

Looney Creek TMDL Implementation Plan
Government Working Group Meeting Summary - Draft
USDA Service Center, Roanoke, VA : March 26, 2007

SUMMARY

Attendees

Tom Wilbon, Resident
Eddie Wells, RVARC
Carol Linkenhoker, Botetourt County
Bob Boeren, VDOF
Drew Miller, DEQ
Bill Wright, SERCAP

Charlene Oliver, MCSWCD
Charlie Lunsford, DCR
Jeff Busby, Botetourt County
Mary Dail, DEQ
Tom Wilson, SERCAP
Mark Hollberg, DCR

Introduction

The working group began the meeting with attendees introducing themselves. The group reviewed the bacteria source reductions from the Looney Creek TMDL in addition to livestock numbers, pet numbers, wildlife numbers, and the number of residents in the watershed currently. The group reviewed a handout that summarized the amount of livestock exclusion fencing needed in the watershed based on information that Map Tech (consultant developing the TMDL implementation plan) provided for the first agricultural working group meeting of January 22, 2007. Included in the handout was the number of straight pipes and failing septic systems that are projected to be in the watershed. These sources of human bacteria along with pets are being addressed by the residential working group.

Overview of Local Programs that Could Assist with TMDL Implementation

Botetourt County – Mapping, public education (*i.e.*, presentations at schools, Ruritan Club, etc.), promotion of conservation easements, staff updates to Board of Supervisors.

Virginia Department of Health – not present.

Virginia Department of Forestry – Reforestation areas, promotion of Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program along with USDA and the MCSWCD.

Virginia Department of Environmental Quality – Organization of citizen monitors in watershed to do bacteria Coliscan monitoring. Conduct bi-monthly ambient monitoring at three stations in the watershed beginning in January 2008.

Mountain Castles Soil and Water Conservation District – Provide state agricultural cost-share funds. District received \$250,000 for FY2007 for Botetourt and Craig Counties. NRCS Natural Resources Conservationist position is currently vacant as well as the Conservation Technician position at the District, formerly filled by Rebecca Evans.

Southeast Rural Community Assistance Project, Inc. (Southeast RCAP) – Provide funding for families and individuals at poverty level to fund replacement of straight pipes and failing on-site sewage disposal systems. Also, fund indoor plumbing rehabilitation and well construction for water supplies. Have a licensed P.E. on staff that can design alternative waste treatment system installations that reduces the cost as much as \$2,500 to \$3,000 per system. Southeast RCAP has agreed to target some funding to the Looney Creek watershed. Will need to work with them to determine how to integrate this source of funding with the EPA Section 319 funds that will be available to replace straight pipes and failing on-site sewage disposal systems.

Regulatory Controls to Assist with Implementation

The two regulatory controls that were discussed included the Virginia Agricultural Stewardship Act administered by the Virginia Department of Agricultural and Consumer Services (VDACS) and the Virginia Sewage Handling and Disposal Regulations. VDACS administers the Agricultural Stewardship Act Program with support from Soil and Water Conservation Districts who often investigate the citizen complaints. It was mentioned that the Act does not address pathogens, it actually addresses water quality problems associated with sediment and nutrients entering rivers and streams from agricultural operations. The Virginia Sewage Handling and Disposal Regulations are enforced by the local Health Dept.

There was a mention of equine exclusion from streams and that this is a growing water quality issue across Virginia. Currently, Virginia's Agricultural Cost-Share Program does not provide funding to pay for excluding equine from streams. A tax credit is provided for a landowners out-of-pocket cost to exclude equine. The state would like to see local governments develop ordinances to regulate allowable stocking densities for equine prior to providing cost-share assistance.

It was also mentioned that there is a provision under Virginia's Water Quality Improvement Fund to reimburse local governments tax revenues that are lost when land use is changed to riparian buffers. To date, this has not been utilized by local governments due to the low acres of land involved and insignificant revenue loss.

A comment was made by Tom Wilbon that the County needs to set a better example in addressing water quality issues. The example given was ridge top development. He expressed that the agricultural community feels that they are constantly being asked to do more. Comment was made that everyone needs to do their part to have success

Monitoring Component for Implementation Plan

Citizen monitors are monitoring for two months at 16 sites in the watershed that will be reduced down to 10 core stations for monthly monitoring through December 2007. They will try to sample one or more rain events. DCR offered to provide funding to continue the Coliscan monitoring beyond 2007. This would need to be included in the implementation plan along with the amount of funding needed.

Government Working Group Member on Steering Committee

It was mentioned that a member of the government working group is needed to sit on the Steering Committee for Looney Creek and to provide the government working group report at the first meeting of this committee. The Committee will have two meetings during the plan development process, one to discuss the working group reports and recommendations and the second to discuss the draft plan and the presentation for the public meeting when the draft plan is presented.