

AGENDA

Baltimore County Commission on Environmental Quality (CEQ)

May 24, 2023 at 7 pm on Webex

CEQ webpage: www.baltimorecountymd.gov/Agencies/ceq/index.html

I. Welcome. This is the 7th and last evening in the CEQ series on the expected increases in extreme weather and water-related challenges (coastal and non-coastal) in Baltimore County, their projected impacts, and the development of resiliency to protect essential infrastructure and public health. Goals of the series are to present information and to stimulate discussion, thus encouraging timely progress on climate change adaptation in our county.

II. Barbara Hopkins, Esq., will speak on how municipalities across the U.S. are implementing green stormwater infrastructure, including Baltimore County, in the setting of regulations, flooding, aging infrastructure, and quality of life in disadvantaged communities.

Ms. Hopkins is Executive Director of [the Green Infrastructure Leadership Exchange](#), which activates local governments in the U.S. and Canada to implement green stormwater infrastructure (GSI) equitably. The presentation is about the first-ever nationwide survey to gauge the state of GSI implementation by local governments and stormwater agencies in the U.S. The report, *The State of Public Sector GSI in the U.S., 2022*, can be [found here](#). The Exchange has 55 agency members and over 350 individual members across the U.S. and Canada.

III. 8 pm: Minutes of 4/26/2023 meeting, correct and approve. Thank you, Lynda and Andy.

IV. Update on Oregon Ridge Master Plan. In-person meeting tonight (5/24) at 6 pm to include a presentation of the report by the landscape architect firm Lardner/Klein, followed by 30 minutes for public comments/questions (2 minutes each), then informal viewing of display boards provided by Lardner/Klein. The plan is here: <https://www.baltimorecountymd.gov/departments/recreation/programs/oregon-ridge-lodge/master-plan>

Naturalists, members of local environmental groups and leaders of community organizations have met and unanimously approved a statement in response to the OR Park Master Plan, focussing on the recommendations that addressed the natural environment of the forest, streams, wetlands and meadows. To "Protect, Restore, Enhance" this natural preserve is listed in the Master Plan as one of the first priorities, although the bulk of the Plan emphasizes new buildings, roads, and parking lots. In response, the statement addresses: (1)

Implementing the stated recommendation to “Protect, Restore, Enhance, and Educate”; (2) Creating the new “Natural Resources Manager position, with staff, supplies and equipment as well as support from DEPS; (3) Constructing environmentally sustainable foot trails and bridges, following published guidelines (cited); (4) Creating true Transparency and incorporating public and stakeholder input during the entire process of discernment and implementation of work at the Park. The document is included as an Addendum to this Agenda.

V. Update on Forest Conservation code changes. State law (SB 526 /House bill 0723) Forest Preservation and Retention, addresses several of the concerns that were raised by speakers at CEQ's Symposium in 2022, except not the time period for maintaining newly planted trees. BCGA is following up with County Councilmembers Marks and Patoka and others. DEPS current survey of tree plantings, and plan to update Landscape Manual.

VI. Closing comments: Carol Newill

This concludes CEQ’s series on stormwater-related challenges to Baltimore County and the development of resilience to them. We thank all our expert speakers for sharing their knowledge and experience with us. We thank the County and State elected officials, administration members, and other workers in government and non-government agencies for attending. We hope the series has been useful to discussions of priorities and implementation of strategies to protect our essential infrastructure and public health as climate change continues.

Questions: What topic(s) shall CEQ address beginning in September? Would you like CEQ to host another series of talks on a particular topic area, and if so what topic area? As a Commissioner, are you interested in pursuing an analysis of the current state of a particular topic in our County, as a member of a Workgroup, and presenting the results as a report (as part of a series, or as a project in itself)? Please share your thoughts by email or phone by the end of July.

Enjoy your summer break!

CEQ meeting dates: 9/27, 10/25, 12/6/2023.

Addendum: Comments by Nature Council and concerned citizens on implementation of the Oregon Ridge Park Master Plan (5-18-23)

1. Implementation of Plan Recommendations is the next crucial part of this Master Plan. *a. “Protect, Restore, Enhance, and Educate.”* The Master Plan acknowledges that Oregon Ridge Park is both a cultural center and a natural preserve. *“This vision unifies the park, with robust stewardship of its natural resources, historic structures and artifacts, and reinvestment in infrastructure and amenities.”* **Protection, restoration, and enhancement of ORP’s natural and historic resources are integral drivers of this master plan.** *b. “Baltimore County Recreation and Parks will formalize a park mission statement that provides overarching park guidance and acts as a covenant to the residents of Baltimore County. This mission statement will focus on natural area preservation and enhancement, passive recreation, and the unique natural resources of the park, including the large forest blocks and reproducing brook trout.”* *c. There must be a firm commitment to provide equal priority and resources to the Natural Resources management sections of the plan as that given to the active recreational portions (ball fields) and infrastructure (buildings, roads, restrooms) recommendations of the plan.* This is a new aspect of Park management and care must be taken in its development. Years 1 – 6 recommend Trail improvements and the development of a Natural Resources Management Plan. (Natural Resources items only are included here.)

2. A Natural Resource Manager is required to protect, restore, and enhance the natural resources of the park. **a. Recommend the hiring and full funding of a Natural Resource Manager for Oregon Ridge Park in Year 1 along with funding for the necessary support staff.** **b. Ensure inclusion in the Park budget as well as all necessary maintenance supplies and equipment.** **c. The position should report directly to the Director of Recreation and Parks and collaborate with and receive support from the Department of Environmental Protection and Sustainability.** **d. The position must require the requisite experience and education in wildlife ecology, forest and land management and environmental conservation practices.** **e. Will work closely with (or potentially replace) the consultant chosen to develop the Natural Resources Management Plan (Pg 127, “Next Steps, years 1-6)**

3. Sustainable Foot Trails and Foot Bridges are essential to protect streams and educate and inspire park visitors. **a. Ensure that sustainable, non-motorized Class 3 ‘hiking only’ trails meet wilderness hiking standards as outlined in the “Pennsylvania Trail Design & Development Principles: Guidelines for Sustainable Non-motorized Trails.”** Publication found at <https://conservationtools.org/guides/126-pennsylvania-trail-design-and-development-principles>. **b. Bridges over stream crossings must be designed, built, and maintained with best practices to ensure the protection of the streams, while also maximizing the education benefits of bringing park patrons close to these pristine waterways.** **c. Plan and create the non-motorized trail system with robust public input at every stage** as also outlined in the Guidelines referenced above.

4. Transparency – ensures public trust and support in the Plan and its implementation. **a.**

Continue to maintain a transparent process during the implementation of the Master Plan. b. Public and stakeholder input should be a priority throughout implementation prior to commencement of recommendations. c. Progress reports should be scheduled at periodic intervals and upon inception/completion of plan milestones. d. Oregon Ridge Park public advocates and stakeholders promise to maintain an active role throughout all stages of Plan implementation.
