

Commission ACTION:

Approve the Executive Committee recommendation to accept the StreamWatch Steering Committee invitation to join the Steering Committee as a non-voting member.

BACKGROUND

From www.streamwatch.org:

"Per our charter, StreamWatch engages a broad spectrum of the community to develop data and information credible to all. We are guided and funded by a formal partnership composed of local governments, resource management agencies, and non-governmental organizations. We engage citizens to help us collect data, we work with science experts to help us analyze our data and convert it to understandable information, and we present our findings to planners, managers, elected decision-makers, and, via the media, the general public. Through this inclusive and comprehensive involvement, we help facilitate community consensus on the status of our streams and rivers. We believe that when diverse sectors of the community share fundamental agreement on the condition of the resource, the chances of sound, collaborative management are enhanced.

"Stream monitoring is a key component of successful stewardship of the watershed because responsive management requires the environmental feedback – the data – that monitoring supplies. Government agencies don't have sufficient resources to monitor as comprehensively as needed, and "official" resource managers are increasingly turning to volunteer monitors to help fill data gaps."

The StreamWatch Steering Committee presently consists of the following organizations:

City of Charlottesville
County of Albemarle
Thomas Jefferson Planning Commission
Rivanna Water and Sewer Authority
Rivanna Conservation Society
The Nature Conservancy
Fluvanna County Virginia
Thomas Jefferson Soil and Water Conservation District

While the RRBC was operating under the auspices of The Nature Conservancy (TNC), there was ample cross-fertilization of information and feedback between StreamWatch

Steering Committee and TNC staff supporting the RRBC and serving on the StreamWatch Steering Committee (Ridge Schuyler) and the StreamWatch Technical Advisory Committee (Diane Frisbee). However, with the departure of TNC staff simultaneously engaged in RRBC and StreamWatch activities, it is timely to address the nature of the relationship between StreamWatch and RRBC.

All present StreamWatch Steering Committee member organizations (partners) provide funding and/or in-kind services to support the StreamWatch mission.

There has been ongoing, but informal discussion, between the StreamWatch organization, the StreamWatch Director, TNC, and others about the relationship between the Rivanna River Basin Commission and StreamWatch. RRBC has a strong need for data obtained and analysis developed by StreamWatch in order to help guide its efforts and projects. In fact, RRBC made a substantial investment (\$25,500) towards the (Rivanna) Land Cover Map, a project originally proposed by StreamWatch in order to complete the StreamWatch Land Use Effects study. On the other hand, some think that RRBC, given its make-up of elected and appointed members, is a more political organization than the other StreamWatch partners and that this could impact the collaborative nature of the organization as a group of partners, each of whom have a clear need to monitor the health of the watershed.

Earlier this summer, the StreamWatch Steering Committee voted to invite RRBC to become a non-voting member of the StreamWatch Steering Committee. The Steering Committee felt that this was a logical next step that did not require RRBC to commit funds and support as a full fledged partner, nor commit StreamWatch to prematurely define a relationship with RRBC, an organization that is still emerging into its place in the watershed community.

The Executive Committee of the RRBC voted at the July 15, 2009 meeting to recommend to the full Commission that the Commission accept this invitation to become a non-voting member of the StreamWatch Steering Committee. The Commission was unable to take up this matter at the July meeting due to time constraints.

There are minimal impacts on RRBC staff that would result from formalizing the relationship between RRBC and StreamWatch in this way.