



Briefing on the Greater Baltimore Wilderness Coalition Accord



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Description

The Greater Baltimore Wildlife Coalition (GWBC) is conducting a regional green infrastructure resilience study. The study area includes the portion of Montgomery County within the Patuxent River watershed. The GWBC Steering Committee (Attachment 2) is requesting that The Maryland-National Park and Planning Commission become a signatory to the GBWC Accord document provided in Attachment 3. The Coalition expects to remain an unincorporated voluntary association active in promoting green infrastructure for the mutual benefit of its members. Signing the accord only obligates the Commission to provide readily available GIS datasets for use in mapping of existing resources and staff participation to the extent that staff is available.

One short-term outcome of the GBWC is the development of a green infrastructure plan through a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's (NFWF) Hurricane Sandy Coastal Resiliency Grant Program. This grant is focused on a smaller geographic area than the Coalition as shown in Attachment 1, but will involve all of the identified jurisdictions in creating an important blueprint for regional coordination and advancement.

Staff Recommendation: Review prior to a Full Commission briefing and vote scheduled for 5/20.

Background

In 2008, The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission signed a memorandum of understanding with the Baltimore-Washington Partners for Forest Stewardship. This all volunteer partnership is made up of land managers from all levels of government – from municipalities to the federal government. This partnership serves as a venue to share information and ideas between land managers along the Baltimore-Washington Corridor.

In 2013, discussions began about the need for a concerted effort to identify critical landscapes for conservation within the communities in Maryland that will see the highest population growth in the coming decades: the counties of Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Harford, Howard, **Montgomery, and Prince George's**, and the cities of Baltimore, Annapolis, and Bowie (Attachment 1). The group consists of staff from federal, state, county and local governments, non-profit conservation and park organizations, and conservation coalitions.

This new coalition, called the **Greater Baltimore Wilderness Coalition (GBWC or the Coalition)**, seeks to build on the success of the Baltimore-Washington Partners' effort and expand the area of concern while retaining the model of sharing information with a limit on agency resource commitment.

The new coalition is built on the model used to create the Baltimore-Washington Partners and a project in the greater Chicago metropolitan area called Chicago Wilderness (CW). CW now serves over 400 jurisdictions in four states (Illinois, Indiana, Michigan and Wisconsin) and is focused on bringing back biodiversity through connected, preserved, and restored landscapes using a green infrastructure network approach. GBWC will support the use of the green infrastructure planning approach to advance the region's ecological, social, and economic well-being using the connected themes of resiliency, biodiversity, equity and discovery.

The GBWC Steering Committee (Attachment 2) is requesting that The Maryland-National Park and Planning Commission become a signatory to the GBWC Accord document provided in Attachment 3. The Coalition expects to remain an unincorporated voluntary association active in promoting green infrastructure for the mutual benefit of its members. By signing the accord the Commission agrees only to provide readily available information, such as GIS datasets for use in mapping of existing resources, and staff participation to the extent that staff is available.

The Accord states:

"This Accord in no way obligates or restricts the activity of any party hereto in any way. No Member shall obligate, or purport to obligate, any other Member with respect to any matter."

One short-term outcome of the GBWC is the development of a green infrastructure map through a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's (NFWF) Hurricane Sandy Coastal Resiliency Grant Program. This grant is focused on a smaller geographic area than the Coalition (the dark green area as shown in Attachment 1), but will involve all of the identified jurisdictions in creating an important blueprint for regional coordination and advancement. The study area includes the area of Montgomery County that lies within the Patuxent River watershed.

