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Fred Tutman

Patuxent Riverkeeper Fred Tutman.

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Fred Tutman founded the Patuxent Riverkeeper program in 2004 and works as its CEO. He also teaches courses in environmental law and policy at St. Mary's College of Maryland.

What does success look like?

"That such a question would be a subject of debate reveals how deeply and badly this Bay movement has stalled. True success is when both the perception and the scientific reality reflects the ability to safely swim without risking illness, consume fish without fear of toxicity, and when the waters themselves resume the appearance and character of pure, clean water instead of their current unwholesome appearance more like sewers and industrial waste conduits."

What is the greatest accomplishment of the past 30 years?

"Citizens filing lawsuits to enforce the Clean Water Act worked previously on the Patuxent with stellar and historic results, but now once again in decline. But it proved that this type of renaissance can occur in a relatively short period of time instead of the decades of backsliding we are currently experiencing (and subsidizing). Never mind that the Bay is bigger than my river, we have yet to clean up a single tributary in the Chesapeake of any size! Citizens undaunted by vested interests doing likewise on the Hudson is what gave rise to the original Riverkeeper movement with impressive results again on that estuary. It seems the thing we do the least of, is zealously enforcing environmental laws and empowering grassroots citizens to step up and take charge and hold government and polluters accountable. Instead, we are top heavy with professional environmentalists whose commitment to clean water has been compromised by various other considerations ranging from fundraising needs, institutional self interest, career goals and guarding closely held business and political alliances. We need to get bottom heavy again through genuine grassroots action in order to keep it real and make sure the progress is real too."

What is the greatest mistake of the past 30 years?

"We have institutionalized the Bay movement into an all but unaccountable, large scale top down enterprise not unlike a corporate franchise. It disables, subordinates and opposes independent, passionate, wholly grassroots community and citizen based efforts which also means it defers any promise of a movement with economic or social diversity--which could help leverage much needed mass and power for our cause. The same top down movement actually struggles to contain local citizen activism and route it into establishment sanctioned ineffectual Bay-wide tasks that while generally affirming, civil and environmentally positive, are usually in no way proportional to the stated goal of "Saving the Bay". This lulls the public into more non-proportional, feel-good actions and illusory promises of progress that preserve the status quo instead of protecting the Bay. Unleashing the full power of engaged and informed (and

outraged) citizens would have the effect of holding the environmental community and the system fully accountable. This is how and why the movement works against the grassroots. The pollution establishment could never withstand a passionate and well informed grassroots citizens movement demanding social and culture change while taking back control of the Bay protection efforts from the grip of the funded/vested Bay environmental establishment and their business and legislative allies."

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