

**THE DRAFT SUMMARY OF THE MEETING OF THE
REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE
March 5, 2015**

1. Summary of the February 5, 2015 meeting of the Hampton Roads Regional Environmental Committee

The summary of the February 5, 2015 meeting of the Hampton Roads Regional Environmental Committee was approved as distributed.

2. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

3. Chesapeake Bay Climate Change Workgroup Briefing

Mr. Mark Bennett, U.S. Geological Survey, is serving as the co-chair of the Chesapeake Bay Program's Climate Change Workgroup. The Workgroup held its kickoff meeting on December 10, 2014. Mr. Bennett gave a presentation of the Workgroup's objectives.

In 2014, the Chesapeake Watershed Agreement established a goal to increase the resiliency of the Bay watershed to withstand adverse impacts from changing environmental and climate conditions. Two outcomes were designed to achieve the goal:

- Monitoring and Assessment Outcome – continually monitor and assess the likely impacts of changing climatic and sea level conditions on the Bay, including the effectiveness of restoration and protection policies, programs and projects
- Adaptation Outcome – continually design and construct restoration and protection projects to enhance the resiliency of the Bay

There are 29 total outcomes in the Bay Program and changing climatic conditions will now be considered in most of them. Mr. Bennett announced that the public comment period on this management strategy will begin on March 16, 2015 and extend for at least 30 days.

Mr. Bennett invited Committee members to participate in the new STAC Workshop, "The Development of Standardized Climate Projections for Use in Chesapeake Bay Program Assessments." The STAC will inform the development of standardized climate projections for use in Chesapeake Bay Program assessments.

Mr. Clay Bernick (Virginia Beach) observed that it sounds like significant alignment of the Bay Programs will be made initially. Mr. Bennett agreed, explaining that climate needs to be incorporated into the Bay TMDL mid-point assessment. Increasing precipitation and rising temperatures impact evapotranspiration, which also affects nutrient transport.

Ms. Shereen Hughes (Wetlands Watch) asked which model will be the standard for predicting sea level rise. Mr. Bennett answered that the Bay Program needs to adopt a standard by evaluating which projection makes the most sense. It will be a focus of the STAC.

Mr. Ben McFarlane (HRPDC) asked when the STAC would begin meeting. Mr. Bennett replied most likely in January 2016.

Ms. Jennifer White (Chesapeake) asked what the impact of the new management strategy will be to Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act (CBPA) localities. Mr. Bennett responded that the Bay Program will not make changes to the CBPA, it will be addressed by the State. The Bay Program is interested in helping the State to incorporate climate into their programs.

4. National Disaster Resilience Competition

The National Disaster Resilience Competition is a grant program offered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) that will make \$1 billion available to communities that were significantly affected by natural disasters between 2011 and 2013. The goal of the program is to fund innovative resilience projects to help communities address current and future risks from storms and other extreme events. The Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (VDHCD) has been tasked with developing the Commonwealth's application and has been working with Norfolk and Chesapeake on the proposal. Mr. Chris Thompson (VDHCD) provided an update to the Committee.

Mr. Thompson provided information about the application process. This is a national competition, with approximately \$800M available for VA to compete for. HUD agreed to accept applications that focus on un-met needs, specifically areas in which storm damage has been repaired but not to a resilient standard. The State decided to focus their efforts on the Hampton Roads region because of the available data, particularly in Norfolk and Chesapeake. The group plans to bring in the other localities once the first phase of the application is approved. The idea is to establish Hampton Roads as a model seaport region. Initially, the partners will be focused on applying for the grant, but there are ancillary benefits to gaining federal exposure. There is a strong interest in bringing together all stakeholders, including federal, state, and local governments, as well as citizens. In conclusion, Mr. Thompson asked the Committee for their input on the application and also on the implementation of their plan.

Ms. Martha Burns (Chesapeake) spoke of their positive experiences working with the Governor's office, as well as state and local partners in the application process. She indicated that Chesapeake had provided damage assessment reports and GIS files to support the application.

Ms. Christine Morris (Norfolk) added that Norfolk was encouraged to apply for the grant because of their designation as one of the 100 Resilient Cities.

