



LAND USE & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes – November 14, 2013

Attendees:

Jenny Biche'	Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission
Deirdre Clark	John Marshall Soil & Water Conservation District
Brian Daniel	Madison County
Stephanie DeNicola	Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District
Michelle Edwards	Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission
David Ek	Fauquier County
David Holtzman	Piedmont Environmental Council
Kenner Love	Virginia Cooperative Extension
Maggi MacQuilliam	Piedmont Environmental Council
Gardiner Mulford	Culpeper Horse Owners Association
Joan Salvati	VA Department of Environmental Quality
Becky Sheffield	Virginia Cooperative Extension
David Sours	Public House Produce
Debbie Switzer	VA Department of Environmental Quality
Greg Wichelns	Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District

Welcome & Introductions

Attendees were welcomed and introductions were made. Copies of the Agenda were distributed.

Local Stormwater Program Development Update

Joan Salvati, DEQ

Ms. Salvati provided an overview of the local stormwater program development. Her presentation is available on the committee webpage at <http://www.rrregion.org/envcmte.html>.

Localities should keep the numbers 9-6-3 in mind when developing their programs:

- 9 elements required to be in each localities stormwater programs
- 6 of those elements must be included in the localities stormwater ordinance
- 3 items must be submitted in the final VSMP package

Due to revision of the state Construction General Permit, DEQ has moved the deadlines for submission of local program information by one month. On January 15, 2014, localities will need to submit their preliminary local VSMP application packages. On May 15, 2014, final adopted VSMP ordinances must be submitted. July 1, 2014 remains the date for local program implementation. An inquiry was made as to whether the timeline for the stormwater program development grants will be amended, to which Ms. Salvati replied yes.

A question was raised as to whether the frequency of inspections needed to be specified in local stormwater ordinances, to which Ms. Salvati responded yes. The state permit fee schedule was developed based on workload and Ms. Salvati offered to send that information to everyone to use as a guide.

For those localities using a third party, such as Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District, to implement their stormwater program, a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) will need to be submitted with in the local policies and procedures. A draft MOA will be acceptable for the January 2014 deadline.

An inquiry was made as to how detailed the Funding and Staffing Plans needed to be; to which Ms. Salvati replied that there did not have to be much detail. Succinct is preferred. The plans should identify program staff, where program funds are coming from, and a brief explanation of how the plan was developed. Example: Number of permits expected was based on the local comprehensive plan. The Funding and Staffing Plan should be thought of as an “Executive Summary.”

Of the three items submitted in the final VSMP package, a 4th item is needed for county stormwater programs, if the town(s) is not implementing their own local stormwater program, yet has its own policies/procedures. In this case, the county will need to submit a MOA formalizing the partnership. If the town does not have its own policies and procedure an MOA is optional.

Bills are being developed which would affect localities’ stormwater programs if passed. There has been some consideration towards grandfathering single-family lots in subdivision plans that have not yet been built. If approved, the General Permit could grandfather those lots that are already in the site plan and include them in the subdivisions permit coverage. If so, then there would be no registration statement and no fee paid. Permit by rule—individual lots covered by general permit, but would still need to comply with ESC.

That change would not cover single-family lots outside of subdivisions. Those would still require a VSMP permit. DEQ staff felt that they did not have the latitude to change the regulatory requirement. It would require a change to state statute. There may be legislation proposed allowing Stormwater Agreements in Lieu of Plan for single-family lots. Another Bill is being introduced to reduce the fees for single-family lots by homebuilders.

If legislation passes amending the state stormwater law, then adjustments will need to be made in the local program timeline. Further information regarding the stormwater program roll-out will be provided to localities through DEQ regional office staff as it becomes available.

DEQ has developed Tools for Program Development, a local government program development toolkit geared towards localities that do not current implement a stormwater program. The toolkit includes:

- Required Elements Checklist
- VSMP Local Ordinance Checklist
- Model Ordinance
- Stormwater Management Handbook

All these tools are on the DEQ website. In addition, DEQ assistance will be available to localities through regional planning staff; with each locality being assigned to a regional planner. Daniel Moore is the regional planner for PD9. Ms. Salvati thanked the localities, CSWCD and RRRC for their support and assistance during this process.

