

LIVING SHORELINE CASE STUDY

Pines on the Severn Community Living Shoreline

Maryland

EDUCATION TO ENDURANCE

Community leaders were able to gain widespread support by educating residents on the benefits of a living shoreline.

The Pines on the Severn residents were experiencing increasing erosion of a community beach area, brought on by a failing bulkhead. In addition to the eroding beach, sand and soil were seeping through the bulkhead into a nearby creek, resulting in the water becoming murky. Community piers that once connected residents were no longer accessible to some neighbors and the community was faced with an important decision about how to address erosion.

"It was a matter of stopping erosion and also reclaiming community property that had not been usable."

– ELLEN, RESIDENT, PINES ON THE SEVERN

For close to 100 years families have enjoyed the shoreline, but erosion threatened the centerpiece of this historic waterfront community. Armed with the support of a neighboring non-profit organization, The Severn Riverkeeper, community members set out on an initiative to inform the community about the benefits of a living shoreline. Ellen, a Pines on the Severn resident and organizer, was particularly attracted to an approach that imitated nature instead of working in opposition to it—as is the case with the deteriorating bulkhead. Residents throughout the community had a similar interest in protecting the environment and their beloved Severn River.

The Severn Riverkeeper helped organize a series of meetings and presentations to educate the community on living shorelines. In addition, they coordinated visits to completed living shoreline sites. Seeing this natural infrastructure in person helped community members understand how the process might work on their own waterfront. Soon after, the community engaged in extensive fundraising efforts for the construction of their own living shoreline which took place over several years. The community utilized the expertise of The Severn Riverkeeper to complete permitting requirements. According to community members, the permitting process was straightforward and completed within a few months.



Community leaders also sought out funding and advice from a variety of non-profit and state government sources. The Chesapeake Bay Trust provided funding for the design phase of the living shoreline, while the Maryland Department of Natural Resources supplied grant funding from the Chesapeake Atlantic and Coastal Bays Trust for installation. The combination of fundraising and grants made it possible for the community to hire a consultant to design the living shoreline. The community selected a consultant that had previous experience with living shoreline projects, the backing of The Severn Riverkeeper and who provided information and regular updates to residents. During the two-week installation phase, numerous native grasses and trees were planted along the shoreline. Now, six years after construction, community members have increased access to their neighborhood piers with the assurance that natural barriers are protecting against erosion.

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Ellen, who was deeply involved with the living shoreline initiative, recommends that waterfront communities take opportunities to learn as much as they can by attending educational events and visiting existing projects for inspiration. By involving the entire community in this effort, residents were able to assess how a living shoreline might benefit them. As a result, residents extended their full support by participating in fundraising and helping to install native plants. In the end, the living shoreline was much more than protection for the waterfront, it strengthened community bonds.

"It has really engaged the community in a very active way, the community loves the shoreline."

– ELLEN, RESIDENT, PINES ON THE SEVERN

