



## CHESAPEAKE BAY AND WATER RESOURCES POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING SUMMARY-DRAFT

March 15, 2019

### LINK TO ALL MARCH MEETING PRESENTATIONS AND MATERIALS:

[HTTPS://WWW.MWCOG.ORG/EVENTS/2019/3/15/CHESAPEAKE-BAY-AND-WATER-RESOURCES-POLICY-COMMITTEE-MEETING/](https://www.mwco.org/events/2019/3/15/chesapeake-bay-and-water-resources-policy-committee-meeting/)

### DECISIONS & ACTIONS

- The CBPC agreed to form an Ag Task Force, comprised of representative members, to advance recommendations from COG's *What Our Region Grows* Report. The Task Force outcomes will be shared at the May meeting.
- CBPC members agreed to review the draft Regional Water Fund Work Program and Budget and Level of Effort documents so that the final versions may be approved by members at the May CBPC meeting.
- Members supported a CBPC letter to Congress in favor of the Bay funding reauthorization and asking for increased Bay funding, per the recommendation from the CBPC's Legislative and Advocacy Work Group.

### 1. WELCOME & OPENING REMARKS

Chair Dyballa called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m., asking those in the room and on the webinar to say names. She thanked those that came to the March new member orientation and said that the generated ideas and future topics were noted, as there is some open room in the September and November agendas.

### 2. CPBC APPROVAL

*Cindy Dyballa, CBPC Chair*

The Summary from the January CBPC Meeting was approved with two edits from the Chair.

### 3. SOILS, WATER, CLIMATE NEXUS & COG'S WHAT OUR REGION GROWS REPORT

*Dr. Sara Via, University of Maryland*

*Lindsay Smith, COG staff*

A. Dr. Via provided background on the characteristics of healthy soil and how to foster these. Better soil health supports improved water quality and retention, carbon sequestration, and protects farmers' investments. While more details are in her presentation, here are some highlights:

- Soil is a living thing—a teaspoon of healthy soil has over 1 billion microbes (bacteria and fungi)
- By nurturing the microorganisms in soil, they in turn, protect and benefit plants which can reduce the need for chemical inputs.
- Many conventional agriculture practices have led to degraded soils with poor structure (i.e. continued application of fungicides, herbicides, fertilizer, tilling, etc.)
- Healthy soil principles include:
  - Minimizing soil disturbance (i.e., no till)
  - Planting a diversity of crops to increase microbial diversity
  - Maintaining living roots in the soil (as food for the bacteria)
  - Keeping the soil covered with crops to reduce erosion and run off

Healthy soil remains intact (soil organisms act as "glue"), which helps with infiltration and in periods of drought and flooding.

These practices also sequester carbon, with greenhouse gas equivalencies of removing cars from the road (see presentation for details).

- Soil microbes process carbon: The U.S. Climate Alliance recognizes Maryland farmers as leading the way in the nation for their climate change mitigation strategies/carbon sequestration. These same principles can be applied on non-ag lands.

**Member discussion:**

- A member asked how these ag principles can be applied to non-ag lands. The reply was that these same principles can be used in park lands, along power lines, and county-owned spaces, such as reducing the chemical inputs and keeping conservation cover plants.
- A few members pointed out that urban areas have a lot of grass and that lawn mowers are carbon emitting—there needs to be conversion of grass to meadows and native plants, and adaption to a new aesthetic.
- Dr. Via said yes, it has to do with public perception of lawns being neat and tidy. We need to reduce lawns and relax perfection. She said there could be some rebranding like “solar clothes drying” for hanging laundry outside to dry, versus using energy-consumptive dryers. Certification programs such as National Wildlife Foundation and University of Maryland’s Bay Wise Program encourage natural landscapes.

B. Lindsay Smith presented highlights of COG’s *What Our Region Grows* report, noting the ties to Dr. Via’s presentation about the need to preserve agricultural lands, open spaces, and healthy soils.

- The Report is an update to the 2012 Report and covers the ag census. It includes farmer demographics including gender, race, and ethnicity, as well as quick facts on food and agriculture for each county in the COG region.
- Overall, ag is a \$5.47 B industry in the region, and \$2.9 B in Maryland and \$2.23 B in Virginia.
- Regional trends include:
  - Transitioning away from dairy farming. It is a grain dominated market in our region due to the eastern shore poultry production.
  - Declining farms and farmers but growing interest from younger farmers and in local food. There’s an opportunity to increase urban-rural connections through food and farming.
- Agri-tourism and craft beverage are a growing ag sector in the COG region 2018 was a particularly hard year for farmers with too much rain. Several farmers took to social media to post about the impact of extreme weather and climate change on their operations.
- The Report poses the question what is the future agriculture in our region? There is a lack of on-going, regional planning and coordination for the sector which takes into account the unique attributes of our region for issues like workforce, food security, access to local food. The Report has a series of recommendations that could support this.
- Ms. Smith outlined a proposal, brought forward by Penny Gross, to form a time-limited Advisory Task Force for Ag with 5-7 members of diverse geographic representation. Members agreed to the Task Force and membership was confirmed at the meeting.

**Member discussion:**

- A member suggested that urban and suburban members be included on the ag task force. Many counties in metropolitan Washington do not have significant farm acres but they do have horse farms and the related issues of land, manure, etc.

