

Sawmill Branch ?? Stream Investigation (Saturday, December 2, 2006)

(Stream Watch Committee Team: Kit Valentine, Steve Schreiner & Betsy McMillion)

On Saturday, December 2, the Friends of the Patapsco Valley & Heritage Greenway (FPVHG) stream team made a recon of an unnamed Baltimore County branch known by the local community as "Sawmill Creek," and on the Patapsco Valley State Park's Maryland Trail Guide as "Sawmill Branch" (see attached copy of map displaying this name). The headwaters are located north of Frederick Road (Route 144 ADC Map 41 A4). We began this recon at the confluence point in which two separate streams meet (between Maple Avenue and near the dead end of Hilltop Concert Road, just south of Frederick Road). The stream flows south through a newer section of Catonsville where it ends in the Hilton Area of Patapsco State Park. The branch ends where it meets with the Patapsco River (ADC Map A7-A8 approximately ½ mile upstream from the swinging bridge). Over 50 digital photos were taken to document this area and our concerns.

The Sawmill Branch watershed has three sections:

- (1) Its headwaters in the Catonsville area, north of Frederick Road (Route 144 - in the vicinity of the Five Oaks Swimming Pool). This section of watershed has older medium density housing with little or no storm water management facilities. No water is found in most of these streambeds until a storm occurs. There are some erosion problems in the vicinity of Frederick Road.
- (2) The intermediate section of the watershed is a wide forested flood plain, south of Frederick Road, which is currently being developed on its west side with medium density housing. New storm water management facilities have been incorporated into these new developments. Maple Avenue on the east side of this section of watershed is an older established neighborhood with medium density housing. There are some older storm water management facilities in this area. All of the houses, on both sides of the streams, are at least 100 yards from the Sawmill Branch. Recent developments have been largely mitigated with storm water management ponds, and downstream flows are not seriously eroding the stream banks.
- (3) The lower section of the watershed within the state park boundaries is an attractive scenic area, which has a walking trail adjacent to the stream. The stream is identified as the "Sawmill Branch" based on the Maryland State Park Trail Guide, which is next to the Sawmill Branch Trail. There is some confusion on maps and among neighbors as to the correct name of the watershed. There is easy accessibility to most of the stream along the park's "Sawmill Branch Trail" which runs almost parallel to the stream in the lower portion of the watershed. We did have to ask permission of private landowners to access the stream through several properties in the newer and more established neighborhoods in the upper and intermediate portions of the watershed.

SITES:

1. This site is near a side road off of South Hilltop Road in the Hilltop Way development, in the Woodwind community, which is approximately 10-15 years old. Melissa Gill, 331 Concert Way, Catonsville, MD 21228-5565 (ADC Map 41 A4), gave us permission to walk through their property to get access to the stream. Our stream cleanup captains, Nancy and Jerry Kerr, hold annual cleanups on the other side of the stream, coming in off Maple Avenue. The stream banks appear to be in good condition in part due to the working storm water management pond (SWMP). We noticed a fox running near the stream. However, we observed considerable floatable trash and scrap metal embedded in the stream. This would be a good candidate for a future stream cleanup (see photos 1-1 through 1-4).

