

NATURAL PLACES NEWS LISTSERV

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TOGETHERWERISE



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Hello Maryland Sierra Club Natural Places' Committee current and former members, subscribers, and attendees of committee meetings, outings, and newsletters!

Welcome to the Maryland Natural Places NEWS Listserv! This is a new announcements-only listserv sent out by the Natural Places Committee leadership with Natural Places Committee official news and announcements. It will arrive two times per month in-between monthly Natural Places Committee meetings. The address for this listserv is **MD-Natural-Places-News@lists.SierraClub.org**.

Today you are receiving the inaugural issue, which contains minutes from the June meeting. If you know someone who would like to be added to this listserv, send them this link to fill out the form:

<https://lists.sierraclub.org/SCRIPTS/WA.EXE?SUBED1=MD-Natural-Places-News&A=1>

You can find more information about Sierra Club listservs at: [Email Lists FAQ](#)

To **UNSUBSCRIBE**, do not reply to this message. Go to the bottom of this email and click on MD-NATURAL-PLACES-NEWS-signoff-request@lists.sierraclub.org

Soon you will receive an invitation to a forum for two-way discussions of natural places issues, the **Maryland Natural Places FORUM**. That listserv will provide a way to more easily communicate with each other, share ideas and information, to ask questions, and to get support. Stay tuned for the MD-Natural Places-Forum!

In this email:

- Next Meeting
- Some Upcoming Events
- Action Items
- Natural Places Committee June 20, 2020 Minutes With Marine Plastic Pollution Presentation by Martha Ainsworth and Jacob Ross
- Minutes for April and May summaries and links
- Natural Places Resource Links

NATURAL PLACES COMMITTEE

Minutes and Action Items

June 20, 2020

NEXT MEETING SATURDAY, JULY 18, 2:00 PM TO 3:30 PM on Zoom. Our speaker topic will be Wildlife Trade, with the Center for Biological Center. Register [here](#).

SOME UPCOMING EVENTS

Tue July 14, [“Environmental Justice Forum”](#)

Wed July 15, [“Environmental Book Group”](#)

Thur July 16, [“The Deep Connection Between Healthy Communities and Racial Justice, NRDC”](#)

Fri July 17, [“The Story of Plastic Panel”](#)

Sat July 25, [“Let’s Share Tree Stories”](#)

Be sure to check for other exciting Sierra Club events on our calendar at <https://www.sierraclub.org/maryland/calendar>

ACTION ITEMS

Everyone: Contact your US representative and ask them to support HR 5845 Outdoors for All Act. See *Every Voice Heard: Advocacy Tips* link.

Lily: Send Minutes for this month and previous in new listserv format

Marc: Edit Update on HR 5845 and other legislation.

Everyone: If you’d like to join our work to explore, enjoy and protect natural places, pick one of the following subcommittees to work on, or let us know your ideas! Contact Lily at lily.fountain@mdsierra.org

1. Land Preservation Toolkit Update--Learn how to save natural places (see current outdated Toolkit at www.sierraclub.org/maryland/land-preservation-tool-kit). Please let us know which of the following three areas you would like to work on:

- I. Programs to **avoid development**, such as easements, buying land for conservation, forest conservation plans, endangered species and rare habitat surveys, compliance with National Pollution Elimination System, establish greenways, and education about smart growth regulations.
- II. Programs to **reduce the impact of development**, such as low impact development, stormwater retention regulations, model ordinances on pollinator-friendly yards and rainscapes to reduce storm-water runoff.
- III. **Threats to natural areas** such as certification by the Forest Stewardship Council program, non-native invasive species control, erosion and sediment control, off-road vehicle damage control, damage control for deer overpopulation.

We will have a Land Use task force zoom to further this work on Tuesday July 21, 4 pm. Register [here](#).

2. Parks Project: Provide access information and description of Maryland parks to promote the outdoors for everyone.

3. Native Plant Ordinances in Maryland: Help find, collate and post good ordinances that already exist so people do not encounter difficulties when they “go native.”

4. Meeting Planning: Help arrange speakers and discussion topics at monthly planning meetings. Next meeting: July 14 at 4pm (or adjust to attendees schedules).

5. Take minutes, be the **timekeeper**, help with the chat or **co-host** during zoom meetings.

Natural Places Committee MINUTES June 20, 2020

Present (**new to NPC in bold**): Marney Bruce, **Maggie Dillon**, Margaret Boles, Melina Frame, Janet Gingold, Lily Fountain, Marc Imlay, **James Lawson**, **Alyce Ortuzar**, Linda Rieger, **Sonam Sahu**, **Jeff Stepp**.

