

Meeting Minutes: CEJSC Meeting

Date: July 29, 2025

Commissioners in Attendance: Camille Burke, Subha Chandar, Kellie Gaither, Tracy Garrett, Delegate Boyce, Senator Love Andrew Miller, Voncia Molock, John Papagni, Rebecca Rehr, Aneca Atkinson, Asha Smith

Other Attendance:

Noble Smith (MDE), Alex Lima (MDE), Veronica Carella

1. Welcome and Introductions

The meeting began with introductions from the environmental justice coordinator at the Maryland Department of the Environment, who works for Anika Atkinson. Camille then welcomed everyone to the July 29th meeting and apologized for technical issues. She thanked attendees of the retreat and mentioned they would discuss it further. Sarah Love, a new member, was acknowledged and invited to introduce herself. The speaker also thanked everyone for their work on the bylaws at the retreat and acknowledged new MDE staff, Alex and another young lady, who are joining the environmental team to provide more support for the commission and other MDE areas.

Alex Lima, civic, community, and public engagement coordinator, introduced himself as part of the new EJ team, mentioning his counterpart, Ardina Holland. Camille thanked Alex and deferred to Nevin to explain the executive order. Nevin introduced Caitlyn Walker, also new to the EJ team, who then introduced herself as an executive assistant for Ana, Zach Schaefer, and Rachel Lamb.

2. Retreat Recap

Nevin discussed the first retreat on July 14th, highlighting the work on action items and drafting bylaws. He requested feedback from retreat attendees by the end of the week for legal and Anika's approval to finalize the draft for the commission's approval. The retreat also focused on community engagement, including more visits to urban and rural communities and planning for in-person meetings. Priorities for the annual report, a key topic for the August meeting, were also discussed. Nevin then mentioned introducing the two newest commissioners, deferring to Noble to handle it.

Noble introduced Senator Sarah Love and Tyler Bryce from the Maryland Municipal League as the newest members. Senator Love fills a vacancy, and Tyler Bryce replaces Lori Cunningham. They were invited to introduce themselves, which they did.

3. Executive Order

Camille thanked Tyler and proceeded to discuss the executive order on environmental justice, which reinforces the state's commitment to addressing environmental burdens in vulnerable communities. The order specifically outlines the Commission on Environmental Justice and Sustainable Communities as a supporting party in collaboration with the Interagency

Environmental Justice and Equity Advisory Council. The speaker noted that the advisory council is still forming and being staffed, with updates on collaborative meetings expected by the August 12th meeting once the final roster and staffing are determined. The floor was then opened for questions or thoughts on the executive order or other mandates. The speaker clarified that the intention was to streamline existing work, not add more meetings. Joseph inquired about a deadline for state agencies to assign a point person for this effort, to which Nevin replied that the executive order does not mandate a specific date but flags it as a high priority for agency development in the immediate future. Rebecca's message in the chat was noted as potentially answering Joseph's question.

4. Attendance Announcements

Noble discussed the attendance announcement, building on what was mentioned at the commission retreat. He explained that they are working with appointing bodies to understand future appointment processes, as some seats have reached their term limits. The Governor's Office of Appointments is involved in this capacity. Noble then outlined the main announcements: attendance will be taken at the beginning of meetings for recordkeeping, commissioners will be asked for their appointment letters, and proxy voting will no longer be supported for Governor's Office appointees. Nevin asked for questions about attendance or appointment letters before transitioning to presentations from MDE and MDA. Nevin reminded commissioners to check with their appointing bodies for specific attendance policies, as these may vary and will be followed by the commission. Sua asked if the attendance policy would be integrated into the bylaws and if the proxy voting rule applied to everyone. Nevin confirmed that the bylaws would reflect the appointing body's policy and that the Governor's office specifically requested not to support proxy voting for their appointees, but other appointing parties' policies would be considered.

