

Robinson River, Little Dark Run TMDL Implementation Plan Development

Tuesday, June 15 2010

7 P.M.

Madison County Volunteer Fire Company, Madison, Virginia

Residential Working Group Meeting Summary

Attendance:

Jennie Biche
Leighton Brown
Ted Bullard
Oliver Allen Campbell, IV
Deirdre Clark
Aerin Curtis
Bonnie Dixon
Phil Hawkins
Jim Long

Suzanne Long
Charlie Lunsford
Gail Starling Marshall
Isabel McLaughlin
Stephanie Mendlow
Jennifer Sisney
Shawn Sisney
Bob Slusser
Greg Wichelns

Opening remarks focused on:

- The role of the Residential Working Group:
 - Participants were informed that their report, along with reports from the Agricultural and Government Working Groups, will be submitted to the Steering Committee for consideration for inclusion in the implementation plan.
 - Residential Working Group members may serve on the Steering Committee.
- Services and responsibilities of the Virginia Department of Health:
 - Assists in identifying failing septic systems, straight pipes and alternative treatment systems;
 - Administers cost share funds to pump out, repair or replace septic systems;
 - Maintains records of sewage disposal permits;
 - Assists homeowners in locating septic systems;
 - Can provide information on the proper installation and function of all systems; and
 - Although straight pipes and failing septic systems are health code violations, the VA Dept. of Health is committed to assisting those who need upgrades, not pursuing legal intervention.
- Cost share grant funds to address failing, or poorly functioning septic systems and straight pipes have been administered by the Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District in the Upper Hazel River Watershed and in Rappahannock County.
- Needs documented in TMDL study will be updated to reflect current conditions.

Bacterial Impacts to Streams:

- Concentration of bacterial counts in fecal matter varies among wildlife and domestic species;
- Streamside kennels with no controls add to contaminant level;
- Although permitted, bio-solid application and management practices are questionable;
- Dog walking areas with collection facilities are needed in communities with small lots; and
- Pet owners should be educated as to the benefits of pet waste digester or composter use.

Septic System Performance:

- Problem areas within the watershed include:
 - Areas adjacent to floodplains – flooding can result in temporary septic system failures; however, if setbacks are sufficient and soils are permeable, perc rates should be adequate.
 - Areas characterized by shallow-to-rock soils, low permeability.
- Proper function
 - All systems require appropriate maintenance and well managed use to function properly;
 - Since natural bacterial processes break down most solids, commercial additives are not generally needed;
 - Septic system owners should avoid draining bleach, harsh chemicals, paint and similar materials into their systems;
 - On average, residential garbage disposal use requires a 3X increase in the size of the system;

- Although not required in Madison County, VA Dept. of Health strongly recommends pumping of septic systems every 5 years;
- System Design
 - Alternative systems are costly to install, expensive to maintain, and often mechanically complex. Periodic inspections and maintenance are required by the state;
 - Adding an aeration component to a system extends drainfield function.

Education/ Outreach

- Homeowners
 - Newcomers from localities with public sewers need to understand septic system functions and limitations;
 - Proper pet waste management education is needed:
 - Outreach to confined canine operations is definitely needed
 - Consider ordinance to require proper management
 - Encourage veterinarians, kennels, hunt clubs and pet stores to promote proper pet waste management by providing information on the benefits of:
 - Pet waste digesters or composters for homeowners;
 - Collection kiosks on walking trails and in parks; and
 - Basic clean-up plans on public and private properties.
- Promote available funding and technical assistance through newspapers, bulk mailings, websites, local environmental groups, Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District, VA Cooperative Extension, Farm Bureau, Old Rag Master Naturalists, Piedmont Environmental Council, etc.
- Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District has had some success in working with Farm Bureau to notify property owners of older farm houses that funds are available to repair or replace septic systems and remove straight pipes.

Implementation Requirements

- In response to a question regarding potential requirements and/or consequences for non-compliance with the TMDL-IP, it was noted that only improper management of sewage (i.e. straight pipes, failing septic systems) is subject to enforcement; all other practices are voluntary. The Health Department has the legal ability to cite landowners, but prefers to work with offenders in a supportive manner to correct the problem. Funding is available to help remediate problems. It is anticipated that corrective action, education and maintenance will be an on-going need, even if the streams are removed from the impaired waters list.

Funding Sources

- Historic sources include limited funding from Madison County, Rapidan Better Housing, and the Community Block Grant program.

The Residential Working Group will reconvene in August or September. All participants will be notified and are encouraged to attend. Please invite other local watershed residents to the next Residential Working Group meeting. Information about the working group and meeting minutes can be accessed at http://www.rregion.org/tmdl_rld.html