



Water Quality Advisory Group

MISSION: To recommend policies, programs, and priorities that protect, maintain, and/or restore the biological, chemical and physical integrity of County streams, rivers, wetlands, groundwater, lakes, and other water resources.

2012-2013 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE WATER QUALITY ADVISORY GROUP TO THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE AND COUNTY COUNCIL

Established by the Water Quality Discharge Law, the Water Quality Advisory Group (WQAG) is required to report once a year to the County Executive and Council on its activities and findings. This report discusses the issues confronted by the WQAG during the past year and summarizes its activities and recommendations during 2012, and planned areas of focus for 2013. The leadership of the group continued with two co-chairs: Danila Sheveiko and Patrick Walsh. Furthermore, the WQAG maintained its focus on three broad subject areas through subcommittees: (1) Development and Environmental Site Design (ESD), (2) TMDL and Pollution Reduction, and (3) Emerging Issues/Outreach. Several vacancies in the group were filled. However, due to turnover, and terms ending in the near future, the group needs to fill additional positions. WQAG members continue various efforts to contact people in the County to solicit membership for these vacancies.

In addressing the issues of water quality in 2012, the WQAG relied on the expertise of its members, as well as consulting subject-matter experts, staff, and department representatives to present information and options on the broad areas identified as 2012 priorities. This consultative process informed the WQAG's deliberations on its 2012 actions and recommendations. The WQAG meetings included presentations organized to regularly bring in outside speakers and technical experts to brief the WQAG on how the issues affect or are implemented in the County, and to share their perspectives.

Summary of 2012 Activities and Recommendations

(1). MS4 Permit Implementation and Outreach

As part of the MS4 permit, the County is required to institute significant reductions in impervious surface. Our first meeting of the year had Katherine Nelson of M-NCPPC talk with the group about the County's Private Institutional Facilities (PIF) policy, which allows private non-profit entities to get sewer service just outside the sewer envelope. It is important to monitor actions under this policy, since extending service to the PIFs

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tends to allow an increase in imperviousness beyond the amount originally approved by Council, normally due to increases in parking. **In the future, it will be important to balance the needs of PIFs with the County's MS4 requirements.**

The MS4 also contains requirements for education and outreach activities (E&O). Ryan Zerbe updated the group on DEP's E&O initiatives, which are part of the County's implementation strategy, including pet waste education, residential lawn care education, litter reduction, and tree planting. DEP increased its outreach presence by 145% from FY10 to FY11. Mr. Zerbe suggested that the group could help by taking the E&O outreach message back to the various citizens' groups and stakeholders that WQAG members are involved in.

In September, the WQAG discussed the **potential for art on storm drains to heighten the public's awareness of storm water's impact on the environment.** WQAG plans to explore in 2013 how a storm drain art project could be developed for Montgomery County. The idea is to have local artists and schools paint water/pollution-themed murals on storm drains. The project has potential to dramatically increase awareness in the community, as exhibited in similar programs in St. Louis and Baltimore. The plan would be to have local artists and/or area schools design and paint water-related themes on storm drains.

(2). Environmental Site Design

In addition to the actions described above, the group has engaged in several other activities related to ESD. Our DEP representative, Pam Parker, has continued to update the group on the County's efforts to implement ESD to the maximum extent practicable. A large part of this effort involves changing the County's codes to allow for additional ESD practices. **A large effort is underway in the Planning division to implement an overhaul of the Zoning Code, which the WQAG supports.** Our M-NCPPC representative, Mark Symborski, has kept the group informed on the Planning Department's work to remove impediments to ESD and facilitate its implementation, as part of the comprehensive Zoning Code rewrite.

In July, the group welcomed Ms. St. John from the Department of Transportation to discuss the County's Green Streets program and low impact development (LID). Community engagement with the program continues. Efforts related to the program appear to be assisting with the implementation of the MS4 program. On a related note, Guy Hager of the Parks & People Foundation (PPF) gave a presentation on a storm water run-off reduction project in Baltimore, MD. PPF worked with the city through a public-private partnership to improve water quality by increasing green space and developing green corridors connecting open spaces.

The WQAG also discussed the County's ESD Microscale Practice Committee, which is a public-private partnership that is assisting with the preparation of ESD guidance documents. Since there are inconsistencies between State design guidance and County standards, the goal of the committee is to develop consistent interpretation of guidance.

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(3). Emerging Issues

The WQAG reviewed the Tier designation of streams based on water quality and whether additional streams in Montgomery County should be identified as Tier 2 in order to receive special protection. It was deemed important for the County to be proactive in this designation system, instead of responding after streams are threatened. The tier 3 designation was also explored. This discussion eventually led the WQAG to draft a November 26 letter to the County Executive and Council recommending that the County evaluate additional Tier 2 designations. **The group thanks you for your recent response and promise to investigate the matter.**

Since Ten Mile Creek is in good condition with a high quality biotic index, the WQAG also discussed the Ten Mile Creek and Clarksburg development and the proposed limited amendment to the Master Plan. The WQAG has invited speakers representing the developer and environmental communities to present on the issue in 2013. **This will be a primary focus of the group in the coming year, since it overlaps with several interests of the group.**

WSSC representatives briefed the group on the organization's budget. The CIP budget will ultimately fund inspections and repairs/sewer reconstructions of all sanitary sewer lines. The CIP budget for FY13 is \$136.4 million, and will focus on inspection/repair of sewer lines in the Rock Creek, Sligo Creek, Cabin John and Paint Branch watersheds. Sligo Creek will be a target area for 2013. All of these WSSC programs and efforts are important water quality initiatives and are of continued interest to the group.

Areas of Focus for the Coming Year

- In fulfilling our mission, the WQAG anticipates having speakers and presentations that focus on the following topics/issues given their implications for local water quality, meeting MS4 permit and Bay TMDL obligations, and opportunities to broaden public understanding/support for the important water quality work being done by and in the County. Presentations on the Ten Mile Creek and Clarksburg development process
- Getting updates on further implementation of the MS4 permit and integration of ESD
- Getting updates on the Chesapeake Bay TMDL Requirements. DEP has briefed the WQAG about phase II of the Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) approved by MDE, their educational and outreach programs, and milestones to meet the TMDL requirements. Further action items are on the horizon regarding this issue.
- Exploring the potential benefits of and potentially recommending the development of a storm drain art program.

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