

**THE SUMMARY OF THE MEETING OF THE
REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE
September 1, 2015**

1. Summary of the August 6, 2015 meeting of the Hampton Roads Regional Environmental Committee

The summary of the August 6, 2015 meeting of the Hampton Roads Regional Environmental Committee was approved as distributed.

2. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

3. askHRgreen FY15 Annual Report

Ms. Katie Cullipher presented an overview of the askHRgreen FY15 Annual Report. The highlights of the program in FY15 include the following:

- 10 themed media campaigns with creative advertising materials
- Search Engine Optimization/Search Engine Marketing campaigns
- Media ambassador training and 6 follow-up interviews
- Partnered with *Coastal Virginia Magazine* on *Green Magazine*
- Published the *State of Recycling in Hampton Roads* white paper
- Produced three videos and a movie theater ad
- Conducted third wave of campaign research
- Launched region-wide Bay Star Homes program

The themes of the media campaigns included cleaning up leaf litter and pet waste, preventing fats, oils, and greases from entering sanitary systems, and green lawn care. The advertising materials included radio ads, Facebook posts, and online updates at askHRgreen.org.

For more information, please review the Final report here: <http://askhrgreen.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/askHRgreen-FY15-Annual-Report.pdf>

4. Native Plants

Ms. Julia Hillegass provided an update on the draft Native Plants Strategic Plan. Local government staff, industry representatives, and NGOs have been working together towards the following goals:

- Regional branding and tagging
- Regional plant guide
- Public institutions embrace native plants
- Improve regional supply for chain for native plants
- Support small suppliers

- Engage the large “big box” retailers
- Easy landscape designs/recipe cards for homeowners
- Host local environmental summit
- Increased consistent coordination of native plants efforts within the region

Native plants have been receiving more attention locally. The group attributes this to local plant sales, demonstration gardens, and a growing network of dedicated advocates. There are still some challenges including the public perception that native plants are unattractive and attract undesirable wildlife.

The Native Plants committee will submit the draft plan for grant funding. It is still undecided which group will lead the effort.

Mr. Ben McFarlane asked if any localities are working on developing a policy that encourages native plants in municipally owned areas. Norfolk and VA Beach representatives suggested asking the Parks and Rec representatives in their localities.

The draft Plan will be available for review at the October REC meeting.

5. State Land Cover Data Update

Ms. Sara Kidd provided an update on the status of the State Land Cover Data Development project led by the VA Geographic Information Network. Ms. Kidd sat in on a webinar on August 12, 2015, and she shared the slides with the Committee.

The project is driven by legislative language that requires improved land coverage data to assist local governments in implementing stormwater management programs and to manage recurrent coastal flooding. The deliverables of the project will include raster and vector feature classes for each land cover class and web-based data available for download. The project will be completed in three phases: first focus on five pilot locations, then it will expand to the Bay watershed, and then finally, to the remainder of the state. They are close to finishing the pilot stage now and have planned to finish the entire state by October 2016.

There are some gaps in the data, and VGIN’s contractor, Worldview, has reached out to HRPDC and local staff for assistance in filling them. Ms. Kidd reminded the Committee to encourage their GIS staff to respond to the inquiries. Mr. Justin Shafer asked which localities have not yet responded, and Ms. Kidd said she would distribute the email from Worldview to the Committee.

Mr. Shafer asked about the discrepancy regarding the method VA is using to classify tree canopy compared to the rest of the Bay states. Ms. Kidd said she would follow up with Ms. Jenny Tribo.

6. Follow-up on Northern Long-eared Bat

Mr. McFarlane explained that Ms. Sumalee Hoskin from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will present an update at the November REC meeting.

He asked the Committee to please send him specific questions regarding the recent rule, so that he could forward the concerns to Ms. Hoskins in advance of her visit.

Threatened and endangered species can have significant impacts on development projects. Mr. Clay Bernick mentioned that VB had a \$30M project delayed one year because of the bald eagle. A consultant from Bay Environmental added that they too had experienced project delays because of threatened and endangered species.

Mr. McFarlane stated that the Virginia Wildlife Action Plan (available here: <http://www.bewildvirginia.org/wildlifeplan/>) is now finalized. Mr. Chris Burkett (Virginia Game and Inland Fisheries) will present and update at the next REC meeting.

7. Sea Level Rise

Mr. McFarlane presented an update on sea level rise matters in the region. The CAOs requested that the presentation of the maps and the associated report be postponed until October. It was decided to focus on one scenario of sea level rise instead of several. Mr. McFarlane is also working with the TPO staff on relevant scenarios for the Long Range Transportation Plan.

