

**Pohick Creek Watershed
Introductory and Issues Scoping Forum
Meeting Notes**

West Springfield Elementary School
October 15, 2008
6:30-9:00 pm

In Attendance:

Maureen Roche	Homeowner
Duane Murphy	VP, Southport HOA
Clint Boschen	TetraTech
Mike McCaffrey	FCPA
John and Elizabeth Morrissey	HSHA
Laura Stephens	Fort Belvoir
Chris Jones	GMU
Chuck Smith	Homeowner
Virginia Kost	Indian Oaks HOA
Gary Lucas	Bonnie Brae
Anthony Campillo	Covered Bridge HOA
Richard Shek	
Asad Rouhi	NVSWCD
John Cooley	Civic Association West Springfield Village
Ed Miller	Homeowner
Paul Quinn	
Rachel Wiese	TetraTech
Chris Landgraf	US Army Ft Belvoir
Ginny Harris	Alice Ferguson Foundation
Kelly Meadows	Lake Braddock Community Assn
Patrick Gloyd	Burke Centre Conservancy
Susan Susa	Friends of Hidden Pond/Pohick
George Jennings	George Mason University
Ron Marlow	Burke Presbyterian Church
Bob Kohnke	NV Soil and Water Cons Dis
Rhoda Waters	
Robert Gordon	Potomac River Greenways Coalition
John Rephlo	Old Dominion District Chairman - Boy Scouts of America
Takisha Cannon	Fairfax County DPWES/SWPD

Presentations

Fred Rose, Fairfax County

Fred provided a brief overview of the County's stormwater planning program. He explained that watershed plans in the early 1970s were focused on the quantity of water in streams. However, these early facilities and programs have not fully addressed all the problems and issues with

streams that the County faces today. From 2001-2003, the County conducted a comprehensive biological assessment of streams, considering both quantity and quality, and this analysis demonstrated that over 70% of County streams were impaired. This study included walking the streams and analyzing and scoring them, and resulted in a determination that most of the streams were in fair to very poor condition. It was this study that resulted in a call for moving to the next step, which is the reason for the meeting tonight.

The County is evolving in terms of stormwater management, and it is responding to changes in technology and other advances in the field of stormwater management. There are many possible solutions the County can implement but not all solutions are necessarily proven or effective. The County's goal is based on this challenge – to have watershed plans in place with effective solutions – although the County acknowledges that not all may work.

All of us live in a watershed and impact the watershed – we use cars, have homes, use the roads. The encouraging part is that we can all be part of the solution – every little thing can help. Tonight we are going to have everyone participate as an integral part of this process for Pohick Creek.

The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors sees this effort as an important part of their agenda – specifically, part of the County's environmental agenda. Tonight we are presenting our work to date in the form of a watershed workbook. In compiling the workbook we looked at the watershed, collected data and characterized existing conditions. We are eager to get the workbook to you to review and to get your feedback on it.

An important part of moving to the next step is forming a Watershed Advisory Group (WAG) here in the Pohick Creek watershed. The WAG will have diversified interests represented and it will meet periodically with specific agendas for the meetings.

Supervisor Herrity

Supervisor Herrity described his growing up in Rolling Valley, Pohick Creek and Hidden Creek. He emphasized that the watershed has changed a lot over the years – which is why the public's involvement is so important. The project consultants can collect a lot of information over a one-year period, but since they don't live in the watershed they don't have the residents' knowledge of how the area has changed over time. Supervisor Herrity offered to have residents contact him if he can help as this process proceeds.

Beth Offenbacher, Waterford, Inc. – Public Involvement Consultant

Beth reviewed the agenda for the meeting. Speaking next will be Shannon Curtis, Fairfax County, who will provide background information on watersheds. Then Trish Hennessey-Webb, PBS&J, will highlight workbook efforts. Beth will then report on the public involvement process and introduce the Open House at the end of the meeting.

Beth then introduced the project staff in attendance. This included Chad Grupe, Joe Sanchirico and Darold Burdick from Fairfax County; Karlee Copeland and Laura Chap from PBS&J; and Paul Coelus and Roger Taylor from Waterford.

Shannon Curtis, Fairfax County

Shannon presented a brief watershed primer to introduce terms and associated language. He began by describing what a watershed is, then explained that by definition, everyone lives within *some* watershed. Fairfax County is divided into 30 watersheds, each feeding one or more streams or creeks. Watersheds in the northern and eastern parts of the county drain into the Potomac River; those in the western and southern portions drain into the Occoquan River, which drains into the Potomac. Watersheds are further broken down into Watershed Management Areas (WMAs).

