

**BALTIMORE COUNTY ADVISORY
COMMISSION ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
(CEQ)**

**2009 ANNUAL REPORT TO
BALTIMORE COUNTY EXECUTIVE AND
BALTIMORE COUNTY COUNCIL**

January 27, 2010

Table of Contents

Background.....	1
CEQ Membership.....	1
CEQ Mission Statement	1
CEQ Role in Sustainability Network.....	2
CEQ Reports	2
Deer Overpopulation	2
Environmental and Public Health Impacts of Road Salt.....	3
Environmental District Tours.....	3
District 3:	3
District 2:	3
Contact with Citizens	4
Contact with County.....	4
Commission Infrastructure and Communication.....	4
Tracking County and State Environmental Issues and Legislation.....	5
Agricultural Zoning	5
Pending MD environmental legislation	5
Wind Turbine legislation	5
Baltimore County legislation related to environmental issues	5
Ongoing Education of CEQ Members.....	5
Ground Water Management Program.....	5
Chesapeake Bay Health	5
MD Hospitals for a Healthy Environment (H2E).....	6
World Wildlife Fund	6
Ongoing CEQ Member Concerns	6

BACKGROUND

The Baltimore County Advisory Commission on Environmental Quality (CEQ), which was established by legislation in 2003, met eight times throughout the 2009 calendar year. Kathy Reiner Martin, Chair, set the agendas and presided at the meetings.

This *Baltimore County Advisory Commission on Environmental Quality (CEQ) 2009 Annual Report to the Baltimore County Executive and Baltimore County Council* fulfills the requirement specified in Baltimore County Code Subsection 3-3-2106 and provides a summary of CEQ activities during 2009.

CEQ MEMBERSHIP

The members say farewell and best wishes to Joan Plisko and Steve Schreiner, both of the 1st District, who brought extremely valuable expertise to the efforts of the CEQ, and welcome a new member, Carri Beer, an architect, who brings her unique skills to the CEQ table. The year ends with one vacancy for an At Large member. As of December 2009, the CEQ membership includes the following individuals.

District 1:

Carri Beer, District 1 Representative, Architect:

District 2:

Lois Jacobs, District 2 Representative, Landscape Architect/Designer
Nell B. Strachan, At Large Member: Attorney

District 3:

Mike Pierce, District 3 Representative, Telecommunication Industry
Linda Davis, At Large Member: Educator
Tom Moore, At Large Member: Home Builders
Joan Norman, At Large Member: Agriculture

District 4:

Willie Grier, District 4 Representative, Retired Educator
Rex Wright, At Large Member: Industry

District 5:

Jerry Jurick, District 5 Representative, Management-Environmental and Facilities
Kathy Reiner Martin, Chair, At Large Member: Community Activist
Brian Fath, Ph.D., At Large Member: Academia, Associate Professor -Biology

District 6:

Ray Davis, District 6 Representative, Retired Educator

District 7:

Russell Donnelly, District 7 Representative, Environmental Analyst

CEQ MISSION STATEMENT

The CEQ activities in 2009 furthered the mission previously established for the CEQ:

The purpose of the CEQ, through its duties and responsibilities as described in the Baltimore County Code, Subsection 3-3-21, is to encourage protection and preservation of the natural environment in Baltimore County and its waterways, including the Chesapeake Bay, by educating the community to make environmentally sustainable decisions and by enlightening, advising, and initiating dialogue with County officials. It facilitates communication between the County government and its residents on environmental needs, programs, and legislation.

2009 was a year that the prior work of the CEQ was recognized by its use in the implementation of new initiatives and introduction into action plans by the Sustainability Network. As a group of dedicated volunteers for environmental integrity, the members understand the need for following and monitoring environmental plans.

CEQ ROLE IN SUSTAINABILITY NETWORK

The Sustainability Network/SN consists of County and private sector representatives, as well as members from the environmental community. The creation of the Network was a result of the 2007 CEQ report to the County Council on the "Cool Cities" concept for addressing GHG. The Network is charged by County Executive Jim Smith to deliver recommendations for a sustainability strategy for Baltimore County operations. The Network subdivided into four workgroups: Natural Resources, Operations, Built Environment, and Education.

Four CEQ members serve on committees of the Sustainability Network and two are co-chairs of their respective workgroups.

- Kathy Reiner Martin: Management of natural resources and work-plan planning group;
- Joan Plisko (co-chair): Operations of County facilities;
- Rex Wright (co-chair): Built Environment; and
- Brian Fath: Public Education and Outreach

Since the formation of the workgroups, CEQ members have been meeting regularly with the workgroups to develop recommendations in the respective areas for improvements of County Operations toward more sustainable practices. Status reports are regularly provided back to the full CEQ. The SN report for County Operations is due in 2010 at which point they are to start work on expanding sustainable efforts throughout a wider community in Baltimore County.

