

Education, Communication and Outreach (ECO) Working Group
of the Maryland Commission on Climate Change (MCCC)

January 18, 2017 Meeting Minutes

The meeting was convened at 10:30 at the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) by the Working Group Chair, Allison Rich.

Attending in person: Allison Rich (MD Environmental Health Network/MdEHN), Michele Peterson (Honeywell), Pat Harcourt (UMCES), Rebecca Ruggles (MdEHN), John Coleman (MDP), Tad Aburn (MDE), Liz Entwisle (MDE), Lisa Nissley (MDE), Adrienne Diaczok (MDE), Jessica Herpel (MDE), Brian Hug (MDE).

Attending by phone: Coreen Weilminster (DNR), Gregg Bortz (DNR), Colleen Turner (MDOT), Dave Costello (IEER).

Public attendance: Allison Gost, guest presenter from Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH); Grant Samms, Washington College Center for Environment & Society; Bob Hoyt, EcoLogix (by phone).

Welcome and Introductions. Allison Rich convened the meeting and attendees introduced themselves.

Commission Report Release Update and Communications Planning. Allison reported that MDE social media messaging went out around the November release of the MCCC report. Lisa Nissley and Adrienne Diaczok walked through some MDE media engagement analytics summarized in several handouts shared with ECO members. Adrienne noted that while there were lots of hits and activity, retweeting and push by ECO members could really boost the numbers. Allison added that these and other messaging could be pushed out by the MCCC. Other groups and forums were identified to help with this effort, including a late February meeting of the teachers' community (Pat Harcourt), the Maryland Association for Environmental & Outdoor Education's annual conference in Towson on February 2-5 (Allison), the National Center for Sustainable Transportation (Colleen Turner) and state legislators (Michele Peterson). Michele suggested inviting MCCC Chair and MDE Secretary Ben Grumbles to speak at the Maryland Clean Energy Center's legislative reception on February 23. Tad Aburn advised that legislators would be briefed on the MCCC report through a regular briefing process during Session. He asked how ECO could help with outreach on specific state programs such as tax credits and rebates for electric vehicles and charging equipment, noting that funding is there but people don't know how to find it. Tad highlighted the importance of linking climate change progress to jobs and economic growth and benefits to Maryland consumers. John Coleman asked if a calendar of events has been set up yet for the MCCC website. Allison Rich asked for a small group of volunteers to pull this together. Allison Gost said DHMH has an environmental health and climate change page with an embedded Google calendar that people can send events into for posting. Tad said a link to this calendar could be created on the MCCC website.

Presentation: Maryland Climate Change & Health. Allison Gost, Program Manager for DHMH's climate change and public health project funded by the Centers for Disease Control, presented on the five-year project to identify Maryland communities vulnerable to the health impacts of climate change and build resiliency through education, intervention and adaptation strategies designed to meet specific community needs. The project has three phases: 1) listening, planning; 2) identifying communities to work in; and 3) evaluating programs and intervention strategies and tweaking them.

First year (FY17) goals:

- Get into vulnerable communities
- Identify health effects of concern to the communities
- Formalize the Technical Advisory Group and Public Health Advisory Group
- Finalize training for Healthy Homes
- Host training for Extension Educators with MD Extension
- Continue to explore collaboration and outreach synergies across public, private and government agencies

Tools being used to identify vulnerable communities include overlay maps of asthma hospitalization rates by county, percentage minority rates by census tract and health professional shortage areas. DHMH and the University of Maryland School of Public Health held a kickoff stakeholder forum in December 2016 to discuss community environmental health concerns. A key theme that emerged is that vulnerable communities feel ignored by public officials and agencies. Grant Samms said face-to-face contact has worked best for older people in Washington College's outreach work on the Eastern Shore. Faith communities, community leaders/organizations, academic communities and community health workers were identified by ECO members and Allison Gost as trusted messengers. Bob Hoyt offered that based on his outreach work with EcoLogix in the Port of Baltimore, trusted messengers need to tailor messaging to the audience in order to overcome climate skepticism. People want to know "What does climate change mean to me?". Tad said that people don't want to talk or hear about climate at MDE's community meetings and reported that as a result of the Port outreach work EcoLogix did for MDE, that community now does not feel ignored. He reported that MDE has brought EcoLogix on board to help with other MDE outreach, including support for ECO.

Rebecca Ruggles said doctors are hearing more about respiratory conditions being triggered by moldy basements—a climate-linked phenomenon that doctors are aware of but people generally are not. Allison Gost said messengers need to integrate mitigation and adaptation messages and offered as an example that in the project's Healthy Homes visits, they tell people, "You will see more torrential rains so you need to be on top of it— here's how."

Next DHMH project steps include further community engagement focused on western Maryland, beginning with listening sessions, and intervention mapping showing where actions have been taken across the state. The project's Technical Advisory Group will develop intervention, evaluation and adaptation strategies. The project distinguishes intervention — defined as outward facing education and outreach, from adaptation—defined as inward facing capacity building for institutions such as local public health departments.

Allison Gost invited collaboration with the MCCC and ECO and asked to share listservs and other contacts, noting that DHMH has the funding and ECO has the climate messaging content. Pat Harcourt offered that community colleges are good networking resources since they often serve underserved populations, have training in pre-professional health careers and have trusted messengers. Gost said DHMH has also found county libraries to be good resources. She said that the project's health mapping tool would be online at DHMH soon and suggested that it could include overlays of NOx levels and asthma hospital/doctor visits. Grant said the real task is for government agencies to find trusted messengers in vulnerable communities with accurate climate messaging information. Bob Hoyt said getting MDE/MCCC and DHMH messages on mitigation and adaptation in one package makes so much sense. Tad reported that MDE has an upcoming meeting in Turner Station in Baltimore and is working with the Children's Environmental Health & Protection Advisory Council (CEHPAC) on this and now needs to get DHMH looped in.

Closing Remarks. The presentation and discussions having taken up most of the allotted time, Allison Rich adjourned the meeting shortly before 12:00.