

# Cacapon Institute

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Dear Friend,

These are amazing times at Cacapon Institute. Thanks to your past support we have developed a diverse array of programs that are more broadly relevant to the Cacapon watershed and the rest of our region than ever before.

We want to share our excitement about CI's contributions to making our waters healthier and cleaner -- from the Cacapon to the Potomac to the Chesapeake Bay. And, as we thank you for your past support, we must also ask for your continued support to help us achieve our shared goals this year.





Below are a few highlights from our many innovative projects, focusing on conservation and education.

**Conservation Innovations.** We are problem solvers seeking solutions to environmental challenges that confront us locally and regionally.

- ✿ We are partnering on the "Farmers as Producers of Clean Water" economic incentive experiment with WVU economist Dr. Alan Collins and doctoral candidate Peter Maille. The project is located in the Cullers Run watershed (at the head of the Lost/Cacapon River watershed). Fifteen farmers are participating. Two aspects of this project are remarkable. First, we work with the farmers as a group instead of as individuals like most conservation programs. Second, incentive payments are keyed to water quality improvements rather than paying for specific actions on their lands; in other words, we pay based on *results*, not *practices*. This multiyear project has generated some unexpected results. For example, the farmers decided, as a group, to bank most of their payments to use as reimbursements to individual farmers for costs associated with voluntary conservation actions. And, for a water quality scientist like Neil, it is quite something to have farmers ask for *more* water quality data. Instead of being wary of studies that look at agriculture as a non-point source of pollution, our farmers are eager for data to help better understand their watershed, and they use this data to make decisions on where to place conservation practices.
- ✿ Our deer exclusion experiment to protect forested riparian buffer plantings is generating solid results and considerable interest. CI's project matters because thousands of miles of riparian trees are being planted across the Chesapeake Bay watershed to improve water quality and restore ecosystem functions in our rivers and streams. Where deer are over abundant, these plantings all too often fail. CI's low cost and humane approach seems to offer a viable solution. Neil gave a presentation at the American Water Resources Association's national conference on riparian issues in June. The talk was well received, and resulted in collaborations that will expand the experiment into Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia; we will also have more sites in West Virginia.

**Education programs.** Our vision is that, in thirty years, a stream without a buffer will look as out of place as a smoker in a conference room does today.

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

-  We continue to develop our web-based Potomac Highlands Watershed School (PHWS) to build a community of learners and problem solvers among students, teachers, volunteers, and experts throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Thanks to our funders and supporters, PHWS remains open to anyone, anywhere, free of charge, year-round. This 365/24/7 approach to education using the internet has produced some unexpected opportunities for West Virginia students. For example, as we were tracking use of the eSchool this spring, we identified a user online from Bangkok. Yes! A school in Bangkok, Thailand using our PHWS. We reached out to the teacher and now Capon Bridge Middle School students participating in our PHLOW (Potomac Headwaters Leaders of Watersheds) program have a sister watershed relationship with students on the other side of the world.
-  We use the PHWS and other CI programs to involve students in hands-on activities that are relevant both to the schools and the student's lives. Five of the 21 classes that participated in this spring's Stream Cleaner Environmental Forum went on to do hands-on projects. Jefferson High School (WV) 9<sup>th</sup> graders planted more than 200 trees on their school grounds to buffer a constructed wetland, protect a nearby stream, and reduce the area the school has to mow. Buffalo Gap High School (VA) vo-ag students did an erosion control project at a nearby elementary school that also engaged the elementary school teachers and students. Rappahannock High School (VA) won the SCE Forum bumper sticker contest with a clever graphic design and the slogan: "Save the Bay by Pointing out Non-Point Pollution." We had 200 stickers printed & distributed to the participating schools.
-  We are developing new partnerships among environmental educators throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed. For example, CI is a founding member of the new WV Environmental Education Association and Frank is serving on the board. WVEEA vision is to conserve WV's natural and cultural heritage by fostering an environmentally literate and responsible public. Sound familiar? We're happy to be part of this fast growing network with ties to the North American Association for Environmental Educators.
-  We are building tools to encourage community-based conservation organizations to use the PHWS eForums, other PHWS activities, and other CI Programs like PHLOW to engage their local schools. One example of this is our growing partnership with the Shenandoah Valley Pure Water Forum, which will use our eSchool as a core component of the valley-wide, coordinated environmental education program they are building.

We're proud of our innovative science and education programs and, as a member, you can be too. With your support we will continue this exciting time of expanded outreach from the Cacapon throughout the Potomac River basin and the wider Chesapeake Bay watershed. It is the support from members like you that makes Cacapon Institute the leader it is today.

Thanks for all you do for CI. We appreciate your continuing support.

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](http://www.cacaponinstitute.org/become_a_member.htm)

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