

MWCOG Regional Blue Green Infrastructure Community Engagement and Planning Project (RBGI CEPP)

FLOODREADY COMMUNITIES: BLUE-GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE (BGI) WORKSHOP 1

MEETING SUMMARY: NOVEMBER 14, 2024

ATTENDEES (ALL VIRTUAL):

PROJECT TEAM

- Katie Dyer, MWCOG
- Steve Bieber, MWCOG
- Alex Milan, ICF
- Cassie Bhat, ICF
- Jasmyn Noel, ICF
- Erin Jones, CHPlanning
- Richa Vuppuluri, CHPlanning
- Leila Bahrami, CHPlanning
- Kathryn Cuningham, CHPlanning
- Joe Arrowsmith, Straughan Environmental
- Larry Trout, Straughan Environmental
- Emily Steenkamer, Straughan Environmental

PROJECT PARTNERS

- Kenya Troutman, DC HSEMA, Resilience Program Manager
- Lily Cheng, DC DOEE
- Carole Barth, PG County Department of the Environment, Tree Conservation and Conservation Landscaping Program
- Dawn Hawkins-Nixon, Associate Director, Sustainability Division, Department of the Environment, Prince George's County
- Lilantha Tennekoon, Engineer - Prince George's County Department of the Environment

ATTENDEES

- Absalom F Jordan, Friends of Oxon Run
- Annie Acosta, Capital Nature
- Brenda Richardson, Anacostia Parks & Community Collaborative

- Brian Rodgers, Constituent Services Worldwide, Manager Conservation and Sustainability
- Delaney Samons, Chesapeake Bay Trust, Program Officer
- Dennis Chestnut, Ward 7 Resilience Hub Community Coalition
- Jamoni Overby, DC Conservation Advocate, CCWC DC Lead, Nature Forward
- Janet Gingold, Executive Committee of Prince George's Sierra Club
- Lisa Ragain, Principal Water Resources Planner, MWCOG
- Madeline Daugherty, Mt. Rainier Nature Center
- Marian Dombroski, Anacostia Watershed Community Advisory Committee, Vice-chair
- Mimi Abdu, Master Naturalist, Anacostia Watershed Steward
- Riley Piva, DC Department of Parks and Recreation
- Sadie Drescher, Chesapeake Bay Trust, VP Restoration
- Scott Lopez, Chesapeake Bay Trust, Program Officer
- Serenella Linares, Facility Director at Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission
- Sonya Williams, Program Manager, Corvias Infrastructure Solutions, Prince George's County
- Stella Tarnay, Capital Nature, Co-founder and ED
- Wil Sanders, Joe's Movement Emporium, GreenWorks Director

Meeting Summary:

The watershed-based workshop for the Regional Blue-Green Infrastructure (BGI) Project held on November 14th brought 20 attendees from 17 different community-based organizations (CBOs) together to explore flood risk reduction strategies and environmental resilience across the Arundel Canal, Watts Branch, and Oxon Run subwatersheds. The project team shared BGI benefits and project goals, facilitated discussions with the attendees, and answered any outstanding questions.

1. WELCOME & PROJECT OVERVIEW

Katie Dyer, MWCOG

Erin Jones, CHPlanning, Ltd.

Katie welcomed the attendees, and introduced MWCOG, the BGI project, and the project's key partners and consultants. Erin provided facilitation notes for the meeting, including why the project team wanted to have this meeting with the CBOs and overall community agreements for the call. She then launched an ice breaker and a Zoom poll that indicated that most attendees work in the Watts Branch subwatershed and work in Washington D.C.

2. RBGI PROJECT OVERVIEW

Alex Milan, ICF

Alex's presentation focused on what the project is, where it is located, and why it is important. She also shared the project's goals, outcomes, and timeline.

The project goals are the following:

- Reduce flooding: identify strategies and projects for nature-based solutions that improve flood resilience.
- Foster collaboration: engage residents, community-based organizations (CBOs), and local municipalities to gather input, shape strategies, and encourage participation in environmental solutions.
- Enhance community co-benefits: develop project concepts with social, environmental, and economic benefits such as green space, air and water quality improvement, and recreational opportunities.
- Future partnership: identify potential BGI projects and establish partnerships through community engagement and flood analyses to seek funding for future implementation.

Throughout her presentation, she emphasized the importance of the project's regional approach. A regional approach is the collaboration amongst different jurisdictions, considering the entire watershed or floodplain rather than an isolated section.

