

Buffalo River TMDL Cleanup Plan
Agricultural Working Group
Tuesday, December 10, 2019
Amherst County Administration Building, Amherst, VA

The agricultural working group will discuss ways to reduce bacteria coming from agricultural sources. The principal objective of this working group is to identify obstacles to implementation of practical solutions to reducing bacteria. This group will focus on identifying:

- Constraints to the implementation of BMPs
- BMPs that are both effective and affordable
- Alternative funding sources/partnerships
- The best strategies for reaching agricultural stakeholders

General Questions:

- 1) *How did you hear about tonight's meeting?* **Received an e-mail from James Moneymaker**

- 2) *Are there other ways that we could get the word out about meetings?* **Social media, SWCD website**

- 3) *Are there individuals/organizations not present tonight who you think should be here?* **Amherst County, Virginia Department of Forestry, Virginia Cooperative Extension**

- 4) *Are there any other bacteria sources that have not been discussed that we should consider in the plan?* **Biosolids?**

Agricultural Questions:

- 1) *What is the current growth trend for agriculture in the area?* Do you expect to see significant changes in farming practices over the next 5-10 years? **The average age of a farmer continues to increase. There is noticeably less management of beef farms as more land is being rented. There is zero growth in dairy or poultry. Farms are generally becoming larger as more land is being rented.**

- 2) *Are local cattle producers receptive to stream fencing and improving grazing management? What buffer width (10ft, 35ft, etc.)?* **Most farmers are receptive to stream fencing. Topography is a limiting factor. There are many farmers farming (renting) multiple properties and they cannot manage them all. An estimated 70% of farmers would be interested in the 10ft buffer and 30% of farmers would be interested in the 35ft buffer. State conservation programs are currently a better option, as sign up for the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) is not continuous. CREP should only be 5 or 10% of expected sign up. EQUIP may be up to 20% of expected projects.**

- 3) *What barriers are holding back progress to implementing stream fencing and improving pasture management?* **Topography in the some farmers are not able to give up the land to install a 35 ft. buffer. Cost is also a barrier especially when considering the amount of rented land in the watershed. Someone renting land is not going to make a large investment in land that he or she does not own.**

- 4) *Is there existing manure storage in the watershed? Is there a need for additional manure storage?* **There is opportunity for additional manure storage. Many farms could benefit from a winter-feeding facility. The facility when accompanied by a sacrifice lot can prevent denuded pastures during inclement weather.**

- 5) *Are there any problems with manure spreading on crop or pasture fields locally? What are the best BMPs to address this source?* **There is not a lot of manure storage or cropland in the project area. What manure is produced is spread on hay land.**

- 6) *Is there poor pasture or erodible cropland in the area that should be converted to forest?* **Example: FR-1, SL-1. There would be less interest in the FR-1 reforestation practice in this area.**

- 7) *In general, are there practices that are more easily implemented and/or more appealing than other practices in this area?* **Practices that involve pasture renovation such as applying lime, fertilize and seed are most attractive to producers. There are many poor pastures from a**

nutrient standpoint. Perhaps DEQ could offer pasture improvement to help the DEQ BMPs stand out from those of DCR. Pasture improvement would be an incentive to get more livestock exclusion.

- 8) *What is the best way to let farmers know about conservation programs?* **Field days, word-of-mouth**
- 9) *Are there any groups in the watershed that would be good resources for education and outreach? Is there a need for education and outreach on pasture management for horse owners or owners of other types of livestock? Who is best to disseminate this type of information?* **There is a need for rotational grazing education as overgrazing does occur. Perhaps consider reaching out to Sweet Briar College. Hurt & Proffitt is collaborating with Sweet Briar College to expand its environmental programs. Who is a contact at Sweet Briar? Nathan Kluger**
- 10) *How much of the farmland within the project area is leased?* **An estimated 50% of farmland is leased. Does the 2017 agricultural census reflect that estimation? Yes, the census should be reflective.**
- 11) *Are there many horse owners in the area?* **Yes, but equine farmers have not been able to qualify for DCR practices. There are not many horse owners willing to do voluntary practices.**
- 12) *Are there certain BMPs that you feel would be most appropriate for the agricultural community in the watershed?* **Animal waste, livestock stream exclusion, roof runoff structures**