

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

## Agricultural Working Group June 2, 2005 Meeting Summary

**NOTE:** *This is an attempt to summarize main topics / key areas covered in the focus group. Please add to this list and make corrections wherever needed. This information will be presented to the Steering Committee in the form of a working group report to be incorporated into the plan; therefore, the overall group needs to agree with the information.*

### **Group membership**

- Meeting attendees: John Bauserman, John Chambers, Gray Coyner, Frank Horn, Arney Johnson Jr., Nicolaas Kortlandt, Jay Marshall, Byron Petrauskas, and Tom Turner
- Individuals at the meeting represented the Deep Run and Thumb Run watersheds.
- There were no individuals from the Carter Run and Great Run watersheds present at the meeting.
- Review of sign-in list from kick-off public meeting revealed an individual each in Carter Run and Great Run had signed up to participate in the working group.
- Agreed that meeting location was appropriate and one agricultural working group could address issues relevant to the four watersheds.

### **TMDL development**

- 100% reduction is hard to comprehend.
- Wildlife reduction not specified in Thumb Run. It was mentioned that any wildlife management procedures implemented more than likely will be at the county level and therefore Thumb Run would be included.
- Opinions were expressed that buffers will create more habitat for wildlife (deer) and create a bigger problem - unless population levels are managed.
- The accuracy of the source assessment was questioned, in particular, straight pipes. It was explained that the estimates were based on the best information available and estimates should be treated as precautionary allowing funds to be set aside to correct the straight pipes that are found.

### **Watershed changes**

- Operations in the watersheds have changed over last several years.
  1. Have gone out of business.
  2. Dairy operation in Deep Run watershed changed to beef operation.
  3. Overall increase in horse population.
- Wildlife population (i.e., deer and geese) has increased with more geese residencies.
- Several miles of exclusion fencing has been installed, especially in Thumb Run, which needs to be accounted. Thumb Run has shown the most progress (of the four watersheds)

in implementing BMPs due to farmers initiating contact with district and the word spreading.

### **Monitoring data**

- Monitoring on Thunb Run was stopped in 2002. Members would like to see if BMPs implemented since TMDL development are making a difference. Need to make request to DEQ to find out the status.
- It was suggested that additional monitoring stations and more frequent sampling would help to evaluate progress and pinpoint areas of concern. For example, improvements below a monitoring station would not be reflected in samples collected at that station by DEQ.
- It was stated that a common sense approach needs to be taken first before we go out and spend more money on monitoring (e.g., we know cows in stream and straight pipes are problems, so let's fix them).

### **Constraints / suggestions for implementation**

- Parts of the CREP program and cost-share programs need to be combined to equal the promised 75% cost-share.
- 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.
- CREP dollars are projected to disappear in September 2007.
- Good possibility that incentive programs will not apply to horse operations that are less than 10 acres.
- 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.
- How do you deal with bad actors, especially those upstream of a farm that has implemented the necessary BMPs.
- Need BMP cost-share provided for shade structure and alternative water source with no fencing.
- Up to two years to fully train additional technical assistance may be needed to design additional BMPs. In addition to agricultural programs, the district handles erosion and control program for the county.
- Contractor availability, especially excavators, could hinder BMP installation.

### **Education / outreach**

- 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.
- 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.

- Farmer needs to feel that he is not the only one installing practices instead everyone is putting in practices. Convincing neighbor that they have to participate will work. Use Thumb Run as an example.
- 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**

- Three key programs used by district and NRCS
  - 1) CREP – cropland
  - 2) CREP – forest
  - 3) Virginia Cost-Share Program
- District has never turned away money; the money could always be spent.
- It was proposed that fencing materials be purchased in bulk quantity to enable a cost reduction to farmers. The concept would be more beneficial to smaller farms than cost-share programs. Tyson Foods had favorable results with a program in the Shenandoah Valley where fans were purchased in bulk quantity and sold to producers at a reduced rate. The materials would be available to farmers in the impairments only. The program could be used to tract voluntary practices being implemented.

### **Steering Committee**

- John Bauserman, with John Chambers serving as an alternate, was elected to represent the agricultural group at the steering committee meetings.
- Will conduct two to three meetings in the evening from 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM throughout the project.