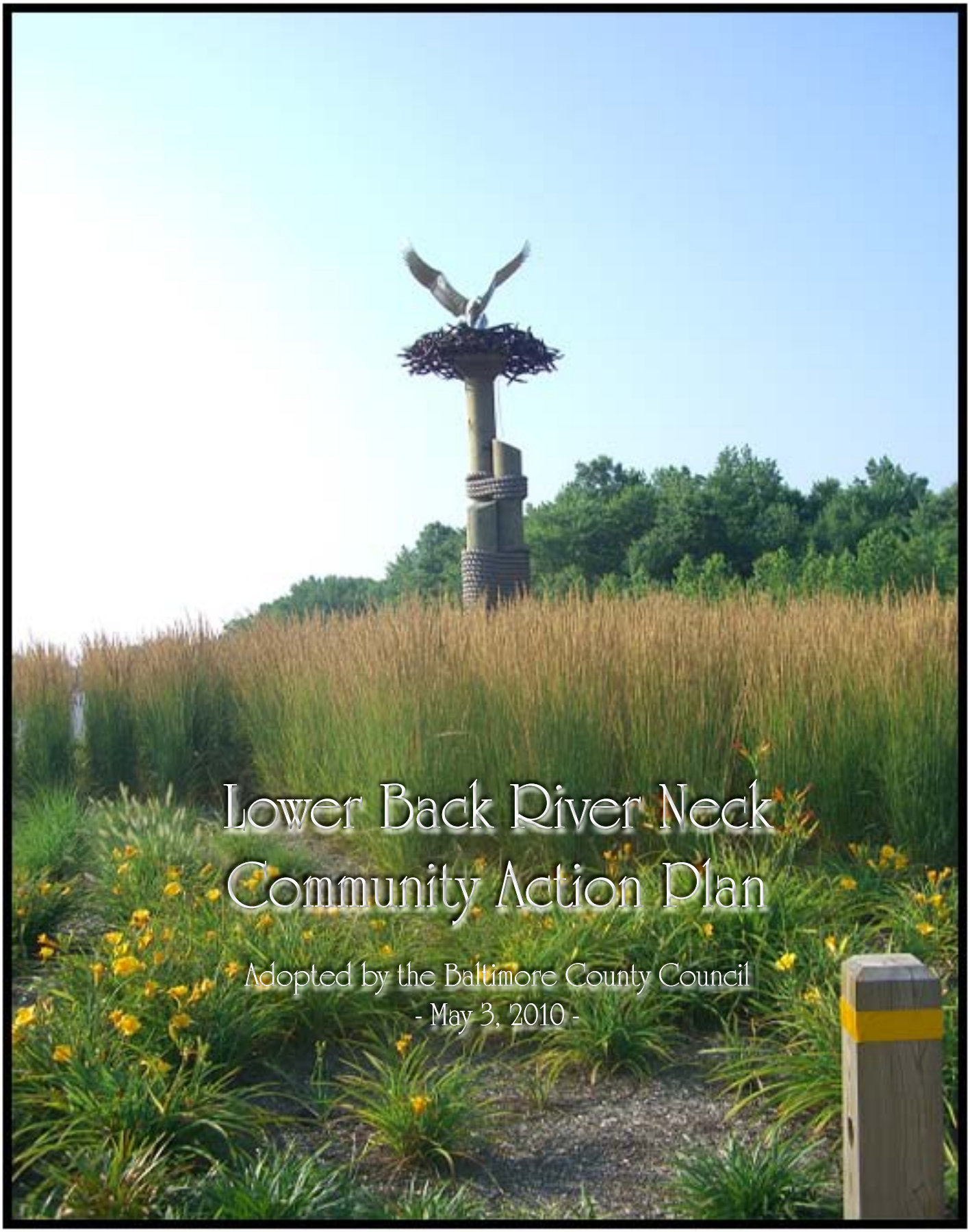

Lower Back River Neck Community Action Plan

Adopted by the Baltimore County Council

- May 3, 2010 -

- Dedication -

A wife, a homemaker, a mother, a grandmother, a schoolteacher,
a historian, a newspaper editor, a columnist, an author,
and most importantly a community activist.

Jackie Nickel was many things to many people. No one can deny the passion,
intensity, and love she put into her desire to protect the rural atmosphere
of the community in which she was raised and grew her family.

Her determination, knowledge and eagerness in the preparation
of this Plan set a shining example for all committee members to follow.

Although she was taken from this life much too early, we who are left
Pledge to continue to follow that shining example and we
Dedicate this Plan to Jackie and her legacy.

COUNTY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE COUNTY

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KEVIN KAMENETZ - Second District

T. BRYAN McINTIRE - Third District

KENNETH N. OLIVER - Fourth District

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Lower Back River Neck

Community Action Plan

Prepared by the:

Lower Back River Neck Community Action Plan Advisory Committee

2006 - 2009

Lower Back River Neck Community
Action Plan Advisory Committee
2006 – 2009

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Neighborhoods

Cape May
Bay Ave./Riverside
Sue Creek Landing
Turkey Point
Engleberth
Holly Neck
Cherry Garden
Evergreen Park
New Haven Wood
Back River Neck
Rockaway Beach
Riverview/Wildwood
Holly Beach
Barrison Point
Cedar Beach

Organizations

Essex-Middle River Chamber of Commerce
Back River Recreation and Parks Council
Holly Neck Conservation Association
Barrison Point Improvement Association
Turkey Point Improvement Association
Essex Sky Park Association
Rockaway Beach Improvement Association
Marine Trades Association of Baltimore Co.
Essex-Middle River Civic Council
Balto. Co. Coastal Rural Legacy Commission
Sue Creek Landing Homeowner's Association
Essex Renaissance Corporation
Back River Neck Peninsula Community Association

Affiliated Businesses

Bafitis & Associates Engineering
Celmer Farms
Hanes Brothers Construction
Island View Waterfront Café
Essex Skypark
Crescent Yacht Club
Baltimore Yacht Club
Sue Island Yacht Basin
Sue Island Dock Bar
Peninsula Building Group, Ltd

COUNTY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE COUNTY, MARYLAND
Legislative Session 2010, Legislative Day No. 8

Resolution No. 21-10

Mr. Joseph Bartenfelder, Councilman

By the County Council, April 19, 2010

A RESOLUTION of the Baltimore County Council to adopt the Lower Back River Neck Community Action Plan as part of the Baltimore County Master Plan 2010.

WHEREAS, the Baltimore County Council adopted the Baltimore County Master Plan 2010 on February 22, 2000; and

WHEREAS, the County Council adopted the Lower Back River Neck Community Action Plan in 1993 (Res. 79-93); and

WHEREAS, in 2005 the County Council asked the Planning board to revise and update the Lower Back River Neck Community Action Plan (Resolution 17-05); and

WHEREAS, the Lower Back River Neck Community Action Plan was prepared in close cooperation with an advisory committee representing various components of the community in the plan area; and

WHEREAS, the Lower Back River Neck Community Action Plan was the subject of a public hearing by the Planning Board and was adopted by the Board on November 19, 2009; and

WHEREAS, the County Council held a public hearing on the recommended Lower Back River Neck Community Action Plan on March 15, 2010;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNTY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE COUNTY, MARYLAND, that the Lower Back River Neck Community Action Plan, a copy of which is attached hereto and made a part hereof, be and it is hereby adopted and incorporated into the Baltimore County Master Plan 2010 to be a guide for the development of the Lower Back River Neck Community area, subject to such further modifications as deemed advisable by the County Council.

READ AND PASSED this ***3RD*** day of ***MAY,*** 2010.

BY ORDER

Thomas J. Peddicord, Jr.
Secretary

ITEM: ***RESOLUTION 21-10***

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Prelude

Pursuant to the 1989-2000 Baltimore County Master Plan, the Department of Environmental Protection and Resource Management was designated to prepare a long-range plan for the Lower Back River Neck Peninsula. In order to accomplish this objective, a Citizens Advisory Committee was formed representing various community organizations, businesses, and private landowners. During the initial meeting a list of issues was developed which were to be addressed in the plan. It was quite evident that there were several areas of concern, which included water quality in Middle River and Back River, marina development, recreational development, public sewer extension, development and population growth, and the possibility of providing the remainder of the peninsula with public water. The result of all this work was the passage and adoption of the Lower Back River Neck Community Action Plan by the Baltimore County Council in 1993.

Many laws and regulations have changed since the adoption of the original plan in 1993. At the urging of many community activists, Councilman Joseph Bartenfelder (in 2005) introduced the necessary legislation to revise and update the current plan. A volunteer Citizen's Advisory Committee was formulated, and in 2006 they began the process of revising and updating the 1993 plan. The committee examined the 1993 plan to see which recommendations were accomplished and which were not. From there, Ad Hoc Committees were selected and a list of old and new issues was prepared along with recommendations for each of these issues.

One of the major concerns about the 1993 plan was that many of its recommendations were not carried out, or when the issues (recommendations) came to test, the community was informed that the plan was just advisory in content and not legally binding. It is the sincere hope of the community that this revised plan will have more legal standing, and the recommendations contained within shall not change or be altered in any fashion without proper public input. To that end, the committee will request that the County Council create a bill that would require mandatory Community Input Meetings before changes can be made by any county agency that would be counter to the letter and intent of this plan. The advisory committee, the affiliated organizations, groups and businesses have put significant effort into making this a definitive representation of their goals for the future. The Committee recognizes that changes will happen and many should be embraced, but we want the Council and Agencies in the county to value the work that went into this plan and require that the community have an opportunity to voice either its support or its disfavor with any proposed change before it is implemented.

Outside Influences

As stated in the original Lower Back River Neck Community Action Plan, outside influences having a direct impact on our community were:

- Eastern Ave. and the upper Back River Neck Road corridor.
- High-density zoning and development on the upper part of the peninsula.
- Pressure from the extension of MD Route 702.
- Severely stressed waterways, particularly Sue Creek.
- The Back River Waste Water Treatment Plant.

