

Robinson River and Little Dark Run TMDL
Implementation Plan Development
STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

November 30, 2010 7:00pm
Madison Volunteer Fire Company
1223 North Main Street, Madison, VA
Steering Committee Meeting Summary

Attendance:

Dave Allen, Madison County Board of Supervisors
James Arrington, Madison County Board of Supervisors
Jenny Biche', Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission
Beth Burnam, Piedmont Environmental Council
Jennifer Carlson, VA Department of Environmental Quality
Deidre Clark, Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission
Sidney Coates, Citizen
Bonnie Dixon, Citizen
Dwayne Dixon, VA Department of Health
Phil Hawkins, Citizen
Jim Long, Citizen
Suzanne Long, Citizen
Byron Petrauskas, Blue Ridge Environmental Solutions, Inc.
Bob Slusser, VA Dept. of Conservation and Recreation
Jeff Talbot, VA Department of Environmental Quality
Greg Wichelns, Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District
Frank Wilczek, Blue Ridge Foothills Conservancy

Welcome and Introductions:

Attendees were welcomed and introductions were made. Reports from the Residential, Agricultural and Government working groups were provided to the Steering Committee along with copies of the Action Chart and the draft of the Robinson River - Little Dark Run Water Quality Improvement Plan presentation as prepared by Byron Petrauskas, Blue Ridge Environmental Solutions, Inc.

Working Group Reports

Residential Working Group Report

Ms. Bonnie Dixon presented the Residential Working Group Report to the Steering Committee, noting the following:

- Educational programs are needed to provide information to residents on the design, function and maintenance of all septic system types;
- Review of changes in land use since the TMDL study was conducted is needed and revisions made;
- The collaboration effort of Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District with the Farm Bureau to education homeowners on cost share programs available for repair or replacement of their septic systems and removal of straight pipes should be supported;
- A data tracking system is needed to documents the location and maintenance history of on-site sewage systems.
- The use of garbage disposals with septic systems should be discouraged;
- Although Culpeper County has a mandatory 5 year septic pump out ordinance, Madison County does not. It is recommended that Madison consider implementing something similar.

- Awareness is needed on applicable programs, technical assistance and available funding.

Comments following the presentation included:

- After the first public meeting, the RRRC received two additional comments from Madison County residents:
 1. Diapers and trash are often dumped in the Robinson River in the Crigglersville area. It was suggested that the county provide trash receptacles in identified recreation use areas.
 2. Vehicles are sometimes parked in the Robinson River adjacent to the low water crossing at Lindsay Lane. Occasionally, cars and trucks are driven down the river. It was suggested that VDOT be informed of the problem and encouraged to install railing along the stream and/or "No Parking" signs.
- Possible funding sources for pet waste management projects were discussed. It was noted that WQIF and NFWF offer grant opportunities that might fund projects. It was suggested that each watershed in the region have a private kennel volunteer to serve as a model for pet waste best management practices with funding provided by grant programs. The SPCA in Fauquier County has been identified as having a successful pet waste management practice.

Agricultural Working Group Report

Mr. Sidney Coates presented the Agricultural Working Group Report to the Steering Committee, noting the following:

- More stream testing and monitoring is needed. Citizen groups should be utilized and funding sources identified;
- Agricultural land use has declined since the TMDL study was done;
- More effort is needed to encourage participation in cost share programs in the Upper Robison River area;
- Fencing alternatives should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis;
- Funding is needed to maintain BMPs beyond the typical 10 year lifespan requirement;
- Alternative cost share programs are needed for areas with braided streams or that are prone to flooding; and
- Funding options such as PEC's livestock exclusion fencing program should be explored.

Comments following the presentation included:

- A 2005 USGS study of the Robinson River at White Oak Canyon was discussed. It was noted that of the 12 samples, taken during both storm and low-flow conditions, only one exceeded the standard. The study may be accessed through a link at http://www.rregion.org/tmdl_rld.html.
- Attendees discussed factors contributing to high bacteria levels frequently documented during storm events; and
- It was recommended that options be provided for land owners in flood-prone areas and areas with braided streams where large areas of pasture are lost due to set-back requirements. It was stated that BMP fencing requirements should be relaxed or compromised so that landowners might be more inclined to participate. Any options should be clearly described.

Government Working Group Report

Bob Slusser presented the Government Working Group Report to the Steering Committee, noting the following:

- Older homes should be identified and included in efforts to promote septic system improvement programs. Citizen groups could be used to conduct surveys and distribute information;
- Educational workshops on septic system function and maintenance are needed.
- [I don't recall that this was in the GWG report so it should not be included.]

