

# The Capital

## South River advocate takes the plunge into dream job

By MIKE UNGER, Staff Writer

Navigating a skiff into a shallow nook of Harness Creek on a brisk but sunny spring day, Drew Koslow spots a blue heron gulping down a fish.

He watches the scene unfold through his blue-tinted sunglasses in a silence disrupted only by tree limbs rustling in a gentle breeze.

This is where Mr. Koslow is most happy, on his beloved South River.

Five years ago he became a member of the South River Federation, a community-based restoration organization, and he served as its president for three years.

Now, what once occupied his time on a volunteer basis has become his profession. Last month he was named the South Riverkeeper.



Beginning in a few weeks, Mr. Koslow, of Arundel on the Bay, will spend his days patrolling the 12-mile-long river and its tributaries, working to revive its ecological health and alerting people young and old to its wonders.

"This is my dream job," said Mr. Koslow, 41. "It matches my passion with my profession. I'm a river rat."

The riverkeeper is a full-time position funded through the Annapolis-based Keith Campbell Foundation for the Environment. The federation's board selected Mr. Koslow from more than 40 applicants - some from Ohio, Pennsylvania and New York. Eighteen were interviewed for the job.

"We are very pleased that Drew turned out to be the best candidate after an intense, open and objective job search," said Paula Jasinski, federation president. "We received applications from environmental lawyers, a Ph.D. scientist, educators, a waterman and marine biologists."

The position of riverkeeper was formally established by the Waterkeeper Alliance, an environmental organization headed by lawyer and activist Robert F. Kennedy Jr. There are nine riverkeepers in Maryland's Chesapeake Bay watershed, including ones on the Severn and Chester rivers.

A biologist with the Department of Natural Resources for the past five years, Mr. Koslow has worked on issues ranging from the striped bass fishery to water quality monitoring.

"He's been such a leader and a strong advocate for the river already," said Theresa Pierno, vice president of environmental protection and restoration for the Chesapeake Bay Foundation. "He'll be able to draw attention to some of the living shorelines and oyster restoration work going on in the river."

Mr. Koslow sees the primary challenge of his new task as "engaging people."

He considers nutrient pollution and sediment pollution the South River's two greatest problems, and plans to encourage the use of natural shorelines, which along with bay grasses provide habitat for young fish and crabs.

In the 1950s, the South River had more than 50 acres of bay grasses. Today the grassbeds have shrunk to 19 acres.

But the future isn't all bleak, Mr. Koslow said. He hopes that by spotlighting the river's beauty, environmental importance and problems, he can contribute to its revitalization.

In addition to cruising the river in a donated 23-foot Carolina skiff with "South Riverkeeper" painted on the side, Mr. Koslow will have an office at the CBF building outside Annapolis.

He envisions his role not as a law enforcement officer, though he won't hesitate to inform county officials if he sees illegal construction or runoff pouring into the river.

"I want to be a resource to people," he said. "When you have two or three people trying to make a difference, the task may seem insurmountable. But a large group of people working together can move mountains."

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