- Recreational and commercial water use.
- Lack of storm water management and water quality control in developed areas on the upper part of the peninsula.
- Severe damage to environmentally sensitive areas by ATV's
- Water and air pollution from nearby industries.
- The Hart-Miller Island Disposal site.

Based on these influences and the resulting list of issues, the original committee developed the following goals.

1. To protect and preserve as much of this very sensitive and strategic area in recognition of its overwhelming importance to the effort to save the bay.
2. To preserve and protect the rural character of the area.
3. To preserve the large, circular riparian wet forest, it's interior and adjacent ecosystems and surrounding creeks, rivers and the Chesapeake Bay.
4. To assure quality of life and the retention of the values and traditions of the communities.
5. To protect the areas defined as the Chesapeake Bay Critical Areas as well as the concepts, regulations and policies of the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area legislation.
6. To protect, conserve and perpetuate habitat and wildlife for future generations.
7. To ensure the enforcement of the concepts and regulations contained within the Lower Back River Growth Management Plan.
8. To ensure the perpetual preservation of all lands on the Lower Peninsula that are protected by conservation easements, agriculture programs, Rural Legacy programs, Program Open Space, Recreation & Parks purchases/acquirements, Land Trust, forest programs, mitigation programs, or other forms of protection.
9. To ensure the continuance of the buffer area between the upper and lower portions of the peninsula through constant zoning monitoring.
10. To constantly seek out and establish new and innovative means of protecting our community.
11. To ensure that this plan have more legal standing at Executive, Legislative, and Judicial levels, and that the recommendations contained within not be changed or altered in any fashion without proper public input.

Area Included in this Plan

The Lower Back River Neck Peninsula is located in the southeastern area of Baltimore County. For the purposes of this plan, the area is bounded by Norman Creek to the north, Middle River to the east, and Back River to the south and west, the area also includes the Hart-Miller Island recreation area. The majority of the Lower Back River Neck is almost entirely covered with mature forests and substantial acreages of non-tidal wetlands. The ecological significance of the area leads to its designation as a habitat protection area under the County's Chesapeake Bay Critical Area Program. The topography is relatively flat with poorly defined drainage patterns. The geology of the area consists of alternate layers of silt, clay, and unconsolidated sand and gravel. Most of the soils are hydric areas home to many acres of natural and mitigated wetlands, which accounts for the sparse development of the area.

Introduction

Although projects such as Program Open Space, the Rural Legacy Program, Agriculture Protection Programs, Forestry Programs, Rec. & Parks purchases, local land trusts and others have placed significant acreages on the peninsula into preservation, there remain many large and small land tracts, which are under development pressure. It is the purpose of this plan and the communities who authored and support it to ensure that future development be carried forth in a controlled manner, conforms to current designs, and is constructed in an environmentally safe fashion.

Protecting the rural character of the community is a primary goal.

2009 Community Plan

The following issues including descriptions and recommendations represent the areas of most importance to the community on the Lower Back River Neck Peninsula. The process to create this plan included many meetings of the advisory committee over more than a two-year period. This work included research into these and all other considered topics. There were field trips to many locations on and around the peninsula as well as education and support sessions with various agencies and organizations in the county.

Issue: Development on the Peninsula

To analyze this issue, we started with a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats Analysis (SWOT). We believed that by identifying these significant factors that are shaping our futures, we would be in the best position to identify all of the possible strategies and tactics that could be applied and choose the best ones. The following list is the result of that analysis.

Strengths:

- The rural character of the community
- Significant wildlife habitat
- Major water quality buffer in the county
- The entire lower peninsula has been designated as a Chesapeake Bay Critical Area
- Much of the interior of the peninsula consists of undeveloped forests and non-tidal wetlands
- Contains a large contiguous forest
- Significant amounts of land zoned Resource Conservation
- Several large recreational areas on which are situated Rocky Point public golf course, a public swimming beach, schools, Essex Sky Park and the Baltimore County Sailing Center. Approximately 2500 acres of this undeveloped land is owned by either the state or the county and much of this is overlaid by conservation easements
- Waterfront property has a higher value than average due to limited supply
- Sense of community among residents

Weaknesses:

- Poor performing public schools
- Poor community reputation as perceived by outsiders
- Current zoning doesn't effectively control development
- Incompatible variances are granted often
- There is no definition for allowable in-fill development; variances are required in most cases
- The existence of water and sewer makes development easier
- The peninsula contains many miles of valuable and desirable waterfront property that creates pressure for overdevelopment
- The protection usually afforded by the Urban Rural Demarcation Line (URDL) has been clouded by the installation of water and sewer on the peninsula
- Much of the community consists of older properties that are ripe for renovation and replacement
- Vulnerable to future development

Opportunities:

- Much of the peninsula remains undeveloped and publicly owned. Protection against development of these publicly owned properties can be and should be made permanent.
- Water and sewerage has recently been extended through the peninsula and the expected limited development and re-development has just begun. The opportunity still exists to create new controls and this must be accomplished.

- Preserving the rural nature of this peninsula will continue to make a large contribution to improved water quality in the future on the Chesapeake Bay
- Large undeveloped areas can be preserved for their environmental value
- Many recreational opportunities are available that will not change the rural character of the area
- Proper maintenance and diligent monitoring of the existing ecology will preserve an area that is a significant contributor to good water quality on the bay.
- Locally controlled boards can be formed to oversee and manage land use.

Threats:

- Routes 43 and 702 make the area very accessible
- Waterfront property is scarce and extremely desirable, therefore subject to increasing density abuse.
- The area is comparatively close to jobs, shopping and connector roads. All of these are desirable for high density development
- An upper bay bridge could be launched off of this peninsula
- Failure of the Hart/Miller Island containment would create a significant environmental and safety hazard to the community
- Installation of water and sewer has compromised the protection intended and afforded by the URDL while it has also provided safe drinking water and prevented private failing septic systems from contaminating the bay
- Development of commercial and attached residential buildings on the peninsula
- Over utilization of the low pressure sewerage system
- Repetitive requests for upzoning during every Comprehensive Zoning Map Process (CZMP).
- Members of the community that do not know the proper environmental processes and procedures to protect the valuable resource of the Chesapeake Bay
- Excessive use of the variance process caused by inappropriate zoning

Recognizing the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats listed above, the following goals were established in respect to development on the peninsula:

1. Maintain the rural atmosphere of the community
2. Improve the water quality in the surrounding rivers and bay
3. Minimize density increases and the human impact on the environment
4. Assure that future construction goes well with the existing developments. Changes in style, size and appearance should not be so radical as to have a negative impact on the community.

Recommendations:

We support strict enforcement of the purpose and intent of the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area law and we recommend that no new growth allocation be granted on the peninsula.

Our strategy is to protect the environment and improve water quality in the adjacent rivers and bay by keeping the existing undeveloped tracts of land undeveloped and to create zoning that will assure proper and appropriate infill on the existing lots. Specific recommendations in these two areas are:

Keeping existing large tracts of land (over 5 acres) undeveloped:

1. Tracts of land within the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area should not be rezoned with densities higher than RC-20.
2. Protect the Open Space character of the land above the URDL. The "buffer" to the rest of the peninsula should remain above the URDL rather than have the urban area encroach into the peninsula. The County should make every effort to purchase this land and place it in a conservancy. Any property above the URDL that is not purchased should remain at a very low density (RC-5 or higher) to serve as a transitional buffer for the URDL.
3. The zoning classifications currently used in this sensitive area permits the inclusion of wetlands, buffer areas and other normally unbuildable land when calculating density. This potential increase in human activity in this region is not in keeping with the intent of the Chesapeake Critical Bay Area law. All density calculations in the district should have this unbuildable square footage removed from the density calculation.
4. Place the land that is currently owned by the County and State in a trust that will protect it from future development.
5. Require voter approval before selling any County-owned land on the peninsula
6. Do not allow Planned Unit Developments (PUDs) below the URDL. The loss of density protection in the PUD process is not acceptable.
7. We believe that the possible construction of the upper bay bridge, launched from this peninsula, would have a significant negative impact on the sensitive environment of the area. If an upper bay bridge is proposed, establish a community oversight board that will participate in all aspects of the plan. This board should remain in place after planning is complete to ensure that such plans are implemented.

The community associations have partnered with the County and State to place land in conservation.

Controlling in-fill on existing building lots:

1. Appropriate in-fill development will:
    a. not diminish the value or utility of adjacent properties
    b. include appropriate setback standards
    c. conform with all environmental regulations
2. Do not grant zoning variances that would violate the intent of item 1 above.
3. Develop new zoning classifications that are appropriate for in-fill development situated in the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area and to the Lower Back River Neck District.
4. Require the maximum achievable technology for control of storm water and construction run-off for all construction on the peninsula.
5. Maintain environmental buffers. Do not grant variances that would diminish water quality.
6. Apply all required mitigation on the peninsula or the water sheds for Back and Middle Rivers.
7. Treat all construction as new construction to comply with current environmental regulations. Use aerial photographs dated to 1984 as the bench mark for grandfathering non-permitted construction.
8. Do not allow additional commercial zoning.

A new coastal zoning classification is proposed to better regulate the form of residential infill building.

In support of this plan, Baltimore County approved funding and a request for a state grant to hire a consultant to obtain input from the community in an effort to develop new coastal zoning designations for the designated study area that would define how in-fill development would be managed and regulated. The results of that process, when completed will be contained in the appendix of this document and amended as part of this plan.

Issue: Environmental Protection

The shoreline, wetlands, and forests are major assets of the community. They are an important habitat for wildlife, particularly migratory birds, and contribute to the area's beauty and charm. The residents of the community are committed to preserve the beauty of the area. The area includes the largest contiguous forest along the Chesapeake Bay within Baltimore County. The tidal shoreline and tidal wetlands are important in that they provide distinctive habitat necessary to a broad variety of birds, including some threatened and endangered species. Protecting the habitat is important to the overall health of the Chesapeake Bay.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Change zoning regulations to further limit housing density. Increases in developed areas reduces wildlife habitat and contributes to pollution. New development should not adversely impact wildlife habitat.

- Place into preservation the undeveloped land that is owned by the County and State to protect it from future development.

- Obtain voter approval before selling any County-owned land on the peninsula.

- Recruit volunteers to construct platforms and nest boxes for osprey, tree swallows and purple martins. *

- Partner with the community to plant trees and shrubs in appropriate areas to increase forest diversity to provide optimal conditions for Forest Interior Dwelling (FID) bird species. *

- Partner with the community to implement an invasive species treatment program for the removal of invasive species, particularly Multi-flora rose and Japanese honeysuckle. *

- Construct erosion control measures and reestablish wetland vegetation where the shoreline is eroding on public property. *

- Support an effort with local residents as volunteers to clean up the trash that has been dumped along the roads and in the woods. Prosecute persons who violate the litter laws and assist the local residents with an anti-dumping and anti-littering campaign.

- Develop an education and outreach plan for the community concerning habitat awareness, recycling, proper disposal of hazardous materials, use of fertilizer and lawn chemicals, removing or treating invasive plant species, etc. (The Greater Baltimore Master Gardener Program could help with this.)

- Encourage the use of marine pump-out facilities. Improve access to pump-out facilities and educate the boating public on the importance of responsible sanitary waste management. Improperly disposed waste causes serious water quality problems.

- Increase outreach and educate the boating public on the effects of boating on the environment.

- Eliminate trash and debris from flowing into Back River and the adjacent marshes and wetland areas. (A trash removal device is already designed and scheduled for installation during 2009)

- Current methods to control ATV's on publicly owned property are ineffective. With the cooperation of the community, police department, legislators and other county agencies, devise controls that will work and protect these important environmental areas.

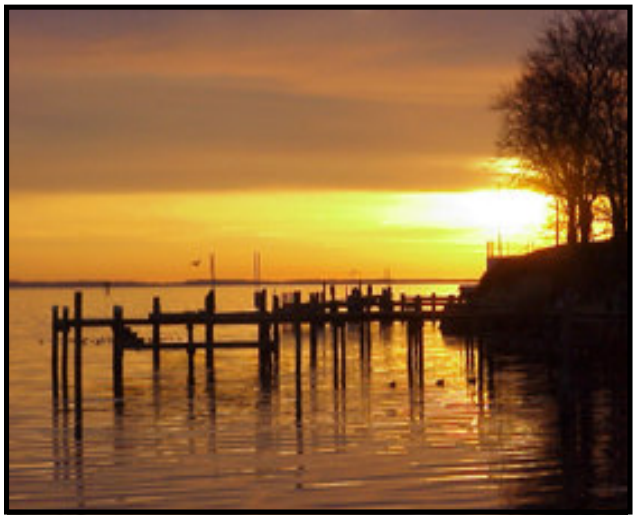
- Install signs indicating where land is preserved and alerting the public concerning dumping and ATV use.

- Conduct a study to determine whether the environment has improved since the installation of public sewer.

- Assess the condition of community roads. The resurfacing and paving of roads as a result of the water and sewer projects on the peninsula have caused runoff problems. Correct the runoff problems in order to protect the health of surrounding wetlands and streams.

* Reference is made to the October 2005 Back River Neck Rural Legacy Ecological Assessment Report.

Ongoing education and outreach concerning habitat awareness continues to be a priority.



Issue: Rural Legacy/Conservation

Maryland's Rural Legacy Program was created in 1997, however the preservation and the conservation of the bountiful natural resources located on the lower Back River Neck Peninsula can trace its roots back much further. In the late 1950's when plans were introduced to create port related industries on the lower Back River Neck, citizens rallied together to stop the destruction of hundreds of acres of pristine forests and wetlands, thereby creating the modern day preservation movement on the peninsula.

Through the use of programs such as Program Open Space, MD Agricultural Land Preservation, the Chesapeake Bay Critical Areas Program, Resource Conservation zoning, Growth Management Legislation, forest restoration programs, Land Trusts, Recreation & Parks purchases, Conservation Easements, Habitat Protection, Mitigation, the Rural Legacy Program, and more; the citizens of the Lower Back River Neck have had a great deal of success in preserving the natural splendor of the peninsula, however upstream pollution needs to be significantly reduced to improve the health of the Bay.

We, the citizens of the Lower Back River Neck, were the champions in the establishment of the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area Program. We were the creators of the Back River Neck Growth Management legislation. We led the crusade for conservation easements long before the Rural Legacy Program was established. We were at the forefront in the creation of conservation zoning. We have planted literally thousands of trees. Our dedication to preservation and conservation in Baltimore County is second to none.

Although our successes have protected large contiguous blocks of forest and wetlands as well as smaller individual tracts, there still remains more than 800 acres of large tracts (10 or more acres) in private ownership on the peninsula that are under the threat of residential or commercial development.

Large blocks of contiguous forest and wetlands have been preserved through the Coastal Rural Legacy Program.

We strongly request the following course of action in reference to Rural Legacy and Conservation on the lower Back River Neck Peninsula.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- No sale of government land for development without voter approval. (This is a repeat of an earlier recommendation).
- Identify large unprotected parcels (10 or more acres) within our planning area and aggressively pursue the preservation of the same.
- Obtain community input before changing the use of the Maryland Rural Legacy Program, Program Open Space, or Recreation & Parks lands.
- No "upzoning" of parcels adjacent to lands preserved through easements.
- Identify funding sources to purchase land under the Maryland Rural Legacy Program.
- All government lands on the peninsula not already under a conservation easement should be placed under such an easement.
- Create a foundation to raise funds for the management and enforcement of protected lands.

Issue: Essex Skypark

In 2000, this 588-acre environmentally sensitive waterfront parcel was purchased by Baltimore County through Maryland's Rural Legacy Program and funds from the County.

A conservation easement held by the Maryland Environmental Trust limits how the property can be used and what can be built and where. The Essex Skypark Association leases a portion of the property, approximately 150 acres, zoned RC-5 from Baltimore County. It is governed by an easement held by the Maryland Environmental Trust. The Lower Back River Neck Community Action Plan Advisory Committee and the community support the continued use of the Skypark as limited by the lease and conservation easement.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Notify and consult the Lower Back River Neck Community Action Plan Advisory Committee and the Back River Neck Peninsula Community Association at least 90 days before any changes or amendments to the conservation easement or lease.

- Install a "Dusk to Dawn" gate on Diffendahl Road as a security measure for the property to deter dumping and undesirable activity at night.

- Extend sewer and water to the property.
    A. Need fire hydrant for safety
    B. Well water is not potable.
    C. Septic system not acceptable for the protection of health and environment.

- Make necessary renovations to the airport buildings.

- Place signs designating property as a "Coastal Rural Legacy Area" and warning of illegal dumping and prohibited activities.

- Organize a joint effort with Baltimore County and local residents to clean up the property.

- Reestablish the "Paradise Farm Trail" as a walking trail on the property.

- Require local law enforcement to combat the use of ATV's on protected properties.

- Work with DEPRM to develop and implement a shoreline restoration plan.

- The Essex Skypark Association shall maintain an environmental committee with representation from the community associations and neighbors to promote the restoration and protection of the environmental features of the skypark.

Issue: Recreation and Parks

The Lower Back River Peninsula is very blessed with an abundance of public open space funded at state and local levels, and the Recreation and Parks Department (referred to in this report as R&P) has done a good job with enhancing that space. The Community Center showcased by an historic flagpole surrounded by a lovely garden is a much-used facility for community gatherings and sports. Rocky Point Park, in addition to the swimming area, now has a sailing school, boat facilities and breakwater. The Rocky Point Golf Course has been improved with a sprinkler system. Ballestone Mansion continues to draw visitors as an historical attraction. Pottery Farm Park, with its natural beauty is a microcosm of what the shores of the Chesapeake Bay once were. The Somogyi property with eighty-seven acres of farmland now adds more possibilities.

The Back River Community Center is used for a variety of activities.

Back River Community Center

The dual purpose of the building is first, to give the civic associations in the area a quiet place to meet and second, to provide a gym for sporting events and young people's activities.

Issue:
The design of the center does not lend itself to concurrent uses due to inadequate soundproofing between the gym and meeting room.

Recommendation:
Construct a separate wing to accommodate the adult community where meetings can be scheduled on a regular basis, thereby guaranteeing they will not be bumped for other activities.

Back River Historic Flagpole:

The 1923 historic flagpole, located at the front of the Community Center property, and marked with a plaque stating it to be the official flagpole for the Community Center, the Headstart Center, and the Emergency Medical Center have great significance in our community. The flagpole was the original wooden

flagpole of the first schoolhouse on our peninsula and was later moved to its current site when a new elementary school was built. In 2004, a grant was obtained by private residents to install lighting so the flag could fly 24/7, and create a path and garden to enhance the site. In the years hence, private funds have been raised for the annual flower display. Also, annual American flags have been donated by private citizens. Volunteers have planted, watered, and maintained the garden, and cared for the flag.

Issue:
Private donations have become difficult to obtain. When exposed to the elements, flags deteriorate.

Recommendation:
Provide yearly funding for the flower display, also a 5x8 American flag.

Rocky Point Golf Course:
The Revenue Authority has done a good job since taking over management of the golf course. Installation of a sprinkler system and removal of underbrush and trees along the water have made the course more playable and scenic.

Issue:
With the transformation of several other county golf courses to high cost premium courses, there is a concern that the same will be done to Rocky Point.

Recommendation:
The course is a good value that is enjoyed by many golfers in the community and the county. It should not be upgraded to a premium course and priced above the affordable value it is now.

Ballestone Manor:
Ballestone Manor is an historic gem cared for lovingly by a hard-working historical society. Their special events throughout the year bring visitors from all over Maryland. The Baltimore County Master Gardeners have recently renovated the herb garden, bringing renewed interest to the kitchen area.

Issue:
The Ballestone Preservation Society reports slow follow-up on repair and maintenance of the building.

Rocky Point Park offers a community beach and sailing center.

Recommendation:
Make small repairs with expediency before they become large repairs.

Rocky Point Park
Rocky Point Park offers opportunities for many active and passive activities including swimming, picnicking, hiking, fishing, and sailing. There is a place to play volleyball and also a boat ramp, which is accessed by paying a fee.

Issue:
The path down to the fishing area is dangerous and in dire need of repair. Volleyball is a popular sport and one court is not enough to serve visitors.

Recommendation:
The fishing path should be repaired and should take precedence over other repairs. More volleyball courts are needed.

Pottery Farm Park:
Pottery Farm Park is an extremely sensitive environmental area, which remains in its natural state due to the wisdom and caring of the private sector and aided by county, state and local funding.

Issue:
The Park is underutilized by the public encouraging illegal ATV activity, which is destroying the very thing we fought to save.

Recommendations:
1. Create a measured walking path starting at the back of the Community Center crossing into Pottery Farm Park's shaded area, and leading down to the water.
2. With the creation of the Marshy Point Nature Center, a perfect opportunity arises to incorporate Pottery Farm Park in satellite field trips, nature studies, and archaeological digs.
3. The more activities such as scouting, and programs to draw in adults to enjoy this natural beauty, the less undesirable activity would occur.

The Rocky Point Golf Club is a regional attraction.

Somogyi Farm:
The purchase of Somogyi Farm creates a wonderful opportunity on the East side of the county to support local farming activity.

Issue:
With the high cost and poor quality of food, unknown growing methods, and long-distance transporting, there has been a groundswell of interest in locally grown produce. The Somogyi farm would be an appropriate and historic site to continue the tradition of "Farming for the Family".

Recommendations:

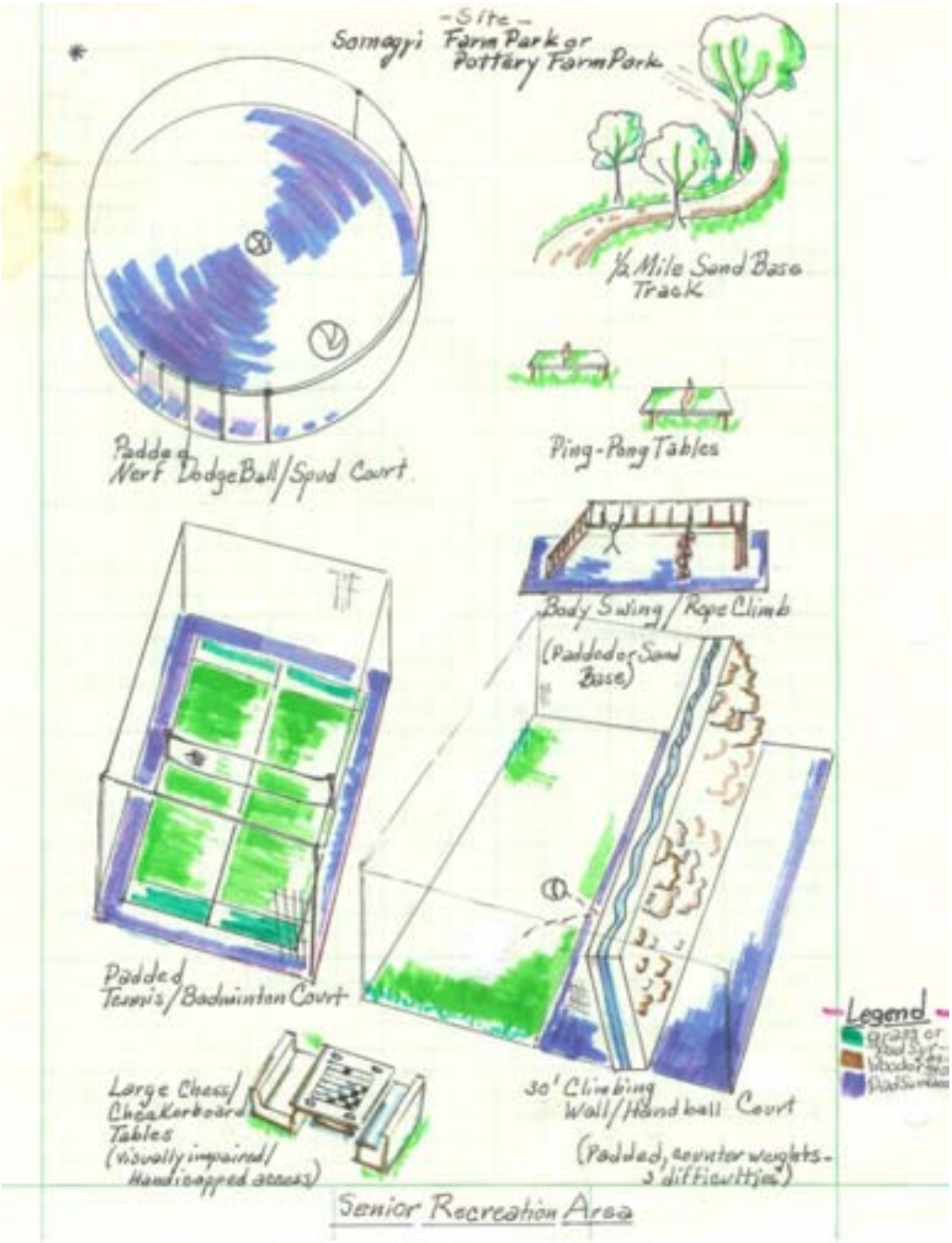
1. Form a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Program: With a partnership of a local farmer, a CSA program could be formed. This type of food distribution is so popular at the county's Cromwell Valley Park that they report a waiting list. Individuals pay the farmer in advance of the growing season and collect the harvest as it matures.

2. Create a Community Garden Program: This garden space will receive technical and educational support from the newly formed Master Gardeners Program of Baltimore County. Area residents will rent yearly plots to grow their own produce attracting a wide variety of greening activities to the community. Gardening classes could be organized at the Community Center in the winter prior to the growing season to teach soil improvement, IPM (Integrated pest management) methods and weed control alternatives to herbicides. Judging events including preserved or canned foods and fresh foods and flowers and a community dinner gathering, using produce grown on their plots, together with recipe exchanges would be held at the end of the growing season. The Master Gardener Program can help expand community relations in a way that benefits a wide, diverse population.

3. A water source would be provided by Baltimore County's Recreation and Parks (R&P) Department. Working together, R&P and Master Gardeners would plan the design and construction. Mulch and soil amendments would be delivered from Day's Cove composting center.

4. Develop a portion of the Somogyi property as a senior adult playground for the "55 And Over" age group. Activities should include padded ball courts, padded climbing wall area, Ping Pong tables, and large chess tables with oversize icons to facilitate the visually and physically challenged. (See attached drawing)

5. When/if the Somogyi property is developed for recreational uses including the senior park idea, efforts need to be taken to retain a rural visual appearance of the property given its important location as a gateway to the remainder of the neck.


-Site-
Somogyi Farm Park or
Pottery Farm Park
½ Mile Sand Base Track
Ping-Pong Tables
Padded Nerf DodgeBall/Spud Court
Body Swing/Rope Climb
(Padded or Sand Base)
Padded Tennis/Badminton Court
Large Chess/Checkerboard Tables (visually impaired/Handicapped access)
30' Climbing Wall/Hand ball Court
(Padded, counter weights - 3 difficulties)
Legend
Senior Recreation Area

Issue: Traffic & Safety

There has been an increase in traffic since the last community plan was written, mostly as a result of more residential development. Along with the increase in traffic there is some road surface failure and more litter. Also, some intersections are having more accidents and need attention.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- No bridge or road to Hart-Miller Island or Upper Chesapeake Bay crossing from the planning area.

- Install rumble strips at the termination of MD 702 onto Back River Neck Road on southbound MD 702, making drivers aware of the speed limit reduction. This technique was used at the "Roundabout" and is effective.

- Post "No Thru Street" and "Dead End Road" signs at appropriate locations. The community will furnish a list of locations.

- Redesign the intersection of Holly Neck Road and Back River Neck Road to avoid the increasing number of personal injury accidents occurring at this location.

- Prohibit additional travel lanes on any road south of Pottery Farm Road.

- Prohibit further extension of MD 702.

- Conduct a study on all road drainage problem areas, creating recommendations to correct the problems.

- Prohibit any further extension of public transportation into the study area due to narrow roads and lack of turnaround areas.

- Form an advisory committee to notify the County of roads needing repair, so that repairs are made more frequently.

- Restore the pedestrian pathway between Holly Neck Road and the Back River Neck Community Center.

- Install curbing and sidewalks on Back River Neck Road from Hyde Park Road to Turkey Point Road.

Issue: Cycling, Hiking and Pedestrian Pathways

Considerations:

1. Increase in organized cycling, walking and running on the peninsula
2. Lack of stable, consistent shoulder material
3. High speed traffic from MD 702 Southeast Parkway onto a county road that lacks wide and well marked shoulders
4. ATV traffic threatening and discouraging desired low impact recreational visitors (bird watching, walkers, horsemen etc.)
5. Proximity of various recreational experiences within biking distance on the peninsula
6. Public use of county and state owned land
7. Low impact public access to abundance of land in conservation easement
8. Environmental education opportunity biking and walking paths offer
9. Funding for monitoring and maintenance of pathways
10. Monitored pathways' effect on public safety
11. The area is targeted for high end development projects for active seniors

Recommendation:

Support Phase 1 of the Eastern Regional Bike Path Plan along Back River Neck Road.

The path should be of such a design and quality that it becomes an additional source of pride for the local residents. The path must be designed to prohibit ATV and other motorized recreational vehicles. Measures must be taken to discourage leaving the path and causing damage to environmentally sensitive areas. The presence of citizens involved in slow moving, low impact activity along the pathway such as biking, walking or jogging will assist in our efforts to discourage the damaging illegal activity from ATVs and other unwanted activity in the protected areas.

Upon evaluation of the impact of phase one, consideration shall be given to the extension of the pathway to the Lower portion of the Holly Neck Peninsula.

The Bike and Walking Path Report in appendix is the work product of sub-committee research on this issue. The plan is submitted as reference material and for your consideration.

Immediate action:

Any planned road or re-surfacing projects include additional funds for shoulder improvement along the targeted roadways in Phase one.

Issue: Signage

The placement and design of signage should be appropriate for the rural character of the community.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Install several more "Critical Area" signs in the lower Back River Neck area.
- All signs below Cape May Road that are not public service and/or non-profit should be rustic as befits a rural nature area.
- Develop a uniform package of "icon" directional signs for businesses located on roads off Back River Neck Road.
- Remove all signs not in compliance with the uniform package noted above.
- Post No Dumping/No Littering signs throughout the area. Educational programs about littering and dumping of refuse should be continued as a cooperative effort between the county and the community.
- Continue enforcement of removal of all commercial signs along MD 702 in compliance with Federal road standards.
- Require temporary produce stand signs to be neat, legible and maintained then removed after the season ends.
- Remove temporary signs (party, showers) promptly after the events are over.

Signage should be reflective of the rural character of the community.

Issue: Marinas/Boat Yards/Yacht Clubs

Prior to 1992, many Marinas/Boatyards/Yacht Clubs in Baltimore County operated by special exception in residential zones. Legislation was adopted in 1992 that created three new zoning classifications: Business Maritime Marina (BMM), Business Maritime Boatyard (BMB), and Business Maritime Yacht Club (BMYC). These new classifications relieved the hardship on marina owners from constantly seeking variances to continue to operate their business, and it relieved the hardship to the community from opposing these variances where necessary.

Within the Back River Plan Area; there are twelve water dependent boating facilities. These twelve facilities have been zoned as Marina/Boatyard or Yacht Clubs. These facilities occupy approximately 52 acres.

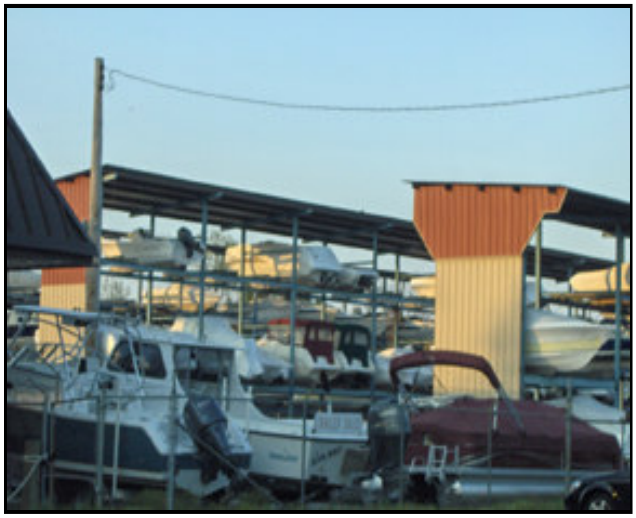
Five of the facilities are zoned Business Maritime Boatyard (BMB) covering 14 acres. One facility is zoned Business Maritime Yacht Club (BMYC) and covers 10.19 acres.

The remaining six facilities covering approximately 30 acres are zoned BL, DR, and RC with special exceptions to be Marinas/Boatyards and Yacht Clubs.

Historically, BMB and BMM classifications have allowed marina/boatyard owners the right to seek DR 5.5 residential build-out on their property. Lately, the community has witnessed some of these marinas exercising this residential option, and it has caused a great deal of concern. Two BMB facilities, formerly with special exceptions, were rezoned to BMB without DR 5.5 density as a matter of right. As of August 2008, these two facilities total 7.2 acres with the passage of the 2008 CZMP by the County Council.

In addition to the zoned marinas, there are numerous "bootleg" marinas where many boats are kept at private residences, which are not zoned for marina use.

Neighborhood marinas are located throughout the area.



RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Continue to enforce zoning, Critical Areas Legislation, and other legislation to protect existing communities and the environment, the spirit of these regulations and policies being of equal or greater significance than the letter of the Law.
- Enforce zoning for boat slips at private residential piers which is limited to 4 or 6 boats per property depending on the water frontage of each property per County Council Bill No. 149-92.
- Marine related businesses, DEPRM and the community should continue to alert boaters of legal and moral obligations to dispose of litter and waste properly.
- All marinas should strive to participate in Maryland's DNR Clean Marina Program.
- The Baltimore County Planning Office should provide an overview of all regulations as they apply to the joint DR 5.5 build-out and marina/boatyard operations for land zoned BMM or BMB. A community input meeting should be held to provide public input.

Issue: Back River and the Back River Waste Water Treatment Plant

Back River is an estuary of the Chesapeake Bay as evidenced by its being subject to tidal influence and the presence of a salinity gradient which reportedly diminishes significantly near Stansbury Point. From the Eastern Avenue Bridge to its confluence with the Chesapeake Bay, it is approximately nine miles in length. The river is very shallow at the headwaters (2-3 feet dependant upon tide and wind direction). The width varies from one quarter (1/4) of a mile in the upper reaches to nearly one and one half (1½) miles near the Bay. The flow in the river is very sluggish with approximately 20% of the freshwater flow coming from its major tributaries, Herring Run and Northeast Creek (fed by Stemmer's Run), while the remaining freshwater flow, approximately 80% is attributed to the discharge from the Back River Waste Water Treatment Plant. At the present time the Waste Water Treatment Plant is treating approximately 180 million gallons per day (mgd) with the resultant effluent split with 60% directed towards Back River and the remaining 40% directed to the Steel Plant at Sparrows Point. The total drainage area of the river is approximately 70 square miles.

Problems in and on the river are not just recent. The pressures of development and unrestricted land use activities as well as the point source effects of the Treatment Plant have caused the gradual decline of the river; however recent upgrades at the Plant have created significant improvements in the water discharge. In the past, massive algal blooms and fish kills, sewage plant washouts, years of failing sewage disposal system effects, are only a few of the pollutant loadings (both bacteriological and chemical) which have influenced the waters. It is imperative that an integrated approach involving multi-media influences be utilized when looking at solutions to historic problems. This leads also to a regional perspective for control of atmospheric pollutants and discharges to the conveyance system.

An inventory of the problems, which affect bacteriological background, oxygen depletion, and nutrient loadings, include Treatment plant discharges, storm water runoff, marina operations, industrial discharges, sewer pumping station overflows, and the existing sediments on the river bottom. These are all problems, which affected the water quality of Back River for years. Solutions cannot be expected to miraculously produce overnight benefits. The goals of restoring the resource for boating, swimming, fishing, and aesthetic appreciation of scenic vistas will require significant commitment from residents and Government.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Vigorously support and monitor the scheduled improvements to the Back River Waste Water Treatment Plant.
- Continue to develop regional cooperation on storm water pollution control and retrofitting, unless the upstream contributions to sediments and pollutants can be controlled, the County efforts will be severely compromised.
- Accelerate water quality monitoring efforts through improvements in frequency of surveys and sampling.
- Provide additional community educational programs to individual residents so that homeowner activities detrimental to the river could be changed.
- Insure all marinas have functioning "Pump-Out" Stations.
- Investigate and identify the segments of the river that are usable for water contact recreational activities.
- Promote and support certification by the State of Maryland to have the Dept. of Natural Resources add Back River to the Scenic River List.

BACK RIVER WASTE WATER TREATMENT PLANT

The Back River Waste Water Treatment Plant (BRWWTP) was originally constructed in 1907 and is owned and operated by the City of Baltimore. The plant occupies 466 acres and has a 35-foot elevation difference between the influent and the outfall to allow wastewater to flow by gravity through the entire plant. An estimated 1.3 million residents of Baltimore City and Baltimore County are served on this plant. The facility has evolved into a tertiary treatment plant and is designed to treat 180 million gallons per day (mgd). The plant is capable of receiving peak hydraulic loads at 400 million gallions daily (mgd) but with decreased treatment.

Preliminary Treatment includes six fine screens to remove larger objects such as cigarette butts, rubber, plastic, rags, and sticks. The flow then enters grit removal basins to allow sand and other particles to settle out. These large objects and particles are removed to the Quarantine Road Landfill.

Primary Treatment is distributed among eleven (11) primary sedimentation tanks where dense organic particles settle. Approximately 65% of organic material (sludge) settles in these tanks. The sludge goes to solid processing while the effluent continues to Secondary Treatment.

Secondary Treatment consists of three (3) fine bubble activated sludge facilities where a culture of microorganisms is maintained to absorb and metabolize organic pollutants. Air is continuously added to the basin to meet the oxygen demand of the bacteria and other organisms that compromise activated sludge. After treatment, the activated sludge is separated from the wastewater by sedimentation similar to Primary Treatment. All basins are configured to remove nitrogen and phosphorus.

Advanced Treatment (Tertiary) to further reduce phosphorus, ferric chloride and polymer are added. These chemicals cause a precipitate to form, which can be removed during filtration. The flow from Secondary Treatment enters the Sand Filtration Facility consisting of Forty-Eight (48) sand beds each containing eleven (11) inches of sand with a total surface area of over two (2) acres. The sand traps most of the remaining suspended solids from the wastewater. Chlorine is added at this stage to minimize algae growth.

Final Treatment occurs at the Chlorination/Dechlorination Facility. Here flow is disinfected by sodium hypochlorite, dechlorinated by sodium bisulfate, and aerated (oxygenated) before it passes through the 1,200 ft long outfall pier into Back River.

Odor Control is achieved through capturing and collecting odorous gases and treating them through a series of chemical scrubbing systems. Hydrogen Peroxide is also used to control odors from incoming wastewater to the plant.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Investigate and procure supplemental financing to insure completion of all phases of plant upgrades.
- Improve and upgrade the existing structure for communication among communities, citizen groups, and plant operators.
- Continue to investigate new technologies for sludge disposal and monitor its progress.
- Support the development of new markets for compost and sludge applications.
- Develop homeowner educational programs to show the potential effect of their action on the plant.
- Develop more homeowner hazardous waste disposal sites to keep these materials out of the system.
- Maintain a minimum 200 mgd surge capacity to control storm water from surging into the system.

Issue: Hart-Miller Island

The History of Hart-Miller Island

Located about 14 miles east of Baltimore's Inner Harbor, Hart-Miller Island lies at the mouth of the Back River. In 1821, Joseph Hart purchased Hart and Miller Islands. At the time of Hart's death in 1858, the size of Hart Island was 264 acres and Miller Island 124 acres.

Around 1900, a group of duck hunters formed Millers Island Ducking Club. The clubhouse on the island, built during the War of 1812, perished in a heavy storm in 1943.

By 1933, more that 30% of Hart Island had eroded away, leaving 180 acres. More than 40% of Millers Island had also eroded, leaving a mere 70 acres. Hart Island was connected to what is now known as Pleasure Island. Pleasure Island, linked by a bridge to the mainland, supported a prominent theme park. By 1965 Pleasure Island had completely lost its connection with Hart Island.

In the late 1970's, Hart Island was purchased by the Maryland Port Administration. Baltimore's Harbor and channels required maintenance and needed a viable location to place the dredged material. Dredged material inflow was initiated in 1983.

Rebuilding Hart-Miller Island

Construction of a perimeter dike to connect Hart and Miller's Island (HMI) began in 1981 and was completed in 1984. The original dike was 18 feet above mean low low water (MLLW). HMI is approximately 6 miles around with a cross dike separating the island into the North (750 acres) and South Cells (290 acres).

Inflow of dredged material to the South Cell began in 1984 and ended in 1990. It contains nearly 16 million cubic yards (MCY) of dredged material. In 1988, the North Cell dike was raised to 28 feet, and then raised again in 1997, to a final elevation of 44 feet, increasing capacity to 100 MCY.

Hart-Miller Island is an important recreational amenity.

Inflow in the North Cell began in 1985 and will continue until 2009. In the fall of 2002, the North Cell had reached almost 84 MCY of dredged material. The pumped dredged material contains 20% solids by volume as it is mixed with Bay water and is pumped via pipeline into the North Cell. Through the use of spillways, the effluent is discharged back into the Chesapeake Bay. Continuous monitoring of water quality insures that the discharged water has no adverse impact on the Bay ecosystem.

Restoring Hart-Miller Island

The Baltimore District of the United States Army Corp of Engineers, in cooperation with the Maryland Port Administration (MPA) and Department of Natural Resources (DNR), developed a unique plan to restore Hart-Miller Island's South Cell. The plan for the restoration project is to create habitat for shorebirds, terns and migratory waterfowl. The restoration efforts include creation of mudflats, shallow wetlands and open water to protect nesting island habitat. These areas are essential for spring and fall migrations, as well as promoting a healthy avian nesting community. These areas are critical due to the limited stopover points during the birds' migrations.

During the years the South Cell was open for dredged material placement (1984 to 1990), the mud flats and pond water created habitats for over 280 species of birds. The South Cell provided shelter and a stable food source during the birds' yearly migration. In 1990, inflow into the South Cell stopped, changing the local habitat created by dredged material inflow. With the change from mudflats to a plant community composed mainly of the invasive Weed Phragmites, the value of the habitat decreased. After years of consolidating and dewatering the dredged material, the construction of the South Cell Restoration Project started in the fall of 2002. The project involves the restoration of 290 acres of the total 1,040 acres encompassing Hart-Miller Island.

After placement ends, the entire Island will be turned over to the Maryland DNR. The North Cell, which currently receives dredged material, has become well known for the extensive bird populations that utilize the mudflats. Because of this, Hart-Miller is one of Maryland's unique bird habitats.

Social Benefits

With thousands of visitors per year, Hart-Miller Island State Park is one of Maryland's most scenic parks. Visitors can dock their boats and relax along the 3,000 foot sandy beach. Several campsites and picnic tables provide a peaceful and enjoyable camping experience. Hart-Miller also provides shelter for the Back River and associated coves. It breaks wave energy by reducing erosion. Recreational fishing and crabbing are excellent due to the increases in habitat.

A Nature Showcase and Treasure

Rarely can three so uniquely diverse ecosystems be found in such close proximity as exists in Lower Back River Neck, Hart-Miller Island and The Black Marsh. The lowland wet forests of Lower Back River Neck are home and breeding grounds for warbler, woodpeckers, many songbirds, birds of prey, many other forest interior dwelling species as well as migratory waterfowl and many rare species. Hart-Miller Island continues to enjoy the return of many species of sea birds such as cormorants, brown pelicans, herons, gulls and terns. It also supports huge concentrations of migratory ducks and geese. The Black Marsh with its salt marsh habitat and adjacent forests support a number of rare species including songbirds and endangered black rail. It is commonplace to see the bald eagle soaring overhead and hunting at all three locations. The retention of these areas in their most natural

state would provide people throughout the country the opportunity to see the many diversities and beauties of nature and to provide areas of study and education that are of national significance. Proper preservation of these areas would insure the perpetuation of numerous species for future generations.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Joint federal, state, county and private effort to procure and set aside as much of the three areas as possible.
- Conduct a thorough study of the entire area by U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, E.P.A., Md. D.N.R., and Baltimore County DEPRM to create action plan for stabilization and proliferation of wildlife species and numbers through enhancement projects.
- Boardwalks, hiking and non-motorized biking trails incorporated for access.
- Access from one area to other should not involve the construction of bridges or roads (water taxi could be a consideration).
- Support the authority of the over sight committee in its long time effort to obtain the best results possible for the overall development of Hart-Miller-Pleasure Island.
- Maintain a continuous communication with state and county officials during the final stages this project after the dredge spoils receiving has stopped.
- Follow the bills enacted by the General Assembly of Maryland

  Senate Bill 307 dated 1/23/97
  House Bill 537 dated 1/29/97

- Maintain the state dock located at Hart-Miller for a possible landing site for the purpose of docking future water taxi.
- Revise current plans that indicate 200 acres of diked area as a bird sanctuary to a more active recreational use such as a nature center or camping area.

Addendum

The Office of Planning is currently working with the community to develop a new Coastal Zoning Code. When completed, the product of that effort will be contained in the appendix of this document and amended as part of the plan.

- Appendix -

Back River and Holly Neck
Cycling and Walking
Pathways

Bicycle Path Gateway
Lower Back River and Holly Neck Peninsula

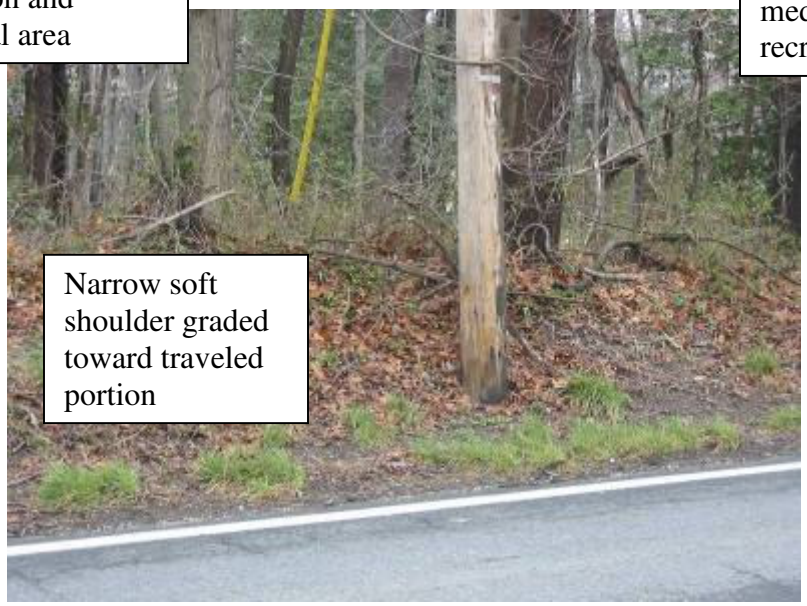
1. The Back River Neck Recreational/Community Center is a popular staging area for cyclists preparing to visit the many points of interest on the Lower Peninsula. The location is easy to find and the parking is excellent for the off loading of cycling equipment. The restroom facilities and play area are family friendly however the initial start of a journey down Back River Neck Road for pedestrians and cyclists is perilous.

2. The lack of a safe pathway between the shopping center and the restaurant area must be corrected. Development of this area has significantly increased foot and cycling traffic in recent years. The area now has a Head Start Center for pre-school children, a video store component to the convenience store, and the abandoned concrete fabricating plant has been converted into thriving shopping center containing a variety of retail and services businesses. This gateway to the lower peninsula is in need of, and deserving of, a separate parallel cycling pathway leading to a system of biking and walking trails on the beautiful lower neck.

3. The travel portion of Back River Neck road as you leave and enter the peninsula is on a slight grade. The incline and curve in the road reduces visibility and increases vehicle speed from in bound MD route 702 traffic. This speed problem has long been a concern of the residential and business community. Many traffic devices have been installed by the state and local government in an attempt to address this problem with limited results. The traffic studies used to justify these traffic devices will support a much needed separate parallel cycling/pedestrian pathway. The roadway is narrow, lacks improved shoulders and the road surface is in constant need of repair.

Vehicle cresting hill is out bound approaching medic station and Recreational area

View by outbound vehicle and foot traffic approaching medic station and recreational area



Narrow soft shoulder graded toward traveled portion

3. Portions of the roadway are bordered by steeply elevated soft shoulders forcing pedestrian and cycling traffic into the on coming traffic lane. The top of the ridge area of the shoulder is dotted with older trees leaning precariously toward the roadway threatening traffic and the utility lines. This bottle neck portion of Back River Neck road is the only route of travel off the peninsula. There has been a growing number of commuters leaving the many pocket communities along Holly Neck, Lower Back River Neck and Cherry Garden roads. The pedestrian path from Cherry Garden Road to the Pottery Farm area is, in places, very narrow and in need of repair. Those cycling on the lower Back River Neck peninsula refer to this hazardous beginning as “shooting the rapids” though they have not been deterred from cycling in the area.

Growing use of the area by local and visiting Cyclists

1. Serious and competitive cycling occurs on the peninsula. The committee learned of a small but growing number of athletes competing in a triathlon on the lower tip of the peninsula. The group takes advantage of the nearby open bay to incorporate swimming in the event. The opportunity for such a first class event, show casing the natural and recreational east side Baltimore County attractions, must be explored.

