & CPR Course at the Animal Service Facility located at 3750 Brown Station Road in Upper Marlboro.

"Practice and preparation will help you be calm and effective in an emergency, protecting you and your four-legged family member from further injury. During the course, participants learned proper CPR techniques for pets and how to handle urgent care situations," said Chief Rodney Taylor of the Animal Services Division. Free copies of the American Red Cross' Cat and Dog First Aid books and DVDs were also available. The guides provided information on keeping pets healthy and safe, and discuss basic responsibilities such as spaying/neutering and administering medications, to managing cardiac emergencies and preparing for disasters.

For more information on future classes call (240) 847-2121 or click <https://classes.redcross.org/Saba/Web/Main>.

Jeffrey M. DeHan
DoE Associate Director

1801 McCormick Drive
Suite 500
Largo, Maryland 20774



About the Rain Check Rebate Program

The Rain Check Rebate Program allows Prince George's County homeowners, businesses and nonprofit entities to receive rebates for installing pre-approved stormwater management practices, including cisterns, green roofs, rain barrels and gardens, planting trees, and replacing pavement with permeable pavers. For more information on the Rain Check Rebate Program, visit www.princegeorgescountymd.gov.

BARLOWE ROAD COUNTY POLICE HEADQUARTERS DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

Green infrastructure improvements are underway in the Palmer Park community! To help reduce flooding and pollution into the Anacostia River, the installation of stormwater management practices, featured in the Prince George's County Rain Check Rebate Program, are under construction at the District 3 Police Station at Barlowe Road.

This cooperative effort of the Maryland Department of the Environment, DoE, Office of Central Services (OCS), Police Department, public utilities and local contractors, incorporates permeable pavement and rain gardens to control flooding and stormwater runoff. The permeable pavement allows rain

water to pass through and soak into the soil below. The rain gardens—shallow depressions in the ground filled with absorbent soil, mulch, and native plants—also soak up rain water and filter pollutants from stormwater runoff. These “green solutions” to help reduce pollutants carried into the Cattail Branch of the Anacostia River.



Construction of Barlowe Road Demonstration Project

STORMWATER NOTES FROM THE FIELD



Checking out our progress at Police HQ on a raingarden and permeable pavement installation designed to naturally filter polluted runoff from their parking lot. Pictured: Gabe Redding and Gadisa Yami.

SUSTAINABLE INITIATIVES

Dawn Hawkins-Nixon
DoE Acting Associate Director

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Be FloodSmart

As the nation's #1 natural disaster, flooding can happen anytime and anywhere. Through the Flood Awareness Program, DoE is encouraging homeowners to focus on flood preparation and protection. Severe weather conditions that occur during hurricane season such as tropical storms, violent winds and heavy rains also cause flooding, threaten lives and damage property. Levees located throughout the Anacostia Watershed reduce the risk of flooding; however, it is important for County residents to know if they live behind a levee, understand associated risks and prepare accordingly.

You don't have to live near water to be a victim of flooding. Floodplain studies, conducted by DoE, have identified approximately 3,700 countywide flood prone structures. All County residents are encouraged to be flood smart and know what to do before, during and after a flood.

Being proactive and prepared is key—County residents should develop an emergency plan, store important papers in a safe place and purchase flood insurance. Remember, most homeowners insurance does not cover flooding. Flood insurance can be purchased through the National Flood insurance Program, which offers County residents up to a 25 percent discount. To learn more about flood insurance options and premium discounts, visit www.floodsmart.gov.

The County offers a notification service, Notify Me, which sends important messages via text or email in the event of a major flood. To sign up, visit www.notifyme.princegeorgescountymd.gov. In addition to Notify Me, DoE's "Be FloodSmart" poster provides information on what causes flooding and how to protect your home.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) offers flood awareness tips and information at www.ready.gov/floods. FEMA provides maps and studies that detail flood risks throughout the County and identifies areas subject to flooding behind levees and along coastal lines. To view these resources, please click [here](#). Additional information about levees is available in a comprehensive booklet titled, So, You Live Behind a Levee! To view and download the booklet, click [here](#).

For more information on the Flood Awareness Program, contact DoE at (301) 883-5810.



LEARNING THE VALUE OF WATER

The DoE Sustainable Initiatives Division (SID) participated in the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission's 9th annual Children's Water Festival at Brighton Dam in Brookville, Maryland. More than 650 elementary school students from Prince George's and Montgomery Counties participated in this event that includes hands-on activities that teach children the value and benefits of water.

During the festival, SID volunteers Moji Banjoko and Debbie Weller shared with students how they can help reduce pollution and keep local rivers clean. Using an educational model of a watershed, they explained how everyday actions and habits impact waterways and the environment.

The Children's Water Festival is an outdoor festival designed to provide students with hands-on learning about water issues, the environment, and the impact our day-to-day habits have on the availability and quality of water. For more information, visit www.wsscwater.com.



DoE SERVES ON D.C. WATER BOARD OF DIRECTORS

DoE is pleased to announce that Shirley Branch, coordinator for the Sustainable Initiatives Division Water and Sewer Plan, was appointed to serve on the D.C. Water Board of Directors.

