GREENSBORO CHOPTANK RIVER PARK PROJECTS

Reducing urban stormwater runoff

PROJECT GOALS

Create a manageable and welcoming public green space that improved water quality in the Choptank River and increased opportunities for meaningful public engagement.

COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC BENEFITS

- Increased public water access, including opportunities for kayaking and fishing.
- Educated the community about native plants through the installation of detailed interpretive signage.
- Lowered maintenance costs due to a reduced need for mowing and labor.
- Mitigated flooding damage to private property.

ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

- Public demonstrations of best management practices led others to implement their own.
- Improved water quality by reducing sediment and stormwater runoff.
- Conserved land and wetland habitat.
- Restored native plants and preserved biodiversity.

CONSERVATION PROJECTS INSTALLED

- Natural underground water filter.
- Rain gardens.
- Constructed wetlands.
- Low-growing vegetation planted along slopes.
- Reinforced turf parking areas.
- Native trees, plants and grass planting.

Photo: Caroline County Department of Planning and Codes

"We've found that water restoration projects are more successful when people feel connected to the water we're trying to protect. We weren't interested in going into a community and implementing a project that didn't directly improve the lives of the people living across the street. That's why the Choptank River Park project was so exciting to us. For every dollar spent, there was a real value for the community in creating a beautiful and welcoming public space."

- Leslie Grunden
Assistant Director of Planning, Caroline County Department of Planning and Codes

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PROJECT SUMMARY

Despite being the primary venue for outdoor events and recreation in Greensboro, Maryland, Choptank River Park was an empty lot of compacted soil and grass. With almost no natural tree cover or stormwater management plans in place, the barren park was the site of frequent, major flooding that allowed urban runoff to flow directly into the Choptank River. Leslie Grunden, assistant director of planning for Caroline County, worked with Eric Helm Buehl, water restoration specialist with the University of Maryland Sea Grant Extension and David Kibler, director of the Greensboro Public Works Department, to develop and implement a plan to reduce urban stormwater runoff and create a welcoming green space for the town. The park was transformed by a variety of stormwater management projects, including a natural underground water filter, rain gardens, wetlands and more durable grass for low-impact parking. Each stormwater practice filters runoff, reduces flooding and supports native plant life. This is the first step in the town's three-phase restoration plan, which also includes building pathways through a restored wetland habitat and installing 800 feet of living shoreline to combat erosion.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Develop a clear understanding of a community's capacity for maintenance and project management.
- Understand practical limitations of the space and funding available.
- Be creative – seemingly unrelated problems can often be addressed with a common solution.

THE PARTNERS AND FUNDING SOURCES

- Town of Greensboro.
- Caroline County.
- University of Maryland Sea Grant Extension.
- Funding provided by Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal Bays Trust Fund via the Maryland Department of Natural Resources.

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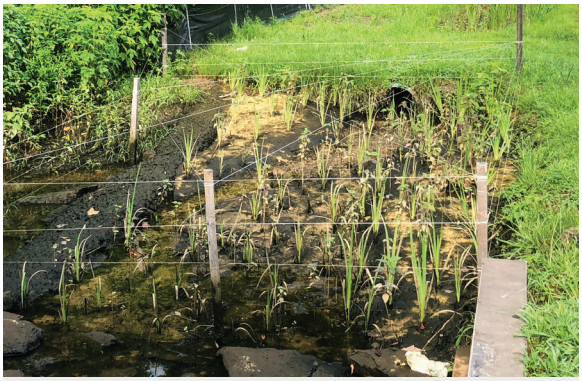
The park's native trees help reduce flooding and will provide valuable shade for the park's recreators. (*Photo: Caroline County Department of Planning and Codes*)



Marshy, vegetated channels known as "swales" help trap stormwater runoff and filter pollutants before they can enter the Choptank River. (*Photo: Caroline County Department of Planning and Codes*)

An underground filter made from gravel and wetland plants helps treat stormwater runoff before it makes its way into the Choptank River. (*Photo: Caroline County Department of Planning and Codes*)