Route One Corridor

STORMWATER & FLOODING ACTION PLAN

BACKGROUND

In September of 2020, six inches of rain fell along Prince George's County's Route One Corridor in a matter of hours, overwhelming stormwater infrastructure systems and causing widespread flooding that damaged residential and commercial properties, rendered roads impassable and threatened public health and safety. For the highly urbanized Route One Corridor, with significant amounts of impervious surfaces and many low-lying areas, this storm event demonstrated just how vulnerable communities can be to flash flooding and chronic stormwater inundation. Unfortunately, these types of extreme weather events are only expected to increase in frequency and severity as global climate change impacts are felt.

Guilford Run, University of Maryland

HIGHLIGHTS

MEMBERS

- City of College Park
- City of Greenbelt
- City of Hyattsville
- City of Mount Rainier
- Town of Berwyn Heights
- Town of Bladensburg
- Town of Brentwood
- Town of Colmar Manor
- Town of Cottage City
- Town of North Brentwood
- Town of Riverdale Park
- Town of University Park

POPULATION

~ 104,665

PARTNERS

- Sustainable Maryland
- Environmental Finance Center

As issues of flooding and extreme weather events escalate, the Route One Corridor communities are positioned not only to directly experience the impacts of these challenges, but also to play a leadership role in crafting a meaningful response. Recognizing that local health and safety depend on good stormwater management practices, and that precipitation and watersheds do not follow jurisdictional boundaries, the Route One Corridor communities are seeking collaborative approaches to ensuring collective resilience.

In 2021 the Environmental Finance Center (EFC) at the University of Maryland and its Sustainable Maryland program worked with the communities of Prince George's County's Route One Corridor on collaborative approaches to water resource management and improved resilience. Over the course of a year, the EFC project team led the communities through a process of identifying and prioritizing shared areas of need, strategies for enhancing collective action, and opportunities for developing project partners.

The aim of the Route One Corridor Stormwater and Flooding Action Plan is to provide an initial framework for coordinating municipal efforts along Route One in Prince George's County to address issues of water conservation, water quality, and flood risk. Specifically, the plan provides recommendations for leveraging relationships with neighboring municipalities to access resources, exchange ideas, and collectively address shared stormwater and flooding more holistically.

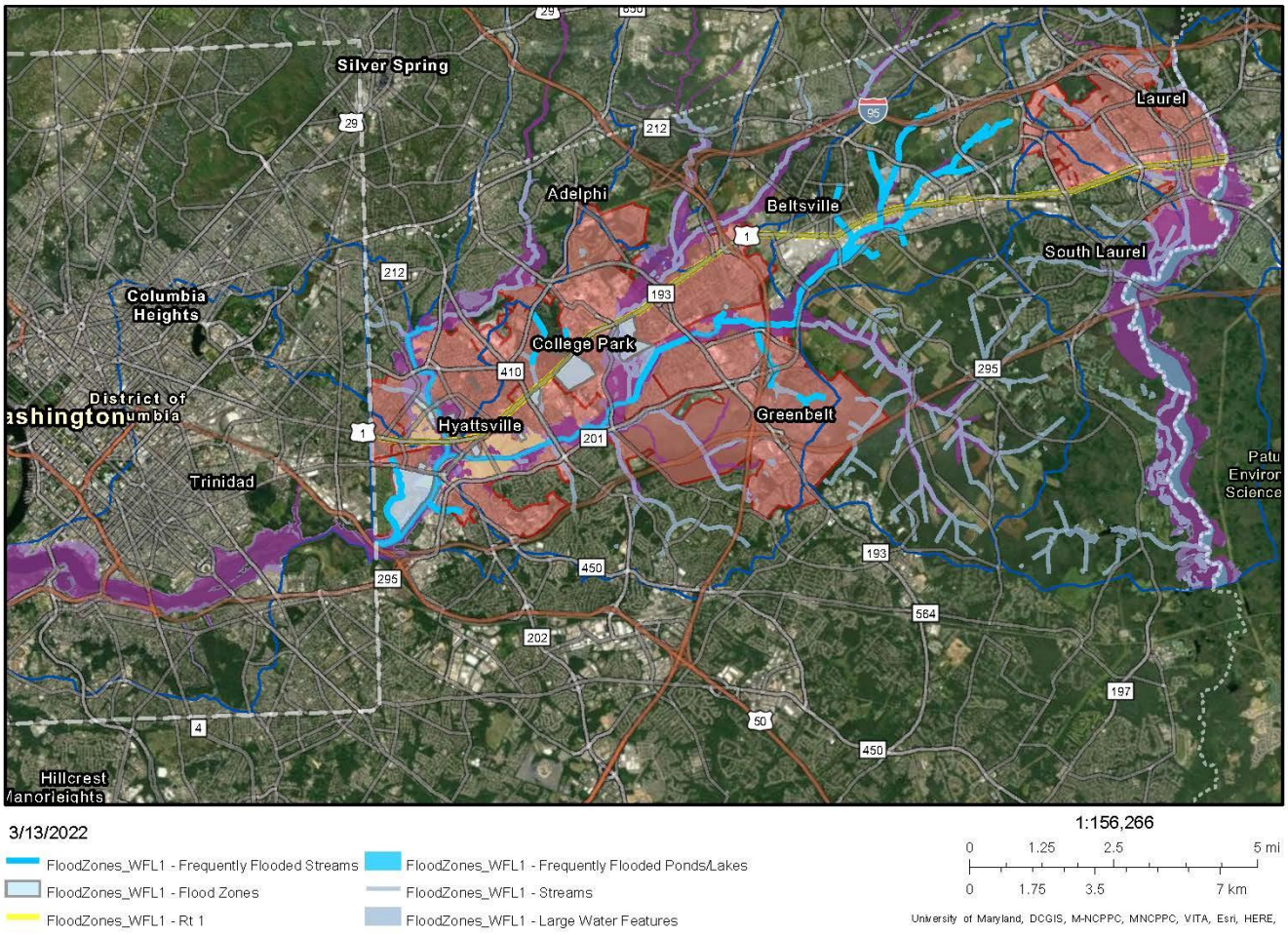
The Stormwater Water and Flooding Action Plan is an element of the Route One Corridor communities overarching effort to adopt a cooperative approach to working across jurisdictions on a number of sustainability initiatives to reduce redundancies (through shared efforts and peer exchange) and avoid unintended consequences (by coordinating implementation).

