



LAND USE & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes – May 22, 2014

Attendees:

Jenny Biche'	Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission
Stephanie DeNicola	Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District
Deirdre Clark	John Marshall Soil and Water Conservation District
Michelle Edwards	Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission
David Ek	Fauquier County
David Holtzman	Piedmont Environmental Council
Eldon James	Rappahannock River Basin Commission
Patrick Mauney	Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission
Katherine Merten	Virginia Department of Health
Patrick Mulhern	Town of Culpeper
Mark Slauter	Virginia Department of Emergency Management
Michael Trop	John Marshall Soil & Water Conservation District
Gregg Zody	Orange County

Rappahannock River Basin Rain/Stream Gauge Update

Eldon James, Rappahannock River Basin Commission (RRBC)

Mark Slauter, Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM)

Eldon James and Mark Slauter provided an update on the implementation of the Rappahannock River Basin Rain and Stream Gauge project. Mark's Powerpoint presentation is available on the committee webpage at <http://www.rregion.org/envcmte.html>.

As part of the Phase II Upper Rappahannock River Feasibility Study, the Army Corps of Engineers conducted the Stream, Rainfall and Water Quality Gauge Analysis to determine the number and type of gauges needed in the upper and middle-basin of the Rappahannock River. A prioritized list of fourteen sites was developed, and the project is now moving into the implementation phase.

RRBC will only be installing the rain/stream gauges at this time, because the water quality gauges are double the cost and public safety is was determined to be the higher priority. The water quality gauges can then be added at the established sites later as funding permits. Gauges

will collect real-time data and be connected to VDEM's Integrated Flood and Warning System (IFLOWS) network, which is publicly available online at www.virginiaflows.virginia.gov. Having full stand-alone sites in each county and city provides redundancy in the system in case one goes down.

This information will give localities advance notice of the likelihood of an emergency situation so emergency managers have more time to evacuate people, close roads, etc. Additionally, the National Weather Service will use the data to issue weather alerts, instead of relying solely on radar. It will also be of use to many others such as dam owners, local public works departments and VDOT.

The total project budget is \$171,000, with 50% to come from state funds and 50% local match. The state portion is currently included in both the House and Senate proposed budgets. However, the House budget provides half of the funding in year one and half in year two, which should not pose a problem. Provided the final state budget includes the required funding and the local match is met, the sites on the Rappahannock River will be completed in the first year and those on the Rapidan in the second. Many of the counties and the City of Fredericksburg already have committed funding to the project and they are all on the mainstem of the Rappahannock River. Gauges will only be placed in localities that provide the local match (\$12,215 per locality). VDEM will fund the operation and maintenance of the gauges, as well as the equipment for one of the fourteen sites.

Once state funding is secured, VDEM will conduct a radio path analysis and visit each of the fourteen sites to ensure they are physically viable. A repeater may need to be added to make some sites function. The cost of this analysis will be paid for by VDEM.

If in the future some sites are upgraded to measure water quality, VDEM will remove their old equipment and install it at the next priority site on the list. The United States Geological Survey (USGS) will then install their equipment, which will also feed into IFLOWS.

RRRC Initiative Updates

Living Lands Workshop: Water Planning – Michelle Edwards

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. This year's workshop will focus on local water planning issues, such as water supply planning, floodplain management, groundwater, and water resource planning. A handout was distributed providing an overview and potential presentation topics to get the discussion going (see attached).

Committee members made the following suggestions:

