

*Fairfax County Stormwater Planning Division*

**ACCOTINK CREEK WATERSHED WORKSHOP  
OCTOBER 7, 2008**

**West Springfield High School  
6100 Rolling Road  
Springfield, VA 22152**

**I. Welcome and Introductions**

Fred Rose, the Chief of the Watershed Planning and Assessment Branch, Fairfax County opened the meeting, welcoming the members of the public in attendance. He noted that the County had planned to complete the development of its watershed management plans in two rounds. Each round would encompass 50% of the County's land area. In the first, already completed, round, plans were developed for eleven of the County's thirty watersheds. In the second, ongoing, round, the County plans to develop seven plans to cover the remaining 19 watersheds. Mr. Rose said that while the plans in the first round was completed consecutively, in the second round the plans would be completed concurrently to meet the 2010 deadline set by the Chesapeake Bay Agreement.

Mr. Rose noted that tonight's meeting was the second public forum for the second round. He reassured meeting participants that the County has allotted funding for this program and the development of the watershed management plans would continue.

Mr. Rose then introduced Penelope Gross, the Mason District Supervisor and chair for the Fairfax County Environmental Committee. Ms. Gross started out stating there was a lot of work to do, adding that the work would be both time consuming and expensive. She recounted how the first watershed plans developed by the County had a 25-30 year timeline, which while needed, was too big to handle. The current watershed plans will provide short term recommendations.

Ms. Gross then informed the group of the County's strong environmental commitment. In June 2004, the County Board of Supervisors adopted the first ever 20-year Environmental Vision plan for Fairfax County. In 2007, the County led the nation in developing the Cool Counties Program, which was presented at the National Association of Counties annual conference and adopted by counties nationwide.

Ms. Gross argued that the key to improving the Chesapeake Bay was to improve the health of the local watersheds which people care about, which is why Fairfax County's work in developing watershed management plans is so important. She said she looked forward to hearing the comments of the meeting participants, eventually seeing the Watershed Advisory Group (WAG) recommendations, and getting projects going on the ground.

Mr. Rose then introduced Juliana Birkhoff, the public forum facilitator. She reviewed the meeting agenda and introduced the teams of Fairfax County staff, technical consultants, and facilitators.

## **II. Slide Show**

### Watershed Primer: An Introduction

Danielle Wynn of the Fairfax County Stormwater Planning Division then gave a background presentation to the group. She gave the group the definition of a “watershed” and informed them that the Accotink Creek watershed was nested within the Potomac River watershed, which was nested within the 64,000 square mile Chesapeake Bay watershed. She then noted that for the purpose of data collection, Accotink Creek watershed was divided into eighteen watershed management areas of 2-4 square miles, which were then further broken down into parcels of approximately 100 acres each.

Ms. Wynn stated that watershed planning consists of stormwater management and public education. As Fairfax County was developed, the amount of impervious surface increased. These impervious surfaces increased both the volume and the velocity of stormwater runoff. Stormwater management attempts to mitigate this extra volume and velocity using a variety of tools and techniques, including a stormwater drainage system or installation of dry and wet ponds.

Watershed plans are developed in order to restore and protect bio-natural resources, and to positively impact the quality of drinking water, human health, and the health of the environment.

Ms. Wynn then listed the five main steps of the watershed planning process:

- Evaluate the data to determine the state of the watersheds;
- Identify the issues the plan will address;
- Establish a vision for the watershed and goals that improve, enhance, and protect the watershed;
- Develop specific actions to achieve the goals; and
- Create a framework and timeframe for implementation.

### Watershed Workbook

Bill Frost of KCI then presented a brief overview of the watershed characterization of Accotink Creek watershed. He listed the following three watershed goals for Fairfax County:

- Improve and maintain watershed functions in Fairfax County, including water quality, habitat, and hydrology.
- Protect human health, safety, and property by reducing stormwater impacts.
- Involve stakeholders in the protection, maintenance and restoration of county watersheds.

Mr. Frost then gave a brief overview to the steps taken to develop the Accotink Creek Watershed Workbook through mapping, field assessment and monitoring, and computer modeling. In the Watershed Workbook, every studied subwatershed of Accotink Creek was found to be degraded, poor, or very poor. In the field assessments, surveyors found that most of the creek was still suffering active erosion and widening of the stream bed. Mr. Frost noted that there were a lot of areas along the Creek with unstable banks. He also observed that because most of the watershed

was developed before stormwater management, much of the opportunity would be for retrofitting existing structures rather than trying to affect new development.

There was a short question and answer session following Ms. Wynn's and Mr. Frost's presentations. During the session, members of the public made the following suggestions:

- The Fairfax County Park Authority should be on the WAG.
- Because of the impact of the construction of the I-95 Hot Lanes in the central part of the watershed, the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) should participate in the WAG.

In response to concerns raised about the expansion of I-495, Mr. Rose informed the group that the County has been working with VDOT to try and bring attention to stormwater management issues. Some sections of the Hot Lanes would be in areas with completed watershed management plans that identified issues. While the County has been reassured that the state stormwater management controls are being implemented, the County is trying to achieve measures beyond state controls. The County has also been meeting with the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation to coordinate and strategize how the state should respond to some of these concerns.

