

**York River and Small Coastal Basin Roundtable Reconvening
May 6, 2019
10:30 AM – 4:00 PM**

King and Queen Branch Library
396 Newtown Rd.
St. Stephens Church, VA 23148

Meeting Purpose:

To determine a path forward for the watershed community with respect to local environmental issues and prioritized topics of mutual concern and interest.

Meeting Objectives:

Participants will familiarize themselves with DEQ's roundtable initiative, as well as DEQ's efforts in the Draft Phase III WIP rollout. Participants will discuss potential future projects and activities for the roundtable, identify organizational and partner capacity, and ensure that the roundtable body moves forward in a concerted direction.

Meeting Minutes:

11:00am

Ms. Cirse Gonzalez, Coastal Training Program Coordinator, Chesapeake Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, began with housekeeping and ground rules for participation.

Opening Remarks

Dr. Willy Reay, Chesapeake Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (CBNERR) Director, began the meeting by setting the stage for the York River and Small Coastal Basin Roundtable (Roundtable), and detailing its value to watershed communities and member participants. He identified the components of the meeting, stressing the importance of each, and encouraged participants to take an active role. Dr. Reay then provided an overview of CBNERR, its four reserve components, and the work it conducts in relation to the Roundtable, noting that the organization is mandated to provide advisory service to policy makers, resource managers, industry and the public. Dr. Reay indicated that CBNERR's program areas include coastal and estuarine research and monitoring, training and technical assistance, K-12 education, and stewardship, or resource management. He concluded by describing the organization's topical areas of focus: coastal response and mitigation to environmental change, and water quality monitoring and assessment to address aquatic life and societal needs.

Membership Introductions and Meeting Format

Ms. Gonzalez noted that the forum was to focus on information exchange and idea generation. She encouraged participants to leverage the social capital in the room.

Ms. Gonzalez then led participants through introductions, indicating that the session would provide everyone an opportunity to share their relevant projects, provide their perspective on emerging issues related to the watershed, and identify common challenges and opportunities that the collective could address.

Participants represented local, state, tribal and federal government, non-profit organizations, academia, civic organizations, youth, and consultants. Participants worked on a wide range of issues, including: community resilience, sea level rise, restoration, water quality and TMDL plans, advocacy, education, energy reform, shoreline best management practices, decision support and technical assistance, benthic biodiversity, social/behavioral science within the watershed, and Draft Phase III Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) planning. Some participants had been members of a previous Roundtable iteration; they expressed the importance of maintaining this important nexus of interests.

With respect to challenges that Roundtable members would collectively face, participants noted that working among a range of geographies – from the urban to the rural, from the upper to the lower watershed - and their related jurisdictions (PDCs, counties, SWCDs) and demographics, would be an obstacle for the group as each audience had its respective issues and needs, and would require tailored programs and messaging. Reaching these audiences, those that aren't a part of the proverbial "choir", was also identified as a challenge, being that the easiest course of actions for the Roundtable would focus on its own member constituencies, who may not necessarily be the audience that needs outreach. Participants from the upper watershed encouraged those in the lower portion to maintain sight of water's land dimension.

With respect to opportunities that the Roundtable could collectively address, participants stressed the importance of sharing information and effectively leveraging, enhancing and supporting the various efforts that each member organization is involved with, while recognizing opportunities for synthesis and partnering where possible. Participants also acknowledged the importance of fostering connections within the Roundtable, and those external to it, through contact with member constituencies. The Roundtable's collective strength in educating and disseminating information was identified by some participants as its most valuable characteristic. Participants expressed the importance of fostering connections with nature to develop understanding and cultivate ethic. Participants also identified the potential of addressing the co-benefits of shared resources.

A complete list of participants is found at this document's end.

Watershed Roundtable Overview and York River Roundtable Historical Successes

Mr. David Evans, Nonpoint Source Coordinator, Northern Regional Office, Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), began by describing the role of Virginia's watershed roundtables in convening a breadth of people who could take place-based actions, learn about each other, and engage in education and outreach toward the ultimate goal of Chesapeake Bay restoration. Mr. Evans expressed DEQ's hopes that the York River and Small Coastal Basin Roundtable become a sustainable effort, noting that the support DEQ was offering was modest, and mostly for convening. Mr. Evans reported that one of DEQ's main priorities in 2019 was creating awareness of the Draft Phase III WIP. He then described the work of established roundtables to this end, remarking on successful digital content and burgeoning social media outreach efforts. In answer to a related query, Mr. Evans indicated that the existence of an outcomes document for any of the established roundtables, or the roundtable system as a

whole, was unknown. With respect to the Draft Phase III WIP, mention was made of the Lower James Roundtable's web effort, vawipcomments.com, a platform for submission of Draft Phase III WIP comments.

