

Upper Goose Creek (UGC) TMDL Implementation Plan

Steering Committee Meeting

May 25, 2017

Meeting Minutes

Location: Tri-County Feeds

7408 John Marshall Highway

Marshall, Virginia 20115

Start: 1:00pm

End: 3:00pm

Meeting Attendance:

Dave Evans, VA Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), Facilitator

Heidi Moltz, Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin (ICPRB), Facilitator

Jenny Biche, Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission (RRRC), Scribe

Gem Bingol, Piedmont Environmental Council (PEC)

Pam Kenel, Loudoun Water

Sarah Marsala, VA Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)

Jeffrey Millington, Goose Creek Association (GCA)

Ben Shoemaker, Loudoun Water

Tom Turner, John Marshall Soil and Water Conservation District (JMSWCD)

David Ward, Loudoun County Building & Development

Ashley Wendt, VA Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)

Meeting Minutes:

The meeting began with a distribution of hand outs (attached) and introductions of all attendees. Dave Evans thanked attendees for their participation and their patience when the development of the plan was temporarily suspended until DEQ staff vacancies could be filled. Following introductions, representatives from the Agricultural, Residential and Government Working Groups provided a summary of recommendations and concerns expressed at the working group meetings. Attendees then shared their perspectives from the agency or non-governmental organization they represented with regard to recommendations and concerns needing to be addressed in the implementation plan. The group shared the following comments:

Agriculture

- Agricultural Working Group (AWG) Committee recommended the IP include a focus on equine practices, given that exclusion fencing (SL-6) cost share practices are typically not available to horse owners.
- The AWG Committee also recommended strategies for manure composting facilities be pursued. Research should be completed on both individual manure composting practices and providing regional composting facilities to see which option would be more successful in the watershed, who would operate centralized composting facilities, and how they would be funded.
- The AWG Committee would like for the maps in the TMDL-IP to be ground-truthed and for localities to have access to technical resources once implementation begins. Goose Creek Association and John Marshall Soil and Water Conservation district volunteered to assist with ground-truthing the data provided in the IP.
- Absentee landownership can create challenges for implementing Best Management Practices (BMPs) as sometimes owners are not interested in investing in the land; concluding instead that land management is up to the operator. PEC has worked successfully with managers of leased properties in the past, though primarily in gardening use context.

Wildlife

- Wildlife numbers identified in the TMDL update appear to be significantly under estimated and should be ground-truthed. The number of geese in the watershed is exceptionally high, but the numbers don't reflect that.
- Geese in the watershed need to be addressed somehow to lessen their impact on the bacteria load. It was recommended that buffers be placed around ponds to make geese less comfortable staying long term.
- Geese, deer and beaver populations all are rising and need to be addressed in the watershed. PEC has done some work to address geese in eastern Loudoun County, using pond buffers and floating islands.

Equine

- Advertisements should be placed in local horse related newspapers and other media outlets to build awareness of cost share options, BMPs, etc. to horse owners. Horse owners in the past have not been targeted because there have not been any programs available to them.
- Loudoun County has assisted Loudoun Soil and Water Conservation District with additional funding (estimated at \$50-\$100,000 a year) for an internal SL-6 cost share program for non-qualifying individuals for the last 3 years.
- Additional funds are needed (either from the county, state or both) for an internal SL-6 cost share program for non-qualifying individuals in both Fauquier and Loudoun counties for more stream exclusion projects throughout the watershed. This would result in a significant benefit to water quality.
- In the last 25 years there has been a transition in the watershed from cattle to horse farms. Many horse owners board their horses, and the boarding owner leaves the farm management up to the barn manager, many who are not familiar with proper pasture management.

- A small horse farm demonstration project that is offered in Prince William County is a great model and should be replicated in the UGC watershed.* PEC's Howser's Branch Farm is a model for livestock exclusion fencing, rotational grazing/pasture management. With water quality monitoring information available, it is an excellent educational resource.

**Prince William Soil and Water Conservation District offers a Healthy Land for Healthy Horses program, a six week free course that gives horse farm owners the opportunity to learn about conservation practices that can improve local water quality and farming operations. Visit <https://www.pswcd.org/horse-owners.html> to learn more.*

