

**Summary of Stakeholder Outreach Meeting for Patuxent Reservoirs
Watershed Protection Study – Rocky Gorge Reservoir
18 June 2012**

EA Engineering, Science, and Technology (EA) held stakeholder outreach meetings on the Patuxent Reservoirs Watershed Protection Study (Study) on June 18 and 19, 2012.. EA is authorized by the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC) to conduct the Study. This summary describes stakeholder comments at the 18 June 2012 meeting.

Meeting Date: June 18, 2012 (7 pm to 10 pm)

Location: Laurel Boys and Girls Club
701 Montgomery Street 26430
Laurel, Maryland 20707

Speakers: See below

Agenda Items:

- EA presented an overview of the Study work plan
- EA answered questions about the Study
- EA listened to and recorded stakeholder comments and suggestions regarding recreational use of the WSSC-owned lands adjacent to Rocky Gorge and Triadelphia reservoirs and potential impacts to water quality

Meeting Format:

- Stakeholder speaking time limited to 3 minutes
- Meeting was audio-recorded and transcribed
- Written comments will be accepted through July 19, 2012

Meeting Summary

Jody Smet, EA, gave a PowerPoint slide presentation (available separately) that provided:

- background information on EA ;
- meeting agenda and format;
- meeting purpose and goals;
- meeting ground rules; and
- key project staff

Mike Powell, EA, gave a PowerPoint slide presentation (available separately) that provided a brief overview of the Study, which will include:

- a review of existing data and information relating to water quality, forest conservation, watershed boundaries, and various physical characteristics;

- field reconnaissance of WSSC access roads and interior trails for the verification of maps, documentation of erosion potential or contamination, and threats to public safety; and
- recommendations regarding buffer management, public access points, and trail locations in order to improve water quality.

Questions and Answers about Study

Mike Powell answered questions about EA's contract with WSSC, availability of information and data, field methodologies including an assessment of erosion, water quality, the extent to which recreational activities could be limited or eliminated, and whether additional factors like sedimentation, vegetation, water depth profiles or damage to culverts would be included in the scope of the Study.

Stakeholder Comments

A diverse group of stakeholders provided comments. The following briefly summarizes key stakeholder comments and concerns by recreational use/activity.

Equestrians

Many speakers stated that the vast majority of the horse trails along the reservoir show no traces of erosion and that issues related to sediment and erosion are caused by culverts and steep access roads instead of properly constructed switchback trails previously used for horseback riding. They said that issues related to fecal matter are more pertinent to deer and other wildlife, not horses. Rather than contributing to litter and excessive waste, many riders explained that they are active in cleaning up trash along the trails. Additionally, the equestrian community feels that they are important stewards of the watershed and have played a pivotal role as WSSC's eyes and ears for many years. Several stakeholders questioned reports of erosion along the trails and want WSSC to present the scientific rationale that horseback riding in these areas has negative impacts on the reservoir and its water quality.

Another concern frequently expressed was the overall dissatisfaction of and negative impact on the commercial horse stables due to:

- prohibiting use of the old bridle trails (e.g., Terry Ledley trail and Pat Oliva trail);
- the winter closure of all designated equestrian trails; and
- closing private horse entrances to the trails.

According to one speaker, the horse economy represents \$5.6 billion, and a reduction in riding could negatively affect both local businesses associated with the horse industry, as well as property values near the reservoir. One speaker cited real estate experts who have said that closing the horse trails has hurt property values in West Laurel.

Many stakeholders shared their frustration with the closure of trails due to a lack of other existing areas for horse riding. Not only does the closing of trails affect local residents, but it discourages outsiders from traveling to such areas and spending money to support local businesses dependent upon horse related retail and services.

Further evidence of the value of the horse riding trails was articulated by those who stated that such activities provided valuable outdoor interactive learning experiences for young children. Additionally, one person referenced the value of trained riders in the case of potential search and rescue operations.

Overall, the stakeholders commented that the study is not focusing on the right issues related to erosion and sedimentation and water quality. Instead of focusing on recreational activities within the WSSC-owned buffer, they suggest that a more effective approach would include more analysis of tributary inputs, and land uses such as deforestation and overdevelopment in the larger, surrounding watershed.

Anglers and Boaters

Anglers and boaters alike said that they specifically bought their houses because of the close proximity to the reservoir and its associated benefits. Some stakeholders expressed their gratitude for the fishing opportunities that are permitted in the area. Others commented on the currently imposed restrictions on use and asked that the boating season be extended once again. Stakeholders also commented on lack of WSSC policy enforcement at the reservoirs.

Hunters/Deer Management

A few stakeholders commended WSSC's active deer management program and discussed the need to have better deer control in the watershed.

Pollution Sources from Outside WSSC Reservoir Buffer

Several stakeholders recognized the importance of protecting the reservoir's water quality as it is a major source of drinking water for many citizens. One speaker insisted that pollutants in the reservoir, and erosion and sediment from housing developments are more responsible for contamination within the watershed than are permit holders (i.e., recreational users).

Many stakeholders commented that the study was using bad data and focusing on the wrong issues. They would like to see a greater emphasis on other relevant issues such as surrounding development, tributary health, wetland preservation, and biodiversity. Stakeholders commented that WSSC should make the results of the study available to the public.

Stakeholder Speaker List: 18 June 2012

1. James Robinson
2. Chuck Seldon
3. Barbara Sollner-Webb
4. Brian Eyler
5. Donald Chamberlin
6. Stan Hopkins
7. Clara Gouin
8. Annette Ashby Knox
9. David Armstrong
10. Debby Poole
11. Virginia Henriksen
12. Patty Sobel
13. Lucy Errter
14. Denise Raynor
15. Peter Shumacher
16. Fran Koch
17. James Putman
18. Denis Webb
19. Dana Grabiner
20. Priscilla Huffman
21. Maria Schwartz
22. Laurel Santamarina
23. Alyce Ortuzar
24. Thomas Porter
25. Ravi Khanna
26. Jane Van Molton
27. Pat Oliva
28. Elizabeth Yuster