

**POTOMAC WATERSHED ROUNDTABLE**  
**Quarterly Meeting – January 11, 2019**  
**The River View at the Jean R. Packard Center, Lorton**

**MINUTES**

**Members and Alternates**

Hon. Penny Gross, Chair, Voting Member, Fairfax County  
Hon. Deidre Clark, Voting Member, John Marshall SWCD  
Kirsten Conrad, Advisory Member, Virginia Cooperative Extension  
Curtis Dalpra, Voting Alternate, ICPRB  
John Flannery, Voting Member, Loudoun SWCD  
Harry Glasgow, Voting Member, Environment  
Laura Grape, Voting Alternate, Northern Virginia SWCD  
Amy Jackson, Voting Member, City of Alexandria  
Jim McGlone, Advisory Member, Virginia Department of Forestry  
Daniel Moore, Advisory Member, Virginia DEQ  
Hon. Robert Pickett, Voting Member, Northern Neck SWCD  
Greg Prelewicz, Voting Member, Water and Wastewater Utilities  
Rebecca Shoemaker, Advisory Member, Virginia DEQ  
Michael Trop, Voting Alternate, John Marshall SWCD  
Hon. Elizabeth Ward, Voting Alternate, Prince William SWCD  
Hon. Bob Wernsman, Voting Member, Tri-County City SWCD

**Interested Parties**

Samantha Battersby, Alice Ferguson Foundation  
Nicki Bellezza, Fairfax Water  
Emily Burton, Fairfax County  
Jen Cole, Clean Fairfax Council  
Chad Crawford, Fairfax County  
Bill Dickinson, Chesapeake Bay Citizens Advisory Group  
Eric Forbes, Fairfax County  
Randy Freed, Prince William Conservation Alliance  
Frank Graziano, Wetlands Studies and Solutions, Inc  
Rentz Hilyer, Northern Virginia Conservation Trust  
Diane Hoffman, Northern Virginia SWCD  
John Kellas, Fairfax County  
Lynda Kummelt, Keep Prince William Beautiful  
Ashley Palmer, Northern Virginia SWCD  
Hon. Jerry Peters, Northern Virginia SWCD  
Alan Rowsome, Northern Virginia Conservation Trust  
Heather Shackley, Northern Virginia SWCD  
Veronica Tangiri, Prince William SWCD

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

**Introductions and Welcome.** Ms. Gross asked those in attendance to introduce themselves. In addition, she welcomed everyone to Occoquan Regional Park and to the recently opened Jean R. Packard Center. She highlighted its environmental design and sustainable features, which helped the facility to achieve a LEED Gold certified status. In addition, she pointed out the 1608 room that commemorates Captain John Smith's explorations of the Chesapeake Bay and a future outdoor memorial to the women suffragists, who were jailed at the Occoquan Workhouse.

**Approval of Minutes.** A motion (Flannery-Prelewicz, abstention: Jackson) passed to approve the minutes of the October 5, 2018 meeting at The Clubhouse at Aquia Harbour in Stafford.

**Update from the Chair.** Ms. Gross noted that the Phase III Stakeholder Advisory Group was also meeting today. She has been appointed to the SAG. She also noted that the Chesapeake Bay Foundation issued its State of the Bay report, which grades the overall health of the Bay. She noted that the Bay earned a D+, likely due to the rainy weather. She noted that for all of the efforts being made toward restoration that the grade is a bit of a surprise. However, the Bay has also seen significant effects because of the record-breaking rain. She noted that the rain has also engaged many people because they can see the pollutants running into their local waterways.

