

News

Parker Instrumental in Prince George's Stormwater Bill

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Prince George's County Passes Stormwater Bill with Broad Support

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Green jobs, clean waters bill among most innovative in nation

LARGO, MD – On Friday, Prince George's County Executive Rushern L. Baker, signed legislation authorized by the County Council to help rid local waterways of stormwater runoff pollution and to comply with federal and state regulations under the Clean Water Act. The Watershed Protection and Restoration Program (WPRP), will be an economic driver in improving the County's stormwater management practices with the creation of 5,000 new green jobs, local business development, Alternative Compliance Program for religious entities and nonprofit groups, unique public-private partnerships (P3) and property owners fees. The program is expected to generate approximately \$1.2 billion over the next 13 years.

Prince George's County is one of the first jurisdictions in the nation to build a coalition of all stakeholders and to introduce community partnership program funding. The WPRP has already received national attention and strong support from area religious leaders, builders and the environmental community for its innovative approach to financing water infrastructure projects. One approach includes the Alternative Compliance Program that allows for faith-based and nonprofit communities to see a fee reduction provided they meet certain criteria for stewardship to reduce pollution. This includes putting in their own rain gardens and establishing a stewardship ministry for community outreach and education and housekeeping measures such as plantings and cleanups. Participating groups will also receive enhanced technical assistance and funding opportunities from the County.

"We are proud to have such strong partners in the business and faith communities as we step up our stewardship. Together we will create thousands of green jobs as we make our county more healthy, beautiful and sustainable for future generations," said DER Director Adam Ortiz. "We appreciate the leadership of Council Chair Andrea Harrison, Committee Chair Derrick Davis, and the Council for making this innovative program the law of the land."

"By working with receptive ears within County Executive Rushern Baker's administration, we embraced the concept of building a partnership for the care and stewardship of our most precious environmental resource – clean water," said Reverend Nathaniel Thomas, of Forestville New Redeemer Baptist Church, Moderator Elect of the Prince George's County Baptist Association.

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“Much work needs to be done to restore our endangered water tributaries feeding into the Chesapeake Bay, this is a giant leap forward toward this effort,” said **Midgett Parker**, Esq., of Linowes and Blocher LLP - an attorney representing the 200+ church organization known as the Collective Empowerment Group. “By embracing the faith community in this effort, Prince George’s County will build this program on a solid set of stewardship values throughout the entire community.”

Another program approach includes the highly-touted public-private partnerships (P3). Brent Bolin, Clean Water Coalition Director of the Maryland League of Conservation Voters will collaborate with the County on the P3 business model and says he’s excited about how this strategy will generate funding for the County.

“Prince George's County has set the bar in Maryland with its stormwater retrofit program,” says Bolin. I especially appreciate its focus on creating local jobs, improving quality of life in our neighborhoods and its leadership in serving as a regional model for community-based environmental restoration”

Another key program strategy includes a two-year pilot, business development program that will certify, small and local businesses to stimulate and expand the County’s tax base and increase the number of employment opportunities for residents. The Prince George’s County Business Development Reserve Program (BDRP) will assist small business enterprises to be able to compete for and secure contracts to help build water infrastructure systems. Roland L. Jones, executive director of BDRP and Supplier Development and Diversity will operate the program in the County’s Office of Central Services.

Property owners will see a separate line item on their property tax bill for fiscal year 2013/2014 and are eligible to receive a reduced or modified fee by retrofitting their property with approved stormwater management devices and practices. The program also provides a financial hardship provision if a property owner has received a Maryland Homeowners Tax Credit and Energy Assistance Subsidy.

To meet the federal mandate, DER will need to treat 8,000 acres of impervious County surfaces. The project is expected to be completed by 2025.