

# The Capital

## SOUTH COUNTY

### New leader for South River Federation

By E.B. FURGURSON III, Staff Writer

Published August 27, 2008

Just five months after taking the reins at the South River Federation, Matt Berres is stepping down as executive director of the conservation group. Taking his place will be Erik Michelson, a three-year member of the organization's board of directors.

Mr. Berres came on board in February as the group's first ever executive director and was determined to help organize and move the federation forward in its mission to turn around the health of the South River. He planned on doing this while he finished his master's degree in business administration in nonprofit management at Johns Hopkins University.

That apparently became too much to juggle and do both justice.

"The program at Hopkins is pretty rigorous and I was hoping to be able to do both ... complete the time remaining in the program and give the high level of service to the federation," Mr. Berres said. "I found I could not provide the high level of attention the federation deserves.

"The federation is a strong and growing organization with many dedicated volunteers and a committed board and staff. I am pleased by my role in shaping the bright future ahead for the federation."

Federation board President Kinsey Potter praised Mr. Berres' leadership in the few short months he has overseen the federation.

"He has organized our life substantially and installed new procedures and a lot of good things while he was here," she said.

Mr. Berres, who was hired after a search that took several months, is still on the job for another week. Mr. Michelson takes over Sept. 15. In the meantime, Mr. Berres is still hard at work, and yesterday was interviewing candidates for the outfit's riverkeeper job.

With Mr. Michelson, the federation has promoted from within.

"As a board member over the last three years, Erik has demonstrated his knowledge and leadership on many federation initiatives," Ms. Potter. "It is a natural transition for him to move into the executive director position. He has a full understanding of the federation's strategic plan, the river's needs, and the interests of the communities in the watershed."

Mr. Michelson, who grew up on the Severn River, has been heavily involved in environmental work for the past several years. He has been working as project manager for Underwood and Associates, a landscaping firm known for its award-winning watershed-restoration projects in the county. Aside from serving on the federation's board, the Churchton resident is also active with South Arundel Citizens for Responsible Development.

He said his work with Underwood and Associates will serve him well in his new job.

"I think after working with Keith Underwood I better understand the tools needed to help the river," he said. "Those restoration techniques and innovative practices (are something) I hope to bring to bear on the South River over the next several years ... to make progress on the goals we all hope to achieve here."

He said the primary goal is to be able to show measurable improvements on the river in both the short and long term, and to execute the federation's strategic plan, advocating for the river, its restoration and stormwater-related issues which impact the health of the river.

"Matt was doing a capable job of that," Mr. Michelson said. "I'll bring my set of experiences to expand on what he was doing, take it to the next level in getting the river restored."

*Copyright © 2008 Capital Gazette Communications, Inc. , Annapolis, Md.*