- Workshops based on Prince William County's Horse Friendly Farm Workshop and Rappahannock's Cow College could be replicated in the watershed with funding from WQIF or other grant sources;
- Partnerships should be encouraged with organizations such as VA Outdoors Foundation;
- Funding should be pursued through DCR WQIF, PEC, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and other federal, state, local and private funding sources;
- Awareness of the Agricultural Stewardship Act should be promoted;
- County ordinances should be reviewed to identify opportunities for implementing LID practices;
- It was suggested that Madison County amend its ordinance to include animal unit limitations on lot sizes;
- Citizen stream monitoring groups are needed; and
- Electronic maps should be updated to reflect land use changes.

Comments following the presentation included:

- Citizen groups conducting door to door surveys could be problematic. It was suggested that working with the Health Department utilizing tax records and deductive reasoning would be more productive;
- Sources of septic waste could be tracked if reports were created when the material was disposed of at processing facilities;
- Madison, Orange and Culpeper counties do not accept septic pump-out waste.
- The TMDL-IP report should include language recommending that the state provided adequate funding to implement BMPs;
- An inquiry was made as to whether PETA or other animal rights advocates have commented on the TMDL-IP. It was noted that no comments have been received from any such organization;
- The development of a TMDL-IP is required; however, the implementation of the BMPs recommended in the plan is voluntary. Currently the TMDL-IP is completely voluntary with no timeline deadline. The Chesapeake Bay TMDL is a separate process. It could result in federal oversight and enforcement of the Clean Water Act;
- The TMDL-IP is a noble idea, but will be difficult to implement;
- Culpeper County's ordinance includes a 5 year pump-out requirement – Madison's does not;
- It was recommended that ordinance language addressing pump-out requirements target conventional septic systems only. ; [This sentence should be deleted. Actually, based on the new sewage regulations alternative waste treatment systems have to be inspected semi-annually and maintenance could be required based on such inspections.
- Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District has been successful in implementing its septic system cost-share program. About \$110,000 in improvements, including repairs, replacements and installations, have been made in the last 3.5 years. In some cases, farm tenant houses were provided systems where none existed previously.
- Areas served by septic systems could be limited through local ordinances. Slopes, soils, distance to streams, etc., could be adopted as limiting measures;
- Citizens favor less government regulation and prefer that residents be personally responsible for their septic system maintenance;
- In Fairfax County, the Health Department inspects each septic tanks when it is pumped;
- It was recommended that consideration be given for increasing the cost share percentage for residential programs;
- Very few complaints have been made referencing the Agricultural Stewardship Act. Over 50% have been unfounded. It was recommended that agencies receiving such calls provide detailed

information to the complainant, but promoting such information to the general public is not necessary and could be counter-productive;

- Save our Streams, focused on macro-invertebrates, is the only citizen group that is currently monitoring streams in Madison County. While DEQ can support citizen groups and train monitors, it cannot recruit volunteers. Since they tend to remain in the area, adult monitoring groups are preferred over high school student groups;
- Citizen monitoring has various levels of credibility, however, once trained by DEQ, all citizen monitoring data can be used to identify “hot spots” regardless of which level they have achieved. DEQ does monitor and audit the volunteers and their data;
- An “outside” citizen monitoring group may be preferred than a local citizen monitoring group as locals may feel uncomfortable or intimidated;
- DEQ stated that funding for citizen monitoring groups has been cut from their budget; however, other grant funding may be available;
- Property resale value should be emphasized to encourage septic system maintenance and overcome property owners' apprehension regarding repairs; and
- Real estate professionals in other counties have recommended requiring a record of septic system maintenance as well as a plat of its location as part of land transfer documents.

The Action Chart was reviewed as follows:

- For additions or changes, contact Deirdre Clark at the RRRC before the final public meeting on December 16, 2010;
- Include NRCS and DGIF as sources for information on waterfowl impacts to ponds;

Review of Presentation Prepared for Public Meeting

The power-point presentation prepared for the upcoming final public meeting was reviewed. Comments and recommendations were as follows:

- Add Department of Forestry and Culpeper Town Council to “Acknowledgements” slide.
- Address the issue of Shenandoah National Park’s contribution to the water quality during the presentation of the “Bacteria Sources ID in TMDL” slide - mention under wildlife;
- Consider adding “Nonpoint Source” heading above Residential and Agricultural categories on “Bacteria Sources Identification in TDML” slide;
- Photos are small and hard to see from a distance on Control Measures slides - reduce the number of photos and put them on separate slides, or include ability to click on and enlarge each image during the presentation;
- Eliminate “retention ponds” from “Implementation Actions” slide;
- In “Stage 1 Implementation Cost” slide, recalculate cost of technical assistance. Increase both Agricultural and Residential numbers; increasing to three full time employees to be more realistic; and
- Greg Wichelns from Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District will provide Byron Petrauskas the component cost break-down for inclusion in the “Agricultural Funding Example.”

Next Steps:

The Madison Eagle will be provided with a news release highlighting the upcoming public meeting to be held on December 16, 2010 from 7-9 P.M at the Madison Volunteer Fire Company. Attendees were asked to spread the word and invite others to attend. Fliers will be distributed and signs will be placed throughout the watershed.