



FREDERICK COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

September 13, 2017

TITLE:

**Briefing on the Recommended
Monocacy River Management
Plan**

REQUEST:

**Planning Commission review
of the River Board's
Recommended Plan in advance
of the Commission's
public hearing and
recommendation to the
County Council**

STAFF:

Tim Goodfellow, Principal Planner II

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff finds that the Recommended Monocacy River Management Plan supports the goals and policies of the County Comprehensive Plan and would recommend that it be forwarded to the County Council.

ATTACHMENTS:

- Exhibit 1 Staff Report
- Exhibit 2 River Board transmittal letter
- Exhibit 3 Recommended Monocacy River Management Plan

Frederick County Division of Planning & Permitting

Staff Report

ISSUE

The Recommended Monocacy Scenic River Management Plan is being presented to the County Planning Commission for its review and recommendation to the County Council.

BACKGROUND

The Monocacy River is the largest Maryland tributary of the Potomac River. The River begins at the Mason-Dixon Line where Marsh Creek and Rock Creek converge, then flows 58 miles to the Potomac River. The Monocacy bisects Frederick County as it flows south of Miller's Bridge (MD 77) at Rocky Ridge. North of MD 77 to Pennsylvania, the River divides Carroll County from Frederick County.

The Monocacy is a significant resource in the County, used for public water supply (City of Frederick, Ft. Detrick), recreational opportunities, and is a natural and scenic resource. The Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has identified many areas in the Monocacy River corridor that contain habitats of rare, threatened, or endangered species, now identified as Ecologically Significant Areas. The River's riparian area also contains numerous Wetlands of Special State Concern. These wetlands have exceptional ecological value and often contain the last remaining populations of native plants and animals.

Monocacy River Planning History

After the Maryland Scenic and Wild Rivers Act of 1968 was adopted, the first inventory, Scenic Rivers in Maryland, was released in 1970. The Monocacy River was identified as a significant state resource, worthy of immediate study, and as prime candidate for State Scenic River designation. On April 30, 1974, the Monocacy River was added to the Maryland Scenic River System.

The Monocacy River is one of nine (9) State-designated scenic rivers in Maryland, each with a management plan and an advisory body, as described in the Maryland Scenic and Wild Rivers Act (*Md. NATURAL RESOURCES Code Ann. §8-401, §8-402, § 8-403*).

In 1990 the Monocacy Scenic River Local Advisory Board with technical assistance from DNR prepared the initial Monocacy Scenic River Study and Management Plan. This Plan was approved by both Carroll County and Frederick County in May 1990. The 1990 Plan included a number of issues and recommendations to provide guidance to the River Board and other bodies (i.e. planning commissions, elected officials) for decisions that may affect the River corridor.

The Recommended Monocacy Scenic River Management Plan

The Monocacy Scenic River Citizens' Advisory Board (River Board) initiated an update of the 1990 Plan in 2016 with technical assistance provided by the Planning staff's from Carroll and Frederick Counties.

The River Board's Initial Draft Plan was released in October 2016. Public and property owner outreach efforts included the direct notification of river front property owners, placement of the Draft Plan at several public libraries, and posting the Draft Plan on the County web page. Staff also presented information about the Draft Plan to various community organizations and the Town of Walkersville. Six (6) public meetings on the Initial Draft Plan were held by the River Board, which resulted in revisions to the Initial Draft Plan. River Board Staff gave seven (7) presentations on the Plan to various community groups. The River Board's Final Draft Plan was released on June 16, 2017, followed by a public hearing on July 12, 2017. The River Board's Plan had extensive public outreach, comment, and review components. A total of 340 written comments on the Initial Draft and Final Draft Plans were received by the River Board.

The Recommended Plan retains the same general framework as the 1990 Plan, which contains the following chapter headings:

- Preface and Introduction
- The Physical Environment
- History and Cultural Resources
- The Ecological Environment
- Land Use Planning & Water Resources Management
- Water Quality
- Issues and Recommendations, which identifies 11 major issues, with broad objectives for each issue and recommendations for management, protection, and stewardship of the Monocacy River

The 2017 Recommended Plan focuses on the conservation and enhancement of the River corridor and less on the entire Monocacy River Watershed, as was done in the 1990 Plan. However, a plan for a river cannot ignore its watershed and tributaries. Overall, the 2017 Recommended Plan retains large sections of the *1990 Plan*, but contains updated information and narrative on scientific research about ecology and water quality; land use management policies; best practices for the agricultural sector; and water quality restoration and protection mandates.

Revised data, expanded narratives, and additions to each chapter are briefly summarized below under the listing of new chapter headings. Recommendations are included with each chapter. Also included are river resource maps of the Monocacy River corridor that show aerial photography, steep and moderate slopes, forest cover, land use, wetlands, and the FEMA 100-year floodplain.

