

**2016 Patuxent River Commission Annual Action Plan**

APPROVED by the Patuxent River Commission at its March 9, 2016 meeting

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*.

**2016 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. In 2016, strengthen partnership and collaboration between SHA 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 2016, develop recommendations (legal, regulatory, procedural, financial, etc.) to expedite achievement of at least one of the Patuxent River Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) (i.e., four sediment TMDLs, four fecal bacteria TMDLs, two phosphorus TMDLs, one biochemical oxygen demand TMDL, one mercury TMDL). To develop the recommendations, promote discussion and conduct research and analysis, such as:
    - i. Review of local government annual reports regarding Phase I MS4 permit implementation, especially with regard to Patuxent River TMDL implementation.
    - ii. Review of County 2-year WIP milestone reports.
    - iii. Investigation and encouragement of interjurisdictional local watershed-based plans.
    - iv. Invitation of County experts to speak to the Commission.
  - b. By the end of 2016, if available for review, analyze the Maryland State Builders Association's (MSBA's) draft proposal related to "Building Bay Friendly Communities in Maryland", decide

- whether to support the MSBA approach, and if so, what measures for the PRC to undertake to provide that support.
- c. 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. One option could be stormwater remediation needs and approaches at a site adjacent to the Patuxent Research Refuge.
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 2016, 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 2016, review local jurisdiction land use practices and determine smart growth techniques for recommendation.
    - b. Identify irreplaceable resources under threat from development and recommend smart conservation solutions.
  5. Strategy P7. Preserve and restore movement of water, fish and wildlife through identifying and removing barriers.
    - a. By the end of 2016, 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.
    - 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.

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- 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. By July 2016, the Sewage Spill Notification Workgroup will obtain and then provide feedback on Maryland Department of the Environment's (MDE's) and the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's (DHMH's) response to the workgroup's 2015 recommendations (legal, regulatory, procedural, etc.) to ensure 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.
  - c. By the end of 2016, obtain additional information beyond what was provided by MDE in July 2014 regarding the top Patuxent polluters to fulfill the PRC's March 2014 request regarding corrective actions at these facilities, focusing on those facilities with upcoming discharge permit renewals.
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.
    - i. The summary will be an opportunity to remind elected and appointed officials of the importance of local WIP implementation and other important stream restoration efforts.
    - ii. If possible, positive economic information regarding a restored Patuxent River should be provided (e.g., the value of restored oyster populations [in the tidal region] and the value of restored sunfish populations [in the non-tidal region]).
    - iii. Develop a compelling case for why the summary is needed.
    - iv. Identify who would implement this task, as well as who would do the reminding of elected officials once the results are in hand.
    - v. Link the summary to existing studies.
  - b. As an ongoing activity, identify opportunities for the Patuxent River Commission to support the Greater Baltimore Wilderness Coalition's land preservation and restoration efforts. The Coalition's geographic focus includes the northern portion of the Patuxent River watershed. In 2016, the Commission will meet with the leaders of the Coalition and investigate a partnership and potential co-sponsoring of activities or events.

### *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.

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- i. The Workgroup recommendations should focus on public access, business support (e.g., outfitters, bed and breakfasts, historic and cultural outlets, campsites, restaurants), public-private partnerships, public outreach (e.g., use of local media), and Critical Area issues.
    - ii. The Workgroup also should advocate for State agencies (including DBED and the Maryland State Tourism Office), the Southern Maryland Heritage Tourism Society, and local governments/agencies to actively promote the Commission-sponsored Patuxent River Water Trail - <http://patuxentwatertrail.org/> - e.g., develop waterproof hard copies of the trail map.
    - iii. The Workgroup also should communicate benefits of a clean and healthy Patuxent River for the retention of existing river-related businesses, recruitment of new river-related businesses, and the need for such businesses to be increasingly river-friendly. The Workgroup also will communicate that preservation efforts, river-related heritage plans and sites and local economic development are integral to securing the economic benefits of a clean and healthy Patuxent River
  - b. By the end of 2016, the Tourism Workgroup will:
    - i. Develop a methodology to annually quantify, track, and monitor existing river-related businesses.
      - 1. Complete a map project and matrix that identifies existing river-oriented businesses, river-related public sites, events, activities, and visitor support services;
      - 2. Complete 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.
    - ii. Draft a letter for Commission to be sent to state and local tourism and economic development agencies requesting support for publicizing the Patuxent's River-related tourism resources and to recruit businesses and services to fill gaps identified in the workgroup's 2016 needs/opportunity assessment.
    - iii. Design no more than 3 themed itineraries that offer day trips and camp over experiences.
- 10. Strategy X2. Ensure and encourage public access to the river, its tributaries, and recreational opportunities within the watershed.
  - a. By the end of 2016, the Tourism Workgroup will
    - i. secure support from state and local governments in the watershed for WSSC adoption of a dam release notification approach that will not discourage public access to the Patuxent River's recreational opportunities. To gain this support, the Commission will need to build and present a strong case why the current WSSC dam release notification approach needs to be improved, with some recommendations for how it can be improved.

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- ii. Meet with Jefferson-Patterson Park and Museum to advocate for rebuilding its pier and to offer assistance in developing support and funding for the project.
- iii. Initiate efforts to address tourism -related needs identified by the workgroup in 2015
  1. Seek state agency, volunteer and/or grant funded assistance to develop a social media outlet (website, Facebook group, map service, or other to be determined) to publish and distribute information regarding Patuxent River-oriented businesses, public sites and visitor support services.
  2. Seek to increase public access points for non-motorized vessels
    - a. Distribute to jurisdictions mapping that identifies potential river access sites from existing road rights-of-way that extend to the river's edge,
    - b. 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
    - c. Solicit determination of ownership, and rights for access, and future implementation by each the individual jurisdictions.