



**2013 ANNUAL REPORT TO
BALTIMORE COUNTY EXECUTIVE AND
BALTIMORE COUNTY COUNCIL**

February 11, 2014

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BACKGROUND

The Baltimore County Advisory Commission on Environmental Quality (CEQ), which was established by legislation in 2003, met nine times throughout the 2013 calendar year. Brian Fath, Chair, set the agendas and presided at the meetings. Secretary, Andy Miller, took minutes at the meetings.

This *Baltimore County Advisory Commission on Environmental Quality (CEQ) 2013 Annual Report to the Baltimore County Executive and Baltimore County Council* fulfills the requirement specified in Baltimore County Code Subsection 3-3-2106 and provides a summary of CEQ activities during 2013.

CEQ MEMBERSHIP

The CEQ enjoyed full and active membership during much of 2013. Currently there are two vacancies on the Commission, one for District 3 and another for member from Agriculture. As of January 2013, the CEQ membership includes the following individuals.

District 1:

Valerie Androutsopoulos, District 1 Representative

Steven Morsberger, At Large Member: Community Activist

District 2:

Lois Jacobs, District 2 Representative

Andy Miller, Ph.D. At Large Member: Environmental Conservation

Nell B. Strachan, At Large Member: Attorney

District 3:

Linda Davis, At Large Member: Educator

District 4:

Jeff Supik, District 4 Representative

Rex Wright, At Large Member: Industry

District 5:

Jim Burkman, District 5 Representative

Brian Fath, Ph.D., At Large Member: Academia

Eric Hadaway, At Large Member: Home Builders

District 6:

Mary Gruver-Byers, District 6 Representative

District 7:

Russell Donnelly, District 7 Representative

CEQ MISSION STATEMENT

The CEQ activities in 2013 furthered the mission previously established for the CEQ:

The purpose of the CEQ, through its duties and responsibilities as described in the Baltimore County Code, Subsection 3-3-21, is to encourage protection and preservation of the natural environment in Baltimore County and its waterways, including the Chesapeake Bay, by educating the community to make environmentally sustainable decisions and by enlightening, advising, and initiating dialogue with County officials. It facilitates communication between the County government and its residents on environmental needs, programs, and legislation.

As a group of dedicated volunteers for environmental integrity, the members understand the need for following and monitoring environmental plans.

CEQ REPORTS/WORK ITEMS

During 2013, the CEQ continued efforts on three main projects—tree canopy cover, environmental and public health impacts of road salt, and water quality.

Tree Canopy Cover

CEQ efforts in the fall focused on completion of report titled: *Tree Canopy Cover in Baltimore County: Recommendations to the Baltimore County Council from the Baltimore County Commission on Environmental Quality*. The report is completed in response to the Baltimore County Resolution No. 72-13 and contains recommendations for the County to meet its newly established tree canopy goals.

Environmental and Public Health Impacts of Road Salt

Following release of a report in 2009, the CEQ worked hard to establish a pilot program that would allow neighborhoods to volunteer for plow only service during snow events. This action would reduce total salt applications and provide education to the participating communities. An informational brochure was prepared for this pilot by the CEQ. The project was not pursued on advice of the County.

Water Quality

Baltimore County recently passed a Stormwater Remediation Fee (impervious surface tax) in response to a State mandate to reduce sediment and nutrient loads entering the Chesapeake Bay. The Stormwater Remediation Fee raised awareness and funds for addressing Bay-related clean-up related to water borne chemical and sediment runoff. The CEQ was apprised of the progress and goals of implementation and advised County on approaches to communicate the benefits of the fee to parties affected.

CONTACT WITH CITIZENS

Various citizen enquiries came to the CEQ via its website. The CEQ discussed these and the requestors were referred to the proper County agencies. Frequent issues focused on trash, stream quality and flooding, and open space.

CONTACT WITH COUNTY

During 2013, CEQ members:

- Met with respective Council members to update them on CEQ activities and to discuss current environmental concerns and priorities in their district.
- Welcomed the participation of Vince Gardina, Director of Department of Environmental Protection and Sustainability (EPS) at the February, April, and September meetings.
- Welcomed the ongoing, regular attendance of Don Outen and Ayla Haig of EPS and John Alexander formerly of the Office of Planning.
- Had a briefing from Charles Reighart from the Department of Public Works (DPW) on the Bear Creek Recycling Facility.

COMMISSION INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNICATION

The CEQ members discussed questions, concerns, and priorities in their districts and area of environmental expertise. CEQ members:

- Updated the CEQ website.
- Prioritized topics for future CEQ consideration.
- Reviewed statuses of water-related agreements and plans.
- Attended various environmental lectures and events around the County.
- In September, CEQ member Nell Strachan hosted the annual CEQ social dinner picnic at her house.

TRACKING COUNTY AND STATE ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES AND LEGISLATION

During its meetings, the CEQ members discussed various current issues for potential input:

Stormwater Remediation Fee

Plastic Bag Fees

Zoning

Baltimore County legislation related to environmental issues

ONGOING EDUCATION OF CEQ MEMBERS

CEQ has invited speakers from County staff and from outside to brief the CEQ on environmental issues and programs which may be useful in further work efforts.