- 2.** There is a large dry SWMP located next to 331 Concert Way, surrounded by a fence (ADC Map 41 A4 - see photos 2-1 through 2-2).
- 3.** There is a brand new housing development “Patapsco Valley Estates” currently under construction, off of Tadcaster Road near the Woodwind community (ADC Map 40 K5). There are currently two sediment control ponds in the area. The stream is located approximately 100 yards from the closest new home being built. We discovered a large amount of trash and debris in the woods near the stream most likely caused by the new construction. There was also a great deal of floatable trash in this section of the stream (see photos 3-1 through 3-6).
- 4.** This site is further down stream, where we noticed a great deal of undercutting on the outside of the bend (see photos 4-1 through 4-3).
- 5.** This site is a large SWMP located at the end of Woodwind Road (ADC Map 41 A5 – see photos 5-1 through 5-2).
- 6.** This site is a tributary stream at the end of Woodwind Road (ADC map 41 A5), near 1820 Wood Wind Road. Although we observed some erosion, the stream banks appear to be in good condition most likely to the working SWMPs in the community. However, there was a considerable amount of floatables in the stream. This would be a good candidate for a future stream cleanup (see photos 6-1 through 6-3).
- 7.** This site is a point where a major headwater stream crosses Frederick Road underground.
- 8.** This site is a section of this stream we observed north of Frederick Road in the vicinity of Dutton Avenue (ADC Map 41 B3 & B4), which is just off Frederick Road. This small stream runs parallel to Frederick Road and is mostly underground, on private residential property and goes under the road. It appears to be an intermittent stream. We recommend this section to be investigated as a potential storm water control.
- 9.** This site is north of Frederick Road in the vicinity of Overhill Road (off of Dutton Avenue ADC Map 41 B3 & B4). This older neighborhood, known as Sugarwood, has no storm drains. We observed an open dry ditch for storm water runoff. It appears that rocks have been strategically placed along the stream banks to reduce storm water flow, which is located in the vicinity of 1700 Frederick Road (a sign indicates the property belongs to the Ring Family). This stream area would be a good candidate for investigation of potential storm water control (see photos 9-1 through 9-5).
- 10.** This site is a receiving stream in the Oak Forest community (ADC Map 41 B5-B6) adjacent to the property owned by Laura and Stephen Schwang, 406 Patleigh Road. We believe that water from several storm drains in the community flow directly into this receiving stream. Storm water in this receiving stream flows into the Sawmill Branch. There is significant erosion on this receiving stream close to the Schwang home as a result of an estimated ten-foot fall from the road level to the streambed. We recommend the installation of a series of baffles to help slow down the water in this little receiving stream to help the significant erosion problem. Laura Schwang allowed us to walk on her property to get access to the receiving stream, as well as the portion of the Sawmill Branch in this community. Ms. Schwang has lived in the house for over 35 years and told us the neighbors refer to the stream not as “Sawmill Branch”, but as “Sawmill Creek.” Her phone number is 410-744-3061 and e-mail address is laura@schwang.org (see photos 10-1 through 10-4).
- 11.** This site in the Oak Forest community on the Sawmill Branch has some, but no significant, evidence of active erosion going on down stream. When the little receiving stream mentioned in Site 10 gets

close to this branch, it spreads out so you don't see erosion along the stream banks. In this older neighborhood, there was no evidence of storm water controls. Other than floatables along this section of the stream, the stream and stream banks are in good shape. We would recommend this area for a future stream cleanup site and educating citizens on the use of rain barrels to reduce runoff from their own properties. Ms. Schwang would allow us to use her property to allow others to cleanup the Sawmill Branch (ADC Map 41 B5-B6 – see photos 11-1 through 11-8).

12. We noted two storm drains that were visible on Beechwood Avenue, near Patleigh Road, which drains into the small stream previously mentioned in site 10 adjacent to the Schwang property. There are also two other storm drains on Patleigh Road that may be leading to the stream. It appears that several other storm drains throughout the neighborhood may lead into this small stream. The end result is that this receiving stream has serious bank erosion problems whenever there is significant rainfall.

13. This site is along the main stream of Sawmill Branch and is located off Hilton Avenue, in the family campground area inside the Hilton Area of Patapsco Valley State Park, near the cabins. We stopped to access the stream near campsite 272. The stream is in good shape, with a very small amount of erosion visible (ADC Map 41 C8 – see photo 13-1).

14. This is the site of a confluence point. Note the sign designating the Sawmill Branch Trail, which is adjacent to what the state refers to as the Sawmill Branch (see photos 14-1 and 14-2).

15. This site is along the Sawmill Branch under the power lines where there is some evidence of erosion.

16. This site is a constriction point where two ridges concentrate storm water as it flows through this area. It appears that the erosion that has occurred has been there for some time.

17. This is the site of a confluence point (see photo 17-1).

18. This is the site where the Sawmill Branch flows into the Patapsco River, near the train bridge (see photos 18-1 through 18-7).

NOTES:

Adjacent to the Candlelight Inn (1835 Frederick Road - ADC Map 41 A4) and the Five Oaks Swimming Pool (1817 Frederick Road - ADC Map 41 B4), storm water controls are needed in this area, as well as the area upstream of Frederick Road.

Recommendations:

