Senator Bernie Fowler's 30th Annual Patuxent River Wade In

Posted by TBNDavid On 05/24/2017

ST. LEONARD, MD (May 23, 2017) - Join Senator Bernie Fowler at Jefferson Patterson Park and Museum on Sunday, June 11 at 1:00 pm, as he slips on his white sneakers and wades into the waters of the Patuxent River to establish this year's "Sneaker Index."

Senator Bernie Fowler is a long-time Calvert County resident and has been a chair of the Patuxent River Commission for many years. Throughout his career, Fowler worked to prevent the continued degradation of the Patuxent River, as well as the Chesapeake Bay. Fowler advocates through having a personal connection to the environment. Before his involvement in politics, Fowler was a waterman on the Patuxent. His own personal tracking mechanism for testing water clarity, known as the "Senator Bernie Fowler's Sneaker Index," has been used by the United States Environmental Protection Agency as a national example. The method involves walking out into a river until losing sight of one's feet or sneakers to determine the clarity of the water. The clearer the water, the less suspended materials and pollutants present.

Lachlan I. W. McKinna, and Ivona Cetinić, NASA Goddard Space Flight Center/USRA, and Benjamin Crooke compared Senator Bernie Fowler's sneaker index findings from 2002 to 2016 to scientific data received from remotely sensed satellite imagery. Their finding were published in a paper entitled "From toes to top-of-atmosphere: Fowler's Sneaker Depth index of water clarity for the Chesapeake Bay." The findings concluded, "With further refinement and validation, the Fowler Sneaker Index may be a useful tool for delivering scientifically relevant results and for informing and engaging local stakeholders and policy makers."

Over the last 30 years, the Patuxent River Wade In has inspired other organizations and states to coordinate wade in events to bring awareness to a water quality. The Nanticoke Watershed Alliance, Chesapeake Bay Environmental, Spa Creek and the Center for the Inland Bays coordinate annual wade in events using some form of the sneaker index to measure water quality.

Looking forward to the future, young adults are also becoming more environmentally conscious and looking for ways to get involved. As a class project, Liliane Ventrone, a senior at Leonardtown High School, chose the water quality of the Patuxent River and has designed "Patch Up the Patuxent" patches. The patches can be purchased through a GoFundMe account (https://www.gofundme.com/patchupthepatuxent) All monies raised from the patches will be donated to help support the Patuxent River Wade-In.

The Patuxent River Wade In is free and open to the public. View displays from NASA Goddard Space Flight Center, University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science and Morgan State University Patuxent Environmental & Aquatic Research Laboratory (PEARL) while enjoying lunch and live entertainment.

This event is sponsored by Maryland Sea Grants, Southern Maryland Electric Cooperative and the Friends of Jefferson Patterson Park and Museum. For more information about this and other park events, please call 410-586-8501 or visit www.jefpat.org.