

Gramies Run

A CECIL COUNTY STREAM IS FIRST OUT OF THE GATE FOR NEW PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN MARYLAND ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST AND THE STATE HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION

In the very corner of Maryland — even further northeast than the town of North East — a stream called Gramies Run flows south from near the Pennsylvania border into the Elk River, near the very top of the Chesapeake Bay. Winding through a landscape of farms and forests interspersed with suburban homes, this seemingly typical mid-Atlantic stream will now host a new, unusual set of restoration partners.

The headwaters of Gramies Run drain the Cecil County Fairgrounds and the equestrian center at Fair Hill International. Then further downstream after emerging from one of the sizable woodland tracts within Fair Hill Natural Resources Management Area the stream passes through farmland protected by a Maryland Environmental Trust conservation easement on land owned by Edward F. Kelley. In early 2017, MET and State Highways Administration approached Mr. Kelley about allowing a large scale stream restoration and tree planting project on his property. In the spirit of the original 2002 easement on his beautiful 108 acre farm along Gallaher Road, which was granted to MET and Cecil Land Trust, Mr. Kelley enthusiastically agreed and the potential became the possible.

In January 2018, the Maryland State Highway Administration launched the \$4.3 million restoration of Gramies Run. The project aims to enhance natural features and improve water quality by reducing erosion, filtering storm water, slowing water flow, and cooling



Tree plantings on the Kelley property.



The Kelley property.



A root bound bend in Gramies Run near Fair Hill Natural Resource Management Area.

water temperature through an expanded tree canopy over the stream. The planted riparian buffers will also fulfill provisions of the federal Clean Water Act that require states receiving federal highway funds to mitigate natural features to balance new road construction.

“We are very pleased to have Gramies Run as the first project in our partnership with the State Highway Administration,” said John Turgeon, Conservation Easement Program Manager for MET. “We are actively seeking out property owners with MET easements that have enough streambank or open space where SHA can restore natural flows and plant tree buffers.” SHA Administrator Greg Slater shares in the success, noting that, “Water runoff from highway surfaces can leave pollutants in streams and the Bay and we are partnering with DNR/MET to come up with innovative solutions to support Bay restoration.”

The project will reduce the amount of sediment and nutrients, such as nitrogen and phosphorous, that enter the Chesapeake Bay and pollute the water to the detriment of the flora and fauna that live there. The wildlife corridor will be enhanced through this project, allowing wildlife more freedom of movement throughout the reforested area. The construction and restoration along Gramies Run begins in March and will continue through early spring 2019. In a countryside where horses have run for generations, the Gramies Run project will set the pace for similar meets throughout Maryland.