

ST. MARY'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT COMMISSION ON THE ENVIRONMENT

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Annual Report

This Annual Report covers July 2009 through April 2010 and is submitted on behalf of the current members of the Commission on the Environment (COE) to provide a summary of significant tasks the COE has undertaken during the timeframe stated above.

I. Current COE Membership & staff support

A. COE current members and their respective offices are as follows:

Susan Blake - Deputy Chair

Troy Hansen – Member

Larry Hartwick – Member

Marta Kelsey – Member

Caroline Miller – Member

Sandra Neville – Member

Bill Shreve – Member

Mike Thompson – Member

Barne Wheeler - Chair

B. Ex Officio members:

Daryl Calvano –Health Department representative

Sue Veith –Department of Land Use and Growth Management representative

C. Staff Support:

Jada Stuckert-- Department of Land Use and Growth Management

II. Purpose and Mission Statement

The purpose and mission of the COE is as follows:

To promote environmental awareness by research, by information gathering, and by public meetings; to involve citizens through a variety of means to effect improved community understanding; to serve as the County Government's official representation in matters related to the environment. As such to serve as liaison with Federal, State and other local governments and with civic organizations and the general public; and to investigate, to analyze, and to make recommendations on environmental matters as required by the Board of County Commissioners.

As such, “the COE interprets the word ‘environment’ in its broadest terms, encompassing

our lifestyle, quality of life and how our actions influence, for good and bad, and the habitat in which we live.”

III. Major Goals

The COE members desired more specific guidance for fulfillment of its purpose and mission as stated above. To provide that guidance the COE members developed a set of proposed goals, used a consensus process to refine them, and adopted 12 major goals which guide and focus development of their work and activities in the absence of specific requests from the Board of County Commissioners and are used to help focus responses to citizen generated requests. The Major Goals adopted by the COE are:

1. Become the County’s focal point for environmental matters.
2. Undertake environmental studies of important issues and make recommendations to the County Commissioners.
3. Inform County citizens on the environment and enhance their environmental awareness and concern.
4. Publicize and advertise environmental issues throughout the County.
5. Educate County citizens on environmental impacts on human health.
6. Establish an active, effective network of environmental, economic, land use, enforcement and social organizations and groups.
7. Study and recommend actions the County and its citizens can take to be better stewards of the environment.
8. Study and take positions on the County’s potable water quality and quantity.
9. Study and take positions on the health and cleanup of the Chesapeake Bay, its tributaries and the people and wildlife these bodies of water support.
10. Promote programs that reduce waste and encourage recycling.
11. Encourage energy conservation and use of alternative energy sources as strategies to slow climate change and reduce air pollution.
12. Educate County citizens on landscape practices that reduce sedimentation and chemical and nutrient pollution of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries.

IV. Summary of Specific Tasks

The above stated goals are interrelated and often overlap. As such, performance of specific tasks, undertaken by the COE, invariably addresses a variety of the above stated goals. In recognition of this fact, this report will not identify which goals were addressed in fulfillment of the COE’s purpose and mission statement. Instead, this report will summarize significant tasks the COE has undertaken in fulfillment of its purpose and mission statement.

A. Environmental Concern Survey Summit

The COE conducted a survey of County residents and environmental organizations to gauge the environmental concerns of County residents and environmental organizations. The full results of the survey are posted on greensomd.com and were verified by an additional survey conducted during the

COE's annual "Green Forum" in 2009. Sustainable development and waterway pollution were the top two concerns of survey participants. The COE planned to transform these two concerns into specific initiatives at a summit of interested County residents and environmental organizations. However, insufficient RSVPs from County residents and environmental organizations (who participated in the survey) led to the cancelation of the summit. The COE nevertheless transformed these two concerns into specific initiatives and then prioritized them based on responses to email questionnaires forwarded to the survey participants. The COE will present these prioritized initiatives to the County Commissioners by way of formal letter within the next month.

B. Tree cutting along power lines

Concern about tree cutting along power lines in the County was brought to the COE's attention. Specifically, county residents and members were concerned about whether or not SMECO had a tree removal policy in place. After inquiry, the COE learned that SMECO had authority to remove trees located within thirty feet of a minor distribution line, one hundred feet of a major distribution line and one hundred fifty feet from big lines. The COE also learned that SMECO is not required to replant trees. After formal discussion the issue was placed on the inactive list and the above information was posted on the COE companion website.

C. 2009 Comprehensive Plan

After review and discussion of the County's draft 2009 Comprehensive Plan (the Plan), the COE offered formal comment by way of a letter dated November 5, 2009, and presentation to the County Commissioners. In regards to the perseverance of the County's environmental heritage, the COE recognized the Plan as a welcome and ambitious improvement over the previous plan. In sum, the COE offered the following comments: that the Plan failed to mention the adoption and implementation of the County's annual Growth Policy; that the challenge of proper State and County planning for new school construction and prevention of school overcrowding is not described in detail; that the Piney Point Town Center should be re-designated as a Village Center to better protect the surrounding environment and waterways; that due to impediments to development, the sensitive nature of the environment and water and sewer service issues Valley Lee should have been re-designated as a Rural Service Center; that the Plan did not address the topic of maximum sustainable development in the County; that the Plan did not discuss low impact and sustainable development in the County; that the Plan include more language that deals with actively monitoring and mitigating agricultural runoff; that the Plan lacked a goal for the preservation of forested land; that the current Aquifer and Potable Water Management Plan be incorporated into the Plan; that initiatives to treat effluent as drinking water should be validated; that desalinization technology investigations should be broadened beyond the Calvert Cliffs Nuclear Power Plant option; that the plan should outline the strategic location of wells and the distribution of water by pipeline to alleviate future water problems; that the plan acknowledge that MDE controls appropriation of permits to allow major industrial users of potable water for industrial/commercial uses; that the Plan should call for the

