

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

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

There were no comments on the February meeting summary.

**2. Public Comments**

There were no public comments.

**3. Plastics and Microplastics: In the World's Oceans and in the Chesapeake Bay**

Dr. Fred Dobbs, Professor and Chair in the Department of Ocean, Earth, and Atmospheric Sciences at ODU, discussed the phenomenon of plastics and microplastics in oceans and estuaries. Dr. Dobbs addressed the nature and scope of the problem of plastic pollution. There has been rapid expansion in the plastic industry since the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Plastics production is about 300 million tons per year, or 42 kg for every person on earth. Growth in production has mostly occurred outside the US. Packaging, consumer products, and construction markets use the most plastic.

This production and use of plastics has created a waste disposal problem because plastics are nonbiodegradable. Because they are nonbiodegradable, it is unknown how long plastics will remain in the aquatic environment.

There are two types of microplastics. Those intentionally used in manufactured products as beads and fibers, and secondary microplastics that have broken off from larger plastic objects. Ingestion of microplastics by seabirds and fish is a concern. Concentration of microplastics is increasing in the Chesapeake Bay, especially around more densely populated areas.

Microplastics can also be vectors for bacteria and human pathogens. ODU has studied this issue. Their study is the first to examine biofilms on plastics that serve as habitat for particular types of bacteria and human pathogens. Ingestion of plastics by marine organisms subsequently consumed by humans may pose a public health concern.

**4. Hampton Roads Active Transportation Update**

Steve Lambert, HRTPO Transportation Planner, updated the Committee on the Linking Hampton Roads study, Birthplace of America Trail, South Hampton Roads Trail and the newly formed Tidewater Trail Alliance.

Steve discussed Birthplace of America Trail (BoAt) plans, which were adopted by the HRTPO in October 2017. The BoAT will connect with the Virginia Capital Trail. Routes on the Southside and Peninsula are planned. Steve also provided an update on development of the South Hampton Roads Trail, portions of which are already in place.

Finally, Steve discussed the TPO's Linking Hampton Roads Study. The Study's vision is that Hampton Roads become an active transportation destination for the world that accommodates all modes of transportation, and provides opportunities for commuting and recreation that will improve the community's economy and health. Progress on the Linking Hampton Roads Study to date includes an examination of bicycle users, facilities, and existing conditions.

Discussion from Committee members addressed project prioritization, funding opportunities, and opportunities to incorporate environmental features into trail design.

#### **5. Volkswagen Settlement and Water Quality**

Jill Sunderland, HRPDC Water Resources Planner, discussed aspects of Virginia's Beneficiary Mitigation Plan for use of funds provided to the Commonwealth from EPA's settlement with Volkswagen over Clean Air Act violations. Three items of interest in the Plan are mitigation projects to reduce NOx emissions, expediting deployment of zero-emission vehicles, and reducing nitrogen loads to the Chesapeake Bay. Virginia's NOx reduction goals are intended to mitigate 2,095 tons of excess NOx pollution from VW vehicles. That translates to 64,000 lbs of nitrogen that entered the Bay. In perspective, a 64,000 lb reduction in nitrogen represents only .1% of the 55.7M lb statewide planning target for nitrogen. The plan's implementation activities present other opportunities regarding regional transportation, environmental, and health benefits. The HRPDC intends to work with the HRTPO and other partners to provide input for implementation projects.

#### **6. Legislative Wrap Up**

HRPDC staff provided an update on legislative matters from the 2019 Virginia General Assembly Session.