She joins DoE Director Adam Ortiz, CAO Nick Majett, DCAO Victor Hoskins and 20 other distinguished Board members representing the District of Columbia, and Montgomery and Fairfax counties. The Board governs the operations of D.C. Water and Sewer Authority that provides drinking and wastewater treatment services throughout the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area.

Serving as an alternate member representing Prince George's County, her appointment by D.C. Mayor Vincent Gray is pursuant to the recommendation of County Executive Rushern L. Baker, III. Shirley succeeds DoE Sustainable Initiatives Division Acting Associate Director, Dawn Hawkins-Nixon, who served on the Board, also as an alternate member, for three years.

Congratulations Shirley!

WASTE MANAGEMENT

Roger E. Merritt, Jr.
DoE Associate Director

3500 Brown Station Road
Upper Marlboro, Maryland 20774

RESIDENTS BAG IT UP

All across the County, residents are learning to accept change and are bagging their yard waste debris. As of Jan. 1, 2014, residential curbside yard waste collection is no longer accepted in plastic bags and must be placed in heavy-duty paper bags, or heavy-duty trash cans with handles and a secure lid. Residents are reminded that cardboard boxes are not considered acceptable containers. Tree and shrub debris collected curbside must not exceed four (4) feet in length and three (3) inches in diameter and must be securely tied in bundles. Bundles of limbs and bags of dry grass and leaves must weigh less than 60 pounds and wet grass and leaves must weigh less than 25 pounds. Once the yard waste is collected, it is taken to the Prince George's County Yard Waste Composting Facility. This County-owned and operated composting facility processes over 50,000 tons of yard waste annually. Good job to all Prince Georgians who are doing their part in bagging it up!





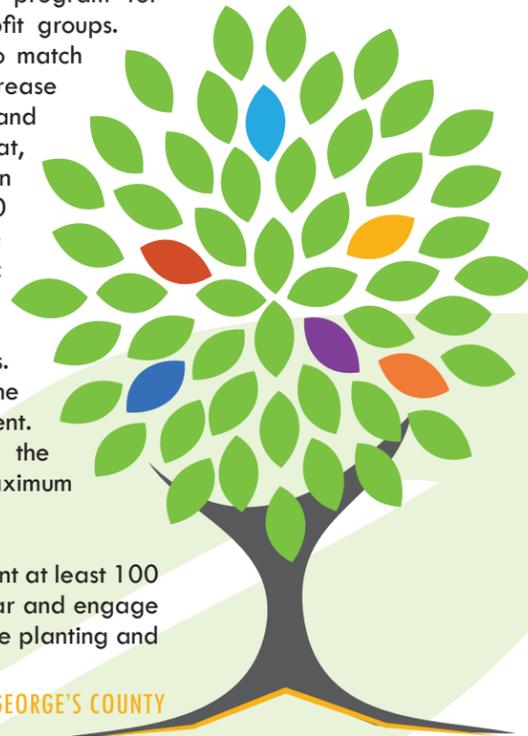
DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT RELAUNCHES TREE PLANTING PROGRAM TO TURN THE COUNTY GREEN WITH TREES

The Department of the Environment (DoE) recently held a kick-off event to relaunch its Tree ReLeaf grant program for municipalities, homeowner associations and nonprofit groups. The grant program requires the grant applicant to match the amount by an equal amount. The goal is to increase the native tree canopy on public and common land and to help improve air and water quality, wildlife habitat, conserve energy and reduce stormwater runoff in the County. The program provides up to \$10,000 to municipalities to plant native trees and shrubs; schools, homeowner associations, libraries or civic groups can receive up to \$5,000.

Program awards funds on a reimbursement basis. Before any work begins on a project, DoE and the applicant shall enter into a grant award agreement. Upon completion of services, DoE will reimburse the applicant for applicable expenditures up to a maximum amount of \$150 per tree permitted by the grant.

FY14 goal is to revitalize/relaunch program and plant at least 100 trees. Long-term goals are to plant 500 trees a year and engage County property owners in active participation in tree planting and other environmental projects.

For more information on how you can participate in the program, call (301) 883-5810.



PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY
TREE ReLEAF
DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT *Grant Program*

GREEN BULLETIN

GREEN TUESDAY TIPS

DoE has started a new series of helpful tips called Tuesday Tips that are designed to help you live a cleaner, healthier and sustainable lifestyle. To get your free copy, send an email to lmowe@co.pg.md.us to sign up.



GREEN VIDEO SHORTS

Sister Eden is an online media company that inspires people to make sustainable choices in their every day lives. One way they do this is with their humorous video shorts that cover topics such as food, fashion, home energy efficiency, pets and travel. To see their videos, visit their YouTube Channel. <http://www.youtube.com/channel/UC1DZ1RhX25hvQRo6jxiiZg>. To learn more about Sister Eden, visit <http://sistereden.com>.



Reduce your dog's paw print by trying these eco-friendly products that will help make Fido go green!



