

The Aarons Run Watershed Project

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Targeting an AMD Impaired 303(d) Stream for EPA Delisting in Maryland

The Aarons Run AMD Remediation Project (Project) eliminated the majority of acid mine drainage (AMD) inflow and raised the stream pH to meet Maryland's water quality standards for pH suitable enough for the reintroduction of native brook trout and other native fish populations. The Project focused on assessing the extent of impairment, selecting best management practices to mitigate AMD impacted sites in the Aaron Run watershed, and planning and constructing three AMD treatment projects. As a result of this impairment, a multi-year Watershed Restoration Project was established to assess and address impairments from pre-1977 coal mining within the watershed. The main goals of the project were to 1) remediate numerous acid mine drainage impacts, 2) restore what is now an extirpated population of native brook trout, 3) protect important economic fisheries, and 4) remove the Aaron Run from Maryland's 303(d) List for low pH impairment. After construction of the three individual projects and after watershed monitoring determined that water quality was improved, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources reintroduced native fish species from nearby stream populations to re-establish the native brook trout populations. This project achieved the recovery of native fish populations in Aaron Run and the impaired sections of the Savage River, which had experienced a 30 percent population reduction at the confluence with Aaron Run. Recovery of the watershed by completing the acid mine drainage remediation efforts created water quality conditions sufficient for MDE to request removal of Aaron Run from Maryland's 303(d) List for low pH impairment. Approval is still pending from EPA. An additional project benefit was improving water quality in the Savage River watershed, which is Maryland's only intact premier population of brook trout.