

Section 1. Executive Summary

The Piedmont Regional Pilot Project for the Chesapeake Bay TMDL (PRPP) is one of two pilot projects nominated by Virginia and selected by EPA to be one of the seven Phase II pilot projects in the Bay watershed. The PRPP conducted its work from April until December 2010 concurrent with the development of the draft and final Chesapeake Bay TMDL and Virginia draft and final Phase I Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP). The Pilot Project was led by a Steering Committee of local elected officials and staff from regional and watershed planning organizations, two soil and water conservation districts, and conservation organizations (see Appendix A for listing). The Steering Committee developed a statement of purpose “to develop a commonly accepted commitment to strategies that key stakeholders have bought into, that are innovative, and that accomplish TMDL goals.”

The PRPP decided that it would invest the bulk of its time and contractor support in convening a series of focus groups with local stakeholders for these purposes:

- 1) Provide accurate background information about the Bay TMDL and the concurrent Virginia Watershed Implementation Planning process;
- 2) Solicit ideas, concerns, and needs from stakeholders and local government in the Piedmont region;
- 3) Solicit specific ideas for feasible strategies that could achieve the nutrient and sediment pollution reduction being required of all sectors;
- 4) Determine interest in pursuing a regional approach to meet local requirements during the Phase II Watershed Implementation process in 2011;
- 5) Develop relationships between Steering Committee members and between stakeholder groups in the region to serve as foundation for responding to Phase II;
- 6) Understand what level of commitment may be necessary to implement required actions at the local level during Phase II.

The input from these sessions then would be provided to the Commonwealth and the EPA from interim and final reports, presentations, and meetings.

The Steering Committee recognized that local governments were in many ways the most affected stakeholder group, through requirements to implement pollution reduction strategies, and by being the elected representatives of the various affected constituents. Therefore, the PRPP commenced its outreach with the first group (staff members of local governments) with plans to report back to each locality board at the end of the pilot project period in late 2010.

The PRPP hosted five focus groups, defining stakeholders as those who would be most affected by the Bay TMDL: 1) staff from local jurisdictions, 2) local elected officials, 3) the agriculture sector, 4) builders/developers, and 5) permitted dischargers. Each meeting provided stakeholders with background information about TMDLs (generally) and the development of the Bay TMDL. Participants were then invited to express their concerns, to provide feedback on resource needs, and to suggest actions that would achieve the required pollution reductions. [Though not included in this report, the PRPP is holding a final focus group on February 16, 2011, that will bring together representatives from each of the stakeholder focus groups to discuss sector challenges and the development of a regional Phase

II watershed implementation plan.]

While each stakeholder focus group included concerns and ideas particular to that group, several overlapping themes emerged. These themes included:

- 1) **Need for good, clear and up-to-date information.** Knowledge of the Bay TMDL varied widely within and between sectors.
- 2) **Concerns about equity.** Each sector had members who believed that their sector was being singled out for more harmful restrictions and excessive costs.
- 3) **Concerns about costs.** Each sector also expressed deep concerns about how much this would cost, who would pay, and what support might be offered.
- 4) **Interest in collaborative regional planning.** Each sector expressed interest in working with other sectors on a regional basis.

Upon completion of these focus groups and an assessment of lessons learned, the Steering Committee recommends these strategies for local government engagement during Phase II:

1) Provide dedicated funding for watershed implementation planning.

Citizens expect other issues such as schools and police to have higher priority. The development of Phase II WIPs will require significant resources so that local government and local and regional agencies can dedicate efforts to focus on plan development, public engagement, and implementation and tracking of progress.

2) Acknowledge and highlight the importance of local water quality to encourage buy-in by local governments and affected stakeholders.

The discontent with the methodology of development of the Bay TMDL and its reliance on the Chesapeake Bay models can be addressed if EPA and its state partners can provide their local partners with enough information, resources, and tools so that local staff can understand the Chesapeake Bay models and the relationship of the Bay TMDL to local water quality.

