

Living shoreline work wraps up



By **KELLEY L. ALLEN** Staff Writer | Posted: Tuesday, May 17, 2011 1:00 am

OXFORD Oxford's second living shoreline project is finished, and town officials are working on a constructed wetland proposal designed to address stormwater problems.

Living shorelines are the state's preferred method of shoreline protection. They offer an alternative to riprap or bulkhead, with stone sills backfilled with native grasses planted in sand. Oxford's commissioners first explored funding for living shorelines in 2008. Since then, more than \$200,000 in state and federal grants has funded two projects, both completed in the past year.

The latest project, finished the day before Oxford Day, held April 30, is along about 140 linear feet between the ferry dock and Tred Avon Yacht Club. Wetland restoration signs and stakes mark and protect plantings, which need one growing season before people can walk there.

Plantings include more than 1,750 smooth cordgrass plants in the low marsh, or intertidal zone, said Kody Cario, Wetland Restoration Manager with Environmental Concern, a company in St. Michaels that did both shorelines.

The high marsh area consists of more than 2,000 salt meadow hay plants, and some marsh hibiscus. And at the bioretention area, about 500 plants include switchgrass, coastal panic grass, northern sea oats, marsh hibiscus, seashore mallow, seaside goldenrod and spikegrass, Cario said.

Those native grasses trap sediment, filter pollution and create habitat for marine life.

This latest project is about half the size of the town's first, at town park, said Gene Slear, Environmental Concern Vice President. That project finished in October, when Easton High School students planted the shoreline's native grasses.

Both areas had significant wave energy to deal with, and the orientation and elevation of each area's stone sills address that energy, he said.

Because the ferry dock's shoreline is smaller, those sills are closer to shore.

Money for the ferry dock project came from the Chesapeake Bay Trust, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the Maryland Department of Environment. Funds for the park project came from the Bay Trust and from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

Peter Dunbar, town commissioner who spearheaded both projects, plans to let those two projects grow out and mature before doing another. In the meantime, work has started on a grant proposal for a stormwater runoff project.

That proposal, due to the NOAA in June, is for about a \$200,000 project that would literally construct wetlands. Those wetlands would hold and delay runoff and are similar to residential rain gardens, but on a larger, municipal scale, Dunbar said.

Originally, the proposal included two areas, each of about one to two acres. The updated proposal also includes the large fields east of the fire hall, along state Route 333, about twice the size originally proposed.

Dunbar said the Cooperative Oxford Lab, part of NOAA, has led the effort, which would include several partnerships.