

FINAL

Thursday, March 27, 2008

To: The Rivanna River Basin Commission

From: The RRBC Technical Advisory Committee

Subject: TAC March 27 meeting summary

The emphasis of the March Technical Advisory Committee meeting was to discuss next steps. The group also briefly discussed a bathymetric study and appointing new TAC members.

Discussion of Next Steps

Sam Austin gave a summary of the TAC's discussions to date. At the last meeting, the group talked about the need to make a recommendation to the Commission about next steps they should take to address the threat of altered hydrology. To facilitate the discussion and decision-making about next steps, TNC volunteered at the last meeting to go through the minutes of previous TAC meetings and compile the questions, ideas, and goals that have been suggested by TAC members over the past year. TNC prepared a flow chart comprised of this information to help guide today's discussion and make a decision about next steps.

The group began reviewing the flow chart presentation TNC prepared. The first slide posed the question "Do we know enough about effectiveness of management practices to recommend implementation?" The TAC spent much of the meeting discussing how to answer this question. Members expressed many ideas and concerns, such as the need to install and monitor pilot projects to see how well practices work with our local conditions, the need to conduct assessments of how well these practices are designed, built, and maintained locally, the need to conduct a modeling exercise to determine whether the watershed hydrology could be restored if these practices were implemented, the need to assess public benefit per unit cost of practices, and the difficulty, expense, and long time frame involved with monitoring of practices. The group also talked about the need to collect or reconstruct baseline data for these practices, and whether or not to move forward with collecting such data at Biscuit Run. The general consensus seemed to be that a lot is known about practices but perhaps not enough to recommend full implementation at this time. The TAC seemed to be leaning toward recommending implementation with installation of a few pilot projects, while at the same time working to gather local data on existing and new practices.

Sally Thomas was in attendance and mentioned to the group that ultimately the Commission will need to convince local elected officials to ask developers to do things differently. This will cost money and people will want assurance that this will work to help the watershed. The TAC and the Commission will have to have a good story to convince elected officials that this should be required. She added that this doesn't necessarily mean the TAC has to conduct more studies and literature reviews, but they do need to be confident in what they recommend people do

differently, since the Commission will have to convince local officials it is the right thing to do to protect the watershed.

The group also discussed their goal for stormwater management practices. There are two main problems with existing stormwater management regulations: 1) they only require replication of the pre-existing condition (which may be pavement or field instead of forest), and 2) there are no volume reduction requirements. In order to address the threat of altered hydrology, the natural forested condition needs to be replicated. The group drafted the following goal statement:

The goal of Rivanna watershed land-use management is to replicate the hydrologic condition¹ of a forest with a goal of: 1) preventing further degradation, and 2) restoring stream health.

¹volume, velocity, frequency, duration, and peak flow rate

Dan Ratzlaff, the new Erosion and Sediment Inspector with Greene County, suggested the group consider using terms other than “replicating” and “restoring” in the goal statement. Dan used to be a contractor, and from his experience he thinks that people will think it is not possible if those terms are used. He added that you can provide contractors, developers, etc. all the data and studies you want but they will disregard them because really all that matters to them is the cost. The TAC will revisit the goal statement and refine it as needed at the next meeting.

The TAC also talked about conducting a runoff modeling exercise to look at a theoretical forested lot and develop it using a suite of practices designed to mitigate runoff and replicate the forested hydrology. The modeling exercise would tell the group if it could be done, how it would be done, and what it would cost. Greg Harper said that a basic runoff modeling exercise such as this would not be very difficult. He offered to discuss it with his colleagues at Albemarle County to see what level of effort would be required and to determine whether it is something the county could take on or if it would require hiring a consultant. They may also be able to scale the modeling exercise up to the watershed level to assess the effect on watershed hydrology if these practices were put in place on all new development sites in the watershed. Greg will report back on this at the next meeting, or he will post information to the TAC weblog if he has something to share before the meeting.

The group decided to spend the next TAC meeting walking through the flow chart presentation, and TNC will post it to the weblog after today’s meeting in case members want to review it beforehand.

Discussion of Bathymetric Study

At the last TAC meeting, John Martin mentioned that the Rivanna Water and Sewer Authority recently removed \$150,000 from their budget for a bathymetric study of the South Fork Rivanna Reservoir. He suggested that if the TAC felt this would be a useful piece of information to have, the TAC should write a letter to Sally Thomas suggesting the Commission request RWSA put the study back into their budget. The TAC discussed whether or not the bathymetric study would be useful to their work to abate the threat of altered hydrology in the watershed. There

was not a quorum present at this point during the meeting, so no decisions were made about the study.

Discuss appointing new TAC members

At the last TAC meeting, Sam mentioned that Leslie Middleton and Joanna Curan are two local citizens who are interested in joining the TAC. The TAC is also short right now of one staff member from Charlottesville and one from Greene County. In the interest of time, the TAC decided to use the TAC weblog over the next few weeks to discuss whether or not to appoint new TAC members. If the group decides to appoint new members, they will vote on a recommendation at the next TAC meeting.

Discuss public access to TAC weblog

In the interest of time, this discussion was postponed to the next meeting.

The next meeting was set for April 16 at 9:30 am at TNC.

Compiled by Diane Frisbee and respectfully submitted by Samuel H. Austin, TAC Chair.

Attachments:

A. Next Steps Flow Chart 08Mar27