With the project's context set, Alex then discussed how the CBOs and the greater community fit into the planning project. Throughout the planning process, the project team aims to provide informational resources, support for projects and floodshed management plans, and embedded community involvement. Alex walked the attendees through the planned community engagement strategies, including future watershed-specific workshops, community/agency meetings, and regional workshops, as well as a general timeline for project deliverables. The planned project products include: BGI booklet, prioritization framework, insurance gap analysis, floodshed

management plans, and BGI planning framework.

3. WHAT IS BLUE-GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE (BGI)?

Joe Arrowsmith, Straughan Environmental

Larry Trout, Straughan Environmental

Joe provided more context on why flood resilience is important and then Larry presented on what flood resilience looks like in communities similar to the project site.

Joe began by discussing flood challenges nationwide (i.e., Asheville, NC) before focusing on the flooding occurring in and around the project site (i.e., Ellicott City). He stressed the importance of community preparedness for extreme storms and flooding, highlighting that, due to climate change, such events are becoming increasingly likely even if they haven't occurred yet.

Joe explained that while a flood map is helpful to understand flood risk, they may not fully depict the extent of the risk, as flooding can extend beyond just floodplains and can affect the entire watershed. For that reason, this project will benefit the entire project area, rather than just isolated sections.

Larry then went into more detail about what BGI is and how it is used to address flooding challenges, using the following local examples:

- DDOT Green Stormwater Infrastructure (multiple sites)
- Oxon Run Pond Retrofit – Glassmanor, MD
- Nash Run Stream Restoration – Kenilworth, Washington, D.C.
- Tweed's Park – Hockessin, DE

Larry discussed the community benefits of BGI, which include reducing flood risk, improving air and water quality, enhancing urban biodiversity, increasing community assets, and mitigating urban heat island effects. In doing so, he underscored the importance of a regional approach and considering BGI opportunities across the entire watershed.

Katie reiterated that the project is a planning process, and while the project aims to propose solutions in the three subwatersheds, the project team does not currently have funding for implementation. She noted, however, that there are funding opportunities that can support BGI work, including projects that are typically water quality focused. More funding opportunities are also crossing jurisdictional boundaries.

4. QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

Erin Jones, CHPlanning, Ltd.

Four attendees asked questions during this session. Details on each question and its answer are below:

- Participant: How is this going to work given that DC (Oxon Run) has a stream restoration project? How does this project relate to existing projects? Will this be an opportunity to collaborate with the project? Will this project address community concerns?
 - Joe (Straughan): The project completed a map of current projects in the surrounding areas. The purpose of this project is to connect projects, make it more compatible, and create partnerships to share resources.
 - Katie (COG): We do not want to duplicate efforts. We do not want to negate progress from other projects. We are working closely with the lead for the Oxon Run stream restoration project.

- Participant: We may have projects in Oxon Run that compromise the progress we want to articulate. We will have an opportunity to discuss this in the breakout rooms
- Participant: As leaders in the space of water quality and quantity problem solvers, how can we help to move the needle on working collaboratively? What can we do now? Data share? Idea development? Grant fund collaboration? Community organizers/communicators?
 - Joe: This is a plan for resilience, and it is only good as the partners that support it. And that will help us find opportunities to find funding and resources.
- Participant: The Watts Branch headwaters are in Capitol Heights Maryland, will that jurisdiction be included in the study?
 - Joe: Yes, one part of this will be working with towns/cities/municipalities within the boundaries. If they are within the boundaries, then they are one of our partners.
- Participant: My interest is in how this study will address training and workforce development.

5. BREAKOUT ROOMS

Erin Jones, CHPlanning, Ltd.

Attendees were divided into three breakout rooms according to their primary subwatershed, as specified in their registration forms. This session aimed to allow participants to share their insights, experiences, and priorities regarding flooding and BGI in their communities.

Each breakout room was facilitated by a project team member, while another team member shared their screen and took notes on their respective Mural Board. In the breakout room, attendees were asked four questions:

1. Tell us about your organization. How do our efforts under this project align with your organization goals?
2. Local Needs & Priorities: Are there ongoing or upcoming projects you're tracking that may interact with, benefit from, or potentially conflict with our project and are there specific community assets or needs we should consider?
3. Community Engagement & Knowledge Exchange on BGI: Has your organization encountered interest in increasing green infrastructure, tree canopy coverage, stormwater runoff solutions, etc.?
4. Collaboration Opportunities: How can we make this BGI process meaningful and beneficial to your work, and are there ways your organization would like to contribute?

