

Healthy Watersheds, Healthier Communities

Fairfax County Stormwater Planning Division

Minutes

Pohick Creek Watershed Advisory Group (WAG)

Meeting #2

Wednesday, March 4, 2009

West Springfield Elementary School

Meeting Attendees	
WAG Members	Fairfax Co. Stormwater Planning Division
Patrick Gloyd, Burke Centre Conservancy	Fred Rose
George Jennings, George Mason University	Shannon Curtis
Gerry Kirwin, Lake Braddock Community Association	Chad Grupe
Chris Landgraf, Fort Belvoir DPW	Darold Burdick
John Levtov, Christopher Consultants	PBS&J (engineering consultant)
Ron Marlow, Burke Presbyterian Church	Trish Hennessy-Webb
Ed Miller, Kings Park West	Terry Suehr
Elizabeth Morrissey, Heritage Square	Waterford Inc. (public involvement consultant)
John Morrissey, Heritage Square (Alternate)	Beth Offenbacher
Duane Murphy, Southport HOA	Paul Coelus
Jim Pomeroy, Hidden Pond Nature Center	

The meeting convened at 7:10 pm with welcome comments by county staff and public involvement consultant/moderator Beth Offenbacher (Waterford Inc.).

County staff and consultants then gave a presentation following the established agenda:

- Shannon Curtis, Fairfax County, presented the county-wide goals and objectives of the watershed plan.
- Trish Hennessy-Webb, PBS&J, reviewed the subwatershed characterization and ranking process (which is still being conducted) and described the problem areas identified so far. She presented examples of color-coded maps of the watershed, which provide a visual representation of the relative conditions in each subwatershed.
- Following a break, Trish Hennessy-Webb described various watershed restoration strategies, including references to problem areas and possible solutions. She concluded with a review of the next steps for the Watershed Advisory Group.
- Each segment of the presentation included an opportunity for questions and comments by the WAG members.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 pm.



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The following is a summary of the questions asked by members of the WAG and the answers provided by county staff and consultants. The identities of the persons asking and answering the questions is not included. This is not a verbatim transcript.

Q: What does “hydrology” mean in the context of watershed planning?

A: It refers mainly to the management of runoff—that portion of rainfall which does not infiltrate into the ground. One of the principal objectives of watershed planning and stormwater management is to reduce the amount of runoff.

Q: Where are impact indicators measured—at the level of the individual stream or lake?

A: It depends on the indicator. Some are measured directly at the stream or lake level. Some are modeled. Some are evaluated annually; others at more frequent intervals.

Q: Are we being asked to look at only the areas of greatest impact/highest priority—the “red” areas on the maps—or the entire watershed?

A: The WAG can consider projects in all areas. However, we need to balance the resources required for any project—restoration of a particular area, for example—with the expected benefits. As a practical matter, projects in the red areas are likely to have greater positive impacts downstream.

Q: You’ve talked about upstream vs. downstream, but I don’t have a good feel for where those areas are.

A: The three main streams in the Pohick Creek watershed are Pohick Creek at the top, Middle Run, and South Run, all of which drain into the Potomac. The direction of flow is from north to south, so an area to the north is upstream of an area to the south. Areas closest to the Potomac are farthest downstream.

Q: Please explain how erosion cuts into stream beds but then stabilizes.

A: Erosion is caused by a greater flow of water than the stream can naturally handle. The increased flow is from stormwater runoff, which is generally attributable to development. When we talk about a streambed stabilizing, there is an assumption that whatever was causing the excess water flow has been corrected. Otherwise, erosion will continue. Stabilization may take a decade or more to achieve, even after the upstream cause has been corrected.

Q: Are there areas within Pohick Creek that members of our group can see to get a first-hand look at what restoration does?

A: Yes, we can identify examples of restoration, and also areas in need of restoration. If there’s sufficient interest we can arrange a tour, perhaps between WAG meetings. These areas may not all be within this watershed.

Q: What’s the difference between a wet pond and a dry pond?

A: Dry ponds mainly control stormwater quantity, not quality. They provide a means of collecting the first runoff so it doesn’t all flow directly into streams, but have little impact on water quality. Wet ponds do both, since the aquatic vegetation in wet ponds absorb some of the pollutants in stormwater.



Q: Have all the Regional Ponds been built?

A: No. A few were built, but not all. After some were built, there was a realization that they look great from a regional perspective, but in practice may be too large for local communities and may not be the most desirable solution.

Q: Is there a timeline for doing this—for the process we're engaged in?

A: The deadline for completing the watershed plan is the end of this year, so we'll have several more WAG meetings between now and October. We'll also have another public meeting when the plan is written in draft form. As far as the projects themselves go, we'll divide them into 10-year projects and 25-year projects. While the current economic situation raises concerns about the county's budget, we must focus on needs rather than on whether any project is financially feasible at the moment.

Q: Do you think you'll get a dedicated funding source?

A: It's being discussed.

Q: Fairfax County is so highly developed right now; we're trying to fix problems that have resulted from past development. How much information and insight do you have for future development and growth?

A: We're focusing on current conditions now, but our modeling will take into account any expected development or redevelopment. The good news is that most future development is likely to be redevelopment, which gives us the opportunity to improve stormwater management in that location. We're now more aware of controls that need to be implemented than we were 30-40 years ago, so we can include such controls in any "area redevelopment."

Q: Are you looking at "synergy" between multiple projects in the same area? What about partnering with other organizations, such as nonprofits or homeowners associations, which might be interested in helping with projects, either through labor or funding?

A: Yes, we will consider "suites" of projects where the effect of one is enhanced by another. But we must always consider the balance of cost and benefit, and we don't want to spend too much in any one location. As for partnering with other organizations, that is probably best addressed in the implementation phase rather than the planning phase.



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