

# Roanoke River Basin Bi-State Commission

## Summary of Minutes from March 20, 2012 Meeting

- I. The Commission approved the minutes from their May 23, 2010 Meeting.
- II. Tom Fransen provided a brief overview of the NC Roanoke River Basin Advisory Committee meeting held on March 12, 2012. The NC Advisory Committee was eliminated through the NC Government Reduction Act. This group will now be referred to as the “NC Delegation” and will likely have meetings as previously held by the Advisory Committee. The statute is still in place for the Bi-State Commission. The Governor makes appointments to the Commission. Mr. Fransen also gave a status update on the Water Allocation Ad Hoc Committee in response to a question by John Feild. He said the Ad Hoc Committee began meeting with the thought that there was a cap on the allocation, but found out last year the Corps of Engineers said there is no cap. North Carolina and Virginia will be reviewing the water supply plans to see what the needs and demands are for Kerr Reservoir.

Mike McEvoy provided an overview of items discussed at the Virginia Roanoke River Basin Advisory Committee meeting held on August 31, 2011. The focus of this meeting was stormwater regulations in Virginia. He explained that he had a schedule for the upcoming year to review the various uranium mining studies and hoped the Bi-State folks would participate. He further explained that the water supply plans for localities and regions in Virginia have been submitted to VA DEQ and were under review for compliance with the regulation.

- III. Possible Impacts of a Uranium Mine and Mill at Coles Hill, Virginia  
Katherine Heller, RTI International

Ms. Heller presented an analysis of possible impacts of the proposed Coles Hill uranium mining operation. The study was funded by the Dan Regional Foundation and focused on impacts to the economy and employment, environmental quality, community well-being, government revenues and services, and competitiveness of the region within a 50 mile radius of Coles Mill.

### *Key Findings of the study:*

- The proposed mine and mill could add more than 700 jobs and \$150 million economic impact to the region’s economy per year during peak operation
- Local and state revenues from facility operations are expected to cover the costs of required additional government services
- Even if fully compliant with expected environmental regulations, there would be measurable contamination, especially close to the facility

- Groundwater levels near the facility would be lowered, impacting local wells, springs
- Design of facility, including tailings management, is critical to limiting environmental impacts
- Within the region, both economic and environmental impacts would vary geographically

*Study limitations and unanswered questions:*

- Assessment is based on best available information, but many unknowns
- No similar facility/community that accurately illustrates risks or benefits
- Economic assumptions based on market price for uranium, local share of spending, safety reputation
- Detailed plans for mining and milling operations have not yet been developed
- Regulatory requirements have not been developed

The project website (<https://coleshillimpacts.rti.org/index.html>) contains the full 500 page report, a non-technical summary, and the presentation material developed to date.

IV. The Socioeconomic Impact of Uranium Mining and Milling in the Chatham Labor Shed  
Mike McEvoy, Chairman, VRRBAC

Mr. McEvoy summarized a study by Chmura Economics and Analytics, which evaluated the socioeconomic impact of the proposed mining operations on six Virginia Counties.

Report Findings:

*In the opinion of Chmura, the mining and milling operations would bring substantial and much needed economic benefits to Pittsylvania County, the immediately surrounding areas, and the state. During its projected 35 years of operations, the Coles Hill site is expected to support more than 1,000 jobs annually (direct, indirect, and induced)<sup>1</sup> and have an annual net positive economic impact of approximately \$135 million. This net benefit comes after subtracting for a broad array of potential socioeconomic costs (such as public health and the environment) and negative “stigma” effects on some sectors (such as tourism and agriculture), which under specific circumstances, Chmura judges most likely to be minimal. Over the life of the operation, the Coles Hill site could generate almost \$5.0 billion in net accumulated economic revenue for Virginia firms. These impressive figures, however, are predicated on the assumption that the Coles Hill site will be continuously operated and ultimately decommissioned within established federal guidelines, which, by law, reduce environmental and public health risks to the surrounding communities to near negligible levels.*

A pdf of the full report 179 page report can be found online at [http://dls.virginia.gov/commissions/cec/files/chmura\\_study.pdf](http://dls.virginia.gov/commissions/cec/files/chmura_study.pdf)

**Virginia Commission Members in Attendance**

**Bi-State Commission Members**

Haywood Hamlet  
Senator Frank Ruff  
Delegate Tommy Wright  
Delegate Charles Poindexter  
John Feild  
Mike McEvoy

**Advisory Committee**

Walter Coles  
Bob Jean  
John Lindsey  
Bill Lindenmuth  
Read Charlton  
Billy Martin

**North Carolina Commission Members in Attendance**

Representative Edith Warren, Chairperson  
Senator Edward Jones  
Larry Yarborough  
Chuck Peoples (via webinar)