

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

DEPARTMENT OF CHEMISTRY

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PATUXENT RIVER COMMISSION

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Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr., Governor

Honorable Al Smith, Chairman

Captain Donald Brown, Vice Chairman

We, the Patuxent River Commission, envision a Patuxent River ecosystem as vital and productive in 2050 as it was in the 1950s. We therefore commit to be stewards and advocates for the Patuxent River and to lead and inspire actions to protect, enhance, and restore living resources and the natural, cultural, economic, and recreational values of the Patuxent River and its watershed.

2005 Annual Report

THE PATUXENT RIVER

The 110-mile Patuxent River is the largest watershed completely within the State of Maryland. The watershed contains trout streams and reservoirs in its headwaters, and flows through the middle of the Washington, D.C.- Baltimore Metro corridor. It becomes a large tidal freshwater ecosystem, continues to a productive estuary (crabs and oysters), and then empties into the Chesapeake Bay.

The 930 square mile (595,000 acres) watershed is 10% of the State's land area and contains portions of seven counties and many communities including: Olney, Columbia, Laurel, Odenton, Bowie, Upper Marlboro, Hughesville, Benedict, Hollywood, Lexington Park, Prince Frederick, and Solomons Island.

Vision

We, the Patuxent River Commission, envision a Patuxent River ecosystem as vital and productive in 2050 as it was in the 1950s. We therefore commit to be stewards and advocates for the Patuxent River and to lead and inspire actions to protect, enhance, and restore living resources and the natural, cultural, economic, and recreational values of the Patuxent River and its watershed.

The population is approximately 618,000 and is projected to be close to 800,000 by the year 2020. The current number of households is estimated at slightly more than 200,000 with a 2020 projection increasing the number of households by nearly 88,000. (Maryland Department of Planning, 2003). Marylanders take advantage of the watershed's natural resources for recreation, drinking water, seafood, research, and for basic quality-of-life purposes.

The Patuxent River's watershed land use comprised of 43 percent forestlands, 30 percent developed lands, 26 percent agricultural lands and one percent wetlands. The forested lands are distributed throughout the watershed along the reservoirs in the upper Patuxent. These forest lands are mostly comprised of parks and land owned by Washington Suburban Sanitary (WSSC). WSSC owns the reservoirs located in the upper Patuxent, which serve as a regional water supply source. In the middle Patuxent between I-95 and U.S. Route 1 lies a significant tract of forest lands, the U.S. Department of the Interior's Wildlife Research Refuge and U.S. Army' Fort Meade. Other tracts of forestland correspond to parkland along the Upper Patuxent between Montgomery and Howard County, in Prince George's County along the middle tidal Patuxent, and the rural portions located in the lower Patuxent.

As of 2005, 18.9 percent of the Patuxent River's watershed has been preserved. (Source: Maryland Department of Planning 2005) This preserved land generally corresponds to the reservoirs, and the Patuxent Wildlife Preserve and Fort Meade, as well as along the Patuxent River shorelines in the lower Patuxent (Source: Maryland Department of Planning 2005).

The densest development in the watershed is located in Prince George's and Montgomery counties and the northeastern portion of Anne Arundel County. There is also concentrated development in Howard County (Columbia), the City of Laurel, and the City of Bowie (both in Prince George's County). Along the corridors of I-95 and Route 1, the densest development follows much of the road systems but the majority of the watershed's development pattern is low-density, large-lot residential. Worth noting is that the most highly developed lands in the region are west toward Washington D.C. and east toward Baltimore, just outside the reaches of the watershed (Source: Maryland Department of Planning 2003).

Agricultural land is mostly mixed with forestland and low-density development throughout the watershed. Sizeable tracts of agricultural land exist in Montgomery, Howard and Lower Anne Arundel counties, as well as in the lower portions of Prince George's and Calvert counties. Wetlands primarily occur where Route 4 crosses the upper tidal Patuxent River, in the middle Patuxent River watershed, and near Chalk Point, in the lower Patuxent portion of the watershed (Source: Maryland Department of Planning 2003).

