

MARYLAND COMMISSION ON ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

Date: 3/26/24

Time: 10a - 12p

Commissioners in Attendance:

Yasmin Behram, Camille Burke, Subha Chandar, Lori Cunningham, Dennis De Shields, Kellie Gaither, Paulette Hammond, Gerald Jackson, Andrew Miller, Voncia Molock, John Papagni, Lesliam Quiros, Rebecca Rehr, Asha Smith, Dr. Sacoby Wilson

Interested Parties:

Sarah Abel, Nadya Chehab, Mariah Davis, Patrick DeArmey, Jared Deluccia, Kamita Gray, Joseph Griffiths, Karen Moe, Kim Pezza, Kathy Somoza

1. Introduction

- Camille Burke, Chair of the Commission

2. Chesapeake Bay Trust (“CBT”)

Presentation

- Kathy Somoza, Senior Program Officer
- The CBT is a nonprofit organization that seeks to empower diverse groups to take actions which enrich natural resources and local communities in the Chesapeake Bay region.
- Environmental Justice Initiatives at the Trust (3)
 1. Mid-Atlantic Environmental Justice Fund
 - Awarded \$17M through the U.S. Forest Service

- 1st participatory EJ fund in the Mid-Atlantic. There are oversight committees at all steps of the award process.
 - 11 project partners including 4 EJ hub leads
 - 3 project tracks - capacity building, workforce development and green infrastructure and resiliency
 - Proposal to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration for \$75M in Fall '24
2. Community Based Organization (“CBO”) - Capacity Building Initiative
 - EPA award to MDE
 - Improve air quality and community resiliency
 - Key partners conduct outreach to provide technical assistance
 - Regions chosen based on their existing poor air quality
 - One goal is a measurable increase in the number of applications from organizations that have not previously applied to watershed resilience- and restoration-focused grant programs and represent historically under-engaged communities
 3. Supplemental Environmental Projects - an environmentally beneficial project or activity that protects and/or improves the environment and/or reduces risks to public health
 - Curtis Bay and Surrounding Communities - funding up to \$750,000
 - Patapsco and Back River Watersheds - funding up to \$1,900,000 - improve water quality in two watersheds - opening the funding opportunity in April to May

Questions and Comments

- Commissioner Wilson stated that he is the Director of the Mid-Atlantic Environmental Justice Fund. He also noted his role as Co-Director of the Thriving Communities Technical Assistance Center for EPA Region 3.
- Commissioner Smith asked if local governments are eligible for funds from the Mid-Atlantic Environmental Justice Fund. Kathy replied that she believed they were but wanted to confirm.
- Commissioner Smith asked if the Trust is administering the CBO grant. Kathy stated that MDE was awarded the grant and the Trust’s role will be to handle the program’s building and infrastructure.
- Commissioner Smith asked if the SEP funding in Curtis Bay was annual or the total allocation. Kathy responded that that was the total amount, but there are other sources of funding for Curtis Bay.
- Commissioner Wilson added that there is a funding opportunity for Curtis Bay in the Community Change Grant.

3. CEJSC 2024 Meeting topics & calendar

- Curtis Bay and Lothian are tentative sites to host a CEJSC meeting. Kellie Gaither will follow up regarding Curtis Bay.
- Commissioner Wilson would like each state agency to submit to the Commission their annual EJ strategic plan and annual report.
- Chair Burke wants to know if each state agency has an EJ Coordinator and if they have an EJ plan. She would like Commissioner Delegate Boyce to be a part of the conversation about the Commission's EJ concerns.
- Sarah Abel, Maryland Department of Planning's new Chief Sustainable Growth Officer would like to work with the Commission on Maryland's Planning Vision.
- Commissioner Wilson wants to create a criteria or baseline for the state agencies to report back to the Commission on their strategic EJ plans.
- Mariah Davis is working on an EJ policy for the Department of Natural Resources. She agreed that there should be a common baseline for all agencies.
- Nadya Chehab is the Maryland's Department of Agriculture's new EJ Coordinator working on EJ and Equity as well as Climate Change.
- Commissioner Rehr stated she's willing and available to assist.
- Commissioner Smith would like to do something for Earth Day.
- Commissioner Wilson works for the University of Maryland and has infrastructure to support the Commission. Also, he noted a symposium he is planning.
- Chair Burke would like the Commission to attend the symposium.
- Commissioner Molock would like the Commission to view the film Eroding History.
- Commissioner Rehr recommended MDE and CEJSC host a public screening of the film Eroding History.

