

**THE SUMMARY OF THE MEETING OF THE
REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE
August 6, 2015**

1. Summary of the July 2, 2015 meeting of the Hampton Roads Regional Environmental Committee

The summary of the July 2, 2015 meeting of the Hampton Roads Regional Environmental Committee was approved as distributed.

2. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

3. Green Sea Blueway and Greenway Management Plan

Mr. Clay Bernick, Virginia Beach, presented the final Green Sea Blueway and Greenway Management Plan to the Committee. Virginia Beach, in partnership with the City of Chesapeake and Currituck County, NC, developed a regional sustainable management and development strategy for protecting shared resources in an area known as the Green Sea. The core components of the Plan evolved from feedback from government officials, local interest groups, and landowners. The major themes that emerged are as follows:

- The North Landing River corridor, its wealth of natural resources and varied ecosystems;
- Significant landholdings of protected land in the Green Sea area by different entities;
- Opportunities to educate private landowners about protecting the corridor's significant tracts of land with unique characteristics;
- Becoming better stewards of land and water resources;
- Opportunities to provide additional passive recreational uses that outdoor enthusiasts can participate in and enjoy, while coexisting with the natural environment;
- Ecotourism-related opportunities that could be introduced; and
- Potential economic gains to the neighboring localities.

The Plan is a way to manage and market the area, jumpstart a new nonprofit organization, and celebrate the North Landing River and other connecting waterways. The Plan was developed to align with other regional plans, such as Comprehensive and Outdoor Plans. Mr. Bernick encouraged the Committee to review the Plan, which is available on the City's website at www.vbgov.com/greensea.

Ms. Whitney Katchmark asked about the challenges of enticing visitors to a recreation area that includes swamps. Mr. Bernick said the best way to overcome those perceptions is to evoke a multiple benefits approach. Several local interest groups, such as cyclists and hunters, were involved in the development of the Plan, and though

interested in becoming better environmental stewards, they were primarily interested in the recreational opportunities of the Green Sea corridor. The non-profit organization has plans to market all of these benefits to appeal to a wider audience.

Mr. Ben McFarlane asked how many departments were involved within the City of Virginia Beach, acknowledging recent efforts to having holistic comprehensive green planning. Mr. Bernick responded that Public Works, Parks & Recreation, and Development participated. Involving many stakeholders makes the planning process take longer; however, the outcomes are also much stronger when there is already buy-in.

4. Local Innovative BMP Projects – Suffolk

Mr. Ed Heide, Civil Engineer, presented an overview of the Deerfield project. Deerfield Pond was constructed in 1964 and serves as flood mitigation for a drainage area of approximately 64.7 acres. It collects both treated and untreated water from the Shoulders Hill Road area of Northern Suffolk. The pond ultimately discharges to Bennett's Creek. The pond currently contains a large amount of sediment, which if removed, would be a benefit to flood control and could serve as a retrofit project.

DEQ awarded the project \$500,000 of SLAF funds, which Suffolk also matched. The city used the Runoff Reduction Method to calculate the pollutant reductions, as required by the SLAF application. The grant application guidance dictated that the Expert Panel to Define Removal Rates for Urban Stormwater Retrofit Projects report be used to determine the removal efficiency of the pond after construction because it would not be built to BMP Clearinghouse Standards. It was estimated that it would cost approximately \$32,000 per pound of TP per year.

The latest version of the Action Plan guidance included specific language indicating the removal credits generated by SLAF projects will have to be recalculated using the most up to date efficiencies prior to being included in an Action Plan. In accordance with the guidance, the credits for the Deerfield project are reduced by 58%, and the cost has increased to \$60,000 per pound of TP per year. As a result, the design of the project has stalled. Staff is seeking ways to reduce the costs, including asking residents to donate easements that extend into the pond. Even though the SLAF is providing \$500,000, it may not be cost effective for Suffolk to pay the matching \$500,000. It may be better to claim the pond as a BMP now instead of completing a retrofit.

The Deerfield project is significantly less cost effective than two other projects that Suffolk will include in their Action Plan – land use change and street sweeping. The City converted 31 acres of city owned managed turf to forest for a reduction of 13.77 pounds per year of TP at a rate of \$4,000 per pound. The City removed over 5,800 cubic yards of debris last year for a credit of 3,700 pounds of TP per year at a rate of \$150 per pound.

Mr. Bill Johnston expressed concern that some of the residents may not be willing to donate the easements for the Deerfield project and instead may see it as an opportunity to earn money. Mr. Heide said they were still waiting for responses.

