



LAND USE & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes – January 29, 2016

Attendees:

Jenny Biche'	Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission
Michelle Edwards	Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission
David Ek	Fauquier County
Bryan Hofmann	Friends of the Rappahannock
Debbie Keyser	Rappahannock County
Patrick Mauney	Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission
Michael Trop	John Marshall Soil & Water Conservation District

Green Infrastructure: Agriculture and Watershed Maps

Patrick Mauney, RRRC

Copies of RRRC's new publication, *Green Infrastructure: A Guide to Asset Mapping in the Rappahannock-Rapidan Region*, were distributed to attendees. The guide describes the complete set of regional green infrastructure GIS maps developed by the Commission and provides suggestions for their use. Green infrastructure is an interconnected network of land and water that sustains air and water resources, maintains natural ecological processes, supports native species, and contributes to the health and quality of life of the people in our communities.

The guide developed by Michelle Edwards and Patrick Mauney is available electronically at www.rrregion.org/pdf/gi/2016/RRRC%20Green%20Infrastructure%20Brochure.pdf.

Patrick then delivered a presentation on the Prime Agriculture and Watershed Models, the newest green infrastructure maps that the Commission developed this year. His presentation is available on the committee webpage at www.rrregion.org/envcmtte.html. GIS layers for all regional green infrastructure maps are available by contacting Patrick at plmauney@rrregion.org or 540-829-7450.

David Ek asked whether other counties in the region besides Fauquier use these maps. Michelle Edwards responded that Culpeper County has incorporated them into its comprehensive plan, but to her knowledge, the others have not yet done so. Debbie Keyser added that Rappahannock County plans to incorporate them in its current comprehensive plan revision.

David also asked whether there any state initiatives to use the statewide green infrastructure maps for making funding decisions. Michelle responded no, not that she is aware of. Bryan Hofmann asked what level of hydrologic unit was used in the Watershed Model, to which Patrick responded HUC 6. When then asked whether there was any correlation between a low Watershed score and TMDLs (Total Maximum Daily Load), Patrick answered yes, some. He will further examine the relationship and provide overlays. Michael Trop pointed out that John Marshall SWCD does have some GIS data on best management practices (BMPs) installed through TMDLs. They have point data and are working to add stream-fencing data.

Agri-artisan Trail Update and Website Tour

Jenny Biche', RRRC

The Regional Tourism Committee developed the Tween Rivers Trail to support local farmers, foresters and artisans, and to bring more revenue to the regional economy. Trail membership is free for the first year until the committee can demonstrate a potential return on investment to trail members. The trail has been advertised in Edible DC and Edible Blueridge magazines, and brochures were placed in area welcome centers. The committee also conducted a two-day agri-tourism symposium last year and will holding a more focused two-hour workshop this year on social media marketing.

Patrick Mauney asked if the committee has received any pushback about future membership fees. Jenny responded that they plan to collect data on the results of the effort and present it to participants prior to determining fees.

Jenny then demonstrated the functionality of the new Tween Rivers Trail website, which is available at www.tweenriverstrail.com. The website includes information on trail members and agri-tourism and artisan events within the region. The Tween Rivers Trail's Facebook and Instagram accounts can also be accessed via the website. In the future, the committee plans to add information on nearby attractions to the website in order to encourage longer stays.

For additional information on the agri-tourism trail project, please contact Jenny Biche at jkbiche@rrregion.org or (540) 829-7450.

RRRC Initiative Updates

Local TMDL Implementation – Jenny Biche'

The TMDL for the Upper Rapidan River was developed in 2006-2007 and is available on the Commission's website at www.rrregion.org/rappbasin.html. It covers nine streams segments within Madison, Greene, Orange and Albemarle counties that are impaired due to high bacteria loads, and sets a pollution diet for these segments. RRRC worked with the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) to develop an Implementation Plan for this TMDL last summer, and hopes to receive cost-share funds soon to implement best management practices called for in the plan. The Implementation Plan has been approved by DEQ and must now be approved by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Development of Implementation Plan for the Goose Creek TMDL in the Potomac Watershed is to begin in March, but the Commission is still working out its contract with DEQ. The effort has been delayed because the TMDL plan must be updated.

Carver-Piedmont Agricultural Institute – Patrick Mauney

The Regional Commission collaborated with the Virginia Food Enterprise Center, Carver-Piedmont Agricultural Institute, Virginia Cooperative Extension and Culpeper County to conduct a feasibility study for the use of the former G.W. Carver High School/Piedmont Technical Education Center as a regional agricultural center. The study identified target markets for a potential multi-use food processing facility/community kitchen, in addition to agricultural research, education and training opportunities.

