

MINUTES

Commission on Environmental Quality (CEQ)

January 28 2015, 7:00 PM

**Dept of Environmental Protection & Sustainability, Room 319: County Office Building,
111 W. Chesapeake Ave, Towson, MD 21204**

Attendance: Rex Wright, Jim Burkman, Bill Breakey, Linda Davis, Glenn Elseroad, Lois Jacobs, Russell Donnelly, Steve Morsberger

Baltimore County Staff: Ayla Haig (EPS), Don Outen (EPS)

Guests: John Alexander (Dept. Planning - retired), Charlie Conklin (Gunpowder Conservancy), Laurie Taylor- Mitchell, Rose Anderson (Baltimore Bird Club), John Canoles (Baltimore Bird Club)

Absent: Brian Fath, Valerie Andoutsopoulos, Andy Miller, Mary Gruver-Byers

Welcome and Introductions

I. Introductions /5 minutes – Ayla

II. Presentation by John Canoles, Eco-Science Professionals – Baltimore County Mowing

- John Canoles gave a presentation about promoting preservation and maintenance of old fields habitats on County properties. Currently there are no programs or regulations in place for old-fields. An old field has multiple benefits, including enhancing water quality, providing habitat for pollinators, moths, spiders, butterflies, etc. and they are easy to maintain.
- A problem exists with the County's current mowing practices, as they do not preserve old-field habitats.
- The Baltimore Bird Club and County naturalists have encouraged the County to retain and preserve old-field habitats on its property. However, there are three primary reasons why the County's maintenance personnel have been reluctant to support the retention of old fields including:
 1. Need to control invasive species such as multiflora rose, Johnson grass and thistle.
 2. Community outcry over the lack of maintenance and weedy appearance of old fields.
 3. Need to maintain room for additional parking for seasonal events.

III. Discussion, Q & A on presentation/15 minutes

- Current problems with Baltimore County: people who control the parks are not in charge of who mow the fields. We need to identify the prime areas of concern, and tailor mowing practices to each field. It is not known who does the mowing, contractors or County employees.
- There is a need to identify key players to reach out to and to provide further education about alternative landscape maintenance practices.
- The worst times to mow include June and July.
- Soil Conservation District has a tree-planting program and crepe programs available.
- Jim Burkman commented on BGE's practices, they have meadow mowing once a year in rows, and they don't mow all the way.
- There's different economic benefits to meadow mowing outlined in the conservation landscape manual already. There needs to be further education about alternative landscape maintenance
- Rose from the Baltimore Bird Club suggested that we start with one to two fields as a demonstration, such as Cromwell Valley Park and Hydes Road Park. Cromwell currently has a lot of milkweed and thistle.
- Laurie commented about the Federal Migratory Bird Act- that it could be illegal to disturb certain areas.

IV. New Business /25 minutes – Group Discussion

Road Salt & MD Environmental Health Network – Linda

- Linda asked if there is a possibility of an outside group to get involved with the road salt issues, and discussion was made whether it would be good to bring back to Council. Is there a possibility to go through the County's Health Department?
- The use of brine was brought up as a solution; however, it is not as effective if it rains first.

V. Meeting adjourned