

York River and Small Coastal Basins Roundtable

January 2005 Roundtable meeting synopsis

Nineteen participants, including representatives from the Counties of Caroline, King William, and York; staff from the Hampton Roads and Middle Peninsula Planning District Commissions; Virginia DCR; Virginia DEQ; the Colonial, Hanover-Caroline, Thomas Jefferson, Tidewater, and Tri-County/City Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and private citizens from Hanover County and Friends of Dragon Run attended the quarterly roundtable discussion meeting at the Aylett Fire House on 7 January 2005. A list of attendees is attached to the end of this meeting summary.

Sharon Conner, Roundtable Chair and staff from the Hanover-Caroline SWCD, called the meeting to order and asked the group to introduce themselves. Matt Criblez (DCR) took the floor and introduced Kelly McDaniel (DCR Staff) who provided an update on the Tributary Strategy:

- The Secretary of Natural Resources, W. Tayloe Murphy, Jr., is finishing the statewide strategy to include a cost analysis and implementation plan. It is anticipated that this plan will be released in 2 weeks (on or about January 21) on the Secretary's website: <http://www.naturalresources.virginia.gov/>
- Basin-specific strategies are still being refined; the fine-tuning and public comments are to be reviewed by the Secretary and will be released on the Secretary's website in February 2005.
- To date, the provisional numbers for 2003 nutrient reduction progress (?) have been worked up and there is nothing to note that may be unusual. The credited BMPs included in the model run for the York River and lower coastal basin include forested buffers, grass buffers, retirement of erodible land, nutrient management plans, conservation plans, cover crops, off stream watering with and without fencing, animal waste management systems, urban nutrient management plans and forest harvesting practices. Many BMPs are still not being credited in the progress run because of a lack of an adequate tracking and reporting system. These include practices such as LID and Shoreline Restoration. It is important that localities report these practices to the state. The tributary strategies emphasize the need to develop tracking programs for Agricultural and Urban practices.
- DCR would like to report annual BMP Implementation and progress towards meeting the nutrient and sediment goals of the tributary strategies at roundtable meetings in the future so that this group may track progress.
- Bob Ehrhart, DEQ, made a comment about the use of the terms "progress" and "simulation". He said that 2003 numbers may look better than they actually are because the numbers reported are based on average simulated hydrologic

period (and not actual measurements).

- Matt Criblez mentioned that there are no changes in phosphorous between simulated values for 2002 and 2003 and therefore the results being seen may not be as good as previously hoped. Matt will send out a note on the progress run and will share the final input deck at the next roundtable meeting in April.

Matt Criblez then discussed potential funding sources for the next 5-7 years:

- The Chesapeake Bay Blue Ribbon Panel (Chesapeake Bay Program) has released data on potential funding mechanisms for Chesapeake Bay clean-up. This calls for a number of things to change in order to improve funding availability. More information on this may be found at <http://www.chesapeakebay.net/blueribbon.htm>
- A Regional Funding Authority is to be established by 2007 and will be funded through a 80/20 ratio of federal and state funds. Matt stated that they hope to have a total of \$15 billion by 2010 – with \$12 billion investment from the federal government and the remainder from Bay watershed states (the Virginia portion would come from direct appropriation from the General Assembly).
- The Blue Ribbon panel also came up with a list of *recommendations* for the states which include:
 - Establish stormwater utility fees at the local level
 - Create a nutrient trading program for municipal and industrial wastewater plants
 - Improve coordination and cooperation between Federal agencies and Chesapeake Bay watershed groups and programs to expand participation of the headwater states in the Bay Program.
 - Apportion funds for education, outreach and technical assistance to important stakeholders
 - Increase Farm Bill funding
- Other Federal funds include **CREP/ EQIP** and EPA Section 319 funds (for TMDL's only)
- Kelly passed out an informational handout developed by the Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) about a proposed "Flush Tax"
 - Proposed tax of \$1/week/household
 - CBF conducted a public opinion poll to see if Virginians would support such a measure. More information is available at <http://www.cleanstreamsva.org/>

The group discussion that followed this "Flush Tax" topic indicated that local governments are generally opposed because it is a state mandate,

(A portion of the collected taxes can be used by the local governments for administration. Opposition from localities is generally due to a sense that the localities are burdened with a state responsibility)

The point was brought up that there was discussion at the Rappahannock River Basin Commission meeting about having the state collect the tax and give an allowance to the locality.

