

Long Meadow Run and Turley Creek Local Steering Committee Meeting

Thursday, July 24 at 1pm
SVSWCD Office

Attendees: Ashley Driver, Jasmine Hardesty, Becky Driver, Paul Spitzer, Clay Spitzer, Sara Bottenfield (SVSWCD), John Eckman (FNFSR), Stephen Lohr (SVSWCD), Katie Almquist, Kendall Driver, Phillip Hurst (DEQ), Chris Mihalkovic (DEQ), Lucy Baker (DEQ), Will Isenberg (DEQ), Neshia McRae (DEQ), Tara Sieber (DEQ), Gene Yagow (VT-BSE)

Notes: Tara Sieber (DEQ) began the meeting by welcoming attendees and asking everyone to introduce themselves. She then gave a short presentation about “Where we’ve been and Where we’re going”. This Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) study began in November of 2011 when a public meeting was held at Hillyard Middle School to ask for the assistance and participation of the community. The study focused on Long Meadow Run and Turley Creek because both of these streams were tributaries of the North Fork of the Shenandoah and both did not host a diverse and healthy aquatic life. A Local Steering Committee was formed from concerned community members, landowners, and representatives from interested organizations. A number of issues were identified in the watershed during the meetings of the Local Steering Committee, including the influence of springs, groundwater-surfacewater interaction, and the large percentage of absentee landowners, and therefore rented ground. During a process known as a Benthic Stressor Analysis, the landowners’ perspectives and local knowledge helped DEQ and Virginia Tech’s Biological Systems Engineering (VT-BSE) Department, DEQ’s contractors for this project, review all available data to determine that *sediment* and *nitrogen* were mostly likely the pollutants at work in these streams. The original water quality study detailed the sources of the sediment and nitrogen and recommended reductions. While the study was completed in early Spring of 2012, the Local Steering Committee and DEQ continued through the process of water quality improvement described by the Clean Water Act and began to create a “Clean-up Plan”. This Plan, also known as an Implementation Plan, describes the actions, practices and strategies individually specific to this project that will reduce *sediment* and *nitrogen*. The best management practices and recommendations in the Clean-up Plan were formulated by the Local Steering Committee to work best in this area and appeal to landowners who want to make a difference. The Clean-up Plan was presented to the community in June of 2012 and the Study and the Plan were then sent to US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for approval. Unfortunately, because much of the computer modeling was based on the Chesapeake Bay TMDL, a body of water far from Rockingham County but still connected by water

drainage, the EPA did not believe that “reasonable assurance” of water quality could be guaranteed. The EPA did not understand that hours of review and lots of input from the Local Steering Committee had refined and updated and improved the basic Chesapeake Bay model and made it more specific to the Long Meadow Run and Turley Creek watersheds. The EPA reviewers did not believe the local water quality goals could be developed using the Chesapeake Bay model so they asked DEQ and VT-BSE to reopen this study and the other studies that used this method, and redevelop the TMDL goals and the outcomes of the Clean-up Plan using a method that more directly linked sediment loads to local water quality. An attendee asked if DEQ knew that EPA wasn’t going to approve this TMDL. Tara answered that no, we didn’t know at the time. We believed that since the Bay study principles were accepted by the EPA, they would approve of us using them in this way, with local oversight and review. We do believe that the new method that DEQ and VT-BSE is using for the reopening will be accepted by EPA because another project near Roanoke is using it as well and we anticipate that EPA will approve that project before the Long Meadow Run and Turley Creek project is completed.

At this point in the meeting, Gene Yagow from VT-BSE, stepped forward and began to describe the new method that will be used for this reopening. He described the All Forested Load Multiplier or AllForX method that will be used to model the watersheds and calculate the amount of sediment and nitrogen that is coming from the watersheds, the reductions necessary to bring the streams back to a healthy condition, and then where and how those reductions can be made. Gene reassured the group that much of the work already put into this project can still be used! Right now he is looking at the watersheds that can be used as “reference watersheds”. If we can understand how much sediment is coming off of the land in these areas, then we’ll better be able to compare Long Meadow Run and Turley Creek to them.

Tara then reviewed the next steps to come with the group. She said that there would be one public meeting sometime during the water quality study and clean-up plan development. The group thought it may be best to wait until the clean-up plan was completed to advertise it to the community in order to minimize confusion. Tara asked how it was best to let folks know about upcoming meetings and everyone said that emails, letters and the signs along the roads worked really well. Some of the participants suggested making sure that folks understand what would be “required” of them – what were the “take-home” messages – and focusing the community meeting around those ideas. Tara and Gene next brought up that they would like to get the Local Steering Committee together again in September to review some data; what would be the best time and place? The Shenandoah Valley SWCD offered to host the group and participants stated that late in the afternoon on Thursday generally worked well. Tara thanked the group for coming and said to please email her or Gene with further questions; otherwise, the group would reconvene in September!