MINUTES

North Fork Rivanna River Watershed Cleanup Plan/Implementation Plan

1st Community Engagement Meeting

WHEN: December 13th, 2023; 1:00 – 3:00 p.m.

WHERE: Virginia Cooperative Extension Services - Greene Unit

ATTENDEES:

- Andrea Bowles, Rivanna Water & Sewer
- Department of Environmental Quality
    - Ashley Wendt – Technical Reviewer, Central Office
    - Kaitlin King – NPS Coordinator, Central Office/NRO
    - Madison Whitehurst – NPS Coordinator, Central Office/VRO
- Greg Wichelns, Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District
- Isabelle O'Brien, Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission
- James Fulcher, Albemarle Resident
- John McCloskey, Watershed Citizen
- Kory Kirkland, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
- Meghan Sobbott, Thomas Jefferson Soil and Water Conservation District
- Stavros Calos, Albemarle City
- Wetland Studies and Solutions
    - Jacob Bellinger
    - Katie Shoemaker

Meeting purpose: To get initial feedback on the status of the North Fork Rivanna River Watershed's bacteria, sediment, and phosphorus sources and ways to reduce these sources in the watershed with best management practices, outreach/education and partnerships; and discuss next steps.

Each participant introduced themselves. Madison Whitehurst (DEQ) gave a brief introduction of the meeting purpose, gave an overview of Virginia's water quality process and the two TMDLs approved in the North Fork Rivanna River Watershed (approved in 2008 for bacteria and 2018 for benthic (sediment and phosphorous)) (see PowerPoint Presentation). The first part of the discussion focused on the sediment and phosphorous issues and then the bacteria issues were discussed. Residential, urban, and agricultural best management practices were discussed for all impairments. The meeting wrapped up with the next steps to complete the plan. Details of the discussions are below, with reference to the corresponding PowerPoint slide.

MEETING NOTES:

- Introductions
- Overview of Cleanup Plan Development Process
    - Slide 5:
      Albemarle citizen was concerned that their stream was not showing up as impaired on the impaired stream segments map. Madison and Ashley, DEQ, both explained that as long as the stream segment is within the implementation plan boundary, then it will still be eligible for BMPs.
- Review of the TMDLs
    - 2008 Bacteria TMDL
        - Slide 18:
          When looking at the bacteria load reductions needed from the TMDL study, Culpeper SWCD and other stakeholders brought up that they were surprised that an impairment did not show up for bacteria in Stanardsville Run. This is because of the wastewater that backs up in that area. We are unsure if there was bacteria monitoring on that stream segment, are going to look into the old TMDL.
- What has happened since the TMDLs
    - BMPs Implemented
        - Slides 20 – 22:
          BMP data comes from DEQ's BMP Warehouse and from DCR. This would no include federal data from NRCS. Looking into getting NRCS BMP data.
    - Agricultural Overview
        - Slide 23:
          What is the current growth trend for agriculture in the area? Do you expect to see significant changes in farming practices over the next 5 – 10 years?
            - Was told that Rockingham County doesn't have any farms.
            - Culpeper SWCD said that we are seeing a decline in certain land use categories, which corresponds to what was found in the comparative analysis. Was given some resources to look into; look at the county's comprehensive plans and the annual county agricultural statistics.
            - Culpeper SWCD and other stakeholders agreed that there will likely be no increase in the intensity of use of agricultural lands. Will more likely see cropland convert to perennial grass and orchards.
            - There is a proposal in Greene County to build enterprise and industrial centers on the agricultural areas.

          Is there a trend or has there been a change in crop practices? What % of cropland is already implementing conservation practices?
            - Nearly every cropland is doing some sort of conservation practice, it just may not be well reported.
            - Livestock comment: There's still a great deal of livestock standing in streams. There may be more livestock in this area than there is crop in regards to agricultural lands.
    - Residential Septic Overview
        - Slide 25:
          What is the current trend in housing? Are new homes being build, or is the housing stock aging?

- The current house trend is increasing. Greene County is looking to have over 1,000 new houses built within Ruckersville and Standardsville.
- There are also a lot of older subdivisions within the area (Twin Lakes).
- Stakeholders wanted to know where the failure rate from the TMDL came from. WSSI explained that it's based on an assumed septic failing rate that every 30 years, a system will need maintenance and/or replacement.
- How does DEQ define a straight pipe? DEQ refers to the VDH definition of a straight pipe. Something to consider is if a straight pipe also refers to a system that has nothing beyond the tank.
- Interest in HOAs applying for 319 funding due to severe sedimentation issues.
- Thoughts: Use the county GIS system to query houses by construction to try and find the age of homes.

Have there been expansions in sewer coverage since the TMDLs?

- Rivanna Sewer Authority is going to figure out and reach back out (Andrea Bowles) about expansions and/or future expansions.
- DEQ is going to investigate if there are any new permits since the TMDL for smaller community wastewater treatment plants.
- Thoughts: The Department of Water and Sewer in Greene County would be a good person to reach out to for information.

Is there plans for future expansion of sewer coverage in the watershed?

Is there any data regarding straight pipes in the watershed?

- Culpeper SWCD mentioned that based on other watershed projects done people will be surprised at how many septic tanks have no treatment systems.
- Comment: Most residents within the IP area aren't going to rush into the $20,000 type fix. Septic issues are usually complaint driven.
- Comment: Culpeper SWCD mentioned that there's an inspection BMP (RB-3M) in our program that gets used a lot and is pushing people more toward the inspection practice vs the pumpout practice.

