

**THE SUMMARY OF THE MEETING OF THE  
HRPDC REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE  
June 7, 2018**

**1. Summary of the June 7, 2018 Meeting of the Hampton Roads Regional Environmental Committee.**

There were no comments on the June meeting summary.

**2. Public Comments**

There were no public comments.

**3. Elizabeth River Trail Update**

Ms. Cheryl White, Elizabeth River Trail (ERT) Foundation Executive Director, and Ms. Mel Price, Principal at Work Program Architects, provided an overview of the Foundation's plans for the Trail. Ms. Price explained the connections the trail makes throughout Norfolk, including anchor institutions, major employers, and economic generators. Their mission "is to create the most iconic urban riverfront trail in the country" and extend it 10.5 miles.

Examples of successful trails were given, such as the Swamp Rabbit Trail in Greenville, South Carolina; Olentangy Trail in Columbus, Ohio; and the Virginia Capital Trail in Richmond, Virginia. Moving forward, the Foundation plans to add amenities along the trail and at 11 new trailheads; update/add signage and mile markers; provide year-round event programming; assist with maintenance through volunteer corps; and extend the trail beyond Norfolk State University and the Port of Virginia. There are several future and proposed extensions/loops that would expand the length of the trail, including connecting it with the Birthplace of America Trail and to the East Coast Greenway.

The projects the Foundation plans to pursue have been divided into phases. Phase I of these projects is to provide signage, seating, landscaping, and other amenities to the Chelsea Managed Meadow. Phase II involves constructing a trail under the Berkley Bridge Underlook, with landscaping and seating options. Phase III would make improvements at Harbor Park. Phases II and III would build upon work done via a Brownfields/Land Renewal grant from DEQ.

In 2019, the Foundation plans to implement a signage package at Plum Pointe Park. In addition, there are plans to install amenities such as water fountains, fitness stations, digital counters, benches, solar charging stations, and public art projects.

Mr. Matt Flanghella, DEQ, asked about public art projects and whether there may be similar opportunities to create murals like those in Virginia Beach's Vibe District. Ms. White replied that they would strive to include large and small projects from both recognized and lesser known local artists.

Ms. Shereen Hughes from Wetlands Watch asked about whether the Foundation could consider a playground that doubles as stormwater storage. Ms. White replied that they are considering those opportunities, and a skate park could potentially serve a similar purpose.

Ms. Jill Sunderland asked about acquiring the land for new sections of the trail. Ms. White replied that most of the land was on City property.

Ms. Sara Kidd asked for more details about the kayak launch. Ms. White explained there is an application complete for a launch at Plum Point Park, and that there are five kayak launches planned, including near Larchmont Library. She also suggested there was a goal to achieve kayak sharing capability.

Mr. Ben McFarlane asked whether planned trail sections will consider water levels during tides. Ms. White indicated the trail would be built on an elevated wooden structure that would allow water to comfortably move underneath.

#### **4. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Chesapeake Bay Comprehensive Plan**

Ms. Miranda Ryan, USACE, discussed findings from the Chesapeake Bay Comprehensive Plan (CBCP), which is intended to serve as an integrated water resource evaluation of the ecological problems and opportunities in the Chesapeake Bay region. The draft plan was released on May 31, 2018 for a 30-day comment period allowing for additional restoration projects to be identified by stakeholders.

Ms. Ryan gave a timeline of the authority used to begin the CBCP, which began with the 1996 Water Resources Development Act. Additional direction from Congress continued through 2014, and the CBCP has been developed in the time since. She explained the goals and objectives of the Plan, as well as components of the report and products that would present upon completion of the report. Ms. Ryan explained the process for stakeholder collaboration, which began with a study initiation notice in October 2016, followed by coordination letters, an email distribution list, a stakeholder meeting, webinars, and strategic engagements.

Ms. Ryan gave an overview of multi-scalar geospatial analyses USACE performed for the plan and presented the results to the Committee. She provided information about restoration opportunities, which were found in each watershed, and details about how the opportunities were prioritized.

Last, Ms. Ryan shared findings and recommendations from the CBCP. The findings include: prioritize actions geographically to maximize benefits and contribution to Bay goals; promote conservation/enhancement adjacent to existing healthy, high value habitat and restoration in highly degraded areas; utilize the National Environmental Information Exchange Network (NEIEN) to track restoration actions; develop relationships to support implementation partnerships; and promote integrated water resource management and plan for future threats. Recommendations include general investigation restoration studies, future planning with the Department of Defense and

other federal agencies, utilizing the Section 510 and Continuing Authorities programs, and providing technical assistance to states and floodplain management services.

USACE plans to make revisions and submit its final draft report to USACE headquarters in late summer/early fall 2018. The final report will be submitted to Congress in summer 2019.

Mr. McFarlane asked whether the state annexes will be released for public comment. Ms. Ryan said she was unsure if they would go out for comment or be included in the final report.

