



LAND USE & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes – May 16, 2019

Attendees:

Steve Cook	Virginia Department of Health
Joe Costello	Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission
Julie Bolthouse	Piedmont Environmental Council
Michelle Edwards	Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission
Bryan Hofmann	Friends of the Rappahannock
Eldon James	Rappahannock River Basin Commission
Joe Rossetti	Virginia Department of Forestry
Gary Rzepecki	Fauquier County
Jim Sawyer	Fauquier County

Healthy Watershed Forest Initiative Update

Eldon James, Rappahannock River Basin Commission

Eldon James presented an update on the Healthy Watershed Forest Initiative, a joint effort of the Rappahannock River Basin Commission (RRBC) and the Virginia Department of Forest that seeks to encourage forestland retention through policy, planning and market-based incentives. The project is funded by philanthropic organizations and the US Environmental Protection Agency's Chesapeake Bay Program. Mr. James stated that the initiative, now in Phase III, is moving toward a more sustainable and land-scape scale funding paradigm for forest retention, using private capital rather than solely philanthropic funding.

Phase I was successful in using the George Washington Regional Commission's region as a pilot. It determined that if you can bend the forest conversion curve, there will be a substantial savings resulting from a reduction in the stormwater BMPs that would need to be built to meet Chesapeake Bay nutrient reductions. Phase II examined land use value taxation and other economic and policy incentives. It found that land conservation tools and incentives need to make sense for both the landowner and local government to be effective.

Phase III is divided into two main tasks. Task 1 involves pilot policy processes in Orange and Essex Counties to foster high quality forest and agricultural land retention drawing from the tool box of options identified in Phase II. The process in Orange County began with public input and then recommended revisions to the County's comprehensive plan, ordinances and policies. Orange County staff have reviewed the recommendations and discussed them with the Board of

Supervisors and Planning Commission, who are now working to determine which recommendations to move forward with. Essex County's process is only beginning.

Task 2 seeks to develop and pilot long-term funding mechanisms that incentivize landowner action, facilitate economic development for the community, and attract large-scale private investment. One mechanism that is being developed involves carbon trading. Mr. James noted that the carbon trading market is global compared to wetland and nutrient credit trading. Corporations want the carbon offsets, as well as to attract environmentally-conscious customers and investors.

Carbon trading has not worked locally for forest landowners due to scale mismatch. We need to aggregate local landowners' parcels to be able to trade on the market, which has been successful in the Mississippi Delta.

During the last Virginia General Assembly session, Legislation passed clarifying that one purpose of Economic Development Authorities (EDAs) and Industrial Development Authorities (IDAs) can be to act as aggregators to facilitate access for landowners to the worldwide carbon markets. In this arrangement, local governments and landowners both gets cuts from the trade. The contract includes a time frame during which royalty payments are made.

Mr. James added that EDAs can also do deals with neighboring jurisdictions even if they are not adjacent. If Orange and Essex's EDAs want to partner, they can. Bryan Hofmann noted that California has accepted carbon credits from the Carolinas.

Julie Bolthouse asked if Mr. James was aware of Fauquier County's issue with conversion of prime farmland. He replied yes, corporations do not want that to happen, because it would not meet their goals stated previously. However, low-quality farmland may be converted.

For further information regarding the Healthy Watershed Forest Initiative, please visit RRBC's website at <http://rappriverbasin.org>, or contact Eldon James at (540) 907-2008 or ejames7@me.com. By clicking on the "Healthy Watershed Forest Project" link in the homepage's sidebar, users can access project reports, FAQs and a video.

Chesapeake Bay WIP Implementation

Michelle Edwards, Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission (RRRC)

Michelle Edwards stated that the comment period for Virginia's Draft Chesapeake Bay Phase III Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) is now open and will end June 7, 2019. The draft document is available on the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality's (DEQ) website at www.deq.virginia.gov/Portals/0/DEQ/Water/ChesapeakeBay/Draft%20WIP%20III/VirginiaDraftChesapeakeBayTMDLPhaseIIIWIP.pdf. Once Virginia's Plan is finalized, DEQ will submit it to the US Environmental Protection Agency.