1. Lily opened the meeting after the 15 minute pre-chat. We especially welcomed the first-timers. At a time when we are all struggling with COVID-19 issues, protests and unrest in our communities, we understand if anyone needs to take time for themselves and their loved ones before launching into a discussion of marine plastic pollution. Lily stated she hoped that Juneteenth would motivate us to continue on our journey to provide freedom to everyone.
2. Everyone introduced themselves and gave their city of residence. We had members from Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Charles, Montgomery, Prince George's, and Southern Maryland County Groups.
3. **Martha Ainsworth, Maryland Sierra Club Zero Waste Chair**, provided an overview of plastic pollution.

Sierra Club was one of the lead organizations on the statewide plastic bag ban in 2020. We mobilized more than 200 volunteers to survey the bag behavior of 34,000 shoppers across the state to show the impact of incentives on bag choice. The Maryland Sierra Club Zero Waste Team is working to ensure passage in 2021 of this bill and to ensure education and enforcement on the bills to date. Anyone who would like to join this effort is invited to join the Zero Waste Team at this link: www.sierraclub.org/maryland/zero-waste.

Martha can be reached at martha.ainsworth@mdsierra.org. Click [here to](#) read more about Martha's presentation of the problem and the solutions that the Maryland Sierra Club Zero Waste Committee is pursuing.

4. We showed the **Plastic Ocean video** (available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=ju_2NuK5O-E)
5. **Jacob Ross, of Oceana**, presented an overview of possible solutions for marine plastic pollution in Maryland. *Jacob Ross: I want to help you know how to win campaigns, for example, airline pollution that someone mentioned. How can we influence companies by using the power of community? Jacob's Land Acknowledgement: I live on Piscataway Conoy tribal land.*

Marine Pollution Policy Solutions for Maryland



We could be fighting COVID-19 and racism but are taking a moment to look at marine pollution. Jacob is the Mid-Atlantic Field Campaign Scholar for Oceana, the largest international organization studying ocean. Oceana has assisted successful foam bans and responsible fishing campaigns.

Cost of Plastic Pollution

Why care about marine plastic pollution? Restoring the ocean could feed 1 billion people per day healthy seafood and could support nearly 100,000 jobs. In Maryland and Delaware, eliminating marine debris would CREATE 478,000 visitor days, \$20 millions in recreational value, \$35 million in tourism spending, and 460 jobs. On the other hand, doubling marine debris would COST 3.5 million visitor days, \$141 million in recreational value, \$254 in tourism spending, and the loss of 3,400 jobs in coastal Maryland and Delaware.

Solutions

Recycling solves only 2% of the problem. Only 2% of plastic waste is effectively recycled. Out of 14% of plastic packaging collected for recycling, 2% represents plastic recycled into products of the same or greater value. 4% is lost in the process and 8% is recycled into lower-value applications.

*The real solution has to be **reduction**. Incineration is NOT a solution. It releases toxic emissions, mostly in communities of color, and releases greenhouse gases. There are very few plastic-free choices available to consumers. For example, spinach and toothpaste are usually unavailable unless in plastic.*

Maryland Efforts

In Maryland, plastic pollution has been found in 10% of sea turtles. Although plastic bags are not accepted as curbside recycling, they are frequently placed there and jam recycling machinery. Only 1% of plastic bags are returned to stores in national studies.

So in order to reduce marine plastic pollution, Sierra Club, Oceana, and some other organizations are supporting bag legislation that prohibits plastic bag distribution at the point of sale. Based on research on what level of cost will cause consumers to change behavior, we recommend a 10-cent price floor for single-use alternatives, and the establishment of a single-use products working group. The goal is to create a system where consumers who want single-use bags pay for them, and others do not. Previous studies have shown 80% decline in plastic bag use, 200% increase in shoppers bringing reusable bags, and a 44% reduction in plastic bags found in storm drains--levels of change never seen with only education campaigns. This bill will be re-introduced in the next legislative session since the session ended early this year.

Federal Bill

There is also a federal legislative effort. The Lowenthal-Udall Break Free From Plastics Act, HR 5845/S. 3263, requires PRODUCERS to design, manage and finance the processing of plastic waste. It would establish a 10-cent container refund; phase out bags, EPS foam, utensils, and straws (unless requested); and put a temporary pause on new plastic production facilities, and much more. How effective could the bill be? The container deposit section alone would increase recycling rates from 33% to 80%, create 90,000 jobs, and reduce the use of virgin plastic, according to a study by the Consumer Recycling Institute.

