

MINUTES

Baltimore County Advisory Commission on Environmental Quality (CEQ)

March 22, 2023 Online Meeting

Our thanks to Brian Lindley of EPS for coordinating Webex meetings.

Attendees: Carol Newill, Valerie Androutsopoulos, Chris Overcash, Dustin Shearer, Karen Wynn, Steve Malan, Lois Jacobs, Jennifer Langford, Brian Lindley, Radu Zamfirache.

CEQ commissioners unable to attend were Andy Miller, Brian Fath, Lynda Eisenberg, Brian Bernstein, Mahnaz Assadi.

Guests included:

Bob Summers (Ecologix Group; was MD Sec of Environment)
Kim Grove (Chief, Research & Environmental Protection, Balt City Dept Public Works)
Susan Parts (Chief of Staff, MD Delegate Cathi Forbes)
Ben Zaitchik (Johns Hopkins U Professor Earth & Planetary Sciences)
Dan Coy (Balt City Chief of Forestry)
Ericka Popovich (Maryland DNR)
Jason T. Stick (Carroll County Floodplain Management Specialist)
Claire Cambardella (U Maryland and Chesapeake Bay Foundation)
Kim Pause Tucker (Gunpowder Valley Conservancy Exec Director)
Kelly Fleming (Neighborhood Design Center Landscape Architect)
Soleiman Abdallah (U Maryland)
Suzanne Flinchbaugh (Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health)
Vrindarani Pani (Baltimore County Executive Office)

PRESENTATION This presentation is the 5th in CEQ's series on Resilience to Extreme Storms and Floods.

"Addressing Urban Flooding Using an Inter-jurisdictional Watershed Approach - The Work of the Baltimore Urban Waters Partnership Flood Team". Our speaker was Bob Shedlock, who leads the Baltimore Urban Waters Partnership Flood Team (of which Andy Miller and Radu Zamfirache are members). Bob Shedlock is Scientist Emeritus at US Geological Survey, Emeritus Director of USGS MD-DE-DC Water Science Center.

Through the EPA's National Urban Waters Program (UWP), Baltimore was one of seven pilot studies and the Patapsco River water shed was selected. The activities included sub-groups and monitoring workshops. There are various

types of flooding in Baltimore but pluvial flooding is the current concern, i.e. when extreme precipitation results in a flood that is independent of an overflowing body of water.

- A. A workshop was held to address the disconnect between current policy and the known realities.
 - 1. There is no common language for discussion
 - 2. The 100 year flood plains are increasingly being topped
 - 3. There are stronger up-down drafts, e.g. cloudbursts.
- B. There is a probabilistic approach to flood hazard mapping systems that are not designed to handle current conditions.
- C. Tidal flooding a.k.a. “nuisance flooding” is increasing in coastal areas.

EPA Report addresses 5 topics:

- 1. Risks increasing outside the 100 year flood plains
- 2. Understanding floods
- 3. Vulnerability of urban streams, both quality and quantity.
- 4. Scientists and regulators need to work together to develop policy
- 5. Coordination and policy are disconnected between federal, state and local governments.

There need to be new flood tracking tools and an update of terrain maps.

Maiden Choice Run Watershed was chosen for a case study because it includes both Baltimore City and County. On 5/27/18 more than 5” of rain fell in one hour. Incentives are needed for inter-jurisdictional collaboration. There is a need for money, curation and dedicated staff because what was once a 100-year event is becoming every 30 years.

Carol thanked the speaker Mr. Shedlock and the guests who attended and opened the meeting to questions.

Q: Chris Overcash – What is the next best step?

A: Bob Shedlock – No good answer but surge modelers together with pluvial monitors would help frame it to develop a better understanding.

Q: Bob Shedlock: Has there been any progress?

A: Kim Grove: There's been little difference, with City-wide storm drain, H&H model at Middle Branch. Microbursts at low tide are not the same. Unlike Hurricane Isabel, where the flooding wasn't from the rain, but came later. Looking at the Inner Harbor and Middle Branch, there can be a 4-foot difference between low and high tides. But we're not using the worst case scenarios in making our predictions.

Carol: Thank you Kim. Have you had any luck?

A: Kim Grove - No, but digging deeper, humidity and temperature may also influence.

Q: Chris Overcash – As a follow-up, if we're trying to protect infrastructure, why aren't we using the worst case scenario? E.g. Thanksgiving traffic AND snowfall?

A. Kim Grove - Cost. It costs more so we're not going with a worst case scenario.

Comment: Steve Malan – Anecdotally, clean water is routinely violated when dealing with storm water flooding M4 permits. Design focus is based on storm water volume. How is water going to be controlled – intercept the water to control it. Baltimore Ecosystem looks at the effectiveness of these practices and soil compaction impact. It looks at storm water collection and what happens beneath the surface.

