



LAND USE & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes – March 6, 2014

Attendees:

Jenny Biche'	Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission
Deirdre Clark	John Marshall Soil & Water Conservation District
Michelle Edwards	Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission
David Ek	Fauquier County
Bryan Hofmann	Friends of the Rappahannock
Ray Pickering	Fauquier County
Charles Rapp	Town of Culpeper
Michael Trop	John Marshall Soil & Water Conservation District
Gregg Zody	Orange County

Rainscape Retrofits Program

Bryan Hofmann, Friends of the Rappahannock (FOR)

Bryan provided an overview of FOR's Rainscape Retrofits Program. His presentation is available on the committee webpage at <http://www.rregion.org/envcmte.html>.

The program's mission is to 1) reduce the amount of unwanted contaminants and excessive quantities of stormwater reaching the Rappahannock River and tributaries by assisting homeowners with managing runoff on site; and 2) work to implement a high volume of low-tech, low maintenance, residential-scale best management practices to encourage infiltration.

The program takes a resource-sharing approach by sharing implementation costs with the homeowner (FOR pays 70%), as well as providing technical assistance through site assessments and best management practice (BMP) design. Additionally, FOR works alongside the homeowner to provide volunteer labor through the Rappahannock Restore Corps.

The suite of potential best management practices recommended by the assessments include the following structural and non-structural best management practices (BMPs).

- Bioretention/rain gardens
- Downspout disconnection
- Soil amendment

- Soil aeration and decompaction
- Rain barrels/cisterns
- Porous pavers

To participate in the program, first homeowners fill out an interest form on the program webpage. FOR staff then contact the homeowner and sends an application to complete. This step acts a pre-screening to ensure homeowner commitment. Once the application is received, FOR completes an aerial delineation of the site using GIS before conducted an on-site assessment with the homeowner. Following the assessment, Bryan develops a project proposal with several recommended options with a range of costs. Finally FOR staff and volunteers implement the homeowner's chosen BMPs.

Additional information on FOR's Rainscape Retrofits Program is available on the organization's website at www.riverfriends.org.

RRRC Initiative Updates

Homeowner Watershed Education: Backyard Rainscaping - Michelle Edwards

The Regional Commission has been awarded a two-year National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Small Watershed Grant to educate homeowners on practices they can implement in their backyard that will benefit their local watershed. Partnering with FOR and the Master Gardeners, the project will incorporate aspects of FOR's Rainscape Retrofits Program and Virginia Cooperative Extension's Green Grass Program.

A minimum of twenty-five free backyard assessments will be offered, after which we will work with the homeowner to find the most cost-effective and appropriate approach. In addition to the steps outlined by Bryan Hofmann, the backyard assessments will include a soil test and development of a nutrient management plan by the Master Gardeners. In cases where a rain garden is warranted by the site conditions and there is homeowner interest, FOR and RRRC will assist the homeowner with the installation. The homeowner will be expected to share a portion of the rain garden costs by providing volunteer labor and covering the cost of the plants, or providing a cash match. RRRC plans to install a minimum of ten rain gardens through this grant project.

To develop a pool of willing homeowners, RRRC plans to target several specific subdivisions in the region via the homeowners associations and also several of the towns. Fauquier County, Culpeper County, the Town of Warrenton, the Town of Culpeper and Lake of the Woods are potential target areas for this pilot effort. We intend to concentrate the rainscape assessments to encourage adjacent homeowners to implement BMPs, and to serve as demonstration sites.

Additionally, RRRC will publish a regional homeowners' guide on topics such as stormwater management, septic maintenance, urban nutrient management and landscaping with native plants. The goal is to create a concise and user-friendly guide that is also technically sound and useful in dealing with common issues for homeowners in this region. The content of the guide will be tailored to local soil and hydrologic conditions, as well as local policies. The Commission is forming an ad hoc technical workgroup to gain input in the guide's development. The

workgroup's first meeting is scheduled for March 27, 2014 at 10:00am. This guide will be provided to local governments within the region for distribution to homeowners, targeting those applying for land disturbing and building permits. It will also be available for download from the RRRC website.

