

## Construction Background

Remarkable as it may seem, the project was almost 15 years in the making. A Stream Corridor Assessment by DNR in 2001 and the Isle of Wight Bay Watershed Restoration Action Strategy 2002 had identified the dam as a stream blockage in need of attention. Also, the area was to be used as mitigation for the dualization of Rt. 113 by the State Highway Administration, but mitigation was conducted elsewhere, when it was determined that the contractors' bids for pond dredging and construction of rock ramps exceeded engineering estimates. A new design was submitted by Underwood and Associates in 2004 that incorporated nutrient processing in addition to fish passage. Winning of a competitive grant from the Restore America's Estuary Act obtained in 2005 along with additional funding by SHA provided renewed impetus for the project and a pre-construction meeting was held in 2006. Economic downturns in 2008 diminished the State Highway Administration budget and funding was soon cut for the dam project. Through perseverance by DNR and Underwood, new funding was obtained in 2010 and 2011 through the Chesapeake Bay Trust and Fish and Wildlife Service along with committed monies from Worcester County and the Maryland Coastal Bays Program. Construction permits were issued in April 2014. Construction started in July 2014 and was completed by December 2014.

## Pond Background

The pond and dam appeared in maps from 1870, but the dam may have been older. The dam provided power to the burgeoning community of Bishopville. The current sheet pile dam was built in 1959 and the 4-acre pond was used as a source of water for the fire department and as a recreational facility especially during winter when the pond would freeze over.

Municipal waste from the town of Selbyville and waste from local industries added significantly to water quality problems in the upper St. Martins watershed. By the 1970's a biologist working in the area found that the fish survived longer in air than in the pond water. Clean up of areas commenced in the late 1980's when the Selbyville Waste Water Treatment plant was renovated and the discharge was sent to the ocean. Industrial clean up was also occurring through EPA intervention and point source pollution was effectively removed by 1995. However, water quality problems in the watershed continued. According to the 2002 WRAS, nearly 70% of the stream miles walked were channelized, and over 60% also had inadequate forest buffers. In addition, excessive nutrients were consistently measured in the St. Martin River. Recommendations generated in the WRAS report specifically identified the need for removal of the fish blockage at Bishopville dam and implementation of wetland restoration and buffer establishment in the watershed. The 2004 State of the Bays report indicated that the St. Martin River had the lowest ranking of the five Maryland Coastal Bays sub-watersheds, due to very low values for water quality, living resources and habitat indicators. The combination of poor flushing, high nutrient loads and intensive land use (development and agriculture) led to this low overall ranking. Nitrogen and phosphorus were very high as were chlorophyll levels, resulting in very low water clarity and low concentration of dissolved oxygen. Moreover, benthic animal communities were degraded in the upper reaches. St. Martin River is consistently ranked the lowest water body in the Maryland Coastal Bays for nutrients (MCBP Report Cards, 2008 to 2014).