4. Annual Report 2022-2023

- The CEJSC Annual Report is posted on the MDE website.
- Joseph Griffiths asked if other states had passed legislation requiring county and municipal governments to review their planning and zoning laws to identify and protect overburdened and underserved communities. Commissioner Wilson commented that California had passed legislation to have EJ in each county plan.
- Commissioner Chandar asked if there are models between health equity and EJ.
- Commissioner Hammond commented that the Protecting State Waters from PFAS pollution Bill HB1153 and SB956 crossed over to the Senate.
- Chair Burke would like recommendations for the next annual report to the Commission by July.

5. Public Comment

- Patrick DeArme is a staff attorney at the Chesapeake Legal Alliance and works in the Lothian community. There are plenty of zoning issues that have created EJ problems. He is currently working with some mobile home communities and asks if there is anyone who does renters and tenants rights in Maryland. The company that owns the mobile home park is Horizon Land Management LLC.
- Patrick added that the Chesapeake Legal Alliance was the law firm that represented Bluewater Baltimore in the lawsuit against the Patapsco River and Back River wastewater treatment plant that resulted in the Chesapeake Bay Trust Supplemental Environment Project.

The meeting adjourned.

Notes (in part) from the chat:

Sacoby Wilson

10:09 AM

Btw, I am the Director of the Fund

Voncia Molock

10:12 AM

Please repeat the name of the Eastern Shore Hub...

Sacoby Wilson

10:13 AM

Sentinels of Eastern Shore Health

Sacoby Wilson

10:14 AM

If funded, the Mid-Atlantic EJ Fund would have almost 100 million dollars in it; the NOAA funding is part of the Fund

B. Thomas Burton (BTB Coalition)

10:25 AM

If a SEP is for a benefit to community is was not for Brandywine,

<https://engage.voiceyouropinion.info/btbcoalition/epasep>

Sarah Abel -MDP-

10:28 AM

Can the presentation or a fact sheet on the EJ fund be sent out to meeting attendees?

Would love to share at MDP!

Kathy Somoza

10:34 AM

Sarah, I'll share my slides and inquire about a fact sheet for the EJ fund!

Sacoby Wilson

10:34 AM

<https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2024-02/community-change-grants-modified-nof-2.12.24.pdf>

Sarah Abel -MDP-

10:34 AM

It would be great to have a fact sheet on all the funds that Dr. Wilson mentioned!

Kellie Gaither

10:35 AM

Dr. Wilson can you share the information about the TCTAC meeting in VA please.

B. Thomas Burton (BTB Coalition)

10:36 AM

Thank you because we are left out...

Patrick DeArmey

10:38 AM

I am representing members of the Lothian community including Dr. Garrett so I can pass along any messages/make connections.

Rebecca Rehr

10:39 AM

Thanks, Patrick! I'll send a follow up note to you and Dr. Garrett

Mariah Davis -DNR-

10:45 AM

Dept of Ag just got a new EJ person too working under the Secretary

Nadya Chehab -MDA-

10:46 AM

Hi! I'm the EJ Coordinator for MDA -- would love to have these conversations, I am in the process of drafting an EJ plan based on conversations I've been having.

