

## **MORE Commission Meeting – July 8-9, 2019**

July 8, Deep Creek Lake SP

### Subcommittee Updates:

Joel Dunn – world-class experiences workgroup

- Lots of recommendations from June workgroup meeting
- Both current opportunities to expand and new ideas – lots of world class opportunities in the Chesapeake area

Liz Fitzsimmons -- World-class outdoor destination workgroup

- Unique species
- More emphasis on marketing outdoor experiences
- Excellent trail system – land and water

Rick Decker – Stewardship workgroup (500k acres of DNR land)

- Private-public partnerships
- Non-traditional partnerships to fund opportunities
- New strategies for preserving historical areas

Joel – Wants to implement recommendations beyond the Governor’s term – how can we make sure that the recommendations are implemented beyond the submission of the final report/end of Governor’s term?

- Sec Riccio – add this item to discussion for next/final meeting when we are drafting the final report

### Panel 1: Deep Creek Lake

**Eric Null** – Lake Manager, MPS

- Largest lake in MD
- DNR began management in 1980 (also manages the surrounding buffer strip)
- Fuels Yough River whitewater fishing and trout fishing
- Water and biological monitoring, recreational use management (LOTS!)
- One of the top fisheries in the east
- Excellent SAV and variety of species
- 3 major public access points
- Future
  - Rapid expansion of water quality monitoring

- Expanding shoreline erosion control
- State Lakes Protection Fund
- Expanding partnerships for storm water abatement

**David Meyerberg** – President, Deep Creek Watershed Foundation

- DCWF – nonprofit org
- Need for a watershed plan for the DCL area (Griffin’s tenure)
  - 13 goals, short and long-term
  - Approved by MDE, DNR, County (but not funded)
  - Formed Watershed foundation (nonprofit) to help fund these goals
    - Some private donations... but not enough to keep up with potential issues
    - Partnerships: DNR, MDE, Local Gov, Brookfield Power Fdn (dam)
- PPP a “gold standard” for watersheds across the state – encouraged for every watershed?
- Potential issues to DCL
  - Acid mine drainage (harmful to trout)
  - Invasive aquatic species
  - Water quality – not great in coves (wants to make Eyes on the Bay-like program for the lake)
  - Old septic systems
  - Old stormwater infrastructure
  - Sediment deposits
- What can be done?
  - Support PPP, tax incentives from donors, competitive grants for restoration

**Karen Myers** – Deep Creek Marina

- Private sector perspective
- Major challenge – staffing (need seasonal employees)
  - Meeting minimum wage reqs (young employees with little experience), issues with work ethic
- Weather-proofing business/expanding indoor recreation

**Paul Edwards** – work ethic diploma

- Partnership between public school and chamber of commerce
- Exit interview with local businesses
- Students with diploma are guaranteed an interview (if qualified) and if hired, will be paid 50c more than minimum wage
- Optional – get certified drug-free to add points to diploma

**David Meyerberg** – Garrett County learn to swim program

- All public school children must learn to swim

- Bussing in elementary-aged children to the college to learn to swim during the school year, covered by the county (22k budget)

**Jonathan “Smiley” Kessler** – The Lodges at Sunset Village, Smiley’s, Pine Lodge Steakhouse

- Small business owner, Garrett County
- My businesses have generated about 16 million into Garrett County
- Garrett County has tighter seasons
- Whatever you suggest should motivate someone to drive 3 hours (declining population and demographics) - 28k in the entire county → need travel-motivated attractions
- Facilitate big projects – no large leader in the rec industry (Rocky Gap is in Allegany, WISP is the leader seasonally)
- Garrett County is operating at 10% of its capacity
- Need branded accommodations (franchise)
- Need more opportunities for young people

Panel 2: Expanding Recreational Opportunities

**Dr. Scott Knoche** – Director, PEARL Laboratory, Morgan State University

- Data on DCL Recreation and fishing
- 62% of trips to DCL were overnight; Just over 50% of trips were fishing for the primary purpose
- North Branch Potomac River
- Research: What are the net economic benefits of acid mine drainage remediation of the North Branch Potomac River to MD Anglers?
- Angler trade offs when choosing location – driving distance, amenities,
- Assessing net econ benefits of publically accessible hunting lands – recreational angler data
  - Next projects – sika deer econ impacts?

**Alan Kotz** – Western Region Fisheries Manager, DNR

- North Branch Potomac River, 1988 – very poor water quality due to acid mine drainage
- Due to partnerships, water quality has significantly improved and experienced a “rebirth”
- 2010 study – North Branch Potomac River (anglers and boaters) \$3 million annually
- DNBR FABS manages 300 acres of North Branch Potomac River Fishery Management Areas
- The point: We need public access at Pinto area of the river
  - Yoder FMA boat launch to Cumberland Fairgrounds boat launch is 17 miles (too long)

**Paul Peditto** – Director, Wildlife and Heritage Service, DNR

- Scientific expertise and gather public input

- Outreach and education, conservation of endangered species, managed of exotic and invasive species, public lands managements,
- Revenue from hunting licenses and stamps + federal match
- 62 WMAs, ~500k public land opened to hunting
- Wildlife response – staffs 100 calls a month, triage many more calls (together with NRP)
- World-class deer hunting opportunities – largest deer on the East Coast caught in MD
  - Sika deer hunting opportunities
- Black bear hunt
  - 2004: first in 50 years
  - 2018: 135 bears taken (800 permits, 2300 hunters)
- Goals and opportunities
  - Hunting – expand Sunday opportunities
    - Increase deer harvest
    - Attract out-of-town hunters for full weekend opportunities
  - Bear hunting – attract down-state hunters
    - Increase harvest = decrease damage
    - Western MD tourism revenues
    - Outfitter opportunities
  - Goose hunting – resident opportunities and one and done
    - Market resident goose hunting opportunities
    - Promote conservation ethic on migratory geese