Additionally, the FAQ/guidance document regarding local program implementation of the new stormwater regulations are currently being reviewed. When approved, it will be sent to localities through the DEQ regional staff. Joan estimated the document will be sent out in two weeks.

An inquiry was made as to when the e-Permitting site would be ready; to which Ms. Salvati replied that DEQ was committed to developing them and is aware that localities need it before July 1, 2014. The site is currently being revised to address security issues. DEQ plans to make the beta version available for testing by April. All information contained in the stormwater permit registration statement will be included in the e-permitting site. It will also include information necessary to get credit for BMP's in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Model. DEQ will be holding meetings across the state in December and January to gather local programs' input regarding proposed content of the e-Permitting Site. DEQ will send an email to local program staff with the meeting dates and locations.

Page County Grown & Shenandoah Food System Study *David Sours, Public House Produce*

Mr. Sours owns and operates Public House Produce, a small vegetable and egg production on 12 acres. This is his 5th year and does not come from a conventional Agricultural background. Public House Produce started out by selling at farmers markets, then expanded into a CSA. He now sells to restaurants, Shenandoah Valley Produce Auction and schools. Mr. Sours also serves as a broker to the public schools in Page County.

David is also President of Page County Grown (PCG), a grassroots organization started in February 2011, which includes farmers, restaurateurs, and chefs. PCG's mission is to bring prosperity to Paige County by promoting family farms; linking farmers with markets and consumers; enhancing tourism experiences and building healthier connections to locally-grown products. The organization grew out of stakeholders' interest in branding their local products.

They took their idea to the Luray Chamber of Commerce, and Page County Grown was officially formalized with by-laws, a logo, mission statement and website.

In Page County, Agriculture is the number one industry and is three times larger than the second industry, which is tourism. Page County is a low income county with high unemployment rates. They were able to get buy in by utilizing the multiplier effect where for every \$1 spent locally, \$2 is invested in the local economy. They implemented the \$10 challenge, requesting that every household spend \$10 a month in local products. Page County Grown is currently comprised of a dozen farms in Page County and 3-4 restaurants. Their goal is to get every business on Main Street to join.

The Shenandoah Food System Study found that the biggest opportunity available for Agricultural Markets was with emerging institutions. It was recommended that relationships with institutions be fostered. Page County Grown's biggest success has been with the public school system. They started three years ago by selling 6 dozen eggs to 8 schools in Page County. The volume was low, due to the added work needed to shell fresh eggs — a barrier. Over the years, the schools have added a "Go Local Day" event where volunteers, including producers, serve 100% locally sourced foods. They now host three Go Local Days a year. This year the goal is to serve a local food item every day.

Currently 35% of produce used by the school system is locally grown. During the winter months, the schools utilize storage crops—apples, sweet potatoes, etc. There is potential for using high tunnels during the winter months. School is not in session when most local products are in season, and the extra work required for processing the local products, which presents a significant challenge. Initially kitchen staff were not very supportive of the extra work, but over the years, they have seen increased buy-in. Gardens have also been installed at the schools and the harvest is used during Go Local Day events. A study showed that only 1% of people in the United States have a direct connection with Agriculture. The gardens are one step in the effort to change that.

A question was raised as to what the largest untapped resource market for Page County Grown is. Mr. Sours replied the Institutions, such as Valley Health Hospital and Shenandoah National Park. An inquiry was made as to whether Federal statutes could be written to help support the purchase of locally grown products. Mr. Sours replied that the Federal guidelines set guidelines, to which the State then restricts further, to which the County restricts even more. For example, the Federal Guidelines state that public schools may purchase \$150,000 off-bid. The State reduced the maximum to \$75,000. In Page County, the maximum off-bid amount was further reduced to \$10,000. Page County Schools have revised their off-bid maximum to match the state and reworded their Bid Proposal this year to include a geographic preference. More points would be awarded to the Bid if the products were purchased/grown within the county, less points would be given if products were purchased/grown in the region (90 miles), and even less points would be given if the products were purchase/grown in the state.