Road Salt Research

Prof. Joel Snodgrass, Chair, Dept. of Biological Sciences, Towson University gave a talk titled “Watersheds Shift to Net Exporters of Road Salts Under Modern Stormwater Management Practices”. Data show a large increase in U.S. highway salt sales since the 1960s, particularly starting in the 1990s. Kaushal et al. also show increases in salt concentration in water supply reservoirs. Dr. Snodgrass’s research in the Red Run watershed in Owings Mills shows that chloride levels get up as high as 8000-9000 mg/l. Later in winter, surface levels start to go down. Towson project has installed piezometers beneath ponds and also covering the area carrying groundwater flow out of those ponds, which can show spatial patterns of salt changing through time. By June, there is still an indication of groundwater contamination but not as much in shallow groundwater within 1 m of surface. Riparian forests are also very active at this time so groundwater levels will drop during growing season. End of growing season will show expression of groundwater contamination increasing as water tables rise and influx continues from beneath ponds even before snow and road salting occurs. The strong expression really shows up in May after end of road salting season.

Land Use Trends and Zoning Policies

Prof. David Newburn, Dept. of Agriculture & Resource Economics, UMCP, presented an overview of a spatial database he has developed of all parcel-level residential development from tax assessment records (MD Property View) and uses it to analyze which parcels are developable; if they develop, how many buildable lots; zoning, accessibility, distance to Baltimore, soil quality, restrictive floodplain development. The model can predict the probability of development for every developable parcel in the

County, predict future simulations of overall development pattern estimate site-specific probability, compare to random uniform number to determine conversion events, and estimate number of lots.

Blue Water Baltimore

Tina Meyers, from Blue Water Baltimore (BWB), discussed the formation and ongoing activities of the Baltimore Harbor Waterkeeper (BHW). The Waterkeeper program focuses on legal and regulatory issues. Blue Water Baltimore also has a Community Greening Program that focuses on tree plantings as an effective practice to reduce stormwater, installation of rain gardens, conservation landscaping practices, invasive species control and pavement reduction projects. In 2012, the group planted over 12,000 trees. Stream cleanups are a popular volunteer opportunity. BWB established a storm drain stenciling program in 5 underserved communities in Baltimore where community associations are helping to establish their own environmental priorities. The number one issue in all communities is trash. The group's Water Audit Program is a free service assessing what conservation landscaping, rain gardens, rain barrels, etc. can be implemented in yards to reduce and prevent stormwater pollution. Blue Water Baltimore will perform the audit/assessment and install the practices for a reduced fee. They have also removed patches of impervious cover by breaking up cement with jackhammers and replacing with vegetable and rain gardens and conservation landscaping.

Plastic Bag Fee

Meo Curtis, Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection, discussed the success of the Montgomery bag bill, which began 1/1/2012 with a 5-cent fee. Retailers keep 1 cent of the fee and must report to the county when it reaches \$100. The law requires the fee to return to a county Water Quality Protection Fund. Almost all stores are required to charge for bags. The bag bill had a lot of outreach and publicity during its launch, including a free reusable bag give-away. Meo's predecessor, Bob Hoyt formerly of MDE, has also come to Montgomery County to help with Montgomery County's bag bill. The bill has had an immediate impact in reducing the total amount of plastic bags used and in the waste stream.

Ecosystem Services in Baltimore County

Carly Dean, M.S. student in Environmental Sciences at Towson University, presented results on the history of the quantification and valuation of ecosystem services and how models are being developed incorporating GIS technology that will be useful for land use planning in Baltimore County.

Baltimore County Tree Canopy Goals

Don Outen, EPS, gave a presentation on the County's tree canopy goal which went into effect on April 25, 2013. The overall goal is to achieve at least a 50% countywide canopy cover (currently at 48.7%), maintain at least a 50% cover in reservoir watersheds, and achieve 40% in the URDL (currently at 38.4%) and all Census designated places. This program ties together several ongoing initiatives such as the Phase II Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) nutrient reduction and the stormwater fee. Baltimore County has several ongoing programs to help meet the targets such as the following: bi-annual Big Trees Sale – with a focus on native trees; meeting with homeowners that mow greater than 1 acre lawns to engage in meadow mowing practices (this represents more than 7000 acres in the County); planting and maintaining trees on County-owned lands; and redesigning school grounds to convert mowed space into trees. To help implement these programs, the County recently hired two staff members (funded by the WIP) to work on forest-related issues. One issue that is difficult to resolve is street tree liability. Many large neighborhood trees are removed or are improperly sited in the first place which can affect local utilities and cause buckling of sidewalks.

Baltimore County Stormwater Remediation Fee Appeals

Ayla Haig, EPS, gave an update on the stormwater remediation fee program. A call center was established for 6 weeks to answer questions and provide instructions on the appeal process. There were about 1000 appeals received from Baltimore County property owners. There were more appeals than anticipated. A banner and website were established to answer questions about the stormwater remediation fee, to describe best practices for stormwater management, and to provide information about the non-profit credit program. For appeals brought to a hearing, Sam Moxley was designated as the hearing officer and Ethan Hunt was his assistant. After preliminary review by EPS, the hearing officer was able to review and evaluate the claims and provide a final decision.

Community Street Trees

Larry Fogelson and Ryan Cosgrove, Tree Rodgers Forge, and Nick Linehan from Associates of Loch Raven Village (LRV) presented to the CEQ with concerns regarding the loss of street trees in their communities. Both groups were primarily concerned with the fact that it is much easier to remove street trees in the neighborhood than it is to replace them. Homeowners need more information about their obligation to replant and guidance on how to do so. The community groups also notice healthy trees are coming down when an alternative sidewalk repair could be possible. They requested a moratorium on tree removal until the problem is studied and encouraged DPW to work closely with EPS in conjunction with the County's overall tree canopy goals.

ONGOING CEQ MEMBER CONCERNS

During the course of CEQ discussions, individual members raised the following issues for possible later action by the commission:

- Emerald Ash Borer
- Sea level rise in Baltimore County
- Recycling and waste reduction
- County property mowing schedules
- Bio-energy production
- Revising building codes for better energy efficiency and "gray water" use
- Redevelopment toward walkable communities