

Preliminary Technical Advisory Committee Meeting
August 29, 2016
USDA Service Center – Lexington, VA

Attendees: Kip Brunker & Robert Hickman & Lee Cummings & Morris Trimmer (NBSWCD), Sandra Stuart (NBSWCD & RACC), Barbara Walsh (RACC), Karen Stanley (VADOF), Tom Stanley (Cooperative Extension), Deborah Woodcock (landowner), Phyllis Fevrier (Boxerwood & SOS), Peter Gruner & Elise Sheffield (Boxerwood), Arne Glaeser (City of Lexington Planning Dept.), Mike Kennedy & Jeff Martone (City of Lexington Public Works), Drew Williams (B.G. LLC – City of Lexington contractors), Charlie Simmons (USDA-NRCS), Robert Humston (W&L University), Karen Kline & Brian Benham & Gene Yagow & Wesley Tse (VT-BSE), Tara Sieber & Nesha McRae and Don Kain (VADEQ)

Tara Sieber, the Regional TMDL coordinator for The Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (VADEQ), opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and thanking the Natural Bridge Soil and Water Conservation District (NBSWCD) for hosting the meeting. Tara asked participants to introduce themselves and the organization or agency they were representing (or if they were a landowner or interested citizen, as well). Next, Tara reviewed the agenda for the meeting which would cover the definition of a TMDL, what the TMDL process looks like, the area that would be included in the Woods Creek TMDL, and the schedule for this project.

First on the agenda was the definition of a TMDL, and Tara reminded folks that the acronym stood for “Total Maximum Daily Load”, which is the amount of pollution a stream can receive and still maintain water quality standards. TMDL also refers to the process of water quality improvement in Virginia as mandated by the federal Clean Water Act. This process takes about 9-12 months to move through, incorporating two public meetings at the beginning and the end of the project, as well as several smaller Technical Advisory Committee (or TAC) meetings along the way. The TAC provides input and feedback on the data gathered and prepared by DEQ and its contractors. Members of the TAC represent local community interests and groups as well as government agencies. The TAC’s role is to communicate with VADEQ on community issues and works with the agency to plan public meetings and community outreach, and also reviews the final TMDL document.

The group then went on to review and discuss the watershed, which is the area that drains to Woods Creek. Tara asked the group to assist with the names of the tributaries that drain to Woods Creek. The group called the small tributary that runs down Lime Kiln Road “BBQ Creek”, the one from the west that runs through Kendall Retirement Community “Sunnyside”, and the large creek that drains the southeastern portion of Lexington “Sarah’s Run”. Another small tributary was brought to the attention of the group which runs through the downtown area of Lexington proper, and is locally known as “Town Branch”. This trib was not found on the National Hydrology Dataset (NHD) layer, but VADEQ and VT-BSE said they will look into where this small stream meets Woods Creek. Tara asked the group for help in tracking down sources of monitoring data since there have been so many great studies undertaken by a multitude of different groups. Moving farther along into the topic of monitoring, Tara next reviewed

VADEQ's monitoring station locations both for chemical monitoring and biological monitoring. These stations are where the monitoring data that the impairment listing data originated.

The two impairments of concern as identified by VADEQ monitoring on Woods Creek are excessive bacteria, based on a recreational use of the stream, and an unhealthy biological community. The Commonwealth of Virginia has set its standards to have all of its streams and rivers to be "swimmable" and "fishable", which means to be safe for primary contact recreation (wading and swimming) and healthy for the aquatic life, including fish and bugs, to live and thrive. Tara then reviewed the bacteria data and then the benthic macroinvertebrate data collected by VADEQ on Woods Creek.

Next, Tara reviewed some of the process of collecting data, including looking at sources of pollution (whether bacteria or something else) and how that data and information is used in the computer modeling process. Participants had a few questions about what the final product of the TMDL will be and what this will mean for Woods Creek. Tara discussed how the final product, a document detailing the sources of pollution and recommending reductions that can be made, can be the foundation for water quality improvement for the community. Neshia McRae (VADEQ) also added that funding is easier to secure with not only a TMDL but also an Implementation Plan.

Finally, Tara led the group through a discussion to plan the community meeting that will introduce this process to the public and invite their participation. The best location for parking and ambiance was identified as Maury River Middle School. The group decided that the first week of October would be best, and due to Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors and other government meetings, probably Wednesday or Tuesday (10/4-5) would be the best. At first the group thought that 7pm would be the best time, but as the agenda evolved, it seems that 6.30pm would be the best time to begin the display stations of local students who will give short presentations of their research, studies, and other activities (Bay Club, Biological and chemical monitoring and results). A number of groups were identified as possibly having an interest in putting together a display including: Kendall Retirement Community, NBSWCD, W&L Service Learning, a map of the watershed, a "Table of Concerns" & the VA Dept. of Forestry. Food could be provided by the Culinary Class at the local high school or the Home Economics class at the Middle School. Advertising ideas were innovative and numerous! A few of the ideas that were volunteered included: the City of Lexington website and Facebook page, posters and fliers downtown, articles in the local newspapers (Lexington News-Gazette and Rockbridge Advocate), email list-servs (RACC, Chamber of Commerce, Boxerwood, NBSWCD), websites and community calendars of organizations (Boxerwood and NBSWCD), and the potential to have the VMI student rhetoric class write a short article as part of their work with RACC (there is also a W&L TV station show).

Tara thanked everyone for their time and is looking forward to working with them over the next few months!