

POTOMAC WATERSHED ROUNDTABLE
Quarterly Meeting – October 6, 2017
Ida Lee Recreation Center, Leesburg

MINUTES

Members and Alternates

Hon. Penny Gross, Chair, Voting Member, Fairfax County
Deirdre Clark, Voting Member, John Marshall SWCD
Debbie Cross, Advisory Member, Virginia DCR
Curtis Dalpra, Voting Member, ICPRB
Michael DeMarco, Voting Member, City of Fairfax
Hon. John Flannery, Voting Member, Loudoun SWCD
Laura Grape, Voting Alternate, Northern Virginia SWCD
Alan Gray, Voting Member, Agriculture and Forestry (Forestry)
Charlie Grymes, Voting Member, Environment
Jim McGlone, Advisory Member, Virginia DOF
Daniel Moore, Advisory Member, Virginia DEQ
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
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

Interested Parties

Monica Billger, Audubon Naturalist Society
Suzie Brown, Loudoun SWCD
Barbara Christian, Loudoun SWCD
Jim Christian, Loudoun SWCD
Dennis Cumbie, Loudoun County
Don Demetrius, Fairfax County
Charlotte DeMolay, Loudoun SWCD
Jeremy Falken
Scott Fincham, Loudoun County
Holly Flannery, Loudoun SWCD
Daniel Habete, Fairfax County
Maria Harwood, Northern Virginia SWCD
Pete Holden, Loudoun SWCD
Pam Kenel
Pat McIlvaine, Loudoun SWCD
Jerry Peters, Northern Virginia SWCD
Hon. John Price, Prince William SWCD
Joe Rossetti, Virginia DOF

Zackery Salisbury
Pawan Sarang, Virginia DOT
Heather Shackley, Northern Virginia SWCD
Chris Van Vlack, Loudoun SWCD
David Ward, Loudoun County
Willie Woode, Northern Virginia SWCD

Call to Order. Ms. Gross called the meeting to order at 10:08 AM and thanked the Loudoun Soil and Water Conservation District for hosting the meeting.

Welcome. Ms. Umstatt, member of the Loudoun County Board of Supervisors welcomed the Roundtable members to the Town of Leesburg. She noted that the Town serves as the county seat for Loudoun County. The Ida Lee Recreation Center, where the meeting is held, was a \$9 million investment by the Town for its 50,000 residents. She thanked everyone for attending the meeting and making the drive.

Introductions.

Minutes. A **motion** (Umstatt-DeMarco, abstention by Grymes) passed unanimously to approve the minutes from the July 7, 2017 meeting in Woodbridge.

Updates from the Chair. Ms. Gross noted that the Local Government Advisory Council welcomed a new member, Chip Jones, who is on the Board of Directors with the Northern Neck Soil and Water Conservation District and a fellow Roundtable member. She noted that this is the first time that LGAC has a soil and water conservation district representative at the table and appreciated the insights he brought to his first meeting on October 5 in Shepherdstown, WV. The meeting focused on the Chesapeake Bay TMDL Mid-Point Assessment and local government engagement strategies.

The TMDL discussion was led by Lucinda Power with the Chesapeake Bay Program Office and James Davis-Martin who chairs the Water Quality Goal Team. Ms. Gross noted that the discussion focused on how development growth is factored into the loading calculations. She noted that growth can be interpreted in different ways. The Mid-Point Assessment will take into consideration population, climate change, and effects of the Conowingo Dam. However, concerns about whether or not these will cause significant changes and how they will affect or address pollutant reductions remains to be seen. She was assured that Virginia will not assume additional loads to account for what is behind the Conowingo dam. Efforts are underway to establish a contract to dredge approximately 25,000 cubic yards of material to determine the composition of the material and how to adequately dispose of it. To meet the TMDL goals, approximately 35 million cubic yards of sediment needs to be removed. Ms. Gross noted that concerns persist about future storms depositing material, which could impact the good work that has been accomplished thus far. The next meeting of LGAC is scheduled for December.

Ms. Gross acknowledged that the House budget has \$50 million in it slated for the Bay Program. Regardless of whether the funding is available, states and localities will still be on the hook for work toward the Bay TMDL, even though achieving success will be very difficult without the funding to support it.

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

- Mr. McGlone shared the following announcements:
 - the Northern Virginia Urban Forestry Roundtable’s annual conference will focus on the relationship between urban forests and public health. Kathy Wolfe, PhD, with the University of Washington is a featured speaker. The conference will be held on November 9 at Algonkian Regional Park in Sterling.
 - There is a newly established three-level Urban Tree Planting BMP, which is creditable. The levels include, reforestation, trees over grass, and trees over pavement. Reporting goes directly to the Virginia Department of Forestry.
 - A grant funded Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) Specialist position has been established to coordinate a cost-share program with private residents to treat trees. The trees will not be removed through this program.
 - A new invasive species has been trapped in New Jersey. It affects trees similarly to the EAB, however it affects the highly invasive Tree of Heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*).
- Ms. Ward shared two items:
 - Fairfax County will host a Household Well Water Quality Monitoring Program in October. The cost for a kit is \$55. The kick-off meeting will take place on October 16 at the Virginia Cooperative Extension’s Fairfax Office in Fairfax.
 - She is working with delegates Marshall and Lingamfelter to amend enabling legislation in comprehensive plans to require the evaluation of sustainability of groundwater for new development.

