



## **LAND USE & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

### **Meeting Minutes – November 17, 2016**

#### **Attendees:**

John Barrett	Culpeper County
Jenny Biché	Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission
Deirdre Clark	John Marshall Soil and Water Conservation District
Bill Conkle	Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation
Steve Cook	Virginia Department of Health
Lynn Crump	Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation
Michelle Edwards	Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission
Greg Evans	Virginia Department of Forestry
Josh Frederick	Orange County
Peter Hujik	Piedmont Environmental Council
Eldon James	Rappahannock River Basin Commission
Kenner Love	Virginia Cooperative Extension – Rappahannock County
Charles Rapp	Town of Culpeper

#### **Virginia Outdoors Plan (VOP) Update**

##### ***Bill Conkle and Lynn Crump, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)***

Bill Conkle and Lynn Crump provided two handouts, including an Agenda and meetings notes from the 2015 VOP Update (see attached). A link to the Rappahannock-Rapidan Region's chapter of the 2013 Virginia Outdoors Plan ([www.dcr.virginia.gov/recreational-planning/document/voppd09.pdf](http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/recreational-planning/document/voppd09.pdf)) was provided via email prior to the meeting. Mr. Conkle noted that the back of the agenda lists coalitions for which the Virginia Department of Health is seeking participation from park and recreation departments across the state. A Regional Input Survey was also distributed, and attendees were asked to send completed surveys to Mr. Conkle at [bill.conkle@dcr.virginia.gov](mailto:bill.conkle@dcr.virginia.gov) (see attached). Two videos were then shown: the first provided an overview of DCR's divisions and programs, and the second an update on DCR, Division of Planning and Recreation programs.

Following the final video, Steve Cook asked why localities pulled support for Scenic River designation of the Rapidan River. Ms. Crump answered that the initial request came from Orange County, and then other counties came on board. Changes in Orange County Administration and Board of Supervisors later occurred, and new individuals were not supportive of the designation. When Orange County pulled out of the request, other localities

followed suit. Fear of TMDL regulations impacting development and water withdrawal was the main issue raised by the County. Ms. Crump noted that the Scenic River Designation is non-regulatory, however. Dams can even be built on Scenic Rivers with General Assembly approval.

Eldon James added that the issue seems like a misunderstanding about regulation versus promotion. A Scenic River designation can bring economic benefits to a region by marketing the River as a recreation destination. Josh Frederick stated that it was also a misunderstanding regarding private property rights. Several adjacent land owners claimed Kings Grant ownership of the river and objected to canoers going past their property.

Mr. Conkle asked attendees to review projects listed in last year's meeting minutes and provide updates, including new projects or those that need to be removed. Following is a summary of attendees' responses:

- Journey Through Hallowed Ground Partnership – Trees have been planted at various sites. Still an active project.
- Water Access along the region's rivers and tributaries– PEC conducted a preliminary assessment of public access on the Rapidan, and received a grant to do conceptual planning for river access at Remington. The Town of Culpeper built a boat house and ramp on Lake Pelham through a public-private partnership; Lake Pelham Adventures now rents watercraft from the boat house. Public access is desired at the Route 211 Bridge.
- Woods of Warrenton Trail– Project is being requested to be rebid since it has come in significantly higher than estimates for the previous 2 round of bidding.
- Improve Rappahannock Landing river access– The design and construction is still included in Fauquier County's 5-year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), although the County is having a meeting in December to review the CIP. There is a lot of interest in this project and options outside of the existing site are being examined.
- Mountain Run Corridor– There is a plan for a continuous route from Yowell Meadow Park to Lake Pelham in the Town of Culpeper. The name of Wine Street Memorial Park was changed to Yowell Meadow.
- Laurel Valley Park in Culpeper County– Soap box derby group has created a track at the site. An 18-hole disc golf course has been opened at Spillman Park in Culpeper County. No other progress.
- Culpeper Regional Horse Park– No progress.
- Montpelier Connector Trail– is proposed as a multiuse trail connecting Montpelier Historic Site and the Town of Orange, and on to Gordonsville. Added three additional miles of trails in 2016, and considering extending further.
- Rock Water Park, not Waugh Park is now under construction in the Town of Culpeper.
- Warrenton's dog park is currently under negotiation.
- A group of citizens are working with Madison County to build a park at the Criglersville School site near Syria.

