

Schoolyard Habitats Earns Maryland School Green Ribbon Recognition

Dunloggin Middle School in Howard County Maryland was one of 78 schools designated as a U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon School. More than 350 schools applied for the Green Ribbon School recognition.

Honored schools create “green” environments through reducing environmental impact, promoting health, and ensuring a high-quality environmental and outdoor education to prepare students with skills and sustainability concepts needed for the future.

Green Ribbon School recognition is given to schools that show how they reduced their water use, reduced waste production and conserved energy. Dunloggin met all the energy criteria as well as well removed exotic plants, restored native habitat and created nature areas they use in their studies.

In 2008, heads of the science and gifted and talented programs at Dunloggin Middle School attended a Schoolyard Habitat Workshop conducted by Karen KellyMullin, U.S Fish and Wildlife Service, Chesapeake Bay Field Office. Initially, the school planned to plant a small native garden out, but after learning about watersheds and habitat, they decided to do more, a lot more.

With help from the Chesapeake Bay Field Office and Natural Resources Conservation Service, the school constructed a ½ mile nature trail, and created a riparian wetland to help reduce the runoff from the school to a nearby stream. The school received funding for their schoolyard habitat projects through a Chesapeake Bay Trust grant.

It took some time to get all the local authority permission for these projects, but that didn't stop the students and teachers from taking on other projects. Areas behind the school were overrun with invasive plants, mainly garlic mustard, multiflora rose and Japanese honeysuckle. So the students and staff prepared their future schoolyard habitats by first removing the insidious invaders, and planting native habitat species.

The Chesapeake Bay Field Office has been a leader in the Environmental Education movement for 20 years. Staff worked with the U.S. Department of Education and the EPA to ensure that the Green Ribbon award criteria included the outdoor environment. A total of four Green Ribbon schools were awarded in Maryland, the maximum allowed for any one state. Three of the four Maryland schools had strong Schoolyard Habitat programs.

Although the U.S. Department of Education's Green Ribbons are one-year recognitions, the changes due to reducing waste and conserving water and energy will be felt for years to come. Years from now, new students at Dunloggin Middle School will have access to diverse natural areas that will continue to attract wildlife and provide a place for science and outdoor studies.

Funding for the Schoolyard Habitat workshop and assistance to Maryland schools was provided through the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Bay Watershed Education and Training grant, in partnership with the Maryland Association for Environmental and Outdoor Education.

For more information about schoolyard habitats contact:

Karen KellyMullin

410/271-2481

karen.willowoak@gmail.com

For details about program visit: [Green Ribbon Schools Program](#)