Upper Roanoke River (Roanoke and Botetourt Counties, Cities of Roanoke and Salem, Town of Vinton) TMDL Implementation (Cleanup) Plan Development

Residential and Agricultural Working Group – Meeting 1

Thursday June 20, 2013, 7 P.M.
Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, 3019 Peters Creek Rd., Roanoke, VA

Attendance:

- Angela Nielan - Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)
- Paula Nash - Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)
- Mary Dail - Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)
- Heather Longo - Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)
- Stacy Horton - Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)
- Mike McEvoy - Western Virginia Water Authority
- Margie Lucas - Mill Mountain Garden Club
- Marlin Old - Mountain Castle Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD)
- Staci Merkt - Mountain Castle Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD)
- Jeff Henderson - Botetourt County Farmer
- Michael Beahm - Botetourt County Farmer
- Doug Phillips- Southeast Rural Community Assistance Project (SERCAP)
- Dave Burris - Virginia Department of Health (VDH)
- Dave Henderson - Roanoke County
- Bruce Peters - Roanoke County
- Chris Flannagan – Louis Berger Group
- Nick Tatalovich – Louis Berger Group

Since the group was small, it was decided that the Agricultural and Residential Working Groups would meet together. Meeting guidelines were established and each participant shared their expectations for the meeting.

TMDL Implementation Plan Discussion

Mary Dail provided some project background and explained the Cleanup Plan process

Residential/Urban Working Group (RUWG)
Sewer Overflows

- Stakeholders did not suggest any areas of the watershed that may smell of sewage or show other evidence of a sewer leak/overflow. Any information on this topic would be beneficial in assisting with the targeting of pollution control practices in the watershed.

- 95% of Roanoke City is connected to sanitary sewer.
- Less than half of Roanoke County is sewered, about 44.7%

Onsite Residential Waste Systems

- The number of straight pipes in the watersheds will be estimated based on the age of homes and proximity to streams and rivers.

- It can be difficult to identify straight pipes. Mountain Castles SWCD mentioned that people are more likely to come forward if they know funding assistance is available. Neighbors may also complain about the straight pipes.

- Glade Creek and Laymantown are areas likely to have failing septic systems.

- None of the localities in the Cleanup Plan have ordinances that require septic system maintenance. Roanoke County does require houses within a certain distance of sewer lines to hook-up to the system. Botetourt County does not require this. There are some houses within Roanoke City that are not hooked up to the sewer because connection is impractical. Western VA Water Authority has GIS data that will show the difference between sewer coverage and service. Areas that are eligible for sewer line extension need to be specifically identified in the cleanup plan in order to be eligible for sewer line connection cost share funds.

- There are alternative waste treatment systems in areas covered by the cleanup plan.

- In Roanoke County, less than 50% of homes are on sewer.

- Once the Cleanup Plan is complete, stakeholders in the watersheds will be able to apply for competitive funding, including cost-share on septic system repairs and replacements. Southeast Rural Community Assistance Project (SERCAP) has some grants and loans for septic improvements and installations. Eligibility is based on income.

- Stakeholders agreed that there is a need for education on septic systems and straight pipes in areas addressed by the Plan.

- Stakeholders agreed that newsletters (homeowners' associations, agricultural groups, etc.), mailings, and door hangers would be effective forms of outreach. It was also recommended the septic pumpers carry literature for distribution.

- Most jurisdictions have GIS and they could identify houses with onsite systems that are close to the streams to target outreach.

- VDH maintains a database of permits for installations and repairs; this could be used to target areas with houses likely needing new systems.

- Home age may also indicate overwhelmed systems, handling a volume of water exceeding that for which they ware designed.

- Stakeholders raised concerns about septage haulers improperly disposing of waste. A tracking system was suggested to ensure that pumped waste goes to the wastewater treatment plant.

Pet Waste

- It was recommended that educational literature be distributed via pet stores or vets.

- Roanoke County sent out fliers to vets to educate pet-owners on picking up waste.

- Animal control officers may be able to assist in identifying homes/areas in need of information on the importance of properly disposing of pet wastes.

Stormwater Best Management Practices (BMPs)

- Concerns were raised about the effectiveness of Erosion and Sediment (E&S) controls in the watersheds. Some stakeholders felt that E&S practices are not installed properly and some are not maintained properly. This problem may be exacerbated by limited numbers of inspectors and inspections, as well as the prevalence of highly erodible land available for new construction.

