



LAND USE & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes – February 20, 2020

Attendees:

Maggi Blomstrom	Piedmont Environmental Council
Michelle Edwards	Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission
Bryan Hofmann	Friends of the Rappahannock
Andrew Hopewell	Fauquier County
Richard Jacobs	Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District
James Sawyer	Fauquier County

Upper Rappahannock River Watershed Plan Development

Michelle Edwards, Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission (RRRC)

Michelle Edwards informed attendees that David Evans, Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), will be developing a TMDL Implementation Plan for the Mountain Run and Muddy Run Watersheds (see attached project map). A meeting for key stakeholder organizations will be held in April, and the first public meeting is planned for this summer. Rather than hire a consultant to conduct a modeling analysis, DEQ plans to extrapolate from the data contained in the implementation plans of adjacent watersheds.

Ms. Edwards distributed the updated table of data inputs for the Upper Rappahannock River Watershed Plan that denotes which data has been collected thus far (see attached). She also passed around a few copies of two regional GIS maps as examples: 1) Impaired Waters overlaid with DEQ Water Quality Monitoring Stations and Permitted VPDES Facilities; and 2) Impaired Waters overlaid with Agricultural Best Management Practices (BMPs).

Friends of the Rappahannock (FOR) had shared the agriculture BMP data, which they received from the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) as part of FOR's Rappahannock River Report Card project. Due to recent feedback from the Attorney General's Office, DCR would not share the data due to privacy concerns. However, a data sharing agreement may eventually make it possible.

Ms. Edwards contacted the consultant who conducted the data analysis for local TMDLs in the region to request the data files. He is now working for the Maryland Department of Agriculture and has agreed to provide the files. The estimated stream fencing GIS data should be particularly useful to this effort.

After discussion, existing land use and stream/wetland restoration categories were eliminated due to a lack of available data. Bryan Hoffman noted that the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) typically will not share their data. The United States Geological Survey (USGS) was suggested as a source for stream flow data.

To obtain additional data for the Watershed Plan, RRRC intends to apply for a Small Watershed Grant from National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to hire a consultant to conduct stream assessments. To outline one possible avenue, Ms. Edwards played a video from Trutta Environmental Solutions' High Definition Stream Surveys (<http://truttasolutions.com/hdss-overview>). Their equipment is able to continuously collect geo-referenced imagery with instream, streambank, water quality and bathymetric data over long reaches. Copies of a River Management Society article on the methodology were distributed (see attached). Ms. Edwards and Mr. Hoffman will be speaking with this consultant tomorrow and she is seeking feedback on this method, as well as suggested questions to ask the consultant.

Mr. Hoffman stated that there are too many stream miles in the watershed to survey them all, and surveying tributaries of the Rappahannock River would be more useful than the mainstem. The potential issue of hostile landowners was raised. Maggie Blomstrom agreed with Mr. Hoffman and recommended using the Report Card and stakeholders' local landowner connections to select which tributaries to target. Mr. Hoffman expressed his concern that the consultant will not be able to see stream fencing from the water due to the fences' set back and the tall bank height in some areas. Getting bacterial samples would be worthwhile. After discussion, several attendees felt Mountain Run should be a priority.

Ms. Edwards stated that using drones may be another option to quickly capture stream bank and buffer information. The footage could then be used to target areas for stream sampling by University of Mary Washington staff/students. Mr. Hoffman suggested the Chesapeake Conservancy's 1-meter resolution land cover data with LIDAR could be used if updated. A comparison between the update and 2016 version would also show land use change. James Sawyer noted that Fauquier County is discussing obtaining better aeriels with LIDAR for the County, but it may not happen for some time. Mr. Hoffman agreed to contact the Chesapeake Conservancy to explore the feasibility of the alternative method.

Ms. Edwards suggested one disadvantage of using drones is that the drone footage would have to be analyzed, whereas Trutta handles all of the analysis. Mr. Sawyer agreed that would be time consuming. He also suggested she ask the consultant what time of year is best to survey.

Ms. Edwards said that the decision of which methodology to choose may come down to cost. Fauquier County and Warrenton may also partner on the grant application for stormwater BMP projects at Fauquier High School and Warrenton Middle School. A Stormwater Local Assistance Fund Grant would also be pursued to use as matching funds. The NFWF grant maximum request is \$500,000. The stormwater BMP work would take much of that amount, with approximately \$50,000-\$60,000 for the stream assessment.

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.

Chesapeake Bay-related Grant Matrix Update

Michelle Edwards, RRRC

Ms. Edwards updated the table of Chesapeake Bay-related grant opportunities, previously provided to the Committee, and provided copies to attendees (see attached). She plans to update it again in early-fall. Mr. Hoffman offered that Rappahannock River Roundtable members could present project case studies for several of these grant programs during a future committee meeting. Ms. Edwards will coordinate with him to arrange it.

Additionally, several Committee members had remarked on the usefulness of the Region's Chesapeake Bay Urban Sector Grant Project Matrix. To facilitate timely updates in the future, Ms. Blomstrom had suggested sharing the document using Google Docs to allow Committee members to make edits online. Ms. Edwards asked attendees for input. Dropbox was proposed as an alternative, but Mr. Sawyer stated that access is not permitted on Fauquier County computers.

