

POTOMAC WATERSHED ROUNDTABLE
Quarterly Meeting – July 8, 2022
Held Virtually Via Microsoft Teams Platform
Meeting Summary

Voting Members/Alternates

Hon. Penny Gross, Potomac Watershed Roundtable Chair, Fairfax County
Deidre Clark, John Marshall SWCD
Ellie Coddling, Fairfax County
Monica Gary, Stafford County
Chuck Koch, Tri County City SWCD
Paul McCulla, Fauquier County
John Peterson, Northern Virginia SWCD
Hon. Will Lintner, Prince William SWCD
Hon. Robert Pickett, Northern Neck SWCD
Richard Wilkins

Advisory Members/Alternates (Non-Voting)

Debbie Cross, Virginia DCR
Curtis Dalpra, ICPRB
Jim McGlone, Virginia DOF

Presenters

Glen Merzer, Sustainable Earth Eating

Interested Parties

Scott Baron, Northern Virginia SWCD
Jason Bateman, Northern Neck PDC
Nicki Bellezza, Fairfax Water
Craig Carinci, Fairfax County Stormwater Planning
Cordelia Collinson, Virginia Cooperative Extension
Stacey Evers, Northern Virginia SWCD
Christine Howard, Metropolitan Washing COG
Chris Koerner, Northern Virginia SWCD
Don Lacquement, Northern Virginia SWCD
Elizabeth Lonoff
Ashley Palmer, Northern Virginia SWCD
Marissa Roland, Virginia DCR
Heather Shackley, Northern Virginia SWCD
Veronica Tangiri, Prince William SWCD
Elaine Tholen, Northern Virginia SWCD
Elizabeth Ward, Green Risks
Willie Woode, Northern Virginia SWCD
Jacob Zielinski, Virginia DOF

Call to Order

Ms. Gross called the meeting to order at 10:00 am and welcomed all to the meeting. She noted that the agenda had been sent out to participants before meeting. In lieu of introductions, Ms. Gross encouraged all to view the Microsoft Teams list of participants, available on screen.

Minutes—April 8, 2022

The minutes of the April 8, 2022 meeting of the Potomac Watershed Roundtable (PWR) had been distributed in advance of the meeting. Ms. Gross asked if there were any corrections or additions. Hearing none and following a motion by Ms. Codding and seconded by Mr. Pickett, the minutes of the April 8, 2022 meeting were approved by voice vote.

Updates from the Roundtable Chair

Ms. Gross noted that at the last PWR meeting there was a discussion about the need to review the PWR bylaws. Ms. Gross noted that we will hold a separate meeting soon to prepare a draft revision for PWR review.

Ms. Gross congratulated Mr. Woode on his appointment as Executive Director of the Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD). Mr. Woode has been serving as Acting Executive Director since February upon the departure of Laura Grape and was appointed to the position permanently at the beginning of this month.

Ms. Gross reported on a recent meeting of the Metropolitan Washing Council of Governments Chesapeake Bay Policy Committee, on which she serves, related to the water supply and asked Ms. Bellezza to comment on steps that have been taken in this area to ensure an adequate water supply. Ms. Bellezza briefly outlined the steps that have been taken and the cooperative agreements that are in place with other water providers should the need arise.

Ms. Gross also reported on a recent meeting of the Chesapeake Bay Local Government Advisory meeting held in June in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. One of the themes of the meeting was “Corporate Sustainability and Social Science in Agriculture for Local Governments.” There was also a presentation on “Riparian Rangers,” a program which supports riparian forest buffer maintenance through trained volunteers. Finally, information was shared about a new Geographic Information Systems mapping tool that will help localities target their resources to places and activities that accelerate progress for the Chesapeake Bay Program goals. Ms. Gross will share additional information with the PWR as it becomes available.

Potomac Council Update

Ms. Gross asked Mr. Peterson to report on the Potomac Council (PC) meeting held this morning. Mr. Peterson provided the PWR with a recap of that meeting, noting that four of the six Potomac Watershed SWCDs were represented. He noted that the PC had a brief discussion about the PWR bylaws and membership list and the desire among members of the council to help reinvigorate the programs of the PC/PWR. The next meeting of the PC will be on Friday, October 7, 2022, just before the PWR meeting. It is hoped that this meeting can be in-person.

Presentation

Food is Climate

Glen Merzer, Senior Advisor for Research, Sustainable Earth Eating

Ms. Gross provided a brief introduction of today’s speaker. Mr. Merzer is Senior Advisor for Research at Sustainable Earth Eating. He has authored/co-authored twelve books. His latest book is *Food Is Climate*. He grew up in New York and attended New College of Florida in Sarasota. Additional information about him may be found at www.glenmerzer.com.

Mr. Merzer thanked Ms. Gross and the PWR for inviting him to speak. He used PowerPoint slides to give an interesting and thought-provoking presentation on the topic *Food is Climate*, and spoke about climate,

the pandemic, and culture. His presentation was recorded and may be found on the [NVSWCD YouTube channel](#).

Discussion

Ms. Gross thanked Mr. Merzer for his presentation and entertained questions from the group. What followed was a robust discussion among PWR members and Mr. Merzer about animal agriculture in the United States and in the Commonwealth, the distribution of land used for animal agriculture versus for growing fruits and vegetables or for “rewilding,” information on the health effects of meat-based versus plant-based diets, the impact those each have on the environment, and what can be done to ensure that agricultural lands are well-producing and contribute to a healthy environment.

Ms. Gross suggested that the PWR may want to have additional presentations on the topic of rewilding and on programs that take poorly-maintained areas and make them green open space again. There are such examples in the PWR area. This may be an idea for a longer, special meeting with an opportunity for PWR members to see this work first-hand.

Updates from Around the Region—Roundtable Discussion

Ms. Gross asked those present to share what they have been doing in their districts, agencies, and jurisdictions during the last several months. The following information was shared:

Jim McGlone, Virginia Department of Forestry

Dr. McGlone reported that there are three new field positions within the Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOT), one for each region. These individuals will be focused on fire coverage and also on logging programs. Dr. McGlone reviewed various budget allocations to VDOT for logging and tree planting programs, support for state forests for recreational and access improvements, funds to replace seedling coolers across the state, and funding to purchase additional land for state forests. In addition, Dr. McGlone reported on the VDOT Riparian Buffer Action Plan. A statewide coordinator for this program has been hired and at least three specialists will be working on this plan, in collaboration with SWCDs in the Commonwealth on riparian buffer planting.

Dr. McGlone added that local jurisdictions have the authority to require the replacement of tree canopy during development and only 19 counties have taken advantage of this authority. He encouraged representatives from the localities represented on the PWR to work to take advantage of this authority and thus increase the tree canopy.

Mr. Woode asked PWR members to submit names of potential speakers and topics for upcoming PWR meetings. He would like to have a variety of ideas coming in so that robust programs may be planned for future PWR meetings.

Ms. Gross expressed her interest in holding a Potomac Forum next year—similar to full day programs that have been held in the past.

Ms. Gross thanked all for their attendance and engagement in today’s meeting. She noted that the next meeting will be held on Friday, October 7, 2022.

Adjournment.

There being no other updates, the meeting adjourned at 11:55 am.