



HOWARD COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY BOARD
3430 Court House Drive ■ Ellicott City, Maryland 21043 ■

Ned Tillman, Chair

http://www.howardcountymd.gov/OES/OES_Board.htm

2015 Annual Report The Howard County Environmental Sustainability Board

To the County Executive and the County Council:

The primary responsibility of the Environmental Sustainability Board (ESB) is to advise the Executive and County Council on matters related to environmental sustainability. In past years we have chosen a major focus, e.g., stormwater, food, and green infrastructure. This year the board decided to revisit four major topic areas to propose possible next steps.

To achieve this goal, we have done the following over the past 8 months:

1. Held open meetings and discussions on four major topic areas:
 - Agriculture and Food Policy
 - Energy Management
 - Water Quality
 - Green Infrastructure Network (GIN)
2. Listed ideas for actions that could be pursued to benefit the county
3. Weighed the actions by having ESB participants vote on which ones they thought should be recommended to the Administration for prioritization and further evaluation by the Office of Community Sustainability.

Those actions are listed in the attached spreadsheet for your review.

Summary of the Main Points

1. **Ag and Food** – Build on what is working with a goal to rebuild our lost, local food producing infrastructure.
 - a. Strengthen and expand the Roving Radish program to include more local farmers and more outlets such as restaurants and food buyers. Additionally, this could include making available an incubator kitchen where new entrepreneurs would launch a value-added food product.
 - b. Develop an incubator Farm Program that would allow new farmers to lease space, share equipment and receive training to help them launch new farms. It could offer classes to existing farmers as well.
 - c. Evaluate and implement the food task force recommendations.
<http://livegreenhoward.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/FOOD-POLICY-TASK-FORCE-REPORT-2014.pdf>

2. **Energy** –

- a. Energy related economic development and job creation – Most energy related jobs are in the traditional trades (e.g. electricians, HVAC mechanics). Foster the creation of energy related jobs by working with the business sector and incentivizing energy efficiency and renewable energy projects.
- b. Climate Action Plan – To achieve greenhouse gas (GHG) reductions goals the County should implement the Additional Emission Reduction Strategies proposed by the county's consultant in Climate Action Plan. http://livegreenhoward.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/02/HCM_2015_Climate-Action-Plan_Sept2015_eversion.pdf
- c. Local Clean Energy – The County should investigate and remove impediments to local renewable energy projects and promote incentives for clean energy adoption (e.g. solar and ground source heat pumps).
- d. Telecommuting – In consideration of the significant carbon footprint associated with commuting, the potential for increased workforce resiliency, and the expected relatively low cost to implement, the County should seriously evaluate a comprehensive telecommuting program for eligible County employees.

3. **Water Quality** – Provide full funding and institutional capacity long-term to meet Clean Water Act requirements and restore high water quality throughout the county.

- a. Evaluate the use of nutrient trading between agriculture and urban sectors to achieve more cost-effective pollutant reductions, while ensuring that no parts of the county are ignored and all local waters are restored.
- b. Maintain the watershed protection fee and provide additional incentives to bring all county residents and businesses to the table and ensure that restoration activities will occur on private lands, as needed to meet federal and state mandates.
- c. Investigate methods for addressing pollution from the septic sector, which has hitherto been difficult to remediate.

4. **Green Infrastructure Network (GIN)** – Use the GIN as a tool for maintaining and enhancing natural areas for recreation, wildlife, biodiversity, and the ecosystem services of clean air, clean water, and flood control throughout the county.

- a. Update the Forest Conservation Manual to reflect current State and County policies, and to protect and enhance the County's GIN through (1) incentives to develop outside of the GIN of hubs and corridors, and (2) increased habitat restoration requirements for developers clearing within the Network.
- b. Increase management of invasive species (e.g., deer and exotic plants) within the GIN and other public lands, especially in areas where invasive species are newly established or threaten public health and water quality.
- c. Encourage collaboration with existing nonprofits to expand GIN outreach and education that would foster development of a GIN easement program.

Many of these goals can be achieved through education and partnerships with residents and businesses across the county, including agriculture, the food industry, the corporate real estate sector, and other businesses, small and large. The list is not in priority order. Goals range from ones that might be easy and inexpensive to others that might be expensive and difficult. Some will actually save the county, our businesses, and our citizens' money. Others will result in a healthier workforce and lower health costs. They cover a wide range of actions and can be approached via a mix of:

- Outreach
- Incentives
- Regulations

The Energy Task Force, which has just been appointed, will be assessing some of the items we mentioned here. You might want to wait for their report for some of these actions. There are also several opportunities that will arise during the next 12 months that you may want to pursue prior to the release of the Energy Task Force report. For example, there are a series of recommendations by the county's consultant, who worked on the Greenhouse Gas Inventory and Climate Action Plan that could/should be pursued right away. (See #2, Energy, above)

We suggest that the attached list be vetted by your Office of Community Sustainability and your subcabinets (Energy, Agriculture, etc.) and then as appropriate these ideas should be provided to the appropriate people or departments for further review and implementation.

Thank you for your interest in these matters.

Sincerely,



Ned Tillman, Chair

Cathy Hudson, Vice Chair

Sherman Howell

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