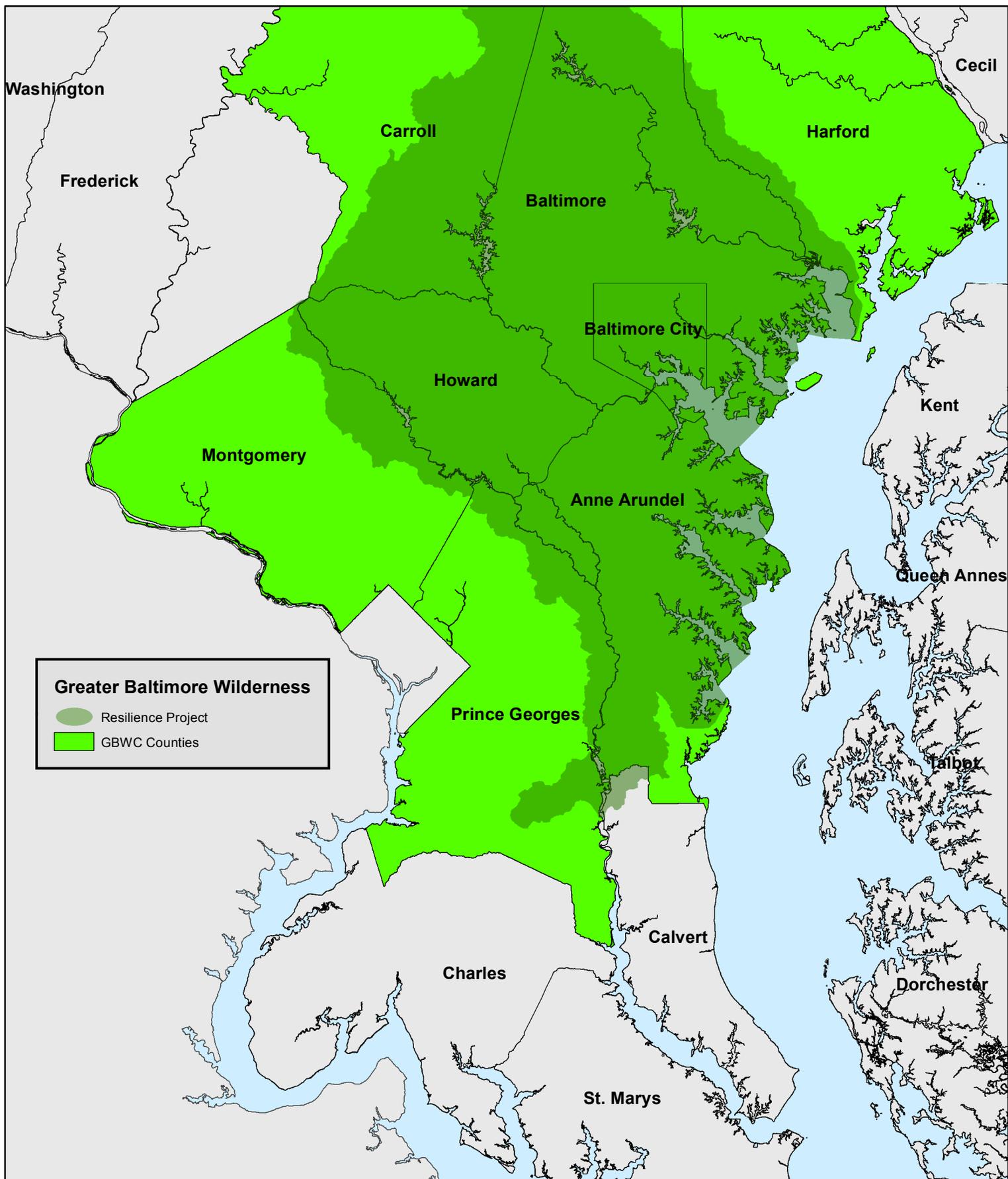
The Prince George's County Planning Department is recommending that the Prince George's County Planning Board forward the draft Resolution provided in Attachment 4 to the Full Commission for their consideration.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Map of the GBWC Boundaries
2. GBWC Steering Committee
3. GBWC Accord document
4. Draft Full Commission Resolution

c: Fern Piret, Planning Director, M-NCPPC, Prince George's County Planning Department
CJ Lammers, M-NCPPC, Prince George's County Planning Department

Greater Baltimore Wilderness Coalition & Coastal Resilience Project



Greater Baltimore Wilderness Coalition

Steering Committee

January 2015

The Center for Chesapeake Communities (Gary Allen)

Parks and People Foundation (Jackie Carrera or Guy Hager)

SavATree Consulting Group (Michael Galvin)

Baltimore City (Kristin Baja)

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources (Christine Conn)

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Genevieve LaRouche)

U.S. Forest Service (Morgan Grove)

The Chesapeake Conservancy (Joanna Ogburn)

US Department of the Interior (Lisa Pelstring)

Prince George's County Planning Department, M-NCPPC (CJ Lammers – interim local government representative)

The Conservation Fund (Erik Meyers) ex-officio

The American Planning Association (David Rouse) ex-officio



Greater Baltimore Wilderness Accord

This Accord is made and entered into by and among the members of the Greater Baltimore Wilderness Coalition (hereafter referred to as the **Baltimore Wilderness or BW.**) The Accord creates a voluntary network of local, state and federal agencies and independent organizations that share and support common goals.

Vision

Baltimore Wilderness envisions a future where:

- Accessible interconnected and healthy ecosystems contribute to economic vitality, resilience and quality of life for all of the region's residents and visitors;
- The region's working lands, watersheds, open spaces and natural communities are intentionally protected, restored, enhanced, and managed for ecological health; and
- Healthy and prosperous communities appreciate and support natural ecosystems, creating an enduring culture of conservation and stewardship.

Mission

To improve the quality of life by identifying, restoring, enhancing and protecting an interconnected network of lands and waters supporting healthy ecosystems and communities to benefit the people and wildlife of central Maryland.

