

## **General Meeting August 2, 2018**

**Attendees:** Council members: Lynn Rothman, Elisabeth Cichonski, Kathy Fox, Jack Gambino, Brian Hilliard and Mike Topping. Also in attendance: Ed Gallagher, Jessica Morris, Beth Behrend, Amy True, George Yasko, Greg Cook, Kate Ebel and Martha Christine.

**Approval of July Minutes:** Moved by Elisabeth; seconded by Brian; approved as revised.

**Chair's Comments:** Lynn reported that the Iron Pigs baseball team has offered the EAC an opportunity to set up a booth at their game for Agricultural Day on August 26, if anyone was interested. It was determined that no one was available.

**Wildlands Conservancy Presentation:** Senior Environmental Scientist, Kate Ebel, gave a presentation on the Monocacy Creek Watershed Plan (MCWP), which covers 48.8 square miles and includes portions of 13 municipalities. The creek is considered a "High Quality Cold Water Fishery" and all tributaries to it are also considered high quality. There are two "Class A" sections of the creek and one is located within the City. Over the years, there has been a lot of development along the creek, which has negatively impacted the quality of the water. There are also large areas of public parks and other protected lands (primarily through conservation easements), which have had a positive effect on the creek.

The original MCWP was developed in 1998 and since that time additional development has led to the need for an updated plan. Currently, dam removal (both concrete and rock dams), improved riparian buffers, and the introduction of best management practices (for agricultural uses and during development), are promoted. Much of this includes the education of the general public about the need for these changes, so that landowners will understand and become involved in the implementation of these changes.

Wildlands has studied the geology, geography, streambed conditions, aquatic inhabitants and habitats in and around the creek to determine the present condition of the watershed. Area population growth and the development of different types of parks and open space to meet the public's needs were also taken into account. An initial activity involved a visual stream assessment of the seven plus miles of the creek. This included the use of 25 volunteers from Moravian College and Trout Unlimited, among others, who were issued forms for sections of the creek (reaches) which listed streambed conditions, vegetation, man-made alterations, bank erosion, nutrient enrichment, storm sewer discharges, fish passage deterrents (dams) and other stream conditions. Where possible, photos were taken of the area. Sixty percent of the creek was considered in good to excellent condition. Forty percent was considered in fair to poor condition. Forty-five percent of the reaches contained fair to poor riparian buffers. In many areas, the flood plain is inadequate in size, design and/or proper vegetation and, therefore, susceptible to increased flooding. In 30% of the creek, the lack of tree overhangs increase water temperatures, which is unhealthy for fish. Nutrient levels, dissolved oxygen, and water temperature readings were also taken to help determine the health of the water. A land use map was drawn to show the various concentrations of agricultural, residential, commercial/industrial and open space/park areas in the watershed and how development has changed these areas over the years.

Among the proposed recommendations for the watershed, Wildlands has proposed improved riparian buffers, connection and expansion of greenways, best management practices during development and agricultural use, protection of critical habitats, and removal of obstructions in the creek which inhibit the movement of fish and other aquatic life. Partnerships are important in this effort, and Wildlands has worked with PA DEP, Northampton County, the City, and the Monocacy Creek Watershed Coalition, as well as other private and public entities, to help this plan succeed. A first step in the development of the MCWP is the implementation of improvements to Monocacy Park. Existing park usage and the presence of geese has made progress difficult.

**(Note: Two day later, On August 4, the Monocacy Creek was flooded from the park to the**

Kate stated that Saucon Park will enter phase 2 of proposed riparian plantings this fall and Wildlands and the City can use extra volunteers to help. (See Chair's Comments 11/2/17) She noted that partnerships with area EACs, watershed groups and others are critical to accomplish all of the improvements proposed for the area.

**Monocacy Creek Watershed Coalition (MCWC):** Greg Cook described the organization as a coalition of public and private organizations that are interested in the welfare of the Monocacy Creek Watershed and support the implementation of the goals and recommendations of MCWP. He mentioned some of the local groups, which are members, and noted that they are looking for additional members, such as EACs or sportsmen's clubs. Their next meeting is scheduled for September 11 at Illick's Mill. George Yasko stated that the Monocacy Creek Watershed Association (MCWA) has been working with Trout Unlimited to do work on the creek and noted that one of the reasons for the MCWC was to provide better coordination between like-minded groups so that they don't overlap with each other and do the same thing. George noted that the MCWA has funds, which can be used to implement some of the Plan's recommendations. He stated that residents always have the opportunity to write letters of support for funding to the City Administration and City Council. Like the MCWC, the MCWA is also looking for new members. They meet at Illick's Mill at 6 PM on the second Tuesday of the month.

**Board Comments & Announcements:** Jack announced a tentative schedule for the Muhlenberg College Center for Ethics program "Crisis Earth: The Ethics of the Anthropocene" beginning with an address by Dr. James Hansen, one of the first to study global climate change. The event is Friday, September 7 at 2 PM. See attached schedule.

Mike reported on the annual Northampton County Envirothon, which was won for the fourth time in a row by Bangor HS. Many local high schools participate, including Freedom, Bethlehem Catholic and Moravian Academy. The competition, held at Louise Moore Park, focuses on five environmental and natural resource categories: Wildlife, Forestry, Soils & Land Use, Aquatic Ecology and current environmental issues. The EAC could become involved in the future.

Brian reported that as a condition of the VW settlement, PA received over \$100 million for cleanup programs and the installation of free Electric Charging Stations (EV) on public properties such as parking authority installations. He also reported that First Energy Solutions will provide electricity from 100% renewable sources at \$.0671/KW Hour.

Kathy, representing the EAC, attended the Sustainable Energy Conference at DeSales University and listened to presentations about electric vehicle (EV) charging stations and which cars would best be able to benefit from them. The regulations concerning community solar were presented as very restrictive, but PA is looking into revising the regulations, which could allow even low-income communities to become involved. A PennDOT representative gave a talk on the need for EV utility installations as a way to minimize the cost for transportation and Kathy recommended that the EAC contact PPL to support this idea.

#### **Committee Reports:**

**Bethlehem Backyards for Wildlife (BBFW):** Martha Christine reported that the City has been recertified for the sixth consecutive year for this program.

#### **External Committee Reports:**

**City Council:** No Report.

**Planning & Zoning:** No Report.

#### **Unfinished Business:**

**Facebook Page:** Elisabeth reported on her efforts to create a Facebook page for the EAC and noted that this would allow others to better learn about and correspond with EAC members.

**Outreach to Local EACs:** Brian has attended many of the local EAC meetings and is in the process of creating an EAC list with contact information and meeting dates.