Fairfax County is also part of the Potomac River watershed, which is part of the larger Chesapeake Bay watershed. The Chesapeake Bay watershed covers all or part of six states. Runoff from this large area travels through low and high coastal areas, mountains, etc., before reaching the Bay.

Stormwater is rainwater; it becomes runoff if it doesn't get absorbed by the ground. Stormwater management deals with managing that runoff so it doesn't create floods, etc.

Impervious areas are problems – water can't drain into the ground on an impervious surface, such as a parking lot, road, rooftop, or sidewalk. There are fewer places for rainwater to go in areas that are developed; in addition, the more impervious surfaces there are, the more pollution is retained by runoff water.

Wet and dry ponds help to reduce volume and speed of water; some help to strain water and remove some of the pollutants. Many ponds use natural biological systems. For the watersheds in Fairfax County, we have to find ways to work with stormwater runoff and manage it within the watershed.

The watershed planning process involves several steps. We will evaluate data, identify issues, establish a vision, link visions/goals/actions, and create a framework and timeframe for implementation. Once the plan development has been completed, we will have reviewed previous studies and data, characterized the watershed, and determined what else we need to know. Tonight continues our plan development efforts by helping us collect additional information.

Creation of the draft plan for the Pohick Creek watershed is next. The plan will identify ways to address issues. We'll work with the Watershed Advisory Group (WAG) on this effort. Once the plan is finalized, it will be presented to the Board of Supervisors for adoption.

We are also considering common issues across all County watersheds, including development and land use, biological conditions, nonpoint source solution, litter and physical conditions, flooding, landscaping, and awareness of watershed/stormwater management.

Why create watershed plans? Watershed planning and stormwater management is a much bigger picture. Watersheds are where biological conditions exist. It affects drinking water, affects creeks and streams and rivers and also the Chesapeake Bay. These efforts also help prevent erosion and property damage/loss, and ensure that people can enjoy outdoor activities.

Trish Hennessy-Webb, PBS&J – Project Manager

Trish provided several quick facts about Pohick Creek: The watershed includes 36 square miles or 9% of the County and it includes 10 WMAs. There are six large dams in the watershed and the watershed includes portions of Laurel Hill.

We welcome comments on the draft workbook. The workbook has several chapters: Chapter 1 – general data on the watershed; Chapter 2 – details about each WMA; Chapter 3 – restoration strategies (future).

Twenty-three percent of this watershed is impervious. Pohick Creek is categorized at stage 3 in stream condition ranking. Erosion is widening, although it is on its way to stabilizing. There is a lot of water that is untreated in the watershed.

Fairfax County has developed several goals for its watershed planning effort. These include five key objectives – hydrology, habitat, stream water quality, drinking water quality and stewardship.

The data being collected is focused on Pohick Creek but will be rolled up County-wide. This data will be used in the planning process and plan creation. We have compiled data but need input from the public. Our next step, once we have compiled the added information from the public with our existing data, is to mitigate impacts.

Beth Offenbacher, Waterford, Inc. – Public Involvement Consultant

Beth reviewed the requirements for the WAG composition. The WAG is to consist of diverse members representing a broad cross-section of community, civic, business groups. It will have about 20 members in all. Meeting attendees can nominate themselves or someone else for WAG membership.

There are four ways the public can participate. These include: 1) through membership on the WAG; 2) by telling neighbors, friends, colleagues about the WAG and the need for additional information; 3) by submitting any comments or feedback via our Virtual Forum on the County website (the website currently is in transition, check back in a week if what you are looking for is not yet posted); and 4) through the Comment Form. You can use the section of the form to let us know of your potential interest in the WAG. You can also tell us about any problems or issues you're aware of in the watershed. The Comment Form can be returned either by email, by calling us, mailing it in or faxing it to us. The deadline for Comment Forms is Saturday, November 29th, 2008.

Beth next opened up the session to questions from audience. There were several questions posed, which are listed below.

Questions Asked by the Public

- My group has 10 projects throughout the watershed – which breakout group should I go to during the Open House?

- What has been Fairfax County's interaction with VDOT as it relates to road expansion and the stormwater impacts of that?
- Can the County consider putting signs on park paths that are near streams for safety purposes ("watch your step")?
- What kind of relationship does Fairfax County have with VDOT as it relates to new development – is it advisory or is it binding?
- What is the intention of the County Supervisors regarding additional funding for watershed projects? What percent of the County budget is used for stormwater now?
- Has the amount of rainfall this year affected erosion? Have you noticed older neighborhoods being more affected by runoff and having more impervious surfaces?
- The County has expanded its Resource Protection Areas – has that helped or been a hindrance?