

Carter Run, Great Run, Thumb Run, and Deep Run TMDL Implementation Plan Development

Agricultural Working Group Report to Steering Committee *January 12, 2006*

Group Membership

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Meeting Dates

Thursday, June 2, 2005, 7:00 – 9:00 PM
Monday, October 3, 2005, 7:00 – 9:00 PM
Thursday, December 1, 2005, 7:00 – 9:00 PM

Goal and Tasks

The overall goal and responsibility of the Agricultural Working Group (AWG) is to address the sources of bacteria attributed to agricultural operations, identify any obstacles to implementation of agricultural load reductions, and seek practical solutions to these obstacles. Specific tasks of the working group include:

- Identify potential constraints to BMP implementation
- Identify preferred and/or innovative best management practices (BMPs)
- Identify outreach methods for engaging producers
- Identify appropriate measurable goals- and timeline for achieving implementation goals
- Identify alternative funding sources / partnerships that will promote implementation
- Review implementation strategies from an agricultural perspective

Key Topics and Recommendations

The following key topics and recommendations resulted from the three AWG meetings:

Monitoring

- Monitoring on Thumb Run was stopped in 2002. Members would like to see if BMPs implemented since TMDL development are making a difference. Additional monitoring stations and more frequent sampling is requested to help evaluate progress and pinpoint areas of concern. At a minimum, a bi-monthly monitoring station closest to the impairment outlet is suggested.
- John Marshall Soil and Water Conservation District (JMSWCD) began monthly coliscan monitoring for *E. coli* enumerations from 10/1/05 through 9/30/06 in Thumb Run watershed. Funding similar studies throughout implementation would enable evaluation of water quality gains throughout points in the entire watershed.
- Funds should be sought to perform monitoring upstream and downstream of farm with substantial land in conservation practices, particularly on a tributary stream, utilizing monitoring results in the educational program.

Best Management Practices

- Larger, established producers know about incentive programs, reaching the newer farmers / recreational farmers with smaller horse and exotic species operations will be a challenge especially in Carter Run, Great Run, and Thumb Run. May be difficult to get owner or renter of rented pasture to participate in cost-share program. BMP maintenance for required time (e.g., 10 years) will be an issue. The district has had positive and negative experience with signing renters up for cost-share programs.
- In order to allow incentive program participation by horse owners, it is requested that a sacrifice area be included in the SL-6 Grazing Land Protection specifications.
- A new “Pasture Management System BMP ?” to provide incentive for control of upland pasture loads is recommended with the following criteria:
 - Must have livestock exclusion system installed (cost-shared system or is voluntary also acceptable?)
 - Must have soil testing performed for nutrient applications. Lime and fertilizer applied based on testing allowing nutrients to be more readily available resulting in an improved stand.
 - Must maintain a 3-inch minimum grass height
 - Must mow pastures to control woody vegetation
 - Must chain harrow pasture to break-up manure piles after livestock are removed from field
 - Tax credit provided for chain harrow purchase
 - Incentive payment of \$200/ac to be provided. Incentive payment similar to no-till payments that have been successful at obtaining buy-in.
- Vegetative buffers on the edge of cropland will help meet specified cropland load reductions. An incentive payment of \$560/ac is needed to entice farmers to convert cropland to vegetated buffers.
- Providing alternative shade for livestock excluded from stream corridor will reduce concentration of livestock at buffer edges. It is recommended that cost-share be provided for a shade structure to farmers with an acceptable livestock exclusion system.

- The group is confident that current BMPs eligible for cost-share in TMDL areas and proposed additions will provide the necessary incentive for producers and horse owners to implement required BMPs to meet the specified TMDL reductions.

Technical Assistance and Education

- JMSWCD will provide technical assistance in the Thumb Run, Carter Run, and Great Run watersheds. JMSWCD will collaborate with Tri-County/City Soil and Water Conservation District (TCCSWCD) in the Deep Run watershed with JMSWCD and TCCSWCD taking the lead on the Fauquier County and Stafford County portions, respectively.
- Two technical assistance full time equivalents (FTE) and one administrative assistance [Will need to justify this, none of the six implementation projects have a full time administrative assistant.] FTE divided evenly between the watersheds are needed to support implementation.
- Field days, small workshops, and field visits would work best to inform farmers as to exactly what the TMDL means to them and what will most practically get the job done. During field day, workshops and farm visit an informational packet defining the TMDL and what it means to the farmer, options farmer has for funding sources (e.g. voluntary, cost-share, and tax credit) with requirements of each and list of components with cost (e.g. alternative watering systems) should be distributed. A variety of issues / topics (e.g., crop, beef, horse) have been covered in previous field days in the area. Generally, there has been a good response from farmers. A watershed group that farmers can contact with questions / comments may have better response than contacting a government agency.
- A statewide public service announcement through various media (e.g., radio, newspapers, cable) paid by the Commonwealth about BMPs and incentive programs was suggested.

Potential Funding Sources

- USDA cost estimates are well below local costs. Local averages verified by district need to be incorporated into cost-share allotment. Programs do not fully cover BMP maintenance costs. Contractor availability could hinder BMP installation.
- Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) dollars are projected to disappear in September 2007.
- Three key programs used by district and NRCS:
 - a. CREP – cropland
 - b. CREP – forest
 - c. Virginia Cost-Share Program
- Great Run watershed was designated as potential spawning habitat for Blue Back Herring and could be eligible for additional funding from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries.

Timeline and Targeting

- The 5-year implementation timeline and 10-year stream de-listing timeline seem reasonable.
- The district will utilize maps produced during BMP quantification to target landowners. The plan will be to start at the impairment outlet and work along the main stem until all landowners have been contacted. Interested landowners outside this progression will not be turned away if money is available.