

Final

Special Area Management Planning: Strategy **STRATEGY #1: *Dragon Run SAMP Implementation***

Summary

Initiated in 2001, the SAMP program has played an integral role in the development of policy in the Dragon Run Watershed. Three of the four counties in the watershed adopted the Dragon Run Watershed Management Plan (WMP) as an addendum to their comprehensive plans. The plan includes 4 recommendations on how each county can improve protection of the Dragon Run and preserve the watershed's cultural, historic, and natural character, while preserving property rights and the watershed's traditional uses (e.g. forestry, farming, recreation). By pursuing several of the action recommendations contained in the WMP, this strategy focuses on three areas of implementation: new zoning and comprehensive plans, sustainable economic development practices, and public access/conservation lands management.

In order to assist the counties with the implementation of the Dragon Run WMP recommended action items, the first and second tasks of this strategy aim to provide educational and technical assistance opportunities to each county as they move through the process of adopting (Task 1) and implementing (Task 2) developed SAMP-recommended comprehensive plan and zoning amendments. These amendments, refined to reflect the needs of each county within the Dragon Run Compatible Economic Development and Preservation District, are a product of the 2005 Final Project Report: Recommendations for a Model Comprehensive Plan District and Zoning Options for the Dragon Run. The first task is providing technical assistance (TA) during the recommendation adoption process as it arises in each county. The counties will have refined recommended draft comprehensive plan or zoning ordinance language prepared prior to this task, therefore, 309 funds will be used to provide TA, such as presentations to the Boards of Supervisors to remind them of the goals of the recommendations, and to facilitate the adoption process at the point when the county is in its comprehensive planning/zoning ordinance update cycle. The second task of this strategy will provide a blend of training opportunities for local planning staff and citizens (through public and/or planning division workshop series, onsite training by a consultant, visioning sessions, or other techniques tailored to the needs of each watershed county) in an effort to ensure widespread understanding and full implementation of the adopted changes. Planning District Commission staff and consultants will develop and provide the appropriate training opportunities. Additionally, some funding incentives will be provided to the participating localities to counterbalance the costs (such as for hours of staff time spent in training) of incorporating the new land use policy and regulation recommendations (e.g. preservation district, drainage area conservation zone, stream buffer zone, conservation subdivision option). This counterbalancing incentive is estimated at \$5,000 for each of the three watershed counties that adopted the WMP.

The third and fourth tasks of this strategy will address one of the key WMP action recommendations, which is to further the implementation of sustainable economic development practices through the pursuit of two recommendations within the 2005 Dragon Run economic study by Yellow Wood Associates, Inc. – Opportunities for Sustainable Natural Resource-Based Development in the Dragon Run Watershed. Under the third task of the SAMP 309 funding, a feasibility study will be conducted in which an active partnership between Essex County, local/watershed soy suppliers and a biodiesel producer will be conducted. As an enforceable outcome of the pilot study, the Dragon Run Steering Committee will pursue a signed resolution from Essex County indicating that it will use biodiesel fuel resulting from this pilot program partnership in municipal school bus fleets. Promoting the adoption of biodiesel for sustainability purposes is a particularly good fit in the Middle Peninsula, as the enterprise meets the overall goal of sustainable natural resource-based economic development of the

Watershed, offering new opportunities for local farmers as well as a cleaner environment, and opening new fuel opportunities for the private sector. The fourth task of this strategy is another one that has the potential to provide a sustainable economic supplement to the traditional uses of the watershed through the implementation of an estate planning network. Because estate planning includes a barrage of flexible tools, such as conservation easements, life instruments, right of first refusal, community foundations, conservation registries, purchase of development rights, and transfer of development rights, many watershed landowners may be willing to participate in order to keep their lands in their current use. The network will target landowners in the Dragon Run Watershed, secure the land base for long term natural resource management and use, and direct local wealth to support sustainable local development. Additionally, the network will provide training and informational opportunities to family attorneys and accountants who may be in a position to advise landowners. Work is currently underway to identify key estate planning partner entities, as well as key large tract land owners in and around the watershed. The aim of this task is to implement a formal network that would result in the official formation of a Dragon Run conservation hub.