Q: Carol Newill – The County's Hazen report has a map showing the time to get to each of the hospitals in the County, which can be greatly increased in episodes of flooding. Flooding can disrupt medical care access including ambulances but also access to pharmacies and other medical care facilities. How is that taken into account?

Q: Radu Zimfirache – Some roads are State Highway Administration (SHA), some are private and not Baltimore County roads.

A: Kim Grove – SHA has a vulnerability tool. Emergency response doesn't look at the borders, it looks at the closest.

Dustin Shearer- A 30% increase in intensity has been used for a more conservative estimate of the State standard rainfall curves for Baltimore County resiliency studies. Most regulations do not include 500- year flood events and storm surge analyses. Typically, state and local regulations are only using 100- year flood elevations and 100- year rainfall events which are based on the same

rainfall estimates that have been used over the past 30 years, despite increased storm frequency and intensity.

Kim Grove – Remember last year’s flooding of Jones Falls? The flood plain area has decreased but facilities have increased. How do we get better data before we make changes?

Suzanne Flinchbaugh – Data from the Heritage Greenway: Bull Branch sub-watershed received a grant from DNR and it funded summer assessments.

Fifteen stakeholders assessed data at the Avalon entrance to Patapsco State Park where there’s been flooding in Catonsville and loss of trees with subsequent ecological disintegration due to the Emerald Ash Borer. It was a lot of work and the County said thanks but ... there’s no interest and no leadership.

Bob Shedlock – So I’m not sure how we move forward...?

Kim Grove – Maiden’s Choice has had a lot of interest because of the emergency rescue vehicles using Frederick Rd. and the flooding of a number of basement apartments. There was a failing slope. The apartments developed mold. What resources were available to get grants, signs, outreach, in order to get real capital improvements? They succeeded because of the community neighborhood association, the City Councilperson, and the State delegates. You need to get community engagement and not just a story, but photos. State the case and capture the street, inland flooding and with a date/time stamp.

FEMA must go through the State but it helps when the community asks for funding and grants. Also, the Baltimore County Metropolitan Council.

Q: Carol Newill – Anyone else? Questions? Comments? It’s 8:05. Thank you. I’m going to close this part of the meeting to move on to CEQ business. You are welcome to stay if you want. If you must leave now, I invite you to come to the next CEQ meeting (April 26) when Jenn Aiosa, former Executive Director of Blue Water Baltimore and former County Chief Sustainability Officer, and now the Baltimore County Government Affairs Liaison, will present on long-term resilience to climate change - associated flooding, including green and grey infrastructure, including plans at Turner Station.

MEETING

Agriculture Award for a farmer doing outstanding work on preventing the loss of good agricultural soil to erosion - Update from Steve Malan. CEQ workgroup includes Dustin Shearer, Andy Miller, Brian Bernstein.

We're looking for three nominees that that will be recognized by the Dept. of Agriculture, and the Nutrient and Conservation Team. The winner will be announced at the Maryland State Fair on Baltimore County Day (2nd Wednesday of the fair?). We will ask CE Johnny O to present the award.

The name of the award had not been finalized. IASCP / collaboration of CASCP – Innovative or Cooperative Agriculture Soil Conservation Practices. Suggestion that we have a poster at the Agriculture Center and possibly at the State Fair, especially as one of the main goals of the award is to increase awareness of and action on preventing loss of good soil to erosion due to our increasing frequent and increasingly severe storms. People can apply and nominate themselves for the award in 2024.

Oregon Ridge Master Plan Final Report – Brian Bernstein - On April 13 at 6:30 pm the final report will be presented online. The link is on the Rec & Parks website. The report is not yet available for the public to read, and opportunities for public input have not yet been announced.

Forest Conservation Report – There has been no movement from the County Council. The Baltimore Green Alliance has been giving a nudge to the County Councilmembers who voted for the resolution to ask CEQ to prepare our report (which we did a year ago). DEPS Director Lykens is conducting a survey of tree planting sites. Per Brian Lindley the survey is open and the forest conservation manual is being updated now by DEPS.

Also, there is a bill in the State Legislature that will require the state to update its manual / report every five years.

Deer Management at Oregon Ridge – Brian Lindley provided an update due to concerns that too few deer were culled this year and are doing damage to the trees and other native plants in the park. There was no culling of deer during Covid. In 2023, 14 deer were culled. Normally the number is closer to 30 per year, based on the number of deer that were counted in a sample that year. Due to the lack of culling during Covid, the number of deer in 2023 would be expected to be greater than the number in the year prior to Covid, but the sample this year did not show a large number of deer. Brian believes that historically the sample has been accurate.

Carol – We need help updating the various reports. Linda and Charlie Davis are good resources for the Deer Report and Andy Miller is a good resource for Road Salt. I will be calling to put together teams if CEQ commissioners are interested in helping with updating either of the reports.

Adjourned at 8:35 pm.