A question was asked as to whether or not Page County Grown or Public House Produce sells to grocery stores; to which Mr. Sours replied that grocery stores typically depend on a consistent supply and it takes a special grocery store to work with seasonal availability.

With regard to the Shenandoah Food System Study, the Shenandoah Valley Produce Auction is a true success story from the study. The biggest challenge initially was producer buy-in. Another auction so close to the Shenandoah Valley Produce Auction would likely not be able to compete. However, there is potential for aggregation and brokering. Farmers just want to farm and do not necessarily have the skills or desire to develop relationships with consumers. A broker who can deal with various personalities could fill that need.

Mr. Sours was asked to share his opinion of the Shenandoah Valley Food System Assessment conducted by Ken Meter of Crossroads Resource Center. He replied that Mr. Meeter was great to work with, had powerful facts to share, and gave a regional perspective. One of the most influential pieces of information he shared was the amount of money left on the table, the potential to increase revenue. While individual groups have used the study results as a jumping off point, there has not been a concerted effort move forward as a region or develop a regional plan.

RRRC Agriculture Subcommittee Update

Day to Serve Project: The Day to Serve Event was held at Fauquier Education Farm where thirty-five volunteers harvested 1100 lbs. of sweet potatoes, which were then donated to the local food bank. Among the volunteers were staff from RRRC, Piedmont Environmental Council, and Virginia Cooperative Extension, as well as Master Gardeners and students and staff of St. John the Evangelist School.

Agro-artisan Trail: RRRC was awarded an Agricultural and Forestry Industries Development (AFID) Planning Grant from the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. The two year grant will include the development of a regional Agro-Artisan Trail to promote and support agricultural businesses in the region. The Agricultural Working Group will work closely with the Regional Tourism Committee to implement the project. The Regional Tourism Committee had their first planning meeting on October 29th to discuss the parameters of who will be invited to participate on the trail and define “agro-artisan.” Once developed, the information will be shared with the Agricultural Working Group for their feedback and guidance. Anyone who is interested in learning more may contact Jenny Biche at jkbiche@rrregion.org/540-829-7450.

Green Infrastructure Mapping Final Phase: The AFID Planning Grant will also fund the final phase of the Regional Green Infrastructure Map, adding prime agriculture and water quality layers. Once completed, the layers will be made available in digital format for use in localities and organizations’ existing GIS. Additionally, an outreach document containing all of the Regional Green Infrastructure layers will produced. For more information, contact Michelle Edwards at medwards@rrregion.org/540-829-750.

Regional Food System Study: Culpeper County received initial funding via a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) from the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) to develop a regional Food System Study. RRRC was not eligible to apply, therefore Culpeper County agree to act as the applicant. RRRC will be managing and

carrying out the project, however. \$3,000 was awarded initially to complete initial project activities by November 22, 2013. Hosting two public meetings and two steering committee meeting were included among those tasks. Once all tasks have been completed, DHCD will schedule a meeting with RRRC, Culpeper County and the Regional Food System Steering Committee to negotiate the amount and terms of the grant award.

Two public meetings were held: one in Warrenton on November 13th and one in Culpeper on November 14th). The purpose of the meetings was to raise awareness, gather public input, and broaden the membership of the steering committee. The meetings were well attended and comprised of a variety of stakeholders including farmers, consumers, and representatives from Institutions, government agencies, non-profits and businesses. The next Regional Food System Plan Steering Committee meeting will be held on Monday, November 18, 2013 at 1:30pm. Those interested in serving on the Steering Committee, or who would like more information about the study, should contact Michelle Edwards at medwards@rrregion.org or (540)829-7450.

Next Land Use & Environment Committee Meeting:

The next Land Use and Environment Committee meeting is scheduled for February 13, 2014, at 10:00 am – 12:00 noon.

Please email Michelle at medwards@rrregion.org with suggestions for future meeting topics.