CEQ REPORTS

During 2009, the CEQ compiled and issues two reports:

Deer Overpopulation

In April of 2009, the CEQ wrote a letter to the members of the Baltimore County Council and the County Executive expressing concern about the overpopulation of deer in the County, about the overall health of forests in the County, and in response to citizen concern about the impacts of deer overpopulation in and around County Parks and other County properties. After commending the County's recent efforts to manage the deer herds on the Loch Raven Reservoir property, the CEQ noted that a decrease in deer population would improve the health of the forest buffer that safeguards the water supply.

CEQ reviewed relevant research and reports about the effects of deer overpopulation on forest health, from which it concluded that a reduction of deer population size is essential to protect and preserve the County's forests and recommended that the County implement the deer control measures recommended in the *Oregon Ridge Park Forest Health Assessment and Forest Management Plan*. In addition, the CEQ recommended that the County implement deer control measures in all County Parks and on all appropriate County lands so that the deer population is maintained at or below the documented sustainable carrying capacity of ten deer per square mile.

The letter included a photo of deer enclosure fencing with overview of the impacts of deer on a healthy forest as well as relevant excerpts from the Oregon Ridge report, website links to the above-mentioned reports, and a list of other resources about deer and forests.

The County Executive responded to the letter and, in November, the CEQ wrote back again stressing that the County needs to take further action and requesting to be informed of County's plans. In the meantime, members of the CEQ have discussed this issue with their respective Council members.

Environmental and Public Health Impacts of Road Salt

In response to a request from Councilman Vince Gardina, the CEQ undertook a study of the environmental impacts of the use of salt to remove ice and snow from our roads. There are many studies and sources addressing the impacts of road salt, which indicate conclusively that salt use creates serious environmental problems, especially on water quality (including the impact on the drinking water supply for Baltimore City and 90% of the county population). Road salt also negatively affects aquatic and plant life and contributes to the deterioration of roads and bridges.

The current county practice of using road salt reflects both the relatively lower purchase price for salt and the county's practice of following the state policy of having clear and bare roads within 4 hours of a storm event.

The CEQ requested that the county conduct studies of the various long-term costs of the use of road salt, and of the alternatives, as a step to minimizing the deleterious effects on the environment. The report is available on the CEQ website.

ENVIRONMENTAL DISTRICT TOURS

CEQ members conducted two tours during 2009 for Jonas Jacobson, Director of DEPRM:

District 3:

CEQ members Mike Pierce and Kathy Martin conducted a tour on February 13, 2009, accompanied by CEQ members Linda Davis, Joan Norman, and Tom Moore and the Director of the Soil Conservation District, Jim Ensor. Mr. Jacobson was accompanied by John Markley. The tour covered Long Green Valley, My Lady's Manor, and the Hereford Zone. The group visited the following sites where various environment issues affecting rural portions of the county were discussed:

- Loch Raven Skeet Club (site of recent deer hunt)
- Prigel's Creamery site
- White's Dairy
- Jacksonville
- Monkton
- Blue Mount Quarry
- Hereford
- Chuck Ensor's grain farm

District 2:

The CEQ District 2 Tour on October 2, 2009 centered on the environmental and watershed concerns of the area. The Jones Falls is largely within District 2 and defines its physical geography. Since there was only 2 hours available, the tour structure featured two primary areas and a driving tour to connect them and demonstrate specific areas of concern. The tour was led by Lois Jacobs and Nell Strachan (CEQ) – participants were Jonas Jacobson, Director of DEPRM, Kathy Martin, CEQ Chair, Al Barry, Planner for Ruxton-Riderwood, Neville Jacobs, representing the Pikesville Greenspring Community Coalition, as well as Nate Pretl, Wes Riddle, and Marsha Ramsay.

The group met at Quarry Lake's Bluestone Park to discuss the quarry restoration, dam structures, and their relationship to the Moores Branch, and examined a watershed map and outlined areas of concern including stormwater and erosion, flooding, and invasives.

On the driving tour to Lake Roland the group passed through Bare Hills, a shopping center of special interest in the Updated Ruxton Riderwood Community Plan, and stopped beside the Lake in Robert E. Lee Park to discuss the County takeover and improvement plans for the new regional park area, erosion, degradation, and invasives, and plans for the re-development of Bare Hills.

On the driving tour back to Quarry Lake, the group stopped to examine a meadow by Roland Run created and maintained by the community, as well as a trail beside the stream used by the residents to explore the park.

The full reports for both tours can be found on the CEQ website.

CONTACT WITH CITIZENS

Various citizen enquiries came to the CEQ via its web site, including questions related to high salt in wells, rat infestation, illegal dumping, and tax credits for solar panels. The CEQ discussed these and the requestors were referred to the proper county agencies.

