

**THE SUMMARY OF THE MEETING OF THE
REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE
October 1, 2015**

1. Summary of the September 3, 2015 meeting of the Hampton Roads Regional Environmental Committee

The summary of the September 3, 2015 meeting of the Hampton Roads Regional Environmental Committee was approved as distributed.

2. Public Comments

Ms. Donna Sayegh, resident of Portsmouth, expressed frustration with the amount she pays in taxes. She explained that she has a right to offer her opinions on government matters.

Ms. Liz Scheessele, Timmons Group, reminded the Committee of the upcoming VA Lakes and Watersheds conference, to be held on March 14-15, 2016 in Richmond. They have issued a call for papers and abstracts are due November 15, 2015.

3. VA Wildlife Action Plan Update

Mr. Chris Burkett, Wildlife Action Plan Coordinator, DGIF, presented a summary of the Hampton Roads section of the final VA Wildlife Action Plan. DGIF has prioritized conservation efforts to prevent species from declining to the point where they become threatened or endangered. DGIF identified 884 species of greatest need across the state. The primary cause of their decline is habitat loss. In Hampton Roads, there are 139 species that require action to prevent them from becoming threatened. Mr. Burkett explained that the idea is to conserve habitat and protect species in ways that have multiple benefits. For example, living shoreline create a habitat for aquatic species while also improving water quality. DGIF is interested in partnering with localities to meet mutual goals. Mr. Burkett asked for feedback from the localities on how best to coordinate and seek funding opportunities together.

Mr. Ed Heide asked if shoreline restoration projects could be collaborative. He also mentioned that wetland habitat protection could be coordinated with localities since many have easements in wetlands.

Mr. Clay Bernick would like to collaborate with Mr. Burkett on their efforts to develop a maritime forest strategy.

Mr. Justin Shafer offered to work together on small-scale restoration design in urban environments.

Mr. Heide asked about the spraying practices associated with timber BMPs. Mr. Burkett said that DGIF has biologists who manage young forests without harming the undercover.

Mr. Dave Kuzma expressed concern that the Wildlife Action Plan could be in conflict with a locality's local bacteria TMDL. Wildlife, particularly deer and geese, are listed as sources. Mr. Burkett noted that neither deer nor geese are listed as action species in the Wildlife Action Plan. He agreed that determining an appropriate management strategy is challenging.

Ms. Whitney Katchmark asked if someone at DGIF was dedicated to managing geese. Mr. Burkett recommended speaking with Mr. Gary Costanza, who specializes in water fowl. Ms. Katchmark said she could see overlapping benefits with the Bay TMDL Action Plans and wildlife conservation.

Mr. Ben McFarlane asked if the Committee would be interested in an in-depth Workshop to discuss the VA Outdoors and Wildlife Action Plans. Mr. Bernick said it would be valuable and could lead to collaborative dialogue. Mr. McFarlane said he would plan the Workshop.

4. Sea Level Rise Update

Mr. Ben McFarlane provided an update on coastal zone and sea level rise (SLR) issues in the Region. He noted that HRPDC staff is still working on the new maps. The SLR Advisory Committee will meet Friday, October 9, 2015.

The Governor's Climate Change and Resiliency Update Commission delivered their recommendations to the Governor in a final draft report. It is not yet publically available.

5. Coastal Zone Update

The Hampton Roads Coastal Resources Technical Assistance Program Final Report for FY14-15 was not included in the agenda as originally planned; it will be distributed later in the week.

The Coastal Zone Technical Assistance grant supports environmental planning work at the HRPDC. The program has the following components:

- Regional coordination process (Regional Environmental Committee meetings)
- Environmental impact and project review (projects and proposals reviewed, comment letters submitted)
- Public information and education (13 articles posted to HRPDC website)
- Training (Planner webinars, LIDAR Workshop, 3 Adaptation Forums, Coastal Inundation Mapping)

- Technical studies and assistance (for localities per request)

Two special projects also fall under the Coastal Zone grant:

- Assessment of Research Options for Analyzing the Economic Impacts of Sea Level Rise and Flooding on Hampton Roads Communities
- Survey of Local Floodplain Management Programs

Comments on the FY14-15 Report are due October 28, 2015. The FY14-15 report will be included in the HRPDC agenda packet, but it will not be voted on. Ms. Katchmark stated that HRPDC staff is seeking consensus; however voting to submit the final grant report is not necessary. Grant reports have to be submitted or the funds are forfeited.

Mr. McFarlane reminded the Committee of the Section 309 grant to conduct a stormwater threshold analysis with the City of Hampton. It was selected for funding; however, DEQ does not want the HRPDC to begin work. DEQ is concerned that the ongoing Streamlining SAG could impact the project. Coastal Zone Management has suggested changing the grant to promote coordination between comprehensive planning, hazard mitigation planning, and CRS. The award would be the same (\$40,000) and HRPDC staff would complete the work. Mr. McFarlane proposed changing the Section 309 grant to coastal hazards and completing the threshold analysis as a TA Special Project in FY15-16.

Mr. Clay Bernick supported this proposal acknowledging that it keeps the threshold analysis moving forward, without having to wait for the completion of the Streamlining SAG.