- Areas were identified erosion problems exist; include the Glebe Development and Sports Complex that put dirt on Etzler.

- There is a slope ordinance in Roanoke County, but it is lenient.

Outreach

- It was recommended that a recognition program, like the Lynhaven Pearl Home project (http://www.lynnhavenrivernow.org/Pearl-Homes.aspx), be instituted in the watershed. This program would encourage households to do a certain number of things that benefit the watershed to earn some time of recognition, such as a flag in their yard.

- It was recommended that education and outreach programs could be run through the Cooperative Extension

- It was suggested that a QR code could be registered and placed on literature to improve the impact of outreach materials.

Financial and Technical Assistance

- A list of potential funding sources will be included in the Cleanup Plan. Input on any additional sources is welcome.

- There is some question if MS4 areas would be eligible for state implementation funding. This funding has historically focused on residential septic and agricultural funding but is increasingly being used to fund stormwater projects. It is recommended that stakeholders in MS4 areas discuss potential projects with funding entity contacts when Requests for Proposals are released.

<u>Agricultural Working Group (AWG)</u>
Local Agriculture

- Agriculture as a living is getting harder to do. Hobby farmers are present and likely becoming more common in the watersheds.

- Louis Berger has records of all agricultural practices in the watershed that were partially funded with cost-share money. Additional information on voluntary BMPs would be helpful. The tracking program currently used by SWCD's has the ability to track the voluntary practices. These working group meetings are intended to gather more "on the ground" information about BMPs in the watersheds.

- Stakeholders asked who would be responsible for implementation and tracking of BMPs in this Plan. The road map is still being developed, but ideally the Steering Committee will stay in place and guide implementation. SWCDs will continue to handle funding and tracking of agricultural BMPs, however other organizations may lead other sectors of implementation (residential septic, pet, stormwater BMPs, etc.). In the last two years, implementation grant funding has been offered through a competitive process, and the collaboration of multiple organizations to handle different parts of implementation has been strongly encouraged. Now that the funding will come from DEQ, this process may change, but no decisions have been made.

- Stakeholders asked for a clarification of how agricultural loads are modeled. Louis Berger uses land use runoff based on precipitation, bacterial density for different animals' excrement, and the number of animals (based on the Ag census). They model for a long period time and at different points on the stream and correlate the data points with the seasonal variations. They try to use all the data available and all the variations as possible to get a representative model.

- There are livestock markets present in the watershed. One is in the Tinker Creek watershed.

Agricultural BMP Cost-Share

- Mountain Castles SWCD representatives felt that increased cost-share match would increase participation in the program. It was noted that TMDL cost share funding (awarded competitively in areas with Cleanup Plans) increases the cost share on the most popular fencing

practice to 85%. 100% cost-share on the fencing practice in all areas is proposed for the new fiscal year, starting July 1.

- It was clarified that cost-share funding is available for fencing practices that require a 35 foot setback or a 10 foot setback, though the latter has a lower percentage of cost-share offered.

- Farmers fear that the government will have more control over their farm if they accept cost-share.
- Farmers are more wary of working with DEQ or EPA than working with DCR. SWCDs try to tell farmers that the money is still there, it's just coming from a different state entity.

- Word of mouth is a good tool to show farmers that the government is not going to take your farm and that BMPs can actually make the farming process easier and more profitable.

- There are some stipulations on famers and specifications that practices must meet to be eligible for cost share. Farmers must have the money to pay for the practices up-front, as cost-share funding is on a reimbursement basis.

What's Next?

- The Government Working Group will meet in July
- The Steering Committee will convene to review information discussed in all four working groups; if you would like to represent a working group on the Steering Committee, please notify Mary Dail (contact information below)
- The next Agricultural and Residential Working Group meetings will take place in September

For More Information

- Contact Mary Dail, DEQ (540) 562-6715, mary.dail@deq.virginia.gov.
- The TMDL studies for this cleanup plan can be viewed at
  http://www.deq.virginia.gov/portals/0/DEQ/Water/TMDL/apptmdls/roankrvr/tinkerfc.pdf
  http://www.deq.virginia.gov/portals/0/DEQ/Water/TMDL/apptmdls/roankrvr/uroanec.pdf
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