CONTACT WITH COUNTY

During 2009, CEQ Chair Kathy Reiner Martin and CEQ members:

- Met with respective Council persons to update them on CEQ activities and to discuss current environmental concerns and priorities in their district
- Attended County Council work sessions
- Welcomed the ongoing, regular attendance of Don Outen of DEPRM and John Alexander of the Office of Planning. They can provide briefings and information on particular topics. There is a standing invite to a DPW representative who attends when the topic is pertinent to their workload.
- Organized tours with Jonas Jacobsen, new director of DEPRM, through respective districts to highlight areas of environmental concern (2nd and 3rd District tour reports included). Future tours in other districts are planned.
- Met with Ed Adams and Tim Burgess of DPW to discuss the use of road salt.
- Reviewed the Office of Community Conservation's Ten Year Action Plan
- Reviewed the plans for the Agricultural Park

In August, CEQ member Joan Norman hosted the annual CEQ picnic at One Straw Farm for members and County officials. In addition to a tour of this organic farm, the participants had an opportunity for informal discussions of many environmental issues.

COMMISSION INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNICATION

The CEQ chair met with each member to discuss questions, concerns, and priorities in their district and area of environmental expertise. CEQ members:

- Updated the CEQ website.
- Prioritized topics for future CEQ consideration and formed committees to:
- Reviewed status of water-related agreements and plans such as the Watershed agreement, Builders for the Bay, new MD storm water regulations.
- Reviewed healthy living initiatives

TRACKING COUNTY AND STATE ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES AND LEGISLATION

During its meetings, the CEQ members discussed various current issues for potential input:

Agricultural Zoning

Continual reports were provided to the CEQ of the work in a Planning Board ad hoc committee which is reviewing the regulations for RC2 zones in order to provide better protection of this land for agriculture. Several CEQ members have been active on that committee.

Pending MD environmental legislation

Current issues include: energy related bills, legislation that addresses green buildings for state and school construction, tax credit for residential LEED buildings, other MD counties' actions on sustainability, and the MD carbon cap and trade auction.

Wind Turbine legislation

The CEQ reviewed the present status of the proposed legislation drafted by the Office of Planning to allow wind turbines in the county. A position statement was prepared for presentation at the September 22 Planning Board committee hearing. It supported allowing wind turbines, and urged the committee to ensure that proper protections and limits are included in the proposed regulations.

Baltimore County legislation related to environmental issues

The CEQ continued to monitor County legislation related to environmental issues. The following were discussed during 2009 and passed by the County Council:

- Bill 34-09 Farmstead creamery
- Bill 62-09 Recycling of Home Electronic Devices

ONGOING EDUCATION OF CEQ MEMBERS

CEQ has invited speakers from within their ranks, from county staff, and from outside to brief the CEQ on environmental issues and programs.

Ground Water Management Program

In March, Kevin Koepenick of DEPRM spoke on the efforts of DEPRM, both through their own employees and contractors, to monitor the quality of groundwater in Baltimore County. This involves measurements of both streams and wells. The data presented shows an increasing salt level.

Later in March, Steve Steward of DEPRM gave a more detailed overview of the stream monitoring program within the county. The major driver for this work is the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) which sets stringent limits on runoff. Monitoring includes both biological and chemical impacts.

Chesapeake Bay Health

In April, Jenn Aiosa, Senior Scientist, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, gave a status report on the health of the Bay. She stated that little progress has been made and highlighted issues relevant to the Baltimore County watersheds including the need for environmentalists and agriculture to work together. An

overview of the current status of land preservation, use of cover crops, and the new nitrogen reduction legislation was provided

MD Hospitals for a Healthy Environment (H2E)

In May, CEQ member Joan Plisko gave a presentation about the Healthy Hospitals initiative. As she explained, hospitals have a large environmental footprint, including energy usage, water consumption, and waste. Significant improvements are being made in waste management, mostly by proper segregation of various classes of waste, allowing more cost effective disposal.

World Wildlife Fund

In November, Jeff Muller of the World Wildlife Fund, gave us an overview of the many worldwide efforts being made to preserve endangered species. Although there are many areas with extremely difficult challenges, including civil unrest, great strides have been made by targeting the "middlemen", that is, the relatively few number of large corporations which control the processing, trading, and shipping of goods from producers who may be destroying environments to the consumers whose demands are ultimately causing that destruction. The WWF has had success convincing the large corporations to bring about change, for example, by refusing to accept products that were produced where rain-forests once stood.

ONGOING CEQ MEMBER CONCERNS

During the course of CEQ discussions, individual members raised the following issues for possible later action by the commission:

- Limiting development in waterfront critical areas
- Down zoning of land outside the URDL (Urban-Rural Demarcation Line)
- Financial implications of recycling, i.e., return on investment and the recycling market.
- Revising building codes for better energy efficiency and "gray water" use.