

METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON REGION  
GENERAL UPDATES & UPCOMING EVENTS  
(as of 9/17/14)



## WATER QUALITY

### Chesapeake Bay Oxygen "Dead Zones"

As part of COG's ongoing regional water quality efforts, here are links to two recent stories among several press accounts of high "dead zone" volume levels in the Chesapeake Bay in late summer:

- [Washington Post Aug. 31, 2014, article](#)
- [Daily Press Sept. 8, 2014 article](#)

The media stories are based on monitoring of the Bay conducted by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and documented on the state's Eyes on the Bay web site at: <http://mddnr.chesapeakebay.net/eyesonthebay/stories/lateAugust.pdf>

The monitoring data from August shows that the Bay had relatively high volumes of water with less than 2 milligrams/liter of dissolved oxygen - which is the minimum amount needed to sustain living resources. The large dead zone is in line with predictions that were made based on higher amounts of nitrogen flowing into the Bay in the early part of 2014.

These higher-than-normal spring volumes of nutrients were also seen in the Potomac River, according to preliminary COG data, and may have contributed to summer algal blooms in the Potomac estuary.

COG staff will continue to monitor water quality conditions and will review the summer algal bloom situation at a monitoring workshop being scheduled for late fall 2014.

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### Proposed Rule on Waters of the US

COG staff is not aware of major member activity on the EPA's and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' proposed rule on "waters of the U.S." as the Oct. 20, 2014, deadline for public comment approaches.

In April, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) jointly released a new proposed rule - Definition of Waters of the U.S. Under the Clean Water Act - to amend the definition of waters of the U.S. and address uncertainties about coverage that resulted from two Supreme Court rulings. The proposed rule is being challenged by a number of local governments and local government associations who contend that it will expand the range of waters that fall under federal jurisdiction, such as water in roadside ditches, and add new permitting requirements to routine activities such as maintenance. Some observers contend that the new rule will require Corps-based permitting of some forms of stormwater infrastructure, such as rain gardens. However, EPA says (see <http://www2.epa.gov/uswaters>) that such concerns are baseless and contends that the proposed rule does not regulate any types of waters that are not already regulated under the current rule.

The controversy has sparked a political response: the House of Representatives recently passed H.R. 5078, the "Waters of the United States Regulatory Overreach Protection Act of 2014," that would block implementation of the proposed rule and require EPA and the Corps to consult with relevant state and local officials and issue a recommended new rule only after reaching consensus with these stakeholders. The bill is unlikely to become law, however.

COG does not plan to file comments on the rule. However, the National Association of Counties opposes the rule in its current form (see <http://www.naco.org/legislation/Pages/WOUS.aspx>). Closer to home, both NACO's Maryland and Virginia affiliates intend to file comments.

Contacts include:

- NACO: [Julie Ufner](#), Associate Legislative Director, Environment, Energy & Land Use, 202.942.4269
- MACO: [Les Knapp](#), Legal and Policy Counsel, Maryland Association of Counties, 410.269.0043
- VACO: [Larry Land](#), Director of Policy Development, Virginia Association of Counties, 804.343.2504

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### Intersex Fish

"As More Male Bass Switch Sex, a Strange Fish Story Expands." This August 3, 2014 Washington Post [article](#) explains the findings of a recent study on intersex fish prevalence at 16 sites in the Delaware, Ohio, and Susquehanna rivers in Pennsylvania.

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## **WATER INFRASTRUCTURE**

### Water Utilities Release Major Report on Economic Jobs

On Capitol Hill on Wednesday, September 10, water leaders from across the country were joined by Congressional, state and local officials, private sector partners, and national organizations to the release of major study "*National Economic & Labor Impacts of the Water Utility Sector Study*". This study was produced by the Water Research Foundation (WRF) and the Water Environment Research Foundation (WERF), surveyed over 30 water utilities nationwide (including Alexandria Renew and DC Water), and focused on how vast investments in our nation's water infrastructure are creating jobs and sharpening America's competitive edge.

The stated purpose of this study was to 'examine the role of water utilities and its monetary contributions and impacts to the overall national economy.' Refer to COG staff's factsheet for a summary of the report, its key findings, and links to a video and the actual report.

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### COG Board Infrastructure Report

The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments Board of Directors, throughout 2014, has been assessing the state of the National Capital Region's transportation, water, energy and communications infrastructure. This assessment is looking at the level of our current investments, needs to maintain and expand infrastructure to serve the Region, and gaps in our ability to make the needed investments. The Board has heard about specific conditions and needs of our water supply, wastewater, and stormwater infrastructure. The Board heard about how the Region is home to some of the largest, most advanced wastewater treatment plants in the country, how three-quarters of our population relies on the Potomac River for its water supply, how we must maintain over 30,000 miles of water and sewer pipes to keep our systems running, and how we must expand stormwater treatment to reach regional water quality goals.

COG is preparing a summary report and recommendations from this year-long assessment, to be issued in January 2015. This is expected to address the scope of needs we are able to, or not able to, address, how these needs will be paid for (costs, rate impacts, and other issues), innovative technologies that can help meet the Region's needs, and related issues.

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## STORMWATER

### Joint Workshop with Greater Washington Board of Trade

COG is working with the Board of Trade to organize a half-day Regional Stormwater Management Forum with local regulatory experts, as well as private sector and local government representatives. The workshop would focus on new stormwater rules, complying with Best Management Practices, and opportunities for coordinating regional regulatory processes. The date of October 31<sup>st</sup> is currently being considered.

