

College Creek offers glimpse of Bay health

W&M biologists grade more than a dozen tributaries

By Cortney Langley

JAMES CITY — College Creek watershed is serving as a microcosm of what happens in the entire Chesapeake Bay.

Students and faculty at the College of William & Mary have been testing water quality of the 17 freshwater streams and ponds of the College Creek watershed four times a year for five years.

Some water bodies have improved ranking, said Randy Chambers, director of W&M's Keck Environmental Field Laboratory. Lake Matoaka was the fourth healthiest this year, up from 10th in 2005. Holly Hills' stream improved.

But others have gotten worse. Tutter's Neck Pond, just upstream of the new Quarterpath Crossing, dropped from fifth healthiest to 12th. Bloody Ravine dropped from third to ninth.

Chambers said the research will help identify trends in response to changes in land use or management.

College Creek at Compton Drive is an example. Just downstream of High Street and the new School of Education, if the changes affect water quality downstream,

the study could detect it.

As for what's going right, a pond in Kingspoint maxed out the top level of water health.

"No other pond or stream approached the consistent, high water quality of this body of water, which also achieved the highest score in 2005," he said.

The five worst were the same as in 2005, he said, listing a stream near the old town dump, another running through the W&M campus, two portions of Papermill Creek near Colonial Williamsburg and the stormwater pond at Route 199 and Route 5.

"It is the water quality in the thousands of small tributaries like College Creek that ultimately determine the health of the Chesapeake Bay," he said.

Chambers is presenting the findings, plus more information, at a James City County Citizens Coalition workshop Saturday afternoon.

Want to go? "Understanding Watersheds: Why We Need to Protect Them" will be held 1-3:30 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 16, in rooms A & B of the James City-Williamsburg Community Center.

GRADING COLLEGE CREEK

Kingspoint Pond 1	A+
Kingspoint Pond 2	B+
Holly Hills Stream	B-
Lake Matoaka	C
Mimosa Court Stream	C-
College Creek at Compton Drive	D+
College Creek at New Hope Rd.	D
Vineyards Pond	D-
Bloody Ravine	D-
Kingsmill Pond	F
Kingsmill Stream	F
Tutter's Neck Pond	F
Stream, Old Town dump	F
College campus stream	F
Papermill Creek, upper reach	F
Papermill Creek, lower reach	F
Route 199 and Route 5 pond	F