

Revitalizing Burba Lake

VOLUNTEERS HELP TO RESTORE SHORELINE THROUGH FEDERAL GRANT

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Mitch Keiler of the Directorate of Public Works Environmental Division gives volunteers, including some members of Cub Scout Pack 377, last-minute instructions on the Burba Lake shoreline restoration project on Oct. 18.

Burba Lake, a beloved beauty for many on the installation, is a great site for a summer picnic with the family, exercising, or simply a place of comfort to clear your head.

In celebration of National Public Lands Day, the nation's largest single-day volunteer effort held annually in September, Fort Meade received a \$9,500 grant to revitalize the Burba Lake shoreline.

The grant is funded by a partnership between the Department of Defense Natural Resources Program and the National Environmental Education Foundation.

Established in 1994, National Public Lands Day is held annually on the fourth Saturday in September.

"On NPLD, around 200,000 to 300,000 people in the U.S. go around to different national parks or federal and state lands and do different events, cleanups or tree-planting," said Maribeth Gravunder, environmental engineer for the Directorate of Public Works Environmental Division.

Although this year's National Public Lands Day was Sept. 22, the Fort Meade revitalization project conducted on Burba Lake was Oct. 18.

“[Our] event was in October to give us ample time to plan and purchase materials, which can take time for government entities,” Gravunder said. “The grant we received allows flexibility for when the event is held.”

The goal of the partnership is to ensure that, on military lands, everyone is a public steward and educated on maintaining the quality of public lands — promoting the connection between people and the great outdoors.

Volunteers from the Air Force as well as nine Cub Scouts and five Boy Scouts from multiple troops were present.

“We are excited to have the leader from the Scouts, mainly composed of Fort Meade residents,” Gravunder said. “[It’s] a happy accident that the Scouts were seeking an educational activity to learn about erosion in the Chesapeake Bay.”

They helped install fiber logs, back-filling with topsoil and installing native plants on eroded sections of the shoreline.

“As a Scout leader, it was fulfilling to see young Scouts lead each other and work through the problem as we worked to restore the shoreline,” Justino Lopez said.

Burba Lake has experienced erosion over the years of usage by both residents and animal life.

“Lake Burba is like the gem of the recreational area for the campus,” said Mitch Keiler, environmentalist in the Environmental Division at DPW. “It gets a lot of use — use from a lot of different interests. Geese like to use the lake, people like to use the lake for fishing and hiking around it.

“[As a result], there are some areas where we have shoreline that has been trampled now and eroded.”

Volunteers and DPW staff worked three sites near eroded shoreline, placing fiber logs made out of flexible, loose-woven mesh and coconut material. The fiber logs serve as a barrier between what’s eroding and the plant life that is being protected.

Afterward, the fiber logs are carefully placed parallel to the area of the escarpment, staked down, back-filled with topsoil, jute mesh and special seed mix laid on top.

“Part of the work we do in the Storm Water Program is to reduce sediments and erosion in our waterways,” Keiler said. “The plan is to execute a living shoreline; stabilize a portion of the shoreline using bio-degradable products.

Keiler urges residents to familiarize themselves with the necessity of preserving natural habitats on Fort Meade to remain a safe haven for all to enjoy.

“At one point, the environmental program used to have a number of signs that would describe the wildlife and vegetative habitat, but those signs have gotten old,” Keiler said.

“Education on a repair and buffer system allows plants along the shoreline to serve as a filtering-out function for nutrients, holds sediments in, provides habitats for wildlife and food for aquatic organisms in the water.”



Deborah Patterson and Mitch Keiler of the DPW Environmental Division pound 4-foot stakes into the Burba Lake bed. The stakes will keep in place the bio-log.