Ms. Brumbaugh asked that Mr. Heide keep the Committee informed about the project.

Mr. Bernick asked if their Action Plan involved many city departments. Mr. Heide replied that Public Works and Parks & Recreation were involved. He expects more to take part in subsequent Action Plans, as more reductions are required.

Mr. Johnston asked HRPDC staff about the Street Sweeping Expert Panel report. Virginia Beach is interested in purchasing additional sweepers and he wants to ensure that credit will be generated. Ms. Katchmark mentioned that the credit for sweeping depends on the frequency and the type of sweeper. Mr. Johnston asked that HRPDC staff provide him a copy of the draft Expert Panel report.

Ms. Erin Rountree added that Suffolk has included street sweeping in its draft Action Plan because it is included in the guidance.

5. Green Infrastructure Grant

The VA Department of Forestry provided funding to the Green Infrastructure Center (GIC) for green infrastructure planning grants. The funds will provide for GIC staff to offer technical assistance to communities and regions to develop green infrastructure plans. The required match (in-kind or cash) is 80%, and the applications are due August 21. Mr. McFarlane explained that the HRPDC would like to submit a proposal building on prior experience with green infrastructure planning and focused on three core objectives:

- 1) Creating a stakeholder committee to identify data resources and needs, local values, and potential uses for the green infrastructure network data
- 2) Creating a new green infrastructure dataset for the region that improves on the previous layers by including new data, such as land cover data, aerial imagery, LIDAR data, and tree canopy data.
- 3) Overlaying cultural, historic, and recreational resources with the green infrastructure network to identify opportunities for connectivity and coordinated planning.

Mr. McFarlane stated that a draft proposal would be distributed within a few days. Staff would like to know if the Committee supports the proposal or has any suggestions for improvement.

Virginia Beach is also applying for the grant, and Mr. McFarlane offered to provide a letter of support from the HRPDC.

Ms. Katchmark asked if staff has determined the focal areas of the project. Previous studies highlighted water quality and habitat. Staff is looking to move beyond 30m resolution data and show smaller features, such as trees.

Mr. Shafer asked whether the study would be focused on stormwater management. Mr. McFarlane said they would like to include it.

Mr. Kuzma mentioned that localities have their own ideas for green infrastructure that may not show up on state data maps, such as cultural resources. Mr. McFarlane explained that they intend to reach out to localities. Ms. Kidd said that a large part of the program is to involve stakeholders.

Ms. Whitehurst asked how much funding was required from the Committee. Mr. McFarlane and Ms. Katchmark clarified that they were seeking support, but do not need funding. Mr. McFarlane's and Ms. Kidd's staff time would be funded through the per capita contributions not through stormwater funding.

Mr. Johnston felt the grant was not very attractive because it required an 80% match. Mr. McFarlane explained that the GIC has experience taking a layer of green infrastructure data and making it more useful.

Ms. Whitehurst asked if they would be expanding what they already have or developing a new plan. Mr. McFarlane envisions both.

Mr. Shafer asked how the tool will be used and encouraged a clearly defined end goal. Ms. Katchmark summarized and stated that the Committee seems interested but that we were not explaining the proposal well.

Mr. Bernick suggested starting with a focus on stormwater management and then expand the focus to multiple benefits.

Ms. Whitehurst asked for a summary of the proposal with a more concrete concept. Mr. McFarlane will distribute a draft proposal within the next few days.

6. Dutch Dialogues Briefing

The Dutch Dialogues workshop, held June 19 -23, explored solutions to water management problems using a multiple benefits approach, with a focus on two sites, one in Hampton and one in Norfolk. A separate group focused on solutions at the regional scale. Mr. McFarlane provided an overview of the regional discussion. The primary issue is sea level rise in urban areas developed on top of floodplains. Stormwater management in these areas is designed to store and slow the discharge of stormwater. The Dutch suggested collaborating regionally when watersheds extend across jurisdictional boundaries. Mr. McFarlane encouraged the Committee to review the closing brief on the Dutch Dialogues website, <http://www.lifeatsealevel.org/presentations-and-video/>.

Ms. Katchmark asked whether the Committee is interested in learning more detail about the sites in Hampton and Norfolk. The response was affirmative.

Ms. Brumbaugh asked if the giant sea wall concept is even feasible. Mr. McFarlane answered that it is; however, it is very expensive and only delays the inevitable challenge of what to do with the water. The Dutch said “no” to big infrastructure solutions but did not provide enough information to satisfy the Workshop participants. Ms. Katchmark asked the Committee who would lead a feasibility study. Mr. McFarlane mentioned that VIMS has a draft study and perhaps they would be willing to come to the Committee to talk about it.

