

**THE DRAFT SUMMARY OF THE MEETING OF THE
REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE
November 6, 2014**

1. Summary of the October 2, 2014 Meeting of the Hampton Roads Regional Environmental Committee

The Summary of the October 2, 2014 Meeting of the Hampton Roads Regional Environmental Committee was approved as distributed.

2. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

3. EPA Office of Research and Development Presentation

Mr. Gary Foley, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Office of Research and Development, gave a presentation to the Committee on projects being done by the office related to promoting systems dynamics. Specifically, the office is shifting from a focus on academic research to the development of tools for use by decision makers. One focus of this change has been on applying systems dynamics to environmental issues, with an emphasis on areas such as the Narragansett Bay, Cape Code, and the Delmarva Peninsula. This work has centered on triple value simulations, or 3VS, which consider economic, social, and environmental processes and factors. Mr. Foley demonstrated some of the tools that can be used to explore these relationships, including diagrams and web-based dynamic tools.

Ms. Whitney Katchmark, HRPDC, asked who the intended audiences of these tools were. Mr. Foley stated that they are intended to be used by decision makers such as state and local boards and commissions. Ms. Ellen Roberts, Poquoson, asked about the Delmarva Project, since it reaches into three states. Mr. Foley stated that the office is working with the states to divide the research area into appropriate land segments, such as counties. That will depend on the availability of data and the desired information. Mr. David Imburgia, Hampton, asked if the models can be run backwards, i.e. instead of calculating outputs, using measured outcomes to derive inputs. Mr. Foley answered in the affirmative.

4. Chesapeake Bay Landscape Professional Certification Initiative

Ms. Shereen Hughes, Wetlands Watch, gave a presentation to the Committee on an initiative to create a Chesapeake Bay Landscape Professional Certification. This initiative is built on efforts to promote the implementation of stormwater best management practices on private properties to help localities meet stormwater and Chesapeake Bay TMDL goals. There is a need to train and certify landscape professionals so that BMPs meet appropriate standards and to track BMPs as they are put in place. The certification will cover design, installation, and maintenance of BMPs.

Partners on the effort include the University of Maryland Extension, the Chesapeake Conservation Landscaping Council, the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, and Wetlands Watch. Wetlands Watch is also working with local community colleges.

Mr. Bill Johnston, Virginia Beach, asked if DEQ has been contacted. Ms. Hughes stated that Russ Baxter supports the effort, and one of the next steps is to expand the partnership list. Other items to address include whether or not localities would be able to exclude landscape professionals without the certification from competing for contracts and ensuring that the BMPs are compatible with the BMP clearinghouse. The Committee suggested tying the effort to workforce development.

5. Update on new Chesapeake Bay SAG and Phase III WIP

Ms. Katchmark updated the Committee on the Chesapeake Bay Stakeholder Advisory Group and the Phase III WIP. The SAG has been recently reconstituted and met on October 20, 2014. The midpoint assessment for the Chesapeake Bay TMDL is in 2017, when the Bay Model will be run with updated data to assess implementation progress. At that point, EPA will determine if any revisions to the TMDL are necessary. Phase III WIPs will be developed in 2018. This will give Virginia an opportunity to revise its TMDL strategies. In the previous WIP, Virginia did not use its own data; instead it used data from <http://stat.chesapeakebay.net/>. Virginia is still benefitting from wastewater load reductions, but agricultural reductions are still needed. The SAG only discussed regulated urban areas. It held off on discussing unregulated areas. One challenge that was identified is how to implement local BMPs while also looking for cheaper solutions. The state has not produced a cost estimate for the urban sector. DCR staff talked about the agricultural BMP fund and how it is not likely to meet demands. There is significant concern regarding MBP verification. Virginia is developing a Quality Assurance Plan that will include a different approach for each sector. The draft is supposed to be finished July 1, 2015, with the final completed by October 1, 2015. Verification will cover installation, design, and whether or not a BMP is still functioning. The deadline for historic data clean-up is October 1, 2015. At its October meeting, the HRPDC discussed several concerns with Virginia's TMDL process:

- 1) Inconsistencies between the model data and local data
- 2) The use of estimates for BMP implementation in its baseline scenario
- 3) The high cost of stormwater BMPs compared to other sectors
- 4) The treatment of all urban lands equally in the WIP, regardless of past stormwater treatment and without prioritization of areas with the highest delivered loads
- 5) The lack of a clear plan to address non-regulated urban loads.

Ms. Katchmark suggested that localities should have historic BMP data by the spring. DEQ has not specified a format for the data yet, but localities would prefer to have it as soon as possible. Credit discounts will apply to older BMPs (for pre-1991 BMPs, no credit; for 1991-1999 BMPs, 10% discount; for post-1999 BMPs, full credit).

