



## **LAND USE & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

### **Meeting Minutes – November 21, 2019**

#### **Attendees:**

Maggi Blomstrom	Piedmont Environmental Council
Deirdre Clark	John Marshall Soil and Water Conservation District
Joe Costello	Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission
Michelle Edwards	Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission
Michael Hanson	Fauquier County
Bryan Hofmann	Friends of the Rappahannock
Andrew Hopewell	Fauquier County
Richard Jacobs	Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District
Adam Lynch	Friends of the Rappahannock
Kendall May	Culpeper County
Joe Rossetti	Virginia Department of Forestry
James Sawyer	Fauquier County
Carl Stafford	Virginia Cooperative Extension – Culpeper County
Michael Trop	John Marshall Soil and Water Conservation District

#### **Upper Rappahannock River Report Card**

##### ***Adam Lynch, Friends of the Rappahannock (FOR)***

Adam Lynch presented FOR's Upper Rappahannock River Report Card results, methodology and next steps (see attached). A handout summarizing the results was also distributed to attendees (see attached). The full report is available on FOR's website at [riverfriends.org/upper-rappahannock-report-card](http://riverfriends.org/upper-rappahannock-report-card).

This is the second phase of their effort, following the Middle Rappahannock River, and was developed from May to October 2019. It was funded by the PATH and Northern Piedmont Community Foundations. Mr. Lynch noted that the Rapidan River is not included, but will be part of a future phase. FOR plans to repeat the study every two to four years. Mr. Lynch presented the results in each of the three counties included in the study (Culpeper, Fauquier and Rappahannock Counties).

The goals of the study are to:

- Establish measurable, repeatable data indicators
- Produce targeted recommendations for local citizens and leaders
- Inspire action via stewardship projects and collaboration

The Report Card measured traditional water quality indicators and non-traditional indicators, such as watershed education and public access. Twelve tributaries of the river were chosen and measured using sixteen indicators. The indicators were then grouped into the following four main categories:

- Human Health
- Land Use
- Stream Ecology
- Community Engagement

Each tributary was graded from A to F in each of the four categories and then received an overall grade. Mountain Run earned the worse grade, a D+, while the Upper Hazel received the best, a B. Both tributaries are located in Culpeper County. Overall, the Upper Rappahannock received a C+, while the Middle Rappahannock earned a C.

Mr. Lynch stated that spring fed areas of the Upper Rappahannock River watershed fared better, as did those with government ownership or conservation easements. He also noted that Stream Ecology indicators were measured for 300 feet on either side of the stream.

Michelle Edwards asked whether the Watershed Education category includes work done by Soil and Water Conservation Districts or only FOR. Mr. Lynch replied that FOR realized too late that they did not have enough data on this category, so they gave all tributaries A's. Deirdre Clark asked how categories were weighted, to which Mr. Lynch answered all categories were weighted equally.

A member asked how FOR intends to get information out to local elected and appointed officials. Bryan Hofmann replied that FOR will provide printed tri-fold summaries and spiral bound reports, as well as deliver presentations by request. Ms. Edwards recommend that FOR instead make the offer of a presentation to local governments, particularly committees such as the Fauquier Conservation Roundtable. Andrew Hopewell agreed.

Ms. Edwards asked if the Residential BMP (best management practice) indicator includes Virginia Cooperative Extension's Green Grass Program data. Mr. Lynch answered no, only Virginia Conservation Assistance Program (VCAP) voluntary retrofits. It also does not include new construction.

For additional information regarding the Upper Rappahannock River Report Card, please contact Adam Lynch, Restoration Coordinator, at 540-373-3448 x115 or [adam.lynych@riverfriends.org](mailto:adam.lynych@riverfriends.org).

### **Upper Rappahannock Watershed Plan Scope**

*Michelle Edwards, Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission (RRRC)*

RRRC's new Chesapeake Bay WIP Implementation contract with the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) began October 1 and ends December 31, 2020. Copies of the draft contract were distributed (see attached). Each Planning District Commission (PDC) within the Bay Watershed was given the same contract. DEQ took parts of the proposals each PDC developed, then generalized and combined them. Ms. Edwards stated RRRC's new work plan

includes many of the same items as the previous contract, but will also focus on assisting localities with implementation of the Healthy Watershed Forest Initiative's recommendations and beginning to develop a watershed management plan for the Upper Rappahannock River.

