

HARFORD COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY BOARD

MEETING SUMMARY – Feb 19, 2019

Members Present: Paul Gartelmann, Dennis Kirkwood, Roland Beckman, Sally LaBarre, Tami Imbierowicz, Lynn Davis

Ex-officio Members Present: Julie Mackert, Matt Kropp, Paul Magness, Jeff Schoenberger

Review / Approval of January 15, 2019 Meeting Summary

A motion to approve the January 15th meeting summary was made. The motion was seconded; the Board unanimously approved the meeting summary.

FIDS Habitat for Birds – Mr. Phil Powers, Harford Bird Club

Mr. Powers began his presentation by telling the group how he became an avid bird watcher by attending an annual ‘birding’ trip to Pennsylvania, which later became a New Year’s Day tradition. Over the past twenty years, he has seen and measured the decline of crucial forest habitat and its effect on Forest Interior Dwelling Species (FIDS), especially vulnerable bird populations. Mr. Powers felt that the County’s growth patterns over the last 40 years have contributed to the loss of habitat and the decline of bird populations.

Mr. Powers does a bird count at least four times per year. He encourages everyone to participate in the Great American Backyard Bird Count to contribute to the study. “Anyone can participate,” he says, “You tend to see lower numbers during inclement weather, so you don’t have to wait until a designated bird count event in order to submit your findings online.” Cornell University accepts bird counts from the public and incorporates these findings into a national database catalog.

Due to forest fragmentation, bobwhite quails are now only found at Aberdeen Proving Ground, where their habitat is protected. We see hawks more regularly than ever before because they have been forced to look for food on major roadways, as their food source (ie, small rodents) have been pushed from their natural habitats by development. Great horned owls have left the local area entirely in search of a more secluded habitat. Mr. Powers noted, however, that a few great bird-watching areas still reside in our local area, where wide expanses of forest habitat still exist. “Kilgore Falls, Annie’s Playground, Eden’s Mill, Mariner Point Park, Susquehanna State Park, and Swan Harbor are excellent bird-watching sites,” he says.

According to Mr. Powers, organizations like the Harford Land Trust are the best advocates for protected, open space for FIDS. Estuary centers and nature centers are fundamental for teaching the next generation the about the importance of natural habitat and resource conservation. There, children and adults alike can learn about protecting wildlife in their own back yard. For instance, because birds find it difficult to see a window as a solid object, home owners may want to consider bird-proofing their windows to prevent birds from flying into them and being severely injured. Bird lovers can also build nesting boxes for the local (non-migratory) birds to overwinter. “Local birds stay where they are born. They do not move from place to place, so we

need to take care of their existing home, rather than expecting them to find a new one every time [people] decide to build.”

Departmental Updates

Julie Mackert reported that there has been some inquiry by some local Joppa residents on to what agency tests water quality for people to be able to swim in and around Rumsey Island. Paul Magness said that there are no formal public swim beaches in the County. EAB members discussed other areas in the County that people may use for swimming/tubing. Anne Arundel Community College tests water quality for some neighborhood groups that are willing to pay for testing. Ms. Mackert is going to continue to discuss this issue with Maryland Dept. of the Environment.

Jeff Schoenberger reported that the most recent February 5, 2019 Household Hazardous Waste Day collected 3 tons of household waste. Over 300 tons of tires were recycled from the agricultural community over about a two week period recently. Independent Brewery and Chesapeake Shredding have won local business recycling awards.

Paul Magness reported that the “Graham Property” off Tollgate Road which is now owned by the Maryland Center for the Visual and Performing Arts is currently going through the DAC review process. The property between Route 24 and Route 924, which is owned by the County is required to be a passive park, per Ms. Graham’s wishes. That project will be out to bid in March, with construction expected to begin in April. Construction is expected to take at least 8 months to complete. Mr. Magness also reported that the County is going to be receiving some property back from Maryland American Water Company after the reservoir project is fully completed. He mentioned that they are planning on recording an easement on the western edge of the property that could provide future access to the Ma and Pa trail system.

Matt Kropp reported that public comments have been incorporated into the Final Draft of the County’s Green Infrastructure Plan. The County is now working to bring the revised Plan document into InDesign format, which is the same as the County’s Master Plan HarfordNEXT. Matt also reported that the State of Maryland has updated and delineated the County’s tidal wetlands. This will change the location of the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area, which is a 1000’ boundary from tidal waterways and tidal wetlands. Designations and changes are currently being reviewed by the County. The State Critical Area Commission will be notifying all affected property owners once maps are finalized, and a public meeting will be held later this year.

New Business

None.

Adjourn: Meeting was adjourned at 8:06pm.