After 20 minutes, all attendees were brought back to the main room to discuss key takeaways from the guided discussion. Each facilitator had a few minutes to briefly summarize what their group discussed in terms of all of the questions asked. Key takeaways from the breakout rooms are included in the appendix.

6. NEXT STEPS AND CLOSING REMARKS

Katie Dyer, MWCOG

Katie expressed her gratitude to the attendees for their time and initial feedback on the project. She emphasized the importance of developing solutions collaboratively with the community. Additionally, she reminded everyone about the upcoming workshops in February and encouraged them to complete the post-workshop evaluation survey to provide feedback to the project team.

APPENDIX – SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

More Information on Invited and Attending CBO's

The initial watershed workshop was dedicated to introducing Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) to the project's background and objectives, emphasizing the importance of involving them as partners early on. The participating CBOs are potential collaborators with significant community influence, granting them access to the community that the project team may lack. Therefore, it is crucial for them to be informed about the project so they can effectively conduct outreach within their own community.

The invited CBOs vary in geographic scope, as detailed by the table below:

Geographic Range	# of CBO's invited
Community	12
City	3
County	5
State	2
Region	8
National*	2

*Offers city-based projects as well

For more information on which CBO's attended, please refer to the invitation list.

Engagement Summary

- We sent out invitations to 47 individuals who work for 32 distinct community-based organizations
- On the call, we had 20 attendees from 17 different community-based organizations (CBOs), 11 project team members, and five project partners.

Key Themes from Breakout Rooms/Group Discussion

Arundel Canal Breakout Room

Facilitator: Erin Jones

- There is an opportunity for MWCOG to fill a gap by offering training for rain garden installation to landscaping contractors or nonprofits.
- There aren't many projects geared toward a residential scale, so projects like Prince George's County Rain Check Rebate Program are very popular amongst residents.
 - It is important to engage on residential / local level.
- Barriers to accessing meetings/information include transportation, language, and jobs/money.
 - Organizations can help transport residents to meetings.
 - Project teams can provide honorariums to meeting participants.
 - Project teams can offer food if the meetings are during dinnertime.
- CBOs are looking for continuous communication, like sharing project updates through a variety of channels, i.e. website, attending meetings, hosting pop ups, newsletters.
 - There is an interest in getting project updates in real time.
 - This would allow organizations to know when and how they can contribute i.e.,

providing meeting space).

Watts Branch Breakout Room

Facilitator: Larry Trout

- There is an emphasis on the holistic nature of the project and solutions. When project teams look at the bigger picture, there is a better chance of acquiring grant funding when working together.
- Attendees shared that there was a lot of opportunity for BGI projects in the area, but the key challenge is lack of funding for implementation.
- With engagement/implementation at the local level (i.e., local entities, businesses, residents), there is a higher rate of success and a higher efficacy for the solutions.
- There is a need for resident awareness and localized education, since many times people tend to look at these developmental practices as obstructions to change.
- Citizen science can be an effective way to engage residents about BGI, since there is evidence of neighborhood interest, but CBOs don't always have access to the right people from the communities.
- Project teams should tap into community history, lived experiences, and knowledge and learn about design from residents who have lived there for years.
- Other potential data sources overlaid on the map could be helpful, like environmental justice factors, land ownership, etc.

Oxon Run Breakout Room

Facilitator: Joe Arrowsmith

- There is a failure of land use planning in the area, especially the excess of private property.
- There is a lack of awareness amongst residents, especially in the flood plain corridor.
 - What are the best methods of community engagement that makes sure people are aware and ready?
- Attendees want to know how to communicate with their own communities about flooding and what they can do, and which organizations they can reach out to.
 - This workshop was a helpful opportunity for individuals to listen and learn from other community organizations and leaders.
- There have been failures in the past from government organizations to engage community members, so residents have a difficult time fully trusting the development/planning process.
 - Trust can be built by following existing environmental studies and listening to stakeholders.
- Collaboration is incredibly important and all solutions going forward must be proposed in collaboration with the community.

Mural Board

- [Arundel Canal](#)
- [Watts Branch](#)
- [Oxon Run](#)