

I AM BILL SHERWOOD AND OWNER OF A SMALL FARM LOCATED BETWEEN HUGHESVILLE AND PICTURE ROCKS AND ADJACENT TO MUNCY CREEK. MY TOPIC IS "THE NEED FOR CREEK BANK STABILIZATION AND REMOVAL OF GRAVEL BARS." ALBEIT, IT IS NOT OFFICIAL, I HAVE HEARD, THIS FLOOD CAUSED BY TROPICAL STORM LEE WAS OF THE MAGNITUDE OF A 500 YEAR FLOOD, AND WAS MORE DESTRUCTIVE THAN THE 100 YEAR FLOOD CAUSED BY HURRICANE AGNES IN 1972.

FOR ALL THOSE WHO PERSONNALLY SUFFERED FROM THIS PAST YEAR'S FLOOD, THEIR FIRST PRIORITY IN THE CLEAN-UP EFFORT WAS TO GET THEIR HOMES BACK INTO A LIVEABLE CONDITION. FOR FARMERS IT WAS THE HOME AS WELL AS OUT BUILDINGS AND THEN THE FIELDS. THIS FLOOD COULD NOT HAVE HAPPENED AT A WORSE TIME, AS THE SOIL WAS ALREADY SATURATED DUE TO PRIOR RAINS AND HURRICANE IRENE, PLUS THE CROPS WERE NOT YET AT THE STAGE TO BE HARVESTED, I.E., CORN, SOY BEANS, ETC., ALL BECAME NATURAL CATCH-ALLS FOR DEBRIS FROM THE OVER FLOWING CREEK. BEFORE ANY EFFORT COULD BE MUSTERED TO EMPLOY EQUIPMENT TO CUT THE CORN STALKS AND OTHER CROPS, THE LARGE AMOUNT OF DEBRIS RANGING FROM TREES, TREE STUMPS, LOGS, FIRE WOOD, PLASTIC CONTAINERS OF ALL TYPES, HOSES, METAL CANS, TOYS, LUMBER WITH NAILS, ETC., ALL HAD TO BE REMOVED BY SYSTEMATIALLY GOING THROUGH EVERY CORN ROW. NEXT WAS THE REMOVAL OF THE REMINANTS FROM THE STREAM BANK THAT HAD BEEN BREACHED BY POWERFUL FLOOD WATERS CONSISTING OF ROCK, STONE AND SEDIMENT. THIS MATERIAL HAD TO BE PUSHED BACK TO THE EDGE OF THE STREAM BANK OR LITERALLY INTO THE GAP WHERE THE BANK WAS PREVIOUSLY LOCATED. I FOR ONE DO NOT WANT TO HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO REPEAT A CLEAN-UP OF THIS MAGNATUDE.

IN OUR AREA OF MUNCY CREEK, LITTLE EFFORT HAS BEEN EXPENDED TO REMOVE GRAVEL BARS AND/OR STABALIZE CREEK BANKS SINCE THE 1972 FLOOD CAUSED BY HURRICANE AGNES. THE ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS AT THAT TIME CONSTRUCTED RIP RAP PROTECTON FOR THE CREEK BANKS AND REMOVED GRAVEL BARS WHERE NECESSARY.

FOLLOWING THE 1996 WINTER FLOOD, I PERSONALLY PURSUED AN EFFORT TO REPAIR A PORTION OF THE CREEK BANK ALONG MY PROPERTY THAT WAS PARTIALLY DESTROYED. AND

IN 2004, A PERMIT WAS FINALLY APPROVED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION (DEP) FOR THE REPLACEMENT OF 180 LINEAL FEET OF CREEK BANK WITH LARGE #7 RIP RAP. THIS REPAIR WAS COMPLETED AT A PERSONAL COST OF OVER TWENTY THOUSAND DOLLARS WITH GLENN O. HAWBAKER, INC. AS THE CONTRACTOR. NO GOVERNMENT FUNDS WERE INVOLVED. THIS REPLACEMENT WAS CONSIDERED SUCCESSFUL AND HELD UNTIL TROPICAL STORM LEE UNLEASHED ITS TORRENT OF RAIN (9" WITHIN A 24 HOUR PERIOD) IN SEPTEMBER 2011.