### **III. Open House**

Juliana Birkhoff of the Consensus Building Institute provided a brief overview of the public involvement process, noting that the WAG would consist of 12-20 members representing a diverse set of interests and types of people. The WAG would meet over six sessions to identify problems and possible solutions. Following, there would be another forum where members of the public can offer improvements and suggestions to the WAG report. Comments would be accepted throughout the WAG process by the County through the website at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpwes/Watersheds/accotinkcreek.htm>.

Dr. Birkhoff then invited meeting attendees to participate in break out sessions based on their location in the Accotink Creek watershed – North, Middle, or South – to identify locations or concerns in the watershed.

Individuals identified the following items during the break out sessions:

#### North Accotink

- 1) A homeowner near the headwaters for Dale Lestina is having flooding in his house. The stormwater pond there frequently overflows. There is also a new elderly care center being built across the street, increasing impervious surface.
- 2) The stormwater pond in front of the movie theater at Merrifields needs to be retrofitted.
- 3) There is construction in Hunters Branch north of Route 50. This is on a floodplain. There is also an attempt to build a parking lot near there, but the area is muddy and floods.
- 4) The Army-Navy Golf Club in the City of Fairfax has had an expansion plan approved which involved clearing trees.
- 5) At Old Lee Highway across from the Golf Club, a new development is planned.

- 6) There is a retrofit opportunity for stormwater at the (County-owned) Court Complex in the City of Fairfax. In that area, there were tremendous amounts of silt in the headwaters of the Accotink last year during the construction.
- 7) On Chambridge Rd, residents are removing “no mow” signs on public land on the north side of the creek, throwing the signs into the creek, and mowing the grass.
- 8) The Ridgelea Community Association has an erosion problem. A cinderblock wall and a community trail is being undercut by erosion.
- 9) At the storm drain next to Pickett Rd, there is trash coming from the industrial park and erosion from the storm drain outfall.
- 10) At Hunters Branch, there is a severe fish obstruction.
- 11) At Daniels Run in the City of Fairfax, the stream restoration project at the Army-Navy Country Club, planting has transformed this area positively.

### Middle Accotink

- 1) There is severe stream erosion beginning at Turkey Run in the Truror area near Wakefield Chapel.
- 2) At the intersection of I-495 and Little River Turnpike, the cross-county trail gets wiped out by the creek during periods of intense rain (two years ago and again during Hurricane Hanna). This was happening even before the tree removal. (A volume issue)
- 3) Downstream of item 1 at the Willow Woods Homeowners Association, there is stream erosion from the increased volume and velocity of the culvert discharge.
- 4) Under Holburn Avenue at the culvert downstream from items 1 and 2, there is also high velocity due to the culvert. This has destroyed the bridge between Wakefield Swim & Racquet to Chapel Square West. The county creek runs through private lands and there is a “private lake” with a dam constructed. Turkey Run is eroding.
- 5) At 8308 Kay Ct, Annandale, East of the North End where Whitman intersects, there has been massive erosion over the last four years, reaching 4-500 feet deep. Bank collapse is typical of the problem. This erosion has happened since Acctoink was dredged. The creek is 2-3 feet deeper than before and has even changed course. There is increased volume and velocity.
- 6) In Rutherford Park, there is an opportunity for stream buffer restoration. Increased efforts are already underway.
- 7) The construction of the I-495 Hot Lanes would cut down trees and involve minimal stormwater controls. Mitigation is in the form of check to Cedar Run wetlands bank. There are sediment control issues.
- 8) At the Turkey Run reservoir, there is an opportunity for retrofitting below the reservoir to mitigate stormwater.
- 9) Cook Creek was good fish habitat before the I-495 Hot Lanes.
- 10) Redevelopment infill rezoning (where?)
- 11) At the Ravensworth Shopping Area, there is erosion from runoff.
- 12) Near Fairfax Hospital, the stream banks of the first tributary downstream from Woodburn are cut very deep exposing a sewer line. There is also erosion around a manhole and frequent algae growth at that location indicates a possible leak.
- 13) Pine Ridge Park plans to redo all its ball fields, presenting an opportunity for retrofitting.

### South Acctoink

- 1) There are overloaded sewers throughout the waters shed.
- 2) Where the County is paving section of cross-country trail particularly in Acctotink Park, they are cutting down trees that will cause significant erosion that will raise the water level.
- 3) There are over flowing sewers at Fort Belvoir that are creating breeding grounds for mosquitoes.
- 4) Lake Accotink Park has a litter and dog poop problem; this causes significant water quality problems.
- 5) Due to BRAC, the county is over the limit for development and the restrictions are out dated.
- 6) There is an error on the map with the Dogue and Acctotink drainage area
- 7) Around the Army EPG is a very nice area with a beautiful stream with turtle habitat and nests.
- 8) Acctotink Bay has a significant siltation problem.
- 9) Throughout the watershed area, citizens noted that yard waste is being dumped down steep slopes.
- 10) Acctotink Park has a lot of goose poop.
- 11) Throughout the watershed, people are concerned about construction of the I-95 Hot Lanes.
- 12) On several bridges in the sub-watershed there is flooding on the crossings.
- 13) Throughout the lower watershed area, there is trash and large debris in the stream, including log jams.
- 14) There is a proposed channel – realignment from bridge to railroad. There is a need to coordinate with the Army on the construction contract and on 7100 highway extension.
- 15) In many places there are exposed sanitary sewers. In some the lid has broken of in the middle of the creek.