ABOUT THE COMMISSION

The Patuxent River Commission (Commission) is a 34-member body created by State legislation in 1980. The Commission is charged with the implementation of the Patuxent Policy Plan and in 1995, by legislation, assumed the additional role as the Patuxent River Tributary Team. The Commission serves as an interjurisdictional forum for Patuxent watershed issues and develops and oversees implementation of the Patuxent River Policy Plan and the Patuxent Tributary Strategy. The dual role of the Commission can be described as the Patuxent Policy Plan addressing programmatic and land management issues while the Tributary Team activities focus on nutrient and sediment pollution control.

MEMBERSHIP

The Commission's membership represents a cross-section of the watershed's interest groups, and serves as an inter-jurisdictional forum for the protection and restoration of the River's economic, recreational and environmental resources. Membership interests include academic, agricultural, business, development, environmental, federal, state and local governments, waterman, and local citizens. See Attachment A for the 2004 attendance record.

PATUXENT POLICY PLAN

The Patuxent Policy Plan (Plan) and Addendum are policy guides for local jurisdictions and state government in the creation and implementation of land management plans, other regulatory programs, and general guidance in the stewardship of Patuxent River. The Commission uses the Plan's goals and objectives as criteria in review of issues before the Commission such as the comprehensive land use updates in the Patuxent watershed.

The Commission is required to revisit the Plan on a regular basis. Additions or changes are adopted by resolution first by the Commission, then local governments represented on the Commission, and finally the General Assembly. This process was completed in 2001 with the General Assembly's adoption of the 1997 Addendum. The Addendum updates the original 1984 Plan and does not change any of the original recommendations or goals. It defines six findings to address the continuing challenges of growth management, personal stewardship, and financing.

After the Commission adopted the Addendum, it was submitted to all eight of the local governments represented on the Commission. Each of the seven watershed counties and the City of Laurel unanimously approved the Update by resolution by 2003. The City of Laurel, not an original signatory to the original Patuxent Policy Plan, also adopted the Addendum.

2005 WORK PLAN ACTIVITIES

Annually, the Commission approves a work plan that includes a number of workgroups formed to address issues and/or activities impacting the Patuxent River. The Commission sets annual goals based on the workgroup activities. Workgroup chairs provide the Commission with status updates throughout the year. Below is a summary of each workgroup's goal and activities during 2005.

Watershed Environmental Action Work Group: The goal of this workgroup was to engage local jurisdictions regarding the Commission's mission and activities. In 2005, due to a staffing shortage it was decided that the outreach workgroup should be sunset and resurrected on an as needed basis.

Patuxent River Paddling Plan Workgroup: The goal of this workgroup is to increase the awareness of the Patuxent River as a valuable asset by providing the public a web-based water trail as a resource of recreational and educational opportunities.

In July 2005, the responsibility of the Paddling Path website was officially moved from MDP into the hands of the riverkeeper. A formal agreement was written that clearly states the nature of this new relationship and is an important source of information to future members of the commission if questions are raised about the nature of the relationship between the riverkeeper and the website.

National Wild and Scenic River Designation Work Group:

In 2003, the Commission set out to obtain support to initiate a study to determine the qualifications of the Patuxent River for inclusion in the federal Wild and Scenic River Program. Designation would protect the river by prohibiting federally licensed dams; prohibiting assistance for water resource projects by federal agencies if the projects will have a direct adverse effect, or would invade or unreasonably diminish the outstandingly remarkable values present at the time of designation. The designation could maintain and even perhaps improve water quality. The designation was sought for the free-flowing part of the river. The Patuxent watershed in Montgomery and Howard Counties would not be included in the study.

In 2003 and 2004, the watershed's seven jurisdictions and a number of civic groups and other interested organizations provided documents supporting the study. In early 2004, the Maryland Soil Conservation Districts, waterman community and the farming community voiced opposition to the study. After a series of stakeholder meetings and an attempt to address concerns, in 2005, the Commission voted to table any further activities to initiate the study to further explore other nonpoint source management options for the river.

Riparian Buffers Workgroup: The goal of this workgroup is to reduce sediment and nutrient pollution from entering the Patuxent River by increasing riparian buffers. After receiving money from the Chesapeake Bay Trust for the seedlings in May of 2003 a new grow-out station at Kings Landing in Calvert County was established. During 2004 and 2005, seedlings were planted at various locations throughout the Patuxent watershed.