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### Green Streets Best Practices Workshop

TPB and COG held the Green Streets Best Practices Workshop on July 23. Presentations from around the region and around the country, including Prince George's, District of Columbia, Arlington, Virginia, Philadelphia, and Portland are posted [here](#). Presentations highlighted partnerships, overcoming challenges, and technical solutions.

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## DRINKING WATER

### Safe Drinking Water Act Anniversary Celebration: Toast to Tap

On October 2<sup>nd</sup>, at City Center Park in the District of Columbia will be [Toast to Tap](#): A celebration of clean, safe water in the metro region and the value of water to local businesses. The event will draw attendees from the surrounding office spaces in City Center, the general public and water supporters from around the region. It is being organized by Regional Water Utilities, Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, American Water Works Association, Association of State Drinking Water Administrators, Clean Water Action, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

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## CLIMATE CHANGE, AIR & ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES RELATED TO WATER

### Climate, Energy, and Environment Policy Committee (CEEPC)

CEEPC met on July 23. NASA leaders described how NASA developed a planning process to protect its centers' infrastructure (such as Kennedy Space Flight Center or Wallops Island)

from climate impacts. The committee also heard a presentation on the results of the 'Building a Climate Resilient National Capital Region' workshops that COG helped produce along with NASA, National Capital Planning Commission, and others. The committee also heard presentations on reducing barriers to solar energy, and the Virginia Energy Plan.

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#### Air and Climate Public Advisory Committee (ACPAC)

ACPAC launched a **Climate & Energy Leadership Award** program to recognize and encourage public agencies, non-governmental organizations and stakeholders in their efforts to achieve local and regional climate and energy goals in the [Climate and Energy Action Plan](#). Sixteen applications were received. Judging will occur this summer and winners will be announced this fall. ACPAC's next meeting is September 15<sup>th</sup>.

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#### EPA Clean Power Plan Proposed Rule

On June 2, 2014, EPA proposed the Clean Power Plan rule to cut carbon pollution from power plants. EPA projects that the measures will reduce criteria pollutants - including nitrogen oxides - by 25% from 2020-2030. The rule sets greenhouse gas emissions targets for each state (except Vermont and the District of Columbia) based on the state's estimated ability to feasibly reduce fossil fuel emissions from power plants. Virginia's target is 38% greenhouse gas emissions reduction and Maryland 37% from current levels. Comments must be received by **October 16, 2014**. If the rule proceeds (barring litigation or other actions), the guidelines will be finalized in June, 2015, and states will have one year to submit a compliance plan to EPA. For more information, see [this link](#).

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#### **AWARDS, RECOGNITION & OTHER MEMBER NEWS**

**Penny Gross**. Fairfax County Board of Supervisors was re-appointed to the Local Government Advisory Committee to the Chesapeake Bay Executive Council.

DC Water's **George S. Hawkins** was awarded the prestigious Fuller Award by the American Water Works Association at its annual meeting (September 3<sup>rd</sup>). The award recognizes Hawkins' "exceptional and extraordinary" service and leadership to the water sector through a career of environmental and watershed protection.

At its Annual Conference Awards Ceremony (September 30<sup>th</sup>) the Water Environment Federation will be awarding **Penny Gross** one of their Public Officials Awards, noting that "*The Honorable Penelope A. Gross has demonstrated a commitment to the environment with strong, effective and practical leadership while being a voice for local governments. Ms. Gross has made a difference in protecting the water environment, not only in her home county but well beyond her home.*"

**CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR COG OFFICIALS!**

**UPCOMING MEETINGS AND EVENTS**

September 24-26. [EcoDistricts Summit](#) Various locations, Washington, DC

September 24. [EcoDistricts Practitioners Training at MWCOG](#) 1:00-4:30pm, 777 North Capitol St NE, Suite 300

September 25, 5:30-7:30pm. **Adaptation and Resilience to National Disasters Event.** American Water Resources Association National Capital Region Section. Held in the Training Center at the COG building on 777 N. Capital St. NE, Washington, DC. More information [here](#).

September 26. [2014 DC Green Building Symposium & Expo](#) Washington, DC Convention Center

September 27 - October 1- WEFTEC, the Water Environment Federation's Annual Technical Exhibition and Conference, New Orleans, LA. More information [here](#).

October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 11:00-2:00 -**Toast to Tap Celebration of Safe Drinking Water Act Anniversary**, City Center Park, District of Columbia. Come join your water utilities, water associations, EPA, and TapIt food vendors in celebrating source water protection and drinking water.

October 2- **Joint Climate Energy & Environment Policy Committee/Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee Meeting (Transportation Focus)**

October 4-5. [Solar & Green Homes Tour](#) Metropolitan Washington, DC

October 31 (tentative). **Joint Stormwater Management Workshop** - Co-sponsored by COG & Greater Washington Board of Trade

November 2-6, 2014 - American Water Resources Association (AWRA) **Annual Water Resources Conference**, Tyson's Corner, Virginia. More information [here](#).

November 2, 2014, 1pm-5pm. **Rainwater Harvesting Systems: Design, Implementation and Potential.** Pre-conference technical workshop hosted by AWRA National Capital Region section, the Cabell Brand Center for Global Poverty and Resource Sustainability Studies, and the American Rainwater Catchment Association. More information [here](#).

November 6- **Water Resources Technical Committee Meeting**

November 21- **Chesapeake Bay Policy Committee Meeting**