



News

Living shoreline design for Oxford park adds baptismal beach, sills

[Print Page](#)

By **KELLEY L. ALLEN** Staff Writer

Published: Monday, December 28, 2009 8:06 AM CST

OXFORD Oxford's town park has a new design for a living shoreline and additional grant funds for a similar project at the ferry dock, local officials said Tuesday night.

Environmental Concern Vice President Gene Slear and Wetland Restoration Manager Kody Cario presented the design at the town council meeting, and answered questions about the project. That latest design uses sills instead of breakwaters, incorporates a baptismal beach at the Methodist Church and has a beach area that is about 40 feet long and 20 feet deep.

The sills are about 15 feet wide and 3 feet deep and would keep the sand from washing away. Two stepping stone paths would lead through the planted area into two breaks in the sills for swimming.

Originally, the project included a beach along the water's edge, but Town Council President Peter Dunbar said the regulators said that would get washed away and need replenishing. He also said public comments included opposition to the breakwaters in the original plan.

Dunbar said there is no final contract, but said he hoped for one next month.

Living shorelines offer an alternative to riprap or bulkhead and include vegetation, like cordgrass and salt meadow hay, that provide habitat, filter pollutants and reduce erosion.

In October 2008, the Living Shoreline Act became effective, which defined living shorelines as the preferred method of shore protection. Property owners must use them unless they can demonstrate a living shoreline is not feasible.

But Oxford's proposal drew opposition from some residents, who balked at potential project and maintenance costs, among other things.

Slear said once the shoreline is stabilized, it will sustain itself with minimal maintenance. He also said that Hurricane Isabel did not cause marsh failures in local living shorelines.

"We stand behind our designs," he said. "As stewards of the Bay, we have to treat it gently."

The shoreline project at the Cooperative Oxford Lab will use breakwaters, but there are two examples of projects that use sills in St. Michaels. Those are the projects at San Domingo Creek park and at the Maritime Museum.

Cario said plants in a living shoreline can convert nitrogen and phosphorus into benign elements, and the design includes a bioretention area near the beach that would filter runoff before it reaches the shore.

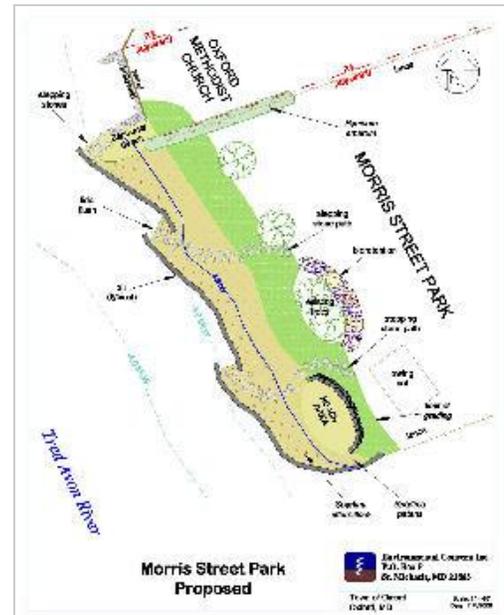


PHOTO COURTESY OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN

The latest design for a living shoreline at Oxford's town park includes sills instead of breakwaters and adds a baptismal beach.

The town secured \$161,000 in federal funds for the project from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, along with two grants from the Chesapeake Bay Trust. Town officials received \$23,000 from the CBF to incorporate the baptismal beach at the park, and another \$69,000 for a shoreline project at the ferry dock.

Dunbar planned to start public input on the ferry dock project next month, he said. The next steps for the park project include a contract, maintenance and construction issues and a timeframe.

Environmental Concern did not charge the town for the design, Slear said.

Copyright © 2009 - The Star-Democrat

[\[x\] Close Window](#)