Watershed Wide Clean-Up Workgroup: The goal of this workgroup is to reduce trash accumulation and increase stewardship along all of the Patuxent River. During the clean-up, volunteers removed over 600 bags of trash (approximately 150,000 lbs.), plus 2 dumpster loads, and 12 pick-up truck loads of bottles, cans, household and bulk litter. The leading bulk items were auto tires, grocery carts, and household appliances including propane tanks, space heaters, carpeting, foam insulation, and every kind of auto part.

Administrative Workgroup: The goal of this workgroup is to ensure that representation on the Commission complies with its enabling legislation. During 2005, several long-time members retired. Their historical knowledge and history with the Patuxent River will be missed. The Commission wishes future success to Larry Cartano, Dominic Motta, and Lee Summerville.

During 2005, the Honorable Al Smith was Chairman, and Ms. Meosotis Curtis was Chairwoman. Their leadership helped the Commission to explore nonpoint source strategies for the River, address administrative issues, implement work plan objectives, and provide support for local

causes and for legislative initiatives. In 2006, Al Smith was re-elected Chairman and Captain Don Brown from St. Mary's County was elected Vice Chairman.

In 2005 this work group filled the membership vacancies that existed at the start of the year and ones that developed throughout the year. Janet Siddiqui has filled the vacant position of the Howard County representative. The City of Laurel is no longer without representation. Councilman Michael Leszcz is now the municipality's representative. Throughout 2005 five positions saw a change in their representation. New commissioners replaced the positions of Business, Developer, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Academic, and a Soil Conservation District. The incoming commissioners were (respectively to the list above) Kevin Bruening, Henry Turner Jr., Mark Chalecki, Dr. Kelton Clark, and Luis Dieguez. At year's end there are three vacant positions of citizen including Prince George's County Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, a citizen representative and Prince George's County.

Habitat Conservation and Restoration Work Group: The goal of this workgroup is to restore and conserve habitat at the local and watershed level. Due to turnover at Wildlife Habitat Council, a non-profit partner in implementing goals and objectives of the workgroup, and staffing changes at DNR, this workgroup was sunset in 2005. Various individual counties within the watershed will continue to work towards restoring and conserving habitat within the watershed.

Smart Growth/Review of Local Land Use Management Plans Work Group The goal of this workgroup is to insure that localities within the Patuxent Watershed incorporate the Patuxent Policy Plan recommendations into local land use management plans. During 2005, the workgroup reviewed the Charles County regarding its Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan, and St. Mary's Myrtle Point Park Plan.

Economic Incentives Work Group: The goal of this workgroup is to pursue the development of policies to reduce Bay pollution by using the following economic incentives: effluent trading, an urban fertilizer impact fee with a public education component; and a statewide storm water management utility funded by an impervious surface fee. During 2005, the workgroup was sunset due to Marc Lieber, the workgroup's chair, resigning his position on the Patuxent River Commission to devote more time to his position as a Commissioner on the WSSC. The economic incentives are being pursued and/or are in development under different efforts such as Maryland's Tributary Strategies and through other state efforts.

Waste Water Treatment Initiative Workgroup: The goal of this workgroup is to address nutrient loads originating from the major wastewater treatment plants (WWTPs) within the Patuxent Watershed by identifying the means to utilize Chesapeake Bay Restoration Funds. The Commission hopes to secure funds for WWTP upgrades expediently so that the benefits will be seen in the Patuxent River, demonstrating a success story for the State of Maryland's landmark Chesapeake Bay Restoration Fund in Maryland's most studied and largest self-contained river. During 2005, the workgroup has reached out to local WWTP operators concerning readiness to receive Bay Restoration Funds.

