The pages in this document were taken from the "Corsica River Watershed Characterization" published in October 2003. The entire document can be found at http://dnrweb.dnr.state.md.us/download/bays/cr_char.pdf.

Corsica River Watershed Characterization

Excerpt Showing an Example of Introductory Information

October 2003

INTRODUCTION

Background

In 1998, Maryland completed an assessment of all 134 of the state's watersheds in order to identify high priorities for restoration action based on impaired waters and high priorities for conservation action based on high or unique natural resource value. The assessment, called the Unified Watershed Assessment, was conducted by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) under the direction of the US Environmental Protection Agency's Clean Water Action Plan initiative with assistance from the Maryland Departments of Environment, Agriculture and Planning and the University of Maryland. It moved beyond consideration of water quality in the streams in the state, which had been assessed regularly since the early 1970's, to a larger consideration of living resources in the streams and the landscape conditions which could impact both water quality and living resources.[1,2]

In response to the findings of the Unified Watershed Assessment, DNR offers technical and financial assistance to local governments who are willing to develop and implement Watershed Restoration Action Strategies (WRAS) addressing needs for restoration and conservation in priority watersheds. One of these projects is the Corsica River Watershed in Queen Anne's County, where the Town of Centreville, the County, DNR and other local cooperators, both public and private, are engaged in developing a watershed management strategy.

Purpose of the Characterization

One of the earliest steps in devising a Watershed Restoration Action Strategy is to characterize the watershed using immediately available information. This Watershed Characterization is intended to meet several objectives:

– briefly summarize the most important or relevant information and issues;
– provide preliminary findings based on this information;
– identify sources for more information or analysis;
– suggest opportunities for additional characterization and restoration work; and

– provide a common base of knowledge about the Corsica River Watershed for local governments, citizens, businesses and other organizations.

Additional Characterization Work

The Watershed Characterization is intended to be one starting point that can be updated as needed. It is part of a framework for a more thorough assessment involving an array of additional inputs:

– self-investigation by Centreville and Queen Anne's County
– targeted technical assistance and assessment by partner agencies or contractors
– input from local citizens
– completion of a Stream Corridor Assessment, in which DNR personnel physically walk the streams and catalogue important issues.
– completion of a synoptic water quality survey, i.e. a program of water sample analysis, that can be used to focus on local issues like nutrient hot spots, point source discharges or other selected issues. This is also part of the technical assistance offered by DNR. Findings of the 2002 synoptic survey of the streams in the Corsica River Watershed are reported in Appendix D.

Identifying Gaps in Information

It is important to identify gaps in available watershed knowledge and gauge the importance of these gaps. In assessing data gaps, we have found it helpful to review information in four categories:

– Habitat: physical structure, stream stability and biotic community (including the riparian zone)
– Water Quantity: high water–storm flow and flooding; low water–baseflow problems from dams, water withdrawals, reduced infiltration
– Water Quality: water chemistry; toxics, nutrients, sediment, nuisance odors/scums, etc.
– Cumulative effects associated with habitat, water quantity and water quality.

Because restoration is an active evolving process, the Watershed Characterization and the resulting Watershed Restoration Action Strategy should be maintained as living documents within an active evolving restoration process. These documents will need to be updated periodically as new, more relevant information becomes available and as the watershed response is monitored and reassessed.