

Statement to the Bethany Beach Town Council at their June 21, 2019 Town Council Meeting

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Town Council I am Patrick McGuire, President of the Bethany Beach Landowners Association, (BBLA). I am today speaking with the unanimous approval of the BBLA Board of Directors to address New Business item G on the agenda, that is: exploring the possibility of the Town potentially acquiring a large parcel of open space and wetlands area in Bethany Beach to preserve as a conservation area. The BBLA Board supports this initiative.

We all know from personal experience, that our tidal, non-tidal and storm flooding conditions are a serious and regularly recurring problem. This is especially true of all the areas north of Garfield Parkway. Conditions have worsened because the speed and power of the Loop Canal water flow has eroded the dirt banks and submerged significant areas of habitat adjacent to the canal. These water flow problems are damaging and removing portions of our wetlands that will not return.

Our wetlands serve a vital purpose in controlling flood waters, filtering that water and providing a habitat for wildlife. The wetlands are our natural first responders, our first defenders against flooding. Any loss of wetlands will be felt very quickly by the adjacent properties and shortly thereafter by a wider area of the Town.

Several BBLA Board members have taken a preliminary look at publicly available maps and aerial photographs, and talked to members and other residents regarding flooding issues and potential relationships to the loss of wetlands in our community. We believe that there is an urgent need to more thoroughly assess the conditions of remaining wetland areas in light of the important functions they provide, and discuss ideas regarding appropriate ways to preserve and protect them.

The economic impact of flooding is already being felt, as more insurance carriers increase premiums or step out of the market. Flooding and standing water afterwards can also adversely affect some businesses as well as homeowners.

You, and previous Council Members, are to be commended for every action you take to preserve wetlands in our Town and for exploring acquiring wetlands tracts. The BBLA board encourages the Town Council to explore solutions to wetland preservation, including possible purchase of wetlands thereby preserving this critical asset.

We will inform our 1,266 Bethany Beach member households of this and any other initiative to protect our wetlands areas. We stand ready to help to the extent we can. The BBLA shares the same objective as the Town Council, to act in the best interests of our Town.

Thank you for this opportunity and your attention to this vital issue.

Patrick McGuire
President
Bethany Beach Landowners Association