

**3<sup>rd</sup> Technical Advisory Committee Meeting**

**5/10/2022 at 1:30 p.m.**

**Franklin County Public Library, 355 Franklin Street, Rocky Mount VA 24151**

**Attendees:** Lucy Smith (DEQ), Thomas Schubert (WSSI), Tony Capuco (Leesville Lake Association), Deborah Oliver (Leesville Lake Association), Gabriel Irigaray (Roanoke Valley Alleghany Regional Commission), Eddie Wells (RVARC), Leslie Mace (VA Department of Forestry), Mark Winebemel (VA DOF), Kevin Dawson (VA DOF), Liz Parcell (AEP), Ronald Wilson (Franklin County), Jessy Lacks (Pittsylvania SWCD), Amber Eanes (Pittsylvania SWCD), Dave Waterman (Leesville Lake Association), Charlie Hamilton (Leesville Lake Association Water Quality), Michael Tabor (Blue Ridge SWCD), Allen Jackson (BR SWCD), Tracy Culbertson (Peaks of Otter SWCD), Bill Tanger (Friends of River VA)

Introduction of TAC members including affiliation and watershed of interest.

Lucy Smith (DEQ) presented an overview of DEQ's water quality improvement process starting with monitoring rivers, lakes and streams, then evaluating the data to assess the health of waterbodies, then developing a TMDL for impaired waters, and finally creating a watershed plan that outlines steps needed to improve the water quality. The watersheds of interest are located in Pittsylvania, Franklin, and Bedford counties. Project highlights include 2 previous TAC meetings, a public meeting and watershed tours with interested stakeholders.

Thomas (WSSI) explained that the impairments on the streams of interest are benthic impairments based on the Virginia Stream Condition Index (VSCI), where scores that are below 60 are considered unhealthy. Sediment was identified as the most probable stressor for all impaired streams. A Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) is being developed for sediment. The components of a TMDL are a waste load allocation for permitted sources, a load allocation for nonpoint sources and a margin of safety. The sediment endpoint was established using the AllForX approach, which finds a ratio between a forested watershed's TSS load and the impaired watershed's TSS load. Based on this ratio, a target TSS load is calculated and reductions are estimated to achieve the sediment load goal. A margin of safety is added for model uncertainties and the future growth is added to account for future development in the watershed.

Thomas then presented the allocation scenarios for all watersheds. Three scenarios were presented for each watershed. The group did not have strong feelings for which scenario to select; therefore the scenario where reductions were called for evenly across disturbed land uses was selected.

Q: How are these reductions regulated?

A: DEQ has some regulatory power for permits. The permits in the watershed have been accounted for and will be checked by DEQ compliance staff for compliance of the TMDL. If a future discharge is added then they will have to comply with the existing TMDL and a WLA will be added. Reductions from nonpoint sources will be achieved by voluntary actions only. DEQ has no regulatory role to enforce nonpoint source best management practices (BMPs). However, the TMDL and IP process will open funds for organizations to apply for grants to install BMPs in the watershed.

Q: How were the loadings from pasture and hay calculated? Hay's contribution seems too high.

\* Information added after the meeting \*

## Pigg River, Fryingpan Creek, Poplar Branch and Beaverdam Creek TMDL

A: County data was used to estimate the amount of hay land. Thomas will find the exact loading rate and amend it if it is too high. \*Loading rate for hay is 60 lb/ac/year which is similar to land uses like forested and trees. It is a bit higher because of the assumption that people alternate between hay and pasture. The contribution of hay is likely due to the amount of hay in the watersheds.\*

Q: How is harvested land accounted for? The observation was made that there was sediment coming from harvested land in Franklin County.

A: Kevin Dawson (DOF) explained that the VA Department of Forestry investigates complaints that come from harvested land. They can recommend that timber operations install and maintain BMPs but if sediment is observed leaving the site then they can take regulatory action. Kevin will send Bill Tanger handouts to distribute at the Pigg River Ramble. \*See attached VA DOF handout (Thanks, Kevin!).\*

Q: How long until we are likely to see improvements?

A: Benthic community recovery can take many years; however, if BMPs are installed we will likely come out to sample in 6+ years post implementation.

Q: What about other stressors?

A: There may be other stressors impacting the community; however we evaluated multiple stressors using the data we have and determined that sediment is the most probable stressor. The Stress Analysis document is located on DEQ's website here: <https://www.deq.virginia.gov/water/water-quality/tmdl-development/tmdls-under-development> . However, stressors can have additive or synergistic effects on biological communities that is largely unknown. DEQ's water quality improvement process is iterative therefore if the community is still not as healthy as we would expect after sediment has been addressed than we will need to continue to investigate and address other stressors. However, BMPs installed to control sediment are likely to also control other common stressors like organic matter and nutrients.

C: The suggestion was made to make less reductions to hay because there are few BMPs available for hayland.

C: Poplar Branch watershed has had changes recently and uses less tillage and more cover crops. This may need to be adjusted in the model.

The group then had a discussion about the upcoming Implementation Planning process including the different types of meetings that occur and the components of an EPA approvable Implementation Plan. The final TMDL public meeting will also serve as the kickoff Implementation Plan meeting. A discussion took place regarding the best format and outreach methods for the final TMDL/kickoff IP meeting. Suggestions were made to reach out to the farming community through Southern States, Cattlemen's Association, NRCS, and Extension Offices. The group indicated that meetings would be best attended by farmers if they were in the evening and in the winter. However, this may not be feasible given the project timeline. The recommendation was also made to have site specific tables with handouts describing cost share options and conservation easements etc.

The group will be contacted when the public meeting has been scheduled and the draft report is available for review. Following the public meeting there will be a 30-day public comment period.

\* Information added after the meeting \*

Pigg River, Fryingpan Creek, Poplar Branch and Beaverdam Creek TMDL

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