What can you do?

Ask your local government for a ban on single-use plastics.

Ask your state legislators to support a hybrid ban on plastic-use bags (ban and fee for single-use bags), and write Letters to the Editor, Opinion Editorials, outreach to businesses asking them to join the effort, and host events and presentations.

Click [here](#) to read more about Jacob's presentation on Marine Plastic Pollution.

Jacob can be contacted at jross@Oceana.org

6. Discussion of Plastic Wave moderated by Lily, Martha and Jacob

Marc remarked that the alternatives like cloth are better than plastic, and what alternatives to plastic are available? **Jacob** said we have to ban single-use plastic and pass a federal bill to hold producers responsible for producing the waste, and more plastic-free alternatives will become available. Paper bags are not a good alternative, because they use trees and produce pollution in production, according to **Martha**. The hybrid bill puts a price on anything else including paper. Maryland legislators took out the fee and workgroup, so in the future more education and lobbying is needed. The bans on foam containers passed for the state because many local jurisdictions had it already, and businesses prefer the same rules for the state. **Jacob** reiterated how important it is to call your legislators and ask them to pass the bag ban. **Alyce** expressed

frustration at her inability to get local government to enforce recycling. Sweden weighs garbage, but what does good recycling look like, how to ban products that can't be recycled? **Melina** asked about disintegrating plastic bags, made from stalks of corn. **Jacob** said bioplastics does not mean biodegradable. The bags at MOM's are biodegradable, so consumers must look at their bags on a case-by-case basis [For a good resource for distinguishing biodegradable and compostable, go to www.naturespath.com/en-us/blog/whats-difference-biodegradable-compostable/] **Martha** said some compostable single-use items require industrial not home composting with higher temperatures. Legislation needs to note a definition of "home-compostable." **Melina** suggested legislating labeling that is clear. **Maggie** had seen previous confusion in her students about kinds of composting and biodegradable plastics and mandated that clear labelling is an interesting idea. **Marc** suggested that 10% of forestry can benefit the environment such as preserving doghair thicket areas. **Sonam** stated that the oversized and more frequent packaging for shopping online has created more plastic and paper waste. She also mentioned that recycled materials need to be cleaned, and some people don't do it because it is a lot of work, and asked how the gap between wanting and being able to recycle items. **Jeff** is new to recycling journey, and he feels many people have things happening to them so they don't identify with environmental issues, but to hear that each of us ingests a credit card of plastic each week shows how things affect me personally and will encourage more people to be involved. Things that directly affect me change my mindset. **Lily** mentioned that Prince George's legislative leaders told us regarding plastic legislation to "meet people where they are." **Janet** said people are on different journeys. We can do what's best for our community without trashing our environment. So many things that are good for the planet are also good for people. She continued that we need more voices, because so many of these issues are human issues, and justice issues, not just natural places. **Margaret** asked if for the plastic she must accumulate, if bamboo is an option? How do consumers know what alternatives are? **Jeff** said it is hard for consumers on a budget to pick and choose what products, so we need changes on a bigger scale with legislation affecting producers, in order to move change from top down to consumer. Consumers need to push legislators for change. **Jacob** mentioned refillables in a circular economy can use things we already have. **Martha** recommended "The Story of Plastic" video shown with Howard County Sierra Club (see links below).

7. **Announcements and Updates:**

Marc, Outdoors for All Act (HR 5845/S3263) has passed the U.S. Senate, and we need cosponsors for the House bill. This will increase funding for the Land and Air Fund and save natural places. It is suggested that members ask their representatives to cosponsor the bill. See more announcements and previous minutes below.

8. **Debrief:**

Pluses: Organized, people individually called on; enjoyable, interesting topic, Oceana interesting organization; new material, nice to meet people with similar mindset and break up issue, also calling on people; having new people; very informative, learned that we are producing more plastic than what is deteriorating; took on major topic and all participated, and we have things to do about it. *Delta:* With presentations, it was hard to have enough time for discussion, since the new meeting time was shorter.

Announcements and Updates:

Outdoors for All Act:

Attendees pledged to contact their US representatives and ask them to cosponsor HR 5845. At the June Maryland Sierra Club executive committee meeting the director Josh Tulkin said that three Maryland Congressmen have signed onto this bill. So you can ask your representatives to sign on as cosponsor or thank them for cosponsoring if they are one of the following three

congresspeople. [Rep. Raskin, Jamie \[D-MD-8\]*](#), [Rep. Sarbanes, John P. \[D-MD-3\]*](#), and [Rep. Trone, David J. \[D-MD-6\]](#). Others will be signing on with your advocacy! Find out who is your representative at www.Mdelect.net. To find out more about Every Voice Heard: Tips for Advocacy, click [here](#) and scroll down to “Every Voice Heard”.