Rebecca Rehr

10:47 AM

We got an update on this great report on state spending on GHG reduction in Maryland, and how agencies are applying Justice 40 in that context.

https://mde.maryland.gov/programs/air/ClimateChange/MCCC/Documents/2023%20MCCC%20Annual%20Report%20attachment_GHG%20Mitigation%20Spending.pdf

Voncia Molock

10:47 AM

Suggestion for CEJSC activity - Andre Chung created a short film (about 20 minutes) called "Eroding History, a film at the intersection of sea level rise, historic racism and disappearing Black communities " ...it would be great if CEJSC could view the film at a meeting to view the impact of sea level rise on Deal's Island in Somerset County.

Rebecca Rehr

10:47 AM

So, making sure that's an annual analysis is another piece of what Dr. Wilson and Camille are saying.

A Miller

10:52 AM

Supporting Voncia Molock's suggestion - we had a viewing of the documentary on our campus two weeks ago and a couple of presentations by Rona Kobell who co-produced the documentary and is also working on a book about environmental justice and sea-level rise in underserved communities on the lower Eastern Shore. The environmental justice issues there are even broader than what is shown in the documentary and would be worth sharing with this group.

Asha Smith

10:54 AM

We talked about an Earth Day event last month - could we do a virtual film screening and discussion?

Sarah Abel -MDP-

10:55 AM

Here are the current Maryland Planning Visions that need updating:

<https://planning.maryland.gov/Pages/OurWork/planningvisions.aspx>. Would love to find ways to integrate sustainable growth and environmental justice through the Sustainable Growth Subcabinet and agency EJ reps!

A Miller

11:03 AM

For those interested not just in the film but in the broader context, here is a presentation made by Rona Kobell last month the day before the UMBC showing of the film.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5nK0IM9Gk48>

Sacoby Wilson

11:03 AM

If your CBO is working on environmental, climate, and energy justice issues and need technical assistance and capacity building support, please attend the TCTAC meeting May 4-5 in Reston at NWF Headquarters.

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeCDI2eH-5R_6-Qcr16ZT7vmif6olkHhxLullbGwJ_tDe-eNA/viewform?usp=sf_link

Rebecca Rehr

11:04 AM

The Maryland Commission on Climate Change is also hosting a Teach In the first week of April

Resources here:

<https://mde.maryland.gov/programs/air/ClimateChange/MCCC/Pages/Teach-In.aspx>

Sarah Abel -MDP-

11:10 AM

California was going to be what I suggested. I would also suggest Washington State. Federal Environmental Justice 40 initiative would be a good reference as well.

Shawn Dolan

11:12 AM

PHX Metro Area Association of Governments has a similar direction Ill locate link and send to Brandon

Sarah Abel -MDP-

11:13 AM

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/environmentaljustice/justice40/>

Patrick DeArmey

11:13 AM

Standing to challenge zoning decisions in MD is a roadblock to meeting EJ goals. It's very restrictive.

Sarah Abel -MDP-

11:14 AM

This national conference of state legislatures webpage is a great resource:

<https://www.ncsl.org/environment-and-natural-resources/state-and-federal-environmental-justice-efforts>

Sacoby Wilson

11:14 AM

Yes federal Justice40 Sarah, see WHEJAC's work

B. Thomas Burton (BTB Coalition)

11:21 AM

Brandywine has 9 Aggregate Mining Locations?

Sacoby Wilson

11:22 AM

yes, long-term issue is with special exception, procedural justice issue, grandfathering run amok

B. Thomas Burton (BTB Coalition)

11:22 AM

and 2 wash plants... with 3,500 diesel truck trips

Sacoby Wilson

11:22 AM

unincorporated communities are particularly vulnerable to special exceptions

Sacoby Wilson

11:26 AM

Gotta go. I have a 11 am meeting. Looking forward to next steps.

B. Thomas Burton (BTB Coalition)

11:29 AM

Thanks Ms. Burke

Thanks.. I will btb.eccb@gmail.com

Patrick DeArmey

11:30 AM

Patrick@chesapeakelegal.org

Shawn Dolan

11:31 AM

thank you all shawn Dolan

shawn.dolan@virtuallc.com

Sarah Abel -MDP-

11:32 AM

Nice to meet you all and positive vibes for rescue at the Key Bridge.