Mr. McFarlane asked whether initial damage assessments reports completed immediately following a storm event are common. Ms. Burns replied that they are.

Mr. Thompson elaborated on the types of projects that they intend to include, primarily those that incorporate a resiliency feature such as elevating homes. It is important that the application reference investments have been made historically.

Ms. Gayle Hicks (Hampton) asked how localities can receive the technical assistance that is included as part of the grant award. Mr. Thompson said it is not yet clear because HUD will determine what is available after the first phase of the application process.

Mr. Bernick asked if Mr. Thompson has developed a list of the stakeholders who have been engaged in the application process. A list has been created, and Mr. Thompson indicated he would provide it to HRPDC staff for distribution to the Committee. Mr. Thompson asked the Committee members to identify any gaps in the list.

Mr. McFarlane asked for additional information about the projects that were included in the first phase application, including the type, criteria, and scale. He inquired whether the State had narrowed their focus. Mr. Thompson replied that the State is seeking to make it passed the first phase of the application, which is due on March 27, 2015. Then they will determine which projects are appropriate to meet the grant requirements. He suspects that innovative projects that benefit vulnerable communities will be the priority.

5. Landscape Certification Workshop Summary

Ms. Shereen Hughes provided an update on the recent Virginia Landscaper Certification Program Workshop that was held at the HRPDC on February 20, 2015. The goal of the program is to consistently train landscape professionals working in the Chesapeake Bay watershed to design, install, and maintain small scale stormwater best management practices (BMPs). The Workshop provided a forum for interested parties to identify gaps in the program and refine the goals. Representatives from state and local governments, non-governmental organizations, universities, and other organizations attended the Workshop. Ms. Hughes explained that she is also working with licensed landscape architects and landscape designers. The program will likely be developed as a voluntary credential instead of a certification.

The original focus of the program was to educate homeowners about small scale BMPs; now it is extending to local government operations crews and landscaping companies who are responsible for maintaining large and small scale innovative BMPs.

Ms. Hughes explained that the next Workgroup will be focused on developing the online study guide and the exam. More information will be available soon regarding the exact date, but she is planning for April or May.

6. Federal Flood Risk Standards

On January 30, 2015, President Obama issued Executive Order 13690, establishing a Federal Flood Risk Management Standard (FFRMS) and amending Executive Order 11988, which requires federal agencies to minimize the impact of federal actions on flood plains. The new FFRMS establishes a new process for defining the floodplain for federal actions. Mr. McFarlane briefed the Committee on the new standard and its potential impact on the region.

Mr. McFarlane highlighted page 7 of Executive Order 13690, which explains three approaches for establishing the FFRMS elevation and flood hazard area. These approaches include:

- Utilizing the best-available, actionable hydrologic and hydraulic data and methods that integrate current and future changes in flooding based on climate science (heretofore referred to as the “climate-informed science approach”);
- Freeboard (Base Flood Elevation (BFE) + X); and
- 500-year flood elevation.

The climate-informed science approach is preferred, which is a significant change to federal agencies. Mr. McFarlane will provide a detailed brief to the Recurrent Flooding and Sea Level Rise Committee on March 13, 2015.

7. Coastal Zone Management Program

As discussed at the February 5, 2015 meeting of the Committee, the HRPDC submitted two projects to be considered for 306 funding, including the VIMS wetlands restoration site identification and prioritization project and the Nike Park Canoe/Kayak Launch project in Isle of Wight. The City of Hampton threshold analysis study was submitted for 309 funding. Mr. McFarlane indicated the Coastal Zone Management Program will likely announce winners in April. The awarded funding would be issued in October.

The quarterly meeting of the Coastal Zone Management Program is scheduled for March 10 and will cover native plants and working waterfront strategies.

8. Nutrient Trading Draft Comment Letter

Ms. Jill Sunderland (HRPDC) provided a brief update on the minor changes (one deleted sentence and two typographical corrections) made to the draft Nutrient Trading comment letter. The Committee voted to submit the Comment Letter to DEQ, with these minor adjustments. The Committee members requested an electronic copy of the Comment Letter once it was submitted.