- Ask Michael Rohlband, WSSI, to speak on water re-use

- Include a case-study presentation on the successful inter-jurisdictional water supply planning effort undertaken by Powhatan, Henrico and Goochland Counties to build a new reservoir, as well as one with the Town of Culpeper and Culpeper County.
- Include a case-study presentation on the successful inter-jurisdictional water supply planning effort to create the Occoquan Reservoir and service authority, and request Deb Oliver of Prince William County Public Works to deliver it.
- Include a case-study presentation on the inter-jurisdictional effort undertaken by Fluvanna and Louisa Counties to create a water authority. While the effort initially collapsed, it has recently been revived and would provide valuable lessons learned.
- Begin the workshop with a presentation on the state of the region's groundwater supply, preferably by USGS or the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ).
- Include a panel session with various water organizations in the region to share information about their activities.
- Include a presentation on wellhead and groundwater protection language, and overlay zones in comprehensive plans.
- Include a presentation on the Virginia Master Well-owners program.
- Request a presentation from VDEM on their IFLOWS network.
- Include a presentation on drought preparedness planning, particularly at the regional level.
- Include a presentation on Dam Safety Emergency Action Plans, potentially delivered by the Culpeper Soil & Water Conservation District. The District owns eleven dams and two have been classified as high hazard.
- Include a presentation on the agricultural impacts of and programs for water planning and drought preparedness.
- Include a presentation on surface water protection.

Homeowner Watershed Education: Backyard Rainscaping – Michelle Edwards

Three backyard assessments were conducted this month in conjunction with the Regional Commission's National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Small Watershed Grant. The project will educate homeowners on practices they can implement in their backyard that will benefit their local watershed, incorporating aspects of Friends of the Rappahannock's Rainscape Retrofits Program and Virginia Cooperative Extension's Green Grass Program.

Additionally, the Commission formed an ad hoc technical workgroup to gain input on the development of the regional homeowners' guide, and the first meeting was held March 27, 2014. The guide will provide basic how-to and contact information on topics such as stormwater management, septic maintenance, urban nutrient management and landscaping with native plants.

For further information on the Regional Commission's homeowner watershed education project, visit the project website at www.rrregion.org/rainscaping.html or contact Michelle Edwards at medwards@rrregion.org.

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'

In the fall of 2013, RRRC was awarded an Agricultural and Forestry Industries Development (AFID) Planning Grant to develop and implement a regional agri-tourism trail to support and expand agricultural and forestry related businesses. It will also be used to help brand the region, distinguishing it from other neighboring areas such as the Shenandoah Valley. The Regional Tourism Committee, which is implementing the grant project, has agreed upon a name and tag line for the Trail – Tween the Rivers Trail: Grown & Crafted in The Foothills.

The Regional Tourism Committee is also in the process of developing a list of potential participants. The draft list was presented to the Regional Commission's Agriculture Working Group for members' input and its approval will be sought at the workgroup's June meeting. Once the list of potential participants and other information has been approved, the Regional Tourism Committee will begin inviting the participants and vetting their information. Participation is free for the first year of the project. Other components of the two-year grant will also be initiated including, development of the brochure, website, signage and other marketing material; a regional agri-tourism event; and data collection on the economic impact of the project.

For more information about the agro-artisan trail project, please contact Jenny Biche' at jkbiche@rrregion.org.

Member Roundtable

- **Michael Trop/Deirdre Clark** – John Marshall Soil and Water Conservation District is currently engaged in a National Fish and Wildlife grant project to plant riparian buffers on recently fenced pasture land. A series of wildlife population studies will then be conducted in an effort to document and better understand the value of these agricultural Best Management Practices.
- **David Holtzman** – Piedmont Environmental Council will be hosting a Local Farms and Food Speaker Series in downtown Culpeper from June through August.
- **David Ek** – Fauquier County will begin implementing its new stormwater program on July 1st. Also, the County received its MS4 permit from DEQ on May 6th and will be working with the Town of Warrenton on meeting those permit requirements.
- **Stephanie DeNicola** – Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District is offering the Virginia Trees for Clean Water cost-share program for non-agriculture landowners to install conscientious landscaping, which is a Department of Forestry program. The District also has received a cooperative grant with several other SWCDs to develop a pilot urban BMP cost-share program. As part of that grant, the District is dealing with flooding and

installing a bioretention area at Wetsel Middle School in Madison County. Additionally, the District has \$1.7 million to distribute in agriculture cost-share for stream exclusion.

- **Patrick Mulhern** – The Town of Culpeper is in the process of updating its Flood Hazard Area Ordinance to coincide with the state and FEMA model.

Next Land Use & Environment Committee Meeting:

The next Land Use and Environment Committee meeting is scheduled for August 14, 2014, at 10:00 am – 12:00 noon.

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