

THE RIVANNA RIVER BASIN COMMISSION  
A PROPOSED FRAMEWORK  
April 25, 2007

Purpose of the Commission: Provide guidance for the stewardship and enhancement of the water and natural resources of the Rivanna River Basin.

Threat Assessments: The major threats to the water resources of the Rivanna watershed are known, but are not well understood. As an initial undertaking, the Commission could determine the causes—and more importantly the cures—for the overarching threats to the health of the Rivanna’s rivers and streams.

- **Sedimentation:** Excessive sedimentation threatens to suffocate the life out of the Rivanna. In 2001, the Thomas Jefferson Water Resources Advisory Committee stated that the feasibility of reducing sediment in the Rivanna watershed “rests on identifying the sources of sediment.” A plan for undertaking this threat assessment was developed, but no funding secured. The Advisory Committee recommended that “an existing local institutional entity, or partnership of local entities, serve as an umbrella to orchestrate this project. The umbrella organization(s) would secure funding and manage the project, bringing in technical expertise and manpower as indicated from local, State and Federal government agencies, private sector consultants, and citizen groups.” The Rivanna River Basin Commission is perfectly suited to serve as this umbrella and complete this essential task. In addition to determining the cause of the sedimentation problem, the Commission would initiate work on testing various potential management strategies for abating the threat.
- **Drinking water supply:** Along with increasing residential growth comes increasing demands for drinking water. If water supplies are not managed efficiently, the community runs the risk of failing to meet the demands of both the human and aquatic populations. For the Charlottesville-Albemarle community, a water supply expansion has been proposed that will balance the projected 50-year human demand with the need to leave enough water in the Rivanna’s rivers and streams to support fish and other aquatic species. The Commission would provide support for those and similar efforts.

Organizational Structure: The Commission will have fourteen members comprised of two elected officials from each of the four major localities in the watershed (Albemarle, Charlottesville, Fluvanna and Greene), one citizen from each of those localities who demonstrates interest, experience, or expertise in water-related Basin issues, and a member from each of the two Soil & Water Conservation Districts located in the Rivanna. The Commissioners will set the broad direction for the Commission, but will meet infrequently (quarterly or bi-annually).

Operational Structure: Since the Commission will be meeting only periodically, the ongoing work of the Commission will be undertaken by scientific professionals hired by the Commissioners.

- **Scope of Work:** To get answers to the most pressing issues facing the Rivanna watershed, the Commission would adopt a Scope of Work that guides research to determine the origins of the threats and, perhaps more importantly, to demonstrate the feasibility and efficacy of strategies the community could adopt to address those threats. To ensure that the work on sedimentation does not duplicate investigations undertaken elsewhere, the first phase of that Scope of Work will be to complete a

literature review of the work that has been done to date on the causes and possible cures for the threat of sedimentation. Once the universe of what is known has been defined, the Commission will target its resources on filling the gaps in the knowledge base and applying that knowledge to local conditions.

- **Technical Advisory Committee:** The Commission should appoint a technical advisory committee to aid the Commission in the technical aspects of its work. The technical advisory committee could draft the Scope of Work for the Commission's approval, hire a professional to undertake the literature review, issue requests for proposals and review RFP submissions, manage ongoing research projects, and apply for grants. The technical advisory committee would be comprised of the Commission members, environmental staffs of the four localities, professional staff from the two Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and up to 12 additional non-staff individuals who have an interest and expertise in the work being undertaken by the Commission.
- **Project Manager:** The Commission may want to hire a project manager to oversee the implementation of the Scope of Work and apply for grants, rather than leaving that work to a committee.

**Funding:** To leverage the available funds, every effort should be made to apply for federal and state grants that will match the private funding that has been raised for the Commission. In addition, the Commission will be provided, at no expense, a computer-generated hydrologic model of the Rivanna, which cost over \$150,000 to develop. The model simulates flows, which will aid in the understanding of both sedimentation and drinking water supply needs.