

POTOMAC WATERSHED ROUNDTABLE
Quarterly Meeting – April 7, 2017
Warrenton Visitors Center, Warrenton

MINUTES

Members and Alternates

Hon. Penny Gross, Chair, Voting Member, Fairfax County
Hon. Woody Hynson, Vice Chair, Voting Member, Westmoreland County
Hon. Deirdre Clark, Voting Member, John Marshall SWCD
Kirsten Conrad-Buhls, Advisory Member, Virginia Cooperative Extension
Debbie Cross, Advisory Member, Virginia DCR
Curtis Dalpra, Voting Member, ICPRB
Hon. Jim Gehlsen, Voting Alternate, Prince William SWCD
Harry Glasgow, Voting Member, Environment
Laura Grape, Voting Alternate, Northern Virginia SWCD
Alan Gray, Voting Member, Agriculture and Forestry (Forestry)
Bruce Holley, Voting Member, Citizen of the Watershed
Hon. John Jenkins, Voting Member, King George County
Paul McCulla, Voting Alternate, Fauquier County
Jim McGlone, Advisory Member, Virginia DOF
Daniel Moore, Advisory Member, Virginia DEQ
Karen Pallansch, Voting Member, Water and Wastewater Utilities
James Patteson, Voting Alternate, Fairfax County
Hon. John Peterson, Voting Member, Northern Virginia SWCD
Hon. Robert Pickett, Voting Member, Northern Neck SWCD
Greg Prelewicz, Voting Member, Water and Wastewater Utilities
Mike Rolband, Voting Member, Construction, Development, and Real Estate
Rebecca Shoemaker, Advisory Member, Virginia DEQ
Michael Trop, Voting Alternate, John Marshall SWCD
Hon. Kristen Umstattd, Voting Member, Loudoun County
Hon. Elizabeth Ward, Voting Alternate, Prince William SWCD
Hon. Bob Wernsman, Voting Member, Tri-County City SWCD

Interested Parties

Randy Bartlett, Fairfax County
Bill Dickenson, Alexandria Renew
Nicholas DiPasquale, US Environmental Protection Agency
Norm Goulet, Northern Virginia Regional Commission
Jennifer Hoysa, John Marshall SWCD
Alyssa Janes, Northern Virginia SWCD
Marta Perry, Tri-County City SWCD
Jerry Peters, Northern Virginia SWCD
Daniel Saltzberg, Northern Virginia Conservation Trust
Heather Shackley, Northern Virginia SWCD
Mary Sherrill, Fauquier County Water and Sanitation Authority
Tanya Spano, Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments

Valerie Suzdak, Loudoun County
Willie Woode, Northern Virginia SWCD

Call to Order and Introductions. Ms. Gross called the meeting to order at 10:02 AM and thanked the John Marshall Soil and Water Conservation District for hosting the meeting. She took a moment to recognize and applaud Jennifer Hoysa, District Manager, with John Marshall Soil and Water Conservation District, who is retiring after over 33 years of working with the organization. Those in attendance introduced themselves.

Welcome. Paul McCulla, County Administrator with Fauquier County extended a welcome to Warrenton and provided a brief overview and history to the area. He noted that Fauquier County and Loudoun County maintained the same population through the 1960s. A measured growth plan including a service district for water and sewer managed development to specific areas and a countywide purchase of development rights (PDR) program supports maintaining its rural and agricultural heritage.

Minutes. A **motion** (Holley-Hynson, Umstattd abstention) passed unanimously to approve the minutes from the January 7, 2017 meeting in Annandale, VA.

