



News

Caroline planning officials discuss pollutant caps

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DENTON Caroline County planning officials plan to use state-recommended pollutant caps for the development of the county's water resource elements (WRE), officials reported Jan. 14 to the Caroline County Planning Commission.

The state last year mandated counties and municipalities implement WREs by October 2009 as part of their comprehensive plans.

According to a slide show presented by employees of the Caroline County Department of Planning, Codes and Engineering, the Maryland Department of the Environment has provided "data on basin nutrient loads and recommended nutrient caps for both of the basins" in Caroline County, the Choptank River basin and the Lower Eastern Shore (or Nanticoke River) Basin.

Though the numbers are not final, planners have based initial figures on Caroline County's portion of the land in those basins, 40 percent and 20 percent, respectively.

County planner Leslie Grunden said the numbers likely will change as MDE, Caroline County planners, and Maryland Department of Planning refine their calculations.

Current calculations show Caroline County would reduce yearly nonpoint source loads of nitrogen from about 1.9 million pounds to about 773,000 pounds in the Choptank River Basin.

Caroline County, according to current calculations, would not be required to reduce nitrogen loads in the Lower Eastern Shore Basin. Calculations show the nitrogen load in the Lower Eastern Shore Basin is about 476,000 pounds a year, about 295,000 pounds less than the proposed cap.

Nonpoint source phosphorus loads would be reduced from about 137,000 to about 71,000 pounds per year in the Choptank River Basin. In the Lower Eastern Shore Basin, the county would not be required to reduce loads, because current calculations show the total phosphorus load is about 27,000 pounds less than the proposed yearly cap.

Most of the land in Caroline County is undeveloped, according to the slide show. About 59 percent of the county's land is agricultural, 32 percent is forest, and 7 percent is developed.

Most of Caroline's nutrient loads are from nonpoint sources, according to planners. These sources include pollutants not directly deposited into waterways from discharge pipes (point sources). They include pollutants from runoff, air pollution, erosion, and septic systems, according to planners.

Agricultural land, according to the slide show, "contributes 40 percent of the nitrogen and 50 percent of the phosphorus entering the Bay."

"This is mainly due to the nature of agriculture: large lands (sic) areas covered with loose soils that are exposed to wind and rain, the use of chemical fertilizers, and the occurrence of animal waste, and to the large amount of agricultural land located in the (Chesapeake) Bay watershed."

In other county planning news, the planning commission re-elected John Schmidt as president of the commission and Ann Collier as its vice president for 2009.

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