Tree Planting, Town of Brentwood

U.S. Route One in Prince George's County weaves through diverse cities and towns, widening and narrowing through densely populated residential areas and highly traversed suburban and commercial areas, passing industrial and agricultural areas, and connecting major highways. While Route One has lost its significance as a long-distance route through the state, it remains a major route in the individual towns it traverses and provides an opportunity for connectivity and cooperation. This Route One Corridor collective was formed as a partnership among 12 communities working together to implement regional sustainability efforts in the urbanized area along the U.S. Route One highway in Prince George's County.

OPPORTUNITY HOTSPOTS

Over the course of a series of convenings, the Route One Corridor communities shared and discussed where they were experiencing stormwater and flooding issues. These "hotspots" were mapped using GIS to identify areas where there was potential for shared solutions.



COLLABORATION OPPORTUNITIES & SUGGESTED ACTION STEPS

This process pinpointed a number of shared challenges the Route One Corridor communities were grappling with, and in turn the EFC identified action steps designed to collaboratively advance solutions, which are detailed here.

Continue Organizing Multi-Municipal Collective Action

It was widely agreed that the dialogue to date on these issues was valuable and that there is interest in continuing the conversation. To ensure ongoing collaboration, the Route One Corridor communities should consider organizing a more formal consortium or member-driven network, with an agreed upon meeting frequency, location, format, and decision-making process. Specifically, Route One Corridor communities will want to establish and commit to:

- **A meeting schedule.** Determine the appropriate time commitment that would provide enough continued engagement to coordinate collective action and facilitate peer-learning without overloading participants' schedules. Consider meeting at least quarterly for two hours to maintain momentum and schedule interim work sessions as needed to advance special initiatives.
- **A leadership structure.** Decide on who will be responsible for coordinating meetings, including communicating with participants, scheduling meetings, developing meeting agendas, providing a virtual platform or physical meeting location, and distributing post-meeting follow-up materials. Consider adopting a collaborative leadership approach with volunteer co-chairs that commit to at least one-year tenures and stagger transitions to ensure responsibility is shared amongst participating communities while maintaining continuity during transition periods.
- **A shared communication process.** Create a shared channel of communication. This could be by maintaining a shared contacts list, developing a listserv, or using a shared communications platform like Google Groups, Basecamp, or Discord. Also consider setting up a shared resource repository for sharing information and collaborating on joint projects. This can be Google Drive, Basecamp, DropBox, or some other cloud-sharing service.
- **A collective identity or brand.** Select a group name to better communicate a shared goal to potential funders, partners, and other interested parties. Suggested names include:
  - Sustainable Route One (SR1)
  - Prince George's Route One Collaborative (PGR1C)
  - Route One Sustainability Collaborative/ Cooperative/Consortium (R1SC)
  - Route One Corridor Communities (R1CC)

