



## **LAND USE & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

### **Meeting Minutes – May 6, 2016**

#### **Attendees:**

|                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| Matthew Aylor    | Madison County                                |
| Ron Battaglia    | Town of Warrenton                             |
| Jenny Biche'     | Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission      |
| Julie Bolthouse  | Piedmont Environmental Council                |
| Michelle Edwards | Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission      |
| Beverly Hunter   | RappFLOW                                      |
| Richard Jacobs   | Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District |
| Patrick Mauney   | Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission      |

#### **Watershed-Friendly Homeowners' Guide**

##### ***Michelle Edwards, RRRC***

Draft copies of the Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission's (RRRC) new publication, *Rappahannock-Rapidan Homeowners Guide to a Watershed-Friendly Backyard*, were distributed electronically in advance of the meeting, and updated hard copies were provided at the meeting. Members were asked to provide comments to Michelle Edwards via email or during the meeting.

Prior to collecting attendees' comments, Michelle provided a brief overview and background on its development. Funded through the Regional Commission's National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Small Watershed Grant, the guide provides introductory-level information on best management practices homeowners can implement to improve the region's water quality. Chapters on stormwater management, nutrient management, septic system maintenance and pet waste management are included. Each chapter contains basic how-to information, as well as listings of resources and contacts for further information.

Development of the guide was initiated primarily due to local government demand expressed during the Chesapeake Bay TMDL Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) II Planning Process. A kick-off meeting was held to collect input on content and structure from technical experts and stakeholder organizations in the region. These groups also provided many of the resources and contacts in the guide.

Deirdre Clark, John Marshall Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) board member, submitted comments prior to the meeting regarding pet waste composting. Her request for clarification and additional warnings were incorporated into the draft distributed during the meeting by Jenny Biche', who manages RRRC's pet waste management program. Staff of the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) were consulted prior to making these changes. Ms. Clark reviewed the revised draft and responded that it addressed her concerns.

Julie Bolthouse, Piedmont Environmental Council (PEC), expressed concern with including any information on pet waste composting in the guide. PEC is trying to discourage pet waste composting due to health concerns with the technical specifications DCR and DEQ use, which are based on an Alaskan study. Jenny responded that Ms. Clark felt that providing our best available guidance was preferable to leaving homeowners to their own devices, and RRRC staff were in agreement.

Attendees also provided the following comments:

- A composting section should be added (i.e. general composting not pet waste specific).
- The guide should be approached from the premise of sustainable landscaping.
- Include a recommendation to leave grass clipping and leaves on lawns.
- Include information on riparian buffers and a recommendation to avoid mowing down to the stream bank.
- Warrenton's MS4 program is in the process of finalizing a new brochure for homeowners that should be included as a resource when published. Ron Battaglia will provide Michelle with the link.

Update: the final publication is now available electronically on RRRC's Rainscaping webpage at [www.rregion.org/rainscaping.html](http://www.rregion.org/rainscaping.html). Hard copies are also available for distribution by local governments and other stakeholder organizations. To prevent the document from becoming outdated, RRRC will strive to regularly update the lists of resources and contacts.

The overall grant project educates 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. Cost-share funding is available for residential stormwater best management practices (BMPs) through August 2016. Design and installation of BMPs is provided by Friends of the Rappahannock at no cost. For further information on the Regional Commission's homeowner watershed education project, please visit the project website at [www.rregion.org/rainscaping.html](http://www.rregion.org/rainscaping.html) or contact Michelle Edwards at [medwards@rregion.org](mailto:medwards@rregion.org).

### **Virginia Conservation Assistance Program**

***Richard Jacobs, Culpeper SWCD***

Richard Jacobs presented an overview of the Virginia Conservation Assistance Program (VCAP). His presentation is available on the committee webpage at [www.rregion.org/envcmte.html](http://www.rregion.org/envcmte.html).

VCAP is a new cost-share program that provides financial reimbursement to public and private property owners for installing conservation practices that address stormwater runoff. Eligible project sites range from individual residences to public facilities; however, funding cannot be used on new construction sites or to meet regulatory requirements.

Created to fill a gap identified in the Virginia WIP, the program began in 2011-2012 as a pilot project run by four Virginia SWCDs, including Culpeper SWCD. It has now expanded to all SWCDs within Virginia's Chesapeake Bay Watershed. Program funding is provided through an EPA Chesapeake Bay Implementation Grant.

Applications are reviewed and ranked by the local SWCD, but are approved for funding by a statewide steering committee (i.e. the competition is statewide). Although the SWCD is working to develop a list of area vendors, cost-share recipients are responsible for hiring someone to design and install the BMPs. Payment is made after project completion on a reimbursement basis. The property owner must also sign a Landowner Agreement, Maintenance Plan and Transfer of Ownership.

An attendee asked how much demand there has been. Mr. Jacobs responded that the Culpeper SWCD has received seven applications since January, and one project has been completed.

For additional information about the VCAP program, contact Richard Jacobs at (540) 825-8591 or [RichardJ@culpeperswcd.org](mailto:RichardJ@culpeperswcd.org), or go to the program webpage at [www.vaswcd.org/vcap](http://www.vaswcd.org/vcap).