Dr. KC Filippino asked whether there is a certain scale for projects to be identified in the CBCP. Ms. Ryan indicated the projects included must be planned (not in the idea stage) and likely more than \$10 million to complete.

Mr. McFarlane asked whether the projects would fall under the 3x3x3 Feasibility Studies already authorized by Congress. Ms. Ryan replied that future congressional authorization would be required to complete projects cited in the CBCP.

## **5. Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) Stormwater Management Practices**

Ms. Tracey Harmon, VDOT TMDL Program Planner, briefed the Committee on the stormwater retrofit projects that VDOT is using for Chesapeake Bay TMDL compliance. As a condition of its MS4 permit, VDOT is required to reduce nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment loads from developed lands by at least 36 percent no later than June 30, 2022. Their Bay TMDL Action Plan is due to DEQ on July 1, 2018.

Ms. Harmon reviewed load reductions required in the James, Potomac, Rappahannock, and York River Basins. The James and Potomac River Basins require the largest reductions. She also provided information about BMPs used to achieve reductions thus far, including historical BMPs, stream restoration and stabilization, nutrient credits, and street sweeping and catch basin cleanouts. VDOT is including the following BMPs in their Action Plan: stream restoration (56%), shoreline stabilization (35%), street sweeping (6%), and other methods (4%).

VDOT has partnered with the Department of Conservation and Recreation, the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, the Virginia Marine Resources Commission and the Virginia Institute of Marine Science to pursue these projects on state lands not owned by VDOT. Upcoming projects include: 5.1 miles of stream restoration; 2 miles of shoreline stabilization and 5.4 acres of marsh plantings; 5,000 annual miles of street sweeping; and 230 acres of planting/fallow for land cover conversions.

Ms. Shereen Hughes, Wetlands Watch, asked whether sea level rise was considered in shoreline stabilization projects. Ms. Harmon replied that they are considering baseline information at this time, but need to consider how to implement sea level rise in such projects.

Ms. Barbara Brumbaugh, Chesapeake, asked whether VDOT was funding the projects. Ms. Harmon replied affirmatively that VDOT has a dedicated budget for TMDL projects (about \$10 million in FY19), but suggestions for betterments and amenities may not be funded.

Ms. Brumbaugh also asked if there is a minimum size for land cover projects. Ms. Harmon replied that current guidance requires a ¼ acre, but that VDOT is open to suggestions.

Dr. Sharon Surita, Hampton, asked if routine inspections would be conducted throughout the process and how maintenance of the BMPs will be handled. Ms. Harmon replied that there are land managers who supervise the projects and conduct regular inspections. The state partners are still working out the details for the maintenance specifics.

Mr. Mike Barbachem, Whitman, Requardt & Associates, LLP, asked about the guidance on shoreline management. Ms. Harmon replied that the load reductions are based on linear feet of stabilization. The plans are still preliminary schematics; however, they are committed to protecting the marsh lands.

Mr. McFarlane asked about vulnerability of the projects to sea level rise. Ms. Harmon replied that VDOT is still young in this process and would refer to coastal resiliency staff to consider sea level rise.

Mr. Brian Swets, Portsmouth, asked about why VDOT was not pursuing additional nutrient credits. Ms. Harmon replied that while their returns are notable and they are still in their toolkit, they are expensive compared to other BMPs.

## **6. Conference Highlights**

Mr. Matt Smith briefed the Committee on issues discussed at the 2018 Virginia Energy Conference. He explained there is increasing demand for renewable energy sources, where technology companies have transitioned to 100% renewable energy and others such as Wal-Mart have begun demanding their suppliers use renewable energy. He added that solar energy has not been able to stay competitive with natural gas. Last, Mr. Smith explained offshore wind is gaining popularity. Two leases for 6 megawatt test turbines will be constructed off of the Virginia coast by 2020.

Mr. McFarlane briefed the Committee on issues discussed at the Maryland State of the Coast Conference. Although it seems Maryland may provide more state support for local projects, he noted that Hampton Roads seems to be ahead of the curve for coastal resiliency efforts.

Mr. Smith also reported on the state of recycling programs given a recent decision by China not to accept certain paper and plastic products. At this time, staff is trying to

ascertain the extent to which this national issue impacts recyclers in Hampton Roads. The regional CAOs continue to discuss the issue.

Mr. McFarlane announced that FEMA was hosting a Plan Implementation and Grants Development Workshop at the HRPDC on June 14-15, 2018. He will distribute the agenda to the Committee.

## **7. Status Reports**

DEQ - Mr. Flanghella reported that the Phase II MS4 General Permit has been administratively continued. The new draft Phase II MS4 General Permit is expected to go to the State Water Control Board in August.

Wetlands Watch – Ms. Hughes reported that the James River Association applied for a grant to work in the counties of Surry, Isle of Wight, and Prince George for living shoreline training.

The July 5, 2018 meeting of the Regional Environmental Committee is cancelled, and the next meeting will be held on August 2, 2018.