- Another member echoed this saying that urban areas have chickens, and school pollinator gardens and concerns about herbicides in water.
- A member asked that climate connections be included for the Task Force's consideration.
- A member mentioned that the expenses of farming are compounding the loss of farms as equipment has become significantly more expensive
- Montgomery County has a mobile ag lab that goes to middle schools to teach about agricultural careers (i.e., mechanics, GPS, etc. ) and an annual Ag Forum to examine the future of agriculture in the County.

#### **4. DRAFT FY 2020 REGIONAL WATER FUND WORK PROGRAM AND BUDGET**

Mr. Bieber shared the draft Work Program and Budget and Level of Effort documents and opened them up for comment. Mr. Bieber said that the finalized Work Program and Budget will be before the CBPC for approval at their May meeting.

#### **5. MEMBER AND STAFF ANNOUNCEMENTS**

##### **A. Member Announcements**

- Patty Bubar announced that Montgomery County met the requirements of their April 2018 MS4 permit consent decree ahead of the 2020 deadline. In February, Montgomery County will be reporting that they have met the required 20% impervious surface reduction requirement.
- Libby Garvey, Arlington County, said she is grateful that COG will continue to focus on trees, and that the topic will be discussed by the CBPC in July. Steve Walz said CEEPC is developing a Resolution to form a CEEPC subcommittee, under the direction of Chair Sze.
- Cindy Dyballa, Takoma Park, shared that Takoma Park has a climate change emergency plan to develop greenhouse gas emissions reductions and enhance stormwater resiliency and adaptation.
- Shannon Moore, Frederick County, said Frederick County has applied for a FEMA grant to implement their Hazard Mitigation Plan to mitigate increased flooding risk both through predictive forecasting and enhancing stormwater capacity to address heavy rainfall.
- Penny Gross, Fairfax County, said Fairfax County is changing its zoning ordinance to allow for community gardens on vacant lots, essentially promoting urban ag.
- Penny Gross mentioned that the Chesapeake Bay Commission is advocating for increased Bay funding and has a 4-page document justifying the measure. Heidi Bonnaffon emailed the document after the meeting.
- Catherine Antos, DOEE, announced that DOEE received funding from the Chesapeake Bay Program to develop a lab protocol for testing sealant products for the PAH concentrations. Ultimately, it is hoped that will enough public pressure the sealant manufactures will have to follow the protocol.

##### **B. Watershed Implementation Plans Updates (Phase III WIPs)**

Karl Berger shared highlights from the January 11<sup>th</sup> WRTC meeting concerning the Watershed Implementation Plan (WIPs) process. Draft WIPs are due to the Bay Program in April, and final plans in August 2019. The public comment period on the draft WIPs is from April 12 through June 7, and the CBPC will have the opportunity to develop comments at their May meeting.

The WRTC made three points about the WIPs:

- Nitrogen is the biggest challenge compared to phosphorus and sediment.

- In metropolitan Washington we have capacity for growth in wastewater which gives states flexibility for now, including via nutrient trading programs.
- We need to focus beyond 2025, to address growth, and climate change impacts.

**Member discussion:**

- A member expressed skepticism about Virginia’s plan to address climate change numerically in its Phase III WIP, citing that climate impact numbers are still changing and that stretch goals can become unobtainable goals. This member noted that local budgets must take into account planning efforts and are not as simple as changing a number on paper.

**C. General Updates**

- Mr. Berger said that the final Potomac Water Quality report will be posted to the CBPC website and that COG staff plan to bring the report before the COG Board in the May timeframe. It is on the agenda for the May 8<sup>th</sup> COG Board meeting.
- Ms. Bonnaffon shared the Legislative Work Group’s recommendation to send a letter to Congress in support of the Chesapeake Bay funding reauthorization and an increase in Bay funding. Members agreed to this. The finalized letter was circulated via email.

**6. ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING**

Chair Dyballa adjourned the meeting at 12:00 p.m.

**ATTENDANCE**

**Members and Alternates:**

Amy Jackson, Alexandria  
Cindy Dyballa, Chair, Takoma Park  
Craig Rice, Montgomery County  
Dan Sze, Falls Church  
J. Davis, Greenbelt  
Jerry Maldonado, Prince George’s County  
Jon Stehle, City of Fairfax (phone)  
Kai Hagen, Frederick County  
Libby Garvey, Arlington County  
Mark Charles, Rockville  
Penny Gross, Fairfax County  
Shannon Moore, Frederick County  
Joel Caudill, WSSC  
Karen Pallansch Alexandria Renew

Katherine Antos, DOEE

Mark Peterson, Loudoun Water

Matt Ries, DC Water

Pam Kenel, Loudoun Water

Steve Shofar, Montgomery County

Tiffany Wright, Bowie (phone)

**Guests:**

Ann Mills, Agua Fund  
Erica Martin, Bainum Family Foundation (phone)  
Harry Zang, Water Research Foundation  
Jaime Baxter, Chesapeake Bay Funders Network and Prince Charitable Trusts  
Margaret Schnuck Rogers, Arabella Advisors  
Jake Reilly, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (phone)  
Janice Wiles, Frederick County farmer, Frederick County Food Council

Kim Rush Lynch, Prince George's Soil  
Conservation District  
Kristin Markley, Health Care Without Harm  
Laura Ford, Accokeek Foundation  
Martin Proulx, Charles County Economic  
Development Department

**COG Staff:**  
Brian LeCouteur  
Heidi Bonnaffon  
Karl Berger  
Lindsay Smith  
Steve Bieber  
Steve Walz