

*Fairfax County Stormwater Planning Division*

**ACCOTINK CREEK WATERSHED ADVISORY GROUP MEETING  
MARCH 12, 2009**

**Oakton Library**  
10304 Lynnhaven Pl  
Oakton, VA 22124

**I. Welcome and Introductions**

*[Please note that the presentation from the March 12, 2009 Accotink Creek WAG meeting will be available online at [http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpwes/watersheds/accotinkcreek\\_docs.htm](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpwes/watersheds/accotinkcreek_docs.htm)].*

Juliana Birkhoff, the meeting facilitator, opened the second meeting of the Accotink Creek Watershed Advisory Group (WAG). She welcomed WAG members and the members of the public and reviewed the meeting agenda.<sup>1</sup>

**II. Presentation of Fairfax County Goals**

Danielle Wynne, Fairfax County, reviewed the county's goals and objectives for the Watershed Management Planning effort.<sup>2</sup> She noted there were three overarching goals:

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

For each goal, there are specific objectives that define how to accomplish the goal. The objectives are categorized into hydrology, habitat, stream water quality, drinking water quality, and stewardship. A set of quantifiable indicators will be used to measure how well the objectives are met. Ms. Wynne asked WAG members to let her know if they thought there were any goals or objectives missing from the list.

Ms. Wynne reviewed expectations for the next advisory group meetings. She told the group that the next few WAG meetings will focus on project identification and prioritization.

In response to a question, Ms. Wynne stated that the Watershed Management Plan is not the same as the TMDL implementation plan, which is being developed at the same time for a portion

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<sup>1</sup> The list of meeting participants is attached to this meeting summary. A copy of the meeting agenda is available at [http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpwes/watersheds/accotinkcreek\\_docs.htm](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpwes/watersheds/accotinkcreek_docs.htm).

<sup>2</sup> A copy of the Fairfax County Goals and Objectives is available at [http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpwes/watersheds/accotinkcreek\\_docs.htm](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpwes/watersheds/accotinkcreek_docs.htm).

of the Accotink Creek mainstem. She added that the two are separate plans with different goals and that one is not meant to replace the other.

### **III. Problem Areas and Subwatershed Ranking**

Bill Frost, KCI, identified common problem areas across the watershed and reviewed subwatershed rankings results. He explained how the county's goals and objectives related to watershed impact indicators and source indicators, both of which were inputs for the ranking procedure. He reviewed how several indicators in the Accotink Creek watershed were measured and showed maps that categorized subwatersheds by indicators

The WAG broke to look at detailed maps of the watershed.

### **IV. Restoration Approaches**

Mr. Frost explained the stages the county would go through to develop watershed restoration projects. First, KCI will investigate each problem site, then they will evaluate them for possible feasibility, and finally they would take the highest priority projects to a concept design. He briefly reviewed some restoration approaches and the benefits from each. He also reviewed the criteria used in the evaluation stage to determine priority sites. He noted that in past watershed plans, many potential sites have been dropped because the construction impacts from the restoration project cause more harm than the benefits from the restoration.

He discussed stormwater management retrofits, adding that sometimes the planner can implement a "treatment train"; when there is a series of onsite retrofits and downstream ponds. In many cases, the upstream facilities can be rebuilt for water quality and the downstream ponds can be rebuilt for retention.

The group asked questions and discussed the presentation. During the discussion, participants made the following points:

- A question was asked about the impact of the pending economic stimulus package. The watershed management plans from the second round would not be complete in time to receive money from the stimulus. Some projects from the first six watershed plans, however, were submitted for the stimulus package.
- Culvert retrofits can be designed so they would not be a fish barrier. Most culvert retrofits are on smaller intermittent or ephemeral channels.
- Stream restoration usually requires a wide right-of-way or easement in order to work. If a streambank is close to a property line, stabilization rather than restoration is usually done.
- The initial investigation resulted in potential projects in at least a third of the land area of Accotink Creek watershed. These projects will be scattered across the watershed unless the county and the WAG think a triage approach is better and focus projects in one area.
- The county may want to consider retrofitting culverts using openings at different elevations, with a small baseflow opening and higher floodplain openings. This reduces or eliminates sedimentation in the culvert and a clear "hungry" water discharge that can induce erosion downstream.

Greg Hoffman, Center for Watershed Protection, discussed the preliminary analysis of restoration and preservation opportunities. The Center started with a list of 400 ponds, outfalls, culverts, impervious areas, schools, churches, and other public properties. They narrowed this list down to 300 sites for field reconnaissance. Mr. Hoffman reviewed why those were opportunities for project sites and what the benefits were.

