

The Monocacy River Management Plan Update

Frequently Asked Questions – JUNE 13, 2017

What is the Monocacy Scenic River Management Plan?

The State of Maryland designated the Monocacy River as a Scenic and Wild River in 1974. The Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) managed the preparation of the first Monocacy River Management Plan in 1990. DNR worked with the Monocacy Scenic River Citizens' Advisory Board (River Board) and staff from Frederick and Carroll Counties in preparing the Plan, which was approved by the respective counties and the state. The 2016 Draft Monocacy Scenic River Management Plan is an update of the 1990 Plan.

The 2016 Monocacy River Management Plan describes the River's ecology, environmental resources, natural & cultural history, and also contains recommendations for enhancement and protection of its corridor.

The 2016 Monocacy River Management Plan is not a legally binding document. It is similar to other County Plans such as the Historic Preservation Plan, and the Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan that also contain recommendations and policy guidance for consideration in guiding government actions and land use decisions.

The draft of the 2016 Monocacy River Management Plan was released for public comment on October 6, 2016 via the River Board's web page. A formal press release announcing the creation of the River Management Plan was issued on October 13, 2016 by Frederick County. Carroll County posted the release of the Plan within the News section of the County's homepage. Copies of the Plan were placed in several County libraries for public review.

Who will review and approve the Plan?

The Draft Plan is a recommendation from the Monocacy Scenic River Citizens' Advisory Board, who will forward a Recommended Plan to the officials in both Frederick and Carroll Counties. It is expected that the Recommended Plan will then be presented to both the Frederick and Carroll County Planning Commissions for their review/recommendation.

In Frederick County, the County Council will review and approve the Plan before sending to the County Executive for review and approval. In Carroll County, the Board of County Commissioners reviews and approves the Plan.

The Plan will also be referred to the City of Frederick and Town of Walkersville for their consideration.

What is the River Board and what role do they have with this Plan?

The River Board is a citizen body whose role is to advocate for the Monocacy River. The members are volunteers appointed by the Frederick and Carroll County elected officials. The River Board has ten (10) members and is administered by staff from both counties. The Draft Plan represents the River Board's recommendations to the respective County elected officials. The River Board does not have authority to enact regulation or legislation.

What is the status of the Monocacy River Resource Protection Area (MRRPA)?

The initial Draft Plan proposed a Monocacy River Resource Protection Area (MRRPA) which would seek to *“protect, conserve, and enhance significant Monocacy River resources and their ecological functions and values that provide environmental, social, and economic benefit to Frederick and Carroll County residents.”*

The delineation of the MRRPA was based on the application of conservation-based science and analyzed the extent and location of the following landscape elements along the River corridor:

- o Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) 100-year floodplain
- o Wetlands linked to the River & floodplain
- o Critical woodlands adjacent to the River's banks
- o Moderate & steep slopes adjacent to the River

Following public hearings on the Draft Plan the River Board voted at their meeting on February 1, 2017 to remove the MRRPA from the Draft Plan.

What are Ecologically Significant Areas (ESAs)

The ESAs are areas identified by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to indicate where rare, threatened, or endangered species may be present. This information is publicly available from the DNR and was not created or modified by the River Board. It is included in the Plan as another informational item about the Monocacy River's unique ecology. The map showing the ESAs has been removed from the Draft Plan.

If I have ESAs on my property, does this affect my use of the property?

There are no restrictions to the current use of property if there are ESAs designated by Maryland DNR. However, if a property owner wishes to develop/subdivide his/her property, there may be local or State regulations, such as the Maryland Forest Conservation Act, already in place that would require an additional review to determine if there are ESAs on the property. This may result in collaboration with Maryland DNR to mitigate development impacts. The Draft Plan does not contain any specific recommendations for limiting or regulating activities in the ESAs.

What are the FEMA Floodplain lines? (Blue Lines on River Resource map)

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is responsible for mapping the 100-year floodplains along significant streams and rivers. The 100 year floodplain delineates an area that has a probability of flooding once every 100 years. Each jurisdiction regulates development activity in the 100-year floodplain to varying degrees. The Frederick County Zoning Ordinance prohibits the construction of any structures within the 100-year floodplain and requires an additional 25-foot setback of structures from the 100-year floodplain line. Questions regarding the regulations for the 100-year floodplain can be addressed by your local government planning or zoning office.

Does the Plan recommend a walking or biking path along the Monocacy?

No, the Draft Plan does not recommend a walking or biking path along the Monocacy River.

Does the Plan recommend government take private property through eminent domain or creation of easements to allow public use of private property?

No, the Draft Plan does not recommend the taking of any property or land owner property rights.

Does the Plan recommend the creation of more public access points to the Monocacy River?

Yes, the Draft Plan includes a recommendation for purchase of land for public uses along the River for conservation, parkland development, or River access. The Plan also recommends that safe access points be maintained as a public amenity. However, these would be on public property, not private property.

What are the next steps in the review of the Plan?

The River Board made final revisions to the Draft Plan at its meeting on June 7, 2017 and will conduct another public hearing on a final Draft Plan on July 12, 2017. The River Board is expected to vote on what will be referred to as the Recommended Plan at its regular meeting on August 2, 2017.

Comments on the final Draft Plan can be submitted to the Frederick and Carroll County's staff or testimony can be made at the public hearing.

The River Board's Recommended Plan will then be forwarded to Frederick County, Carroll County, the City of Frederick, and the Town of Walkersville for review. For Frederick County the Recommended Plan will be subject to review and public hearings with the County Planning Commission and the County Council. The County Council will have the decision whether to approve the Plan.

Summary

The draft Monocacy Scenic River Management Plan does not mandate implementation of any its recommendations. The Plan and its recommendations would first have to be approved by the local legislative officials. The Plan's recommendations are proposed for consideration and to encourage collaboration among all parties to improve and protect the Monocacy Scenic River's unique and sensitive resources. The goal of the recommendations is not to stop development or impede agriculture and other initiatives, but to advocate for sustainable land uses, best management practices, and activities that respect and protect the River, its corridor and watershed.