

**Maryland Coastal Bays Program
Citizens Advisory Committee**

**The Globe
12 Broad Street
Berlin, MD 21811**

February 16, 2016

5:30-6:30 p.m.

Attendees:

- Steve Parker, Chair
- Jennifer Rafter, MCBP
- Joe Lieb
- Amanda Poskaitis, MCBP
- Katherine Phillips, MCBP
- Roman Jesien, MCBP
- Larry Walton
- Monty Hawkins
- Alice Tweedy
- JoAnne Faber
- Dennis Faber
- Larry Fry
- Jean Fry
- Suzy Taylor
- Dave Ritondo
- Sandi Smith, MCBP
- Kate Patton
- Charles Herpen
- Faye Fair
- Jakota Herring
- Steve Taylor
- Sandy Eckfeldt
- Fred Eckfeldt
- Charles Herpen
- Barbara Housen

The quarterly meeting of the Maryland Coastal Bays Program (MCBP) Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) was held on Tuesday, February 16th, 2016, at 5:30 P.M., at The Globe. Introductions were made.

Steve Parker introduced benthic habitats, and addressed CAC member concerns and accomplishments. Assateague Island National Seashore's (AINS) General Management Plan is available for comments by the public. AINS invites you to comment on the Draft GMP/EIS and share your thoughts. NPS will accept comments on the Draft GMP/EIS from the public for a period of 90 days following publication of the Environmental Protection Agency's Notice of Availability in the Federal Register. The closing date for comments will be May 1, 2016.

Jennifer Rafter presented MCBP's Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan (CCMP) The CCMP is a long-term plan that contains specific targeted actions designed to address water quality, habitat and living resources challenges in its estuarine watershed. The 2015-2025 CCMP is a revision of the original 2000 CCMP that addresses current and emerging issues impacting the water quality and environmental health of estuaries behind Ocean City and Assateague Island. This plan is a compilation of management recommendations from scientific studies, new local, state, and federal initiatives and the continuation of older successful outreach efforts to watershed stakeholders. This plan includes four plans, 15 goals, 33 challenges, and 222 action items that have been vetted by 16 partners and the public and approved by

EPA to guide collaborative watershed management efforts. The CCMP can be found on MCBP's website, www.mdcoastalbays.org, on the home page.

Monty Hawkins, president of the Ocean City Reef Foundation and charter boat captain, presented on offshore benthic habitats and fisheries. Temperate water corals such as sea whip, star coral, and sponge communities can be found as close as five miles offshore from Ocean City. Underwater footage from Monty can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n77WF9XQRJM>.

Sub-bottom profilers from offshore wind energy surveys affects sea bass negatively. They have been observed to stop feeding within 6 to 7 miles of the sub-bottom profilers. Within three miles of the profiler, no feeding occurs. The area was impacted for months at a time, resulting in no spring sea bass run last year. Surveys occurred in 2013, 2014, and 2015, with 2013 being a major survey. Surveys take about 7 to 8 weeks to complete. The goal of the surveys is to find a suitable location for wind turbines. It is not believed that the installed wind turbines will negatively affect the fish. Sea bass and flounder were observed to return to reefs in November and December of 2015. Captain Hawkins has observed that sea bass populations are still below normal numbers.

Reefs in the offshore wind area are a combination of natural, shipwreck, and artificial. In the 1970s tire reefs were installed as a way to use old tires. The tires were strapped together and compressed with metal straps. Over time the metal has rusted away, resulting in tires that wash up on the beaches. The tire reefs have a lot of coral growth. Captain Hawkins has observed hard coral growth from 1979 that is about a foot deep. Last year, concrete was installed for artificial reefs. More material is necessary to build more artificial reefs. Currently, there is an application with the Nature Conservancy to obtain boulder to restore bottom habitat.

Roman Jesien discussed offshore wind studies performed by Biodiversity Research Institute (BRI). Researchers studied the distribution and abundance of prominent wildlife species, including birds, marine mammals, and sea turtles, in relation to environmental factors on the Outer Continental Shelf. These data can be used to identify important habitat areas, inform siting decisions for future development or other activities, and inform environmental permitting requirements and mitigation efforts aimed at minimizing effects from these activities to wildlife. More information can be found at <http://mdcoastalbays.org/content/files/FINAL%20Maryland%20Project%20092515.pdf>.

The next CAC meeting will be May 17th.

The meeting adjourned at 6:35 p.m.