



AGRICULTURAL WORKING GROUP

Meeting Minutes – September 24, 2014

Attendees:

Jenny Biché	Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission
Ramona Chapman	Department of Housing & Community Development
Deirdre Clark	John Marshall Soil & Water Conservation District
Ben Craig	Virginia Food Enterprise Centers
Ed Dunphy	CFC Farm and Home
Michelle Edwards	Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission
Don Looch	Piedmont Environmental Council
Kenner Love	VA Cooperative Extension – Rappahannock County
Carl Stafford	VA Cooperative Extension – Culpeper County

Food System Economic Analysis RFP – Michelle Edwards, RRRC

The Request for Proposals (RFP) for the Food System Economic Analysis closed on September 11, 2014. Three candidates will be interviewed on October 6th and 9th. The selection panel includes Michelle, Jenny Biché, Carl Sachs and Kenner Love. A decision is anticipated within two weeks following the interviews.

The limitations of using IMPLAN to measure the ripple-effect of agriculture on the overall regional economy was pointed out by the candidates. The model may not be accurate at the scale we are working with, and will likely not capture small farms, which make up the majority of farms in the region. This option also adds significant cost to the study. We will be asking the candidates for suggested alternatives, but may need to ultimately drop this item from the scope of work.

Regional Agri-tourism Trail Update – Jenny Biche’, RRRC

The Regional Tourism Committee sent invitation letters to the perspective trail sites and supportive sites approved by the Ag Working Group requesting their participation in the ‘Tween Rivers Trail. Perspective members were asked to complete a membership application form by September 30, 2014. Response was favorable, with a variety of participants applying (farms, farm to fork restaurants, agri-artisans, events, etc.) from each of the five counties. Perspective members can submit membership applications after September 30, 2014. However, they are not

guaranteed to be included in the brochures or other printed materials as we may not have received their information before the printing deadline.

The Regional Tourism Committee has received estimates from vendors to develop the brochure, logo and website and will be working on securing a contract with the selected vendor(s) as well as vetting the membership applications to ensure those selected for the trail sites and supportive sites meet the established requirements. The Tourism Committee received a two month free Welcome Center Blitz award and is planning on marketing the ‘Tween Rivers Trail at the Manassas Welcome Center for November and December of this year. Development of the regional agri-artisan event will begin in January as well as other aspects of the proposed project (Green Infrastructure Mapping, Agri-artisan Directory/Inventory, etc.). For more information, contact Jenny Biche at jkbiche@rrregion.org or 540-829-7450.

Food System Asset Assessment Group Discussion – Attendees

Michelle distributed the results of the workgroup’s August brainstorming session for the Food System Asset Assessment, as well as asset categories populated by individual members following the meeting (see attached). The asset assessment will be used in establishing a baseline together with the Economic Analysis and Agricultural Surveys.

Upon review, workgroup members updated the following table of asset categories and members tasked with populating it. Additionally, Carl Stafford agreed to expand the list of producer organizations such as the Blue Ridge Cattleman’s Association, while Don Loock will expand the list of online aggregation and distribution facilities such as Relay Foods. Members are asked to provide information by the October meeting.

Food System Asset Categories	Responsibility
Support Organizations	Draft Complete
Educational Programs	List of PEC program’s complete; Kenner will develop a list of VATech’s programs; Dierdre will provide list of JMSWCD programs; Michelle will contact Stephanie DiNicola for a list of CSWCD programs
Food Assistance Programs	Kenner and Carl Stafford
Financial Incentive/Loan Programs	List of SWCD programs complete; Ben-Farm Credit programs; Ray- FSA and Fauquier Co. programs; Carl Sachs-Culpeper Co. programs
Aggregation & Distribution Facilities	Draft Complete
Processing Facilities	Draft Complete
Refrigeration & Storage Facilities	No assets known to exist in this category
Production Services & Supplies	Ed Dunphy
Institutional Markets (potential markets)	Draft Complete
Farmers Markets	Draft Complete

Small Retail Stores, CSAs & Co-ops (not including restaurants)	Draft Complete
Policies & Regulatory Programs	TBD
Collective Marketing Efforts	Draft Complete
Food Culture Efforts	TBD
Labor Force	To be completed through the economic analysis
Natural Resources (e.g. land, soil, and water)	RRRC will provide maps of the region's prime ag soils and water resources. Carl Stafford will develop a brief narrative overview of the region's natural resource assets as it relates to agriculture.

Attendees also made revisions to the draft lists. The Virginia Food Council, Virginia Department of Forestry, Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development were added to the list of support organizations. PEC's new Farmer-Chef Express program was added to the list of collective marketing efforts. It was also suggested small retail stores be separated from seasonal on-farm retail. Jenny Biche agreed to take on this task. All members were asked email any further revisions to Michelle.

Day to Serve Event

The governor's of Virginia, Maryland, West Virginia and the mayor of D.C. have put out a call to action to "feed the hungry and heal the planet" as part of the third annual Day to Serve. The Commission's event at the Fauquier Education Farm will be held on Friday, September 26, 9:00am-12:00noon. Food harvested will be donated to the Fauquier Food Bank. We encourage all workgroup members, local government staff, elected officials, and citizens of all ages to attend.

Next Meeting

The next Steering Committee meeting will be held on October 23, 2014, at 1:30-3:30pm in the RRRC Conference Room.