

## HARFORD COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY BOARD

### APPROVED MEETING SUMMARY – July 15<sup>th</sup>, 2025

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#### **Members Present**

Jackie Koehn, Sally LaBarre, Roland Beckman, Michael Charlton, Jackie Seneschal, Dan Spiker

#### **Ex-officio Members Present**

Terry Hanley, Adam Lanphear, Dan Furman, Jeff Schoenberger

#### **Guests**

Deanna Lethbridge, Harford County Parks & Recreation

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#### **Welcome / Introductions**

Jackie Koehn welcomed the EAB. Everyone introduced themselves.

#### **Review and Approval of the June 2025 Meeting Summary**

The June 2025 meeting summary was approved.

#### **Presentation by Deanna Lethbridge, Recreation Specialist, Harford County Parks & Recreation**

- What Makes a Species Invasive?
  - An invasive species is any Alien living organism that outcompetes the native species for resources
  - Aggressive Natives are living organisms that are native to an area but can sometimes outcompete other natives
- How Did They Get Here?
  - Some were brought intentionally by settlers (e.g., mint, garlic mustard, great mullein) for cooking or medicinal use.
  - Others were introduced by the Forest Service for erosion control along highways or shorelines.
  - Certain species, such as autumn olive and sawtooth oak, were introduced to support hunting and birdwatching but proved less beneficial than native species.
  - Many were introduced as ornamental plants.
- Impacts of Invasive Species
  - Contributed to the decline of 42% of endangered and threatened species in the U.S., with 18% facing invasives as the primary threat.
  - Compete with native species for moisture, sunlight, nutrients, and space.
  - Reduce overall plant diversity.
  - Degrade wildlife habitats.
  - Reduce productivity and soil quality on agricultural lands.
  - Diminish water quality and increase soil erosion.

- Limit recreational opportunities.
- Maryland's Most Wanted Invasives
  - Japanese stilt grass
  - Porcelainberry
  - Burning bush
  - Chickweed
- Examples of Problematic Species
  - **Honeysuckle:** Introduced for ornamental use, erosion control, and wildlife cover. Birds spread seeds, aiding dispersal. Grows as bushes or vines; vines choke out small shrubs and saplings. Adaptable to many habitats. (Note: berries used to make ice cream.)
  - **Japanese Knotweed:** Introduced ornamenteally and for erosion control. Also used medicinally and as a rhubarb substitute. Aggressively outcompetes native plants, alters waterways, and damages infrastructure. Rhizome system makes eradication difficult.
  - **Bradford/Callery Pear:** Imported in the early 1900s to breed disease-resistant fruit trees. Resistant to fire blight but has thorny branches, unpleasant odor, and invasive spreading. One of the earliest trees to bloom in spring.
  - **English Ivy:** Used as ground cover but clings to trees, blocks light, and weakens trunks. Heavy vines can kill trees, especially during storms. Serves as a reservoir for bacterial leaf scorch.
  - **Kudzu:** Known as “the plant that ate the South.” Can grow up to one foot per day, with vines reaching 100 feet. Spreads through runners and rhizomes. Weight can damage trees, power lines, and buildings.
  - **Asian/Chinese Wisteria:** Introduced ornamenteally. Spreads through seeds and root fragments. Woody, counterclockwise-twining vine with pea-type flowers in spring. Strangles trees and shrubs.
- Ways to Handle Invasives
  - Herbicides
  - Foraging/eating (e.g., dandelions, mugwort, garlic mustard)
  - Using goats for vegetation control
- Sources
  - *Plant Invaders of Mid-Atlantic Natural Areas: Field Guide* - Jil M. Swearingen & Judith P. Fulton
  - *Beyond the War on Invasive Species: A permaculture Approach to Ecosystem Restoration* - Tao Orion
  - *Invasive Plants: Guide to Identification and the Impacts and Control of Common North American Species* - Sylvan Ramsey Kaufman & Wallace Kaufman
- Discussion
  - Mr. Beckman asked about bamboo. Ms. Lethbridge explained it can be dangerous and must be removed from the roots, ideally by digging with machinery and applying herbicide. Bamboo has a lifespan of about 75 years but regrows nearby.
  - Ms. LaBarre suggested bamboo could be sold for projects, clothing, and paper.
  - Ms. Koehn asked what Parks & Recreation uses. Ms. Lethbridge said they rely on “Invasinators” (volunteers) and typically avoid herbicides to protect native plants. Cardboard is sometimes used to smother invasives.

- Mr. Hanley noted ongoing public education efforts to remove invasive species, with strong volunteer participation.

## **Departmental Updates**

Mr. Hanley from Parks & Recreation reported they have the grand champion Mulberry Tree. Farm Fair is from July 19-26.

Mr. Lanphear from the Health Department reported they have begun their water sampling. They test the County's recreational water. Results are posted weekly on the Harford County website. With how much rain we have been getting, please make sure to wait 48 hours before going into open water.

Mr. Schoenberger from the Department of Public Works reported the next HHW collection event will be held at the Harford Mulch and Compost Facility on Tuesday, August 5, from 8am to noon. A community cleanup was held at Church Creek Elementary School on July 12. Four roll-off loads were removed; 8.6 tons of trash and 2.5 tons of scrap metal were collected. The next community cleanup is scheduled for August 9 from 8:30-noon at the Edgewood Recreation and Community Center. The County received a \$500,000 grant from DNR for the Anita C. Leight stream restoration project.

Mr. Furman from Planning & Zoning reported that the County sent out comments on the revised Traffic Impact Assessment for Costco a few weeks ago. The developer must address comments from P&Z, DPW, and SHA. We are beginning work on the Master Plan. We are developing a Request for Proposal for a consultant to assist in "listening sessions" with the community, hopefully it will be out in a few months.

## **New Business**

Ms. LaBarre suggested a book called *The Lost Trees of Willow Avenue: A Story of Climate and Hope on One American Street* by Mike Tidwell

## **Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 6:50pm.