

**SUMMARY OF THE MEETING OF THE  
HRPDC REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE  
August 6, 2020**

Pursuant to the declared state of emergency in the Commonwealth of Virginia in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and to protect the public health and safety of the committee members, staff, and the general public, the Regional Environmental Committee meeting was held electronically via Webex. These electronic meetings are required to complete essential business on behalf of the region. A recording of the meeting is available on the website.

**1. Attendance**

A complete attendance list is available. In addition to several non-voting committee members and other interested parties, the following members participated electronically:

**Regional Environmental Committee Voting Members:**

Barbara Brumbaugh, CH

Meg Pittenger, PO

Melanie Coffey, VB

Erin Rountree, SU

Angela Hopkins, NN

Justin Shafer, NO

David Imburgia, HA

Diana St. John, VB

Kevin Landry, GL

Allison Watts, NN

Melissa Lindgren, IW

June Whitehurst, NO

Heather Markle, WG

**2. Summary of the July 2, 2020 Meeting of the Regional Environmental Committee**

There were no comments on the July meeting summary.

**3. Public Comments**

There were no public comments.

**4. ConserveVirginia 2.0**

The Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) released an updated version of [ConserveVirginia](#) on June 12, 2020. Mr. Joe Weber (DCR) provided an overview of the mapping application and explained the changes included in the update. The ConserveVirginia tool targets 6 million acres that represent the high priority lands for Virginia to conserve based on themes such as ecological integrity, forestry, watersheds, recreation, and vulnerability to development. The lands were identified based on data from 21 different map layers provided by state and federal agencies, conservation organizations such as The Nature Conservancy, and land trusts.

The new Water Quality Improvement Opportunity Areas input identifies nearly 800,000 acres of the highest priority lands for conservation in the interest of water quality improvement in general. Most of the areas are agricultural lands in the headwaters of Virginia's primary watersheds. Some of the areas identified are in Hampton Roads, specifically in the Cities of Chesapeake and Suffolk and in Isle of Wight, Southampton, and Surry Counties. DCR and the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) worked together to create the layer based on data from the Phase 6 Chesapeake Bay Program Watershed Model (CAST) and the Virginia Water Quality Assessment, in consideration of the goals outlined in the Phase III Chesapeake Bay Watershed Implementation Plan. The focus of this layer in ConserveVirginia is buffers along the waterways in the watersheds with the highest loads (90<sup>th</sup> percentile) of N, P, and sediment. Generally, wider buffers were mapped for headwater streams and those with steeper slopes. Conservation easements including deed requirements for these vegetated buffers will qualify as a ConserveVirginia success.

Mr. Weber also presented three proposed water quality inputs for ConserveVirginia 3.0: 1) Healthy Waters Conservation Opportunity Areas, 2) Interactive Stream Assessment Resource (INSTAR) Reaches Quality Improvement Opportunity Areas, and 3) Aquatic Life Conservation Opportunity Areas. ConserveVirginia is scheduled to undergo annual updates, so these proposed water quality inputs would be expected in Spring 2021.

## **5. What's in your floodplain?**

Dr. KC Filippino and Ms. Katie Kreuger (HRPDC) provided an overview of ongoing research to evaluate the potential risks in Hampton Roads associated with storing hazardous materials in facilities located in flood prone areas. The objectives of the project are as follows: 1) identify the location of the hazardous materials, 2) assess the risk related to sea level rise, climate change, and flooding, 3) evaluate social vulnerabilities, and 4) offer policy suggestions for risk minimization. This effort stems from the Center for Progressive Reform's report entitled, "Toxic Floodwaters: The Threat of Climate-Driven Chemical Disaster in the James River Watershed."

The regulatory mitigation strategies that HRPDC staff intend to evaluate include state regulations, local ordinances, and legislative action. The state regulations that could help in risk mitigation include storage tank management provisions, septic tank regulations, and also the Virginia Pollutant Discharge Elimination System program. Staff is also interested in whether existing local zoning ordinances and the policies in place to manage the storage of hazardous materials are protective in terms of existing and future flooding conditions.

HRPDC staff asked for input from the Committee members, including whether their localities are already looking into these concerns. It was suggested that staff look to other regional entities in Virginia or neighboring states to see if they have done a similar analysis.

The next steps will be to develop a report of preliminary findings, then coordinate a group of regional partners, and then seek funding for a more robust analysis. It was suggested that DEQ's Brownfields remediation program could be a good fit for potential funding.

## **6. Overview of Regional Solid Waste Management Planning**

Mr. Matt Smith (HRPDC) discussed the structure and purpose of solid waste management plans and how the region can use the plan to further some of its environmental goals.

Solid waste includes municipal trash, construction debris, medical waste, industrial waste, etc. On the southside in Hampton Roads, waste that is generated in Portsmouth and the eastward localities is collected and transported to the Wheelabrator waste-to-energy plant to be incinerated. The ash from that process is then transported to the landfill in Suffolk. It is not cost effective to transport the waste from localities west of Portsmouth to the facility, therefore, the waste is taken directly to the landfill.

The purpose of a solid waste management plan is to provide for environmentally sound solid waste management with the most effective and efficient use of available resources. The most preferred management techniques are source reduction and reuse, while incineration and disposal are the least preferred management methods. The plans require public participation, justification for expanded waste facilities, and documentation for minimum recycling rates. As part of solid waste management planning, local governments are to encourage an ethic of resource conservation and waste minimization. Several of the outreach campaigns developed by askHRgreen are designed to promote this message.

Mr. Smith noted the challenge in Hampton Roads because the planning units do not align with existing political or operational boundaries. There are opportunities to coordinate regional stakeholders, particularly when it comes to policy concerns.

The Committee members asked several questions following the presentation.

There was interest in the waste generation trends related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Though local jurisdictions have seen a spike in residential bulk waste, it is not expected to be more significant than spikes that generate from storm-related debris. The increase in residential waste could also be offset by the reduction in commercial waste during the economic slowdown.

In years past, the Southeastern Public Service Authority (SPSA) used to coordinate a pre-selection process for contractors for emergency storm debris collection and disposal. Ms. Whitehurst (NO) requested additional information, and HRPDC staff will follow up.

## **7. Other Matters**

- a. Ms. Mulroy-Goldman (VDOF) announced that they have a 50/50 cost-share program available for the treatment of ash trees threatened by Emerald Ash Borer (EAB). The applications are due August 14, 2020.

- b. Ms. Melanie Coffey (VB) noted that the City has a new City Manager, Mr. Patrick Duhaney.
- c. Mr. Matt Smith (HRPDC) announced that he has accepted a new position with the Hampton Roads Alliance to be their Director of Offshore Wind Development.

The next meeting of the Regional Environmental Committee will be held on Thursday, September 3, 2020 and it will be held virtually via WebEx.