

Business

Award honors shoreline restoration work

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EASTON For making a "wise" decision to restore the shoreline at the historic Wye House in Easton, Environmental Concern of St. Michaels recently presented its first-ever Wetland Wise Award to the Tilghman family.

"I thought cleaning up the shoreline was the right thing to do," said Mary Donnell Tilghman, Wye House owner. "We are very proud of the results."

The 1,000-foot shoreline project is intended to stop erosion and is consistent with new Maryland guidelines for shoreline restoration. Since April, Maryland Department of the Environment now requires most shoreline erosion projects to be "soft" done with plantings of marsh grasses rather than "hard," such as rip-rap or bulkheading.

"We had a terrible erosion problem and we've been planning to take care of it for years," said Richard Tilghman, son of Mary Donnell Tilghman. "Many of our environmental problems, like global warming, stem from our lack of marshlands. The restoration exceeded my expectations."

The shoreline was planted with native species, including two that are particularly beneficial to stopping erosion.

"Cord grass and pafens improve water quality and encourage increased habitats," said Suzanne Pittenger-Slear, president of Environmental Concern. "The plants also slow down storm surges. The more plants we have, the better chance we have of land not flooding during storms. We want to recognize the Tilghmans for making the wise decision to use the vegetative method in their wetland restoration. Wetlands are much more important than people realize."

Richard said his family has thought about shoreline restoration since inheriting Wye House in 1993.

"We always thought about different ways to address the issue," he said. "We finally came back to the idea after completing some other projects to restore the house."

Living shorelines can also help improve water quality, he noted.

"Plants along the shoreline help clean up the water by taking the nitrogen out," Richard said.

The Tilghmans knew about Environmental Concern for many years, Richard said, noting that its founder Ed Garbisch was married to a relative.

"That's how we heard about it initially," Richard said. "We would talk to Ed all the time about the work he does. My sister, Joanna, is also on the Environmental Concern board so she helped get things started when we were ready to fix the shoreline."

Gene Slear, vice president of Environmental Concern, said the project took four months, finishing in May.

"We had at least three or four people working every day on the project," he said. "It really didn't take that long."

Environmental Concern is currently working on shoreline restoration projects at Waterside Village in Easton and Easton Village.

Richard said another restoration project is underway on the Wye property, and they are considering starting a third.

Since 90 percent of shorelines are privately owned, it is important for property owners to learn about and use living shorelines, Slear said, thanking the Tilghmans for "their commitment to improving the watershed."



The shoreline restoration project at the Wye House property took four months to complete.