



## Overview

This document fulfills the responsibility of the Citizens Environmental Commission (CEC) to submit an annual report to the County Executive of its activities and describes its priorities for the next year. The Commission was chartered by County Executive Steuart Pittman through Executive Order 8 on Earth Day April 2019. This Order provides language regarding the composition of Commissioners, how public meetings are to be held, governance, and recommended actions. Commissioners are tasked with recommending actions to the County Executive to:

- Protect the County's environmental resources, including, but not limited to: clean air, clean water, open space, forests and wildlife;
- Promote clean, renewable energy solutions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions; and
- Defend more than 500 miles of shoreline and nearby communities from rising sea levels.

The Commission is to consist of 13 voting members, as follows:

- One representative from each of the nine watershed assessment and planning areas: Patapsco non-tidal, Patapsco tidal and Bodkin Creek, Magothy River, Severn River, South River, Little Patuxent River, Patuxent River upper, middle and lower portions, West and Rhode Rivers.
- Four representatives from environmental, non-profit organizations with offices in Anne Arundel County.
- Each member shall serve two-year terms and not more than four consecutive terms.

## Commission Members

- Jesse Iliff, Severn River Assn, appointed July 2019
- Sally Hornor, Magothy River Assn., appointed July 2019, elected Chair June 2023
- Steve Miller, Magothy River, appointed July 2019, Secretary and Vice Chair starting July 2023
- Judy Billage, Severn River, appointed February 2023
- Scott Eden, South River, appointed February 2023
- Lloyd Lewis, West & Rhode River, appointed July 2024
- Nita Settina, Center for Ecosystem Recovery, appointed January 2026
- Matt Johnston, Arundel Rivers, appointed January 2026, replacing Elle Bassett

At the end of 2025, there were vacancies for the Patapsco Tidal/Bodkin Creek watershed, Patapsco non-tidal, the Little Patuxent and the Patuxent River watershed. There are also openings for several representatives from non-profit organizations.

Erik Michelsen, Environmental Policy Director, was appointed to the position of County Liaison in February 2023.

### **Governance, Priorities and Committees**

The Commission held nine meetings in 2025, meeting virtually every month except July, August and November. The County Executive met with the Board at our January meeting. Subcommittees did not meet in 2025.

### **County Legislation Discussed by the Commission**

- Bill 72-24, Housing Attainability Act of 2024. The Commission did not support this bill due to the allowance of greater housing density in subdivisions with a percentage of lower cost housing. Commissioners discussed this bill with the CE after it was passed. He noted that a Stakeholder Advisory Committee was formed that would attempt to improve environmental protection of subdivisions built using the greater housing density allowed in this bill.
- Bill 67-25, Floodplain Management, Erosion and Sediment Control, and Stormwater Management – Clearing and Pruning. This bill was discussed in several meetings of the Commission and several amendments to the bill were suggested by the Commission. The Commission supported the bill after these amendments were passed by the County Council.

### **Presentations at Meetings**

January: Brenda Morgan (DPW/Bureau of Watershed Protection and Restoration) gave a talk about the planned transition from the current GIS-based web application for land use to the new Experience Builder app expected to be completed in 2025. This new app is expected to provide more information about stormwater Best Management Practices, among other upgrades.

February: Erik Michelsen (DPW/BWPR) gave a talk on the FY2024 MS4 Report. Erik described how the County is working to meet its stormwater quality goals: through wastewater treatment upgrades, septic upgrades and stream restoration projects. Details of several stream restoration projects completed in 2024 were discussed. One new monitoring technique that is being developed is the use of eDNA (environmental DNA) to assess the biotic community in various streams. This technique looks for critter DNA in water samples and saves lots of time compared to traditional sampling and critter id in the lab.

March: The Save Our Trees group, represented by Ginger Woolridge, Nina Fisher and Susan Wheatley, gave a presentation on their work to protect large trees in our County by removing invasive vines. They noted that especially large vines may need to be treated with herbicides after cutting. They are actively engaging high school students and hope to reach more community

members. They reminded us of the importance of removing invasive plants like English Ivy from commercial garden centers.