- The point was brought up that this York and Small Coastal Basins Roundtable group should start thinking about more funds available for the York and Small Coastal Basins (YSCB) watershed. The YSCB isn't getting very many funds because there is currently little coordination on getting that funding. It was suggested that the group review the Chesapeake Bay Commission Report on Cost Effective Strategies for the Bay (available for download from: <http://www.chesbay.state.va.us/cost%20effective.pdf>)
- In an effort to influence future funding, the group also discussed getting more decision-makers involved in this YSCB discussion group.
 - The Potomac Watershed Roundtable are meeting at the same time as this YRSCB roundtable this morning and invited Chesapeake Bay Program Director Rebecca Hanmer to discuss the Blue Ribbon Panel recommendations.
 - Matt Criblez stated that he would like to see this YRSCB roundtable eventually have the same level of influence as the Potomac watershed roundtable is beginning to establish.
- Wayne Davis (DCR) brought up the development of an Ad-Hoc SWCD "study" steering team. DCR shall review SWCD operations and identify potential improvements in water quality and soil erosion programs. In addition, DCR needs to evaluate the quantitative impacts of SWCD practices and funding on Virginia's water quality and land conservation goals. There has been inconsistent funding across the 47 Soil and Water Conservation districts over the past 10-15 years.
 - Expect BMP program changes in the near future. Tracking has to be done according to specifications (which takes time, expertise, and willingness to do so)
 - DEQ has an Ag Funding Program with low-interest loans which may provide potential interim funding
 - Sharon Conner mentioned that this funding is often hard to get because this program is designed for large-scale farming operations and it is difficult to get the typical farmer in the loan program.
 - Sharon mentioned that she would like to see the loan requirements relaxed because the way it currently stands, the farmer has to put up a minimum of \$10K to qualify for the loan program. She stated that if the standards were relaxed, participation from farmers in the York

- River and Small Coastal Basin watersheds may increase.
- Susan Block (DCR) mentioned that this program has been very successful in other parts of the state (particularly with Mennonite farmers that won't take grant money)
 - The Roundtable group decided this group should further investigate the specific needs of York and Small Coastal Basin Watershed farmers.
 - *The Roundtable would like to invite Van Gallier (DEQ) to come to the next Roundtable meeting to give a presentation about this loan program and answer the group's questions. Wayne Davis said that he would contact Mr. Gallagher about this issue.*
 - Once the issues are addressed at the next meeting, this YRSCB Roundtable group would then like to make recommendations about suggesting changes to funding requirements to meet the needs of YRSCB farmers and increase participation in the program.
 - Brian Noyes (Colonial SWCD) mentioned that there needs to be a distinction between livestock and crop funding in this program because as it currently stands, livestock practices don't compete for the loan program in this region.

Brian Noyes (Colonial SWCD) then gave a brief presentation on a Crop Incentives Program. This MS Powerpoint presentation is available for download (6924 KB) at: www.yorkwatershed.org/documents/MSPowerpoint/Colonial-Roanoke.ppt

This presentation described improving soil quality by improving Carbon content. Improving soil carbon eventually improves local hydrology, which reduces surface runoff. The "Greenseeker Nozzle" was described, a new technology that used infrared sensors to detect the chlorophyll in the crop and adjusts that Nitrogen application accordingly. The need for an education campaign to publicize this technology so that the farmers can demand it was discussed.

The group discussion moved to nutrient "Trading Programs" and the need for pilot programs. Matt Criblez discussed that a draft packet for Continuous No-Till (this is the name DCR and the CBP is using. The practice is the same, only the name has changed), which has gone to Pennsylvania and it is being discussed how as to get this incorporated into the current Bay Model.

Wayne Davis (DCR) then led the discussion on current DCR fund allocation for Ag BMP's.

- Funds to support Ag BMP's have come from the EPA and the Water Quality Improvement Fund (state funds which are 10% of the budget surplus, therefore this is a variable pool of funding from year to year).
- The funding year runs from July 1 through June 30 and fund allocations in the York and Small Coastal Basin Watersheds have ranged from \$321 to \$76K. There are not consistently enough dollars to run an effective program. The general public is under the impression that this funding is easy to get, but it is

very competitive.