Ms. Brumbaugh asked if workshops similar to the Dutch Dialogues have been held anywhere else along the East Coast. Other groups have held workshops in Miami and New York City. The New Orleans Dutch Dialogues workshop has been the most successful so far resulting in a regional Water Management Plan.

7. HRPDC FY17 Draft Stormwater Budget

Ms. Katchmark reminded the Committee that the budget has to be final by December. She asked the Regional Stormwater Workgroup members to consider what level of service they prefer. Four different staffing scenarios were presented, ranging from 1.6 to 2.6 positions for the Water Resources department. Ms. Jenny Tribo’s Senior Planner position has not been filled, and Ms. Jill Sunderland’s part-time position has been funded with old money. Ms. Katchmark said that she has discussed staffing with the new Executive Director at the HRPDC. She feels that sea level rise is currently understaffed and has floated the idea of sea level rise and stormwater sharing a Senior Planner.

The Committee asked Ms. Katchmark to provide additional information regarding the old money and expenditures.

In addition to staffing, another factor is the future of PARS. In order to continue the database beyond FY16, new money would be needed. The Stormwater Workgroup will discuss PARS at their meeting on August 19, 2015.

Ms. Whitehurst mentioned that Norfolk is not willing to support the continued growth of HRStorm. The Bay Program does not currently credit outreach activities and their funds need to be dedicated to creditable pollutant reductions. Mr. Johnston mentioned that Norfolk has an entire public education program that Virginia Beach does not have. Ms. Katchmark noted that the formulas for calculating the budget can change. For example, some programs could be designated as opt-in.

Ms. Katchmark encouraged the Stormwater Managers to email or call her directly with questions they may have. The budget discussion will continue at the Stormwater Workgroup meeting.

8. Other Matters

Mr. Bernick mentioned that Virginia Beach has a new Acting Director of Planning, Mr. Barry Frankenfield.

Ms. Nancy Miller (DEQ) made the following three announcements:

1. DEQ has a RFP out for the second round of pump out grants
2. The Stormwater legislation Streamlining SAG is supposed to be wrapping up in September.
3. DEQ reorganized and the Chesapeake Bay staff is under the Water Planning division.

Ms. Katchmark, who is serving on the SAG, stated that she will be impressed if it wraps in September. The big changes will be for those localities who may want to avoid VSMP authority.

Ms. Jill Sunderland asked the Stormwater Managers if they support the brief IDDE proposal that was distributed via email. Unfortunately, CWP spoke to NFWF and they do not seem eager to fund IDDE projects. In spite of this, we would still like to apply for the grant. The localities support the proposal.

Mr. Scott Rae reminded the Committee that the historical data cleanup deadline is rapidly approaching. The Gloucester City Council is considering reducing their RMA, which is currently county-wide. Mr. Rae may be reaching out to those localities whose whole county is not within the RMA. Mr. McFarlane mentioned that the HRPDC has a spreadsheet, though it is ten years old.

Ms. Brumbaugh said that Chesapeake has a new program for development review, Accela. Mr. Bernick mentioned that Virginia Beach has it, too.

Mr. Johnston has a draft permit meeting with DEQ scheduled for Tuesday, August 18, 2015. He asked Ms. Katchmark to contact Mr. Dale Mullen for his opinion on the DEQ response letter in advance of his meeting.

Ms. Sue Kriebel and Mr. Johnston stated that the Bay Program postponed the boater pumpout Expert Panel until 2017. The task force has only one representative from VA and three from MD. They expressed frustration that it is taking too long to study BMPs and suggested that pressure be applied from the region. Mr. Bernick suggested poking the process with a letter signed by the Commission. Ms. Katchmark said she would like to include specific examples and address it to the State also.

Mr. Drew Scott reported that the second draft of VDOT's Bay TMDL Action Plan is currently under review.

Mr. Louis Bott suggested asking DEQ about their internal training for IDDE. He suggested that it might be part of their PREP. HRPDC staff will inquire.

Mr. John Paine announced that AECOM is hiring. He also encouraged the region to put pressure on the Bay Program. The modelers do not understand the economics of BMP verification.

Mr. McFarlane noted that the Governor's Commission on Climate Change is meeting on August 31, 2105.

The next meeting of the Regional Environmental Committee is scheduled for September 3, 2015 at the Regional Building in Chesapeake, VA. Materials will be sent in advance for review.