

Rush River, Hughes River, and Hazel River TMDL
Implementation Plan Development

Residential Working Group Report to Steering Committee

February 23, 2009

Working Group Members:

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Meeting Dates:

- September 16, 2008
- November 18, 2008

Responsibilities

As was their responsibility, the Residential Working Group (RWG) focused on human sources of bacteria in the watershed, including failing septic systems, uncontrolled discharges of human sewage into streams (straight pipes) and pet waste. The RWG discussed different ways to reduce bacteria from these sources, identified problems associated with achieving bacterial load reductions and practical solutions to these problems. Specifically, the group was expected to address the following tasks:

- How to identify and eliminate straight pipes and failing septic systems serving dwellings and small businesses;
- Identification of difficulties faced by landowners in correcting these problems;
- Identification of potential funding sources to make necessary corrections;
- How to motivate owners of problem properties who may fear regulatory action and/or unknown costs;
- Evaluation of technical assistance needed and how to deliver such assistance;
- Identification of relevant educational tools; and
- Identification of effective ways to reduce bacteria from pet waste.

As is typically the case, this working group was made up of local residents, a representative from a local citizen organization, and staff members from state and local agencies.

Key Topics and Recommendations

The following is a summary of issues discussed and recommendations from both RWG meetings:

- **On-site sewage disposal systems –**
 - **Concerns:**
 - Lack of state-wide pump-out requirements;
 - Unqualified individuals are inspecting and certifying drainfields for home sales;
 - There are no 319 funds available for mandatory hook-ups (Town of Washington); some assistance possible from state revolving loan fund.
 - Soils in TMDL-IP area may limit use of traditional septic systems;
 - Alternative systems are costly to install and maintain;
 - Identification of problem source may be difficult – may include neighbor observation, stream walks, conversations with landowners;
 - Some owners with failing systems will not accept any cost share assistance;

- How to reach and convince landowners to repair faulty systems? In Rappahannock County, newspaper ads and direct mailings to owners with properties within 300feet of stream banks generated interest and resulted in improvements
 - **Recommendations:**
 - Pump-out should be required at time of property sale and/or require periodic pump-outs;
 - Uniformity in pumping/maintenance requirements is needed;
 - Develop and implement a system for tracking septic system pump-outs and maintenance;
 - Require that information regarding residential septic system management and drain field location be part of closing documentation at transfer of property;
 - Develop and implement educational programs focused on septic system design, function and maintenance; and
 - Develop and implement educational programs focused on:
 - Impacts of failing drainfields
 - Mechanics of drainfield function – include this information in closing documents at time of property sale;
 - Require that drainfield locations be accurately recorded on plats of all new homes with septic systems;
 - Expand the scope of Rappahannock's Clean Streams Initiative to include the TMDL –IP area;
- **Education/Outreach**
 - Lack of understanding on how septic systems function
 - Integrate information into school curricula, particularly Earth Science and Health; and
 - Include information in educational programs presented by Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District (CSWCD).
 - Drainfield and tank location and layout, as well as system type, are often unknown or incomplete
 - Require new property plat to include system location and layout
 - Promote information on stormwater capture and use, as well as grey water re-use.
 - CSWCD successfully used door-hangers, newspaper ads and direct mailings to owners of properties within 300' of a stream. These tactics generated inquiries to CSWCD, resulting in inspections and remedial action; and
 - Realtors could distribute septic system management literature.
- **Pet Waste/Confined Canine Operations**
 - **Concerns:**
 - Lack of pet waste management ordinances/requirements within the region;
 - No standardization of waste management for confined canine operations including commercial kennels, hunt clubs, veterinary operations, animal shelters, etc.
 - Hunt kennels often compost waste and/or spread it on fields.
 - **Recommendations:**
 - Compile a database of all confined canine operations, identifying their locations and waste management practices;
 - Develop an informational brochure detailing proper pet waste management to be distributed by veterinary offices, local SPCAs, hunt clubs, dog licensing offices, etc.;
 - Develop and implement educational/outreach programs to inform the public of appropriate pet waste management practices;
 - Install pet waste management stations at The Link in Sperryville, the public park in Washington and other identified public dog-walking locations;
 - Provide information on, and encourage the use of, private dog waste enzyme digesting composters.
 - Determine how existing confined canine operations are currently handling waste and promote those with appropriate management systems while working to improve those with problematic techniques.
 - Develop a model pet/kennel waste management ordinance for consideration and adoption by all localities.
- **Cost-Share/Potential Funding**
 - EPA Environmental Education grants might be explored as a source of funds for:

- The development and distribution of informational materials by Realtors;
- The development and implementation of educational materials for students and the general public.
- Sources of potential funding for educational programs, informational; brochures, and demonstration projects include;
 - Water Quality Improvement Fund
 - Rural Community Assistance Program
 - Chesapeake Bay Foundation
 - National Fish and Wildlife Foundation