Following discussion, it was decided that Ms. Edwards would post the document on Google Docs and provide a link to Committee members for editing. [Edited to add: the link is https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1_ZmTVIEOrkNvEg3JxAsfCGneReYMgOn4gk3GaENCUUo/edit?usp=sharing]. Members should contact her if they encounter any issues. The arrangement will be reevaluated at the next meeting.

Homeowner's Guide to a Watershed-Friendly Backyard Revisions

Michelle Edwards, RRRC

RRRC will be updating the Homeowner's Guide to a Watershed-Friendly Backyard, and Ms. Edwards is seeking input. The guide was originally published in June 2016 and updated in December 2017. While a wholesale revision is not planned, the resource sections will be updated with new contact information and website links, and updates to the text can also be made. Please email suggestions to Michelle Edwards at medwards@rrregion.org.

RRRC Initiative Updates

Regional Food Policy Council Update - Michelle Edwards, RRRC

Ms. Edwards provided a handout of notable metrics from the final report of RRRC's three-year Farmers Market Promotion Program Grant (see attached). The grant funded efforts for RRRC's Purely Piedmont and Tween Rivers Trail Programs, as well as Piedmont Environmental Council's Buy Fresh Buy Local Program, Culpeper Farmers Market and Madison Farmers Market.

As discussed during the previous meeting, RRRC is working with public school food service directors in the region, No Kid Hungry and the PATH Foundation to hire a Regional Farm to School Liaison, similar to Loudoun County's. All school districts in the region are participating in the process. In order to keep the position regionally focused, the Liaison is proposed to be an

RRRC employee, based out of RRRC's office. Funding will be sought for this full-time position from RRRC, No Kid Hungry and the PATH Foundation.

A quarterly regional farm to school meeting was held on January 16th to determine the highest priority tasks that school districts would like the Liaison to focus on, and any that they would prefer the Liaison not take on. These items were then incorporated into the position's job description (see attached).

For the first year, the position's workplan will use the framework of Virginia's Harvest of the Month program. The Liaison will focus on increasing local food procurement and participation in school reimbursable meals, including breakfast. The successful candidate will conduct one tasting in each school district each month, and collect and analyze data to show whether tastings result in increased meal purchases. The Liaison will also conduct an initial survey of teachers to determine potential areas s/he can contribute to the existing curriculum through outreach, train-the-trainer and SOL-based modules. Besides these main priorities, there will also be district specific tasks noted in the job description.

Ms. Edwards will be presenting the proposed job description to RRRC's Commissioners for approval during their February 26 meeting. If it is approved, she will then seek support letters from each school district and apply for funding from No Kid Hungry and PATH Foundation. The group is targeting a June start date.

The Rappahannock-Rapidan Food Policy Council's next meeting will be held March 24, 2020 at 5:30 pm at Woodberry Forest School. For further information regarding the 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.

Regional Tourism Committee Update – Michelle Edwards, RRRC

The new Tween Rivers Trail commercial was played for attendees, and can be viewed at <https://youtu.be/qI6n17QJ-cc>. Ms. Edwards relayed the following update on behalf of Hunter Berry who leads RRRC's tourism efforts.

The agritourism trail's brochure was updated and is currently in production. The updated brochure will be placed at six Virginia Welcome Centers for 2020. Advertisements have been placed on Virginia.org and partner websites for February, April and June. Additionally, there are monthly placements on both Facebook and Instagram covering the Trail's featured assets of immersive agricultural experiences, wineries, breweries, farm-to-table restaurants, history, etc.

RRRC is planning to attend the upcoming seasonal festivals, beginning with our Trail members' Blue Quartz Winery & Shotwell Run Brewing Company's Spring Craft Festival in Etlan on April 18th.

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

Member Roundtable

- **Richard Jacobs, Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District**– The District held a contractor training session for the Virginia Conservation Assistance Program (VCAP) at Lake of the Woods last month. Thirty-five people attended. They posted articles in local newspapers about VCAP and stream fencing, which also touched on the related bills in the General Assembly. The District is currently reviewing how they handle interest in stream bank stabilization after a recent increase in interest, particularly from farmers.
- **Bryan Hofmann, Friends of the Rappahannock (FOR)**– The organization was recently awarded a Trees for Clean Water grant to plant trees on public land in Rappahannock, Fauquier, and Culpeper Counties, and the Town of Culpeper. They will be holding a tree seedling giveaway with Piedmont Environmental Council on Earth Day in Warrenton. FOR is working with the Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District on riparian buffers as part of the Headwater Stream Initiative. They are also helping Fauquier County develop a Green Streets, Green Towns, Green Cities grant application to fund the engineering of a stormwater project at Fauquier High School.
- **Andrew Hopewell, Fauquier County**– Three of the County’s Agricultural and Forestal Districts are up for renewal. The County is shifting from eight to ten-year terms for these districts. The Planning Commission is holding a hearing on the County’s solar ordinance tonight.
- **Maggi Blomstrom, Piedmont Environmental Council (PEC)**– Fauquier County’s Purchase of Development Rights Program is considering providing incentives to farmers willing to install BMPs, and PEC is willing to help with funding. PEC can also pay the up-front costs for stream fencing as a loan until farmers get their cost-share reimbursement. From the Rappahannock For the Rappahannock event will be held April 5th at Marriot Ranch.

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 May 21, 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.