

**SUMMARY OF THE MEETING OF THE
HRPDC REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE
APRIL 4, 2019**

1. Summary of the March 7, 2019 Meeting of the Hampton Roads Regional Environmental Committee.

There were no comments on the March meeting summary.

2. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

3. Mariner's Museum and Park

Mr. Howard Hoege described how the Mariner's Museum and Park ("the Museum") is looking to expand their research, public education, and partnerships. The Park has 550 acres of forested land surrounding Lake Maury, so the opportunities for studying trees, wildlife, stormwater treatment, and other environmental interests are great. Ms. Erica Deal provided some examples of research efforts conducted by local universities, such as Hampton University's recent insect study where they discovered 15 species of ants living in the Park. The Museum is also conducting research, specifically monitoring the stormwater inlets at the reservoir and working with the City of Newport News to address shoreline erosion challenges. Mr. Hoege welcomes additional opportunities to collaborate with regional partners and is willing to fundraise to support them.

The Museum is actively involved with environmental public education, hosting events such as the Bio Blitz and CBF's Voices program, as well as meetings of the Hampton Roads Coastal Adaptation Forum. There is a designated Science Educator on staff who develops programs for the general public and school children.

Ms. Shereen Hughes noted opportunities at the Museum to study the impact of sea level rise on the living shoreline projects along the James River.

4. Chesapeake Bay Phase III Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP)

Dr. Filippino presented an update on the Phase III WIP, which was shared by DEQ and Secretary Strickler at the March 14, 2019 meeting of the Stakeholder Advisory Group and at the Environment Virginia Symposium. The Commonwealth has several goals for the Phase III WIP, including: 1) tackling additional pollutant loads expected from growth and climate change, 2) meeting the December 31, 2025 deadline, 3) engaging stakeholders, and 4) maximizing the potential for co-benefits. State representatives have noted that the local planning targets are met by implementing the strategies included in the Phase II WIP; however, those practices are not an accurate depiction of what has been implemented.

The new state initiatives to be included in the Phase III WIP were culled from the programmatic actions submitted by the PDCs and the SWCDs. For the developed sector, Virginia is looking to: 1) enhance BMP reporting, 2) fund VCAP and SLAF, and 3) promote proper fertilizer usage by expanding urban nutrient planning programs, enhancing fertilizer application certification, and expanding the Healthy Virginia Lawns program.

Some of the programmatic actions submitted by the HRPDC were included by the state. For example, Virginia is committing to developing a WIP that is dedicated to state lands and will establish a Workgroup to evaluate expanding the CBPA to all localities in the Bay watershed.

DEQ issued a second contract to the PDCs in the Bay watershed, this one for \$21,500, to develop a plan for future technical assistance needs. Some PDCs are building capacity, but HRPDC is looking to expand technical assistance by engaging with local CBPA staff and researching green infrastructure.

The draft Phase III WIP will be released by April 12, 2019, and the public comment will close June 7, 2019. DEQ will be holding a public meeting at the HRPDC on May 8, 2019 at 10:00am. DEQ has also scheduled webinars on May 13, 2019 at 9:00am and also at 6:00pm. The final Phase III WIP is due to EPA on August 9, 2019.

Mr. Hare asked if Virginia's 2025 goals are by sector. Dr. Filippino replied that they represent overall goals for each river basin.

Ms. Katchmark added that she is interested to see which suggestions from Hampton Roads the state decides to include in the plan, and whether they are willing to share their reasons for why some are not included.

5. Update on askHRgreen.org Initiatives

Ms. Cullipher highlighted two upcoming promotions – straw-free Earth Day on April 22, 2019 and the “Team Up 2 Clean Up” events happening regionally on May 3 and 4, 2019. Keep It Beachy Clean and askHRgreen.org are working together for a straw-free Earth Day. The program is targeted to restaurants, where they would pledge to only offer straws upon request and to display signage explaining the program. Members of the public are also encouraged to sign a pledge that indicates they will decline straws when they are offered.

Team Up 2 Clean Up is the two-day regional kick-off of the Great American Cleanup in Hampton Roads in partnership with Keep Virginia Beautiful. Activities include land-based cleanups, water-based cleanups, and beautification projects. Military and corporate volunteers, individuals and families, and sponsors are encouraged to participate.