- Prioritizing BMPs for the Implementation Plan
    - Sediment and Phosphorus
        - Agricultural BMPS, <u>Slide 29:</u>

          What is the level of interest in installing BMPs? What % are interested in 10, 25, 35, and 50-foot buffers? What type of practices do they prefer?
          - 35 ft buffers are the most common within this watershed (70% of farmers)
          - Assuming the average farm size is decreasing, as shown by land use change, farmers are not going to want to give up more land than they need to.
          - Question: What is the source of the phosphorus impairments? It's most agricultural-driven. Going to investigate phosphorus WQM.

          What are the BMPs on the list that are likely to generate the most interest? Least interest?
          - Stream Exclusion practices are going to be the most popular. Cover Crop is going to be the practice a lot of farmers are hesitant to do. Could be a good opportunity to educate on. Water quality filters/development on cropland could also be a potential highly sought-after BMP.

Are there any BMPs of interest that you are not seeing on the list?

- BMPs of interest that the stakeholders would like to see include woodland buffer practices, afforestation, sod waterways, streambank protection/stabilization, agricultural road stabilization (dirt & gravel road stabilization), cover crops, and stream crossings.
- Culpeper SWCD would like to talk/discuss more at the next meeting about piggybacking BMPs, i.e., streambank stabilization with water quality filtering.

Is there any interest in rotational grazing systems? Other pasture management practices?

- Yes

Is there interest in converting poor pasture or erodible cropland to forest?

- There is interest in converting older pasture to meadows. There would be more interest if there is an incentive.
- Albemarle County is interested in canopy cover.

- Residential/Urban BMPS, Slide 31:

What is the level of interest in installing BMPs?

- There are high demands for urban practices within this IP watershed. Albemarle County has a large interest in tree plantings and permeable pavement (just a limited number of contractors). There is also a lot of interest in rain gardens and conservation landscaping.
- The least amount of interest is in Greene County.
- Comment: Look into the Chesapeake Bay Survey to find interest within the area.

What are the BMPs on the list that are likely to generate the most interest? The least interest?

- Rain gardens and conservation landscaping are the most common/wanted practices.

Are there any BMPs of interest that you are not seeing?

- Conservation landscaping, filter strips, rain gardens, rainwater harvesting should all be added since these are the most sought after and requested within the area.
- Question on if we are able to report pollution reductions from rain barrels. The answer is yes, albeit its small, we can report pollution reductions.
- VT lawn soil testing (outreach?).

- Bacteria
  - Agricultural BMPs, Slide 34:

What are the BMPs on the list that are likely to generate the most interest? The least interest?

- Stream exclusion practices, mostly the same as the BMPs that address benthic impairments of sediment and phosphorus.

Are there any BMPs of interest that you are not seeing on the list?

- Poultry Litter.

Is there interest in rotational grazing systems? Other pasture management practices?

- Yes

Is there interest in practices to address manure spreading on crop or pasture fields?

- There is interest in biosolids.
- Unknown if there are any confined animal operations in Albemarle or Greene County.

Any barriers to implementing stream fencing and improving pasture management in this watershed?

- There are pockets of people who are not interested, and who have livestock just sitting in the streams.
- There are hunt clubs/dog kennels in small areas with no grass on the ground, providing a heavy load of bacteria.
- Try to focus on the hot spots of small areas that are resistant.

- Residential Wastewater/Pet Waste BMPs, Slide 36:

Are there any particular BMPs that you would prefer to see implemented?

What % if failing septic systems need to be repaired vs. replaced?

- The health department would know more in terms of how many need to be replaced/repaired. Find health department contact and reach out.

Of the failing systems and straight pipes, what % would require a conventional system vs. an alternative system?

- Answered above

What's the possibility of hooking up to the sewer? Any new projects in the future?

- Rivanna Water and Sewer is looking into this and getting back to me.

Is there interest in pet waste stations? Where? What watersheds are kennels located in?

- There is a big dog park in Chris Green Lake. Everything goes right into the lake. There are also a lot of apartment complexes with dog parks. Kennels are also located all throughout the watershed.
- There is interest in pet waste stations.

- General Question
  - Slide 37:

What would be the best outreach/education methods to recruit interest? Are there any groups in the watershed that would be good resources for education and outreach?

- Engage with schools, potentially putting in a rainwater harvesting system in the schools.
- Hold outreach events at farmers markets, parks, local churches, signage in public spaces, etc.
- Potential groups: Greene County Farm Bureau, HOAs (Civic League & Home Owners Association Directory (google.com)), Virginia Cooperative Extension, SWCDs, Rivanna Conservation Alliance, Rivanna Water and Sewer Authority, Greene County Government, Piedmont Environmental Council, Blue Ridge Foothills Conservancy (easement advocacy).

Are there other funding opportunities that could help pay for the installation of BMPs?

- James River Association, private foundations, local government, grants for specific projects.
- An idea that was brought up was to advertise through the chamber of commerce, could advertise the overall implementation and helping the watershed.

What timeline do you think makes sense for this watershed?

- Will know when there are more numbers involved.

Question: How efficient are sediment and erosion control BMPs? Answer: Virginia's standard is 85% efficiency. This is assuming that the practice is properly maintained.