Bernie Fowler Sneaker Index: Last year's annual Bernie Fowler Sneak Index, which has been held at Broomes Island in Calvert County annually since 1988, was a commemorative event. Held on June 12th, Congressman Steny Hoyer (D-5th District), county commissioners from Calvert and St. Mary's Counties, and representatives from the Chesapeake Bay Program and other officials who attended, reaffirmed their commitment to cleaning up the river. For the eighteenth annual event multiple generations of Bernie Fowler's family attended the wade-in to emphasize the need for cleaning the river so that our children's children can enjoy the fruits and beauty of the river. This year Senator Fowler continued to see his sneakers until he reached a depth of 27 inches. While this is lower than the previous year, it is more than halfway to the goal of 50 inches.

Urban/Suburban Erosion and Sediment Control Work Group: The goal of this workgroup is to reduce damage to land, streams and reservoirs caused by erosion and the resulting sediment associated with construction projects and other sources. This is accomplished by identifying major and minor sediment sources in urban/suburban areas, determining whether they are temporary, long-term, or temporary but recurring, and working with the agency, group or individual who owns the land. The intent is to assess what appear to be major sources of sediment, including roads, road construction, and other similar potential development projects, and also to consider the cumulative sediment from multiple smaller, individually owned sites.

During 2005, this workgroup was merged with the Local Government Priorities Workgroup. The Commission recognized that the goals of these workgroups could be realized better if it were merged into a single effort. In 2005, Charles County voted to apply to MDE for full delegation of the County's sediment and erosion control enforcement program. This represents a major step forward in the County's efforts to reduce sediment inputs into the Patuxent watershed.

Legislation

In 2005, the Commission agreed to support the proposed legislation being introduced by Senator Paul Sarbanes and representative Wayne Gilchrest regarding funding for agricultural programs in Maryland, and to improve reporting procedures as recommended in the Government Accountability Office (GAO) for status of Chesapeake Bay restoration.

Chesapeake Bay Agreement Implementation

The Commission has a dual role as the Patuxent River Commission, as originally intended in its enabling legislation and as a Tributary Team. As a Tributary Team, the Commission must develop a strategy to address water quality at the tributary scale in response to the C2K Agreement. There has been an ongoing effort to address the nutrient and sediment related problems with the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries and to have the Chesapeake Bay removed from the list of impaired waters under the Clean Water Act by 2010 through voluntary means. The Chesapeake Bay Agreement has set a nutrient "cap" for pollutants entering the Patuxent River.

In 2004 and continuing in 2005, the Commission is working to devise a strategy to implement the Patuxent Tributary Strategy, which includes allocations, current and projected nutrients reduction goals, and the identification of a gap in meeting the River's nutrient reduction goals. In the Patuxent River Tributary Strategy, it is estimated that a nutrient gap of approximately 1.3 M lbs of nitrogen and .06 M lbs. of phosphorus exists. The Commission's priority programs and policies for achieving the River's nutrient goals and addressing the nutrient gaps include: restoring and enhancing riparian forest buffers; implementing effective urban erosion and sediment control; and reducing septic system inputs.

Briefings/Presentations

In 2005, numerous presentations were made to the Commission. Presentation topics included: Cost Effective Best Management Practices; Chesapeake Bay Blue Ribbon Panel Supplemental Recommendations; Mattawoman Waste Water Treatment Plant Operations Upgrades for Nutrient Removal; and Air Quality in the Watershed and its Influences on River Health.

Following through on one of its priorities to implement the River's tributary strategy and various workgroups' objectives, the Commission heard presentations on Calvert County's strategy to implement nutrient removing septic systems; and revisiting the Patuxent River charrette (1982) goals. For nutrient caps, the creation of a math fertilizer curriculum for integration into Maryland's school systems.

In addition the PRC heard a presentation from the Forks of the Patuxent Improvement Association regarding the Chesapeake Rubble Fill Proposal. This presentation resulted on the Commission writing a letter to the Department of the Interior voicing concerns the proposal may have on the River's water quality and natural resource base.

The State Highway Administration also presented changes in its erosion and sediment control measures, and nonpoint source management plan for construction sites. These changes resulted in discoveries made by the chair of the Commission's Urban and Sediment Control Workgroup of poor erosion and sediment control at a construction site.

LOOKING TOWARD 2006

In 2006, the Commission will continue to work towards implementing its workplan objectives and explore ways in which it can implement the Patuxent River Tributary Strategy.