WHAT I ALSO TRIED TO DO BACK IN THE 1996-2004 TIME FRAME WAS TO FIND AN APPROVED WAY TO REMOVE THE EXTRA LARGE AND EVER EXPANDING GRAVEL BAR THAT WAS CAUSING THE CREEK'S CHANNEL AND STREAM BED TO MOVE, THEREIN CHANGING THE LOCATION WHERE THE CREEK'S MAIN WATER FORCE WOULD IMPACT THE CREEK BANK. REPRESENTATIVES FROM DEP WERE INVITED TO INFORMALLY DISCUSS HOW THIS LARGE GRAVEL BAR COULD BE REMOVED AND THE LOCATION OF THE STREAM BED MOVED BACK TO ITS ORIGINAL VENUE. DUE TO THE SIZE OF THE GRAVEL BAR AND EXTRA MATERIAL REQUIRED TO ACCOMMODATE SUCH A PROJECT, THEY WERE AT A LOSS AS TO HOW THIS COULD BE CARRIED OUT. I WAS THEN INFORMED BY THE BUREAU OF WATERWAYS ENGINEERING, DEP THAT UNDER THEIR DEPARTMENT'S STREAM IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM THEY CONSTRUCT PROJECTS ONLY TO REDUCE FLOODING OR EROSION DAMAGES TO HOUSES, BUSINESS BUILDINGS OR INDUSTRIAL STRUCTURES AND THAT ALTHOUGH THE SITE APPEARS TO BE ACTIVE THERE IS NO IMMINENT THREAT TO YOUR HOUSE. THEY ALSO INDICATED THIS SITE IS NOT COVERED THROUGH THE STREAM IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM. FOLLOWING THIS PRONOUNCEMENT FROM DEP AND LACKING THE NECESSARY RESOURCES TO PURSUE THE GRAVEL BAR REMOVAL, THE INITIATIVE WAS TABLED. IN RETROSPECT, IF THE GRAVEL BAR HAD BEEN REMOVED AT THAT TIME, THE RESULTING DEVASTATION TO THE CREEK BANKS, FARM LAND, FARM STRUCTURES AND HOMES IN OUR IMMEDIATE AREA WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN IMPACTED TO THE EXTENT THEY WERE. HOPEFULLY, DEP WILL RE-CONSIDER AND INCLUDE THIS EXISTING AND EVER EXPANDING GRAVEL BAR AS A PRIORITY PROJECT IN THEIR STREAM IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM.

IN REVIEWING DEP'S BANK REHABILITATION, BANK PROTECTION AND GRAVEL BAR REMOVAL REGULATIONS FOR PERMITTING, I FIND THEM QUITE COMPLEX AND SOMETIMES NOT UNDERSTANDABLE. FOR INSTANCE, WHEN REMOVING GRAVEL BARS, GRAVEL CANNOT BE REMOVED TO A LEVEL LESS THAN SIX INCHES ABOVE THE WATER LEVEL AT TIME OF CONSTRUCTION. LIKEWISE, A GENERAL PERMIT DOES NOT APPLY WHEN THE PROJECT INVOLVES CHANNEL RELOCATION. IN ESSENCE, THESE REGULATIONS SEEM CONTRARY TO WHY YOU WANT TO REMOVE A GRAVEL BAR TO BEGIN WITH, E.G., TO REDIRECT THE FLOW OF WATER AND IN SOME CASES THE STREAM BED ITSELF BACK TO ITS NATURAL COURSE. TO REITERATE, THE GRAVEL BAR I MENTIONED PREVIOUSLY HAS CAUSED THE STREAM BED AND ITS CHANNEL TO DRASTICALLY MOVE WITH THE WATER NOW HITTING AREAS WHERE THE BANKS ARE NON-EXISTANT OR CONTAIN ONLY ROUND CREEK STONES WHICH AT HIGH WATER EASILY TOPPLE SIMILAR TO A PYRAMID OF MARBLES-----MOVE THE BOTTOM MARBLE AND THE PYRAMID COLLAPSES. IF YOU CAN ONLY REDUCE THE GRAVEL BAR TO A LEVEL OF SIX INCHES ABOVE THE STREAMS COURSE, IT APPEARS THE REGULATIONS PRECLUDE ANY ATTEMPT TO CORRECT THE PROBLEM.