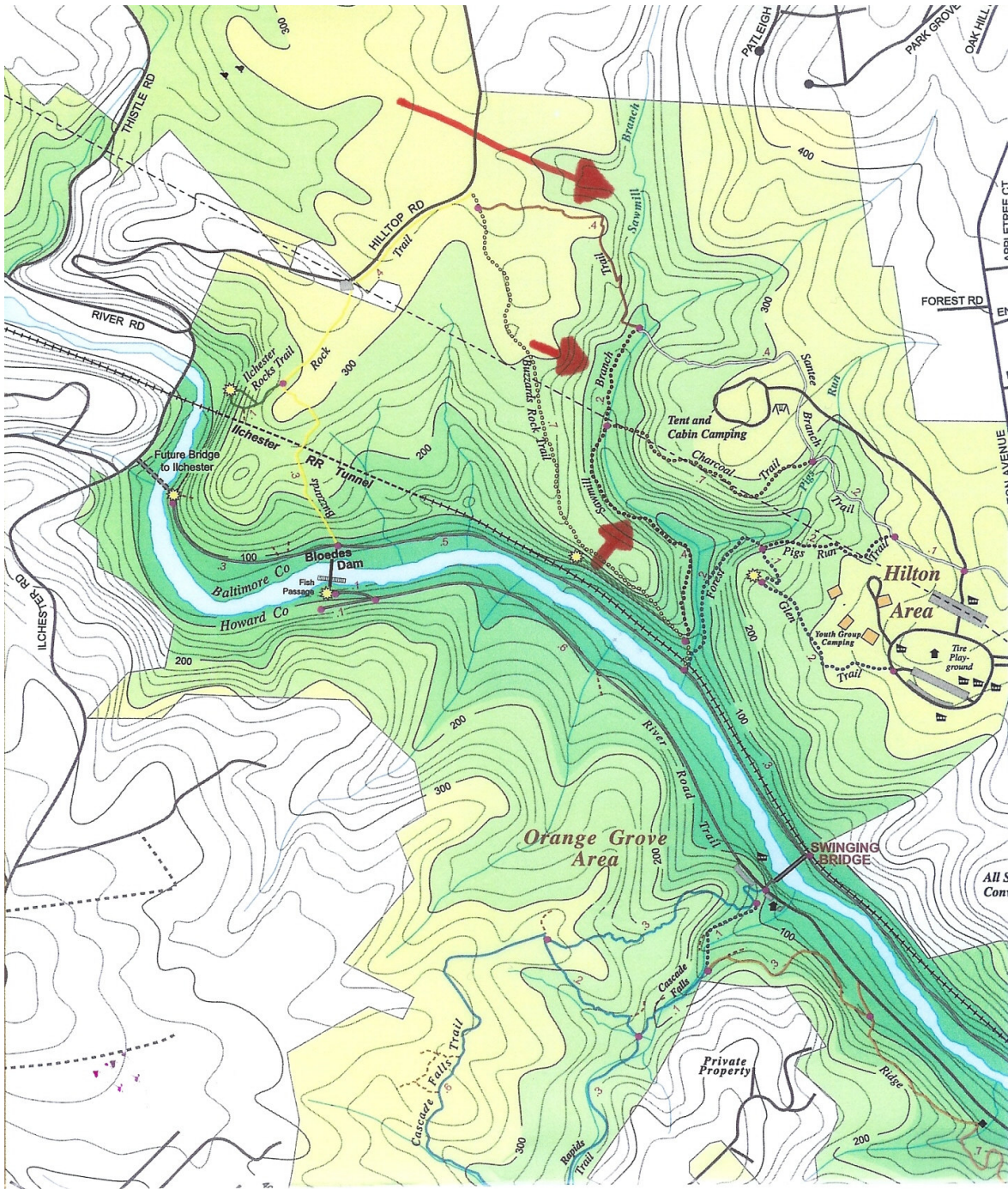
Baltimore County look into the installation of storm water controls:

- (1) Off Dutton Avenue (ADC Map 41 B3 & B4);
- (2) Overhill Road (Sugarwood community - ADC Map 41 B3 & B4);
- (3) Adjacent the Candlelight Inn (1835 Frederick Road ADC Map 41 A4); and
- (4) Adjacent to the Five Oaks Swimming Pool (1817 Frederick Road ADC Map 41 B4).
- (5) The small stream adjacent to Laura and Stephen Schwang, 406 Patleigh Road in the Oak Forest community (ADC Map 41 B5);

Baltimore County require the developers of the new Patapsco Valley Estates to remove trash from the streams and adjacent construction areas. (ADC Map 40 K5).

FPVHG:

- (1) Coordinate stream clean ups on both sides of the Sawmill Branch with Nancy and Jerry Kerr near the Hilltop Way community (ADC Map 41 A4), Woodwind community (ADC Map 41 A5), and Oak Forest community (ADC Map 41 B5).
- (2) Work with the Oak Forest community to educate residents about rain gardens and/or rain barrels to reduce run off on their own properties.



Maryland Trail Guide - Patapsco Valley State Park
(Avalon, Hilton, Glen Artney & Orange Grove Area)

Note: The State refers to the stream we investigated as "Saw Mill Branch"