



CAPITAL SIERRAN

Newsletter of the Washington, D.C., Chapter

Backyard Greening and Pope Branch Restoration by Penn Branch Residents

by Linda Fennell

Lewis Shorter and 17 of his neighbors on Nash Street, S.E., are in a peculiar predicament: they are losing their backyards. In this quiet, picturesque community of Penn Branch, located off Pennsylvania Avenue, S.E., residents say something has to be done before their yards disappear. So who do they turn to? To Alberta Paul, public works chair of the Penn Branch Citizens Civic Association. In response Ms. Paul called together staff from the D.C. Department of

worked diligently with her neighbors to keep the city on its toes when it comes to public works issues. The disappearing backyards form just one of several seemingly insurmountable problems. "We are going to get this done," said Ms. Paul with fiery determination, "and we will do it together." She and the D.C. Chapter's environmental justice organizer, Linda Fennell, sat down and conducted research on which agencies and nonprofit organizations could come to the community's aid. Ms. Paul has the goal of making this project a model for other communities in Southeast Washington, D.C., to follow.

The first step was to apply for a grant from the Casey Tree Foundation. After completing the first-round application and attending the orientation session, the next step was to pull together all the interested parties that would become a part of the restoration team. That included contacting the Anacostia Watershed Society, the Sierra Club staff and volunteers, and getting the neighbors on board. While Mr. Shorter and Mr. Ferguson worked on getting input from the Nash Street neighbors, Ms. Paul and Linda Fennell pulled together all the other parties. A contingent of about 20 people representing five organizations walked the creek again on a cold February morning and found additional problems that affect the stream. It was time to move on to the next step.

Over the next few months, preliminary planning and activities to begin greening backyards and open spaces within the community will take place. The first phase of the planting and restoration project will begin in May or June. It will take at least a year to 18 months to carry out the various greening stages. Stay tuned to hear more about the project's progress.

If you would like to be a volunteer for this project or any other river cleanup programs supported by the D.C. Chapter, please contact Linda Fennell at 202-610-0200 or Joanna Winchester at 202-543-0552.



Exposed storm drain at the end of Texas Avenue, N.W.

Health Storm Water Management, along with Mr. Shorter and his neighbor James Ferguson, for a tour of the Pope Branch stream bank on the Nash Street side. Pope Branch is a tributary to the Anacostia River that begins in the vicinity of Fort Davis Drive off Pennsylvania Avenue, S.E. It winds its way to the Anacostia River through the Penn Branch and DuPont Park neighborhoods, under Branch Avenue, under Minnesota Avenue, and under the CSX rail line.

The tour was very informative. Sliding down the slippery slope of leaves and tree branches was an adventure in itself for everyone. As the group walked along the stream bank, they identified the erosion that is causing the backyards to disappear and then returned to Mr. Shorter's home for tea and crackers. There Ms. Paul came up with a plan. She had already envisioned a solution to the problem: treescaping and greening the banks of the stream. Ms. Paul has for years

photo by Steve McKinley-Ward, AWS

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