

Proposal to integrate the Rivanna River Coordinating Group into the formal structure of the Rivanna River Basin Commission

Background

The Rivanna River Coordinating Group (RRCG) is an informal networking forum for area nonprofits and government personnel. The RRCG was created in 2006 and includes participants from the Counties of Albemarle, Fluvanna and Greene and the City of Charlottesville. Governmental participants have included the environmental administration, planning, outreach, engineering, inspections, parks and recreation.

During a recent meeting, Robbi Savage (RCS Director, chair of the Coordinating Group and a member of the RRBC) and Leslie Middleton (Commission staff and a former member of the RRBC) met to discuss the Commission's grant proposal submitted to the NFWF. As a part of that discussion, they discussed the structure of the Commission and the potential for adding a public outreach and involvement Committee. Robbi and Leslie identified the Rivanna River Coordinating Group as one forum for this outreach and began to work on a set of options to propose to the Commission at its April 2009 meeting.

At the February 26, 2009, meeting of the RRCG, Robbi broached the subject with the members of the group, and there was enthusiastic support for the idea of integrating the RRCG into the Rivanna River Basin Commission. If such a merger was to be accomplished, the expectation is that the staffing of the Committee would be transferred from RCS to the Commission staff. This draft proposal is put forward with the support of the Rivanna Conservation Society and the Rivanna River Coordinating Group.

The Issues.

1. A number of coordinating meetings take place throughout the watershed. Government personnel and NGO leaders find themselves attending meetings with the same folks different locations and times to discuss similar topics. There is a growing sense of "meeting weariness" – as well as concern that there could be a more efficient way to coordinate activities, project planning, and response to funding opportunities.
2. The Rivanna River Coordinating Group provides the NGO community with the opportunity to regularly engage with the governmental professionals (who are able to attend) in order to stay abreast of the key issues facing the watershed.
3. The Rivanna River Basin Commission's Technical Advisory Committee meetings, while open to the public, are focused on the work of the TAC, which heretofore has been highly technical and focused on developing a threat analysis for the Rivanna. Presently, the TAC comprised of professional staff appointed by the localities, plus selected technical experts including planning, engineering, and stormwater management professionals. The make-up of the TAC is based on the charter of the RRBC. The Rivanna River Coordinating Group, on the other hand, is broad based and is open to all, especially those with an interest in environmental

protection, environmental education, conservation and recreation. These interests and activities have little or no representation on the RRBC's TAC.

4. The RRBC is comprised of elected officials and citizens members appointed by elected officials from four jurisdictions. The Commission is unique among the many Rivanna groups in that it is multi-jurisdictional make-up that is reflective of the Rivanna watershed. The make-up of the RRBC and its TAC has made it possible to move quickly forward in identifying the main threat to the Rivanna watershed and the next step of focusing on implementing solutions through its member jurisdictions.

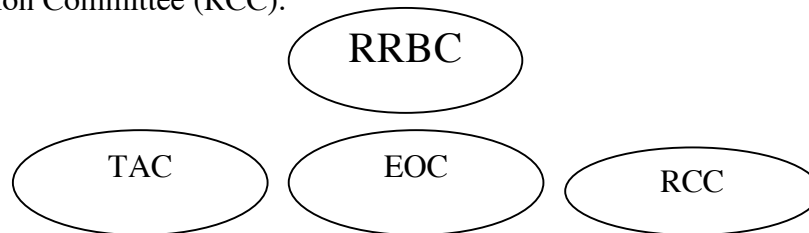
5. The component of the RRBC's charter (" ... *promoting communication, coordination, and education...*") has yet to be realized. This could be accomplished by moving the administration of the Rivanna River Coordinating Group to the Rivanna River Basin Commission.

6. Administration of the Rivanna River Coordinating Group requires resources that will need to be identified to ensure its sustainability regardless of which entity provides these services.

The Proposal

The Rivanna Conservation Society and the Rivanna River Coordinating Committee are recommending that the Coordinating Group become a Committee of the Rivanna River Basin Commission.

Option I: Committees of the Rivanna River Basin Commission could include: (1) The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC); (2) Education and Outreach Committee (EOC); and (3) Recreation and Conservation Committee (RCC).



Option II: Include business and corporate representation on the Commission through its committee structure. Committees of the Rivanna River Basin Commission could include: (1) The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC); (2) the Public Advisory Committee (PAC); and (3) the Business Advisory Committee (BAC). If this option were pursued, it would be worthwhile to explore whether the Public Advisory Committee should include both education *and* recreation interests or whether two separate committees could be created:

