



PATUXENT RIVER COMMISSION

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Larry Hogan, Governor
Councilman Michael Leszcz, Chairman
Councilwoman Mary Kay Sigaty Vice Chairman

We, the Patuxent River Commission, envision a Patuxent River ecosystem as vital and productive in 2050 as it was in the 1950s. We therefore commit to be stewards and advocates for the Patuxent River and to lead and inspire actions to protect, enhance, and restore living resources and the natural, cultural, economic, and recreational values of the Patuxent River and its watershed.

☀ Please call Daniel Rosen at MDP 410-767-4577 if you have any questions or comments.

MEETING SUMMARY

July 13, 2016

Maryland Department of Agriculture

Annapolis, MD

4:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.

Members: Joanne Baer (attending for Councilman Michael Leszcz (Chair)), Honorable Mary Kay Sigaty (Vice-Chair), Alison Armocida, Martin Chandler, Kelton Clark, Guy Curley, Steve Darcey, Luis Dieguez, Paul Emmart (attending for Jim George), Jack Fringer, Erica Hahn, Tay Harris (attending for David Brownlee), John Hartline, Honorable Mike Hewitt, John McCoy, Mark Mendelsohn, Erik Michelsen, Christopher Perry, Byron Petrauskas, Barbara Sollner-Webb, Sandy Spencer, Mark Symborski, Al Tucker, Jason Dubow

MDP Staff: Jason Dubow, La Verne Gray, and Daniel Rosen

Attendee: Jennifer Raulin

Approval of Minutes

The minutes were approved with small changes.

Boat Trip Options

Staff discussed the potential day, time, location and content for the boat trip, which Michael Hewitt had proposed at the May meeting. He reviewed his idea for the trip, which is to shed light on the issue of shoreline erosion on the river, the possible use of terracing to address erosion, and the limitations of regulations to allow for terracing. Mary Kay Sigaty said that the boat tour should sail as close to the shoreline as possible.

Chris Perry stated that the tour also could be used to see how “living shoreline” projects have stabilized the shoreline. Tay Harris said that Calvert County regulates development along the cliffs; several houses there have been bought out by FEMA. Mary Kay Sigaty suggested that the Commission learn

how the different Patuxent River counties treat shoreline retention. Alison Armocida noted that shoreline protection measures that harden the shoreline are bad for wildlife. Staff note: terracing is considered a biotechnical approach which is better for habitat than shoreline hardening.

Election of Officers

Mike Leszcz, who could not attend the meeting, and Mary Kay Sigaty agreed to serve another term as Chair and Co-Chair. They were nominated from the floor and a motion to reappoint them passed unanimously.

Mary Kay Sigaty informed the Commission that she is term-limited, so her term as Howard County Commissioner will end in 2018. She reported that Mike Leszcz had announced his intention to retire before the next election as well. They will not be able to serve on the Commission after they leave elected office. They said they would like to create a standing Executive Committee of perhaps five to seven members who can eventually move into leadership positions on the Commission. Kelton Clark asked if a statute change is necessary to create the Executive Committee. Jason Dubow replied that the statute already allows for such a committee. Mary Kay Sigaty asked the commissioners to think about the idea for discussion at the next meeting.

Outreach

Mary Kay Sigaty said that she and the Chair are considering visiting the Patuxent jurisdictions again to explain what the Commission does and to further connect with elected officials on river restoration issues. She also sought recommendations on people who should be invited to speak to the Commission and asked commissioners to send suggestions to Jason Dubow.

Patuxent River Science Conference

The conference was held on Thursday, June 23, 2016, at the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center (SERC) in Edgewater, MD. Attendees from the Commission included Mary Kay Sigaty, Al Tucker, Alison Armocida, and Martin Chandler. Martin Chandler said that the theme of the conference was environmental outreach and education: how to present science to lay audiences. Alison Armocida added that she learned much about historical artifacts, but not much about restoration of the Patuxent River. Al Tucker noted that the archeological digs along the Patuxent are some of the most significant on the East Coast. Extensive villages for Native Americans were found south of Cape Point that date back 10,000 years. Mary Kay Sigaty said that she attended the same presentation as David Brownlee and Alison Armocida on how to tell stories related to the river. Narratives get listeners interested and excited.

The Bernie Fowler Wade-In

Mary Kay Sigaty, Alison Armocida, Kelton Clark, Tom Miller, and Jason Dubow participated at the wade-in. Senator Fowler could see his sneakers at 31 inches, down from 41.5 inches last year.

Presentation on Aquaculture by Kelton Clark

Kelton Clark is the Director of the Patuxent Environmental and Aquatic Research Laboratory (PEARL). Among other endeavors, PEARL runs the Oyster Aquaculture Program. During his PowerPoint presentation, Kelton Clark told the audience that nobody knows how many oysters live in the Bay. The oyster aquaculture program had been located in the Maryland Department of Agriculture but was moved to the Maryland Department of Natural Resources. Every \$1 spent on oyster aquaculture generates \$2.50 in economic activity. One drawback to the program is that the extensive grant application process has deterred watermen from participating. Also, the water area occupied by oyster aquaculture takes fishing space away from others. Oyster aquaculture operations also harm the viewshed.

John Hartline said that a conflict resolution process is needed. Kelton Clark added that a history of mistrust exists due to the reduction in public oyster fishing grounds, the selection of new oyster reefs, and the amount of space occupied by oyster aquaculture.

Workgroup Updates

The workgroups are continuing their effort to implement the Commission's 2016 Annual Action Plan.

La Verne Gray reported that the tourism workgroup is conducting evaluations of water access sites to assess the amenities provided by the access points that are part of the Patuxent River Trail. Workgroup members also are assessing the sites for the "themes" that would interest boaters and influence their destination choices: ecology, history, quality of fishing, and availability of food and beverages. La Verne Gray thanked John Hartline for introducing the workgroup to the Southern Maryland Heritage Consortium.

Chris Perry reported that the preservation/restoration workgroup had spoken to staff in a number of counties and the WSSC to find out about their TMDL efforts. Common obstacles include funding, deadlines, and long permit approval times.

Sandy Spencer said that the Patuxent Research Refuge is in the midst of a landscape/conservation design effort, which will allow the Refuge to expand using federal Land and Water Conservation Funds, once the plans are approved. She has been meeting with potential partners, including the co-chairs of the Commission's preservation/restoration workgroup. The expansion focuses on the Patuxent watershed: the Refuge cannot be an island; it needs to be connected by greenways to other sites. Ecological assessment values are being assigned to potential acquisition sites.

Paul Emmert, attending for Jim George, reported the Sewage Spill Notification Workgroup and MDE held a conference call to discuss next steps. The main outcome from the call was to complete an inventory of the Patuxent counties to determine their specific protocols for public notification and sign posting lifting. Barbara Sollner-Webb asked if the conversation included downstream notification? Al Tucker said that sometimes a county itself has not been informed of a spill and cannot notify downstream communities. A simple alert is not what counties need; the parameters of the spill need to be reported, and the requirement should be codified. Mary Kay Sigaty noted that each county uses a different notification process. Paul Emmert added that tidal flow, level of flow, etc., all need to be considered. Barbara Sollner-Webb said that the 30-day standard has no consideration to reality.