Ms. Gordon asked if the straw-free program has a method for tracking the number of straws avoided. Ms. Cullipher noted that it was not part of the current program, but she added that some restaurants report the number of straws they would use in a typical day as a way to estimate the number avoided.

6. Environment Virginia Symposium Highlights

Several HRPDC staff attended the 30th Environment Virginia Symposium, which was held on March 26-28, 2019 in Lexington, VA. The Symposium featured presentations on a variety of topics, including resiliency, renewable energy, Chesapeake Bay restoration, groundwater management, HRSD's SWIFT project, and stormwater BMPs. Governor Northam gave the keynote address, where he discussed his administration's environmental priorities, such as increasing the number of conserved acres, maintaining and increasing state park lands, the Virginia Coastal Resiliency Master Plan, etc. HRPDC staff presented some highlights.

Ms. Sunderland summarized some of the high level updates provided by DEQ including staffing and budget. She went on to announce that the Conserve Virginia mapping tool, which was used to identify 6.3M acres statewide for new or strengthened conservation protection, will be released later this month. Ms. Sunderland also learned more about the additional electric vehicle charging stations coming to Virginia. EVgo, the recipient of \$14M of Virginia's portion of the Volkswagen settlement, will be offering charging stations to 20 municipalities at little or no cost. HRDPC staff is researching how a municipality would apply for one.

Ms. Katchmark noted a couple of VDH initiatives, including the new www.swimhealthyva.com website, which was developed to better communicate safe swimming conditions and the harmful algal blooms Task Force, which was created to investigate public reporting of algal blooms. Ms. Katchmark also mentioned new guidance developed by VDOT's research arm that includes recommendations for climate adaptation with infrastructure design.

Mr. McFarlane described a study conducted by the NRCS with Water Words that Work, LLC, where they evaluated why some NRCS field staffers were so much more effective in getting landowners to implement voluntary best management practices than others.

The researchers documented the extent to which Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) practices had been implemented in each Virginia county. In those counties with a large number of acres in the program, the researchers interviewed field staff to assess what strategies and practices they used to be successful. Those practices were categorized based on whether they were more helpful for new field staff or for mid-level (3-5 years of experience) staffers. The study is expected to be published later this year, with the goal of providing training materials.

Resiliency Projects Dashboard

Mr. McFarlane described HRPDC's efforts to compile the region's resiliency projects of the last 5 years and those expected to be completed within the next 5 years into one publically-available dashboard. The goal of the project is to define the magnitude of the funding need in Hampton Roads for resiliency and flood mitigation projects so that it can be better communicated to Richmond. Mr. McFarlane and Ms. Gordon are still collecting project data and welcome data from Committee members. They demonstrated how the dashboard works and different ways to sort the data. For example, you can limit your search to a specific locality or a specific type of project. Currently, the dashboard includes projects from eleven localities in ten categories. Several categories include projects that have been funded by local stormwater programs or the Stormwater Local Assistance Fund.

Ms. Hughes added that Wetlands Watch has a Coastal Zone Management grant to catalog potential natural resiliency projects statewide. Their goal is to get the projects shovel-ready so that they can be submitted for funding.

7. Other Matters

- A. DEQ TRO** – Mr. Fanghella recently completed an audit of the City of Suffolk's MS4 that went very well. The City of Williamsburg will be audited during the second week of May.
- B. City of Hampton** – Mr. Imburgia said Council recently supported the regional sea level rise scenarios and endorsed the Resilient Hampton design workshops. He added that a \$1.00 increase to the stormwater fee was also approved, which will add \$1M for stormwater initiatives.
- C. City of Chesapeake** – Ms. Brumbaugh recommended that Dr. Todd Egerton (VDH) and Dr. Tish Robertson (DEQ) come to the HRPDC to present more information regarding harmful algal blooms.
- D. City of Portsmouth** – Mr. Quattlebaum announced that Portsmouth has applied for two resiliency grants through VDEM and FEMA. Additionally, Council has approved a \$0.75 increase to their stormwater fee.

E. Wetlands Watch – Ms. Hughes asked localities interested in collaborating with a university on a resiliency project to contact her.

The next meeting of the Regional Environmental Committee will be held in Hampton on May 2, 2019.