Erik Michelsen also reviewed the County's approach to stream restoration over the last 15 years. Initially stabilizing stream banks and raising stream beds was the primary method of restoring streams and now a more complex approach is used that permits greater capture of sediments and nutrients. This approach includes an integrated stream and wetland complex that considers the hydrology or channel dynamics, flow, geomorphology, chemistry and biology. The more recent stream restorations create not only more functional stream corridors but also more aesthetically pleasing habitats.

October: Brenda Morgan, GIS Manager for BWPR/DPW presented the Deale Shady Side Flood Risk Reduction Study. This area is one of concern for the County as it is at risk for flooding based on a vulnerability analysis. The primary ways to mitigate flooding are to install berms to floodproof buildings, raise bulkheads, raise roads and install tide gates or flood gates to hold back high tides. All efforts to reduce flooding are expensive and there is no funding mechanism now established by the County.

December: Rhody Holthaus, Deputy Director AA Co DPW Waste Management Services, gave a presentation on production of energy from landfills. There is one landfill in the county, Millersville Landfill, that produces enough methane to produce electricity. Methane used to be burned off during landfill operation but now it is collected with a vacuum system. This 3.2 Megawatt facility provides about \$500,000 per year, which not only pays for itself but also yields cash to the County. Another energy-generating project is the use of solar panels over landfills. At this time the Glen Burnie landfill is covered with about 10,000 solar panels and yields 3 MW of electricity annually. The County continues to look for more sites where solar panels can be utilized for Utility Scale Solar power.

Each of these presentations was recorded during the meeting and posted on the Citizens Environmental Commission website.

### **Additional Topics Addressed in 2025**

- Progress on Plan 2040 was the topic of several meetings. The Commission sent a letter to the County Executive emphasizing several aspects of this plan that we felt should be given highest priority. The following are topics that were included in this letter and, in many cases, are topics of interest shared with the County Executive in previous years. In Policy NE (Natural Environment) 1.1, we encouraged a code change that requires all environmental features of a potential development site to be identified at or before the sketch plan.
- Policy NE 1.4 addresses the protection of sensitive areas and we renewed our request to include Habitat Protection Areas that are outside the Critical Area. The first step in this process is to map the areas that support spawning of anadromous fish and colonial nesting birds. We understand that this will require the time and expertise of County staff and we will continue to request this authorization.

- Policy NE 2.1 addresses forest and tree canopy protection and expansion. We renewed our request to keep the County Forest Dashboard up to date so that progress can be quantified.
- Policy NE 4.3 covers reduction of nutrients released from septic systems and community systems. We recommend that the County continue to look for ways to educate residents about the importance of retrofitting traditional septic systems to low N systems and to encourage conversion of septic to sewer where feasible.
- We also urge the County to continue to work with the Horizon trailer park sewage issue and to try to find ways to reduce the inflow of untreated sewage into the Patuxent.
- NE 4.4 includes reducing sediment entering our waterways. We encourage the County to send more construction site inspectors out to keep tabs on site stabilization during construction.
- NE 4.5 address stormwater BMP design and maintenance. The Commission requests more accurate data regarding private stormwater BMP information in the Bureau of Watershed Protection and Restoration Watershed application. Similarly, we request that privately owned and maintained stormwater conveyance infrastructure be added to County GIS maps in the same way that the County infrastructure is mapped.
- Policy NE 6.1 refers to the need for consistent environmental data to be available to all departments dealing with environmental and sustainability issues. We ask that the County consider forming a Department of the Environment.
- At our December meeting, we reviewed the County's comments on the MD Dept of Environment's updates to their Stormwater Manual. We supported the County's comments on all but one policy. We sent an email to the County Executive supporting the inclusion of requiring stormwater conveyances to be included in triennial inspections. We received an immediate reply from the CE stating that although they understand our goal in maintaining functioning stormwater infrastructure, inspection of all facilities is too great a financial burden on the County.