Mr. McFarlane announced the following upcoming meetings:

- 9/15/15 – meeting of the Joint Subcommittee to Address Recurrent Flooding
- 9/25/15 – meeting of the SLR Advisory Committee
- Fall 2015 – next Adaptation Forum

The Governor's Climate Change and Resiliency Update Commission was appointed on July 1, 2104 by Governor McAuliffe. They were tasked to review the Kaine Commission report from 2008, determine what, if any, actions had been taken since the report was issued, and to issue a new short list of priority recommendations for Governor McAuliffe to implement. The Commission met on August 31, 2015 and prioritized the following recommendations:

1. Creating a special bank to help finance clean energy efforts, such as solar power projects, as well as resiliency projects, such as elevating homes near rising seas.
2. Creating a state clearinghouse for climate change information.
3. Establishing a renewable energy target for state agencies.
4. Adopting a program to increase the number of vehicles that do not emit carbon dioxide.

5. Seeking federal dollars for programs to make communities in coastal, Southside and Southwest Virginia models for warding off the effects of climate change.

Mr. Bernick asked when the report will be available to the public, and Mr. McFarlane said that it is currently in draft form. He will follow up with the Committee on the timeline for the final report.

8. Economic Impact of Sea Level Rise

Mr. James Clary briefed the Committee on options for assessing the economic impact of SLR in Hampton Roads, which he has studied as part of the Coastal Resources Technical Assistance Program. He presented the following types of analyses, along with their pros and cons:

- 1) Direct Damage Estimate Analysis (based on personal property damage, has consistent results with high levels of confidence)
- 2) Property Value Analysis (examines how home values are affected, accounts for property adaptations and flood insurance costs)
- 3) Economic Impact from Adaptations (cost v. benefit, not suitable for regional analysis but could be used at school district level, both labor and data intensive)
- 4) Economic Drag from Sea Level Rise (difficult to have confidence in results because of significant assumptions, usually done on a national scale)

Direct damage estimation uses data that are available and of high quality, the labor intensity and methodology is clear, and the results are of high quality.

Mr. McFarlane explained that HRPDC staff is studying these options because the question of how to properly characterize the economic impact of SLR is often discussed. Part of the challenge is that in this case, historical information is not an accurate prediction of the future. Different types of analyses have to be considered.

Ms. Ellen Roberts said that the most helpful analysis would be one that considers economic impacts over time instead of a snapshot in time. For example, if a waterfront property recently flooded, the value would depress. How much would it depress? Did it recover? How long did it take?

Mr. McFarlane added that it is important to analyze the economic impacts of both frequent events and large storm events. HRPDC staff is preparing a white paper to present the options.

Ms. Roberts added that a depressed home value is also related to the economic downturn, not only how susceptible it is to flooding. Mr. Clary described the challenge of modeling economic bounce back.

9. HRPDC FY17 Draft Stormwater Budget – postponed to October Committee meeting

10. Other Matters

- A. Mr. McFarlane mentioned that the VA Marine Resources Commission has a new regulation in effect, “Pertaining to Living Shoreline Group 1 General Permit for Certain Living Shoreline Treatments Involving Tidal Wetlands.” A minimal impact to the HR localities is anticipated; however, when the Group 2 permit is released, it will have a much larger impact. It will be an agenda topic for a future REC meeting.
- B. Ms. Jill Sunderland announced that the Regional Cooperation Summary for FY15 would be finalized early next week. Also, she still needs Effectiveness Indicators data from Chesapeake and Portsmouth.
- C. VB submitted their historical BMP data to DEQ. There were some discrepancies between local watershed boundaries and HUC lines. They have also spoken to Dale Mullen, counsel with McGuire Woods, regarding their Phase I MS4 permit negotiations. VB has estimated that compliance with the permit as currently written will cost the City millions of dollars.
- D. HA said they were still working through the grandfathering issue in the draft Phase I permit.
- E. SU has an EPA audit scheduled for September 17 and 18, 2015.
- F. NN announced that they had received their second draft Phase I MS4 permit just during the meeting.
- G. Mr. Bernick announced that VB should have the first draft of their Comprehensive Plan completed in October. They are holding a design contest for LID and use of water in the creative arts district. VB is also undergoing a search for a new City Manager.
- H. VDOT announced that their Bay TMDL Action Plan is on schedule to be published by October 1.

The next meeting of the Regional Environmental Committee is scheduled for October 1, 2015 at the Regional Building in Chesapeake, VA. Materials will be sent in advance for review.