## **RRRC Initiative Updates**

### ***Agri-artisan Trail – Jenny Biche'***

In conjunction with the Tween Rivers Trail project, the Regional Tourism Committee held its second agri-tourism symposium on April 13<sup>th</sup>. Steve Galen, Virginia Tourism Commission, presented an overview of the Commission's available grant programs. Forty people attended including farmers and business owners. Of those in attendance, 50% reported that they had heard of the trail and 85% were interested in additional workshops, especially marketing-related.

The next workshop in the series will be held on August 4, 2016. The Rural Development Roundtable will be led by staff of USDA Rural Development to provide information on the Office's grant and loan programs as well as topic-specific roundtable discussions. When asked for topic suggestions, Ms. Bolthouse recommended one breakout session on failing septic systems.

For additional information on the agri-tourism trail project, please contact Jenny Biche at [jkbiche@rrregion.org](mailto:jkbiche@rrregion.org) or (540) 829-7450 or visit the trail website at [www.tweenriverstrail.com](http://www.tweenriverstrail.com).

### ***Regional Food Policy Council – Michelle Edwards***

As one of nine priority projects recommended in by the "Rappahannock-Rapidan Farm & Food Plan," RRRC formed a regional food policy council to make policy recommendations, in addition to overseeing implementation of the remaining priority projects and other food system

initiatives. The Rappahannock-Rapidan Food Policy Council had its first meeting on April 28<sup>th</sup>, at which it approved the Council's bylaws. It also voted to endorse a proposed USDA Farmers Market Promotion Program grant application by RRRC in partnership with PEC, and Culpeper and Madison Farmers Markets. If successful, the majority of the requested funds will be spent developing and conducting a local foods marketing campaign, which is also one of the nine priority projects. The campaign would first focus within the region, then expand advertising to nearby metro areas.

Other proposed grant activities include:

- Further development of RRRC's Tween Rivers Agri-artisan Trail
- Conduct marketing workshops for farmers through RRRC's regional tourism committee and the region's Food Policy Council
- Promotion of the Culpeper and Madison farmers markets
- Printing and mailing of PEC's Buy Fresh – Buy Local Guide
- Marketing of PEC's Farmer-Chef Express tool and three farmer-buyer mixers
- Joint PEC and RRRC tasting event for farmers and potential buyers

The Council's next meeting will be held May 24 at 6:30pm in the RRRC conference room. While only appointed members may vote, meetings are open to the public and participation in the discussions is encouraged. For further information about the regional Rappahannock-Rapidan Food Policy Council, including upcoming meetings, please contact Michelle Edwards at (540) 829-7450 or [medwards@rrregion.org](mailto:medwards@rrregion.org), or visit RRRC's Regional Food System webpage at [www.rrregion.org/foodsystem.html](http://www.rrregion.org/foodsystem.html).

#### ***Carver-Piedmont Agricultural Institute – Patrick Mauney***

Following completion of the feasibility study in January 2016, funding has been secured to conduct preliminary work on the Carver-Piedmont Agricultural Institute. The George Washington Carver Agriculture Research Center received an Ohrstrom Foundation Grant to determine needs for agricultural research and education in the region, and conduct a target market assessment. There are approximately 16 acres on the school site that can be utilized, plus the Inskeeps have agreed to allow the center to use part of their farm for research and education.

Additionally, Culpeper County has received a DEQ brownfields grant to remediate asbestos in several classrooms and two bathrooms, and then restore those spaces. The George Washington Carver Food Enterprise Center also applied for a USDA Rural Business Development Grant primarily for water and wastewater system design, and also further market assessment.

For more information on the George Washington Carver Agriculture Research Center, visit [www.gwcarc.org](http://www.gwcarc.org), and for the Food Enterprise Center, visit [www.gwcfec.org](http://www.gwcfec.org).

### ***Chesapeake Bay Stakeholders Advisory Group – Michelle Edwards***

As an appointed member, Michelle attended the Chesapeake Bay Stakeholders Advisory Group meeting on May 3, 2016. A handout outlining the highlights of the meeting was distributed to attendees and discussed (see attachment).

### **Member Roundtable**

- **Beverly Hunter, RappFLOW** – The next event in the series Community Conversation on the Environment: Care for our Common Home will be held on Sunday, May 15. [Update: the final meeting in this series will be held on June 12, in the Washington Fire Hall at 3:30pm]. Further information on this series can be found at [www.rappflow.org/conversation-with-pope-francis/pope-francis-conversation.html](http://www.rappflow.org/conversation-with-pope-francis/pope-francis-conversation.html).
- **Richard Jacobs, Culpeper SWCD** – Kevin McLean will be managing VCAP efforts for the Culpeper SWCD. He can be contacted at [kevin.mclean@vswcd.org](mailto:kevin.mclean@vswcd.org).

### **Next Land Use & Environment Committee Meeting:**

The next Land Use and Environment Committee meeting is scheduled for August 18, 2016 at 10:00 am – 12:00 noon in the RRRC conference room. Please provide any suggestions for future meeting topics to Michelle Edwards at [medwards@rrregion.org](mailto:medwards@rrregion.org).