The question was raised whether high school students could assist with the rain garden installations. Bryan responded that they can assist with almost all aspects (i.e. they cannot drive the backhoe). Asked whether the project will be exclusive to the Rappahannock Watershed, or whether the Potomac Watershed of Fauquier County will also be included. Michelle responded that is still to be determined. Initially, RRRC will focus on the Rappahannock Watershed to ensure no conflict with FOR's mission. Committee members recommended targeting Somerset Ridge and Wilderness Shores subdivisions in Orange County as well as the Town of Remington.

For further information on the Regional Commission's homeowner watershed education project, or to volunteer for the technical workgroup please contact Michelle Edwards at medwards@rrregion.org or (540) 829-7450.

Regional Food System Study – Michelle Edwards

Upon completing initial required activities, RRRC submitted a report to the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) in late-November 2013. DHCD responded in February with a request for additional information concerning the regional food system plan content, development and goals in order to potentially receive full CDBG Regional Planning Grant funding. RRRC provided the required information on February 28, 2014, and is awaiting DHCD's response. Once a response is received, Michelle will schedule the next Agriculture Workgroup meeting.

Agro-artisan Trail – Jenny Biche'

RRRC was awarded \$33,000 in Agricultural and Forestry Industries Development (AFID) Planning Grant funding from the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. The two-year project has a total cost of \$66,000 and will include the development of a regional Agro-Artisan Trail to promote and support agricultural businesses in the region. The Regional Tourism Committee met on March 5, 2014 and developed a draft list of those agricultural producers who will be invited to participate in the trail. After the final list is agreed to by the end of March, the Commission's Agricultural Working Group will review the list. Once the final list is approved, invitations will be sent out and participants will be required to sign a Memorandum of Agreement. Anyone who is interested in learning more may contact Jenny Biche at jkliche@rrregion.org/540-829-7450.

Upper York Watershed Pet Waste Project – Jenny Biche'

In collaboration with DEQ, RRRC is implementing a cost-share program in the Upper-York Watershed for forty homeowners to purchase pet waste digesters at a 50:50 match. Displays have been installed at local animal shelters and vet clinics. Additionally, Jenny will be installing pet waste stations in the Towns of Orange and Gordonsville.

Living Lands Workshop Discussion

RRRC is planning to hold another event in its popular Living Lands Workshop series this fall and is seeking committee members' input. These technical workshops on natural resource planning topics are directed primarily toward local government staff and elected officials, as well as staff of other applicable organizations. Past workshop topics have included Green Infrastructure Planning and Sustainable Agriculture Planning for Economic Development. Staff suggested potential topics this year could include stormwater management, recreation planning, or agro-tourism planning.

It was recommended that the Commission consider directing the workshop at homeowners and landowners, and hold the workshop on a Saturday, similar to the Department of Forestry's very popular Woods and Wildlife Workshop. Several members proposed focusing on water planning issues, such as floodplain management, groundwater, and water supply planning. Other members concurred.

Member Roundtable

- **Gregg Zody** – Orange County will be holding a charrette for the Route 3 corridor visioning process on March 30-April 1. Additionally, the County now has in-house GIS capabilities.
- **Michael Trop** – John Marshall Soil and Water Conservation District received a National Fish and Wildlife grant for riparian tree planting, and needs volunteers to plant trees on farms in Fauquier County on March 26, and April 1, 8, 12, 15, and 23.
- **David Ek** – Fauquier County recently sent its initial MS4 application to the Department of Environmental Quality and is awaiting comments. Additionally, the County is continuing to revise the Natural Resources chapter of its comprehensive plan. The initial public comment period ended and a good number of responses were received from the surveys.
- **Charles Rapp** – The Town of Culpeper has three major road projects underway: Route 29 widening, Culpeper inner loop, and the VDOT 15/29 and 229 roundabout. The Town will also be developing a long-range strategic plan this summer.
- **Ray Pickering** – Fauquier County Department of Agricultural Development is in the process of updating its Farm Product Directory. Additionally, the County's agricultural economic impact analysis should be completed in late-May 2014.

Next Land Use & Environment Committee Meeting:

The next Land Use and Environment Committee meeting is scheduled for May 22, 2014, at 10:00 am – 12:00 noon.

Please provide suggestions for future meeting topics to Michelle at medwards@rrregion.org.