



Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background

The Little Hunting Creek Watershed is one of the most developed watersheds in Fairfax County. Clearing and building on the land started before General George Washington was the principal landholder in the watershed. The Little Hunting Creek Watershed Management Plan provides a strategy for mitigating the impacts of development, such as increased runoff and poor water quality. This plan is the first one to be developed as part of a county initiative to create watershed management plans for all Fairfax County watersheds.

The history of the county's watershed management began in the 1940s with the conversion of primarily agricultural land use to residential and commercial land uses. Stormwater infrastructure was constructed to quickly carry runoff away from the developed areas to the creeks and streams that serve as the principal drainage system for the county. Starting in 1972, onsite detention was required for new development to minimize the effects of increased runoff from development. In the early 1980s, water quality best management practices (BMPs) were required for new development in the southern areas of the county that drained to the Occoquan drinking water reservoir. BMPs were required for all new development in the county starting in 1993.

In the late 1970s, the county developed master drainage plans for all of the watersheds in the county, including the Little Hunting Creek Watershed. This plan identified projects to solve problems including flooding, erosion, sedimentation, and other environmental problems projected through the year 2000. Recently, the county started a stream restoration and protection study and completed the Fairfax County Stream Protection Strategy (www.fairfax.va.us/dpwes/environmental/sps_main.htm) in January 2001. This baseline study evaluated the condition of county streams and prioritized the watersheds for protection strategies. The stream protection strategy program is ongoing with further biological monitoring and assessment of stream condition.

Building on the recommendations from the Stream Protection Strategy, the county initiated a process to develop watershed management plans for all 30 watersheds in the county over a period of five to seven years. The development of the watershed management plans includes a stream physical assessment of over 800 miles of stream; community involvement; modeling of the creeks and streams; and the development of goals, objectives, and strategies for addressing watershed issues.

1.2 Purpose

The primary reasons the Little Hunting Creek Watershed Management Plan was developed can be summarized as follows:

1. To restore and protect the county's streams, of which 70% are in fair to very poor condition
2. To meet state and federal water quality standards by identifying strategies to prevent and remove pollution
3. To support Virginia's commitment to the Chesapeake 2000 Agreement to clean the Chesapeake Bay
4. To replace the currently out-dated watershed management plan through the use of new technologies
5. To take a comprehensive approach in addressing multiple regulations, commitments and community needs

With input from the Little Hunting Creek Steering Committee and other members of the community, this watershed management plan addresses these needs and requirements with a strategy for restoring and protecting the watershed.

1.3 Plan Organization

The Little Hunting Creek Watershed Management Plan integrates environmental management, natural resource protection, and community goals to improve the watershed. It provides a guide that:

- Describes goals and objectives to support the vision for the watershed
- Assesses the existing and future condition of the watershed
- Sets forth strategies for addressing watershed issues
- Provides the county and the community with a management tool to make informed decisions regarding short term and long term actions in the watershed

The watershed plan chapters contain the following information:

- Chapter 1 Background, purpose, and plan organization
- Chapter 2 General watershed information, watershed history, land use and impervious cover, subwatershed and tributary information, and a summary of existing reports and data
- Chapter 3 Subwatershed characteristics, description of the storm drain infrastructure, stream geomorphology, stream quality, problem areas, and modeling results
- Chapter 4 Plan vision, goals, structural and non-structural objectives and actions, action benefits, implementation strategy, and monitoring plan
- Chapter 5 Policy and land use objectives and actions, action benefits, implementation strategy, and monitoring plan

Supplemental appendices include a glossary, list of acronyms and abbreviations, references, stream restoration information, sources of native plant information, and project fact sheets with cost estimates.