5. MDA and MDE Presentations

Zach Schaefer began the MDE presentation, providing an overview of MDE's work on PFAS and introducing Rick Kessler and Lee Curry. Rick Kessler, Director of the Land and Materials Administration at MDE, introduced himself and his work related to solid and hazardous waste, bio-solids, and PFAS, also sharing his EPA experience. Lee Curry, Director of the Water and Science Administration at the Maryland Department of the Environment, introduced herself, explaining her oversight of water-related issues, including PFAS in drinking water and wastewater, and fish consumption advisories. She has been with the department for 25 years and working on PFAS since 2020.

Zach explained that PFAS is a group of thousands of human-made synthetic chemicals used since the 1940s, useful for their resistance to breakdown but persistent and accumulating in the environment and human bodies. He described the unique properties of PFAS (water, oil, stain resistance, and resistance to decomposition) that make them useful in various products and industries, including food packaging, non-stick cookware, cosmetics, pesticides, paints, and firefighting foam. Zach detailed how PFAS enters the environment through various sources like consumer goods and firefighting foam, then moves into drinking water, wastewater, biosolids, and eventually groundwater, contaminating wells and fish. He also outlined direct exposure pathways for humans, including contaminated drinking water, fish consumption, inhalation of soil

or dust, and consumption of food grown on contaminated land, noting evolving research on accumulation and transport. Zach then outlined documented health risks associated with certain PFAS chemicals, including higher cholesterol, reduced vaccine effectiveness in children, increased cancer risk (kidney and testicular), reduced fertility, and developmental delays.

Zach discussed environmental justice considerations related to PFAS contamination, noting that vulnerable communities are disproportionately affected by higher pollution burdens and multiple exposure pathways. He highlighted challenges with information access and affordability of water treatment. Zach described MDE's efforts to address environmental justice concerns, including reaching out to water systems for funding access, holding industrial facilities accountable, and providing information through online resources and signage at fishing spots. He then discussed federal actions on PFAS, noting EPA's 2021 PFAS roadmap and the White House's whole-of-government approach. Key federal actions include national drinking water limits, water quality criteria, hazardous substance designation, and funding through the bipartisan infrastructure law.

Zach reviewed Maryland's state actions, including key legislation. The 2022 George Walter Taylor Act required a PFAS action plan, banned PFAS in firefighting foam, carpets, rugs, and food packaging, and established a foam takeback program. The 2024 Protecting State Waters from PFAS Pollution Act requires MDE to establish a process to address PFAS contamination from significant industrial users discharging into wastewater treatment systems. Zach also mentioned other legislative efforts, including a withdrawn bill on biosolids and a proposed bill to ban PFAS in cosmetics. He then introduced the 2023 PFAS action plan, a document outlining MDE and other agencies' actions, both completed and ongoing, to address PFAS, available on their website.

Lee Curry discussed MDE's water-related actions to reduce PFAS exposure and sources. This includes monitoring public water systems, educating the public, providing technical and financial assistance to affected communities, and aiming for all systems to meet federal standards by 2027. She also discussed non-community public water systems (businesses, schools) and private wells, noting that private wells are not federally regulated. MDE is educating homeowners and leveraging responsible parties for source control. Lee then discussed PFAS in fish consumption, noting that PFOS accumulates in fish tissue. MDE has added PFAS to fish consumption advisories and posted signage at fishing locations, but found no elevated levels in crabs and oysters. Lee outlined source control efforts in water programs, including monitoring wastewater treatment plants, adding PFAS requirements to discharge permits, and developing action levels for significant industrial users. She also discussed industrial stormwater permits, where MDE is surveying facilities for potential PFAS sources and incorporating protections and monitoring. Finally, Lee discussed pesticides, noting that the Maryland Department of Agriculture is the lead agency for pesticide regulation. MDE has a discharge permit for pesticides to water and is considering updates for it.

Sources:

- [CEJSC Meeting - 2025/07/29 09:53 EDT - Recording](#)