

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

Agricultural Working Group January 12, 2009 Meeting Summary

Group Membership

The following individuals were present at the meeting:

Augustus Vogel, Bob Slusser, Byron Petrauskas, Charlie Lunsford, David Massie, Debbie Cross, Deirdre Clark, Don Loock, Edward Dorsey, Greg Wichelns, Harold Hiner, James Henshaw, John McCarthy, Katie Conaway, and Melissa H. Allen

Meeting Topics and Discussion Summary

No comments were made regarding the September and November Agricultural Working Group meeting minutes distributed in a handout

Successes of other TMDL implementation projects were presented along with handouts describing the Middle Fork Holston River / Three Creeks, North River, and Willis River implementation projects. Highlights of projects include:

- Residential and agricultural technicians were hired as part of the Middle Fork Holston River / Three Creeks project in Washington County. During six years of implementation, fencing totaling 23 miles and excluding 2,700 animals from streams has been installed.
- North River watershed is located in Rockingham County, the most intensive agricultural county in Virginia. Volunteer fencing installed by Old Order Mennonite community has been crucial to success of project, fostered by relationships built by Mike Phillips (Shenandoah Valley SWCD).
- Peter Francisco SWCD has lead the Willis River implementation efforts in Cumberland and Buckingham Counties. In three years, fencing totaling 23 miles has been installed. A portion of the impairment is now meeting the bacteria water quality standard and is a candidate for de-listing.
- Implementation has been ongoing for three years in Thumb Run, Carter Run, Great Run, and Deep Run watersheds in Fauquier County. Technicians with John Marshall SWCD and VDH were funded to address agricultural and residential components, respectively. Harold Heiner, a beef producer in Carter Run watershed, shared his experience with installation of 4,000 feet of fencing and a new watering system through the cost-share program. Mr. Heiner indicated the overall herd health was better, less calves have been lost, and the district worked well to meet his needs.
- Overall, successes have been relationships formed with local community to assist with correcting failed septic systems, evidence of improved herd health, and improved property values.

A handout was distributed addressing livestock direct deposition bacteria load.

- All perennial streams in the watershed previously used were utilized to determine the total stream length, streamside fencing, and exclusion systems needed to reduce the livestock direct deposition load. These estimates were approximately three times previous estimates derived using just the main streams.
- Point was made that implementation plan time-frame does not allow for adequate “ground-truth” of fencing estimates. Majority of “ground-truth” generally occurs during implementation phase.
- Current exclusion fencing installed in the watersheds was partially accounted for in the analysis. Maps with exclusion fencing were distributed to Culpeper SWCD to further assist in updating fencing estimates.
- The group agreed actual fencing needed was between estimate using main stream and estimates using all perennial streams, but a decision was not made as to how to derive that estimate.

Summary of discussion addressing constraints and/or incentives to implementation follows:

Livestock Exclusion Fencing

- A new BMP eligible in TMDL implementation areas would reduce buffer width to 10 feet and fencing specification requirements, at 50% cost-share, to address concerns that 35-foot buffer and NRCS fencing requirements for stream exclusion are too stringent.
- Loss of shade is less of an issue for beef cows versus dairy cows. Cost-share for portable shade structures was deemed unnecessary.
- Equipment not animals is allowed in buffers for maintenance.
- Cost-share for fence replacement after a flood event is offered in TMDL implementation areas. Specification does not list number of times producer is eligible.
- Question regarding whether a producer can exclude main stem and not tributary was asked. CSWCD explained the evaluation is on a field-per- field basis and addresses all surface water.
- Given amount of exclusion fencing required, implementation timeline should be 10 years.

Pasture management system

- Specification drafted by DCR; however, incentive payment not finalized. An incentive payment between \$75/ac to \$100/ac with a cap on number of acres is anticipated.

Cost-share program

- No suggestions were made for updating programs to make it easier for first time participants.
- Timely reimbursement of producer expenses has occurred in district and is anticipated to not be an issue during implementation.

Land-use conversion

- Previous concern whether converting agricultural land use to buffers would compromise eligibility for agriculture land use status was discussed. According to representatives from Rappahannock County, the topic spawned from another issue in county not pertaining to TMDL implementation and the land use would be classified as a BMP under the agricultural land-use category.