

**SUMMARY OF THE MEETING OF THE
HRPDC REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE
November 5, 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.

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	Heather Markle, WG
Anna Drake, YK	Erin Rountree, SU
Greta Hawkins, HA	Diana St. John, VB
Angela Hopkins, NN	Allison Watts, NN
David Imburgia, HA	June Whitehurst, NO
David Kuzma, IW	

1. Summary of the October 1, 2020 Meeting of the Regional Environmental Committee

There were no comments on the October meeting summary.

2. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

3. James River Association – Funding and Programs

Ms. Emily Hinson and Mr. Ryan of the James River Association (JRA) provided an overview of the Living Shoreline Collaborative (LSC), including their projects and available funding. The LSC is a group of regional and state partners, including non-profits, state agencies, localities, and universities, working to scale up implementation of resilient shoreline practices in the tidal James River watershed. The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, National Coastal Resilience Fund is supporting the LSC's demonstration projects and workshops; while the Virginia Environmental Endowment,

James River Water Quality Improvement Program, is funding a cost-share program for landowners.

Several LSC projects are currently underway. Three living shoreline demonstration sites, in Isle of Wight and Prince William counties, are under construction. There are also two projects in the City of Hampton, a floodplain restoration where 11 properties were bought by the City and a wet pond that will treat 31 acres.

The Living Shoreline cost-share program provides technical and financial assistance to property owners in the James River watershed and was of particular interest to the Committee members. The Collaborative will provide a 50% cost-share, design assistance, and installation by vetted contractors. The LSC has goals of restoring 1,800 linear feet of shoreline in the James River watershed and 1,061 linear feet in the Elizabeth River watershed. Property owners should contact JRA for projects in the Lower James watershed and should contact the Elizabeth River Project for projects in the Elizabeth River watershed. The application is available [online](#). If approved, a contract is established between the property owner, JRA, and the contractor.

Their funding also includes training for property owners, local staff, and contractors. The next Living Shorelines Summit is scheduled for February 2021.

The LSC also received \$1M from NFWF's Innovative Nutrient and Sediment Reduction program to: 1) expand the Collaborative, 2) focus on implementation, monitoring, and training, and 3) implement a large living shoreline project to treat agricultural land.

4. VMRC Wetlands Guidance

Senate Bill 776 directs the Virginia Marine Resources Commission (VMRC) to “permit only living shoreline approaches to shoreline management unless the best available science shows that such approaches are not suitable.” They are also directed to promulgate minimum standards to protect wetlands from sea level rise and coastal hazards. Mr. McFarlane outlined the steps VMRC is taking to update the existing wetlands guidance, which was developed in 1993. Three public listening sessions were held in August and September 2020. Several themes emerged from the discussions, including: 1) the definition of “best available science”, 2) the factors for determining suitability of living shoreline practices, and 3) the life expectancy of living shorelines when planning for sea level rise. VMRC intends to release a draft of the guidance for stakeholder input later this year, make any changes, and then present it to the Commission in the Spring of 2021. In the meantime, VMRC continues to welcome public input using a dedicated email address, wetlandsguidelines@mrc.virginia.gov. They are particularly interested in hearing the needs of local wetlands boards.

5. City of Chesapeake Receives EPA Waste Wise Award

Mr. David Gauthier, Fleet Specialist with the City of Chesapeake, presented the waste tracking program used at the City Garage that was recently recognized by the EPA with a WasteWise Award. The City Garage began tracking their pounds of recycled wastes, such as scrap metal, used oil, and used tires in 2005. By 2019, the program had expanded to

include solvents, aerosol cans, oil filters, and more. Over the years, the waste minimization program has saved the City over \$920,000. The environmental improvement efforts of the City Garage have been recognized not only by the EPA, but also the Virginia Environmental Excellence Program and River Star Businesses.

One of the programs in which they have made great improvements is with the management of their parts washers. They decreased the number of parts washers from ten units down to four, and also switched to a different solvent that requires less frequent servicing. The switch has saved costs and decreased their waste.

Mr. Gauthier works closely with the vendors contracted by the City to ensure consistency with the City's waste minimization and tracking procedures.

6. Coastal Zone Management Project of Special Merit

Ms. Elizabeth Andrews, Director of the Virginia Coastal Policy Center, and Ms. Pam Mason, with the Center for Coastal Resources Management at VIMS, described their project to update technical guidance related to coastal resiliency and sea level rise under the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act. Ms. Andrews explained that the guidance will include adaptations to flooding while also preserving water quality.

DEQ is revising the CBPA regulations in accordance with HB504, and the Project of Special Merit will begin after the State Water Control Board approves the revisions.

Ms. Andrews explained that DEQ will establish a stakeholder's group that will meet at least three times over the next year. She anticipated the first meeting will be held to kick off the process and then subsequent meetings would be designed to evaluate the draft guidance.

Ms. Mason described their work for the project, including geospatial analysis to project changes in the resource protection area (RPA) over time and a literature review to determine the impact of landscape changes on water quality. They are coordinating with NOAA and USGS to ensure the most current land cover data will be used.

In accordance with HB504, the regulations will be updated using an expedited process that includes a 60-day comment period after the draft is published in the Virginia Register. Ms. Andrews stated that the revisions to the regulations will provide the direction that is needed to develop the guidance.

Ms. Katchmark noted that HRPDC staff informed the CAO Committee that the regulations were complicated and include potential political implications, when considering property rights and water quality preservation. The Committee directed staff to develop a letter that requests additional time for stakeholder input.

7. HRSD's Sustainable Water Initiative for Tomorrow (SWIFT) Update

HRSD recently presented an update to the Directors of Utilities Committee, and Ms. Katchmark shared highlights from that presentation. The SWIFT project, which includes five treatment plant upgrades for advanced wastewater treatment, will improve water quality by limiting the discharge of nitrogen into the James and York Rivers but it will also help to stabilize groundwater levels. The James River plant upgrades are already underway and scheduled to be online in 2027. The Boat Harbor plant in Newport News will be closed and that wastewater will be pumped to the larger Nansemond plant. All of the upgrades are scheduled to be completed by 2033.

8. Other Matters

None.

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