Ms. Edwards is now seeking member's input on the scope of the Upper Rappahannock Watershed Plan and data needs. A table of potential data inputs by County was distributed to attendees (see attached). Green shading denotes data RRRC possesses, red denotes data that RRRC could not locate, and yellow denotes incomplete data. Ms. Edwards asked attendees for suggestions for additional data inputs, unnecessary inputs that can be deleted, and any data they may be able to offer or assist in locating.

Attendees made the following suggestions:

- Delete drainage/utility easements and future land use from the potential data inputs
  - This data will be very difficult if not impossible to gather and provide little additional benefit
- Add public and private water sources
- Add mitigation, wetland and nutrient credit bank locations to the potential data inputs
  - The Army Corps of Engineers' RIBITS website should have the data
- Add fish passage to potential data inputs
- Ask Natural Resource Conservation Service for restoration project data
- Rappahannock County has buffer requirements
- Culpeper County and Town have buffer requirements in Lake Pelham watershed
- Maggi Blomstrom will email Piedmont Environmental Council's data
- Joe Rosetti will look into VDOF's BMP data and respond via email
- Adam Lynch will provide any data from FOR's Report Card as needed

For additional questions and comments regarding the Upper Rappahannock Watershed Plan or RRRC's other Chesapeake Bay TMDL efforts, please contact Michelle Edwards at (540) 829-7450 or [medwards@rrregion.org](mailto:medwards@rrregion.org).

### **RRRC Initiative Updates**

#### ***Regional Active 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 draft document is now available, and he is seeking comments.

RRRC will be holding a joint meeting with Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation staff on December 5<sup>th</sup> at 10:00am to 12:00 noon in the Commission's conference room. DCR staff will provide an update on the agency's parks and recreation work and collect stakeholder

input for the annual Virginia Outdoors Plan update. Joe will present the Alternative Transportation Plan and engage attendees in discussion of next steps.

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

### ***Regional Tourism Committee Update – Michelle Edwards, RRRC***

Ms. Edwards relayed the following update on behalf of Hunter Berry who leads RRRC's tourism efforts.

The Virginia Tourism Commission grant awarded to RRRC in March 2018 for the 'Tween Rivers Trail Brand Awareness Campaign ended on October 31st. The grant enabled increased digital marketing on social media platforms and banner ads, receiving over four million impressions. It also funded filming and production of a commercial, which is anticipated to launch in early-Spring 2020, and updates to the Virginia Piedmont website ([www.thevirginiapiedmont.org](http://www.thevirginiapiedmont.org)).

Over the summer, 'Tween Rivers Trail reached a milestone of 100 members, both agritourism and complementary businesses. As of today, there are over 113 members, including 63 agritourism sites. For the upcoming year, the tourism committee has primarily decided to focus marketing efforts with print materials at six of our state visitor centers and continued digital advertising.

For further information regarding RRRC's tourism efforts, please contact Hunter Berry at [hberry@rrregion.org](mailto:hberry@rrregion.org) or (540) 829-7450.

### ***Regional Food Policy Council Update - Michelle Edwards, RRRC***

Ms. Edwards stated that the Purely Piedmont website has been updated to include a listing and interactive map of member sites with website links. RRRC's USDA Farmers Market Promotion Program grant ended on September 30<sup>th</sup>. Metrics on RRRC and grant partners' programs will be shared at the next Committee meeting.

