

Browns Run, Craig Run, and Marsh Run Water Quality Improvement Plan

AGRICULTURAL WORKING GROUP MEETING SUMMARY

May 4, 2010 at 8:00 PM (Cedar Lee Middle School; Bealeton, VA)

Meeting Attendees

Melissa Allen (JMSWCD)	John Baker (Citizen)	Ben Cooper (Farm Bureau)	Jeanie Costello (Citizen)	Debbie Cross (VADCR)
Daron Culbertson (Citizen)	Earnest Dodson (Citizen)	Michael H. Dwyer (Citizen)	Roger Flint (NRCS)	Howard L. Grove (Citizen)
Marsha Hamilton (Citizen)	Eugene Hankinson (Citizen)	Walter P. Hodge (Citizen)	Jennifer R. Hoysa (JMSWCD)	Sue Keller (Citizen)
James Messick (Citizen)	Ronald Messick (Citizen)	Paul Neale (Citizen)	Terry Nyhous (Fauquier Co. BOS)	Frank Ott Jr. (Citizen)
Morgan Ott (Citizen)	Byron Petrauskas (BRES)	John Schied (Farm Bureau)	Jim Stone (Fauquier Co. PC)	Chester Stribling (Fauquier Co. BOS)
Altwon R. Wellington (Citizen)				

Agricultural Working Group Summary

Melissa Allen with John Marshall Soil and Water Conservation District (JMSWCD) and Debbie Cross with Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (VADCR) led the facilitation at the Agricultural Working Group meeting. The attendees at the meeting received a factsheet that described the purpose of the agricultural working group. This group is to focus on ways to obtain the livestock bacteria load reductions that are required in the TMDLs.

Several issues were raised regarding water quality monitoring performed by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (VADEQ), these included: exceedance rates depicted in the public meeting graph (especially the 100%), data validity, correlation to flow conditions, and sampling frequency. It was suggested that a recommendation for water quality monitoring could be made from this group to address these concerns. Suggestions for providing additional water quality monitoring included citizen monitoring or a monitoring project financed with grant funds. Melissa thought the district's monitoring plan included stations in these watersheds and said she would verify and provide data if applicable. One attendee had performed Chesapeake Bay Citizen Monitoring for two years and said it was set-up to be regimented as to capture various environmental conditions.

Current operational status of producers was discussed. It was stated that primarily beef and dairy operations exist in these watersheds. There are no poultry facilities and confined animal feeding operations (CAFOs) consist of dairy operations. Attendees indicated there are sufficient waste storage facilities for the dairy operations. It was indicated that some beef operations were confining animals a portion of the year; therefore, a recommendation to include the “Animal Waste Control Facility (VA Agricultural Practice Number WP-4)” practice in the water quality improvement plan was made. It was also noted that sufficient land was available for producers to spread collected waste and sufficient exporting of manure was not prevalent in these watersheds. Horse population was discussed with concern towards the condition of pasture horses were being kept on (i.e., overstocking and overgrazing). The group discussed the decreasing trend in agricultural landuses, especially in the Craig Run watershed.

The group discussed best management practices (BMPs) that would address livestock with stream access and bacteria loads on pasture and cropland. Several producers in attendance have participated in state and federal cost-share programs and have been very pleased working with the JMSWCD and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). One producer noted frustration with recouping cost for engineering fees and timing sequence of EQIP program requirements. Generally, they would recommend the programs to other producers. The group was asked what their favorite BMP was and responded with: cover crops, woodland buffers, alternative watering system, and nutrient management. The group questioned the applicability of cost-share programs for leased land. Roger Flint with NRCS replied that this was not an issue and contracts have been written in the past for this situation. Inquiry was made whether assistance was available for BMP maintenance after the cost-share contract expires and the possibility of extending CREP contracts. Debbie Cross with VADCR responded that VADCR is in the process of developing incentives for producers to continue BMP maintenance and should be available July 2010.

Constraints to BMP implementation indicated by group include – maintenance cost, responsiveness of agencies providing technical assistance, and belief that producers need to spend money on BMPs when confidence in water quality monitoring data and extent of contamination is lacking.

Applicable educational /outreach methods that work well in the area include: farmer-to-farmer interaction; JMSWCD, Farm Service Agency, and NRCS newsletters; field tours conducted by JMSWCD; educational events conducted by Virginia Cooperative Extension; Cattleman’s and Dairyman’s Association events; information booth at Fauquier County Fair; and updates on the Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission website. Melissa Allen acknowledged the successful partnerships the JMSWCD has formed with producers in these watersheds already participating in cost-share programs.