The group asked questions and discussed Mr. Hoffman's presentation. During the discussion, individuals made the following points:

- The county may want to consider a policy recommendation for a green roof tax credit.
- Restoring the biota to the watershed is the ultimate goal, but in order to reach that point, the county must first restore the water flow and water quality to create habitat. It will take years to have a healthy benthic community again.
- A series of reference stream surveys in Prince William Park may offer as close to an intact watershed system as possible.
- There are tradeoffs. The WAG and the county should discuss if it is better to restore areas that are truly impaired or try to maintain pristine areas in order to maintain a population reservoir.

## **V. Subwatershed Strategy**

Mr. Frost discussed approaches to the subwatershed prioritization strategy for Accotink Creek. He offered three examples for discussion:

- Subwatersheds with improvement potential;
- Retrofit sites with highest feasibility; and
- WMAs with best turnaround.

The WAG discussed the tradeoffs that must be made to decide on sites. Members suggested other criteria for determining project sites:

- Focus on preserving pristine areas first, move to the really impaired areas where restoration would be most effective, and finally to some areas in the middle. One member argued that once the really pristine areas are degraded, it would be nearly impossible to restore them.
- Identify very impaired subwatersheds (black on the map) for which only one factor is causing such a poor ranking. If that one factor is addressed, that subwatershed could be improved enough to move into another ranking.
- Identify areas where future development will be unlikely so that any work done in those subwatersheds would not be undone once developed.
- Identify project sites with a high degree of visibility and opportunity for education, such as churches and schools.
- Identify locations which are slightly impaired, which can be restored and expand the population reservoir.
- Identify hotspots using unified subwatershed and site reconnaissance (USSR) and unified stream assessment (USA) protocols.

- Identify other capital improvement projects that are planned that could negatively impact watershed health (e.g., paving of the cross-county trail along the stream). If the county could stop the project or find alternatives, that would be better.
- Identify areas where shared easements for trails are a possibility (e.g., Sewage Authority land).
- Identify areas slated for development. However, county staff informed the WAG that this could be difficult. The county has an opportunity to work with developers during rezoning applications but does not usually know of development plans until the application is submitted.

One WAG member suggested looking at the zoning regulations in the parts of the watershed that are good, and working to maintain those as a preservation strategy.

During the discussion, Ms. Wynne informed the group that many policy recommendations from the first six watershed plans included incentives to encourage communities to build more sensitively. This is something the county will explore for feasibility. She added that the county also has a shared permit with the school system, so there is an opportunity there to work with the schools to implement new and innovative technologies. The school system includes watersheds and stormwater in its curriculum; county staff already gives talks to high schools every year and every middle school is required to have a meaningful watershed experience.

One WAG member suggested the county consider daylighting outfall pipes back about twenty feet and installing a detention box, which can dissipate water. That along with plantings along the bank would go a long way towards reestablishing the biota. By daylighting an existing pipe, the county has no need for an environmental permit because no natural streams or wetlands would be disturbed.

## **VI. Next Steps**

The WAG should next meet late-April to early May. In the meantime, the consultants are going to perform additional field reconnaissance and start prioritizing sites. The county promised to send the members PDFs of the maps displayed at the meeting, and asked that the members look over them in more detail and provide any comments on proposed project types.

A few WAG members requested a field visit for photographs of retrofits, and an idea of successes and failures.

Prior to the next meeting, the county will send the WAG members a list of possible project sites to review and for discussion at the meeting.

The Accotink Creek watershed is severely degraded, mostly due to urbanization. A planning process initiated by Fairfax County is underway to improve the quality of the waterways and their watersheds. The Watershed Advisory Group (WAG) provides input to Fairfax County. The WAG members serve as liaisons between their respective communities and the project team. KCI INC serves as the technical team lead, prepares watershed plan drafts and engineering studies, and facilitates WAG and public meetings for the county. For more information, please contact <[Danielle.Wynne@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:Danielle.Wynne@fairfaxcounty.gov)> or visit <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpwes/watersheds/>

“The opinions represented herein do not necessarily represent those of Fairfax County or its agents.”

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WATERSHED ADVISORY GROUP MEETING  
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**Meeting Participants**

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Courtney Gleason  
Susan Jewell\*  
Susan Jones \*  
Chris Landgraf\*  
Phil Latasa\*  
Peter Millard \*  
Don Waye\*

**Fairfax County Government Staff:**

Craig Carinci  
Danielle Wynne

**Engineering Staff:**

Bill Frost, KCI Technologies  
Greg Hoffman, Center for Watershed Protection

**Public Involvement Team:**

Juliana Birkhoff, Consensus Building Institute  
Debbie Lee, RESOLVE