The fifth and sixth tasks of this strategy will focus on the implementation of public access and conservation lands management recommendations which were identified in the Land Use and Resource Preservation Action Recommendations from the WMP. Implementation of the recommended guidelines for management of public or non-governmental organization holdings acquired for conservation in the Dragon will occur through the creation of management plans for a variety of agencies in the watershed. These management plans will incorporate recommendations for land conservation management, such as wildlife and water quality protection and compatible recreational uses. Access is a continuous issue on the Dragon Run, as most of the land is in private holdings, and there are significant concerns regarding trespass, misuse and pollution among the landowners. Implementation of the access strategy will provide guidance to facilitate the general public and private land owners understanding of the proper ways to use the waterway and public/private rights, i.e. a code of conduct. Public access site managers may adopt this code of conduct and encourage the use of it on the sites. This task will help to implement this code by developing kiosks with this code of conduct information at public access sites to notify boaters/recreationists of trespass issues and public safety threats; developing detailed, complementary brochures; and erecting uniform markers identifying public take-out points. This task will also include the provision information to landowners regarding their private property rights, the approved code of conduct and information on how to deter or encourage public use of their land. Additionally, an active role for a NOAA fellow is planned to address the Dragon Run Watershed Management Plan's public access objective. The above are all key implementation actions needed to address public access within the Watershed.

Lastly, in January 2006 (FY05 Task 91.01), the Department of Environmental Quality (Air and Water Quality Divisions), Virginia Institute of Marine Science, CBNERRs and several NOAA offices pooled resources and expertise to implement a comprehensive mercury monitoring and evaluation program in the Dragon Run watershed and airshed. This major effort includes both air deposition and water monitoring to determine the sources, movement and effects of mercury in the watershed. The continuation of this two-year monitoring effort supports the data gathering and monitoring goals of the Dragon Run SAMP. The results will hopefully quantify the amount of mercury from air deposition, which can then be compared to the water samples being collected by the DEQ Piedmont Regional Office. A multiple-year analysis is key in providing data for the development of a TMDL and a plan for the implementation of BMPs.

Enforceable Policies/Outcomes

All of the following tasks address recommended action items from the Dragon Run Watershed Management Plan, which has been adopted as comprehensive plan addendum for three of the four counties in the watershed.

- Task 1 Enforceable Policy/Outcome: Technical assistance will be provided to facilitate the adoption process for the comprehensive plan and zoning ordinance amendment recommendations as the need arises in each county.
- Task 2 Enforceable Policy/Outcome: The provision of training opportunities and workshops will enable the full implementation of adopted recommendations through planning staff and general public understanding and acceptance of comprehensive plan/zoning amendments.
- Task 3 Enforceable Policy/Outcome: The pilot biodiesel program has the potential to produce a resolution from one of the watershed counties that will support sustainable watershed economy, encourage smart fuel use and provide a model to other counties in the watershed and beyond.
- Task 4 Enforceable Policy/Outcome: The implementation of an official estate planning network aims to enable the creation of a Dragon Run conservation hub that not only protects the resource, but also may provide sustainable economic value to watershed landowners.
- Task 5 Enforceable Policy/Outcome: Task 5 will result in the adoption of management plans for NGO and public conservation holdings by several public entities in the Dragon Run.
- Task 6 Enforceable Policy/Outcome: The implementation of the WMP recommendations for public access signage and educational outreach aims to result in the adoption of a code of conduct by public access site managers which will lead to increased understanding of the impact of public and private rights in the Dragon Run.
- Task 7 Enforceable Policy/Outcome: The continuation of the comprehensive mercury monitoring and evaluation program supports the data gathering and monitoring goals of the Dragon Run SAMP and will lead to the development of a TMDL and BMP implementation plan.

Task	Time	Budget			
Task 1: Provide TA (\$2k/year) for adopting Comprehensive Plan and Zoning amendments (e.g. interest, staff responsibilities)	Year 1-5	\$10,000			
Task 2: Implement adopted Comp Plan and Zoning changes (After approval- Essex, Yr 2,3; Gloucester, Yr 3,4; K&Q, Yr 3,4; Mid Yr. 5). (\$23k in Year 2, \$38k in Year 3, \$26k in Year 4 and \$8k in Year 5.)	Years 2-5	\$95,000			
Task 3: Pilot feasibility study and adoption plan in Essex County for biodiesel use in county bus fleet; implementation assistance. (\$45k in Year 1 and \$14k in Year 2.)	Years 1,2	\$59,000			
Task 4: Create and implement official Dragon Run Estate Planning Network (\$10k in each year)	Year 2,3	\$20,000			
Task 5: Develop 2-4 management plans for public and/or nongovernmental organization holdings acquired for conservation. (\$7k each year.)	Years 1,2	\$14,000			
Task 6: Produce signs at public access sites to warn about public safety and trespassing threats; develop detailed brochures and identification markers for public take-out points	Year 1	\$8,000			
Task 7: Collection and analysis of methyl mercury samples in the Dragon Run airshed.	Year 1	\$7,000			
Total		\$213,000			
Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Total Request
\$69,000	\$56,000	\$50,000	\$28,000	\$10,000	\$213,000