Mr. McFarlane suggested that the threshold analysis would result in a recommended policy instead of just the analysis. The Hampton representatives would like to discuss the changes with Ms. Gayle Hicks, who had been spearheading the project.

Mr. McFarlane said that the switch is a good idea because there is a need to coordinate Hazard Mitigation and Comprehensive planning. Ms. Katchmark asked if it would be appropriate to also include emergency planning, and the Committee agreed. Mr. McFarlane spoke of the benefits of having Emergency Managers and Comprehensive Planners meet.

Mr. Bernick suggested also bringing in the State and NGOs to get even more buy-in.

Ms. Shereen Hughes suggested contacting Wetlands Watch, VIMS, and the VA Coastal Policy Center because they have been coordinating on some similar work. Ms. Katchmark asked if it was a duplication of work, but Ms. Hughes did not think it was.

Mr. McFarlane agreed to provide a draft scope of work on the revised Section 309 grant and to coordinate with Ms. Hicks to update the scope of the threshold analysis as well.

6. Proposed Revision to Guidelines for Committee Actions

Ms. Katchmark asked the Committee to consider the revisions to the 2013 Guideline for Committee Actions to provide for a decision-making procedure for the expenditure of reserve funds. Budgets always require unanimous votes, but a majority vote for the expenditure of reserve funds could provide some flexibility. In order to change the Guidelines, a unanimous vote is required. Ms. Katchmark asked the Stormwater Workgroup members for their input, because the reserve funds are from Stormwater.

Mr. Bill Johnson stated that in the past, the Workgroup agreed either in person or via email, but an official vote was not required. Ms. Katchmark said that the old way streamlines the process of using reserve funds.

Mr. Justin Shafer explained that Norfolk is concerned and prefers a unanimous vote. The reserve funds are taxpayer dollars and Norfolk wants to ensure that they are being spent in their best interest.

Ms. Katchmark said that the bylaws would need to be changed or it could be further discussed in the Stormwater Workgroup.

Mr. Joe DuRant asked what would happen to the reserve funds if a unanimous vote is not reached. Ms. Katchmark said the money would not be spent. In the past it seemed to work well to have general consensus.

Mr. Shafer suggested that the bylaws be left alone and stated that Norfolk does not support the revisions.

A formal vote was taken, and all localities were in favor of the revised language, except Norfolk. Ms. Katchmark noted that she will talk to Norfolk about their concerns.

7. Stormwater Budget FY17

The FY17 stormwater budget has been discussed at the August and September Stormwater Workgroup meetings. The last step is an official Committee vote. All of the localities present (CH, NN, HA, IW, VB, FR/SO, SY, and NO) voted in favor of the proposed FY17 budget. Ms. Katchmark will reach out to those who were not present via email.

8. Other Matters

- A. CH - Ms. Barbara Brumbaugh announced that the Stormwater Administrator left the City, and there will be some restructuring. She will keep the Committee posted.

- B. SU - Mr. Ed Heide reported that their recent EPA audit went well and as expected, except for one thing. On the conference call prior to their visit, EPA representatives stated that they were focused exclusively on the 2010 urbanized area. However, during the visit, they asked to see areas outside of it.
- C. FR - Ms. Beth Lewis said that roughly 10% of their Bay Star Homes items had been distributed.
- D. PO – Mr. Brian Swets announced that they had received a draft report on the sea level rise survey conducted by VMASC. Some of the preliminary results have been counter-intuitive. For example, they found that 80% of citizens believe sea level rise is a real problem; however, the higher their income, the less likely they are to believe it. Mr. Swets will share the report once it is finalized with HRPDC staff for distribution to the Committee.
- E. PO – Ms. Meg Pittenger said that Portsmouth will find out in December if their CRS rating will go from a 9 down to a 7.
- F. VB – Mr. Clay Bernick said the VB is encouraging participation in the CRS also. He mentioned that last week they had the kickoff to implement the Green Sea Blueway and Greenway Plan.
- G. VDOT – Mr. Drew Scott mentioned that VDOT will be hiring 5 MS4 Coordinators, one for each District.
- H. HRPDC – Ms. Katie Cullipher reminded the Committee of the Keep Hampton Roads Beautiful golf tournament on Monday, October 12, 2015. Sign-up online at askHRgreen.org.
- I. HRPDC – Mr. McFarlane urged Isle of Wight and Norfolk to build the kayak launches funded by the Coastal grant.
- J. CH – Ms. Barbara Brumbaugh asked if the Coastal grant could fund property acquisition or is it limited to design/build. Mr. McFarlane answered possibly, though the funds are only about \$20,000-\$30,000. He agreed to follow-up with Ms. Brumbaugh.
- K. HRPDC – Ms. Katchmark invited all meeting attendees to the Water Quality Technical Workgroup (formerly known as the Regional Environmental Technical Workgroup) meeting at 1:00pm that afternoon.
- L. Wetlands Watch – Ms. Shereen Hughes invited the Committee members to their upcoming Wet ‘tails networking event. It is scheduled for October 7, 2015 at 5:00pm at Cogan’s Pizza North in Norfolk and will focus on green infrastructure projects in the community.

The next meeting of the Regional Environmental Committee is scheduled for November 5, 2015 at the Regional Building in Chesapeake, VA. Materials will be sent in advance for review.