

Montgomery County Water Quality Advisory Group – Draft Meeting Summary

Date and Time: February 12, 2024 (7:00 PM – 8:30 PM)

Location: Microsoft Teams meeting

Staff Liaison: Miranda Reid, DEP

Notetaker: Phillip Mariscal

Members present: Keith Brooks, Bob Buglass, Travis Gorleski, Phillip Mariscal, Edward Ohanian, Linda Silversmith, Tim Stemann, Amy Stevens, Mark Symborski, Allison Wright

Members absent: Amanda Rockler, Tracy Rouleau

Additional attendees: Sadie Drescher (Chesapeake Bay Trust)

Meeting summary

I. Introductions and welcome

Acting Chair, Keith Brooks, requested to move Sadie Drescher’s presentation from New Business (III) to the beginning of the agenda. Members did not object.

Sadie Drescher, Vice President of Programs for Restoration, Chesapeake Bay Trust, introduced the Pooled Monitoring Initiative’s Restoration Research Award Program. The program pools funding to support scientists, who answer key questions about stream restoration.

The program started when stream restorations stalled in response to questions about their performance. The program seeks to use science to guide the selection and funding of the best and most cost-effective stream restoration projects at the most optimal sites.

The program has funded forty-three projects since 2015 with about eight million dollars in funding. The program does not build projects, but funds research to monitor projects and answer key restoration questions posed by the regulatory community and practitioners. The intent is for these answers to shape restoration decisions, policies, and practices.

Montgomery County Water Quality Advisory Group – Draft Meeting Summary

Some of the research questions address best management practices effectiveness, biological community restoration, climate change, pollutants of emerging concern (e.g., polychlorinated biphenyls), and restoration trade-offs.

Restoration Research Award Program awards, progress, program outputs, past RFPs, etc. are posted online at: <https://cbtrust.org/grants/restoration-research/>.

Multiple counties serve as Pooled Monitoring Initiative partners, including Montgomery County, Anne Arundel County, Baltimore City, Charles County, Frederick County, Harford County, and Prince George’s County.

Montgomery County voluntarily partnered with the Pooled Monitoring Program in 2017 with a ten-year memorandum of understanding and of the forty-three projects, Montgomery County funded two, which follow:

- *[“Using a Novel Research Framework to Assess Water Quality Impacts of Urban Trees.”](#)* This project quantified the stormwater treatment value of trees across urban forest types to determine whether more complex urban forest types resulted in greater reduction of runoff volume; and
- *“Influence of historic and current land use practices on polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) contamination of soils and stormwater sediments in the Chesapeake Bay watershed.”* This project evaluated the historic and current land use impact on the presence of PCBs in soils and stormwater sediments.

The Chesapeake Bay Trust set a due date of January 2024 for grant applications. Studies may not deviate from the specific research question for which the Trust provided funding.

Solange Filoso performed one such stream restoration study, *[Evaluating the Effectiveness and Sustainability of Novel Stream Restoration Designs for Coastal Plain Streams in Maryland: Integrating Existing and New Data from Restoration Monitoring](#)*. The study looked at stream restoration project positions in the watershed, stream imperviousness, and pre- and post-information. Overall, the study found restorations more effective in headwater streams and less effective in lowland streams. Such findings can be used by regulators who permit projects. Project builders also use the studies, and the Maryland Stream Restoration Association hosts webinars with the researchers.

Montgomery County Water Quality Advisory Group – Draft Meeting Summary

The presentation concluded at 7:38pm ET, and the Acting Chair opened questions to the presenter.

Keith Brooks, Acting Chair, asked if it was unusual that Montgomery County funded only two of the forty-three projects. However, other research is occurring in Montgomery County, which is not funded by the County itself. While Montgomery County does not have funds every year to support studies, the County does provide a significant amount of data from its monitoring program to support the studies.

Travis Gorleski commented on the subdivided nature of Montgomery County land, including its many small farms and parcels. He added that streams which run through the properties of multiple landowners could present challenges for gaining approval for restorations, as not all landowners involved may approve.

Phillip Mariscal noted one researcher stated stream restorations had benefited the Chesapeake Bay but not necessarily the streams themselves. Amy Stevens stated it is important to consider what is being measured. If we look at stream stability (decreased erosion) and reduced pollutant loads, one can say restorations have helped the Bay. However, we are not seeing the benthic/biological uplift from the restorations in the streams themselves. The reason for this lack of uplift could relate to the urban environment, particularly in Montgomery County, where benthic macroinvertebrates don't have significant populations even in neighboring streams.

II. Review of the January 8, 2024, meeting summary

The Chair asked members if they had questions or comments about the meeting summary. No members had questions or comments.

III. New Business.

a. Chesapeake Bay Trust Restoration Research Grant and Pooled Monitoring programs, Sadie Drescher, Vice President of Programs for Restoration

See agenda item I. Introductions and welcome.

b. Brainstorm 2024 Speaker Topics and New Focus Areas

Montgomery County Water Quality Advisory Group – Draft Meeting Summary

ACTION: Miranda Reid will send the brainstorm list to members after the February 12, 2024, meeting. Miranda will add Climate Change Officer, Sarah Kogel-Smucker, as a potential speaker on the topic list.

ACTION: Group members will reply to Miranda’s email containing the brainstorm list with their rankings indicating their preferences for speaker topics.

ACTION: Travis Gorleski will see if he can find a speaker on agricultural topics for a future meeting. Travis will consider whether the speaker should be an individual who assesses agriculture-related water issues or an individual who designs solutions to these issues.

c. 2024 Notetaker Schedule

Miranda Reid shared with the group the notetaker schedule she had shared prior to the February 12, 2024, meeting. She advised notetakers they must submit notes one week prior to the next meeting at the latest. Notetakers must attach presentation to the notes and include comments on the presentations in the meeting notes.

IV. Reports of Officers, Boards, Standing Committees.

None at this time. No report.

V. Reports of Special Committees.

None at this time. No report.

VI. Special Orders.

None at this time. No report.

VII. Unfinished Business and General Orders.

None at this time. No report.

VIII. Adjournment.

Montgomery County Water Quality Advisory Group – Draft Meeting Summary

The next meeting will occur on March 11, 2024, from 7:00pm – 8:30pm ET. Per communication from Miranda Reid prior to the meeting, Edward Ohanian will serve as the March 11, 2024 Notetaker.

The meeting adjourned at 8:03pm ET.

Attachment: Montgomery County WQ Advisory Group_Pooled Monitoring Initiative_021224

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