



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

August 12, 2020

Maryland Department of Agriculture

Annapolis, MD

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

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- Members:** Michael Leszcz, Chair; Chris Perry, Vice-Chair; Erik Michelsen; Paula Proctor; Steve Shofar; Joanna Smith; Brandy Glenn; Martin Chandler; Mark Symborski; Kim Finch; John Hartline; Fred Tutman; Albert Tucker; Andrew Der; Barbara Sollner-Webb; Mary Dolan; Scott Knoche; Thomas Miller; Steve Darcey; Luis Dieguez; Byron Petrauskas; Alison Santoro; Jason Dubow; John Denniston
- Attendees:** Ian Rainey, Furqan Siddiqi, Kris Federes, Ron Marney, Brooke Landry, Sam Droege, Sylvia Mosser, Denise Keehner, Delegate Nicole Williams, Janelle Jackson, William Scott, Lauren Standiford
- Staff:** Dan Rosen, Debbie Herr Cornwell, Jason Dubow

Introductions and Approval of June Minutes

The June 10, 2020 meeting minutes were approved.

Updates/Announcements

Joanna Smith announced that the Bear Branch project had started with an anticipated completion date of December 2022.

Mark Symborski provided a reminder for the Montgomery County General Plan timeline, noting that a working draft would be available online on September 24, 2020.

Presentation on Submerged Aquatic Vegetation in the Patuxent River Watershed (Brooke Landry, DNR)

Brooke Landry provided an overview of the native and non-native submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) found in the river, as well as the benefits provided by these plants. Only two species are found in the saltiest portions of the river (eel and widgeon grass), while there are more species in the freshwater areas. Brooke shared the SAV Fact sheet, noting the restoration goal of 1,954 acres of SAVs for the Patuxent. In the upper Patuxent, the restoration goal is 320 acres – which has been determined to be attainable. The goal for the lower Patuxent is 1,634 acres and is noted as being potentially attainable.

Overall, there has been a general decline in eelgrass which may be due to the warming water temperatures, making it more difficult to attain the restoration goal.

Barbara Sollner-Webb compared the upper Patuxent to other river segments in the bay watershed and questioned why SAV populations in the Patuxent appeared to be lagging. Brooke offered to follow up and provide additional feedback.

Presentation on PFAS (Denise Keehner, MDE Assistant Secretary)

Denise Keehner provided a presentation on MDE's efforts to study PFAS and gain a better understanding of where the chemical compound is found and how it interacts with our environment. Some pathways where the chemical impacts humans are through drinking water, recreational and other surface waters, and seafood. MDE is looking at wastewater treatment biosolids and to see if plants can take up the chemical. New testing is much more sensitive than testing from 2012-2016 and elevated levels have raised concerns. MDE is studying the interaction of surface waters with oysters and looking at PFAS in public water systems (phase 1 covers 138 systems) and has convened a roundtable of key scientists.

Update on Local Sediment and Erosion Control Enforcements

Due to time constraints, this item was postponed to a later meeting.

Status of Maglev and Hyperloop project

Maryland Delegate Nicole Williams attended and expressed her interest in learning more about the project to support her discussions with her constituency.

Ian Rainey with The Northeast Maglev US Co. (TNEM) provided an overview of the project noting the two potential alignments being considered – “J” east of BW Parkway and “J1” west of BW Parkway. The first phase is Baltimore to Washington with seventy percent of the project to be tunnel (underground) and the remaining thirty percent being raised viaduct (aboveground). One TMF (train maintenance facility) will be constructed – with two locations currently being considered – one impacting the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center and the other the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center.

Mr. Rainey shared the following timeline: the draft Environmental Impact Statement is expected to be

complete by the end of the year and will be published for the public comment period from March 26 through May 10, 2021. An April public hearing is anticipated.

Sam Droege presented background on the areas that will be impacted by the project – the alignment as well as the TMF. The BW Parkway, Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, BARC and NASA are the last remaining natural areas surrounded by dense development. He expressed concern about the project being located on public lands, especially research lands that have been actively studied for a long time.