**Trash-Free Potomac Watershed Initiatives.** Ms. Samantha Battersby, Program Coordinator with the Alice Ferguson Foundation, shared an overview of the Foundation and their annual Potomac River Watershed Cleanup and Regional Litter Prevention Campaign. She noted that it is the Foundation's mission "to connect people to the natural world, sustainable agricultural practices, and the cultural heritage of their local watershed through education, stewardship, and advocacy." She highlighted three core program, including the Hard Bargain Farm Environmental Center, Bridging the Watershed, and the Trash Free Potomac Watershed Initiative. Each of the programs focus on hands-on stewardship and learning. Roundtable members were invited to participate in the trash timeline activity, a facilitated exercise that is often used by the Foundation at school events. The goal is to help participants understand what materials we use and how long it takes for them to decompose. She noted that many of the materials are commonly found throughout the watershed and are collected during cleanups. Participants were broken into pairs and given a bag of trash that included styrafoam, steel can, newspaper, plastic bag, milk carton, aluminum can, plastic bottle, cardboard glass bottle, and to sort by how long it would take to biodegrade. Once completed, Ms. Battersby revealed that the materials biodegrade at the following rates:

Newspaper: 2 to 4 weeks, Cardboard: 3 months, Milk Carton: 5 years, Steel Can: 80 to 100 years, Aluminum Can: 200 to 400 years, Plastic Bag: 300 years, Plastic Bottle: 450 years, Glass Bottle: thousands of years, Styrofoam: never?

Ms. Battersby noted that the Foundation decided to invest their resources in removing trash from the watershed. Over the 31 years since the Trash-Free Potomac Cleanup has been taking place, more than 145,000 volunteers have removed more than 7 million pounds of trash. The Foundation provides all of the supplies for the cleanup and site leader support. With the site leaders, the Foundation assists with contacting haulers for disposing of the bags. In addition, she noted that Fairfax and Prince William Counties both provide support by waiving tipping fees and providing pick-up services from locations.

Ms. Battersby noted that preventing litter is also a key interest of the Foundation and suggested making choices based on the four R's – Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Refuse. It was noted that there are challenges with recycling, particularly from single stream sources. It was noted that glass should not be included with curbside recycling pick up. Mr. Kellas, Director of Fairfax County's Division of Solid Waste explained the reason is due to glass breaking and contaminating other products during processing. He noted that glass can still be recycled and reused by dropping off clean materials at recycling facilities. Mr. Forbes, Director of Recycling, Engineering, and Environmental Compliance with the Fairfax County Division of Solid Waste shared that the county has a glass crusher for the I-95 Landfill, which can accommodate 20 tons of glass per day. The end product is a sand or gravel material that meets VDOT specifications and can be used for various public works projects.

Roundtable members shared several initiatives regarding bag bans and bottle bills in surrounding states. The question arose as to why legislation continues to die in Virginia. Ms. Jackson shared that both a bag ban and bottle bill are included in the City of Alexandria's legislative priorities. Ms. Gross shared that continued outreach needs to take place and anticipates that movement on this issue will continue to take time. Ms. Battersby shared data showing that the number of plastic bags collected in the annual cleanups in the District of Columbia has dropped since D.C. instituted a bag fee in 2010. She noted that it is difficult to change the behaviors of adults, but it is not impossible. Through the trash-free campaigns the Foundation is working with many stakeholders and there is a noticeable change occurring in the littering rates, per the data collected by site leaders. She also noted that there are several other ways to encourage behavior change, including leading a cleanup in your community, support the litter prevention campaign, talk with neighbors, advocate for policies that reduce litter, and adopting a nearby stream. The annual Potomac River Watershed Cleanup will take place on April 13, 2019 at locations throughout the watershed.

Ms. Hoffman encouraged Roundtable members to participate in the Foundation's annual Trash Summit, so they can learn the newest information, understand policy consideration, and share creative ideas. The summit takes place in October and it was requested that Ms. Grape send out a notice about the event to the Roundtable membership. Ms. Gross noted that it is a powerful event.

