



St. Michaels officials commend marsh creation project

Environmental Concern lauded for work at Back Creek Park

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ST. MICHAELS What was once viewed by some as an eyesore is now being praised as an example of how beautiful St. Michaels can be.

At Wednesday night's meeting of St. Michaels' commissioners, the commission had nothing but compliments for Gene and Suzanne Slear of Environmental Concern, who have helped lead the creation of a marsh at Back Creek Park and the subsequent improvements to the area. He was given a round of applause by the commissioners and attendees as a sign of appreciation for the work done.

Gene Slear, who was at the meeting and recently moved with his family to St. Michaels, said the project had several benefits for the area and helped clean up a part of town many wanted to see revamped.

The project cost \$200,000, with \$40,000 coming from a grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the balance from Environmental Concern. The commission thanked Slear for the contribution, with Commission President Ted Doyle saying "I think that's very valuable and quite the contribution to town."

Back Creek, which runs into San Domingo Creek, and the park have been enhanced by the work because the marsh will help remove pollutants entering it, Slear said. He thanked the commission for their strong interest in the project, saying "a living shoreline is an important part of the town's comprehensive plan." The shoreline was also stabilized with the addition of riprap.

For Slear, there were two main points to the work he wanted to bring to the commissioners' attention the new canoe and kayak ramp where the dilapidated boat ramp was and the work of local school kids in planting the marsh.

When the ramp was redesigned, Slear said it was done to give canoeists a good place to launch, something he felt would become very popular with locals and visitors to town. In order to keep the area peaceful for neighbors and help make the ramp safer for boaters, Slear said jet skis will not physically be able to launch there, adding the design took into consideration the interests of commercial and recreational boaters.

Doyle said the work would greatly enhance the nature trail and be a source of pride for residents, with Slear saying he thought the trail would become a popular thoroughfare for them as they traveled in town.

"You really cleaned it up of motors and tires and lots of junk," Doyle said to Slear.

"We made some interesting discoveries," Slear laughed.