

Fairfax County Stormwater Planning Division

**NICHOL RUN AND POND BRANCH WATERSHEDS
WATERSHED ADVISORY GROUP MEETING
APRIL 28, 2009**

Great Falls Library
9830 Georgetown Pike
Great Falls, VA 22066-2634

I. Welcome and Introductions

[Please note that the presentation from the March 3, 2009 Nichol Run and Pond Branch WAG meeting will be available online at

<http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpwes/watersheds/nicholrun.htm>.]

Juliana Birkhoff, the meeting facilitator, welcomed the Watershed Advisory Group (WAG) members to the second meeting of the Nichol Run and Pond Branch WAG.¹ She briefly reviewed the meeting agenda, meeting objectives, and group expectations. She asked the members to keep suggesting interested parties as they can be contacted at the end of the process to participate in the public review of the watershed plan.

II. Presentation of Fairfax County Goals and Objectives

Joe Sanchirico, Fairfax County, then reviewed the county's goals and objectives. He noted that in the previous round, each watershed had developed goals and objectives, which was time consuming. For the sake of efficiency, consistency, and evaluation purposes, the county had developed three overall watershed planning goals consolidated from the goals from the first round. Within these goals were more specific objectives, relating to one of five categories. Quantifiable and measurable indicators are used in the watershed ranking process and apply to goals and objectives, creating a direct relationship between what the county is attempting to accomplish and the data. Mr. Sanchirico pointed WAG members to the list of Fairfax County goals and objectives included in their meeting materials.²

Mr. Sanchirico briefly reviewed the WAG process expectations, highlighting that WAG time will be primarily devoted to project identification and selection.

In response to a question, Fairfax County staff noted that the county most likely did not have any specific data on pesticides or herbicides in the water. The county focuses more on controlling the source. The Park Authority, for example, tracks how much is applied and compares that to guidelines. One WAG member added that Audubon offers certification for golf courses for

¹ A list of the meeting attendees are attached to this meeting summary. A copy of the meeting agenda is available online at <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpwes/watersheds/sugarlandrun.htm>.

² For a copy of the Fairfax County's goals and objectives, please contact dlee@resolv.org.

property grass use, water usage, and fertilizers. Three Park Authority golf courses are Audubon certified.

III. Problem Areas Identified by Subwatershed Characterization

Melissa Taibi, F.X. Browne, Inc., informed the WAG how the county identified problem areas using subwatershed characterization. She noted that the county can use predictive indicators to characterize future scenarios to identify areas that need preservation and evaluate the benefit of proposed projects.

Ms. Taibi reviewed the three groups of indicators used to determine the subwatershed rankings:

1. Watershed Impact Indicators, which provide information on the overall watershed condition;
2. Source Indicators, which provide data on the location of watershed stressors; and
3. Programmatic Indicators, which provide information on existing watershed management programs.

Ms. Taibi explained in more detail the watershed impact indicators, which are comprised of objective composite scores related to stormwater runoff, flooding hazards, habitat health, habitat diversity, stream water quality, drinking water quality, and storage capacity. The individual objective composite scores are summed into an overall watershed impact objective composite score, which provides an overall look at the subwatershed condition.

Ms. Taibi reviewed each of the objective composite scores. During the presentation, WAG members asked questions about the indicators used to develop the composite scores and discussed the data presented. Participants made the following points:

- The habitat diversity objective composite score heavily relied on surrogates because there were limited sites in the watersheds with data. These data were collected during the Stream Protection Strategy survey. The county also collects samples from random sites every year. USGS has four survey stations in the county.
- The county is aware of stream monitoring data collected by volunteer organizations like Audubon. The county supplements the data it collects with the stream monitoring data from Audubon but does not analyze the data from other monitoring groups.
- The county is currently focusing on pinpointing the areas that are degraded so it can identify potential project sites. It is not currently tracking sites to see if they are improving or worsening.
- The county had to develop some indicators using a Spreadsheet Tool for Estimating Pollutant Loads (STEPL) model.
- The maps in the presentation are colored relative to the watershed, not the rest of the county. Compared to the rest of the county, the Nichol Run and Pond Branch watersheds are relatively pristine. The objective scores are relative to the rest of the county.

Ms. Taibi also briefly reviewed source indicators and programmatic indicators. The WAG will delve more deeply into the programmatic indicators when it discusses candidate projects. She reviewed the problems identified in the watershed based on data collected from field

reconnaissance, past surveys, public comment on the watershed workbook, and input collected from the public watershed forum.

IV. Preliminary Strategies for Watershed Improvements and Preservation

Ms. Taibi summarized three restoration strategies and gave examples of each. The three restoration strategies were:

- Reduce Flooding;
- Improve Water Quality; and
- Improve Habitat or Reduce Streambank Erosion.

One WAG member suggested that the county prepare a list of local places where restoration strategies were implemented, so that the group can visit some.

The group discussed the various restoration strategies. Individuals made the following points:

- The county has a parking lot sweeping program where machines clean up debris in parking lots once a year.
- Sand and sand/peat filters are typically used in more urban areas, as are other manufactured self-contained systems.
- Streambank stabilization has historically been very rigid, but the new model of streambank stabilization incorporates more naturalization techniques.
- Rain barrels are an easy way to collect water at the source and the county is encouraging residents to do it.

Ms. Taibi reviewed two subwatersheds as examples of how the County could apply the strategies given each subwatershed's descriptions and problem areas.

One WAG member pointed out an area across from the entrance to Great Falls National Park where developers were building mansions and stripping the land.

V. Watershed Planning Next Steps

Before the next WAG meeting, currently planned for late-June, the county will distribute a list of proposed projects to the members to review. In the meantime, the county will send out a list of local restoration projects and a draft list of policy issues compiled from the previous round of watershed management plans.. By the next meeting, the county will attempt to give a general idea of cost per project type, and plan a field trip to look at sites with implemented restoration projects.

The county will initially consider every potential project without taking feasibility into account. It will start paring down the list with WAG input and other criteria, such as easements.

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. F.X. Browne 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 <Joseph.Sanchirico@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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Meeting Participants

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Brittany Geserick
Chuck Langrad, Jr.*
Aaron Larocca*
Robin Rentsch*
Jackie Taylor*
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Fairfax County Staff

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Engineering Team

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Debbie Lee, RESOLVE

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