- Culpeper County is developing a Parks and Recreation Master Plan to be completed in 2017. Also, the County is discussing the possibility of a trail from the Town of Culpeper to the Sports Complex, and continuing on to Lynn Park and possibly other connectors.
- Orange County Economic Development Director is examining the possibility of a disc golf course on Thomas E. Lee Industrial Park.
- Rappahannock County is considering trails and pedestrian paths for its towns, including Washington and Sperryville, there is also hope of connecting the three major towns (Sperryville, Washington, Flint Hill) with retail/ hospitality offerings in Rappahannock County using pedestrian-cyclist friendly routes. The county also needs safe recreational exercise loops for residents and visitors.

For additional information on the VOP or to send further updates, please contact Bill Conkle at [bill.conkle@dcr.virginia.gov](mailto:bill.conkle@dcr.virginia.gov) or (804)786-5492.

### **Healthy Watershed Forests Initiative**

***Eldon James, Rappahannock River Basin Commission (RRBC) and  
Greg Evans, Virginia Department of Forestry (DOF)***

RRBC is working with DOF and other project partners on the Healthy Watershed Forests Initiative, which seeks to provide localities with the tools they need to retain existing forestland and thereby preserve water quality. The state needs the cooperation of local government to conserve forest land in order to meet the requirements of the Chesapeake Bay TMDL. Eldon James distributed several handouts to attendees (see attached) and provided further background on the Initiative.

Phase I of the Initiative focused on the George Washington Regional Commission's service area to prove the hypothesis that retaining forests would not only reduce nitrogen, phosphorous and sediment loads, but also reduce future offset costs localities could be facing in 2025. Localities' comprehensive and green infrastructure plans were first reviewed, then DEQ modeled what would happen if the localities implemented 10% above levels called for in their current comprehensive plans. The total savings from stormwater BMPs that would not need to be installed to meet those nutrient reductions was then calculated. The results showed a savings of \$125 million in potential offset savings for localities in the GWRC region compared to the current Chesapeake Bay TMDL Model's 2025 projections.

Phase II of the Initiative is currently underway in the entire Rappahannock River Basin. The goal of Phase II is to identify administrative or legal obstacles to forest retention and develop a toolbox of potential solutions for localities. Mr. James will be meeting with locality staff and other key stakeholders in the RRRC region to discuss the project and gain input in March/April 2017. He met with county and town administrators during the November 4<sup>th</sup> RRRC Executive Committee meeting, and will brief local elected officials as the initiative progresses.

Greg Evans stated that retention of forestland is one of the best tools for meeting the Chesapeake Bay TMDL, but no credit is provided for doing so. Local elected officials that Eldon and Greg

have talked to said they need credit for implementation given competing budget needs. They are looking for input from localities since localities make the land use decisions and solutions must be workable at the local level.

Mr. Evans is also working with Pennsylvania to conduct a similar study to determine if they achieve similar results and to broaden the suite of potential tools. Greg stated that project partners are trying to make the case to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for crediting forest retention in the Chesapeake Bay Model. EPA plans to make a decision in Spring 2017 on whether to switch from a static model to a dynamic model, which could impact the implementation of a forest retention credit.

Kenner Love asked whether retention includes reforestation. Mr. Evans replied no, EPA's TMDL Model already provides credit for reforestation. Peter Hujik asked whether there is consideration for conserving non-forest land. Mr. Evans answered that the effort may eventually broaden to include other land types.

Dierdre Clark asked if Phase II of this initiative will be coordinated with the WIP III effort., to which Mr. Evans responded yes. It will feed into DEQ's WIP III outreach effort, which will start soon after RRBC's initiative concludes.

Mr. Hujik mentioned that Madison County will be updating its comprehensive plan in 2017 and may be able to incorporate tools recommended by the Healthy Watershed Forests Initiative. He also noted that the Chesapeake Conservancy is currently mapping priority areas, including high priority water quality areas.