Potomac Council Report. Mr. Peterson reported that the Potomac Council met prior to the Roundtable meeting and proposed two possible topics for consideration at upcoming meetings, including:

- Groundwater sustainability and tools to assess availability
- FEMA floodplain issues impacting riparian restoration efforts

There was general agreement that both topics are worth discussing. In regards to the groundwater sustainability topic, Ms. Umstattd shared that communities north and west of Leesburg have expressed interest in having a municipal water source because of the growing concern regarding groundwater availability. Mr. Jenkins shared that the topic is also of interest in King George and that costs associated with monitoring is often a limitation. Mr. Goulet shared that establishing a monitoring program could be expensive because it is labor intensive. Ms. Ward added that a unified model could be used to save costs. Mr. McCulla shared that Fauquier County recently entered into a five-year monitoring and modeling effort with the USGS, which cost approximately \$500,000. A wellhead protection ordinance is also in development.

In regards to the FEMA floodplain issues, Ms. Umstattd noted that because of the way Loudoun County's floodplains are designated, riparian buffer planting projects are not being allowed until an engineering study is performed and proves that the project will not change the floodplain elevations. She acknowledged that the costs associated with the studies are prohibitive to residents and communities and will hamper participation in Virginia Agricultural Cost-Share program and neighborhood riparian buffer planting projects. She noted that it could greatly impede meeting Chesapeake Bay TMDL goals.

Member Time & Announcements. Ms. Gross invited members to provide updates. They included:

- Mr. Prelewicz shared that Fairfax Water is accepting proposals for the Water Supply Grants, which award up to \$10,000 for projects that work toward source water protection. The

deadline for applications is May 15. He asked that a link be added to the Potomac Watershed Roundtable website.

- Mr. Dalpra shared that the Interstate Commission of the Potomac River Basin (ICPRB) will be hosting several trash clean-ups sites along local streams, as part of the Annual Potomac Watershed Cleanup. Site locations can be found at www.potomaccleanup.org.
- Mr. McGlone shared that the Northern Virginia Urban Forestry Roundtable will meet on May 19 and will discuss wood waste in urban areas and uses for felled trees that are alternatives to firewood and mulch.
- Ms. Clark shared that the annual From the Rappahannock for the Rappahannock event will take place at the Marriot Ranch in Hume, VA on April 9, beginning at 1:00 PM. Tickets are \$35 per person.
- Mr. Glasgow shared that the annual and free Merrimac Farm Bluebell Festival will be hosted by the Prince William Conservation Alliance on April 9.
- Ms. Grape shared that the Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District is currently accepting orders for its annual Native Tree and Shrub Seedling Sale featuring species that provide ample fall color. Distribution will take place on April 21 and 22 at the Packard Center in Annandale.

The Future of the Chesapeake Bay – a dialogue. Ms. Gross noted that the meeting topic is timely and is intended to serve as a candid dialogue about the Chesapeake Bay program and what is needed to continue progress toward shared goals for local water quality and support for the Chesapeake Bay. She introduced Nicholas DiPasquale, Director of the Chesapeake Bay Program office and expressed her appreciation for his participation. Mr. DiPasquale shared that the budget proposed by President Trump zeros out the \$530 million dollars that supports geographic programs across the United States, including the 34 year old Chesapeake Bay Program (Bay Program). He noted that all federal programs are being asked to cut 17 to 21 percent of their budgets. He shared that two-thirds of the Bay Program budget goes back to states as NFWF and CBIG grants to undertake projects and support staff. In addition, approximately \$6 million is provided to states for water quality monitoring programs and assists with measuring progress. The Bay Program also provides technical resources including 1-meter resolution data that supports the Bay Model and is made available to any organization interested in using it.

It was noted that the loss of the Bay Program grants could reduce progress in jurisdictions that do not have adequate local resources available to address this federal mandate and buffer the impact of cuts taking place at all levels of government. The skinny budget proposes cutting a total of 31 percent of EPA's budget, including approximately another \$425 million in other grant programs not related to the geographic programs.

The group discussed ways that Chesapeake Bay goals have been integrated into permits and state ordinances, including the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act. The existing efforts and "infrastructure" that exists would be difficult to dismantle. In addition, several indicators of success that are trending upwards were noted, including increases in bay grasses and water clarity and a decrease in the severity of the dead zone. Several attendees noted seeing local improvements across the watershed, suggesting renewed resilience within the ecosystem.

