

**2019-2020 Patuxent River Commission Annual Action Plan**

**2019-2020 priorities and ongoing work for Policy Plan implementation:**

*Preservation/Restoration*

**1. Strategy P6. Support the work of local jurisdictions and the state in meeting their respective water quality goals as stated in approved plans and permits.**

- a. By the end of 2020:
  - i. Schedule a special meeting of the PRC to hear updates on/obstacles to TMDL implementation from the local representatives interviewed by the Preservation/Restoration workgroup in 2016-2018. Leave ample time for a thorough question and answer period.
  - ii. This meeting is a simpler way to achieve the objectives of the previously discussed TMDL workshop.
  - iii. The Commissioners will follow up the meeting with recommendations on how to remove obstacles.

**2. Consider 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—as a subset of 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 2020, identify critical natural resources within the watershed and determine which of those are under threat.
  - i. Staff will create maps that show the boundaries of the Patuxent River watershed.
  - ii. Displayed within the watershed boundaries will be Targeted Environment Areas (TEAs) that DNR wants to preserve, plus the boundaries of Rural Legacy Areas and Priority Preservation Areas that the Patuxent Counties have prioritized for preservation.
  - iii. Parcels that are preserved by easement or public ownership will be displayed, along with generalized areas that are suitable for preservation.
  - iv. Commissioners will be able to use these maps to obtain a regional perspective on where new easements or land acquisitions can add to preserved areas along the Patuxent and its headwaters, parks, wildlife refuges, etc.

**3. Strategy P1. Maintain and improve the health of the Patuxent River so it can support sustainable commercial and recreational fishing and seafood harvesting.**

- a. Schedule the following three presentations for the same PRC meeting
  - i. Request an update from DNR on the status of the oyster sanctuaries and restoration programs.
  - ii. Request a presentation/update from the Virginia Institute of Marine Sciences on the status of underwater grass communities in the Patuxent River based on the aerial surveys.

- iii. Request a presentation on the extent and potential for oyster aquaculture in the river.
  - b. Request DNR or appropriate academic group review the status and trends of commercially, recreationally and ecologically important finfish and shellfish species in the Patuxent River
- 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. Identify approach(s) for supporting the implementation of adopted plans, including Prince George’s County 2017 Resource Conservation Plan.
    - i. As an ongoing activity, request an annual status update from Prince George’s County on the implementation of the 2017 Resource Conservation Plan.
  - b. Throughout future years receive periodic updates on the Anne Arundel County general plan update and identify opportunities to protect and restore the Patuxent River and its tributaries.
  - c. Throughout future years 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. In future years, 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.
    - ii. Organize meeting with DNR, SHA/MDOT and local officials to identify one high priority in-stream fish blockage for removal.

*Advocacy*

- 1. 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 a subsequent meeting address the issues

**2. 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. By the end of 2020, the Sewage Spill Notification Workgroup will facilitate conversations among the local environmental health leads 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.), and to discuss local environmental health lead questions regarding the final sewage spill guidance document developed by MDE and DHMH. This effort is meant 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.

**3. 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 and its tributaries.

**4. Strategy A4. Recommend changes to policies, programs, legislation and/or regulations to improve and restore water quality in the river and its watershed.**

- a. As an ongoing activity, the Commission will review any new policies, programs, legislation and/or regulations that would impact the water quality of the Patuxent River and watershed and provide recommendations.
- b. By the end of 2020, request that the local and state representatives of the Patuxent Reservoirs Policy Board discuss with the Commission their response to the recommendations from the Patuxent Reservoirs Watershed Technical Advisory Committee to: raise awareness of the road salt-related water quality threat to the reservoirs; create an interjurisdictional/interagency task force/work group to assess the situation; and facilitate the creation of a road salt management plan for the Patuxent Reservoirs watershed.

*eXcitement*

**11. 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 work with State agencies and local governments to expand Patuxent River-related opportunities within the watershed.

Final, approved by the Patuxent River Commission on September 11, 2019

i. State agencies: Request the Maryland Tourism Office to provide information that quantifies, tracks and monitors existing river related businesses.

ii. Local Governments: Tourism officials will be periodically invited to the Tourism Workgroup meetings. They will help 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.

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

a. Continue social media marketing for #PatuxentChallenge, onsite signage and communications toolkit.

b. Provide two tourism group in-person status reports at the Patuxent River Commission monthly meetings (i.e. May and November) on the #PatuxentChallenge.

c. Develop a series of maps that focus on the characteristics of the Patuxent Water Trail (recreational, environmental, social and cultural) resources.

d. Monitor the Patuxent Water Trail map each year for accuracy. Make changes as needed.

e. Design and develop geocaching feature for #Patuxent Challenge

13. Strategy X3. Support economic and scientific research projects on the river and seek or support funding where possible.

a. Provide letters of support for economic and scientific research projects on the river when requested.

b. Share knowledge of funding opportunities with partner groups in the watershed when requested.

14. Strategy X4. Create and support educational and stewardship opportunities for all communities within the watershed.

a. Promote and document educational and stewardship opportunities for all communities within the watershed.

15. Strategy X5. Protect valuable cultural resources and historical properties within the watershed.

a. Promote heritage tourism.