Ms. Dawn Shank, President, Mattaponi Pamunkey River Association, recounted the conception, implementation and evolution of roundtables state-wide, noting the goal of creating a meaningful watershed experience and delivering data to localities, through maps and other visuals, in an effort to bring stakeholders together around a collective experience and issues therein. Ms. Shank detailed the evolution from buzzword to inception in 2002, when Virginia's Department of Conservation and Recreation dedicated funding to the effort. According to Ms. Shank, the Roundtable's mission developed in 2005 under the leadership of the Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission, whose guidance provided for the expansion of the Roundtable to include adjacent watersheds. Ms. Shank recounted the transfer of leadership over the years, and the associated projects that occurred at each step. She addressed challenges to its continuity of operations, including political obstacles that precluded funding. Ms. Shank noted that members of the current Roundtable, like those of the last, were, still working hard independently to increase awareness, especially among the increasing number of people now relying, if not living, on the river. While she acknowledged that more people, and the visibility they bring to a river, can be an asset, she indicated that they often place more stress on already burdened resources. Ms. Shank described the challenge of getting people to care, stressing that care stems from connection, particularly at younger ages, and that the role of the Roundtable may be rooted in connecting people to their resource. She then emphasized the importance of outreach to agency personnel and the provision of related resources to homeowners and private land users. Ms. Shank suggested that reporting would be a challenge for the Roundtable, given the breadth of its collective work and constituencies. She concluded with the comment, "There's still work to be done, and I still care."

The Roundtable's historical timeline as presented by Ms. Shank is found in the attachments.

12:30 pm

Lunch break

1:00pm

Strategic Plan and Priorities Moving Forward

Ms. Gonzalez presented an operational structure for the Roundtable comprising of a membership body, steering committees and a self-selected board. She noted that the steering committees could focus on a variety of topics or issues, including a strategic plan, communications, technical aspects, and education/outreach. Steering committees would be comprised of members and inform the board. Board members would meet quarterly and make final decisions on those items that necessitated them.

Participants were amenable to the operational structure proposed, though questioned the locality and timing of future meetings, expressing enthusiasm for shifting locations to encourage participation from a variety of places. Ms. Gonzalez noted that the Roundtable membership could meet biannually while the self-selected board met quarterly. Participants expressed

enthusiasm for meetings held in combination with educational experiences – which not only helped broaden perspective, but also helped cement the concepts and issues central to Roundtable discourse, and provided a platform for learning exchange.

Ms. Gonzalez mentioned that the ideas she would next present were intended to be a starting point; nothing was set in stone, everything was malleable and fair game for debate and revision. She noted that the ideas that surfaced in discussion would be used to orient the direction of the Roundtable as its strategic course of action for the next two years was developed.

Ms. Gonzalez then described the concept of Cornerstones, or elements of an organization's foundation that represent its major focus of work and are the bedrock of future agendas. Cornerstones would take the shape of themes under which a strategic plan, with corresponding goals, objectives and activities, would be developed. In that, Ms. Gonzalez suggested that the Roundtable's Cornerstones would cement its function and purpose, and frame the priority issues it would continue to focus on beyond an initial, two-year strategic plan. She noted that the Cornerstones would not only inform the Roundtable's initial strategic plan, but also how the Roundtable would be perceived and leveraged by external groups. Ms. Gonzalez clarified that these Cornerstones were to be distinguished from Deliverables, or the activities detailed in the Roundtable's strategic plan that would represent the Roundtable's action items.

Ms. Gonzalez then described the Deliverables that would, without question, be a part of the Roundtable's initial, two-year strategic plan, those being public outreach on the Draft Phase III WIP, and the implementation of the Roundtable's website. As the former would be addressed in the next session, she proceeded to describe the new website, noting that hadn't been launched yet officially, but was being created within the Virginia Institute of Marine Science's (VIMS) digital infrastructure. Ms. Gonzalez relayed the fact that the Roundtable's current website would be expiring soon and that a platform was needed to ensure its continuity. Participants discussed the new website platform, and the merits of VIMS hosting the Roundtable's site for the immediate future. Participants noted that while the VIMS platform was an agreeable temporary solution, they were concerned about a permanent transition to the VIMS site, given the breadth of the VIMS directory, and difficulty in navigating to the Roundtable page. Participants suggested that the domain name of the operational site be kept and, when the new site went live, that the old domain redirect to the new site to ease the transition and alleviate navigational obstacles; participants could then explore options for alternative hosts further down the road. Ms. Gonzalez would follow up on the feasibility.

Participants agreed that the website could act as a repository for Roundtable information, and a central resource to which its members could refer stakeholders. The utility of a website was discussed, and the importance of having and providing digital content to increase public exposure, awareness and visibility was agreeable to most, though there was some recognition that digital content and collateral were already in high supply, and may not be the most effective tools in getting conveying the Roundtable's messages; alternative Deliverables would need to be discussed.

