



## CHESAPEAKE BAY AND WATER RESOURCES POLICY COMMITTEE

### Meeting Summary-**DRAFT**

May 17, 2024

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

<https://www.mwcog.org/events/2024/5/17/chesapeake-bay-and-water-resources-policy-committee/>

#### 1. WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

*Natali Fani-González, CBPC Chair*

Chair Fani-González welcomed members and asked new members to introduce themselves.

#### 2. APPROVAL OF MEETING SUMMARY

*Chair Fani-González*

The summary from the March 2024 meeting was approved.

#### 3. WATER WORKFORCE DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

*Abel Oliv, Defensores de la Cuenca Director*

*Kishia Powell, WSSC Water General Manager*

Mr. Oliv, cofounder and executive director of Defensores de la Cuenca, presented about the work they do to engage Latinos and Spanish speakers in watershed-related issues. Defensores de la Cuenca is a non-profit organization focused on creating shared experiences in the watershed, building a more informed community, and building a network of Latino leaders. Some of the barriers they face when engaging the Latino community include overcoming the language gap, building trust within the community, and working around limited free time.

One program Defensores de la Cuenca provides is La Academia de Defensores, a paid adult training program that builds the capacity of participants around watershed-related issues through workshops, hands-on activities, and participant-led capstone projects. The goal of this paid-professional development opportunity is to deliver tangible environmental outcomes while also building leaders. Another program led by Defensores de la Cuenca is the Embajadores de los Árboles program, which invites participants to serve as paid ambassadors for trees. This program focuses on improving tree canopy coverage in Spanish speaking communities by directly engaging those communities. The Defensores Youth Corps is a third program developed by Defensores de la Cuenca that helps young people attain job training opportunities and service hours.

#### QUESTIONS:

- Maria Mackie thanked Mr. Oliv for his work and asked if they could connect later about engaging the Latino Community in College Park in environmental issues.
- Susan Cunningham asked what has worked with connecting with young people still in school. Mr. Oliv responded that it is a challenge. He explained that building confidence in young people is very important for engaging them in these issues.
- Heidi Bonnaffon asked if they've had adults or students come back to their programs after they've completed one, and Mr. Oliv responded yes, they have had people continue



CBPC Meeting Summary-draft  
May 17, 2024

on with their programs.

Next, Ms. Powell, General Manager of WSSC Water, presented about water workforce diversity, equity and inclusion and building the water workforce to be fit for future. WSSC is the 8th largest utility in the country and serves 1.9 million customers. To keep operations going, they have a team of 1,735 staff, but they are losing workforce due to retirements, and their overall vacancy rate is 14.7%. One challenge they face with hiring is that many of the positions at WSSC Water are specialized and multi-skilled. WSSC has recently launched a Smart One Water initiative to understand how they can leverage technology to fill gaps while also looking at what skillsets are needed for new hires, and how to best invest in diverse workforce development.

WSSC is currently going through a strategic planning process and has identified a number of challenges and barriers they face with workforce development including barriers to entry level positions, daycare, lagging compensation, training opportunities and budget that need improvement, and experience requirements that do not facilitate internal promotions. To address these and other challenges, WSSC is focusing on retention, recruitment, and engagement. Looking ahead, WSSC is embarking on a regional industry and workforce development collaboration led by the City of Baltimore DPW and WSSC Water where they are pursuing \$914k in an EPA grant. They also established the Chesapeake Water Workforce Network which focuses on cultural competence and underemployed/underserved communities and populations.

#### QUESTIONS:

- Mr. Oliv commented about how when installing green infrastructure and practices, people need to think about the workforce available to install and maintain the projects as well as the funding to build them.
- Ms. Makie asked how to incentivize people in the workforce who are looking for a career change to enter the water workforce and how a municipality like College Park can help support water workforce development. Ms. Powell responded that as part of the Chesapeake Water Workforce Network, they have discussed the need to ensure there are pathways for entry into our workforce from all from all different avenues and that they need to include retraining and reskilling in their efforts. One area they could use help in is amplifying the public awareness of the opportunities available in the water workforce and what they entail.

#### 4. MEMBER & STAFF UPDATES

*CBPC members and COG staff*

##### A. Member updates.

- Chair Fani-González attended the Delmarva Wondering Waterways tour which focused on topics like agrotourism and sustainability in the poultry industry.
- Vice Chair Kenny Boddye made the announcement that Prince William County adopted their FY25 budget. They received funding for an environmental analyst in the sustainability office. They also initiated a comprehensive plan amendment



CBPC Meeting Summary-draft  
May 17, 2024

to begin incorporating the new sustainability master plan into the comprehensive plan. It will probably take 6 to 8 months to finalize.

- Ms. Mackie announced that Collage Park has continued to paint or place drain covers on stormwater inlets. They also are continuing with their food scrap collection, have diminished tipping fees, and are working with University of Maryland students to encourage them to reuse, recycle, and repurpose.

- B. Staff Updates and Water Resources General Updates (see document for additional updates, resources, and events)
1. CEC One Water Art Contest winners were shared in the chat.
  2. The General Updates document was shared.
  3. There will be some staffing changes as Heidi Bonnaffon switches roles at COG to focus on Climate and Energy.

## 5. CHESAPEAKE BAY PROGRAM HAPPENINGS

*Caitlin Bolton, COG*

Chesapeake Bay Awareness Week will take place June 1-9. This year's theme is Unsung Heroes of the Chesapeake Bay. The first half of the week will be focused on Habitat Heros: Nature's Silent Protectors and the second half of the week will be Tide Turners: Recognizing Bay Advocates. A tool kit and proclamation template will be shared shortly.

**Recommended Action:** Prepare proclamations and participate on social media for Chesapeake Bay Awareness Week.

## 6. ADJOURNMENT

*Chair Fani-González*

The next CBPC meeting will be virtual on July 19, 2024

## PARTICIPANTS:

Andrea Lewis, Fairfax County  
Kathy L. Smith, Fairfax County  
Heather Gewandter, Rockville  
Maria Mackie, College Park  
Jenni Pompei, Greenbelt  
Natali Fani-González, Chair  
Cara Honzak, Takoma Park  
Kenel, Pam, Loudoun Water  
Myles Cooper, Alex Renew  
Kenny Boddy, Vice Chair  
Erin Flynn, Falls Church  
Adam Van Grack, Rockville  
Khandikile Mvunga Sokoni, Montgomery County  
John Sartschev, Charles County



CBPC Meeting Summary-draft  
May 17, 2024

Kishia L. Powell, WSSC Water  
Abel Oliv, Defensores de la Cuenca  
Amanda Waters, Alex Renew  
Susan Cunningham, Arlington  
Mayor Pro Tem Denise Mitchell  
Kalisha Dixon, Bladensburg  
Steve Saari, DOEE  
Cheryl Hutchison, Louden County  
M.C. Keegan-Ayer, Frederick County Council  
Emily R. Judson, WMATA

**COG Staff:**

Heidi Bonnaffon  
Wyetha Lipford  
Caitlin Bolton  
Ata Adeel  
Lisa Reynolds  
Lisa Ragain  
Katherine Dyer