3) Provide a mechanism for using local water quality, land use, and other data in the development and implementation of local and regional pollution reduction strategies.

The potential to improve local water quality may be the most compelling reason for many localities to embrace the Bay TMDL requirements. This is especially true above the fall line or for communities that are remote from the Bay, where the desire for healthy Localities should be provided with user-friendly tools for evaluating and determining the most cost effective strategies for achieving local targets.

4) Provide accurate and timely information from EPA and the state agencies about the process of developing the Bay TMDL and state WIP.

With the combination of uncertainty, fears, and concerns of various stakeholders about what the Bay TMDL and Virginia's WIP might mean, many stakeholders hold beliefs that are not factually based. Presentations should be accurate to the scale of the region with which the stakeholders are identified (i.e., to the regional or local government scale versus Chesapeake Bay watershed for sector load analyses).

5) Engage the proper units of local and regional governance during the development of Phase II WIPs.

Local governments fear being given responsibilities without having the authority to effectuate its charges. Although EPA has suggested that “local governments, SWCDs or watershed groups” may take a lead role in implementing the Phase II WIPs, this will likely vary from region to region in Virginia. The Commonwealth can minimize turf battles between entities of local government and regional agencies by providing clear direction regarding role, resources, and expectations.

6) Provide sufficient opportunities for cross-sector understanding and problem solving.

Without these opportunities, there is likely to be substantial debilitating conflict among the affected stakeholder groups. It is also important that federal and state decision-makers directly engage local government officials continually through Phase II implementation.

7) Take measures to ensure that implementation of the Bay TMDL takes advantage of local efforts to maintain existing healthy streams and restore compromised ecosystems.

Healthy ecosystems and streams have the greatest capacity to process excess nutrients and sediment. Precautions will be necessary to make sure that trading between basins does not result in unintended degradation of local waters.

A second component of the PRPP was to attempt to evaluate how load reductions of nutrients and sediment required by existing local TMDLs would compare to the anticipated target loads during Phase II Bay TMDL implementation planning. The Watershed Modeling Division of TetraTech, Inc supported this work. This was difficult to achieve, since the Bay watershed model inputs were in flux during the time of the Pilot Project. Also, models used to develop local TMDL loads are significantly different from the Bay models. A comprehensive list and map of existing regional impaired stream segments was developed for use at focus groups. A database was developed for the region in preparation for Phase II.

The Institute for Environmental Negotiations provided essential meeting support (facilitation and meeting logistics) for the Steering Committee and focus groups meetings.

Steering Committee for the Piedmont Regional Pilot Project

Connie Brennan	Nelson County Board of Supervisors
Bill Kittrell	The Nature Conservancy
Leslie Middleton	Rivanna River Basin Commission
Rick Parrish	Southern Environmental Law Center
Alyson Sappington	Thomas Jefferson SWCD
Carl Schmitt	Greene County Board of Supervisors
Sally Thomas	Chesapeake Bay Program Local Government Advisory Committee
Greg Wichelns	Culpeper SWCD
Steve Williams	Thomas Jefferson PDC

This report and more detailed information about the Piedmont Regional Pilot Project can be found at http://www.rivannariverbasin.org/chesbay_tmdl_pilot_project.php.

Table of Contents

Section 1. Executive Summary 3

Section 2. Pilot Project Overview 6

Section 3. Key Messages: Feedback from Focus Group and Local Stakeholders 8

Section 4. Understanding Local Impairments: TetraTech Technical Support 12

Section 5. Observations On Pilot Project Process (Challenges and Responses) 14

**Section 6. Recommended Strategies for Phase II WIP Development:
Local Government Engagement and Partnerships 17**

Section 7. Appendix

A. Pilot Project Steering Committee Members 20

B. Pilot Project Roadmap and Timeline..... 21

C. Focus Group Summaries

Agriculture **22**

Local Elected Officials **31**

Building/Development **35**

Permit Holders (MS4, VPDES) **38**