

Upper York River Watershed
Total Maximum Daily Load Implementation Plan (TMDL-IP) Development

Tuesday, June 7, 2011

6 P.M.

Town of Orange Public Works Community Room
235 Warren Street, Orange Virginia

Residential Working Group Report to Steering Committee

Residential Working Group Participants:

Jenny Biche, Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission
Tommy T. Barlow, Louisa County BOS
Joshua Bateman, Director, Community Development, Town of Orange
Cynthia Bowman, USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service
Deirdre Clark, Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission
Katie Conaway, Virginia Department of Environmental Quality
Stephanie DeNicola, Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District
Steve Hopkins, Virginia Cooperative Extension
Mary E. Johnson, Thomas Jefferson Soil and Water Conservation District
Courtney Lipski, Virginia Department of Health
Etta Lucas, Tri-County/City Soil and Water Conservation District
Charlie Lunsford, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation
Christopher Owens, Citizen
Byron Petrauskas, Blue Ridge Environmental Solutions, Inc.
Alex Ramey, Eastern View High School
Richela Rosales, Eastern View High School
Chip Russell, Virginia Department of Health
May Sligh, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation
Bob Slusser, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation
Doug Smith, Citizen
Jimmy Stevens, Citizen
Richard Street, Spotsylvania County
Debra Switzer, Citizen
Gary Switzer, Virginia Department of Health
Scott Vogel, Virginia Department of Health
Greg Wichelns, Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District
Ron Wisniewski, USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service
Spencer Yager, Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District

Meeting Dates:

The Residential Working Group met on January 25, 2011, February 8, 2011 and May 10, 2011.

The principal objective of the residential working group is to identify obstacles to the implementation of residential bacteria load reductions and practical solutions to these obstacles.

Key Topics and Recommendations

The following is a summary of the issues discussed at the Residential Working Group meetings and their recommendations to the Steering Committee:

On-site sewage disposal systems:

- Background Information include:
 - Spotsylvania has a county-wide storm water ordinance and falls under the Chesapeake Bay requirements;
 - Most of the Plentiful Creek watershed in Spotsylvania County is wooded and hasn't had a building permit issued since 2003;
 - Louisa and Spotsylvania counties require permits for repairs to septic systems and require 100% reserve; and
 - There might be opportunities within the watershed for connecting to public sewer in Orange and Louisa.

- Problem areas within the watershed include:
 - Possible lake water intruding into ground water in Spotsylvania and Louisa Counties;
 - Regional population growth in Louisa County has resulted in increased demands on the Louisa sewage treatment plant;
 - There is not enough voluntary compliance to forgo regulation. Education for homeowners is needed to encourage participation so that regulation is a last resort; and
 - Greywater containing disinfectants and detergents from maintenance activities contributes to the degradation of surface and groundwater quality.

- Alternative systems:
 - Most owners of alternative systems are uninformed of mechanical function, costs and failure rates, as are owners of conventional systems;
 - Many areas within the watershed are unsuited for systems of any kind-conventional or alternative; and
 - The issue of specific soils being unsuitable for septic systems is addressed in the Louisa County Comprehensive Plan.

Recommendations:

- Septic Systems:
 - Information regarding septic system type, function, location (site plan) and maintenance, including costs, should be included in closing documents at all home sales;
 - To reach all property owners, include septic system information with tax assessments;
 - Raise awareness of fact that funding and technical assistance is available, especially when VDH notifies a homeowner of a septic tank failure;
 - Repairs to failing septic systems will have a greater effect at reducing the bacteria exceedence rate versus pump-outs;
 - Suggest including information on the impact of the practice of hydrofracking on existing wells and structures;

- Older structures along Tomahawk Creek and the Houseworth Street area (Pamunkey Watershed) should be evaluated; and
- Older homes along Route 15 might have failures.

Residential and Commercial Pet Waste:

- Develop and implement public information campaigns on pet waste management (such as “It’s Your Doodie” or “Poop Fairy” campaigns);
- Devise and implement pet waste composter construction workshops similar to rain barrel workshops offered by Soil and Water Conservation Districts;
- Pet waste management information must be introduced strategically, there may be resistance to programs perceived as trivial or frivolous;
- Reach out to home owners associations to promote pet waste composters, collection kiosks, and other management strategies; and
- Seek funds to install kennel waste management program as pilot project and consider offering a “clean kennel” award.

Education:

- It was suggested that the definition of the bacteria standard (235 E. coli colony forming units per 100mL water) be put in terms that the general public can understand. What does this mean to me? Suggestions include: Unhealthy water that if swallowed can lead to illness, ear infection, etc.;
- Information found in the Thomas Jefferson Soil and Water Conservation District Goldmine Creek septic system study which focused on identifying bacterial pollution hot spots should be shared with the Louisa County Board of Supervisors. It could be used as a template for how counties can identify septic problem areas in all of the impaired watersheds;
- Determine if coordination with the Army Corps of Engineers Lake Anna Ecosystem Restoration Project would be beneficial to the TMDL-IP process, in terms of information gathered; and
- Efforts should be made to educate high school students and get other stakeholders to assist with public education.

A ten year timeline, with all watersheds receiving equal attention, is recommended. Eight years will be devoted to stage 1, with the remaining two years focused on stage 2.