

Cacapon Institute

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Dear Friend,

It feels strange writing a fundraising letter in such uncertain times, with everyone concerned about the economy, and uneasy about the future. Cacapon Institute is worried about the future too, but here's a checklist of a few things we are *not* uncertain about:

- ✓ We cannot protect and restore our environment only during the good times.
- ✓ Ensuring an informed and engaged community through creative, school-based education programs has never been needed more.
- ✓ Citizens and agencies will always require sources of information they know are unbiased, non political and objective.

For over 23 years, CI has used science and education to protect the waters of the Cacapon and other Potomac streams, and engage the next generation to become informed citizens and environmental leaders.

And for all 23 of those years, donations from members like you have made our important work possible. While we remain a solid, well established organization, we must again ask for your financial support to help us remain effective in delivering vital services during these troubled times.

Here are a few of the programs your support will help us sustain:

- **Environmental Forums.** Since they began in 2005, more than 1000 students in four states have taken part in the web-based Potomac Highlands Watershed School's Environmental Forums. The eForums provide a unique setting for high school students throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed to undertake in-depth, collaborative explorations, of science and societal challenges. Students study regionally important environmental problems, such as non point source pollution and overpopulated deer. Then, working as stakeholders, they seek consensus solutions to the problem. The eForums are a powerful educational tool for the next generation, offering practical learning that goes far beyond typical classroom learning. Here's what one Virginia teacher told us:

“With your forum the students need to come to a consensus for a large, real controversial topic twice - as a small group and as a large group. They get to see a BIG picture to a for-real BIG problem. Then they get to see what solution others propose. . . . It has also taught me a respect for the ability of many of my students to see the big picture and to express it concisely. I have been delighted all way round with your wonderful, usable concept of small to large and real problems for real learning.”

**From the Cacapon to the Potomac to the Chesapeake Bay,
we protect rivers and watersheds using science and education.**

- **Failure is Not an Option: Investigating a Cost-Effective Approach to Reducing Deer Damage in Reforestation Programs.** Thousands of miles of riparian buffers, and hundreds of thousands of trees, are being planted across the Chesapeake Bay watershed to improve water quality and restore ecosystem function. Where deer are over abundant, these plantings all too often fail. Our cost effective deer exclusion experiment to protect forested riparian buffer plantings is generating solid results and considerable interest. We have received a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to support continuing and expanding this project, but we need significant matching funds as well. Your support will help fully fund this project.
- **Cacapon River Monitoring.** We continue our monthly water sampling to build on our twelve years of data on the health of the river. It isn't easy or glamorous collecting water quality samples in the ice and rain, but the collection of scientific data on the Cacapon is core to CI's mission and member support is essential.
- **Stream Scholars Summer Camp.** Eight middle and high school students from Hampshire County enjoyed a week in July participating in Cacapon Institute's 6th Annual Stream Scholars Summer Camp, a hands-on exploration of stream ecology and conservation. They studied a WV stream, worked at our water quality laboratory, visited our elected representatives in Washington D.C., and cruised the Chesapeake Bay on a research vessel. Lydia Moreland wrote us that her son Levi "has lived around the Potomac R. most of his life, but thinks of it differently due to the Stream Scholars Camp." Your support is directly helping youth in the Potomac Highlands.

Other ongoing programs include the **Potomac Headwaters Stream Flow Restoration Project: Farmers as Producers of Clean Water**, an experiment with WVU testing economic incentives; **Potomac Headwaters Leaders of Watersheds (PHLOW)**, leadership training and service learning for students; **Lost River and Sleepy Creek Watershed Plans**, two implementation projects; and, **WV's Potomac Tributary Strategy**, reducing sediment and nutrient pollution in West Virginia's Potomac headwaters and the Chesapeake Bay.

We are writing to ask you for a special year-end gift of \$75 or more to help us continue to protect rivers and watersheds using science and education, and to transform a generation of school kids throughout the Chesapeake Bay's watershed into responsible watershed stewards.

We wish you a wonderful and safe holiday and a happy new year!

Sincerely,

W. Neil Gillies
Executive Director

Frank Rodgers
Education & Outreach Director

P.S. You can also renew your membership through a secure link at http://www.cacaponinstitute.org/become_a_member.htm

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