Ms. Gonzalez then encouraged participants to provide their own examples of potential Roundtable Cornerstones and Deliverables, demonstrating some of her own, including engagement, awareness, water quality and access for Cornerstones, and the development of a communications plan, the maintenance of a York River Symposium, the creation of a "State of the York" report, and the execution of a social media campaign for Deliverables. Ms. Gonzalez clarified that Cornerstones were not goals or objectives; both of these elements, however, would align with Cornerstones, and be detailed in a strategic plan.

With respect to **Cornerstones**, participants felt that criteria shouldn't limit ideas that have not seen success; conversely, they expressed the need to pursue themes where there has been little historical success. Participants also noted that **York and small coastal basin specificity** was key to the operations of the Roundtable, which was, presumably, dedicated to this discrete geography.

One common theme continuously echoed throughout the Cornerstone discussion was that of **capacity building**. Specifically, participants felt that capacity building efforts should focus on Chesapeake Bay regional goals and outcomes, including those related to wetland restoration and environmental literacy. At the same time, participants suggested that Cornerstone emphasis focus on concepts peripheral to those detailed in the Draft Phase III WIP, i.e. "unregulated/unmandated" WIP projects; peripheral projects were identified as being mutually beneficial to Roundtable members and their respective constituencies. Lacking state support, these projects could benefit from Roundtable intervention. In the same vein, participants expressed the need for the Roundtable to fill conceptual and programmatic gaps and not recreate the proverbial wheel. Participants also noted that efforts in capacity building need not be external, and that there were opportunities to build capacity within the Roundtable itself.

Restoration and environmental literacy surfaced in discussion as key Cornerstone elements multiple times. Participants described the importance of visible and tangible exercises, best practices, results and other related information in communications with local community members. Participants advocated for demonstrations, seminars, workshops, trainings and field trips, stressing the importance of experience, and, ultimately, highlighting the need for more opportunities in **experiential education** to promote environmental literacy, internal and external to the Roundtable.

Experiential education connected with the sentiment that the strength of the group lied in its understanding of relevant regulations and tools, and its ability to transmit that information to different demographics. Participants stressed that the regulatory landscape was difficult to navigate for the general public, and that part of the value add of the Roundtable may lie in its translation of regulations. Translation would be especially important in cases where there was an ostensible disconnect in practice and in message, as was noted is often the case with Department of Forestry resource management projects. Experiential education was identified as a potential, effective tool in transcending such disconnects and bringing awareness to solutions within the watershed.

Experiential education was also identified as an important facilitator of **behavior change**. Participants repeatedly remarked on the importance of behavior change, characterizing its manifestation as crucial to watershed efforts, and noting that it only happened through interpersonal relationships. Members of the Roundtable were identified as agents of behavior change who were trusted, influential members of their communities. Modeling behaviors in experiential education forums, like seminars or workshops, was depicted as vital, especially in the delivery of best management practices. Participants recognized the importance of training trainers in these forums, and the potential strength of the Roundtable, which could disseminate important information to trainers in its respective members' constituencies. Extension agents were also described as an asset in this respect, though participants remarked on their limited capacity.

Resilience was addressed by participants in multiple contexts: environmental, economic and social, all of which were recognized as being intricately connected. Acknowledging that

development could hinder or help resilience in these three respects, participants recommended that the Roundtable highlight **environmentally responsible development** in its communications and actions. Furthermore, ecological restoration, and its current and potential connections to the local economy, were identified as important aspects of resilience that merited continued attention and study.

All of the above ideas and sentiments were recognized as being predicated on **community engagement**. Participants gave particular attention to homeowner and landowner opportunities and engagement, especially those from rural communities who could take part in the WIP.

Finally, participants recognized the strength of the Roundtable in advocacy work, both internal and external to its membership. Supporting the fabric of the Roundtable's **social network**, and increasing the capacity of each partner by bolstering it with the experience, perspective and resources of the collective, was described as one of the Roundtable's greatest assets. Participants recognized that leveraging the social network would provide numerous ancillary benefits, including increased public exposure of its members - and of the Roundtable as a whole. Additionally, participants identified the ability of the Roundtable to act as an information conduit, sharing relevant communications within, and external to, its own social network.

With respect to **Deliverables**, and in alignment with the **capacity building** Cornerstone idea, participants advocated for a focus on trainings and resources to convey and implement best management practices to and in watershed communities.

In alignment with an **environmental literacy** Cornerstone, participants highlighted the BayScapes and BayStar programs, which developed awareness among the public through incentivized workshops and demonstrations. Similar, incentivized efforts to increase awareness of key issues within the watershed, and their applicability to the Chesapeake Bay as a whole, were recommended by participants. The regulatory landscape and applicable ordinances were suggested as priority topics for any Roundtable training. Participants also noted that gardening and landscape initiatives were relevant and applicable throughout the watershed, and could seamlessly incorporate environmental literacy concepts. To this end, home and garden centers were acknowledged as important nodes in the Roundtable's communication network and its watershed discourse.