9. The sub-committee has learned cycling in this area has increased significantly with the popularity among active seniors growing at the greatest rate. The following are just a few of the groups known to travel from other communities to tour the Lower Back River Neck; *The Greater Baltimore Bike Club, The E-Z Riders* from Pikesville and *Cycling Seniors* from the Dundalk center. The size of the senior citizen groups ranges from 30 to 50 riders and their journey is approximately 30 miles with an average cyclist speed of 12 – 15 mph. The below cycling invitation recently appeared in a bulletin from the Ateaze Senior Center.

This is a casual ride
Nov. 30 ***Back River Neck Ride***
Meet: *Back River Recreation Center*
Leader: *Bob Carson 410 828 8604, bikebob@comcast.net*
Description: Up to 30 miles on almost flat roads. You will be able to bike in and out of the many peninsulas with dead end roads off of Turkey Point Road and Back River Neck Road, past waterfront homes, yacht clubs and countryside vistas of the Chesapeake Bay and tributaries. Little to moderate traffic. Lunch will be at a restaurant about 3/4 of the way into the ride.
Directions: Back River Neck Recreation Center is located on Back River Neck Road just south of the junction with South East Blvd. (MD 702). From the Beltway (I-695), take Exit 36, which leads directly to MD 702. In about 4 miles you will see the Recreation Center on your left.

8. The ***Back River Neck Ride*** invitation describes the traffic as "…*little to moderate* …" this may be true during certain times of the day after the cyclists or pedestrian has passed or turned onto Holly Neck road. Once through "the rapids" and deep into the peninsula the below solitude greets the visiting cyclists:

Early spring view of a typical side road excursion

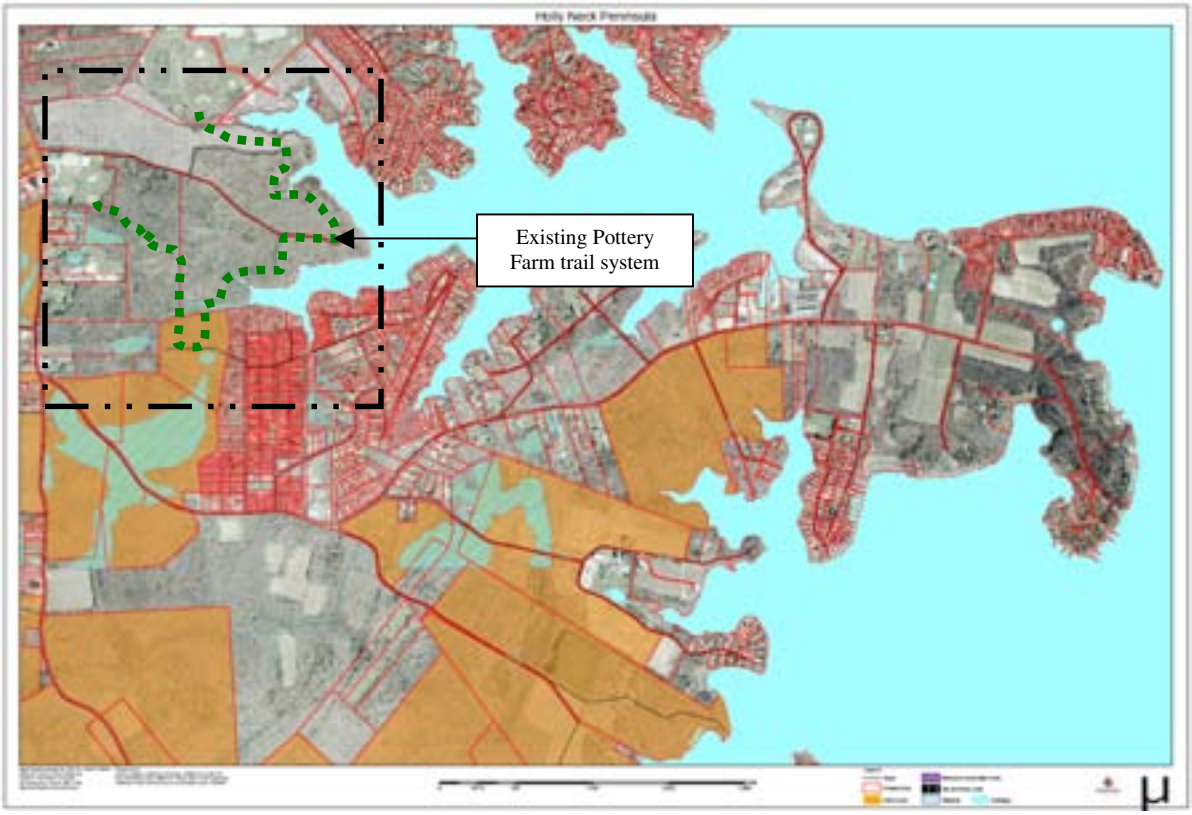
11. The upper portion of Holly Neck road and the greater portion of Back River Neck road are clearly in need of resurfacing. The recent extension of public water and sewer has created an opportunity. This opportunity to install a parallel bike lane along these roads during repaving should not be missed. **<u>Those steps necessary to adjust the budget or find emergency funding should be taken as soon as possible.</u>** Although limited, the growth these utilities will bring increases the need to address this hazard now.

8. The cycling invitation also describes "…*biking in and out of the many peninsulas dead end roads.*" The committee learned that cyclists touring our area would very much enjoy a large loop or series of touring loops on the peninsula. These marked cycling loops would showcase the natural beauty of the area and prevent accidental off path environmental impact.

5. Creating a cycling and pedestrian pathway, which joined points of interest near the coastal rural legacy area, would be an incredible addition to ecotourism and environmental education. Visiting the wetlands restoration project, the Skypark, Rocky Point Park and historic Ballestone Mansion would not only add greatly to environmental awareness but would also promote the low impact manner in which we should visit such sensitive areas.

10. Providing a system of organized, well regulated paths will substantially increase use of those paths. This increase in low impact recreational activity (walking, jogging and biking etc…) will be an added deterrent to the illegal off road motorized vehicles currently destroying this sensitive area.

8. The area known a *Pottery Farm* has great potential for a managed historic trail system. This wooded area joins land under the control of the Baltimore County Board of Education (Chesapeake High School) and land under the control of the Department of Recreation (the Back River Neck Recreational Center.) Although *Pottery Farm* is not marked as "under government control" it is the understanding of the community that the property was acquired from the State for that purpose. Within the wooded area is a trail system formerly used by early Americans to acquire clay, later used by seasonal cottages dwellers, then the horseman of Essex and today off road vehicles illegally use the trails. These trails and this area are in need of the protection of a well managed and monitored nature trail system.



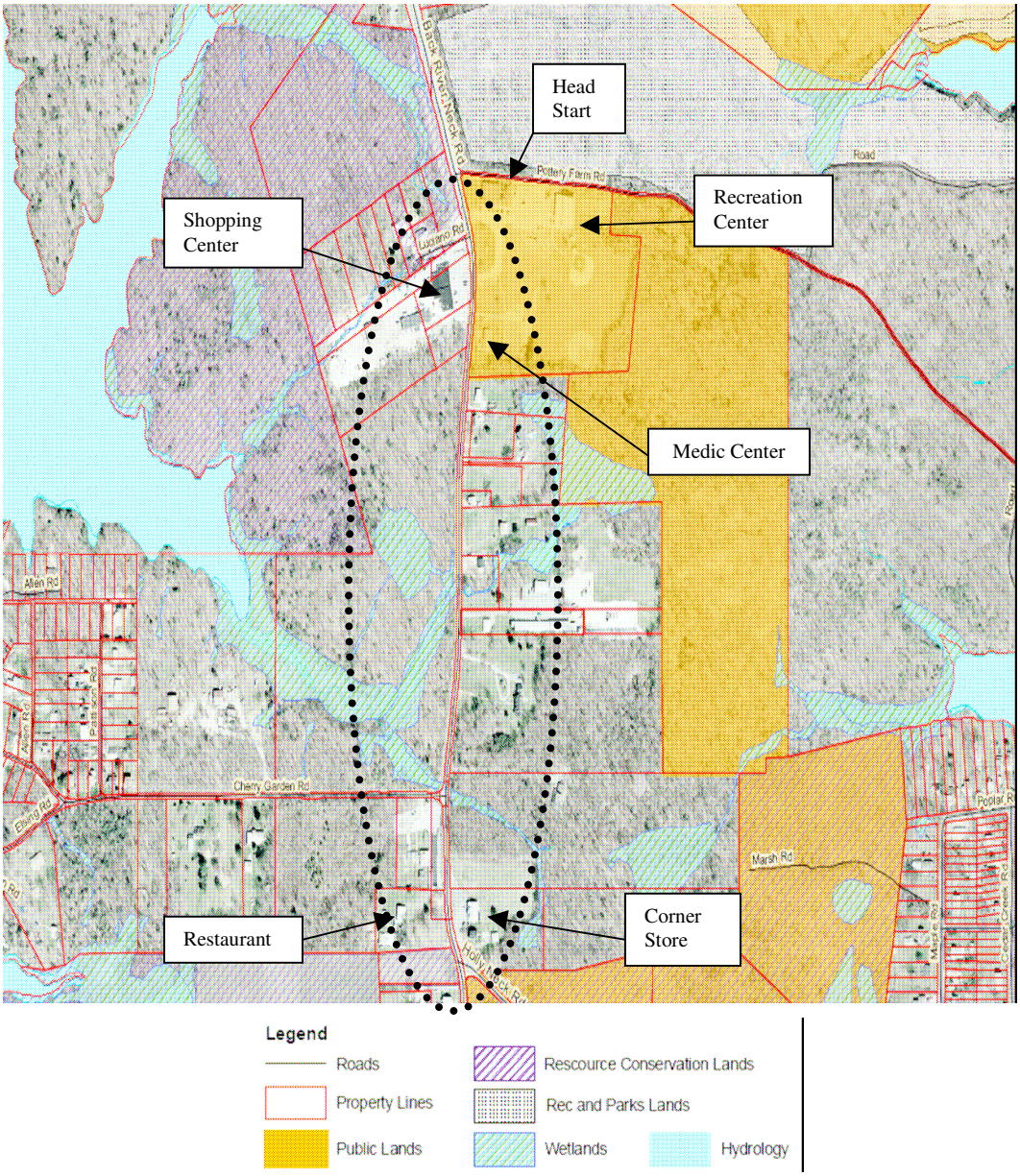
View from shopping Center to recreation center