**Sustainability through Engagement.** Ms. Jen Cole, Executive Director with Clean Fairfax Council, introduced the organization, which was established in 1979 and became a non-profit in 1985. Clean Fairfax Council focuses its efforts on litter prevention, recycling education and sustainability issues in Fairfax County. She "believes plastic water bottles, plastic bags and polystyrene are the ban of our existence." She noted that the Council is funded in part by the Litter Tax, in which companies contribute \$10-25 per year. The focus of the funds has been to pick up bottles and cans and the funds have remained static for many years. However, the Council is putting more emphasis on reducing single use products in the market place because no matter how much recycling is promoted, to the consumer it still gets thrown "away." She noted there is no such thing as "away" – it ends up everywhere. Ms. Cole highlighted several current programs to take action and advocate for litter prevention.

The Council's Clean Streams Initiative, which assists Fairfax County's compliance with its Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) floatables monitoring requirement by monitoring five different land use locations on a quarterly basis. Outreach to the surrounding communities focuses on what is being found in the stream, where it comes from, and how best to reach out and tailor messages to see less litter the next quarter.

The Council's "Business is Picking Up" program that is based on their Community Clean Up program and includes an awards program for those that go above and beyond what is required of them. She asked that Roundtable members share businesses that they appreciate in their communities and noted that "green is a great bottomline."

With an ad-hoc coordination of non-profits, the litterfreeVA.org initiative is tracking legislation. It serves as a clearinghouse of information for others to use. She noted that the petrochemical lobby is the primary objecting voice for bag and bottle bills. She noted that no state has become bankrupt because of a bottle bill or bag tax, but if manufacturers are not held to a certain standard then it becomes the responsibility of the regular person.

In the meantime, she noted that litter from single use plastics will continue to be remain a problem. In the Mt Vernon/Route 1 area, she shared that the Council is working on a pilot project to identify the source of the overwhelming litter in Little Hunting Creek and other waterways in this area. The program will strive for a holistic approach with the goal of suggesting policy solutions that are sustainable and applicable across the region.

Ms. Cole noted her solutions include working on gateway changes, pressing for behavior changes, and recognizing the need to use and have less stuff. She highlighted three things that the Roundtable members could take back with them, including: making better choices, leading by example, and using their voices. She noted that placing the pressure on the consumer to do the right thing absolves the manufacturer – efforts need to be made to control messages from lobbying groups.

Ms. Tangiri inquired whether or not the litter tax could be adjusted to provide a better source of funding for cleanup and education activities. Ms. Gross noted that she see trash accumulate at various locations, particularly at bus stops with over-flowing receptacles. Ms. Cole shared her concerns that there is too much of a reliance on volunteers to pick up other people's litter, as opposed to making the difficult choices in legislature.

**Keep Prince William Beautiful – Community Partnerships in Action.** Ms. Lynda Kummelt, Executive Director with Keep Prince William Beautiful (KPWB) shared the history of the non-profit organization, which was formed in 1982 by citizens who were concerned about trash and graffiti and is an affiliate of Keep America Beautiful. KPWB's focus is on educational outreach to various civic groups and at festivals and provides volunteer programs, including adopt-a-spot, community cleanups, litter surveys, shopping center surveys, and storm drain labelling. Through the adopt-a-spot and community cleanups, approximately 15.5 tons of litter were picked up by volunteers. She noted that it is often difficult to get reports from volunteers, so this amount is likely underestimated. Ms. Kummelt shared that the shopping center surveys review 27 different parameters, which are ultimately reported to Prince William County government for their targeted efforts. She noted that all volunteer programs offer school or community-based service hours.

Ms. Kummelt shared that partnerships are essential due to the limited staff resources of KPWB and the scale of the litter issue in Prince William County. She highlighted the unique roles that Prince William County's Public Works Department, Risk Management, Neighborhood Services, Parks, Recreation and Tourism, Schools, and the Prince William Soil and Water Conservation District all provide. For example, she noted that landfill vouchers are provided to volunteers for disposing of the litter they pick up. Connections are forming between KPWB and Prince William County Schools, although she noted that it has been difficult. In 2018, KPWB did reach 500 students through

various events. Other non-profit organizations and businesses are also engaged as part of KPWB initiatives by beautifying locations, providing grants for supplies.