WITHIN THE MUNCY CREEK WATERSHED, THE DEMOGRAPHICS ARE RAPIDLY CHANGING AS MORE PEOPLE ARE MOVING INTO THE AREA. THE GROWTH OF THE NATURAL GAS INDUSTRY, CONSTRUCTION OF NEW HOMES, BUSINESSES AND ROAD NETWORKS, LEAVE HUGE FOOTPRINTS ADDING TO WATER RUN-OFF AT AN EVER INCREASING RATE. SINCE THE MUNCY CREEK STREAM CHANNEL IS LIMITED TO THE VOLUME OF WATER IT CAN HANDLE, WE CAN ANTICIPATE ADDITIONAL FLOODING IN THE FUTURE IF MUNCY CREEK'S CHANNEL IS NOT CLEARED OF IMPEDIMENTS TO ITS FLOW.

OVER THE YEARS IT HAS BEEN A FRUSTRATING EXPERIENCE LIVING ON A FARM THAT BORDERS MUNCY CREEK AND COPING WITH THE CREEK BANK PROBLEM AND ASSOCIATED FLOODING. THERE APPEARS TO BE A LARGE NUMBER OF GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES INVOLVED IN CREATING RULES AND IMPLEMENTING MANDATES ON WHAT YOU CAN AND CANNOT DO; BUT, THERE IS MINIMAL ACTUAL HELP TO ASSIST IN MITIGATING OR TRYING TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM. ORGANIZATIONS NOW INVOLVED WITH MANAGEMENT OF OUR WATERWAYS AND ADJOINING LANDS INCLUDE TO NAME A FEW: PA FISH AND BOAT

COMMISSION; DEP; CONSERVATION DISTRICTS; FARM SERVICE AGENCY; FARM BUREAU; CHESAPEAKE BAY COMMISSION; ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS; COUNTY COMMISSIONERS; TOWNSHIP SUPERVISORS; BOROUGH COUNCIL MEMBERS; AND ON AND ON!!!!!!! TO NAVIGATE THIS BUREAUCRATIC MORASS IS SELF DEFEATING. SO IT APPEARS THAT EVERYONE WANTS A SAY IN WHAT CAN AND CANNOT BE DONE, BUT WHEN PUSH COMES TO SHOVE IN DOING SOMETHING CONSTRUCTIVE TO RESOLVE A SITUATION, IT IS ON THE BACK OF THE LAND OWNER. ARE THOSE AGENCIES REALLY HERE TO HELP AND TO MITIGATE THE NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF FLOODING OR ARE THEY JUST HERE TO STRICTLY ENFORCE AND POLICE THE SITUATION AND DO NOTHING?

IN SUMMARY, IT IS PARAMOUNT THAT WE CLEAN THE MUNCY CREEK CHANNEL AT THE EARLIEST BY REMOVING GRAVEL BARS AND OTHER IMPEDIMENTS THAT RESTRICT THE PROPER FLOW OF THE STREAM AND CAUSE NEGATIVE IMPACT ON ADJACENT CREEK BANKS AND FARM LAND. ANY EFFORT IMPLEMENTED MUST INCLUDE THE STABILIZATION OF THE CREEK BANKS DAMAGED OR DESTROYED BY TROPICAL STORM LEE. NOW IS THE TIME WHEN WE NEED TO JOIN FORCES IN A CONCERTED ALL- OUT EFFORT TO CLEAN THE CREEK. CHOOSING NOT TO DO SO WILL RESULT IN MORE SEVERE AND FREQUENT FLOODING OF OUR HOMES, FARMS, AND BUSINESSES WHEN RAINFALL IS A LOT LESS THAN THAT EXPERIENCED DURING TROPICAL STORM LEE. RESTRICTIONS, REGULATIONS AND PROCEDURES SHOULD BE STREAMLINED TO EXPEDITE THIS IMPORTANT PROJECT. AND I MUST EMPHASIZE, INDIVIDUAL PROPERTY OWNERS WILL NOT AND CAN NOT BE EXPECTED TO BEAR THE BRUNT OF FUNDING FOR THIS MASSIVE AND COSTLY EFFORT-----THEIR RESOURCES ARE LIMITED.

THANK YOU