

COMMISSION ON THE ENVIRONMENT (COE) MINUTES
Potomac Building
Minutes of October 5, 2011

COE Members present were Lawrence Langley (Chair), Larry Hartwick, Mike Thompson, Daryl Calvano, Paul DiBenedetto, Marta Kelsey, Steve Tripp. Memembers absent were Barne Wheeler, Jenn Ballard, Laura Friess and Mindy Johnson. Others present Paul Waxman.

- I) **Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.
- II) **Discussion & Approval Meeting Minutes:** The September meeting minutes were approved.
- III) **Continuing Business:**
- a. **Analysis of Previous Month's Presentations from Environmental Groups:** The following observations, comments and factual information describe the COE's analysis of last month's presentations from the Potomac River Assn., Patuxent River Keeper & St. Mary's River Watershed Assn. General consensus from all presenters is that excess nitrogen and phosphorous loads entering the Bay are the primary reasons for its failing health. After repeated local attempts to clean the Bay failed miserably, the EPA stepped in with a mandated plan, throughout the Bay's entire watershed, to effect improvement.
1. **Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP).** An EPA mandated system to clean up the Bay by targeting lowering nitrogen (N) and phosphorous (P) loading into it. Each county in the Bay's watershed has been given N & P reduction targets in these areas: Agriculture, Urban, Septic, Forest and Wastewater.
 2. **Septic Systems (SS).** SS discharge nitrogen into the water table, which eventually gets into the Bay. SS repair/replacement is the most important and most costly item in our county's Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP), yet it only accounts for 4-8% of the Bay's nitrogen loading problem. Anne Arundel & St. Mary's counties, according the WIP figures are the two counties with the largest septic problem. Enhanced nitrogen removal (ENR) SS replacements are available, but are expensive. Grants to improve nitrogen removal from SS are available. They go to the most critical problems first: failing systems and those in the Critical Area. However other areas can obtain funding for repairs. Money is handled by the SMHD and is allocated by them. Funding covers the holding tank only. The homeowner must pay drain field and other repairs. Better education on how to get money to fix SS problems is needed, a possible COE initiative. Holding tanks are not permitted as a substitute for SS. There are currently no regulations in place to insure that these new SS will be properly maintained. Spending millions to retrofit SS, which are not failing, with ENR will be very contentious and controversial.
 3. **WIP Cap & Trade.** Consideration is being given to allowing tradeoffs between areas e.g., septic & agriculture.
 4. **Sewage System Expansion.** Consideration is being given to expanding sewage systems to developments in the rural areas that now have SS. This would be very expensive. Currently the State will not approve expanding sewage systems into the rural areas; however, there are some housing developments near development districts and town & village centers, which might be candidates. Also, Calvert County apparently has a model of the ENRSS, which might be available to us @ displays like Earth Day.
 5. **Follow-on Action(s).** Get Sue Veith to come and present the WIP process and status to us. Also, get other experts in each area, e.g., agriculture, to come in also if necessary. Want the COE to address the WIP process in a positive not negative way. Need to determine where the COE fits in the process and how/where it can influence things. Suggestion to write frequent short letters to the BOCC telling them what we are doing was favorably received. Larry Hartwick to do the first letter on our three presenters. Draft available for Nov. meeting. Copy of letter to be sent to newspapers to get public aware of COE and its activities.
- b. **Making Public Aware of COE.**
1. **Newspapers.** Provide copies of all the COE correspondence to them. Use them to advertise our activities.
 2. **Web Site.** Now have two people to update site. Need to make people more aware of site's existence. Separate from County site, but with link to it. In addition to COE correspondence use it to post interesting articles or links to articles on the site e.g., articles from the Bay Journal.
 3. **Facebook.** No action taken on this over the month. Larry Langley to get Steve Trip into contact with Caroline Miller. Report at Nov. meeting.

4. **COE Event Display.** Our display at events needs to be more interesting. Perhaps info on ENRSS and ways to get grant money should be a part?
5. **Next Expo.** No discussion.

c. Other Items of Interest.

1. **Recycling at Sports Events.** A previously inactive issue. Larry Hartwick said the schools did do this but he had not researched...will update at next meeting.
2. **School Cafeteria Trays.** Larry Hartwick said there is a desire to get back to using single, compartmented, reusable trays in cafeterias. Currently Styrofoam is used. The interest is there but, so far, the economics is not.
3. **Hurricane Tree Debris.** Mike Thompson reported that the rumor that there is no market for debris lumber is false. There is still a market for lumber. He is going to contract with someone to clear out fallen trees in his forest and will receive some % on the dollar once the trees are sold. Also, hardwood and other valuable lumber is not being burned at the disposal sites, but is being separated and sold.

IV) **New Business:** None

V) **Announcements:** None

VI) **Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 p.m.