

**FAIRFAX COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
THURSDAY, APRIL 27, 2006**

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Walter L. Alcorn, At-Large
John R. Byers, Mount Vernon District
Frank A. de la Fe, Hunter Mill District
James R. Hart, Commissioner At-large
Laurie F. Wilson, At-Large

COMMITTEE MEMBER ABSENT:

Nancy Hopkins, Dranesville District

OTHER COMMISSIONER PRESENT:

Kenneth A. Lawrence, Providence District

PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF PRESENT:

Barbara J. Lippa, Executive Director, Planning Commission Office
Linda Rodeffer, Clerk, Planning Commission

**ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE/ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ADVISORY COUNCIL
(EQAC) MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Frank Crandall, Dranesville District
Stella Koch, Chairman, At-Large

**DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS AND ENVIRONMENT SERVICES STAFF
PRESENT:**

Jimmie Jenkins, Director
Michelle Brickner, Director, Site Development Services
James Patteson, Director, Land Development Services (LDS)
Randy Bartlett, Director, Stormwater Management
John Friedman, Engineer III, LDS
Shannon Curtis, Ecologist II, Watershed Planning & Assessment Branch
Stormwater Planning Division (SWPD)
Matthew Meyers, Ecologist III, Stormwater Planning Division
Krystal Kearns, Information Officer II, Stormwater Management

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND ZONING STAFF PRESENT:

Noel Kaplan, Senior Environmental Planner, Planning Division (PD)
John Bell, Engineer III, PD
Pamela Nee, Chief, Environment and Development Review Branch, PD
Mary Ann Welton, Environmental Planner, PD
Jennifer Bonnette, Planner, PD

OTHERS PRESENT:

Kambiz Agazi, Environmental Coordinator, Office of the County Executive
Michael Rolband, President, Wetlands Studies and Solutions, Inc.

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Chairman Walter L. Alcorn convened the meeting at 7:05 p.m. in the Board of Supervisors' Conference Room, Fairfax County Government Center, 12000 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax, Virginia 22035.

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Chairman Alcorn noted that the first item on the agenda was approval of minutes.

Commissioner de la Fe MOVED THAT ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 28, 2005 AND OCTOBER 19, 2005 BE APPROVED.

Commissioner Hart seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

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Chairman Alcorn noted that tonight the committee would continue discussion on improving stream quality.

Noel Kaplan stated that at the September 28, 2005 committee meeting, he had been requested to prepare a matrix identifying actions that could be taken to support stream protection. He said the matrix, which had been presented to the committee on October 19, 2005, focused on the land use component of the issue and included methods such as physical protection, stormwater management, and restoration techniques. (A copy of the matrix is in the date file.) He said issues of particular interest were parking and buffer areas, environmental quality corridor (EQC) policy, and resource protection areas (RPAs). He said Michael Rolband, President, Wetlands Studies and Solutions, Inc., had produced a Countywide map from the Geographic Information System (GIS), which showed that some streams on the stream layer were drainage ditches and in some areas the density of streams seemed to be abnormally high compared to other similarly situated areas. Therefore, he said Department of Public Works and Environmental Services (DPWES) staff had scrubbed the data layer to look at drainage ditches along roads and streams focusing on buffers and headwater streams. Mr. Kaplan said Shannon Curtis and Matthew Meyers from the Stormwater Planning Division, DPWES, would present the results of this effort. (Copies of four sample tax maps are in the date file.)

Mr. Curtis and Mr. Meyers narrated a PowerPoint presentation entitled "Potential Stream Buffer Expansions in Fairfax County – Estimating Extents and Affected Areas," showing how many miles could be buffered under possible RPA protection, how it would be done, and what the final

outcome might be. (A copy of the presentation is in the date file.) The following slides presented were:

- Fairfax Hydrography Dataset (FHD) – a digital GIS layer of all streams in the County.
- Map of areas incorporating the Potomac River, Dulles Airport, non-jurisdictional areas with the county which would be removed.
- Defining streams to potentially buffer not included in estimates;
- Defining streams to potentially buffer included in estimates;
- Sample watersheds with high, medium, and low density residential land use; estimates of FHD miles outside RPAs; and the current number of acres in the RPA stream buffer with estimates for additional 50 and 100 foot buffers:
- RPA stream buffer with estimates for additional 50 and 100 foot buffers:
 - High: Horsepen Creek, Pimmit Run, Dogue Creek.
 - Medium: Bottom third of Difficult Run
 - Low: Downzoned watersheds of Johnny Moore Creek and Wolf Run;
- Current miles of protected streams vs. potential additional miles in sample watershed areas;
- Current buffered areas vs. potential additional buffer areas in sample watershed areas;
- Estimating Countywide extent of candidate streams for potential buffering;
- Example tax maps from sample areas.
- Summary of affected parcels and buildings on three different buffer widths.
- Comparison of proposed buffer widths to current RPAs in sample watersheds and a comparison of proposed streams to be protected vs. current miles of streams in RPAs.

Summarizing the presentation, Mr. Meyers said there would be approximately 400 miles of new streams to be protected based on the sample areas. In order to be more specific, he said Mr. Kaplan had suggested that vacant and under utilized parcels be looked at which were shown in purple on the draft example map. Mr. Kaplan added that the purple areas reflected parcels that were not built out to their zoning or planned potential but did not include redevelopable parcels.

In response to a question from Commissioner de la Fe, Mr. Curtis said it was possible that development had occurred after the publication of the maps in 2002 and they should be used as a

general guide only. Mr. Curtis noted that the purple data layer was current as of 2005, but the aerial map reflected older data and that each map had both an ortho and parcel view.

In response to a question from Commissioner Wilson, Mr. Kaplan said that the purple areas on the maps represented vacant and under-utilized parcels regardless of whether they would be affected by a buffer. He said the parcels and structures shown were only those that would be affected by incremental additions of buffer areas and it was possible that some vacant and under-utilized land would not be affected. He said the idea was to present a typical situation showing what could be developed and how much might be affected by buffers. Mr. Kaplan explained that his initial evaluation of the 19 sample maps had indicated that there would not be a significant amount of vacant or under-utilized parcels subject to rezoning based on current zoning and Comprehensive Plan recommendations.

Responding to a question from Commissioner Hart, Mr. Meyers explained that some of the streams shown on the maps appeared to have gaps in them because they had pipe networks which were not shown. He added that if an Ordinance amendment was proposed, the streams would probably be shown as continuous. Mr. Curtis added that pipes had been taken out to give a more accurate estimate of the total length and after that had been done, a buffer had been applied to all of them.

In response to a question from Commissioner Wilson, Mr. Curtis said the maps showed channels and topography, but not stream flow.

Mr. Curtis said the maps also showed: existing RPAs; hatched areas; potential 50 and 100 foot buffers; FHD water courses, both clean and dirty; parcels; subdivisions; buildings; and footprints of structures such as sheds and warehouses. He pointed out that the data table on the maps showed structures and parcels affected by 50 and 100 foot buffers for that particular map. He noted that totals of the pilot areas were shown on the last page of the PowerPoint presentation.

Mr. Meyers explained that the last slide was taken from a presentation made by Mary Ann Welton, Environmental Planner, PD, DPZ, to the Board of Supervisors' Environmental Committee on tidal wetlands.

Mr. Curtis pointed out that the exercise was a digital desktop exercise only so it was possible that all streams were not shown.

Chairman Alcorn said the presentation had been extremely helpful in illustrating the potential effects of additional RPA regulations.

Chairman Alcorn asked Kambiz Agazi, Environmental Coordinator, Office of the County Executive, to comment on the data presented. Mr. Agazi noted that extending RPAs would have a significant impact on homeowners. He said the question was whether to pursue regulatory changes or Policy Plan changes. He pointed out that intermittent and headwater streams performed an extremely important function and could perhaps be protected or included in Policy Plan language and by strengthening EQC policy.

