

Museum on Main Street, Smithsonian Institution
Stories: Yes | Student Digital Storytelling Project
Watermen: Observer's of the Chesapeake Bay, Maryland

Speaker 1: Water: it's all around us. When you live in a county that is surrounded by water, it can become a lifeline to most people who live there. Calvert County is one of the smallest counties in Maryland and it is a peninsula. To the east lies the Chesapeake Bay and to the west flows the Patuxent River. From when the first settlers came to Calvert, they found oysters, which turned out to be a great business. However, the settlers didn't know much about moderation because by the time they had figured out that the water was getting polluted, it was because they were taking out all of the natural filters from the water. Ever since this event occurred, the counties around the bay have dealt with filthy bay water. Calvert County's kept modernizing but eventually repeated the past by extensive building.

Speaker 1: [0:47] The construction in some forms were leading runoff into the bay, which caused water quality to go way down. This decline in water quality has led to multiple conclusions that Calvert County as a whole should start helping the bay and river. Certain building regulations have been put into place so runoff would hopefully stop and Calvert County could conform to the needs of the citizens. Over the years, Calvert County has grown. Within Calvert, there are many town centers which bring businesses and money to the county. These town centers have expanded. Three major centers are Prince Frederick, Dunkirk, and Solomons.

Speaker 1: [1:22] In Prince Frederick, the main watershed is Parkers Creek with an area of 7,949 acres. Out of the 7,949 acres, 774 acres are critical area. In this situation, the less critical area there is in a watershed, the better it is for the creatures living there. Parkers Creek is about 3.4 miles long. The streams in the watershed have had samples taken by Maryland Department of Natural Resources and the Maryland Biological Stream Survey in this watershed between 1997 and 2017. This survey has found 19 species of FIDS are found regularly there. FIDS are the Forest Interior Dwelling Species. They can be birds or fish.

Speaker 1: [2:05] FIDS habitat is defined as a forest tract that is larger than 50 acres. The FIDS habitats are protected under the Critical Areas Law in Maryland. To the north is Dunkirk. The main watershed is Hall Creek. The total area of Hall Creek watershed is 10,445 acres. Out of that, 884 acres are critical area. There are about 21 miles of streams, according to Maryland Biological Stream Survey, conducted by Maryland Department of Natural Resources. In those streams, the survey collected 18 species between 1997 and 2017. The FIDS can live in about 12% of the watershed. To the south of the county is Solomons. The main watershed in Solomons is Mill Creek watershed with an area of 6,337 acres. There are almost 4 miles of streams based on the sampling results of the Southern Maryland watershed. There are likely 10 to 12 or more species of fish living in the Mill Creek watershed.

Speaker 1: [3:05] FIDS are occupying 427 acres of the watershed. This number indicates that some species of birds or fish can live and thrive in that watershed. Impervious land cover is any

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surface on the land that cannot effectively absorb precipitation. Impervious surfaces include roads, parking lots, driveways, sidewalks, and rooftops. 964 acres of that total watershed is covered in impervious surfaces and the second-highest behind another watershed within Calvert. These watersheds are the main three within Calvert. They are the ones that have shown the most growth and development.

Speaker 1: [3:44] The reason why this information is being said is to get the point across that this information could be better. Impervious surfaces could be lower, but that's just fine. The FIDS percentage could be higher and the animals could be thriving more than they are but the fact is everyone could be nicer and everyone could recycle. But being realistic, what needs to improve is how the builders are treating the environment because if they are just painting a picture for the inspector just once, what is really going to keep them from ruining the water around Calvert? If these town centers keep expanding, the watersheds will need to be protected more. County Commissioner Weems has been an advocate of water quality along with former Senator Bernie Fowlers.

County Commissioner Weems: [4:23] I attend former senator Bernie Fowler's Wade In each year and as such, we go over the scorecard at that event. He's been a stalwart advocate of water quality and my presence there is out of respect for him and his advocacy.

Speaker 1: [4:51] The builders have started to put up the silt fence and even if they're just putting it up for the inspector just once, it may help water quality. A silt fence is called a filter fence. It is a temporary sediment-control device used at construction sites to protect water quality in nearby streams, rivers, lakes, and seas from sediment and stormwater runoff.

Dave Stover: [5:16] Mainly in Calvert County, you gotta get a silt fence inspection before you can start building. So what that means is when we build pools, we have to put up something called silt fence, which prevents any dirt in the area that we're working from getting in any waterways. So, it used to just be that when we did the pool, we could put the silt fence up at our leisure, and sometime when they did the first building inspection, the county inspector would make sure it was there. Now, in any of the counties--

Speaker 1: [5:37] Overall, Calvert County is growing and nothing is ever going to stop that. As citizens of the county, however, we need to make sure that we're taking the best environmental actions possible. This means that the building regulations in Calvert need to be followed because if they aren't and we as a county are not be cautious, the water quality will get worse. Silt fences will be able to help the water but many other options can be put to use that should be mandatory for building inspections. Calvert's source of money has started with the bay and river. The history there dates back to when the county was first discovered. Ever since the beginning of Calvert County, it has thrived around one lifeline: water.