9. Legislative Update

Ms. Julia Hillegass (HRPDC) provided an update to the Committee regarding the most significant environmental legislation passed by the General Assembly.

The stormwater utility fee exemption bills failed to pass.

Two studies passed, including the DEQ study to examine the long-term effects of the storage and land application of industrial wastes and sewage sludge on public health, residential wells, surface water, and groundwater (HJ 506) and the JLARC study to examine Virginia's water resources planning and management, particularly with regard to groundwater (HJ 623).

SB 1201, the bill to establish a procedure for the approval of dredging operations as a creditable BMP for meeting required pollutant reductions, is ongoing.

HB 1871, the bill to require the registration of wells constructed in groundwater management areas, is ongoing.

The bill to establish the Eastern Virginia Groundwater Management Advisory Committee, HB 1924 is ongoing.

10. HRPDC RFP for FY16 Professional Services

Ms. Tiffany Smith (HRPDC) updated the Committee on the status of the RFP. The Selection Panel, which includes representatives from the Directors of Utilities Committee and the Regional Environmental Committee, has completed its review of the forthcoming HRPDC RFP for FY16 Professional Services. The final RFP is pending HRPDC administrative approvals; Notice to Procure is anticipated for publication on March 12, 2015. Ms. Smith thanked Ms. Barbara Brumbaugh (Chesapeake) and Ms. Meg Pittenger (Portsmouth) for serving on the Selection Panel. The proposals are due April 16, 2015.

11. Status Reports

- A.** Mr. McFarlane reminded the Committee that the Special Committee for Sea Level Rise will be held on March 13, 2015 at 10:00am.
- B.** Mr. McFarlane noted that the next REC meeting is scheduled for April 2, 2015, which conflicts with the Environment Virginia Symposium. He asked how many Committee members were planning to attend the Symposium; only two members, Ms. Brumbaugh and Ms. Ellen Roberts (Poquoson) are planning to attend. The April REC meeting will remain as scheduled.
- C.** Ms. Hillegass announced that the askHRgreen contract with Cahoon & Cross is expiring soon, and a RFP will be on the website on March 12, 2015.

- D.** Ms. Roberts asked the status of the open Senior Water Resources Planner position at the HRPDC. Mr. McFarlane explained that Ms. Whitney Katchmark (HRPDC) will be making a decision with the next couple of weeks.
- E.** Ms. Brumbaugh reported that Chesapeake has a RFP out for stormwater services with a deadline of March 16, 2015.
- F.** Ms. Mary-Carson Saunders Stiff (Wetlands Watch) announced a new networking group hosted by Wetlands Watch, called Wet 'tails, which will meet for the first time at O'Connor's Brewery in Norfolk at 5:00pm on March 25, 2015. Wet 'tails is a social event designed for connecting folks interested in environmental and flooding adaptation issues. The first Wet 'tails will focus on a landscape and sea level rise adaptation design competition underway in Norfolk's historic Chesterfield Heights neighborhood. This project includes collaboration from ODU's Engineering Department, Hampton University's Architecture Department, the Virginia Institute of Marine Science at W&M, the Hampton Roads Green Building Council, and a number of engineering, architectural, landscape and design professionals in Virginia.
- G.** Mr. Bernick briefed the Virginia Beach City Council on the Green Sea Blueway and Greenway Management Plan, which is available on the City website. He also announced a new city-wide inter-departmental Workgroup to address sea level rise and recurring flooding.
- H.** Mr. McFarlane reported that the first round of Dutch Dialogues meetings was completed this week. The Workshop will be scheduled sometime this Spring.
- I.** Mr. Chris Moore (CBF) invited the Committee members to attend their next Blue Planet Forum, which is scheduled for March 10, 2015. The topic for discussion is the recently released CBF report on the economic benefits of a clean Chesapeake Bay.

12. Other Matters

The next meeting of the Regional Environmental Committee is scheduled for April 2, 2015 at the HRPDC office in Chesapeake, Virginia. Materials will be sent in advance for review.