



# WSA'S 13TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE **SPRING INTO ACTION!**

LET'S GROW!

**Saturday, March 9, 2024**

**LIVE! Event Center**

**Hanover, MD 21076**

**8:00 am Steward Action Breakfast** *for Certified Anne Arundel County Watershed Stewards only*

**8:15 am Registration**

**9:00 am Conference Welcome & Opening Remarks**

*Ron Bowen Environmental Legacy Award*

**10:05 am Break**

**10:15 am Session 1**

**1A: Fantastic Fungi and Where to Find Them**

**Location: Spotlight**

*Serenella Linares | Mount Rainier Nature Center*

From 8-meter mushrooms to zombie ants, we will explore the mysteries of the kingdom Fungi and their importance to us all. Learn about the natural history of these fascinating creatures, their ecological roles, their amazing diversity, and how these organisms intersect with different environments. Discover how crucial fungi are to human life and the unexpected places fungi grow near you. You'll even learn about local spots that are host to two of the most brilliant bioluminescent species of fungi in the Mid-Atlantic!

**1B: Resilient and Ready Anne Arundel: National Tools for Local Climate Strategies\***

**Location: Limelight**

*Matt Fleming | Resilience Authority of Annapolis and Anne Arundel County*

*David Herring | NOAA Communication, Education, and Engagement Division (CEE)*

*Michael Stringer | Anne Arundel County Office of Planning and Zoning*

It's no secret that climate change is already affecting communities across Anne Arundel County. This session will unpack the policies and programs driving climate resilience work and introduce tools and resources to help communities rise to this great challenge. You'll hear from local and national climate experts: Matt Fleming is the Director of the Resilience Authority of Annapolis and Anne Arundel County, a new and innovative organization that will develop, finance, and support infrastructure, and Michael Stringer is a Senior Planner with the Anne Arundel County Office of Planning and Zoning. David Herring is the award winning Division Chief of NOAA's CEE - the federal government's largest team dedicated to climate communication, education and engagement. David will provide an overview of the tools available

to help restoration professionals and communities like yours make informed decisions when planning for resilience.

*\*Includes advanced content for restoration professionals.*

### **1C: Putting Our Minds Together: Using Mindfulness to Engage New Communities**

#### ***Location: Feature***

*Terryl Acker-Carter | WSA*

*Ren Grumbles | Watershed Steward*

*Amira Westenburger | The Judy Center at Belle Grove*

**ONE** environmental literacy lesson, **TWO** Watershed Stewards, **THREE** community partners, **FOUR** years, and the **FIVE** senses. What started as one Watershed Steward resource has grown into a thriving community partnership with a sensory garden path that has connected children and families from The Judy Center and Belle Grove Elementary School to nature. Join this session to learn about this unique program that uses nature and native plants to develop mindfulness and promote mental well-being.

## **11:30 am Lunch and Networking**

Meet your local watershed organization, attend funders office hours, network with sponsors and restoration professionals

### **12:00 - 12:15 pm - Presentation of Awards**

*Ann Jackson Steward of the Year Award*

*Consortium Member of the Year Award*

## **12:45 pm Session 2**

### **2A: Maintenance at Maryland: How UMD Manages 100 BMPs**

#### ***Location: Feature***

*Michael Carmichael | University of Maryland*

We know maintaining a single project can be a tough job, but what would you do if you had to maintain a hundred of them? Michael Carmichael, UMD's Stormwater Management and Maintenance Inspector, will be sharing how he's gotten the maintenance under control for more than 100 best management practices at the College Park campus. From green roofs to conservation landscapes to stream restorations, Michael has seen them all--and had to monitor and maintain them, too! He'll share success stories, lessons learned, and cover the steps you need to take to get maintenance right in your community. Whether you're the person who designs projects, installs them, or wrangles the weeds, you won't want to miss Michael's talk!

### **2B: Streams, Trees, Ponds, & BMPs: An Inside Look at Local Government Restoration Priorities**

#### ***Location: Limelight***

*Erik Michelsen | Anne Arundel County Bureau of Watershed Protection and Restoration*

*Betsy McKeown, Mike Rossberg and Jasmine Wilding | City of Annapolis*

In this yearly session, local government leaders join WSA to share insights and updates from both Anne Arundel County and the City of Annapolis. This year, Erik Michelsen will dive into stream restoration: What have we learned in the last decade of restoring streams across the County? What unexpected impact has stream restoration had on our rivers and surrounding lands, and how is the County adjusting its strategy? As if that's not enough, Erik will climb into tree canopy and unveil the new State of the Forests dashboard, a tool for tracking forest impacts in the County, from development, tree planting, harvest and conservation efforts, as it shifts from year to year.

The City of Annapolis stormwater team, Betsy McKeown, Mike Rossberg and Jasmine Wilding will showcase their outfall risk assessments and watershed plans and give insight into how they prioritize projects. You'll learn about the City's new focus on maintenance and hear the redemption story of one failing stormwater pond, from installation to retrofit.

## **2C: This is Bliss: Communities Connected to Nature**

### **Location: Spotlight**

*Atiya Wells | Backyard Basecamp*

Learn about connecting communities to nature from Atiya Wells, Founder of Backyard Basecamp. You'll hear about how Atiya used her skills and expertise as a pediatric nurse to meet her community's needs, and where that journey has taken her. What started as nature walks for health, has led to BLISS, a 10 acre land-reclamation project - that's a lot of growth! Join this session for inspiration and practical steps on how to assess your skills and your communities needs, grow as a community leader and bring a vision to life.

## **2:00 pm Break**

## **2:15 pm Session 3**

### **3A: Integrated Vegetation Management: Controlling Invasives to Promote Biodiversity**

#### **Location: Limelight**

*Rick Johnstone | Integrated Vegetation Management*

Rick Johnstone has been controlling invasives for over 5 decades and he has learned a thing or two about what works. Rick will discuss how integrated vegetation management (IVM), using a combination of techniques that promote biological controls, can reduce carbon emissions while restoring native habitat for pollinators, birds and other threatened or endangered species. The IVM approach can meet safety, access, and reliability standards while lowering costs. It can be applied to community spaces, parks, agriculture, and restoration projects. Rick will explain how the efficacy of these practices can be assessed using a Pollinator Site Value Index (PSVI).

*\*Includes advanced content for restoration professionals*

### **3B: Chesapeake Behavior Change: The Game Show**

#### **Location: Spotlight**

*Steve Raabe | OpinionWorks*

Attend this session for a unique take on behavior change, game show style! Steve Raabe, of OpinionWorks, will be your gameshow host and guide you through an interactive look at brand new survey results for the Chesapeake Watershed, with extra data for an in-depth look at Anne Arundel County. You'll have a ton of fun, all while learning about what the latest Stewardship survey data collected in fall 2023 says about what County residents are doing, or not doing, and what behaviors they are likely to adopt. Play along and learn the information you need to help your community Spring into Action. Survey Says: you'll love this session!

### **3C: Putting Our Minds Together: Using Mindfulness to Engage New Communities**

#### **Location: Feature**

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program that uses nature and native plants to develop mindfulness and promote mental well-being.

**3:30-5:00 pm Conference After Party In the Exhibit Hall**

*After a fantastic day of learning and growing, stick around to connect with others and grow your network! Join us just outside the session doors for light appetizers and a cash bar.*