

2024 Annual Report to the Board of Directors
Environment & Natural Assets Advisory Committee (ENA)

Section 1. Committee Member and Status of Terms:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Status</u>	<u>Comments</u>
Patricia Benner	1st term expires 3/18/25	
Brian Burgess	1st term expires 11/18/26	Elected Vice Chair 8/28/24
Karen Krun Detter	3rd and final term expired 9/30/24	
Patricia Gamby	1st term expires 7/27/25	
Patricia Ryan Garcia	1st term expires 9/24/25	Elected Chair 8/28/24
John Maziuk	1st term expires 2/18/25	
Anne O'Connell	3rd term expires 11/18/24	Extension requested
Timothy Peck, Former Chair	Resigned 8/11/24	
Don Wolski	1st term expires 11/18/26	

Section 2. Section of Major Activities during Reporting Period 2024:

- Green Street articles were prepared and submitted for quarterly Ocean Pines (OP) newsletters. The topics were as follows: Winter–Yacht Club “Litter Warrior”; Spring–Blue/Green Algae proliferation in OP ponds; Summer–Invasive Plants to Avoid; Fall–Planting Native Trees.
- At its first quarter 2024 meetings, the Committee heard presentations from the Maryland Coastal Bays Program, the Lower Shore Land Trust, and Assateague Coastal Trust on the organizations’ programs that aim to protect and preserve the area’s waterways and other natural resources and ways that the Committee can support their efforts.
- Turtle Sanctuaries: the Committee submitted a Charging Document in February 2024 requesting the placement of fallen trees or artificial islands to provide platforms for turtle basking at the South Gate Pond. It was noted that trees and logs around the pond previously used by turtles had been removed to facilitate the creation of a helicopter landing pad. The Committee has been informed that OPA is researching options for turtle sanctuaries.
- Committee members produced a 6-½ minute video explaining what the ENA Committee does, highlighted OPA’s natural assets, and provided recommendations for homeowner best practices for maintaining them. The video was posted on the OPA Facebook and YouTube accounts.
- Ocean Pines Season Kickoff: The Committee sponsored an exhibit at the April 20 event where the ENA video was shown and an oyster cage was displayed. Handouts about the ENA Committee’s activities were distributed, and a trash picker and bucket were offered for giveaway.
- Bay Day: The Committee sponsored a similar exhibit at the May 19 event which also included results of efforts to clean up liquor mini bottles and cigarette butts found on roadsides throughout the community. A committee member also staffed an activity table for Maryland Coastal Bays.

- Teach a Kid to Fish Day on June 15: Two committee members staffed a table offering information on responsible disposal of fishing line and hooks and displayed a prototype gear disposal unit. Coloring books and crayons on responsible gear use/disposal were offered to children. Due to the low attendance and limited interest in the Committee's table we will most likely not participate in the 2025 event.
- In June 2024, the Committee purchased and installed an oyster gardening cage at the Swim & Racquet Club gazebo. Committee volunteers will clean and maintain the cage on a rotating basis.
- Progress on the South Gate Pond shoreline improvements initiated by the Committee in conjunction with Maryland Coastal Bays Program in 2023 has been slow as several meetings on the project were canceled due to illness. It is hoped that the project will move forward in the coming months and that the Committee will be consulted on its development.
- Goose/Duck crossing signs: A Committee member modified the signs produced by OPA in 2023 to improve their stability. OPA repurposed some of the signs for other uses. While four signs remain in place around the South Gate Pond, their future is uncertain in light of Worcester County's new ban on roadside "snipe" signs on county-owned roads which include both Manklin Creek and Cathell. The Committee believes the signs are useful in protecting wildlife and improving roadway safety and hopes that they will remain in place.
- The Committee continued to express concern over the loss of mature trees in Ocean Pines. We encourage OPA to enforce the new tree removal policies and to encourage replacement of mature trees removed due to disease or other issues with those that are native to the area.
- In August, OPA installed fishing line disposal tubes at the South Gate and Route 90 ponds for which the Committee had provided a prototype. The Committee had recommended this project in order to prevent wildlife entanglement in monofilament line left behind by fishermen. As Committee members have found other types of trash in the tubes, we recommend that they be labeled "Line & Hooks Only," and that OPA initiate a social media educational effort to explain what the tubes are for.
- In 2023, the committee developed a plan to install educational nature signs around the Rt.90 Pond to inform users of the walking paths on the natural habitat of Ocean Pines and preservation of wildlife. As this project overlaps with the responsibilities of the Recreation & Parks Advisory Committee, the ENA Committee will reach out to that committee to discuss possible collaboration.
- The Committee continues to have concerns about disposal of yard waste in OP canals that is causing algae blooms and contributing to the contamination of our waterways. The Committee recommends an annual public communications effort to build awareness of this issue.

Section 3. Problems Encountered and Assistance Required:

While the Committee understands that OPA must manage multiple requests from ours and the other Advisory Committees, we would appreciate more timely feedback on our proposed projects. We appreciate the availability of "Charging Documents" to initiate requests for OPA funding and actions and are pleased that our current Board Liaison has been very supportive of our efforts. We hope that we will see more timely responses in the coming year.

Section 4. Request for items to be included in the next OPA budget:

- Costs for turtle sanctuary platforms..
- Costs to implement the shoreline protection methods on eroding shorelines of South Gate Pond.
- Costs to plant native trees within the common areas of OP.

Section 5. Recommendations for Board Action:

We look forward to the Board's support as we continue working cooperatively with Public Works, Parks & Recreation and other OP personnel to help us initiate and complete several projects. We welcome consultation from OPA on the

Committee's areas of responsibility. Of particular concern is the health of the St. Martins River which received the second lowest grade in the watershed of "C" in the recently released 2023 Maryland Coastal Bays Report Card.

Section 6. Recommendations for Committee work in 2023 - 2024:

- Continue support of the annual "Bay Day" event co-sponsored with the Maryland Coastal Bays Program.
- Continue work to enhance our environmental assets such as the Route 90 pond and South Gate Pond.
- Continue environmental education efforts for the residents of OP through our "Green Street" articles in the OP Quarterly Reports, at event exhibits and other opportunities that may arise.
- Continue projects to humanely manage wildlife including establishing buffer zones around the South Gate Pond to help mitigate geese gathering.
- Continue to encourage Oyster Gardening to help improve the health of our canals.
- Continue efforts to help stop the decline in water quality of our waterways with emphasis on the St. Martin River.
- The ENA Committee sees that there is overlap of Advisory Committee responsibility for the natural assets of OP including with the Marine Activities, Architectural Review, and Recreation and Parks committees. Examples include improvements to walking trails, improvement of water quality in the canals, and the oversight of tree cutting. Periodic joint meetings and other communication between these committees and the OPA Board could help address common issues of concern.