- \$5 million was allocated last year and 60% of this went to the Bay area (\$3 million). Of this 3 million, 50% goes to high priority watersheds, 35% to medium priority, and 15% to low priority watersheds. The York River and Small Coastal Basins Watershed group is ranked medium/low and therefore receives less funding.
- The EQIP (**E**nvironmental **Q**uality **I**ncentives **P**rogram, a USDA program through the Natural Resources Conservation Service, NRCS) provides additional funding. Historically, the South West part of Virginia always ranks higher for this funding than the other portions of the state. USDA is reallocating the distribution of this funding to 4 regions this year. Because of this reallocation, the YRSCB region will no longer have to compete with SW Virginia. Each of the 4 regions will get an equal 25% portion of the available funding.
- In summary, inconsistent funding has negatively impacted the efforts in meeting nutrient strategies and it is important that more-effective practices are funded.
- *It was suggested that this Roundtable group get someone from NRCS to come to a future meeting to provide additional information on this program.*

Kelly McDaniel followed with a brief presentation of additional funding opportunities that are available:

- NRCS Conservation Partnership Initiatives RFP information and application forms. Funding provided for developing partnership plans on a regional basis. It was suggested that this Roundtable Group consider this source of funding. Application deadline is February 17, 2005
<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/cpi/>
- 2005 National Fish and Wildlife Chesapeake Bay Small Watersheds Grant offers up to \$50K for watershed management Planning. The application deadline is February 4, 2005
<http://www.nfwf.org/chesapeake/index.htm>
- DCR LID grant is due in June/July 2005 and local governments are eligible. Bill Roberts (Tidewater SWCD) received funding for a LID parking lot project and can provide more information.
- The Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay received a LID grant to support a contest. The Green Roof Contest is offering \$28K toward the installation of a “green roof”. Eligibility is limited (see website) and the application deadline is February 14, 2005
<http://www.acb-online.org/project.cfm?vid=240>

Sharon Conner (H-C SWCD) then led a discussion pertaining to the large farm turn-overs currently faced by locality and districts within the York River and Small Coastal Basin watersheds. It is estimated that 50% of all the farmland in Virginia will turn-over ownership and many of these farms will be converted into smaller “farmettes” or

become suburban developments.

- Maintaining farmland is important to local governments because it maintains the rural character of the region and provides a stable economic base because agriculture is profitable
- This group should further investigate ways to preserve agricultural land because if the Tributary Strategy is based on Ag BMP's and the agriculture disappears, then the Tributary Strategy will not work.
- Rezoning may ultimately change the infrastructure of the region so that farmers can no longer farm.
- *It was suggested that this YRSCB group look into a program implementing the purchase of development rights and Sharon agreed to prepare a brief presentation providing more information on this program for the next Roundtable meeting in April.*

The group discussion moved to the topic of LID (Low-Impact Development), which is a program that uses alternative BMP's to filter/store water in the ground in order to control run-off and nutrient flow. *David Powers (KCI Technologies) agreed to put together a presentation about LID practices for the next Roundtable meeting in April.*

The final portion of this roundtable discussion focused on identifying a mission statement for this York River and Small Coastal Basin Roundtable Group:

The York River and Small Coastal Basin Roundtable Group is a forum for a regional information exchange to address water quality issues with the York River, Mobjack Bay, and Piankatank River Watersheds. The Group will discuss and establish position statements for practices and policies that affect water quality in these Watersheds to influence state agencies and decision makers. Such practices and policies include Agricultural Best Management Practices (BMP's), Low Impact Development (LID) practices, Nutrient Tracking programs, Nutrient Point-Source Regulations and Funding opportunities, and Nutrient Non-Point Source Regulations for On-site Disposal System practices.

The group was asked to provide comments on this mission statement and come to a consensus on its content so that it may be posted to the YRSCB Roundtable website.

The next meeting will take place Friday, April 8, 2005 at 9 am at the Aylett Fire House.

MEETING ATTENDEES

Janet Nestlerode	Middle Peninsula PDC
Brian Noyes	Colonial SWCD
Matt Stafford	Caroline County
Tom Gregory	Friends of Dragon Run
Charles LeFon	King William County Planning Dept.
Lynn Wingfield	Hanover County Voter
Susan Block	DCR
Charles Ivins	Tri County/City SWCD
Bill Roberts	Tidewater SWCD
David Powers	KCI Technologies
Claire Jones	Hampton Roads PDC
Connie Bennett	York Co.
Don Nelson	Thomas Jefferson SWCD
Wayne Davis	DCR
Kelly McDaniel	DCR
Sharon Conner	Hanover-Caroline SWCD
Marian Moody	Hanover-Caroline SWCD
Bob Ehrhart	DEQ
Matt Criblez	DCR