To achieve this mission, Baltimore Wilderness will focus on four programmatic pillars:

- Resilience – To improve the region’s capacity to achieve lasting economic vitality, BW will seek to mitigate impacts of climate change including sea level rise, flooding, stronger coastal storms, warmer temperatures, and drought through a protected regional green infrastructure network that includes forests, wetlands, parks, rain gardens and urban tree canopy. This network will absorb rainfall, store water, reduce flooding and provide additional community benefits, such as cleaner air, space for recreation, and relief from urban heat.
- Biodiversity - In this rapidly developing region wildlife habitat is continually fragmented or lost due to traditional infrastructure and development. Preserving valuable natural areas, such as forests, wetlands, vernal pools, and coastal environments provides access to food and shelter for wildlife, offers corridors for migration, and protects vulnerable, often at risk species.
- Equity – As access to nature is unequally available across the region, BW seeks to connect the region’s increasingly urbanized population with nature. Local and regional greenways, city parks, restored stream corridors, urban waterways and trees can reach even into heavily developed areas and provide connections with green and blue natural resources.
- Discovery and Engagement - In a world that is increasingly urbanized and dominated by technology, environmental and outdoor education for children and adults is even more important. BW must direct the attention of present and up-and-coming generations to the richness and value of the natural world so that we will collectively do better as its stewards.

Recitals

WHEREAS, the Greater Baltimore region’s natural resource lands are permeated by intense urban development making protection and restoration of contiguous blocks of green infrastructure critical for the region’s resilience to climate change, water and air quality and living resource services; and

WHEREAS, Federal, state and local agencies have a critical role in the protection, conservation, restoration and enhancement of unique and sensitive habitats and plant and animal communities; the maintenance and improvement of local soil, water and air quality; the reduction of greenhouse gases; and the provision of recreational and aesthetic amenities to the community; and

WHEREAS, we support the Chesapeake Bay Program and its signatory partners to meet the commitments of the New Chesapeake 2014 Watershed Agreement; and

WHEREAS, collaborative research and innovative technology improves natural resource management among participating organizations and the community;

NOW THEREFORE,

Each Member commits to the following:

- Fostering coordination of support for management and research to achieve stewardship objectives consistent with constraints of affected agencies or organizations;
- Improving communication among members and the public about shared goals and ideals for environmental stewardship;
- Meeting regularly to identify restoration, management or monitoring initiatives of mutual interest in targeted geographic areas;
- Maintaining and enhancing ecological, environmental and societal services provided by green infrastructure through management, restoration and conservation actions;
- Implementing joint management strategies for green infrastructure when feasible, given available financial and staff resources;
- Conducting outreach activities to improve awareness, and integrate public and private sensitivity to environmental issues; and
- Adopting sustainability criteria to guide our strategies, evaluate the progress of the Coalition, and communicate benefits to members and the public.

IN FURTHERANCE OF THESE SHARED VALUES AND COMMITMENTS, it is mutually agreed and understood by and among the parties hereto that,

This Accord reflects a voluntary commitment among the parties to work together to achieve the vision and mission articulated herein. This Accord in no way obligates or restricts the activity of any party hereto in any way. No Member shall obligate, or purport to obligate, any other Member with respect to any matter. Upon providing written notice of intent to withdraw to either Coalition Co-Chair at least sixty (60) days in advance of the effective date, any Member may withdraw from the Greater Baltimore Wilderness Coalition. Other voluntary policies and practices are described in the Policies and Procedures document adopted by the Steering Committee.

NOW, IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the following party has executed this Accord as of the date indicated.

Signature

Date

Print name/title

Printed Name of Agency/Organization

DRAFT

R E S O L U T I O N

WHEREAS, in 2008 The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission signed a memorandum of understanding with the Baltimore-Washington Partners for Forest Stewardship (BWPFS or Baltimore-Washington Partners), a volunteer partnership of all levels of government created to share information among land managers in the Baltimore-Washington corridor; and

WHEREAS, in 2013 the BWPFS joined with other federal, state, local governments, and non-profit organizations to build on the success of the Baltimore-Washington Partners and expand the area of concern while retaining the model of sharing information with a limit on voluntary agency resource commitment; and

WHEREAS, this new organization is called the Greater Baltimore Wilderness Coalition; and

WHEREAS, The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission recognizes that the Baltimore-Washington region contains a wealth of natural assets that provide a multitude of ecosystem services to people including improving air quality, water quality, and the livability of our communities, and that interconnected and healthy ecosystems contribute to the economic vitality, sustainability, and quality of life for county residents and workers; and

WHEREAS, The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission recognizes the value and mutual benefits of aligning public and private partner resources to achieve a common vision that engages participation of affected individuals, governments, and organizations.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission does hereby agree to become a signatory to the Greater Baltimore Wilderness Accord.

Adopted by The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission this ___ day of ___ 2015.

Patricia Colihan Barney
Executive Director