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Storm Water Studies Start

BY JOE RONAN
CORRESPONDENT

The Rivanna River Basin Commission (RRBC) and the Center for Watershed Protection (CWP) have started identifying areas that can be retrofitted to improve storm water management in Fluvanna County.

Members of the RRBC, county board of supervisors and county staff accompanied representatives of the Center as they examined three sites, all of them on county property.

The sites were:

- the existing high school,
- Central Elementary School
- the government complex in Palmyra.

At each, the groups identified areas where water runoff can be improved by promoting on-site infiltration of storm water.

The commission plans to help the county obtain grants for the improvements.

The aim of the effort is to correct inadequate storm water management practices as well as to fix past

mistakes and maintenance problems and solve chronic flood problems.

The effort should also show how to reduce the most common form of pollutants, helping preserve existing water sources and ensure a viable water supply for the future.

Representatives of the Center, a nonprofit group focusing on storm water management issues, said the idea is to restore the natural function of soil and vegetation as a filter.

In recent decades, the methods of dealing with storm water runoff included constructing storm drains that removed water from a site as quickly as possible.

Instead of allowing rain water to soak into and infiltrate the natural ground cover and be filtered as it travels to the aquifer, storm runoff is usually directed over paved surfaces and into storm drains.

The Rivanna Conservation Society (RCS) a nonprofit group which seeks to safeguard the Rivanna River Watershed, that approach "can cause excessive erosion and sedimentation of the waterways into which it flows."

In contrast, when rain falls on natural and forested lands, it "is absorbed into the ground where it falls, nourishing plant life and helping to recharge groundwater aquifers."

Some of the remedial actions the commission and center propose would eliminate curbs that direct large volumes of runoff directly into streams and rainwater harvesting — which is part of the new high school plan to water sports fields. Other ideas include rain gardens and using permeable parking lot material.

The current work of CWP will result in identifying feasible sites for retrofit, as well as collecting information for initial concepts or designs.

The center will also prioritize the list of eligible sites and providing a cost benefit analysis of the retrofit recommendations.

The commission will then assist the county in obtaining grants that will cover the cost of the projects. The ultimate goal is to provide county officials with verifiable data which will be used to encourage these practices in future construction projects.



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