More than 900 groups have asked the US Congress to pass the **Great American Outdoors Act, HR 5845**, which would invest in the repair of aging infrastructure at national parks and public lands, and promote the protection of outdoor recreation access.

Here is the **Sierra Club’s statement**:

"The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) has always held the promise of ensuring that our nation’s public lands and waters would be protected for future generations. For too long, that promise has been broken as the fund has been diverted for non-conservation purposes. Our national parks and public lands are places where all should be able to experience the healing benefits of time in nature, but for far too many, parks and public lands are unjustly inaccessible.

"Passage of the Great American Outdoors Act will move us one step closer to fulfilling the LWCF’s promise and secure the future of our parks and public lands for the next generation. Full funding will dramatically expand investments in state and local park projects that have been woefully under-resourced and begin to address historical injustices that have prevented far too many communities from having nearby access to nature. At a time when 10 million people cannot safely walk to a park from their home, it’s time to invest in communities and make access to the outdoors for all. We encourage the House to pass this legislation quickly and double-down on efforts to ensure justice and equity in the outdoors."

Story of Plastic Showing Fri, Jul 17, 2020 7:30 PM :

Join Sierra Club for the SMCM Sierra Club Student Coalition's debut event: a virtual screening of the environmental-justice focused documentary, The Story of Plastic, and a follow up webinar designed to create and inspire concrete action methods at the individual, collegiate, local, state, and federal levels towards a zero-waste goal. During the webinar, we will be joined by experts to learn more about how plastic pollution affects multiple aspects of our lives, ranging from the individual level to the national level. This effort is supported by the local Southern Maryland Group as well as the Maryland Chapter.

Cost: FREE

Signup Instructions: RSVP [here](#) and you will be sent the link to screen the film before the date of the discussion. The Zoom webinar link for the discussion will be sent 24 hours before the event.

PREVIOUS MINUTES NEEDING APPROVAL:

Click for [April 2020 Minutes](#): If you attended, please send changes and your approval to Lily lily.fountain@mdsierra.org.

We discussed signs of spring and leadership changes. Lily was appointed Chair of Natural Places by Maryland Sierra Club Executive Committee. Everyone gave evidence of environmental justice issues around them: More people in parks, especially apartment residents without yards, and inadequate access to parks for everyone equally has been an issue. Areas of heavy air pollution causing racial disparities in COVID-19 deaths due to placement of incinerators in certain neighborhoods. Sirens in the inner city are scary, African-American men are out of their jobs, bandanas are scary because they may make you a target of the police if African-American. Economic and health injustices being exposed. Natural Places activities can occur in low-income areas, and victory gardens and community gardens can help solve environmental problems. The Natural Places Committee could help set up clean-ups and invasive pulls in inner city areas.

Environmental Justice has been an issue for years, but message did not sink in, but virus is bringing message home. People of color in areas with industry and coal-burning are being hurt by asthma. Environmental Injustice taking its toll. Food access is a problem, and even suburban and rural areas are causing shortages due to panic buying. Masks can be hard to obtain in some areas. Poverty makes it harder to choose environmentally-friendly things, such as cloth diapers. We will confirm to expand our activities to all communities across the state, including NAACP. We could work with gardening in African-American communities. Connect with Baltimore Inspiring Connections Outdoors (BICO) which helps families feed kids. Conservation Montgomery takes kids who have not spent time in nature to parks and was very inviting. We could make outings accessible via rented buses.

Click for [May 2020 Minutes](#): If you attended, please send changes and your approval to Lily lily.fountain@mdsierra.org.

We discussed our favorite parks, Clean Water and Stream Restoration resources, native plants under Pepco lines, and everyone's role in updating our Land Preservation Toolkit, so check it out! We also watched a video of Marc Imlay showing us natives and pulling non-natives at Swann Memorial Park. For safety reasons, Sierra Club does not sponsor in-person group events right now so we discussed good COVID behavior while households are getting outdoors.

Natural Places Resource Links

Click [here](#) for a link to websites, film and videos, legislation, articles, blogs and reports by scrolling down to **Plastic Pollution Resources**.

Click [here](#) for a link to Dr. Doug Tallamy's wonderful new talk on the importance of having native plants in your yard with amazing slides and photography.

