

# Director's Report – April 2015

The 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2015 has been an exceptionally busy one. The great Board Meeting in VA in January kicked launched our work based on the new strategic plan. Winter weather threw us a few curves but program work is proceeding at a rapid pace. Highlights follow.

## Events and Activities

In March, we once again hosted the Environmental Showcase in partnership with the Annapolis Film Festival. Thanks to Laura's relationships with the organizers, strong outreach and media, and a push to include this as an Alliance Member event, we received some excellent exposure and visibility. Our technical panel on sea level rise and climate change at the conclusion was very well received.

April saw a major push for Project Clean Stream, our annual volunteer clean-up throughout the watershed. The Alliance team set ambitious goals: 500 sites (225 in 2014), 10,000 volunteers (7500 in 2014) and over a million pounds of trash removed from waterways. We also included a number of tree plantings and invasive removal project sites this time around. As of April 15, Joanna Freeman already reports 576 sites. Volunteer and trash volume numbers will continue to roll in over the next 30 days from site captains. A tremendous success! Even so, we had difficulty finding sponsors to fund the effort this year. Part of the problem appears to be the ability to pursue grant sources repeatedly. We are looking at a different strategy for the coming year with a focus on securing a team of sponsors who would join us in a stronger 3-5 year annual sponsorship. We also organized the Stormwater Partners Retreat at NCTC in April with over 100 local stormwater practitioners and local government officials.

## Grants

The last few months have been a busy time for grant application preparation for EPA. We prepared proposals for 3 separate 6-year contracts: LGAC/CAC Renewal, Citizen Monitoring Program, and Communications Support all in response to Chesapeake Bay Program RFPs. We have competed for and won two of these grants which total approximately \$1 million per year in budget. We anticipate winning the third contract (EPA will notify next week) which is for an additional approximately \$480,000 per year. The Citizen Monitoring Grant represents a brand new effort for the CBP.

In addition, our NRCS Conservation Innovation Grant pre-proposal for development of a new impact investing pilot program in partnership with the State of MD was selected for full proposal submittal. This is usually a very good sign for funding. We have also won grants from the Chesapeake Bay Trust for continuation of our Trees for Sacred Places program with area churches, from Dominion Foundation to support the Jefferson Greenway and Businesses for the Bay, and have renewed Phase 2 of our grant for local Assistance work in Blair County PA from NFWF and from PA and MD for operation of the fish lift at Conowingo Dam.

The next 30 days represent a heavy grant writing period with major proposals due to USDA, NFWF, MD DNR Trust Fund, BG&E and others.

## Financial management

Beyond continual grants and system management and heavy support to EPA grant proposals, primary focus of financial staff so far this year has been on preparation for our 2014 audit process which will take place the first 2 weeks of May.

### **Taste preparations and outreach**

The event venue contract has been signed and preparations and outreach are underway. We have begun to aggressively pursue past and new sponsors for the event to try to meet our ambitious goals. We have produced new sponsor brochure, save the date materials, and have met with two design firms (Redhead and John Damm) to discuss assistance with event visual products. We have enlisted a local volunteer to solicit local business support.

### **Program Development and Strategic Planning**

We have begun to share our Strategic Plan with external partners and have received excellent feedback. We have begun to work on various actions in the plan for 2015 and will be preparing a set of prioritized actions for the next 9 months. In January, we began a program a process with Bob Paul to better consolidate and communicate our projects in 5 program areas. At the Staff Retreat, discussions further consolidated these to 3 program areas: Trees and forests, rivers and streams, and Partner support. We hope these efforts will provide a more refined way to present our “calls to action” on a new website design.

### **CBP Agreement Support**

The CBP released draft management strategies for the new agreement on March 15<sup>th</sup>. I am leading the development of the Citizen Stewardship strategy and the staff and I are involved in development of riparian buffer, urban tree canopy, local leadership and diversity strategies.

### **Businesses for the Bay**

We on several occasions with our Steering Committee, developed program membership materials, and a first draft web site. Nissa and Dave Gunnarson delivered a “soft launch” at the Environment VA conference the first week of April. In addition, we developed a Position description and job announcement and conducted outreach and interviews. From over 30 applications, we conducted 8 interviews. Corinne Stephens accepted our offer as the Alliance’s *Business Partnerships Coordinator* on April 14 and will start work May 11 to develop and build B4B and other partnerships with business.

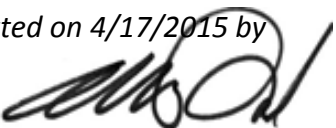
### **Riparian Buffer Initiative/Task Force**

The Alliance Chairs this Task Force. The last few months have seen a flurry of activity to complete RFB program recommendations from all 6 Bay States. These have now been submitted to USDA leadership for review. Our next step will be to facilitate the development of CREP Program Amendments in each of the States and to organize a second Leadership Summit in late June.

### **Staff Retreat**

In March, we hosted our annual staff retreat in Cecil County on the upper Bay. This overnight gathering provided an opportunity to review and discuss the new Strategic Plan with staff, discuss communication priorities, implement a branding strategy, engage employees in program delivery, discuss organizational needs, and build our team and have a little fun together.

Submitted on 4/17/2015 by



**ALBERT H TODD**  
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