Video and Convenience store

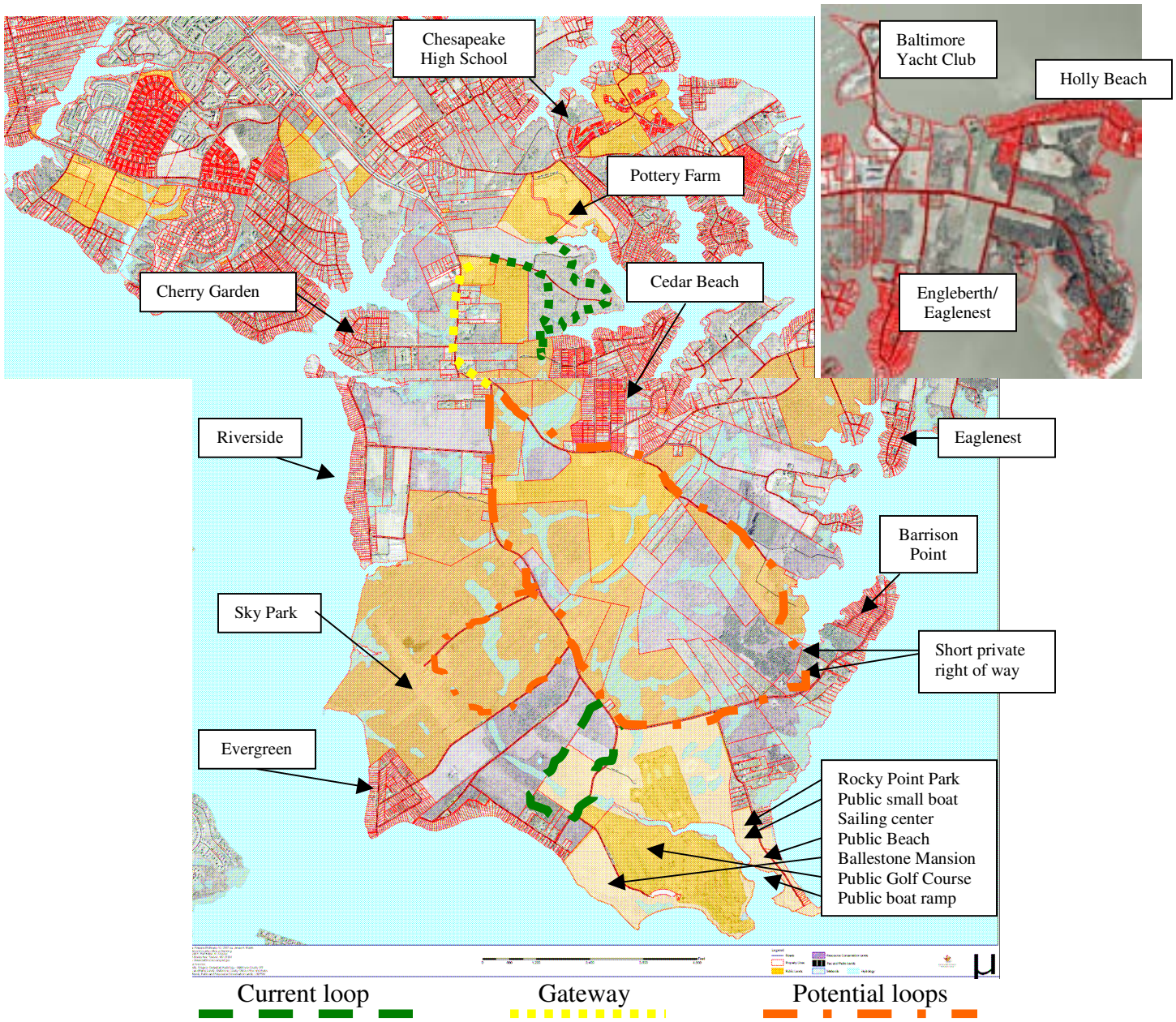
Restaurant at Holly Neck
and Cherry Garden roads

Road work in progress

Bottle Neck

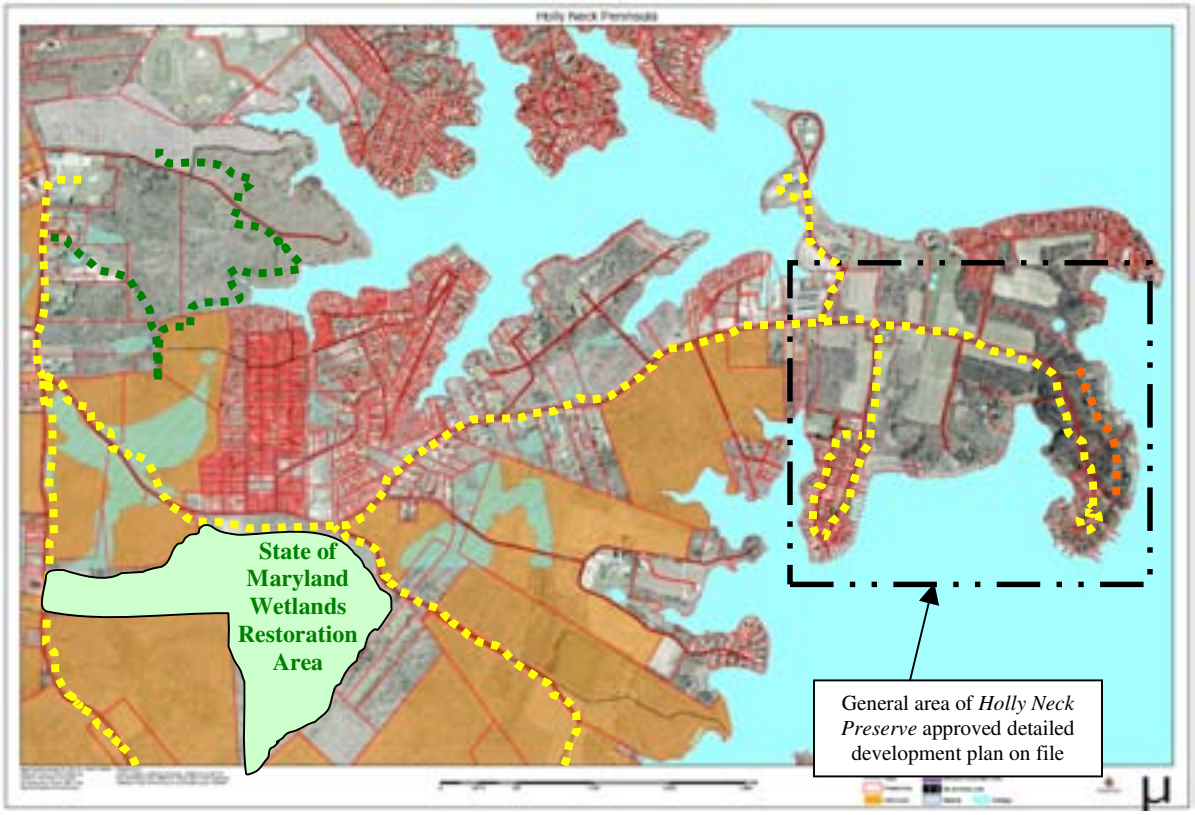

Head
Start
Recreation
Center
Shopping
Center
Medic Center
Restaurant
Corner
Store
Legend
Roads
Property Lines
Public Lands
Rescource Conservation Lands
Rec and Parks Lands
Wetlands
Hydrology

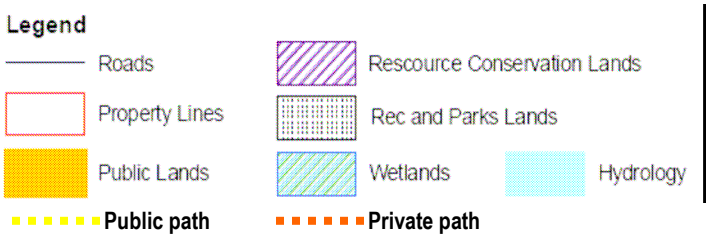
6. **Public Lands - Pocket Communities – Trail Possibilities**



6. Currently Baltimore County and the State of Maryland own significant parcels of land from Holly Neck road along Schaffer's Road to the open bay. This land borders a fresh water wetlands restoration project and is (but for a small privately own right of way) reachable by Barrision Point road. Consider a journey from the Back River Recreational center past or through a fresh water wetlands park, followed by open bay vistas, with a potential side trip of small boat sailing or a visit to a restored home from the family of Martha Washington. Potential trails could include an aviation experience at the Sky-Park. These Baltimore County cycling trails could become a nationally recognized informative environmental experience with many unique opportunities for the visitor.

11. The negotiated and approved development plan for the lower portion of the Holly Neck peninsula will include biking and walking pathways. Access to some of the trails will be strictly controlled by a home owner's association and developer however many of the public roads and public paths will offer an open view of the bay. This system of public and private trails will add a strong element to the targeted high quality growth for this area. These new homes are expected to attract active seniors and families. Holly Neck road has long needed a safe pedestrian and cycling pathway, now is the time to meet that need.





6. The large areas of land on the peninsula owned by the government and/or under conservation easement should facilitate easy agreements addressing the right of way and environmental issues associated with this project. This project will address serious community safety concerns and serve the public good. The government's authority to widen roads and grant administrative environmental variances should be used as this is a public safety matter.

6. The on-going negotiation to purchase the *Somogyi Farm* by the Baltimore County Department of Recreation presents a very unique opportunity for the community. The *Somogyi Farm*, an 80 acre site, is within walking distance of the existing recreational center and this project will make safe passage between the two locations possible.

9. The positive elements of this project will create community based programs to assist in the care of these trails. The volunteered talents of active seniors, local scouts and others involved in biking will surface up once the government makes a serious commitment to this project. This is not a case of build it and they will come, the riders are on the peninsula now … this is a case of start building it and they will help and more will come.

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