

## Work begins on Oxford living shoreline project

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By KELLEY L. ALLEN Staff Writer |

OXFORD Work started last week and should continue into September on a living shoreline project at Oxford Town Park.

Town officials secured grants from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the Chesapeake Bay Trust for the shoreline, which offers an alternative to riprap or bulkhead with a sill backfilled with sand planted with natural grasses. That vegetation creates habitat, filters pollution and prevents erosion.

After a somewhat lengthy public participation and permit process, construction should finish in about four weeks.

"The Chesapeake Bay Trust, NOAA Restoration Center and MDE are extremely excited about the start of construction," said Jana Davis, associate director of CBF. "This project will demonstrate the value of wetlands restoration to town residents and visitors alike, and get kids excited about the construction process itself."

Thursday afternoon, the project drew curious bystanders. Kody Cario, wetland restoration manager for Environmental Concern, worked machines at the shoreline that broke apart the old seawall, and spread sand along the beach.

So far, trucks have delivered 500 tons of sand that will spread from the water's edge to sticks in the water that mark the outside edge of the sill. The project will include two breaks in that sill, one at a private baptismal beach and another at the public beach.

After the construction phase, the plan is to recruit volunteers to plant cordgrass and salt meadow hay in the sand, said town Commissioner Peter Dunbar, who spearheaded the project.

Dunbar worked with Angler Environmental, who did the original project design, and Environmental Concern, who presented a revised design in December, to incorporate resident's comments into the project. The finalized design includes sills instead of breakwaters, incorporates the baptismal beach, and maintains a beach with water access.

After that project is completed, a similar project at the ferry dock should start, Dunbar said. The CBF provided a \$69,000 grant for a shoreline project there, too.

Other living shoreline projects include one at the Cooperative Oxford Lab, the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum in St. Michaels, and at Sailwinds Park in Cambridge.

Dunbar said the area at the town park is high energy, and showing that a living shoreline can work there means it can work anywhere.

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