



LAND USE & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes – August 20, 2020

Attendees:

Maggi Blomstrom	Piedmont Environmental Council
Julie Bolthouse	Piedmont Environmental Council
Deirdre Clark	John Marshall Soil and Water Conservation District
Matthew Decatur	Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission
Michelle Edwards	Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission
David Evans	Virginia Department of Environmental Quality
October Greenfield	Friends of the Rappahannock
Chris Hawk	Piedmont Environmental Council
Andrew Hopewell	Fauquier County
Richard Jacobs	Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District
John McCarthy	Piedmont Environmental Council
James Sawyer	Fauquier County
Michael Trop	John Marshall Soil and Water Conservation District

The meeting was held via Zoom and a call-in number provided for those without web access. Michelle Edwards welcomed attendees and introductions were made.

Upper Rappahannock River Watershed Plan Progress

Michelle Edwards, Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission (RRRC)

Michelle Edwards provided an update on RRRC's development of the GIS-based Upper Rappahannock Watershed Plan. A spreadsheet of the data inputs and their status was emailed to the Committee distribution list prior to the meeting (see attached). The data sets in blue are in-progress while those in red are not available or could not yet be found. Matthew Decatur provided a brief walkthrough of the GIS data collected thus far.

The Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation worked with RRRC and the state Attorney General's Office to develop a data license agreement for RRRC's partner organizations, including local governments, to be able to access the agency's agriculture best management practice (BMP) data (see attached). Because the data will be part of the Watershed Plan, Ms. Edwards urged organizations who have not yet signed the agreement to do so, even if they do not have an immediate use for it. RRRC will otherwise need to remove the agriculture BMP data from the Watershed Plan, prior to providing the plan to organizations that have not signed the agreement.

Ms. Edwards contacted the Virginia Department of Forestry (DOF) to reconsider RRRC's request for its forestry BMP data in light of Attorney General Office's decision to allow the DCR data sharing agreement. The request was denied, again due to land owner privacy concerns and potential conflicts with the agency's data sharing agreement with the US Natural Resource Conservation Service and Farm Service Agency.

For phase two of Watershed Plan development, RRRC applied for the National Fish and Foundation's (NFWF) Small Watershed – Implementation Grant. Awards will be officially announced in September. The proposed project would contract the Chesapeake Conservancy to develop a custom GIS-based prioritization of urban and agriculture BMPs for the region. Additionally, RRRC would contract Friends of the Rappahannock (FOR) to conduct ground-truthing, targeted water quality monitoring and digitize the region's existing livestock exclusion fencing data. The project would begin in January 2021 and conclude in December 2022 with the final Watershed Plan.

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.

WIP Implementation Updates

Michelle Edwards, RRRC

In addition to the Watershed Plan development, RRRC published the final version of the updated Rappahannock-Rapidan Homeowner's Guide to a Watershed-Friendly Backyard last month. It can be found on RRRC's website at the top of the Chesapeake Bay TMDL webpage at: www.rrregion.org/program_areas/environmental/chesapeake_bay_tmdl.php.

RRRC will be drafting its scope of work for the next year of its Chesapeake Bay PDC Locality Implementation Contract. The draft scope is due to the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) by September 30th. Ms. Edwards stated that the Commission is open to partnering with organizations on activities, as it has with Friends of the Rappahannock and Piedmont Environment Council in the past. Interested organizations should contact her with suggestions to be incorporated into the scope.

Ms. Edwards also reminded Committee members that the Region's Chesapeake Bay-related Urban Sector Project Matrix is posted on Google Docs at: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1_ZmTVIEOrkNvEg3JxAsfCGneReYMGOn4gk3GaENCUUo/edit#gid=1327508395. This is a living document that members should be updating, so that everyone on the committee can be aware of each other's activities and better collaborate.

Member Roundtable

- **David Evans, DEQ**– The Department will be developing the Mountain Run, Muddy Run and Lower Hazel TMDL Implementation Plan (IP), which covers 100,000 acres mostly within Culpeper County. DEQ is planning to hold the kick-off public meeting virtually in the first half of October. The IP will primarily address bacteria impairments, as well as benthic impairments as an alternative to developing a new TMDL for benthic

impairments. IP development will be completed entirely in-house due to budgetary constraints. Since there is no funding for outreach, the public meeting will be published in the Virginia Register, and partner organizations will be asked to share the invitation with their contacts via email and social media. Additionally, DEQ will be awarding a follow-on grant for Upper Goose Creek TMDL IP implementation, which will allow for further work with horse farms, and add urban and septic practices as well.