The Route One Corridor communities are encouraged to organize an overarching collaborative entity, with multiple working groups (e.g., stormwater and pollinators). This will help improve opportunities for branding, streamline the communication processes, facilitate coordinated leadership, and align schedules, reducing redundancies and strengthening the capacity for collective action.

Align with County Efforts

Prince George's County has a variety of plans that could feasibly present opportunities for local stormwater management and flooding to be addressed. The County Capital Improvement Plan, Clean Water Partnership program and Climate Action Plan are a few examples where coordinating priorities and taking a "dig once " approach would serve both County priorities and municipal needs. To better coordinate with the County, the Route One Corridor communities should consider:

- Reviewing County plans for reference to projects in Route One Corridor communities and opportunities for strategic alignment.
- Sending representatives of the Route One Corridor communities to County-led meetings on stormwater and having them report back findings and updates to the larger group.
- Submitting joint letters of support to the County on behalf of the participating communities for strategic stormwater initiatives.
- Developing a list of county-municipal collaborative opportunities and presenting it to the County Department of Environment.
- Scheduling annual check-in meetings with County staff.

Develop Regional Partnerships

The Route One Corridor communities identified dozens of potential partners at the federal, state and county level, as well as in the academic and nonprofit sectors, which are captured in an appendix to this Action Plan. The Route One Corridor communities should review and prioritize this list of potential partners and develop a short and long-term engagement strategy. To prioritize partnership opportunities, the Route One Corridor communities will want to consider:

- What skill sets and services are needed to advance potential capacity gaps? For example, technical assistance with planning and engineering, ad hoc grant writing, or on-going assistance with social media and outreach.
- Which organizations already have a preexisting relationship with participating municipalities?
- What contacts are readily available for reaching out to potential partner organizations?
- What is the value proposition for the potential partner organizations for engaging with the Route One Corridor communities?

Resources

- MOST Center Dig Once Course
- Clean Water Partnership
- Prince George's County Climate Action Plan
- Prince George's Capital Improvement Plan

Partnership Opportunity:

EFC serves as an effective convener that could help facilitate joint Municipal—County discussions.

Conduct a Regional Study on Stormwater Flooding

Route One Corridor communities specifically expressed interest in a comprehensive study that would identify and prioritize projects that will address current and future flooding challenges and improve stormwater management across jurisdictions. While varying levels of exploration and planning of stormwater management and flooding has taken place around specific locations and issues, a cohesive solution will require a regional study that considers the interconnectedness of these challenges and the potential upstream and downstream implications of possible solutions. To advance a regional study, the Route One Corridor communities will want to consider:

- What studies have already been completed? Consider identifying and sharing current relevant regional and local studies to identify what has already been covered and identify potential gaps.
- What is the scale and scope of this comprehensive study? Consider the types of questions this study should address, the level of data needed to make meaningful on-the-ground decisions, and who should be involved in this study.
- Who will fund this study? A collaborative grant proposal would likely be compelling to funders as it demonstrates local commitment to improving water quality. However, most grants are highly competitive, and funding is not guaranteed. Participating communities could consider pooling local funds, such as general revenue funds, or ARPA and Infrastructure Bill dollars.
- Who will be responsible for drafting a joint Request for Proposal of services to complete the study?
- Who will manage any contracts and/or funds secured?

Pervious Pavers, Town of Brentwood

Resources

- Maryland Silver Jackets
- Thriving Earth Exchange
- Low Impact Development Center
- DNR Grants Gateway Outcome 2
- ARPA Funding – Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds

Green Roof, Riverdale Park Station

Maintain and Explore Data Sources

The Route One Corridor communities, in partnership with EFC, developed a community-based hotspot map of known stormwater and flooding issues. This map identifies areas of interest for future project implementation. To keep this map relevant, it will need to be maintained and regularly updated. The Route One Corridor communities will want to determine where the map will be housed, what updates will be needed and how frequently, who will be responsible for making updates and how those changes will be communicated.

