



LAND USE & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes – February 15, 2012

Attendees:

Jenny Biche'	Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission
Michelle Edwards	Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission
Brian Higgins	Piedmont Environmental Council
Paul Howard	Culpeper County
Chuck Hoysa	John Marshall Soil & Water Conservation District
Sue Ellen Johnson	Piedmont Environmental Council
Mark Mansfield (via phone)	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Gardiner Mulford	Culpeper Horse Owners Association
Patrick Mulhern	Town of Culpeper
Ray Pickering	Fauquier County
Katie Abel	Friends of the Rappahannock
Mary Sherrill	Fauquier County
Greg Wichelns	Culpeper Soil & Water Conservation District
Bev Hunter	RappFlow
Tim Bondelid	Rappahannock County
Deirdre Clark	John Marshall Soil & Water Conservation District
Carl Stafford	Virginia Cooperative Extension

Welcome & Introductions

Attendees were welcomed and introductions were made. Copies of the Agenda and handouts were distributed (see attached).

Rappahannock River Basin Water Resources Plan

Mark Mansfield, US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)

Mr. Mansfield provided an overview of the Rappahannock River Basin Water Resources Planning Initiative via teleconference. USACE has been working with the Rappahannock River Basin Commission (RRBC) on this initiative. The plan will be part of phase II of the Rappahannock River restoration efforts. Phase I was initiated by then Senator John Warner and involved the removal of the Embrey Dam. Phase II will identify water resource needs and issues in the river basin, as well as integrated strategies to address those that were identified.

The water resources plan can address any or all of the following USACE business lines:

- Water supply
- Navigation
- Flood risk management, and
- Ecosystem restoration

The first step will be to develop a programmatic document that will determine the scope of the USACE's feasibility study. USACE's FY 2012 budget, which was released in late December 2011, includes \$191,000 for the Upper Rappahannock River Feasibility Study. These funds will be used to fund development of the initial programmatic document. USACE requires a 50:50 match. While exact figures were not available at the time of this meeting, Mr. Mansfield estimated that the total cost of developing the programmatic document is \$60,000, with \$30,000 federal funds (allocated), \$15,000 in-kind services from RRBC (allocated), and \$15,000 from the state of Virginia (pending). If the state matching funds are approved by the General Assembly, the funding for the scoping study will be available on July 1, 2012, at the start of the state fiscal year.

Over the last few months, the Army Corps of Engineers and RRBC have been gathering stakeholder input. The top three issues identified thus far are ground water, sediment, and water quality/TMDL.

Following Mr. Mansfield presentation, questions and comments from the Committee included:

- Mr. Mansfield stated that the broadest definition of "water resource needs" is being considered. It can include recreational use of water, not just water quality.
- Mr. Mansfield will provide more detail information on each of the four USACE business lines noted above to Michelle Edwards, who will share the information with the Committee.
- A committee member noted that there had been a planning effort in the upper basin focusing on fish passage, which may have started with a group in Fredericksburg and Herman Wine, USACE. It was recommended that USACE look at previous studies and projects prior to developing the Water Resources Plan. Mark stated that USACE will take advantage of previous projects and studies that are applicable to this initiative.
- Participants asked Mark if USACE will be working with state agencies on this effort. He replied that USACE will work with DCR, DEQ and other state partners.
- Mr. Mansfield will provide examples of similar water resource studies completed by the USACE in other eastern states to the Committee for reference.
- USACE has a close working relationship with USGS and the National Weather Service. The USGS monitors stream flow, while the National Weather Service monitors rainfall. Currently there is no integrated system incorporating rainfall, stream and water quality gauges that is collected and shared in real time. One of the desired outcomes of this

initiative is to develop such a system. There is a companion piece of legislation being considered by the General Assembly that provides matching funds for gauges. Federal funding would come from USACE's Upper Rappahannock Feasibility Study budget. Mr. Mansfield estimates the total project cost to be \$60,000 with a 50:50 match. The Corps does not install rainfall or stream gauges, the Corps would do the study and work with others to install the gauges.

Discussion of Local Water Resource Issues and Needs

USACE and RRBC have requested local stakeholder input on water resource issues and needs in the Rappahannock River Basin. Participants provided the following comments and recommendations:

- The Water Resources Plan should focus on the upper river basin, as it directly impacts the rest of the watershed and has not received as much attention as the lower river basin.
- Data collection is sorely needed particularly in the upper river basin. In Rappahannock County, there are serious issues with wells, springs, etc. going dry and there has been a lack of data in the upper basin.
- Stream channel instability in the western portion should be examined in the Water Resources Plan. It was suggested that it begin with the Hughes River and work south to Swift Run in Green County and those streams affected by the 1995-1996 flood.
- The Water Resources Plan should examine regional ground water recharge in the upper basin. The underlying geology of the upper basin is much different than that of the lower basin; this difference also relates to the surface water issues. Ground water sustainability should be reviewed as well.
- USACE should include the National Park Service as a stakeholder for this initiative, because the headwaters are located in Shenandoah National Park and the Park Service may have long-term data to share.
- Data should be collected above and below water quality cost-share project sites so that change can be documented. An inventory of NRCS investments would be very useful. It would be important information for landowners as well, if a positive impact can be documented. The data could be used in a positive, instead of punitive way, to help improve water quality and serve as an example.
- Public access and recreational use should be considered in the plan. Public use of the river enables users to be active observers of the state of the river and can encourage users to have a vested interest in it, which can ultimately result in better water quality.
- RappFLOW conducted a comprehensive analysis of sub-watersheds in Rappahannock County. It identified several specific kinds of needs and goals with a water quality focus. It was recommended that the Water Resources Plan incorporate the results of the analysis, and also local water analysis and water supply plans.