The consultant completed its assessment of the needed building renovations for the historic black high school in December 2015. Culpeper County owns the building, which was built in the 1940s. This report and the market analyses are available on RRRC's website at www.rregion.org/carver.html.

Project implementation is to occur in phases. Culpeper County has applied for a DEQ brownfields grant to do preliminary work. The Virginia Food Enterprise Center and Carver-Piedmont Agricultural Institute also applied for grant funding to pursue their first steps.

Regional Food Policy Council – Michelle Edwards

The Commission adopted the "Rappahannock-Rapidan Farm & Food Plan" at its October 28th meeting, and gave permission for staff to move ahead with development of a regional food council which was one of nine Priority Projects recommended in the plan. The council is not intended to set policies, but would make policy recommendations and oversee implementation of the Plan's Priority Projects and other food system initiatives. Michelle distributed a draft outline of the council structure, developed in collaboration with RRRC's Agriculture Working Group (see attached).

As proposed, each county is to appoint a representative to the council, in addition to technical experts appointed by the Regional Commission. This structure can give more weight to the work completed by the food council, as well as ensure buy-in from member localities and balanced and committed participation. An RRRC staff person will also serve on the Council to act as a liaison between the Council and Regional Commission, and will act as the Chair for the first year.

Commissioners are scheduled to review the draft council structure and list of potential Technical Advisory Members during the next Regional Commission meeting. Upon approval, the next step will be making member appointments. The Food Policy Council's first meeting date is therefore dependent on the speed at which appointments can be made.

Watershed-friendly Homeowners' Guide – Michelle Edwards

As part of the Regional Commission's National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Small Watershed Grant, development continues on the "Rappahannock-Rapidan Homeowners Guide to a Watershed-friendly Backyard." Michelle distributed an outline of the guide to attendees (see

attached). It contains chapters on stormwater management, nutrient management, septic system maintenance and pet waste management. Basic how-to information is included in each chapter, as well as listings of resources and contacts for further information. A draft document for review is anticipated by the next Land Use and Environment meeting.

The grant project educates homeowners on practices they can implement in their backyard that will benefit their local watershed, incorporating aspects of Friends of the Rappahannock's Rainscape Retrofits Program and Virginia Cooperative Extension's Green Grass Program. For further information on the Regional Commission's homeowner watershed education project, visit the project website at www.rregion.org/rainscaping.html or contact Michelle Edwards at medwards@rregion.org.

Member Roundtable

- **Bryan Hofmann, Friends of the Rappahannock (FOR)** – FOR's current focus is prioritizing riparian projects for brook trout. The organization is also partnering with John Marshall SWCD on an event scheduled on April 9th entitled "From the Rappahannock, For the Rappahannock" (see attached flyer). This family-friendly event will include food, music, fly-casting demonstrations and hayrides. The fee is yet to be determined, but will be waived for children under 14 and all those who participate in the morning tree planting. Another part of their outreach is to encourage participation in the new Virginia Conservation Assistance Program, a cost-share program managed by Virginia SWCDs. FOR staff can provide technical assistance and be the go-to-contractor to install BMPs.
- **Michael Trop, John Marshall Soil & Water Conservation District** – 100% cost-share for stream exclusion fencing ended on June 30, 2015 and the District is now dealing with the backlog.
- **David Ek, Fauquier County** – The natural resource chapter of the County's comprehensive plan will go to public hearing in February. The County is moving ahead with a hydro-geologic study with the USGS on April 1st. The study will use existing data to identify recharge areas and is intended to be a 5-year study.
- **Debbie Keyser, Rappahannock County** – The County has launched RappU (www.rappu.org), a wide selection of non-credit classes, lectures and programs at various locations in the County. Beverly Hunter, RappFLOW, will be teaching a water quality class. Registration comes online in February, and classes begin in March. The County is also working a comprehensive plan update. Debbie is working with Celebrate Shenandoah to develop a comprehensive plan checklist, and the organization will hold an annual meeting with planners to gather feedback. Celebrate Shenandoah is also working on branding the region surrounding the national park, and hope to use the visitskylinedrive.org website to market the region.

Next Land Use & Environment Committee Meeting:

The next Land Use and Environment Committee meeting is scheduled for April 14, 2015 at 10:00 am – 12:00 noon in the RRRC conference room. Please provide any suggestions for future meeting topics to Michelle at medwards@rregion.org.