Chelsea Dog Collars made by Harry Barker are preppy and practical, and look classic and chic on any breed. Made from recycled plastic bottles, this lightweight, quick-drying and durable dog collar is weather resistant and machine washable. Visit harrybarker.com for more info.



Play fetch with this recyclable dog Frisbee called Zisc®. Made to be easy on a dog's jaws, the fast-flying discs bound, float and clean up in the dishwasher. Made to last. Visit westpawdesign.com for more info.



Ideal for a good game of fetch on both land and water (it floats), the Lunker is the perfect size for your dog to bite down on. Made with recycled polyester shell and packed with foam scraps from the factory. Visit bambeco.com for more info.



Eco-friendly, biodegradable bags are leak-proof and are bigger and thicker than most poop bags. Convenient handles are good for quick tying and disposal. Box is made of recycled content as well. Visit chewy.com for more info.

COMMUNITY PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

PICKING UP TRASH, ONE PERSON AT A TIME

Beware litterbugs because Bill Wamsley is hot on your trail! A resident of the Lanham/Seabrook community since 1979, Bill is a committed community volunteer, not only in his neighborhood, but throughout the County. His biggest pet peeve – litter and trash and he's dedicated himself to cleaning up area roadways and setting a high standard for a clean environment. In his community, he is affectionately known as the 'trash man' because of his faithful walks through the neighborhood picking up debris on curbs, streets, area parks and local wetlands.

In his youth, Bill spend most of his time playing in the woods and fields where he lived and was raised to respect the environment and accept a personal responsibility for preserving the environment and doing all he could to maintain it. "My parents felt very strongly that the earth was ours to protect and that each one of us has a role in taking care of it." He partners with local government agencies and supports their various cleanup activities such as the Department of Public Works and Transportation "Clean up, Green up" program, contacts the Department of Permitting, Inspections and Enforcement to report community code violations and participates in DoE's community and neighborhood cleanups. He's also active on DoE's Environmental Action Council that meets once a month to discuss and tackle environmental stewardship issues in the County.

He also volunteers for The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission and residents living in the Seabrook Estates and Glen Estates subdivisions. He officially signed his first cleanup contract for the Glen Estates section of the Folly Branch Stream Valley Trail/Park in July 2008 and has unofficially been doing trail maintenance since it was first built in the subdivision and has been cleaning the wetlands area for years before that. He is most proud of the time that he cleaned up the wetlands on the north end of the trail, east side of Forbes Boulevard, where he collected more than 13 bags of trash, 1/2 dozen tires, a basketball backstop and other assorted junk. From his neighborhood, he estimates he has collected more than 631 pounds of trash during his daily dog walks during the year. During a typical week, he averages more than 20 miles per week walking the neighborhood and community picking up litter and trash.

Because of his volunteerism and strong commitment to sustainable efforts, Bill was recently nominated for a County Executive Community Service Award by two agencies (DoE and M-NCPPC). Here he is pictured with County Executive Rushern L. Baker, III, accepting his most deserving award. Congratulations to Bill Walmsley; a true example of how one person can help to make a difference in the community!



HR matters

GETTING YOUR POINT ACROSS

In the workplace, written and oral communication is a necessity for getting tasks accomplished. Employees constantly receive information during the work day in various forms including, presentations, phone calls and emails.

Joseph McCormack thinks that everything would be better if people would just get to the point. As the author of Brief and founder of the Sheffield Company, a marketing firm that focuses on helping individuals craft concise messages, he's observed first-hand how endless meetings and wordy emails are becoming the bane of business.

Joseph's research revealed that information overload, inattention and impatience cause employees to tune out and lose interest. For example, he found that within the first minute of a presentation employees stopped listening, and after 30 seconds stopped reading an email—all because the main point was not made quickly. "With all this in play, brevity is not a nice to have, it's a need to have," says Joseph. Following are more tips from Joseph on the fine art of getting to the point:

Don't over-explain

Everyone could use more preparation and self-editing. Put yourself in the shoes of the person with whom you are communicating and ask yourself is there too much information. Whether sharing feedback or a new idea that you've fallen in love with, don't over-explain.

Use the 5 Ws

Keeping who, what, when, where and why at the forefront of your message can convert even the most complex ideas into an intriguing story.

Replace words with images

Use pictures and videos to make a compelling point. For example, an executive team described a five-year vision by drawing stick figure pictures. Do a little Internet research on representative images. It doesn't have to be perfect, just interesting and connected to the topic.

Harness the power of the pause

Especially in interviews or annual reviews, Joseph calls on the power of the pause. He explains that they are strong weapons for brevity. "Feel uncomfortable with silence? Look at it this way; it gives your audience a chance to process what you just said," suggests Joseph.

Map your communication

Make a visual outline of your communication. Speak in headlines and use a mind map—a graphical way to represent ideas and concepts. "Have the main point in the middle and concentric circles with a couple of other supporting facts around it. People will thank you for it," advises Joseph.

Excerpts of this article originally appeared on www.fastcompany.com

