

The Monocacy Scenic River Management Plan Update

Fact Sheet – February 2018

What is the Monocacy Scenic River Management Plan?

The State of Maryland designated the Monocacy River as a Scenic and Wild River in 1974. In 1989/1990, the Monocacy Scenic River Local Advisory Board (River Board), with technical assistance from the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, prepared the initial Monocacy Scenic River Study and Management Plan. This Plan was approved by both Carroll and Frederick Counties in May 1990. The 1990 Plan included issues and recommendations to provide guidance to the River Board and other bodies (i.e., planning commission, elected officials) for decisions that may affect the River corridor.

The River Board's 2017 Recommended Monocacy Scenic River Management Plan ("Recommended Plan") is an update of the 1990 Plan. It describes the River's ecology, environmental resources, natural & cultural history, and also contains recommendations for enhancement and protection of its corridor.

The Recommended 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 only provide recommended actions and policy guidance to the River Board and the County's governing body.

The River Board's initial draft of the 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.

Six (6) public meetings on the Initial Draft Plan were held by the River Board, which resulted in revisions to the Initial Draft Plan. 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 voted on a Recommended Plan at its meeting on August 2, 2017.

Who will review and approve the Plan?

The River Board has sent its Recommended Plan to the Frederick County Planning Commission for their review and recommendation. The Frederick County Planning Commission held a public hearing on the Plan on October 18, 2017, and formally transmitted its recommendations on the Plan to the County Council on November 9, 2017.

The County Council received a briefing on the River Board's Recommended Plan in November 2017 and will schedule a future public hearing on the Plan and decide to approve, modify, or deny the Recommended Plan. In Carroll County, the Board of County Commissioners reviews and approves the Plan.

The Recommended Plan was also be referred to the City of Frederick and Town of Walkersville for review and comment. Both municipalities will have the opportunity to submit comments to the County Council.

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 Recommended Plan represents the River Board's recommendations to the respective County elected officials. The River Board does not have authority to enact regulation or adopt legislation.

What are Ecologically Significant Areas (ESAs)

The ESAs are areas delineated by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to identify where rare, threatened, or endangered plant and animal species and habitats may be present. Within the river corridor most of the ESAs are primarily focused along the tributaries to the Monocacy River and not along the river itself. This information is publicly available from the DNR and was not created or modified by the River Board. It is included in the appendix of the Recommended Plan as another informational item about the Monocacy River's unique ecology.

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

No, the ESAs are only a generalized indication of where significant plant and animal habitats may be located and are not used in any type of regulatory means either by the County or the state. The Recommended Plan does not contain any recommendations to apply ESAs in any kind of regulatory manner.

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 floodplain 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 Plan does not recommend a specific location or section of the River for a walking/biking path. The Plan does reference in the narrative support for the opportunity to experience the river through the use of trails, but only as developed on publically owned land.

Does the Plan recommend government take private property through eminent domain?

No, the Draft Plan does not recommend the taking of any private property through the use of eminent domain. Any acquisition of land for public use would occur with willing sellers.

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

Yes, the Plan includes a recommendation that the river corridor be a priority for purchase of land from willing sellers for public uses that may include public access points. However, the Plan does not identify any specific locations for new access points. The County does have funding in the current Capital Improvements Program (CIP) for initial planning for developing River access at 2 (two) County-owned parcels along the River: MD 77, Rocky Ridge, and MD 140, Bridgeport.

Does the Plan recommend setbacks or other regulatory buffers?

No, the Plan does not recommend or even reference the establishment of building or development setbacks from the river. The discussion of forested riparian buffers in chapter 5 only describes the concept and desirability of having forest buffers along streams/ivers. The reference to the term “buffer” is only to describe the location of forest between (i.e. buffering) a stream/river and from adjoining agricultural or development uses. Narrative in the Plan (page 5-10) does make reference to the desire to have a minimum 150 foot forested riparian buffer. This is a minimum width to address plant/animal habitat and provide numerous other environmental benefits, as described in the scientific literature summarized in the Recommended Plan.

Does the Plan restrict agricultural activities along the River?

No, The Plan does not recommend anything that would prohibit or limit existing or future agricultural activities along the River. Neither the FEMA floodplain regulations nor the existing Resource Conservation (RC) zoning along the river restrict agricultural activities.

Summary

The River Board’s Recommended Monocacy Scenic River Management Plan does not mandate implementation of any of its recommendations. The Plan and its recommendations would first have to be approved by the County Council. Any recommendations that may require legislation would go through a formal legislative process including public hearings before it would be considered by the Council. The Plan’s recommendations are advisory and proposed for consideration to encourage collaboration among all parties to improve and protect the Monocacy Scenic River’s resources.