- **Executive Summary**
- **Chapter 1, Preface**
- **Chapter 2, Introduction**
 - River Board function & role
- **Chapter 3, Physical Environment**
 - soils, wetlands, river and riparian environments
- **Chapter 4, History and Cultural Resources**

- Monocacy Nat'l Battlefield, historic River crossings, Heart of the Civil War Heritage Area, Frederick County Historic Preservation Plan
- **Chapter 5, Ecological Environment**
 - biodiversity, Ecologically Significant Areas, riparian forests & scientific research, Forest Conservation Act, green infrastructure, fisheries
- **Chapter 6, Land Use Planning & Existing River Corridor Protection Measures**
 - State planning initiatives, Comprehensive Plan policies & zoning in River jurisdictions, waterway and floodplain regulation
- **Chapter 7, Agriculture**
 - Frederick County and Carroll County land preservation programs, agriculture and the floodplain, Rural Legacy Program
- **Chapter 8, Recreation, Parkland, Open Space**
 - State and local parkland policies, public river access, river levels and flows
- **Chapter 9, Water Quality**
 - water quality impacts/impairments/restoration, storm water management, water use & monitoring, wastewater treatment,
- **Appendix**
 - supporting data, resources, research, and studies related to the Monocacy River

Frederick County Comprehensive Plan

The 2010 Frederick County Comprehensive Plan addresses the Monocacy River resource in the Conserving our Natural Resources and Green Infrastructure chapter. The chapter outlines a green infrastructure plan element, which is comprised of forest, mountain, stream valley, and parkland/protected land resources. The Monocacy River is also listed as a specific resource in the Sensitive Areas Element, which is a state mandated component of the comprehensive plan to address the protection of environmentally sensitive areas. The County Comprehensive Plan includes the following goals, policies, and action items that address the protection of natural resources in general and the Monocacy River in particular.

Goals

NR-G-01 Protect natural resources and environmentally sensitive areas in Frederick County

NR-G-01 Manage growth and land development in Frederick County in a manner that is in harmony with the conservation and protection of our natural resources.

Policies

NR-P-04 Encourage inter-agency and inter-jurisdictional cooperation and coordination of environmental protection plans and actions.

NR-P-06: Promote the establishment and protection of forested buffers along streams and the Monocacy River

NR-P-10: Support the application of Resource Conservation zoning to steep slopes, forested lands, wetlands, and habitats of threatened and endangered species along the Monocacy River and its tributaries.

Action Items

NR-A-05: Target areas along the Monocacy River as Forest Resource Ordinance priority areas (forest plantings and forest banking) in addition to stream in the Agricultural zoning district

NR-A-06: Initiate an update of the 1990 Monocacy Scenic River Study and Management Plan, including examination of a Monocacy River Greenway and optional forms it could take.

NR-A-07: Establish a new variable-width development setback/buffer, specific to Catoctin Creek and the Monocacy River, which addresses water quality protection, topography and other landscape elements, wildlife habitat, historic and archeological resources, and scenic viewsheds.

NR-A-10: Amend the Agricultural Preservation ranking system to grant additional points to farms with frontage along the Monocacy and Potomac Rivers.

Land Use Plan Designations and Zoning

The Land Use Plan component applies a Natural Resource designation along the entire length of the river within Frederick County. The delineation of this designation primarily follows the extent of the 100-year floodplain and would also include the majority of contiguous forestland and steep slopes. In addition to highlighting the extent of the natural resources of the Monocacy River corridor this area also provides the basis for applying the Resource Conservation (RC) zoning.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff finds that the Recommended Monocacy Scenic River Management Plan supports the goals and policies of the County Comprehensive Plan and would recommend that it be forwarded to the County Council.

Attachments

River Board transmittal

Recommended Plan (Appendix and River Resource maps included on a disc)



August 29, 2017

William Hopwood, Chairman
Frederick County Planning Commission
30 North Market Street
Frederick, Maryland 21701

RE: 2017 Monocacy River Management Plan

Dear Chairman Hopwood:

At our August 2, 2017 meeting, the Monocacy Scenic River Citizens' Advisory Board (River Board) voted to finalize the Recommended Monocacy River Management Plan. This Recommended Plan is the River Board's revision and update of the *1990 Monocacy Scenic River Study and Management Plan*, written by the River Board and Maryland Department of Natural Resources.

After the release of the Initial Draft of the Monocacy River Management Plan in October 2016, the River Board spent many months reviewing public comment (we received 340 written comments on the Initial Draft Plan), listening to public testimony at public meetings, and making revisions to the Initial Draft Plan.

As Chairman of the River Board, I hereby formally transmit the River Board's Recommended Plan to you for the Planning Commission's review and recommendation to the Frederick County Council.

If you have any questions, please contact our Frederick County Staff liaison, Tim Goodfellow, in the Division of Planning and Permitting

Sincerely,

George Grillon, DMD
Chairman, Monocacy Scenic River Citizens' Advisory Board