

Chinese Delegation Visits PWP Restoration Site: Little Pipe Creek wetland

The Potomac Watershed Partnership (PWP)—in collaboration with the World Wildlife Federation (WWF) and Ducks Unlimited—recently had the privilege of leading a 15 person delegation of high level water resource managers, engineers, and basin commissioners from China on a tour of Springdale Dairy- a working farm and PWP restoration site in West Minister, MD.

The field visit to Springdale Dairy was part of a 2-day event sponsored by WWF. The purpose of the event was to share a local example of integrated river basin management (IRBM) featuring inter-state, local government cooperation, NGO activities, outreach, and academic perspectives with water resource managers from China to develop delegates' theoretical and practical understanding of IRBM using the Potomac River as a case study.

During the first day, the delegation attended presentations by key partners in IRBM of the Potomac, including Potomac Conservancy, the Interstate Commission of the Potomac River Basin (ICPRB), Washington Council of Governments, and the District of Columbia Department of the Environment and University of Maryland.

The second day the delegation met Ducks Unlimited staff at Springdale Dairy to tour the farm and its best management practices, including a constructed wetland area:



Little Pipe Creek wetland - Springdale Dairy, Westminister, MD

Background: Springdale Dairy has been owned & operated by the Owings family for over 100 years. The Owings utilize rotational grazing and flash grazing techniques on their ranch, and conventional tillage & crop rotation (corn, wheat, beans cycle) on their farm. For decades, cattle would trample through low lands on part of the ranch, and would often get stuck so badly in the mud of the natural springs, that they would have to be removed one at a time by using a tractor. The Owings noticed that when the cattle disturbed these areas, the entire creek would become muddy, and the cows were very stressed and upset, which affects their productivity.

To increase the productivity of the ranch, improve the water quality in the creek, and provide some habitat for wildlife, the Owings contacted the US Department of Agriculture to learn about the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), which provides incentives for landowners to set aside poor quality land for wildlife and water quality. The USDA told the Owings that the muddy springs would be a good site for a wetland restoration project, while other areas of the ranch would benefit by being planted in warm season

grasses and fenced off from the cattle. While the CRP program offered the Owings 50% of the cost of installing these practices and an annual crop-loss rental payment, the Owings, like many farmers, lacked the means to pay the remaining 50%.

The Owings had heard that non-government groups like Ducks Unlimited and the Potomac Conservancy help landowners cover these costs. Engineers and biologists from Ducks Unlimited surveyed and designed the wetland area, and helped the landowner find a contractor to build the wetland. After the wetland was built, Ducks Unlimited and the Potomac Conservancy helped to pay the contractor.

The tour of Springdale Dairy and the Little Pipe Creek wetland was a great success. Carissa Wong, the WWF program officer who coordinated the event, wrote:

“One delegate who had been to the US several times said that he had never seen anything like this before. I don’t think any had seen a wetland restoration site in the US, and I hadn’t seen one like this before either. I would have liked to stay longer to learn more about the project [...]!”

The Potomac Watershed Partnership would like to thank the World Wildlife Federation and Ducks Unlimited for showcasing this PWP restoration site to the delegation from China.



Chinese Delegation with DU and WWF staff at Springdale Dairy