



ANACOSTIA WATERSHED RESTORATION PARTNERSHIP STEERING COMMITTEE

Wednesday, March 27, 2019

10:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Room 4/5; First Floor

Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments
777 N. Capitol St., NE, Suite 300
Washington, DC 20002

DRAFT MEETING SUMMARY

AWSC Members in Attendance:

- Joe Gill, Prince George's Co DoE (PGDoE); Chair
- Adam Ortiz, Montgomery Co Department of Environmental Protection (MCDEP)
- Jeffrey Seltzer, DOEE
- Gretchen Mikeska, DOEE
- Kate Bennett, MCDEP
- Paul Emmart, Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE)
- Dan Bierly, USACOE
- Mike Comisso, National Park Service (NPS)
- Marian Dombroski, AWCAC Chair
- Erin Garness-Holmes, Anacostia Riverfront Trust

AWSC GUESTS:

- Dev Murali, DOEE
- Cecile Green, DOEE
- Hamid Karimi, DOEE
- Robbie O'Donnell, Anacostia Riverkeeper (ARK)
- Jim Delynn, DOEE
- Vernice Miller-Travis, Skeo

COG STAFF IN ATTENDANCE:

- Steve Bieber
- Sam Groat
- Noah Lee
- Aubin Maynard

Reasonable accommodations are provided upon request, including alternative formats of meeting materials.
Visit www.mwcog.org/accommodations or call (202) 962-3300 or (202) 962-3213 (TDD).

- Phong Trieu

1. CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS

Joe Gill, Steering Committee Chair

Chair Gill called the meeting to order and introduced himself to the group. He then thanked Mr. Ortiz for his work as the committee's previous Chair.

2. APPROVAL OF MEETING SUMMARY

The 9/06/18 meeting summary was approved. Additional comments can be sent to COG staff.

3. TIDAL RIVER BACTERIAL MONITORING

Robbie O'Donnell, Anacostia Riverkeeper (ARK)

Robbie O'Donnell, Anacostia Riverkeeper (ARK) shared progress of the Bacteria and Water Quality Monitoring program for the Clean Rivers Project. This project, funded through DOEE, plans to expand water quality monitoring to 22 stations during 2018-2019 in the District of Columbia tidal river portions, only. The stations will monitor *E. Coli* levels, temperature, turbidity and other water quality parameters. Mr. O'Donnell shared updates on the volunteer monitoring and citizens management training programs, which expect to train over 100 volunteers in the coming months. Additionally, Mr. O'Donnell expressed there has been a growing interest in these training programs from the public – with over 300 volunteers signing up for new training programs. The presentation also covered recent developments for the swim guide app.

Discussion

- Water quality monitoring protocols are approved by DC government and efforts are now moving into the sampling phase.
- The ARK water quality monitoring program is part of a long-term effort to eventually integrate with the Chesapeake Bay watershed dataset, in order to expand data efforts.
- COG plans on discussing with ARK to potentially integrate this water monitoring data into its mapping efforts.
- ARK has reached out to the Maryland portion of the watershed to expand this volunteer monitoring for that tidal river portion.
- Currently it is too early to tell if water quality is improving from sewer upgrades. Exceptional high levels of rainfall and runoff recorded last year.
- Training requirements will align with Chesapeake Bay monitoring for citizen involvement and will include stringent QA/QC process.
- DNA testing in Anacostia planned for next year to better understand sources of the fecal bacterial pollutants.

4. ANACOSTIA MESSAGING WORKGROUP

Vernice Miller-Travis, Skeo

Erin Garnaas-Holmes, Anacostia Waterfront Trust

Ms. Travis, (Skeo) summarized their Anacostia Watershed messaging – Prince George’s County Focus Group report findings. 22 total people participated in two focus group meetings held on October 23 & 24, 2018, on the public perception of the Anacostia Watershed in Prince George’s County (PGCo). Overall perceptions were negative, especially considering perceptions of local waterways compared to perceptions of the Anacostia River. As expressed by Skeo of the focus group participants, Anacostia River restoration efforts were perceived as being more DC-centric, and less-oriented towards PGCo. In other words, there was a feeling shared that PGCo was being left out of the equation, in terms of resources and attention. Additionally, based on the focus group, participants expressed there was lack of access to local waterways and forms of public engagement in restoration efforts. Moreover, there were a variety of things participants articulated that they would like to see improved upon: increased information for stream/river corridor access and aesthetic waterways and facilities, more cleanups and local involvement, better education in schools, stories of the Anacostia and tying the river to other local history and promoting civic responsibility. Also, as expressed by Skeo, none of the focus group participants had seen the Year of the Anacostia (YOTA) video but loved it after watching it. Some group participant suggestions had included: improvement to the icons by showing boats/ferries, dining, emergency areas, growing/gardening, native vegetation, maps, pet area, picnic, restrooms, roller skating/skate parks, sport facilities, trails, trash/recycling, wildlife nature watching, and museums/art/cultural points of interest.