**Daryl Anthony** – MD OHV Alliance

- Expand opportunities to recreate with off-road vehicles
- Use of OHV/ORV – fastest growing outdoor recreational activity nationally
- Stewardship – this type of recreation cannot be detrimental to natural resources (need to properly manage while expanding OHV rec opportunities)

July 9, WISP Resort

Panel 3: Local Opportunities, Allegany County

**Ashli Workman** – Director, Allegany County Tourism

- Name change to office of outdoor recreation? (Negative connotation of “tourism”)
- Enhance quality of life
- Goal: visitors to stay, stay longer, and spend money in our region

- How can we tap into natural resources to revitalize our region?
- Creating a new narrative: a place to live, work, and place
- Rocky Gap casino is a big draw with 1 million yearly visitors; RGSP is the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest grossing SP in the state

Initiatives:

- Expanding public access and promoting Wills Mountain State Park (public access was just recently secured)
- Heritage Area – Appalachian Regional Council funding?
- No access to the Potomac River – can rent kayaks, but cannot access the water
  - No through water access
  - Hard to encourage outfitters to set up if there is no direct access
  - River is already in the downtown, just need an access point
- Passages of the Western Potomac – re-branding the Heritage Area
- Changing the narrative
  - What tourism/outdoor recreation means
  - More jobs, community involvement, and attracting outfitters

**George Eberling** – Regional State Forester, Maryland Forest Service

- State Forests identity and promotion issues – people think they are at parks
- 4 state forests in Western MD, 120k acres
- Offers hiking fishing water sports, and winter sports in Garrett Co.
- No entrance gate or ranger programs
- Garrett State Forest – birthplace of forestry in MD
- Camping permits available for a fee – Green Ridge is very popular

**Dr. Natalia Buta** – Recreation and Parks Management, Frostburg State University

- Western MD forestland study, supported by ARC and MD Heritage Foundation
  - Surveyed ~900 visitors
- 95% of visitors self-identified as white
- Good age and educational distribution
- 74% were non-residents of Garrett or Allegany counties
- 83% were previous forest visitors
- 75% stayed more than 1 day (camping is very popular)
  - Average stay length is 3 days
- 99% were not part of a guided tour or trip hosted by a private outfitter (need more marketing?)
- Top activities: camping, fishing, hunting
- Very few came to see the heritage area
- Non-western MD residents:
  - \$381 average spent in All& Gar counties

- \$124 average spent outside
- Western MD residents:
  - \$325 average spent in All&Gar counties
  - \$30 average spent outside
- About 49k visitors, 5 mil economic impact
- *100% would come to visit the state forests again!!*

Panel 4: Local Opportunities, Garrett County

**Nicole Christian** – President, Garrett County Chamber of Commerce

- Garrett Chamber also manages heritage area and tourism marketing/promotion in the county
- Tourism is one of their largest industries
  - \$1.2 mil visitors per year
  - \$299 mil visitor spending
- Outdoor recreation is a large part of tourism due to abundant natural resources
- Largest freshwater lake (Deep Creek), MD's only ski resort (WISP)
- 8 state parks, 3 state forests
- Heritage Area themes:
  - Man in nature
  - Historic recreation
  - Cultural uniqueness
  - Transportation history
- County-specific research in conjunction with WVU – demographics, desired outdoor activities, satisfaction
  - Helps identify market and customer targeting
- Need state funding to assist with outdoor recreation marketing
  - 79k in OTD marketing match grant
  - Plus funding for infrastructure

**Michael Logsdon** – Director, AdventureSports Institute, Garrett College

- Garrett College – '92 Olympic Trials
- Adventure Sports Institute Outdoor rec degree, 2-year program that can often lead straight to employment
  - For careers in “human-powered sports”
  - Challenge must come from a force of nature
  - Elevated degree of risk (but perceived risk is greater than actual risk)
- Degree focuses on making good judgements and managing risks
- Auxillary Outreach Program
  - Continuing education for general public
  - After school program
  - Community service projects

- ASI partners with Adventure Sports International & their competition team
- FSU now has a 4-year adventure sports management degree; those students must take some courses at Garrett College

**Don Hudson** – Trail Manager, Maryland Park Service

- Trails – land, water, equestrian
  - Trail itself is the recreation
- Primary – getting to a destination vs.
  - Targeting to visitors/tourists
  - Desirable points of interest
- Secondary – quality of life
  - Increase wellness
  - Targeted to residents
  - Includes leisure activities
- Civilian Conservation Corps legacy benefitted VA much more than MD – still lacking for trails in some areas
- Trail-based economic development opportunities are needed
- Direct economic impacts:
  - Equipment sales/rental/repair
  - Guide services
  - Local shuttles/transport
  - Trail maintenance and construction
- Indirect economic impacts:
  - Improved business destination
  - More hotel stays, food, gas, etc.
  - Creating a “trail town”

**Steve Green** – Owner, High Mountain Sports

- Power/motor boating has picked up which has increased boat prices
- Wake surfing
- Multi-family vacations, regardless of weather
- More mountain bikes, more trail hikers
- Seasonal restrictions for various activities impact outfitters and their schedule
- Trying to push white water rafting on Yough. River
- Snow conditions at WISP