It was stated that the possible loss of the Bay Program is a potential turning point to change the conversation away from the Bay and make it about local waterways, as a means of encouraging more constituents to help and do the right thing. Several wondered if this could be a moment of a

call to action, so that the Bay will not be taken for granted. Support for the Bay Program from a wide variety of individuals and organizations has been expressed and documented in the media. Even though TMDLs may not be accepted by everyone, it provides a consensus-based approach. There is interest in presenting a unified stand nationwide to share that these geographic programs are providing good results.

The group agreed that it is hard to say when the Bay restoration program will be over, as there are new and emerging contaminants and anticipated changes related to changes in the climate. It was agreed that continued restoration will be necessary and that it will take time to see results.

It was noted that one of the important successes of the Bay Program is the alignment of six states working together. Keeping that partnership going and motivated requires the use of both carrots and sticks. Enthusiasm varies by states, so state programs vary. Of the 1,800 local governments in the Bay watershed, 1,500 of them are in Pennsylvania. Therefore articulating the value of local water quality and how it also supports Bay goals is an important consideration. Continued efforts to educate residents on where their water goes was expressed as a need. The majority of Bay residents and businesses do not understand or relate to model results, but they do connect with crabs, rockfish, scallops, and oysters. To be successful, messages have to resonate and be meaningful. Sometimes the focus is what the Bay's worth is to the economy.

The 2017 mid-point assessment will also need to address the Conowingo dam, which is one of three dams on the Susquehanna. There was a recognition that there is a need to not rely solely on the dam for managing impacts on Bay health and that there is a need to treat stormwater upstream and in upland areas.

After breaking for lunch, the group reconvened at 1:08 PM, with a question posed by Ms. Gross about how localities will support regional initiatives should the Bay Program be cut.

Even though it was not required, the wastewater community established a Biological Nutrient Reduction Program because it was the right thing to do. Virginia was not going to pay for the program, but lobbying encouraged an allocation of \$5 million toward the program. It was noted that a challenge seems to be that different approaches among the state make tracking progress inconsistent. One state may fund one program, while another may not. The existing tracking and modeling system may restrain innovation, because of the difficulties in crediting these advancements.

It was noted that the Chesapeake Bay TMDL increased awareness of urban stormwater practices and conveyance systems. As a result, stormwater utilities have been established and provide a sustainable funding source for improvements. It was recognized that reactions to funding programs that promote the Bay TMDL can also be dependent upon the location within the watershed. A number of possible political and social divisions were acknowledged that could cause a different reaction to the idea of establishing a new funding program. A systematic approach that focuses on local interests (jobs, aesthetics, environment, etc) and the costs associated with managing or restoring them could encourage more participation. However, a prescriptive approach cannot be assumed – what works well in one area may not work well in another.

Communicating to a wide variety of audiences, including local representatives, state legislature, “average Joes,” and the environmental community about progress was identified as being important. Integration into the education system and improving environmental literacy were

deemed crucial for sustaining the effort. "Need future generations to care and understand what has been done and what needs to continue."

Most wastewater facilities give tours to showcase their programs. Additionally, trash is often seen as the biggest pollutant in our local waterways. Stopping trash pollution at the source and not just continuing to spend time picking it up, should be the goal and can be an entry into discussing larger issues. Other states are banning plastic bottles and disposable bags, perhaps this is something Virginia could consider.

Ms. Gross asked that an upcoming meeting focus on trash and asked participants to provide examples of education materials and legislation to Ms. Grape, along with ideas for who partners might be as we move forward.

Adjournment. Ms. Gross thanked Mr. DiPasquale for attending the meeting and expressed appreciation to the John Marshall SWCD for their hospitality. She noted that the next meeting will take place on July 7, 2017 and will be hosted by the Prince William Soil and Water Conservation District. The meeting adjourned at 2:07 PM.