

News

Choptank River gets a keeper

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By STEVE NERY News Editor

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EASTON A native of the area, former lawyer, adjunct professor and recognized author Timothy D. Junkin has now taken on another role as executive director of the Choptank River Eastern Bay Conservancy, which recently hired Drew Koslow as the first paid riverkeeper for the Choptank River.

CREB Conservancy is a member of the Waterkeeper Alliance, which now licenses 16 riverkeepers on the Bay. The local organization concentrates on the Choptank River, the Eastern Bay, the Tred Avon River, Harris Creek, Broad Creek, the Miles River, Island Creek, Hunting Creek, the Tuckahoe River, La Trappe Creek, the Wye River and Cabin Creek.

As a boy growing up in Oxford, Junkin recalls being able to swim, water ski and crab in the clear waters and abundant grasses without having to worry about pollution.

"Our vision is river by river," he said. "The Bay is not polluted by water, it's polluted by land."

The group, which launched last fall, aims to restore and protect the local waters through community outreach, clean water advocacy, restoration programs and the strengthening and enforcement of anti-pollution laws. CREB Conservancy was able to launch with assistance from the Town Creek and Campbell Foundations as well as individual support.

Koslow is able to go out and test Choptank waters and look for sources of pollution in the organization's boat. If, for instance, he sees an overflowing septic tank, he will contact the property owner to try to fix the situation.

"A clean Bay or a clean Choptank is in everybody's interest," Koslow said. "There's not a person you talk to anywhere who says, 'I don't want clean water.'"

Koslow said CREB Conservancy seeks to work with everyone to "clean this mess up," not laying the blame on just one group. Members will work with homeowners and the agricultural community as well as seek out federal and local grants to rectify the alarming increase in nitrogen, phosphorous, sediment and bacterial pollution.

"If everybody is willing to change a little bit, it's not going to be that hard," Koslow said.

The organization, which now has more than 70 members, hopes to eventually be able to hire a second riverkeeper to specifically monitor the Miles River and the Eastern Bay as well. Koslow previously served as the riverkeeper for the South River Federation, which he helped found, and before that, worked for both the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources. He completed his graduate studies in marine science at the University of Virginia.

The Waterkeeper Alliance sprouted from advocates on the Hudson River in the 1960s, when fishermen joined forces and won some lawsuits which were then incorporated into the federal Clean Water Act. This year, Maryland waterkeeper organizations challenged the Department of the Environment's proposed stormwater construction permit, which is issued every five years, on the basis that the permit failed to meet the minimum requirements of the Clean Water Act.

MDE agreed to settle the matter and substantially amend its permit, committing to update the state's erosion and sediment control standards by May 2010, incorporate any specific effluent limits issued by the Environmental Protection Agency for construction stormwater, and make large construction sites in impaired areas apply for individual permits.

A 1969 graduate of Easton High School, Junkin went on to graduate from the University of Maryland in 1973 and the Georgetown University Law Center in 1977. He spent four years as a public defender in Washington, D.C., then worked in private practice for 26 years, serving as a founding partner at two law firms.

Junkin penned the novels *The Waterman*, *A Novel of the Chesapeake Bay* and *Good Counsel* as well as *Bloodsworth*, a nonfiction book about Cambridge native Kirk Noble Bloodsworth, the first death-row inmate ever to be exonerated by DNA evidence.

Junkin and Koslow comprise the board of directors, along with Horn Point Laboratory Dr. Thomas Fisher, Maryland Critical Areas Commission member Nick Carter, Talbot Creekwatchers President Brice Thorneton and environmental activist Russell C. Powell.

CREB Conservancy can be found on the Web at www.crebconservancy.org.



PHOTO BY ROXANE DOSTER WATTS
Timothy D. Junkin, left, and Drew Koslow discuss the newly formed Choptank River Eastern Bay Conservancy at The Star Democrat office.