



# PATUXENT RIVER COMMISSION

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**Councilman Michael Leszcz, Co-Chairman**  
**Christopher Perry, 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

**March 11, 2020**

**Maryland Department of Agriculture**

**Annapolis, MD**

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

**Members:** Michael Leszcz, Chair; John Swartz; Steve Shofar; Brandy Glenn; Martin Chandler; Mark Symborski; John Hartline; Al Tucker; Guy Curley; Tom Miller; Byron Petrauskas; Matthew Rowe; Alison Santoro; John Denniston; Jason Dubow

**Attendees:** Chris Judy, Karl Roscher

**Staff:** Dan Rosen, Debbie Herr Cornwell, Jason Dubow

### **Introductions and Approval of Minutes**

Since a quorum was not present for the meeting, approval of minutes from the February 12, 2020 meeting were postponed until the May meeting. Through a separate email vote subsequent to the meeting (due to the lack of a quorum and the time sensitivity), the Commission approved attendance waivers for Commissioners (Guy Curley, Steve Darcey, Tom Miller) who had absences due to mitigating factors in 2019.

### **Updates**

Patuxent TMDL Implementation – Staff coordinated a conference call meeting of local County, WSSC and MDE representatives to discuss the status of activities and obstacles identified in the original interviews. A list of updates is being compiled and will be shared with the representatives for discussion in upcoming conference call(s). Once completed, the final information will be presented to the Commission.

### **Report from Commission's Science and Technology Work Group**

Tom Miller provided an overview of the presentations associated with oysters in the Patuxent River,

setting the context for how the Commission could use the presented information for future actions and decisions. The Work Group provided a handout to frame the importance of these issues that impact the lower, tidal portion of the Patuxent River.

**Presentation on DNR's Oyster Sanctuaries and Restoration Programs (Chris Judy, DNR)**

Chris Judy provided an update on the Oyster Management Areas (sanctuaries – no harvest, public fishery – regulated harvest and aquaculture – leased areas). DNR is the lead management agency and developed the Oyster Management Plan in coordination with county oyster committees, the tidal fisheries advisory commission, interagency workgroup and oyster advisory committee. In the Patuxent, there are four sanctuaries that cover 33% of the historic oyster bars in the area. Since 2017, there has been low observed mortality (0-10%). He also noted the status of the razor clam in the Patuxent, which is primarily used for crab bait. Most of the river is closed to clamming, with some small areas open.

**Presentation on the Status of Underwater Grass Communities in the Patuxent River Based on Aerial Surveys or Other Data/Analyses (Brooke Landry, DNR)**

Brooke's presentation will be scheduled for a later meeting due to illness.

**Presentation on Extent of and Potential of Oyster Aquaculture in the Patuxent River (Karl Roscher, DNR)**

Karl explained that aquaculture in Maryland waters involved two types – bottom and water column, requiring a lease and permit.

The lease process is coordinated between MDE and Corps of Engineers and generally takes about 8 months. DNR has developed an online tool for siting Aquaculture to help streamline the process by assisting in identifying sites that fit the aquaculture criteria.

In the Patuxent there are eight shellfish leases, six submerged land leases and two water column leases. About 6,000 acres within the Patuxent River are available for leasing.

**MD General Assembly's Proposed Legislation of Interest to the Commission**

Dan Rosen provided an overview of the proposed legislation, noting that the legislative session was nearing the cross over date.