

FINAL 2017 Patuxent River Commission Annual Action Plan

Under §5-816 of the State Finance and Procurement Article, the Patuxent River Commission shall:

- (1) review the operation of units of State and local government that have responsibility for implementation of the Plan [*Patuxent River Policy Plan*];
- (2) provide a clearinghouse for information on the Patuxent River and its watershed;
- (3) review and comment on plans and reports related to the Patuxent River and its watershed; and
- (4) serve as the Tributary Strategy Team for the Patuxent Watershed, coordinating the Patuxent tributary strategy with the Plan [*Patuxent River Policy Plan*].

The strategies listed below are from the *2015 Patuxent River Policy Plan Update*.

2017 priorities and ongoing work for Policy Plan implementation:

Preservation/Restoration

- 1. Strategy P4. Restore the health of the river by actions such as encouraging acquisition of properties or easements in sensitive resource areas, planting stream buffers, and controlling invasive plants, focusing on stream buffers.**
 - a. As an ongoing activity, State and local government staff will review proposals for land acquisitions brought forward by the Patuxent River Commission (e.g., Four County Farm).
 - b. As an ongoing activity, identify opportunities for the Patuxent River Commission to support the Patuxent Research Refuge's and the Greater Baltimore Wilderness Coalition's land preservation and restoration efforts.
 - c. In 2017, strengthen partnership and collaboration between MDOT Office of Environmental Design and Patuxent-watershed counties on wetland and stream mitigation projects that sustain or improve the health of the Patuxent River.
- 2. Strategy P6. Support the work of the seven counties in meeting their respective water quality goals as stated in approved Watershed Implementation Plans (WIPs).**
 - a. By the end of 2017:
 - i. send a letter to state and/or federal agencies with recommendations (legal, regulatory, procedural, financial, etc.) to expedite achievement of the Patuxent River Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs). The letter will be based on the conference calls that the Preservation & Restoration Workgroup has had with local governments and other constituents involved with local TMDL implementation;
 - ii. hold one or more meetings with local and state representatives in the watershed to discuss the pluses, minuses and obstacles to setting deadlines for local TMDL implementation;
 - iii. develop a proposal to allow for special allocation of state and/or federal funds for local TMDL implementation when certain studies or plans have been completed.

- b. As an ongoing activity, identify one Preservation/ Restoration project achieved by state or local government in the Patuxent watershed to visit during a PRC meeting. If a site visit isn't possible, then a guest speaker should be invited to discuss the project.
- 3. Strategy P2. Identify preservation and conservation priorities for the critical natural resources within the Patuxent River Watershed in county and municipal land use documents.**
- a. By the end of 2017, identify critical natural resources within the watershed and determine which of those are under threat.
 - b. Recommend action to Commission to preserve and conserve critical natural resources.
- 4. Strategy P3. Embrace smart growth and smart conservation practices in the counties and municipalities in the Patuxent River watershed to reduce sprawl and preserve irreplaceable resources.**
- a. By the end of 2017, hold one or more meetings with Prince George's County to discuss adoption and implementation of its draft Resource Conservation Plan, which includes a countywide green infrastructure land preservation plan.
 - b. Throughout 2017, obtain periodic updates from MDE on its nutrient trading and aligning for growth efforts.
- 5. Strategy P7. Preserve and restore movement of water, fish and wildlife through identifying and removing barriers.**
- a. By the end of 2017, compile a list of known in-stream fish blockages in the tributaries of the Patuxent River and recommend actions to the state and applicable jurisdictions.
 - i. Request data from local governments and soil conservation districts within the watershed.
 - b. Determine barriers to water and wildlife movement within the watershed, specifically focused on highways and impacts to floodplains.

Advocacy

- 6. Strategy A1. Keep abreast of issues facing the river in communities within the Patuxent River watershed and share experiences and challenges with the PRC.**
- a. As an ongoing activity, to assist State and local government staff with remaining aware of important issues facing the Patuxent River, the Commission will discuss issues of emergency concern and identify recommendations that protect residents, businesses, fisherman and all those who enjoy or make use of the river within the Patuxent River watershed.
 - i. Include opportunity at each meeting (e.g., Open Floor agenda item) to bring issues to the attention of PRC members
 - ii. At the subsequent meeting address the issues
- 7. Strategy A2. Pursue resolution of pollution concerns for communities within the Patuxent River watershed.**
- a. As an ongoing activity, seek to ensure zero permit violations (and/or stronger permit criteria) for pollution dischargers into the Patuxent River. Actions could include comments on permit renewal notices, for example.