- The Water Resources Plan should be shared with local Boards of Supervisors, because many Supervisors have limited knowledge of ground water issues. This information may be better received coming from USACE rather than local government staff.
- The plan should examine grey water use. Currently there is no infrastructure for grey water use, but it could be used during droughts. It was recommended that water conservation programs be included in the plan.
- Committee members voiced their strong support for the request for funds from the General Assembly to support data collection/gauges.

Any other additional comments, questions or recommendations should be sent to Michelle Edwards who will forward them to Mr. Mansfield and RRBC.

RRBC's Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), which is working on this initiative with Mr. Mansfield, has little representation from the Rappahannock-Rapidan region other than from Fauquier County. The RRBC TAC members are predominantly from the lower river basin. Interested members of the Land Use and Environment Committee are encouraged to attend future RRBC TAC meetings. At participants' request, Michelle Edwards agreed to ask Eldon James, RRBC to include the Land Use and Environment Committee members on the email distribution list for the RRBC TAC meetings and minutes. If you do not want to be on the email distribution list, please let Michelle know.

RRRC Initiative Updates

Sustainable Agriculture Workshop

A draft of the agenda was distributed (see attached). The Living Lands Workshop on "Fostering Sustainable Agriculture for Economic Development" will be held on April 19, 2012 at the Daniel Technology Center in Culpeper. Cost is \$40 per person and will include a continental breakfast and lunch. Save the date cards will be sent soon, and committee members are encouraged to help spread the word. The following suggestions for the agenda were made:

- Brad Jarvis or Kenner Love may be able to recommend someone to replace Kim Niewolny, perhaps Jim Hillary, an extension agent who works with Fauquier.
- Sue Ellen Johnson will send Michelle referrals for CSA case studies, however due to the timing of the event, it may be difficult for them to attend.
- Sue Ellen Johnson, Michelle Edwards, Kenner Love, Ray Pickering and Eric Bendfeldt will meet to discuss possible speakers for the remaining topics.
- The Food Systems Council is separate from the Farm to Table Program. Don Loock, PEC, is now the chair of the Council, and it was suggested Michelle contact for his input.

Chesapeake Bay TMDL

RRRC submitted local comments and data, and regional resource needs for the Chesapeake Bay TMDL Phase II Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) to DCR on February 1, 2012. The

submittal included comments from Rappahannock, Madison and Orange Counties, as well as comments from John Marshall Soil and Water Conservation District pertaining to agricultural BMPs in Fauquier County. Culpeper County sent comments directly to DCR. DCR is required to send the final Phase II WIP to EPA by the end of March 2012. The RRRC Chesapeake Bay TMDL stakeholder committee will be on hold until further notice. The Phase III WIP is scheduled for 2017 and full implementation of the Bay TMDL required by 2025.

Green Infrastructure Mapping Project

The regional green infrastructure GIS base map is nearing completion. The regional base map is based on the Virginia Natural Landscape Assessment, which is an ecological integrity model that uses data from 2000. RRRC is working with the Green Infrastructure Center (GIC) to update the state model using E911 points, and fine tune it for regional use.

RRRC has developed several draft versions of the regional base map, and will be holding a workshop to present the drafts and gather public input. The workshop will be held March 27, 9:00 am – noon, at the VDOT Auditorium in Culpeper. It will be facilitated by GIC.

The final version of the regional green infrastructure base map will be made publically available when completed. Fauquier County intends to use the regional base map as the starting point in their local green infrastructure project. This will complete phase I of the regional green infrastructure mapping effort. Future phases may include regional GIS maps of prime agriculture lands, prime forestry lands, historic resources, recreation, etc. that can be overlaid onto the ecological base map.

VA Outdoors Plan Public Meetings

DCR held a public meeting at RRRC on January 9, 2012 to gather input for the 2013 VA Outdoors Plan. 16 people attended the meeting. Additionally, Fauquier County, Orange County and the Town of Culpeper provided written comments. A handout with information on how to access the survey and send comments was distributed. Additional comments can be sent to Janit.Llewellyn@dcr.va.gov until April 6, 2012.

Next Land Use & Environment Committee Meeting:

May 15, 2012
10:00am – Noon
RRRC Board Room

Please email Michelle at medwards@rrregion.org with suggestions for future meeting topics.