### **RRRC Initiative Updates**

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

RRRC recently received a Farmers Market Promotion Program grant from the United States Department of Agriculture to fund promotion of the region's locally-grown food and agri-tourism (see attached news release). The majority of the funds will be spent developing and conducting a local foods marketing campaign, overseen by the Rappahannock Rapidan Food Policy Council. Funds will also support targeted marketing efforts at the Madison and Culpeper Farmers Markets, continued publication of Piedmont Environmental Council's Buy Fresh-Buy Local guide, further development of the Tween Rivers Agri-artisan Trail, and several events for Piedmont Environmental Council's Farmer-Chef Express Program.

The Council's next meeting will be held November 28 at 6:30pm in the RRRC conference room [Update: the Council's February meeting will be held on the 23<sup>rd</sup> 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).

### ***Tween Rivers Agri-artisan Trail – Jenny Biché, RRRC***

The Regional Tourism Committee is meeting next week to discuss plans for a January agri-tourism workshop on social media. The workshop will be open to public and free to attend. Additionally, Ms. Biché will be sending out invitations for new members, including an expansion to include complimentary sites. Currently there is no membership fee for the Tween Rivers Trail. The USDA grant mentioned previously will allow RRRC to devote staff time to maintain the Trail website and social media sites, as well as work toward increasing membership. Jenny noted that the Tourism Committee is also updating the Virginia Tourism website.

Mr. Love asked whether any feedback has been received from members. Jenny answered that she has received feedback from trail members at workshops—mostly ideas for what can be done with the trail. The USDA grant funding will provide for data collection, including conducting member surveys. For additional information on the Tween Rivers Trail, please visit [www.tweenriverstrail.com](http://www.tweenriverstrail.com), or contact Jenny Biché at [jkbiche@rrregion.org](mailto:jkbiche@rrregion.org) or (540) 829-7450.

### ***Upper Goose Creek TMDL Implementation Plan – Jenny Biché, RRRC***

Jenny Biché provided an update on the status of the Upper Goose Creek TMDL Implementation Plan. The Upper Goose Creek watershed covers parts of Fauquier and Loudoun counties, including Cromwells Run, Little River, Upper Goose Creek and some of its unnamed tributaries.

The Government Working Group meeting was held on September 8, 2016 and the second meeting for the Agricultural and Residential Working Groups was held on September 22. A member from each working group volunteered to serve on the Steering Committee that will meet later in the year to review the recommendations from each of the working groups and the draft Implementation Plan. The final public meeting will then be held to review the finalized draft Plan for public comment.

The TMDL Nonpoint Source Coordinator who had been overseeing the project resigned from her position at the Department of Environmental Quality, so the process will be temporarily on hold until the position is filled. All meeting presentations, minutes and materials for this planning process are available on RRRC's website and at on DEQ's website at [www.deq.virginia.gov/Programs/Water/WaterQualityInformationTMDLs/TMDL/TMDLImplementation/TMDLImplementationProgress.aspx#Goo](http://www.deq.virginia.gov/Programs/Water/WaterQualityInformationTMDLs/TMDL/TMDLImplementation/TMDLImplementationProgress.aspx#Goo). For additional information on the Upper Goose Creek TMDL Implementation Plan, please contact Jenny Biché at [jkbiche@rrregion.org](mailto:jkbiche@rrregion.org) or (540) 829-7450.

### **Member Roundtable**

- **Kenner Love, Virginia Cooperative Extension**– The Virginia Farm-to-Table Conference will be held at the Blue Ridge Community College in Harrisonburg on December 7-8. Additional information can be found at <http://conference.virginiafarmtotable.org>.
- **Deirdre Clark, John Marshall Soil and Water Conservation District**– the District is currently working on a strategic plan and is seeking input.
- **Peter Hujik, Piedmont Environmental Council**– This year, nearly 1000 acres have

been protected in Madison County and 200 acres in Orange County through conservation easements. The numbers may approach 1200 and 600 acres respectively by the end of the year. Additionally, PEC is partnering with Friends of the Rappahannock on the Headwaters Stream Initiative, which works with landowners on streamside forest plantings in the Upper Rappahannock, including the Rapidan River.

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

The next Land Use and Environment Committee meeting is scheduled for February 23, 2017 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).