Other Watershed Plans

- The Loudoun County Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan completed in 2006-2008 does not extend into the Upper Goose Creek watershed.
- The Loudoun County Water and Wastewater Needs Assessment completed in 2011 includes recommendations for their MS4 Program; and while it doesn't extend into the Upper Goose Creek watershed, there are some programs, such as pet waste management, that would be relevant to this implementation plan.
- PEC's conservation easement programs provide opportunities to connect people to proper land management. Early easements did not contain water quality protections and PEC is interested to approach its future conservation efforts from a "Healthy Watershed" perspective. PEC is approaching its goal of seeing 50% of lands in the watershed in an easement, and recently received a grant to evaluate its current easements.
- Floodplains in Loudoun County are a problem that needs to be addressed. The county's designation of riparian "Floodways" does not allow for planting trees within stream buffers without a (FEMA?) permit at a cost of approximately \$20,000.
- The Northern Virginia Regional Commission completed a Conservation Corridor Report that covered Loudoun, Fauquier and Prince William Counties that included water conservation opportunities. It may be relevant to the IP.
- Completing this TMDL implementation plan (IP) will give localities preferential access to 319 grant funds. These grants are awarded competitively among watersheds that have an IP in place. At least 50% of the total grant funds are allocated to "on-the-ground" projects addressing elements of approved IPs.

Water Quality Monitoring

- There is one DEQ "trend station" located in the Upper Goose Creek watershed, with sampling done every other month. Two additional DEQ trend stations are located in lower Goose Creek.
- The Goose Creek Association (GCA) has done monthly monitoring for 12 years, and offered to provide their stream sampling to DEQ. The John Marshal SWCD also conducts monitoring, and GCA, JMSWCD and DEQ will explore opportunities to collaborate on future stream monitoring.
- Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy conducts WQ monitoring, and may also be interested in collaborating. In past, a volunteer monitoring program was in place for North Fork Goose Creek.

Septic Program

- Loudoun County did a Needs Assessment in the last 10 years to identify where the failing septic tanks were. Many failing septic systems are in the lower income areas developed on poor soils.
- Loudoun Water has had some success addressing these issues in other area watersheds. Alternative septic systems often may be required, and are both costly and require annual maintenance. Active management of these systems and funding is needed.
- Fauquier and Loudoun counties both required conventional septic system pump outs every 5 years, and (Loudoun) require annual inspection of alternative septic systems.
- Loudoun County can currently accommodate the amount of septic waste being hauled to its wastewater treatment facilities, however they may reach capacity in the future so will need to stay ahead of it. It will be important to coordinate the septic programs in future grants with county water agencies so they can meet treatment capacity needs.

Following the round table discussion, Dave Evans and Heidi Moltz shared a power point presentation on the draft IP that will be shared at the final public meeting. Attendees were asked to provide edits and recommendations. The following comments were made:

- Identify basic roads on the maps to help people orient themselves within the watershed
- Change year from 2016 to 2017 on slide 5
- Change photo credit on slide 5 to Loudoun County
- Add a floating box to slide 5 that includes information about the 30 day comment period
- On slide 7, redraw arrows in the graphic for Implementation so that it's cyclical
- On slide 12, an inquiry was made as to whether or not 100% failing septic systems load reductions included everything, or just straight pipes
- On slide 12, an inquiry was made as to whether the 75% cropland load reductions included bio-solids
- On slide 15, change "Beef Waste" to "Cattle Waste"
- Move slide 21 to earlier in the presentation
- The comment "If you can't get a baseline of monitoring data, how can we evaluate progress?" was made
- On slide 24, break out DEQ trend stations vs. non-trend stations using different colors
- It was recommended that DEQ contact Goose Creek Scenic River Advisory Committee to see if they are active, and if so, if they would like to be included in the Stakeholder list on slide 25
- County should be added to potential funding sources on slide 27

After presenting slide 28, Dave Evans asked the Steering Committee to send him their answers before the final public meeting. He will email everyone the draft power point presentation after the meeting.

An inquiry was made asking what the likelihood was of funding the IP once it was completed. Once submitted to EPA for their review, it is typically approved after 90 days. DEQ solicit grants in the summer, however, due to the political climate, the amount of funds available is uncertain.

The comment "While there may be a lack of baseline information on water quality data, most streams in this watershed have some impairment regardless based on the nature of farming in the area" was made.

DEQ stated that this implementation plan is an opportunity to state what type and amount of monitoring is needed for this watershed. If it's not stated in the implementation plan, EPA will not fund it.

Dave Evans will send out a link to the Steering Committee members with information on Level 3 monitoring certification. JMSWCD has all the monitoring instruments needed if stakeholders need any.

An inquiry was made as to what advertising and marketing efforts would be made to promote the final public meeting. DEQ will post it in the Virginia Registry and Jenny Biche, RRRRC, will post fliers throughout businesses, libraries, and other key locations and submit the meeting information to local newspapers. If anyone has any recommendations as to where advertisements should be placed, please let Jenny know.

The meeting concluded at 3:15pm.