In addition, there is a wealth of knowledge and research on stormwater management and flooding on-going at the University of Maryland that Route One Corridor communities can tap into. Consider coordinating with the Campus Community Connection initiative to host a Stormwater Research Summit. A Stormwater Research Summit could help connect communities with ongoing stormwater-related research on campus that can provide communities with additional data to inform local decision-making. In turn, such a summit would also help campus researchers better understand how the needs of neighboring communities can be addressed by their efforts and potentially spur partnerships that open doors to additional capacity.

Leadership Opportunity:

The City of Greenbelt indicated an interest in establishing a shared map through open-source ArcGIS in coordination with trusted users from the communities.

The Cities of Hyattsville, College Park, and Greenbelt self-identified as having in-house GIS capacity.

Resources

- Campus Community Connection
  - Andy Fellows, Faculty Research Specialist | afellows@umd.edu
- Stormwater Infrastructure Resilience and Justice (SIRJ) Lab
  - Marrcus Hendricks, PhD, MPH, Director | mdh1@umd.edu

The Route One Corridor communities should consider hosting a single Research Summit, with either multiple sessions or as a two-part series on priority topics (e.g., stormwater and pollinators). This can help streamline the coordination, marketing and outreach, and facilitation of the summit, while allowing participating communities to participate in one or more topic areas discussions.

Explore Finance and Funding Options

Considering how to pay for the stormwater and flooding activities identified as priorities of the Route One Corridor communities will be key to being able to move forward with implementation. The ultimate, overall strategy will likely involve a collection of funding and financing options. Grants are a natural first thought, and both public and private sector funders have expressed a stated interest in supporting collaborative efforts. Relevant opportunities are presented in an appendix to this Action Plan.

ARPA dollars and pending Infrastructure Bill funds could be pooled to support project implementation, or in some cases, be used as a match for grants. Depending on how Infrastructure Bill funds flow through the MDE's Water Quality Finance Administration (State Revolving Loan fund), a grant or loan application that bundles multiple projects and highlights the opportunity to serve often overlooked communities could make for a strong proposal. There may also be the opportunity to reduce overall costs to all of the municipalities through coordinated joint procurement where consolidated purchases achieve a lower cost per unit price point.

Resources

- Chesapeake Bay Trust
  - Prince George's County Stormwater Stewardship Program
  - Rain Check Rebate Program
  - Green Streets, Green Jobs, Green Towns (G3) Grants
- Prince George's County
  - County Council Grants
  - Community Partnership Grants
- State of Maryland
  - Department of Natural Resources Trust Fund Grants Gateway
  - Department of the Environment Water Quality Financing Administration
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Grant Opportunities
- National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Chesapeake Bay Stewardship Fund
- ARPA funding – Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds
- NOAA Environmental Literacy Grants
- Navigating the Federal Funding Landscape: A Guide for Communities (2021)
- Federal Resources for Nature-Based Solutions to Climate Change 2020 Fact Sheet

APPENDIX: POTENTIAL PARTNERS

County, State and Regional Government

- Prince George's County
  - Department of the Environment
  - Department of Public Works and Transportation
  - Clean Water Partnership
- State of Maryland
  - Department of Natural Resources
  - State Highways
  - National Capital Park and Planning
- Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments

Higher Education Institutions

- University of Maryland
  - Environmental Finance Center
  - Sustainable Maryland
  - Campus Community Connection
  - Stormwater Infrastructure Resilience and Justice (SIRJ) Lab
- Bowie State University
- Prince George's County Community College

Technical Assistance Providers

- Maryland Silver Jackets
- Low Impact Development Center
- Neighborhood Design Center
- Thriving Earth Exchange
- Anacostia Riverkeeper
- Anacostia Watershed Society
- Anacostia River Task Force
- Watershed Stewards
- Friends of/ Watershed groups

General Affiliations

- K-12 Schools
  - Environmental education teachers
  - Service-learning supervisors
  - Climate activism student groups
  - Maryland Green Schools
- Faith-based institutions
  - faith Partners for the Chesapeake
- Local Businesses
  - Chamber of Commerce
  - Community Development Center
  - Large parcel owners, especially those with useful data, like NASA and UMD
  - Developers involved with large projects like the Discovery District
- Homeowners and Civic Associations