improvement of predevelopment runoff characteristics for new and redeveloped sites; and, that the Plan should ensure storm water management systems and sediment and erosion control are not only properly implemented but also maintained at new or redeveloped sites.

D. Grey Water System Initiative

The Water Policy Task Force briefed the COE on a concept for a residential rainwater collection system (the concept) whereby the collected water would be used to flush toilets, wash clothes and cars, and water lawns. The COE presented the concept to Patuxent Habitat for Humanity (Habitat) as a proposed pilot project. Although the concept was welcomed, Habitat cited budgetary issues. In addition, further research into the concept's feasibility revealed a discrepancy between the Plumbing Code and the MDE Code. However, the COE continues to seek funding for the concept and clarify the legal discrepancy that may exist.

E. Green Building Task Force

The COE, in accordance with its bylaws, formed a Green Building Subcommittee (the GBS) as a subcommittee of the COE. The GBS's priority is to raise awareness and help provide the County and surrounding jurisdictions with information on issues related to green building. The GBS held its first meeting in October 2009 and meets on the first Wednesday of every month at the Higher Education Center from 7:30 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. GBT meetings have been well attended and have been successful. The GBS reports to the COE at regular COE meetings. Currently the COE is looking into posting some information about the GBS on its companion website and other means.

F. COE and SWAC Integration

The COE received a letter from the County Commissioners that proposed the integration of the Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC) into the COE as a subcommittee thereof. After further inquiry and discussion the COE passed a motion in favor of this integration. As of the 23 day of February, 2010, the County Commissioners approved certain amendments to the COE's charter and bylaws to allow for this integration. Currently, the COE is working out the details of forming the SWAC and integrating this new subcommittee.

G. McIntosh Run Property

Mr. Laurence R. Rowland briefed the COE on an eighty acre forested tract of land (the land) he owns that borders McIntosh Run and is located within the Breton Bay Watershed. Mr. Rowland informed the COE of his efforts to transfer the land to an environmental organization, the County and/or the State in the form of a public conservancy. As the Breton Bay Watershed is among the "most ecologically diverse and sensitive biological communities in the Chesapeake region," the COE voiced its support of the land transferring into a public conservancy in letters to Governor O'Malley, Comptroller Franchot, Treasurer Kopp and the County Commissioners dated November 20, 2010.

H. Combined COE and Plumbing Board Expo

Representatives of the Plumbing Board proposed that the COE and Plumbing Board combine efforts to put on a biannual Expo. The COE passed a motion in favor of this combination and are working on the details with the Plumbing Board. The combined Expo is scheduled for October 9, 2010.

V. Acknowledgments

The COE acknowledges the many citizens and professionals who have provided assistance and information to the Board. We also thank the Board of County Commissioners for providing the staff and financial support for activities of the Commission.

VI. Membership and Meeting Information

As a reader of this annual report, if you are interested in becoming a COE member (commission member or otherwise) or would like to attend a meeting as a concerned County resident, please join us on the first Wednesday of every month at 7:00 pm at the St. Mary's County Governmental Center, Room 14, located in Leonardtown. Please visit our website (<http://www.co.saint-marys.md.us/voluntr/page13.asp>) or our companion webpage (www.greensomd.com) for more information (location, meetings, minutes, bylaws, hyperlinks, etc.).

COE members are appointed to terms of four years and there are currently no vacancies on the Commission. Terms will expire for 2 members in 2010 and 1 member in 2011. Any citizen interested in appointment to the COE may submit an application to the County's public information office to express interest in a COE position. Citizens are welcomed and encouraged to attend meetings on a walk-in basis. The COE has three standing subcommittees and periodically the COE establishes Ad Hoc subcommittees to work on specific topics of interest. Ex Officio (non-voting) members can be utilized in sub-committees and to assist in keeping the COE informed of environmental issues and citizen concerns. Individuals that are interested in joining one of the subcommittees or in participating in COE meetings as Ex Officio (non-voting) members can contact the COE through the "contact link on the web site or by contacting the County's Environmental Planner, Sue Veith, at sue.veith@co.saint-mary's.md.us.

VII. Conclusion

The COE continues its proactive approach in accordance with its goals stated in Section III of this report. The Section V Summary of Specific Tasks provides only a brief summary of the tasks undertaken by the COE since our last report was submitted. For a more detailed record concerning the COE's activities, please consult our minutes found at the county web page provided above. In conclusion, we ask that the Board of County Commissioners review this report and provide guidance and direction as appropriate.

Respectfully submitted,

Signed/ Barne Wheeler

Barne Wheeler, Chair COE