She highlighted six projects that exemplify the partnership approach in Prince William County including:

- Great Prince William Cleanup, which covers 14 miles along Route 1 and falls under the Great American Cleanup in April.
- Pollinator Garden at the Dumfries Road Landfill, which is 1/3 of an acre at the Prince William County Landfill. Bees in the schools program supplied materials and assistance for bee hives that were installed as part of this project.
- Woodbridge Senior Center raised garden beds, help to supplement their food availability.
- Old Bridge Road Cleanup along five miles of roadway in the fall.
- Costco “Love Where You Live” Cleanup was co-sponsored by several organizations. Ms. Kummelt noted that Ms. Veronica Tangiri with the Prince William Soil and Water Conservation District was instrumental in coordinating this event.

Ms. Kummelt noted the challenges associated with these initiatives include high competition for grant-based funding, reaching into schools, fundraising, getting volunteers to commit, trying to utilize various social media platforms to reach out. In addition, she mentioned difficulty with connecting with lower income communities and fear that she is preaching to the choir. Her volunteers consist primarily of scout troops and students, military personnel who need volunteer hours. KPWB board members assist with events and provide overall support.

In the near future, Ms. Kummelt noted that KPWB will establish a teaching garden at Fred Lynn Middle School, planting species recommended by the Virginia Cooperative Extension, such as persimmon, hazelnut, and other native edibles. The garden will be incorporated into the curriculum. She anticipates continued demand for outreach and volunteer programs and invited the Roundtable members to join her at two upcoming events:

- 3<sup>rd</sup> annual Farm to Table Fundraiser on May 4, 6:30-9:30 p.m. at the Winery at La Grange in Haymarket
- Run for the Earth 5K on April 27, 8:30 a.m. at River Mill Park in Historic Occoquan

Mr. Dickinson noted that environmental education has been aggressively pursued in Maryland and Washington, D.C., including teacher trainings that are paid for by the state. It was noted that a budget amendment to include resources for environmental education was being sponsored by Delegate David Bulova during the current legislative session.

**Member Time & Acknowledgements.** Ms. Gross invited attendees to share activities, events, and topics of interest. They included:

- Ms. Grape noted that the program summary for all of the Potomac Watershed Roundtable forums is available.
- Mr. McGlone shared the following items hosted by the Virginia Cooperative Extension on behalf of Ms. Conrad. He suggested calling the Arlington Extension Office at 703-228-6414 for more information:

- Spotted Lanternfly Identification workshop on March 28 from 7:00 – 9:00 p.m. at the Fairlington Community Center.
- Grasses for the Masses workshops on January 28 and March 1.
- Ms. Bellezza noted two items related to Fairfax Water:
  - Fairfax Water is now accepting applications for the 2018 Water Supply Stakeholder grant program, which will award up to \$10,000 for education or water protection projects. Applications are due no later than May 15, 2019.
  - The approved farm bill includes prioritization for funding for source water protection. She is interested in further conversations with Soil and Water Conservation Districts regarding this.
- Mr. Prelewicz shared that the Occoquan Watershed Monitoring Laboratory (OWML) is doing a modeling study regarding the Micron expansion in Manassas and the Virginia DEQ is coordinating an Occoquan Basin Workgroup. Sodium released as a by-product from the production taking place at Micron is the primary concern. It is very difficult to remove excess sodium through the water treatment process. He suggested this would be a good topic for a future Roundtable discussion.

**Adjournment.** Mr. Gross thanked everyone for their attendance and engagement in the meeting dialogue. She expressed appreciation to the Northern Virginia SWCD for their hospitality and noted that the next meeting will be on April 12, 2019 in Prince William County. The meeting adjourned at 2:07 PM.