- b. In 2017, the Sewage Spill Notification Workgroup will work with the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) and the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) to implement the workgroup's 2015 recommendations (legal, regulatory, procedural, etc.) to ensure local notification and signage are adequate to prevent exposure of sewage to residents, businesses, fisherman and all those who enjoy or make use of the river within the Patuxent River watershed.

8. Strategy A3. Keep elected and appointed officials aware of the issues and opportunities facing the river and seek their support when appropriate.

- a. As an ongoing activity, on an annual basis identify a means to provide to local governments within the watershed a summary of assessments regarding the status of fish, shellfish, stream habitat and water quality within the entirety of the Patuxent River.

eXcitement

9. Strategy X1. Maintain, create and encourage opportunities for river-related economic activities within the Patuxent River Basin

- a. As an ongoing activity, the Tourism Workgroup will continue to work with State agencies and local governments to expand Patuxent River-related opportunities within the watershed.
 - i. State agencies: Consult with the Maryland Tourism Office to get information that quantifies, tracks, and monitors existing river related businesses.
 - ii. Local Governments: Tourism officials are encouraged to join the Tourism Workgroup. As part of the Workgroup they will identify and pursue business support (e.g., outfitters, bed and breakfasts, historic and cultural outlets, campsites, restaurants).
- b. Complete, in cooperation with the local tourism officials, a needs/opportunity assessment to identify geographic areas and tourism sectors that are considered to be well served and areas that could benefit from increased river-oriented businesses and supporting amenities. Work with the local jurisdictions to fill the gaps identified in the assessment.
- c. In 2016, three themed itineraries were designed by members of the workgroup team. These itineraries promote camping, economic, historical, and cultural resources that are available to paddlers. In 2017 the workgroup will, for marketing purposes, create a banner that will be placed on each itinerary. These itineraries can be made into a handout for the visitor centers in the Patuxent River basin. They can also be set up on a website or social media site where links can be included.
- d. Promote three events during 2017, for example: Encourage a "Paddle to the Restaurant" program as exemplified in Anne Arundel County.

10. Strategy X2. Ensure and encourage public access to the river, its tributaries, and recreational opportunities within the watershed.

- a. Seek state agency, volunteer and/or grant funded assistance to develop a social media outlet (website, Facebook group, serve list, map service, or other to be determined) to publish and distribute information regarding Patuxent River-oriented businesses, public sites and visitor support services.
- b. Develop and release a series of maps that focus on the characteristics of the Patuxent Water Trail (recreational, environmental, social, and cultural) resources.
- c. Complete a map project and matrix that identifies existing river-oriented businesses, river-related public sites, events, activities, and visitor support services. This project was initiated in 2016. A member of the workgroup has created a matrix that identifies river related public sites. A matrix for events, activities, and visitor support services will be considered in 2017.
- d. In 2017 the Workgroup proposes to open a Facebook site with multiple editors. All of the submittals may include special events and tourists are encouraged to post selfies and pictures of the sites along the Patuxent Water Trail that they visited. The workgroup members will share and post information concerning programs and activities with other workgroup members. This action will provide an opportunity for all members and the general public to see what is happening in the various segments of the river.
- e. Monitor the Patuxent Water Trail map each year for accuracy. Make changes as needed.
- f. Seek to increase public access points for non-motorized vessels:
 - i. Distribute to jurisdictions mapping that identifies potential river access sites from existing road rights-of-way that extend to the river's edge,
 - ii. Obtain donated services from a consultant (obtained by the workgroup) to create a model plan and cost estimate to construct roadside parking, put-in platform, and signage for right-of-way access points
 - iii. Solicit determination of ownership, and rights for access, and future implementation by each of the individual jurisdictions.