

**Report #2012-1**  
**June 19, 2012**

**Greenbelt Advisory Committee on Trees – Report to the City Council**

**Subject: Greenbelt Food Forest, Project of Chesapeake, Education, Arts, and Research Society (CHEARS)**

**BACKGROUND:** At the Advisory Committee on Trees (ACT) meeting on Tuesday, May 22, 2012, Kim Walsh, Executive Director of CHEARS, gave the group an overview of both the narrative and a preliminary layout design of the Greenbelt Food Forest project. She also asked for formal support from ACT for the project. This project grew out of the existing site of one of the Three Sisters Demonstration Gardens at Springhill Lake Recreation Center.

In December 2011, CHEARS, a local 501(c)3 non-profit organization in partnership with Camp Fire USA, Citizens Concerned to Conserve and Restore Indian Creek (CCRIC), Ancestral Knowledge and the City of Greenbelt Public Works Department submitted a proposal to the **Chesapeake Bay Trust: Community Greening Grant** to establish rain gardens, food forest, and extend the stream buffer plantings at the Springhill Lake Recreation site.

The Greenbelt Food Forest project has three interrelated goals:

- 1) To expand tree canopy cover by engaging local residents and students to attend community design sessions and plant native edible trees/shrubs, herbaceous perennials & ground covers that feature permaculture design principles. The tree planting will reduce rapid runoff, erosion, and provide food sources.
- 2) To assess and improve water quality of Springhill Lake Stream using both expert consultation and students' observations and data collection. The expert will provide the initial assessment; work with students in collecting and analyzing the data; and provide a community report.
- 3) To facilitate multi-generational social and regenerative educational opportunities through collaboration with schools, after-school programs, the city government, and other volunteer based groups. This collaborative approach supports the functions of each organization, linking the missions and program objectives.

In February of 2012, CHEARS was notified that they had been awarded a grant of \$14,750 from the **Chesapeake Bay Trust: Community Greening Grant** to cover supplies, educational materials and personnel costs for project management, workshop facilitation, presentations, design consultation and work. Following this, a meeting with all the partners took place on March 1, 2012 to discuss Phase I of the Greenbelt Food Forest project and to schedule dates in the calendar for educational workshops, planting days and community events.

- April 16, CCRIC representative Cary Coppock, and Lesley Riddle from City of Greenbelt Public Works presented to the Greenbelt City Council on the importance of rain gardens and water quality monitoring at Springhill Lake Recreation Center. Camp Fire USA representative, Laura Kovnat and project coordinator of Three Sisters Demonstration Gardens, Maggie Cahalan were also present.
- April 21, in celebration of Earth Day, two rain gardens were planted along with eight trees and residents of Franklin Park Apartments, City Council members, ACT members, City of Greenbelt staff, and other local residents of Greenbelt helped in planting and mulching the native rain garden plants and trees.
- May 19, a Water Quality Monitoring workshop, instructed by Maria Sgambati, M.D., was given followed by a community workday in the Three Sisters Demonstration Garden. The participants at the workshop and volunteering in the gardens following the workshop represented a variety of ages. Food donations from My Organic Market (MOM's) of fresh fruits, granola bars, and vegetable/fruit juices helped refresh the volunteers.

Future educational workshops and events that are in the process of being organized are:

- Water Quality Monitoring workshop with youth & adults (July)
- Introduction to Permaculture Design presentation/workshop (July/August)
- Forest Garden Design workshop & site preparation (September)
- Planting of the canopy trees & understory (September/October)
- Maintenance workday (November)

Lesley Riddle, Assistant Director of Public Works for Parks and Grounds, has expressed strong support for both the Three Sisters Demonstration Gardens and Greenbelt Food Forest projects. The Greenbelt Department of Public Works also received a grant from the Chesapeake Bay Trust focused on a Tree Canopy Plan for the entire city. Ms. Riddle has worked with us closely on layout, design, selection of plants, and providing compost and mulching materials as well as public works staff support during the Earth Day Celebration.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

ACT unanimously recommends support for the Greenbelt Food Forest at Springhill Lake Recreation site that builds onto existing outdoor educational events currently taking place at Three Sisters Demonstration Gardens.