Floodplains and Considerations for Voluntary Conservation Programs. Mr. Chris Van Vlack, Urban/Ag Conservationist with the Loudoun Soil and Water Conservation District, shared an overview of the variety of conservation programs taking place in Loudoun County, including the local administration of the Virginia Agricultural Cost-Share Program (VACS), a locally-funded horse and small farm cost-share and non-agriculture riparian buffer planting program. He explained that the most cost-effective projects that support water quality goals occur within the floodplain, such as fencing livestock from streams and revegetating riparian corridors with native trees and shrubs. However, he noted that revisions to Loudoun County’s Floodplain Ordinance in 2017 now requires that any project proposed within the floodplain must have an engineer certify that the plantings or fencing will result in “no rise” in floodplain elevation, or a floodplain alternation permit must be obtained.

Mr. Van Vlack shared that conducting these studies and acquiring this permit costs the applicant thousands of dollars, which are ineligible for reimbursement through cost share programs. This added cost to an eligible participant is often a deterrent to participating in the program. Therefore, local water quality suffers and farmers and suburban residents lose faith in the programs. In addition, this results in other challenges for Loudoun Soil and Water Conservation District in meeting grant requirements for the installation of agricultural BMPs and agricultural stewardship act violations that require stream and Potomac River fencing would be out of compliance if not installed. Finally, Mr. Van Vlack mentioned that this ordinance will encourage landowners and homeowners associations to maintain their riparian areas in turf, maintained with regular mowing, instead of planting native trees and plants and creating forested riparian filter areas.

In response to Mr. Moore's question about movement to find resolution, Mr. Van Vlack and Mr. Flannery shared that any rise in floodplain is unacceptable. Mr. Peterson noted that if FEMA begins enforcing this with more regularity that it will cause difficulty for the implementation of BMPs for most Conservation Districts. Mr. Demetrius explained that a floodway is a regulated area where no development (defined as any manmade changes) can occur. A floodplain is a mapped area of possible inundation based upon designed storms. He asked if Loudoun ever considered discussing the option of converting from a floodway community to a floodplain. Mr. Van Vlack noted that in his conversations with FEMA representatives, they have expressed that they cannot weaken their ordinance and run the risk of allowing non-conservation related uses.

Floodplains and Forested Buffers – A Case Study. Mr. Mike Rolband P.E., P.W.S., P.W.D., LEED AP, President of Wetland Studies and Solution Inc, presented case studies that he and his colleague Mike Marsala P.E., C.F.M prepared to demonstrate what the change in floodplain elevation based on pasture or treed buffer scenarios in rural areas of Loudoun County. He shared that Loudoun County chose to model their floodplains based on existing conditions versus a future anticipated condition. This means that if the land areas was in pasture at the time the floodplain was created, it was modeled as such. Any change in land use requires a change in the modeled land use. By comparison, he noted that Fairfax County chose to model their floodplains based on a forested condition, even if it was in a different state, to account for the anticipated changes to forested condition in the future.

The results of Mr. Rolband's case study at Dutchman Creek revealed that transitioning a portion of the floodplain area from pasture to a 35 foot tree buffer resulted in a modeled rise of approximately 0.29 feet (3.6 inches). A scenario with 100 foot buffer on one side of the creek and a 35 foot buffer on the other resulted in a modeled rise of approximately 0.56 feet (6.7 inches). He noted that Loudoun County would benefit from revisiting the mapping of their FEMA floodplains, particularly in rural areas, to account for changes in rainfall intensities and Manning's "N" values (roughness coefficients used to calculate flow in open channels, including streams). He noted that 51 percent of Loudoun County's FEMA mapped areas utilize models from 1981 or earlier.

Ms. Umstatt shared that Loudoun County government felt compelled to adopt the new ordinance and stay compliant with FEMA's regulations and that updated local mapping would be beneficial. She noted that this won't impact farmers from continuing the use of their lands. Mr. Van Vlack shared that leaving a field to revegetate will allow for the proliferation of non-native and invasive species. The Virginia Agricultural Cost-Share Program and other similar programs provide an incentive for planting native species and have multiple benefits in addition to water quality.

Resignation. Mr. Alan Gray announced that this was his last meeting, representing Agriculture and Forestry interests. He offered his assistance with appointing a successor. Ms. Gross thanked him for his many years of dedicated service to the Roundtable and wished him the best of luck.

2018 Meeting Schedule. After some brief discussion, Ms. Gross noted that while specific locations will be provided as the dates near, the Roundtable will meet on the following dates in 2018:

- January 5
- April 13
- July 13
- October 5

Dialogue. Ms. Gross invited Roundtable member to share updates on efforts taking place within their areas of specific interest. These included:

- Celebration at Fairfax Water, which celebrated their 60th anniversary and a groundbreaking at the Vulcan quarry near the Griffith Water Treatment Plant.
- Urban wood reuse and recycling is a topic of concern around the country. More wood fiber has been coming out of the urban environment than from national forests. Many forestry groups are working to identify or develop profitable markets.
- Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments is working on a cooperative agreement regarding surface water availability through 2035. A large amount of water is used to support data centers across the region and localities are exploring the use of purple pipe water to meet their demands. This along with planned development may strain our available resources.

Adjournment. Ms. Gross thanked everyone for their attendance and engagement in the meeting dialogue. She expressed appreciation to the Loudoun SWCD for their hospitality. She noted that the next meeting will take place on January 5, 2018 and will be hosted by the John Marshall Soil and Water Conservation District in the Warrenton area. The meeting adjourned at 1:45 PM.