Emergent themes from the focus groups highlight the need for an equitable development approach that bridges the gap between “inner vs outer ring” perceptions of Prince George’s County. Moving forward, focus group participants would like to see heightened involvement from elected officials on decisions that balance equitable development, environment, natural resource protection, and public access to the Anacostia Watershed. These recommendations aim to incorporate the Anacostia Watershed into the cultural history of various Prince George’s County communities. Finally, create a public awareness and education campaign to target and engage the diverse populations, age groups, ethnicities and language communities in Prince George’s County.

Discussion:

- Year of the Anacostia plans to implement a longstanding messaging campaign, with objectives to reach a broader audience of “one message, many voices.”
- A prominent theme of the discussion centers on how to encourage economic development without compromising the identity of the Anacostia community and the health of the Anacostia environment/ecosystem.

5. ANACOSTIA.NET REDEVELOPMENT, DASHBOARD AND MAPS

Phong Trieu, COG; Aubin Maynard, COG

Mr. Trieu provided a brief update on restoration tracking and introduced the new Anacostia.net website. The new site will feature responsive design to meet modern usage demands. The site will also include storytelling maps, data maps, videos, and more interactive recreational content (e.g., fishing maps, feature destinations). Icons and colors will be more modern and pleasing and meet the Anacostia color palette. Mr. Trieu explained that the Indicator dashboard update was nearly complete and that COG hopefully will be able to include information from the DCWater and WSSC. He also highlighted two story telling maps. The first story map narrates the Anacostia Watershed characteristics through maps, summary texts and figures, and images. The second story map to be released with the website release is the River Herring recovery story map.

A brief discussion followed:

- Mr. Trieu drew a distinction between (Upper) Beaverdam Creek and Lower Beaverdam Creek. The former has very low imperviousness levels and healthy aquatic communities relative to Lower Beaverdam Creek and other similar Anacostia subwatersheds.
- The success of the river herring recovery story map should be pushed through social media as they are positive interesting facts.
- Committee supports COG's plan to potentially integrate ARK's water monitoring data into its mapping efforts.

6. ANACOSTIA RIVER SEDIMENT PROJECT UPDATES

Dev Murali, DOEE

Mr. Murali presented a brief update on the Anacostia River Sediment Project. The projects investigation report is in its draft stage, going through the comment and revision process. Mr. Murali informed that there will be a meeting soon, with the project stakeholders, to go over the scope of the project. Things to be covered in this meeting are addressing the human health concerns with the river, remediation techniques and technology that are most cost effective, catering to all members, and balancing all factors. Mr. Murali reiterated the condition of the river being highly contaminated and that the river does not meet human health standards. He followed with a major goal of the project, aside from monitoring, is to locate and determine upstream toxic source contributions. The study has collected toxics data for one year and long-term monitoring is needed. The goal for that toxics monitoring is to transfer operation and management to the upstream Counties. For sediment monitoring, USGS has collected the data on suspended sentiments in low flow. Results found that 97% of the low flow contamination come from the tributaries of the Anacostia. Finally, Mr. Murali informed the committee that a the gauging station at Lower Beaverdam Creek will likely continue to operate with Maryland and County funding.

Discussion

- There have not been any land use studies in coordination with this project. COG, however does monitor for trash "hotspots".
- DOEE has not monitored in Beltsville Agricultural Research Center (BARC), but COG has several surveys conducted within BARC. Beaverdam Creek (BC) and Lower Beaverdam Creek (LBC) are very different; BC is a baseline/reference area and LBC heavily contaminated.

7. STEERING COMMITTEE BUSINESS

A. Management Committee and Workgroup Updates *Kate Bennett, Management Committee Chair*

The MC met on February 14. The agenda included member updates from AWCAC, Trash and Toxics source workgroups. COG also presented the progress on the web site revision and the release schedule plan. Mr. Trieu also presented the 2017-2018 River Herring monitoring summary to which they crafted the River Herring recovery story map for website inclusion.

There was also an afternoon special speaker. Ms. Neely Law, PhD, Center for Watershed Protection presented an inlet cleaning operations study and provided recommendations to improve nutrient and sediment load reductions for TMDL compliance.

B. AWCAC Update

Marian Dombroski, AWCAC Chair

Ms. Dombroski provided a few brief updates on recent AWCAC activities.

- The March meeting focused on larger advocacy issue and statewide legislative issues. The group heard from NGOs on WIP III advocacy, Maryland legislative priorities, and engaging agencies and the development community in DC. The May meeting will be held at the National Arboretum and the July meeting will focus on invasive species management, forest conservation strategies and NPS updates.
- AWCAC will need an ALS interpreter as there are several deaf people interested in participating at the meetings.
- AWCAC has also written several letters of support for various groups.
- Pope Branch received a Native American blessing arranged through the Pope Branch Community Alliance.
- Ms. Antonia Bookbinder (M-NCPPC) received the Robert Finton Outdoor Educator of the Year Award.

C. New Initiatives

All Members

Dan Bierly, USACE stated that the Prince George's County stream restoration project is still proceeding forward with the "environment" OMB review. If approved, USACE can move forward with the preliminary design to restore seven miles of stream and open 6 miles and connect to old projects meaning 14 total miles. The project cost is approximately \$34 million.

NEXT MEETING: JUNE 26, 2019