6. Section 309 – Land and Water Quality Preservation Grant Project Update

Mr. McFarlane briefed the Committee on the final report for Phase III of the Section 309 Land and Water Quality Protection project. The report covers the enforceable policies developed by HRPDC (in consultation with the staffs from Norfolk and Suffolk) and describes a demonstration of how GIS modeling can be used to inform policy discussions. There are three categories of policies discussed:

- 1) Reducing impervious cover requirements
- 2) Promoting redevelopment and protecting natural resources
- 3) Removing impediments to stormwater BMPs

Each enforceable policy discussion includes background information, at least one recommendation, identification of primary and secondary benefits, and examples of implementing those policies in suburban and urban communities, using Suffolk and Norfolk as examples (including specific recommendations for code revisions).

The modeling section describes two analyses of proposed policy changes for transfer of development rights and parking requirements. The transfer of development rights analysis looks at Suffolk's existing ordinance and proposes and models the impact of possible changes to the program on the number of transferrable units possible and the areas that would be transferring units to the city's designated receiving areas. A parking analysis which focused on Norfolk's parking regulations is also included.

The Committee voted to recommend that the Commission approve the report for publication and distribution.

7. Legislative Agenda Update

Ms. Julia Hillegass, HRPDC, updated the Committee on the regional legislative agenda, which was adopted by the Commission at its October meeting. The legislative agenda includes items on water resources, emergency management, economics, housing, FOIA, federal facilities, education, and other items. Water resources items include water quality funding, the Chesapeake Bay WIP, sea level rise, climate change, uranium mining, the Virginia Stormwater Management Program, and well construction. Other items of interest to the Committee include recycling requirements, plastic bags, balloon releases, PDC funding, unfunded mandates, and land acquisition funds for areas near federal facilities.

8. Native Plants Project Update

Ms. Hillegass updated the Committee on the HRPDC's native plants promotion grant project. The state is moving forward with a statewide promotion strategy. HRPDC staff has been meeting with private companies to identify appropriate strategies for promoting native plants in Hampton Roads.

9. Coastal Zone Management Program Update

As a result of discussions between the HRPDC staff and City of Virginia Beach staff, the HRPDC has canceled the grant project, “Developing a Local Sea Level Rise Adaptation Plan for Virginia Beach.” Some of the work done for that project will be incorporated into the HRPDC’s “Sea Level Rise Technical Assistance” grant project.

10. Special Announcement

Ms. Katchmark announced to the Committee that Ms. Jenny Tribo would be leaving the HRPDC and that this would be her final REC meeting. Ms. Katchmark identified three significant accomplishments by Ms. Tribo that would have seemed impossible:

- 1) Water Quality Monitoring
- 2) Regional Land Cover Data
- 3) Grey Infrastructure Chesapeake Bay Expert Panel Report

The Committee expressed its thanks to her for her service and best wishes.

11. Status Reports

Mr. Johnston, Virginia Beach, reported that no TMDL implementation plans have been submitted to EPA by DEQ and that DEQ is changing from implementation plans to action plans. 319 funding is only available for non-point projects; no implementation plans are approved.

Mr. John Harman, VDOT, reported that VDOT approved new SWIP guidance in June.

Mr. David Imburgia, Hampton, introduced two new staff from Hampton who will be attending Committee meetings: Mr. Andrew Griffey, a planner, and Ms. Angela Rivas, an engineer.

Ms. June Whitehurst, Norfolk, reported that the city has vacancies for civil engineers.

Newport News staff offered their thanks and appreciation to Ms. Tribo for her work on behalf of the Committee.

DEQ staff stated that they were also surprised about the implementation plan issue. Ms. Dana Gonzalez is willing to work with localities to update implementation plans to meet the new requirements.

Ms. Hughes reported that Wetlands Watch is working with ODU, Hampton University, the others to put together a sea level rise adaptation design charrette for the Chesterfield Heights neighborhood in Norfolk. The project will be the focus of a Hampton Roads Green Building Council breakfast next week.

Mr. Chris Moore, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, reported that the grand opening for CBF's new building in Virginia Beach will be held next Sunday from 1pm to 4pm. The stormwater training scheduled for December 3 is full, but CBF is looking into options to add spots or schedule additional trainings.

Ms. Tribo stated that she is working with DEQ on contractor training. The HRPDC has an opening for a Senior Water Resources Planner/Scientist. The stormwater work group will be talking about the implementation plan issue at its next meeting. The HRPDC staff is also working on making sure that the Back River and Poquoson River TMDL implementation plan will meet the new requirements to qualify for 319 funding.

12. Other Matters

The next meeting of the Regional Environmental Committee is scheduled for December 4, 2014 at the HRPDC office in Chesapeake, Virginia. Materials will be sent in advance for review.