

PRESS RELEASE

An open house to kick off a water quality cleanup plan for impaired streams in the upper Roanoke River watershed will be held June 11, 2013, from 3 to 8 p.m. at the Roanoke Civic Center Community Hall, 710 Williamson Road, Roanoke, VA 24016. The open house will feature informational booths hosted by local water quality education and advocacy organizations as well as state and local government entities. A series of speakers will cover topics ranging from stormwater to water quality improvement success stories.

The open house marks the first in a series of public meetings to develop a plan for the main stem Roanoke River and tributaries, including Ore Branch, Back Creek, Mason Creek, Mudlick Creek, Murray Run, Peters Creek, Tinker Creek, Carvin Creek, Glade Creek, Laymantown Creek and Lick Run.

Levels of bacteria and the health of the aquatic life communities in these streams violate the Commonwealth's water quality standards. Excessive bacteria could lead to increased risk of illness for people who come in contact with the waters. Bacteria sources identified include failing septic systems, direct discharges of human waste, pet waste, agricultural practices in the area, and wildlife. Unhealthy aquatic life communities are the result of excessive sediment in the streams that are caused by runoff from paved surfaces and eroding stream banks.

The water quality improvement plan development process will be discussed at the open house, and working groups will be formed to review data on the amounts of bacteria and sediment reaching the streams and the sources of these pollutants. The public will have the opportunity to provide input and ask questions about the plan development process. The meeting will be followed by a 30-day public comment period, which ends July 11, 2013.

Working groups will assist in developing the plan to reduce sources of bacteria pollution and sedimentation from agricultural, residential and urban lands. Local residents play a key role on the working groups and are encouraged to attend the open house to find out about upcoming opportunities to participate.

The working groups also will include representatives from the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, the Blue Ridge and Mountain Castles Soil and Water Conservation Districts, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Virginia Department of Health, Virginia Department of Forestry, Roanoke Valley-Alleghany Regional Commission, Upper Roanoke River Roundtable, and local county and city government representatives.

The plan will outline corrective actions, associated costs and benefits, measurable goals, and an implementation timeline. Corrective actions may include but are not limited to:

- Replacing failing septic systems
- Removing direct discharges of human waste to streams
- Stormwater best management practices to reduce bacteria and sediment in runoff
- Creating and/or expanding existing pet waste disposal and education programs
- Fencing to exclude livestock from streams
- Establishment of streamside buffers
- Pasture management.

For more information, contact Mary Dail with the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality at (540) 562-6715 or mary.dail@deq.virginia.gov. Project documents may be viewed on DEQ's website at the following link:

<http://www.deq.virginia.gov/Programs/Water/WaterQualityInformationTMDLs/TMDL/TMDLImplementation/TMDLImplementationProgress.aspx>