Comments can be sent to DEQ via:

1. Email to chesbayplan@DEQ.Virginia.gov
2. Postal mail: DEQ, ATTN: Chesbayplan, P.O. Box 1105, Richmond, VA 23218
3. Hand-delivery: DEQ, ATTN: Chesbayplan, 1111 East Main Street, Richmond, VA 23219

Ms. Edwards delivered a presentation to re-cap Committee members on the suite of urban best management practices (BMPs) and implementation strategies the region's stakeholders developed for WIP III, as well as the next steps (see attached). Copies of the revised Urban BMP Input Deck and the list of implementation strategies were distributed (see attached). The columns of the BMP Input Deck table are as follows:

- PDC Inputs - reflects the version submitted by RRRC based on stakeholder meetings.
- PDC Adjust - additional implementation needed to move the region to 70% of the nutrient reduction goal. DEQ tried to keep these numbers in line with the mix of BMPs submitted by the region.
- Gap Closers - several BMPs were used to close the remaining state-level gap resulting largely from the need to address additional nutrient loads from climate change
- State Lands - represents the placeholder for additional implementation on state-owned lands (note: DEQ used non-ms4 roads as a surrogate for state lands in CAST)
- MS4 - represents the WIP II level of effort on MS4 regulated lands
- Draft WIP III - the combined total of all columns, and the number that appears in the state's Draft WIP III

Ms. Edwards noted that DEQ eliminated both the mechanical broom sweeping, and dirt/gravel road BMPs that were included in the version RRRC submitted, because they only remove sediment, not nitrogen or phosphorous. Several attendees remarked that DEQ's action may be short-sighted, since sediment is a major pollutant in the Rappahannock River. While not a focus of the WIP process, sediment is one of the three main pollutants the Chesapeake Bay TMDL addresses.

To begin the next steps for WIP implementation, DEQ entered into a contract with Planning District Commissions in Virginia's Chesapeake Bay Watershed for March through September 2019, as discussed during the Committee's previous meeting (see attached scope of work).

RRRC's main tasks for the contract will be to:

- Convene stakeholder meetings
- Relay funding opportunities to stakeholders
- Build partnerships for implementation projects
- Survey stakeholders on BMP reporting gaps and training needs
- Work with VDH, localities and SWCDs to develop a process to track septic pump-outs
- Develop a regionally-specific scope of work for 2020, assuming state/federal funding is available

Ms. Edwards noted that RRRC intends to include 1) assisting localities in implementing the recommendations of the Healthy Watershed Forest Initiative and 2) beginning development of the Upper Rappahannock Watershed Management Plan, as key elements of the 2020 scope of work.

Input from stakeholders is needed to complete several deliverables:

- Potential grant projects, partnerships and priorities for the region
- BMP data reporting gaps
- BMP training needs

- Suggestions for RRRC's 2020 Scope of Work

Ms. Edwards stated that she will begin gathering this input during this meeting and continuing during the stakeholder meeting scheduled for June 24th at 1:00-3:00 in RRRC's conference room.

To begin the discussion, Ms. Edwards distributed copies of a table she developed to provide an overview of Chesapeake Bay Urban Sector Grants (see attached). Attendees suggested the following additions:

- Virginia Department of Transportation's Transportation Alternatives Program Grant
- National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's 5 Star Grants
- Trees for Clean Water, which has a maximum of \$10,000 and a 1:1 match requirement
- Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development's Community Development Block Grant, which has been used in the Northern Neck for stormwater projects
- USDA Land Acquisition Loan, which Warsaw used to for a stormwater basin project

Ms. Edwards stated she would develop a blank Grant Project Table for stakeholders to fill out with any current or proposed grant projects and send it with the meeting minutes. Mr. Hofmann suggested Ms. Edwards include a column to note whether a study or design has already been done for the project. He also noted that Friends of the Rappahannock (FOR) will be offering its services to write Stormwater Local Assistance Fund grants for localities.

Attendees next discussed urban BMP reporting gaps, noting the following:

- Septic pump-outs and connections
- Tree planting, including but not limited to tree seedling sales
- VDOT impervious surface reduction
- Buffers installed by landowners as part of conservation easements
- Small-scale, voluntary residential stormwater BMPs
- Residential urban nutrient management
- Storm drain cleaning

Steve Cook stated that a new Virginia Department of Health (VDH) database for wells and drain fields will roll out around the end of July. Systems will be entered into the database when constructed or repaired. The database will eventually include GPS locations. He also noted that septic pump-outs in the region are currently only tracked if they are funded by cost-share programs.

Mr. Hofmann stated that there is a need for an efficient and effective residential-scale BMP reporting tool. If the Virginia Conservation Assistance Program (VCAP) has a good one, he would like to know. He also mentioned that Friends of the Rappahannock is working with Virginia Cooperative Extension and DEQ to seek funding to the expand Extension's Green Grass Program, and conduct a no fertilizer pledge campaign.

Joe Rossetti stated he was not sure whether the Virginia Department of Forestry's BMP data goes to DEQ, and whether double-counting has been occurring.

