



**Inside this Issue**

|  |        |                    |        |
|--|--------|--------------------|--------|
| Sustainable Parks: Water Refill Stations | Page 1 | Weed Warriors      | Page 2 |
| Shell Station                            | Page 1 | Think Twice        | Page 2 |
| Important Dates                          | Page 1 | Adopt-A-Road       | Page 3 |
| GreenFest                                | Page 1 | Additional Efforts | Page 3 |



**Sustainable Parks: Water Refill Stations**

In an effort to reduce the number of plastic bottles in our parks and facilities the Department will be placing bottle fillers for all new construction projects. The upcoming phases for Blandair and Troy Park will have bottle fillers. Funds are being sought to retrofit or replace existing fixtures with bottle filler stations. To give you a sense of the scope of this project, the parks have 49 free-standing water fountains and 16 water fountains attached to buildings – none of which have bottle fillers. The community centers, Robinson Nature Center, Kiwanis-Wallas Hall, Meadowbrook Athletic Complex and Schooley Mill Park building have a total of 30 water fountains with only Roger Carter Community Center having 4 bottle fillers. This effort is not an inexpensive one and may take several years to complete the conversions.

**Shell Station**

Did you know that the Oyster Shell Recycling station at Robinson Nature Center contributed 23.22 bushels of oyster shells to the Oyster Recovery Partnership (ORP) in 2014? ORP provided the shells to the University of Maryland Oyster Hatchery at Horn Point Laboratory to be seeded with baby oysters (116,100 to be exact) and planted back in the Chesapeake Bay. The next time you enjoy oysters on the half shell, remember to save your shells and drop them off at Robinson Nature Center!



**Important Spring and Summer Dates**

- 2015 is the International...Year of Soils  
 March 21.....World Forestry Day  
 March 22.....World Water Day  
 April 1.....MD Arbor Day  
 April 18.....HC GreenFest  
 April 22.....Earth Day  
 May 15.....Bike To Work Day  
 June 5.....World Environment Day  
 June 6.....World Oceans Day

**Did you know** that GreenFest was highlighted in the February 2015 “green” issue of *Parks and Rec Business* magazine? Thanks to Bill Mahoney, a Planner with the Howard County Department of Planning and Zoning and the contributions of his GreenFest Co-chairs, Lindsay DeMarzo, Sue Muller, and Alan Wilcom, an article was written and published on how a premier green event comes to fruition. Check out this great article at [Growing a GreenFest](#) .



### Sustaining Native Habitat

Did you know that invasive species are a leading cause of population decline and extinction in animals? It is estimated that more than 100 million acres of the US, about the land area of California, are infested with invasive plants. Even here in the more than 1,000 acres of protected land of the Middle Patuxent Environmental Area (MPEA), numerous invasive plants are causing habitat loss and damage. Efforts are being managed to reduce the spread of invasive plants and recreate native forest habitat.

Beginning again this spring, Davey Rogner will continue in his second year leading the charge to remove invasive plants and replace them with native vegetation in the MPEA. Find out more about Weed Warrior Volunteer Days and how you can join the effort at a free MPEA Spring Celebration and “friend-raiser” hosted at Robinson Nature Center on Friday, March 27 from 6:30 – 9:30PM. To find out more, or to RSVP: [drogner@howardcountymd.gov](mailto:drogner@howardcountymd.gov).



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### Think Twice Before Promoting Your Events With Balloons

*Balloons Waste Helium, Kill Wildlife and Pollute the Earth.* "We're going to be looking back and thinking, I can't believe people just used to fill up their balloons with it [helium], when it's so precious and unique," says Cambridge University Chemist Peter Wothers.

Did you know that helium is a finite resource that could one day run out? Helium is one of the few elements that escape gravity and leaks into space. Once the Helium is released into the atmosphere it's gone forever. The gas is formed by the decay of radioactive rocks in the earth's crust. Helium is not manufactured. In the universe as a whole, it's one of the most common elements, (second to hydrogen in abundance). Yet on Earth, it's relatively rare.

Helium is used for more than balloons. It is used for cooling super-conducting magnets in MRI scanners, making computer chips, with ventilators, in deep-sea diving, and more.

In addition to preserving our helium-supply, Balloons, including those marketed as “biodegradable latex,” return to Earth as litter. They can kill animals, cause power outages, and pollute pristine places. (Balloons can travel thousands of miles.) Although *natural* latex may be biodegradable, after adding chemicals, plasticizers and artificial dyes, they are no longer able to degrade quickly. And don't forget the strings tied to balloons. These also last for years and can entangle an animal that comes in contact with it.

For further information:

<http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-24903034>

<http://balloonsblow.org/>

“Why the World Will Run Out of Helium,” February 2014

“Why Is There a Helium Shortage?” By Popular Mechanic, June 2012.”

<http://www.technologyreview.com/article/400068/save-the-helium/>

<http://education.jlab.org/itselemental/ele002.html>





**Adopt-A-Road 2015**

The Adopt-a-Road Clean-up is off to a great start for 2015. The first clean-up occurred on March 11<sup>th</sup> with eight employees participating. A record amount of trash was collected! In all, 94 lbs. of trash was collected and 16 lbs. of that was recycled. Since the first Adopt-a-Road clean-up, Department employees have collected 320 lbs. of trash from Oakland Mills Rd. With storm drains right in front of the headquarters building, we have stopped a lot of trash from getting into the Patuxent River and ultimately ending up in the Chesapeake Bay to harm wildlife. Way to go team! Mark your calendars for the next clean-up, June 3<sup>rd</sup> at 10:30AM.



June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 10:30 AM  
Sept. 2<sup>nd</sup>, 10:30AM  
Dec. 2<sup>nd</sup>, 10:30 AM



**Additional Sustainable Efforts Howard County**



- Did you know greenEWit is partnering with the Howard County Public School System to teach students about energy efficiency and environmental consciousness through STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math)-based lessons? Find out the exciting details on the HCPSS web-site: [www.hcpss.org/greenewit](http://www.hcpss.org/greenewit)
- Check out current and new efforts of sustainability in Howard County through the Office of Environmental Sustainability. Did you know our office is the state’s oldest office of sustainability and works to coordinate efforts throughout other Howard County Departments, governments through out the state and region, and community institutions? Find out more here: [www.howardcounty/OES](http://www.howardcounty/OES)
- Did you know that Howard Community College has a Sustainability Team? They meet bi-monthly addressing sustainability issues and concerns to “develop a comprehensive sustainability plan and facilities improvements program, and consists of representatives from all college constituency groups, Students, Staff and Faculty.” To find out more about how HCC is going green visit them online: [www.howardcc.edu](http://www.howardcc.edu)