Over the last six months, the Regional Commission has worked with the PATH Foundation to organize regional farm to school meetings with school districts, state agencies and food businesses on a quarterly basis. All school districts in the region have participated. During the last meeting on October 11<sup>th</sup>, Ms. Edwards raised the Food Policy Council's suggestion of a Regional Farm to School Liaison, similar to Loudoun County's. Potential tasks discussed included:

- Outreach (i.e. promoting menus, know your farmer and encouraging family involvement)
- Education and Activities (i.e. tastings, demos, and leading farm to school week activities)
- Coordination with other departments
- Data collection
- Procurement

Attendees were interested in pursuing this idea further, and are considering the possibility of having one or two liaisons depending on how many school districts participate, the size of the participating districts, and the tasks in the position description. Ms. Edwards will be meeting with staff of the PATH Foundation and No Kid Hungry in mid-December to discuss funding possibilities for the position. The next regional farm to school meeting is scheduled for January 16, 2020.

Orange and Rappahannock Counties' elementary schools participated in a Farm to School Art Contest sponsored by the Regional Commission's Purely Piedmont Program. Students were asked to draw their favorite local farm-fresh food, or a picture of where their food comes from. Schools Districts held the contest during Virginia Farm to School Week in October and chose one winner from each grade to receive a Purely Piedmont T-shirt or cow drawstring bag. Runners-up received a Purely Piedmont cow hat.

Select winning artwork will appear in future Purely Piedmont marketing to promote the region's locally-grown food. While only two of the five school districts in the region participated in the art contest, promotional items have been earmarked for schools that may want to participate within the next year.

The Rappahannock-Rapidan Food Policy Council's next meeting will be held January 23, 2020 at 5:30 pm in the RRRC conference room. For further information regarding the 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).

### **Member Roundtable**

- **Bryan Hofmann, Friends of the Rappahannock (FOR)**– FOR is implementing a Trees for Schools program. Their top priority is planting street trees at schools, in addition to other public lands and also privately conserved lands in partnership with land trusts. FOR will be piloting a VDOF urban tree planting online tool to track tree plantings by anyone. RRRC and FOR staff met with VDOF to provide comments on the tool which is expected to launch in the Rappahannock watershed in spring 2020. FOR has funds to encourage agriculture BMPs by adding to existing cost-share funding. They also have funding to encourage development of urban nutrient management plans, but need assistance with outreach.
- **Kendall May, Culpeper County**– The County's comprehensive plan is currently being updated. There is a farm to table element in the economic chapter on which Ms. May will contact Ms. Edwards for input. The County's solar ordinance has been approved by the Board of Supervisors. There were considerable changes in the Board and Planning Commission this November.
- **Andrew Hopewell, Fauquier County**– The County work session with the Planning Commission on the solar ordinance is happening as we speak. The Rural Lands Chapter of the County Comprehensive Plan was approved by the Board of Supervisors in July.

- **Joe Rossetti, Virginia Department of Forestry (DOF)**– DOF’s tree planting season is starting up.
- **Richard Jacobs, Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District**– The District is advertising its agriculture BMP cost-share program. Some of the septic system cost-share associated with local TMDLs is sunsetting, and they are having difficulty securing funding for district-wide cost share to close the gap. The General Assembly has approved VCAP cost-share funding in the amount of \$1 million state-wide. The District is implementing a NOAA grant for Meaningful Watershed Experiences (MWEs) in area schools, and will be including MWEs in all of the District’s middle schools next year. As a result, they are looking for part-time educators/interns and will pay \$15/hour plus mileage.
- **Michael Hanson, Fauquier County Parks and Recreation**– The County’s Central Sports Complex is 40% complete. The County is currently updating the Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Plan/Master Plan. They have the necessary funding and are getting ready to award a contract for development of the plan.
- **Maggi Blomstrom, Piedmont Environmental Council (PEC)**– Ms. Blomstrom started in her position at PEC on Monday after having previously worked for PEC several years ago. She will be coordinating the Rappahannock-Rapidan Conservation Partnership and a potential Regional Conservation Partnership Program grant, with a long-term goal of promoting land conservation, BMP implementation, natural habitat protection and restoration, and public access in the Upper Rappahannock watershed.

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

The Committee meets quarterly on the third Thursday of the month. The next Land Use and Environment Committee meeting is scheduled for February 20, 2020, at 10:00 am – 12:00 noon in the RRRC conference room. Please provide any additional suggestions for future meeting topics to Michelle Edwards at [medwards@rrregion.org](mailto:medwards@rrregion.org).