

Upper Goose Creek, Cromwells Run, and Little River Implementation Plan Agricultural Working Group Meeting #1

June 21, 2016
Meeting Notes

Location: Wakefield School
4439 Old Tavern Road
The Plains, Virginia 20198

Start: 7:00 p.m.
End: 8:15 p.m.

Meeting Attendance:

Scott Kaiser, Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin, Facilitator
Charlie Lunsford, VA Department of Environmental Quality, Facilitator
Rebecca Shoemaker, VA Department of Environmental Quality, Scribe
Tim Mize, Virginia Tech Extension Agent
Tom Turner, John Marshall Soil and Water Conservation District
Alston Horn, Chesapeake Bay Foundation
Neely Law, Center for Watershed Protection

Meeting Minutes:

The meeting started with introductions of all attendees. ICPRB presented stream exclusion fencing opportunity maps to the group and explained the process by which the maps were generated. It was noted that there is 1.2 million linear feet of fencing opportunity. Accounting for the 500,000 linear feet of fencing installed across the Implementation Plan area since 2002, there is about 700,000 linear feet of fencing opportunity still available. The SWCD confirmed the values presented and noted that a lot of the fencing opportunity may be on land that is leased. DEQ noted that some of the land shown on the map is used for hay, not pasture because NLCD does not distinguish between hay and pasture land cover. The group discussed the potential for field-verifying the accuracy of the maps; JMSWCD noted that there has already been some work done by District staff to ground-truth potential fencing areas.

The IP timeline was discussed. ICPRB noted that the timeline will be discussed in working groups and the Steering Committee and laid out in the draft report that will be presented later this year. Both ICPRB and DEQ explained that the draft plan will outline long-term milestones, likely over a period of 10, 15, and/or 20 years.

The group discussed general thoughts about the project area and potential ideas for moving forward:

- Some landowners did not want to sign up for cost-share programs even when 100% cost-share was available
- Much of the remaining fence installation opportunity exists on rental properties
- JMSWCD has already been tracking some voluntary fencing that has occurred in the project area

- Many properties have perimeter fencing in disrepair; are there ways to approach landowners with aging infrastructure (such as perimeter fencing) to package improvements with stream exclusion fencing?
- The working group may need to engage local organizations such as Goose Creek Association, whose members are engaged in the project area and have opportunities to discuss potential BMP implementation with the people who operate pasture land. Because economic incentives may not always motivate people to implement BMPs, it may be beneficial to include outreach about the other benefits of BMPs. The working group agreed that it is important to engage local landowners; there was discussion of potentially organizing a community meeting or farm tour to show how projects are implemented and their benefits.
- DEQ noted that there is currently a demonstration project in Augusta County, Virginia to supply portable water systems to farm operators; this may be a way for lessees to exclude cattle from streams using temporary fencing, a portable water supply unit and portable water troughs to establish rotational grazing. They would be able to take the equipment with them when they move from one farm to another.
- There may be opportunities to incorporate micro-loans or other financing mechanisms to help off-set the initial upfront costs of implementing practices.
- There is a lot of land in the IP area that is under conservation easement (~34% of Upper Goose Creek and ~50% of Cromwells Run) – a lot of the agreements are older and do not require fencing. There is a tendency to remove cattle when the land is under easement. There is potential to work with Virginia Outdoor Foundation about new easement agreements that could include fencing requirements.
- The working group needs to ensure that the project does not end up providing fencing only on hobby farms without addressing larger landowners.
- There are equine activities in the project area:
 - Hobby farms are often overstocked and there was a suggestion for establishing a regional composting facility
 - It was suggested that outreach would best be approached through the Middleburg Agricultural Research and Extension Center (MARE Center) and that we involve Dr. McIntosh.

The next Agricultural Working Group meeting is tentatively scheduled for September 22. ICPRB explained the intent is to refine the fencing opportunity maps and to reach out to other potential stakeholders prior to the September meeting. Also, at that meeting there will be discussion and input on the types and numbers of agricultural BMPs that can be used to reduce bacteria runoff loadings from cropland and pasture areas.

The agricultural representative for the Steering Committee is Tom Turner.