Chairman Alcorn suggested that educating homeowners about the impact their activities, such as fertilizing or mowing a lawn up to the stream channel, had on stream quality could be the cornerstone of the County's policy. Mr. Crandall added that one of the worst things homeowners did was blow leaves into a stream. Mr. Crandall said if homeowners planted vegetative filters and simple ground covers, 50 foot buffers would be adequate and less onerous.

Commissioner de la Fe commented that the Park Authority had published leaflets on subjects such as identification of invasive plants, what to plant and what to destroy.

Mr. Rolband said that an outreach program to educate property owners and help them restore and protect streams located on their property would be effective.

Chairman Alcorn said that revisions to the Policy Plan should be made before rezoning applications were filed that could affect non-perennial streams.

In response to a comment by an unidentified speaker, Mr. Kaplan said not all streams were located in an EQC. He said the policy change in 1989 had been a refinement only that allowed staff to look at function and make modifications that would not result in an overall increase in the system. He explained that sometimes in headwater areas staff recommended an EQC designation on a case-by-case basis and in some cases without designated EQC some protection for it was obtained. He noted that it was also important to incorporate appropriate stormwater management practices and good site design and advised the committee members to think about the bigger picture when considering policy changes.

Mr. Crandall commented that policy and regulatory changes should go hand in hand and educating the public was crucial. He said environmental awards could be given out to homeowners who did a particularly good job in protecting streams located on their property.

Chairman Alcorn suggested that it might be a good idea to focus first on policy and education with a possibility of regulatory changes. In response to a question from Ms. Koch, he said that the committee could make a recommendation to the Planning Commission which would then be forwarded to the Board of Supervisors for action. He said the committee could meet again to discuss a specific proposal but first he wanted to make sure that committee members were thinking along the same line.

Commissioner Lawrence pointed out that the education component was not dependent upon policy or regulations and could be implemented while those efforts were debated. Chairman Alcorn agreed, noting that amending the Policy Plan was a time consuming process.

Jimmie Jenkins, Director, DPWES, pointed out that watershed plans had an educational component which was going to be expanded. Chairman Alcorn suggested that the committee meet again to be briefed by staff working on this effort which could become part of the committee's recommendation. Mr. Rolband suggested that work on the maps also be continued which could be used to target education to actual property owners. He said intermittent streams located in RPAs in Fairfax City, Alexandria City, and Arlington County were defined by maps

which avoided identifying them by text which could be controversial. Mr. Rolband also said that one year, twenty-four hour detention stormwater management would help to protect streams and would apply to all by-right development.

Mr. Crandall said an educational component could be presented as a logical outgrowth of the Board of Supervisors' recent environmental vision statement.

Responding to a question from Ms. Koch about the next course of action, Chairman Alcorn requested that the committee meet again and in the interim he would work with staff to develop an approach for modifying the Policy Plan as an EQC policy or by some other means. He also recommended that an outline for the education component be developed taking into consideration Mr. Rolband's suggestions and the watershed educational effort. He said the committee could then make a recommendation to the Planning Commission to be forwarded to the Board of Supervisors for action.

Commissioner Hart said he did not envision amending the Policy Plan as an either/or situation with regulatory controls. He also said he thought the maps for educational purposes should be easier for property owners to understand than the maps discussed tonight. Mr. Kaplan commented that the maps used tonight were for internal purposes only to look at the implications of various alternatives and would not be distributed to the public.

Commissioner de la Fe commented that efforts should be coordinated because different parts of the County were doing different things to address stream protection.

Commissioner Lawrence recommended that the educational component be kept very simple with a list of dos and don'ts and noted that an effective way to educate adults was through their children. He also endorsed Mr. Crandall's suggestion of giving out awards.

The next meeting was scheduled for June 1, 2006 at 7:30 p.m.

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The meeting was adjourned at 8:13 p.m.
Walter L. Alcorn, Chairman

For a verbatim record of this meeting, reference may be made to the audio recording which can be found in the Planning Commission Office.

Minutes by: Linda B. Rodeffer

Approved: June 1, 2006

Linda B. Rodeffer, Clerk
Fairfax County Planning Commission