- **Deirdre Clark, John Marshall Soil and Water Conservation District**– The District is focused on the state legislative session and state budget, hoping to at least maintain the status quo with the base level of funding for Soil and Water Conservation Districts.
- **Michael Trop, John Marshall Soil and Water Conservation District**– The District is working on the agriculture cost-share program for the new fiscal year. They have been allocated over \$1 million. During the past year, they put over \$2 million in cost-share practices on the ground.
- **Maggi Blomstrom, Piedmont Environmental Council (PEC)**– PEC is conducting a couple of agriculture cost-share projects in Fauquier County through their revolving loan fund, which assists land owners who have difficulty paying the upfront matching cost. This includes one they are working on with John Marshall Soil and Water Conservation District at the Clifton Institute. Through the Rappahannock-Rapidan Conservation Partnership, PEC will be pursuing the Natural Resources Conservation Service’s Regional Conservation Partnership Program Grant. Additionally, there have been several public access opportunities on the Rappahannock and Rapidan Rivers. Finally, PEC has partnered with Empowering Culpeper to provide milk in Culpeper, expanding its program assisting food banks.
- **John McCarthy, PEC**– They have expanded their program assisting food banks with accessing local dairy cooperative milk throughout PEC’s range from Loudoun to Albemarle Counties. The program provides approximately 18,000 gallons/week to food pantries. \$75,000 has been raised philanthropically, all of which is going to purchase milk, with eleven dairies in the PEC region participating. They have also expanded the program to include a limited amount of beef in Fauquier County. However, the demand for beef is so high and the distribution network so tight that it is difficult to secure slaughter dates to get more cattle into the system. Therefore, the beef portion of the program is unlikely to be ramped up beyond the 400 lbs/month they have been delivering to Fauquier Food Pantry. PEC plans to run the program through the current calendar year.
- **Chris Hawk, PEC**– He noted that Culpeper County is potentially updating the County’s utility-scale solar policy and codifying it into an ordinance to give it more teeth. The Maroon Solar application that was submitted during the past month for 149 megawatts, is one short of the permit-by-rule maximum, which may have sparked the County’s interest. PEC is also following the Greenwood Solar site plan update and approval process.
- **Richard Jacobs, Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District**– They have been sending mailings to Culpeper and Orange residents to increase awareness of the District’s services to urban landowners, such as the Virginia Conservation Assistance Program (VCAP), soil testing, rain barrels, etc. The District has a watershed education grant to

work with area schools. Due to the pandemic, most of the programming will likely be virtual. VCAP received approximately \$500,000 from the Virginia General Assembly and the funds are going fast, with demand high.

- **Andrew Hopewell, Fauquier County Community Development**– The County received a grant for the design of a green infrastructure BMP at Fauquier High School. They started construction of the Catlett-Calverton sewer project and are anticipating an eighteen-month construction period, with it fully operational in early-2022. The Board of Supervisors will be considering a new solar ordinance next month to provide stricter guidance and protections, with the intent of preserving the County’s rural character while allowing solar development where appropriate.
- **October Greenfield, Friends of the Rappahannock (FOR)**– FOR is busy planning for fall tree plantings and giveaways as well as working on new digital education resources for teachers and families doing virtual learning this school year. They recently conducted a river cleanup of Mountain Run at Lenn Park and a kayak trip on Lake Pelham, both in Culpeper County. On August 24th, they will be conducting two cleanup events in Culpeper at Rockwater Park and the War Memorial Park with volunteers. FOR will also be conducting a cleanup at the Rappahannock County Park on September 12th, another kayak trip on Mountain Run Lake on September 19th, and a Beginning Nature Photography outreach event in Rappahannock County on October 3rd. Finally, FOR is planning for their River Fest annual fundraiser on October 24th. Instead of the usual in-person event, this year people will be able to order party packs with three pickup locations across the watershed, including one at FOR’s new office near Culpeper County High School.

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 November 19, 2020, at 10:00 am – 12:00 noon via Zoom with a call-in option. Please provide any additional suggestions for future meeting topics to Michelle Edwards at medwards@rrregion.org.