Jim Sawyer said that Fauquier County has GIS shapefiles for stormwater BMPs from 1985 to the

present. Ms. Edwards noted that Richard Jacobs at Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) likely has BMP data for the other four counties in the region, because he conducts erosion and sediment control plan review for them. Mr. Hofmann added that FOR has GIS data for the BMPs they have installed.

Ms. Edwards stated that the discussion will be continued at the region's Chesapeake Bay stakeholder meeting scheduled for June 24th at 1:00-3:00 in RRRC's conference room, and encouraged everyone present to attend. For additional questions and comments regarding WIP III, please contact Michelle Edwards at (540) 829-7450 or medwards@rrregion.org.

RRRC Initiative Updates

Regional Alternative Transportation Plan– Joe Costello, RRRC

Joe Costello provided an update on the Commission's effort to significantly revise the region's Alternative Transportation Plan, which deals with bicycle and pedestrian routes and blueways. The first stakeholder meeting for the process was held on March 29. Mr. Costello shared results of his initial data collection, interviews and mapping during the meeting, and gathered stakeholder's input. A follow-up meeting is planned for late-summer.

Mr. Costello also stated that the online wiki map mentioned during the previous committee meeting is now active. It allows people to map where they are biking and walking in the region, and where they would like to be doing so. The input will then be incorporated into the regional plan. The online map can be accessed at www.wikimapping.com/Rapp-Rap.html. Attendees were encouraged to pass the link to their contact and provide input themselves.

Mr. Costello is currently working on portions of the draft plan, which has grown in scope to include recreation. The main sections are to include:

- Existing and proposed alternative transportation routes by locality
- Streetlight data
- Wiki map data
- Demographics
- Safety data
- Possible connections

Further questions and comments concerning this effort should be directed to Joe Costello at jcostello@rrregion.org or (540) 829-7450.

Regional Food Policy Council – Michelle Edwards, RRRC

Ms. Edwards updated the Committee on the Flavor of the Piedmont, a family-friendly regional food expo planned as part of RRRC's Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP) Grant project funded by the US Department of Agriculture. Piedmont Environment Council (PEC) and Virginia Cooperative Extension will be co-hosting the event, which will begin as a buyer-seller only tasting event and then open to the public. A chef competition to benefit the Carver Food Enterprise Center is also planned that would also include local restaurant tasting.

The Farm to Table tasting event is scheduled for Saturday, September 8th, for commercial buyers only 3:00-4:00pm, and for the public 4:00-6:00pm. The Battle of the Chefs is scheduled for Thursday, September 5, 6:00-8:00pm. Both events will be held at The Barn at Lord Fairfax Community College in Warrenton. Sponsors and volunteers to assist in planning the Battle of the Chefs are being sought. Registration for vendors and the general public is open on PEC's events webpage at www.pecva.org/events.

Ms. Edwards noted that Lord Fairfax Community College is graciously donating the event space as a sponsorship. They are interested in developing a farm-to-school program and see this as a good partnership to further their mission.

Promotion of the Purely Piedmont regional food label is continuing with three billboards to run in May and June, and promotional items to be distributed at local festivals. Marketing will also include two recently filmed television commercials to be broadcast by Comcast June through September. One of the commercials will also appear in the Culpeper movie theater during June through August.

The Food Policy Council's next meeting will be held May 23, 2019, at 5:30 pm in the RRRC conference room. 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, or visit RRRC's Regional Food System webpage at www.rrregion.org/foodsystem.html.

Member Roundtable

- **Bryan Hofmann, Friends of the Rappahannock**,– FOR will be holding their annual meeting on Thursday, where PEC will be awarded Conservation Partner of the Year.
- **Joe Rossetti, Virginia Department of Forestry**– DOF recently posted a job announcement to fill the vacancy left by Kyle Dingus. Additionally, a silviculture workshop is planned for the end of June.
- **Steve Cook, Virginia Department of Health**– VDH is continuing to review work done by the private sector, rather than doing the work themselves, except when there is a hardship waiver.

Next Land Use & Environment Committee Meeting:

The next Land Use and Environment Committee meeting is scheduled for August 15, 2019 at 10:00 am – 12:00 noon in the RRRC conference room. The final meeting for 2019 will be November 21.

Bryan Hofmann suggested requesting a presentation by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation's Shoreline Erosion Advisory Service (SEAS) program at a future meeting. SEAS staff assist both private landowners and localities with erosion problems. He noted that program staff conduct free streambank assessments throughout the state, not only in tidal areas. Please provide any additional suggestions for future meeting topics to Michelle Edwards at medwards@rrregion.org.