Rooted in an **experiential education** Cornerstone, one participant reported that the Virginia Conservation Network was now partnering with South Wings, a program wherein volunteer pilots fly decision makers over lands that need protection for eye-opening experiences. The potential for a partnership with the Roundtable was expressed.

In the vein of the **resilience and development** Cornerstone concepts, blue-green infrastructure and related advocacy were highlighted as potential pursuits with opportunities for many related deliverables.

In alignment with **community engagement**, participants described the importance of soliciting public input on Deliverables and noted that an evaluation, or needs assessment, of the Roundtable's audience would be in order. To this end, participants recommended that the Roundtable host public meetings, or "listening sessions" to garner feedback from communities around the watershed. Focus groups were also identified as a means by which Roundtable messages that move the needle moving forward could be informed. Participants urged that Roundtable members attend local meetings in-person as a way to establish trust and relay the

Roundtable's collective information, in addition to providing experiential trainings, workshops, field trips, etc.

Corresponding with the **social network** Cornerstone idea, participants commented on the potential of establishing a clearinghouse of watershed contacts and related resources.

Additional example Deliverables included: soil tests, their provision and any associated awareness campaign, in addition to digital campaigns that would function to elevate awareness of each of the Roundtable members and the Roundtable as a whole.

Participants recommended selecting one important deliverable and directing all focus to it in order to ensure its success.

Throughout the Deliverables discourse, the following organizations and groups were identified as potential Roundtable participants: Rotarian groups, farm bureaus, developers, civic organizations, contractors, county administrators, homeowner associations, timber industry representatives, garden clubs, master gardeners and naturalists, home and garden centers/landscaping businesses and Virginia Department of Transportation.

2:20

Break

2:30

Draft Phase III WIP Overview and Brainstorm

Ms. Ann Jennings, VA Deputy Secretary of Natural Resources, provided an overview of Virginia's multi-phased Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP), beginning with successes from Phase I and II. While noting that Virginia met its goal for nitrogen reduction by 2017, and that VA could now report that more than half of the overall sum of submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV) acres in the state have been restored, she mentioned the state was on track to fall short of its 2025 goals in nitrogen and phosphorus reduction, considering additional pressures from population growth and climate change. Virginia's Phase III WIP was created to help achieve the 2025 goals in the face of mounting stressors, and to do so in ways that were cost-effective, mutually beneficial and that met the Environmental Protection Agency's expectations.

Ms. Jennings mentioned that one of the primary focuses of the Phase III WIP is engagement of local partners, including Soil and Water Conservation Districts and Planning District/Regional Commissions. Input from these bodies and others, has informed state planning initiatives.

Some of these initiatives include: a long-term marketing plan for the Resource Management Plan Program; 85% implementation of nutrient management programs on cropland through cost share, with improved documentation; the establishment of a wastewater infrastructure workgroup; the "pilot" shift of septic maintenance from local governments to the VA Department of Health; funding of the Virginia Conservation Assistance Program; long-term partnerships with Planning District Commissions; enhancement of the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services' Certified Fertilizer Applicator program; development of a Coastal Resilience Master Plan; establishment of a work group to study expansion of the Chesapeake

Bay Preservation Act west of Interstate 95; and support of grants for native plant nurseries and oyster aquacultures.

Ms. Jennings concluded her presentation by describing the state's outreach efforts on the Draft Phase III WIP, and calling for comments through June 7. She noted that the final Phase III WIP would be posted no later than August 9 on the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and Virginia Secretary of Natural Resources websites.

When questioned who DEQ wanted to hear from with their comments about the draft plan, Ms. Jennings noted that the agency was eager to hear from everyone, including the general public and agencies.

One participant commented on Ms. Jennings' presentation by noting that the Chesapeake Bay Act was controversial. For the most effective, related activities, they recommended that the state focus on the regulatory components, such as stream buffers.

Another participant recalled discussions and presentations that took place during February's regional Marsh Resilience Summit focusing on the loss of cropland due to saltwater intrusion. They questioned whether there were missed opportunities to convert these lost croplands to wetlands rather than continue with the status quo, which focused on preventing saltwater intrusion. Ms. Jennings noted that there may be opportunities through the developing Coastal Resilience Master Plan, and that at present, there were no best management practices related to saltwater intrusion.

Multiple participants reiterated that cooperative extension staff are trusted agents and that the WIP process presented a prime opportunity for the Roundtable to work in collaboration with them.

Ms. Gonzalez then presented a concept webpage, hosted on the Roundtable's new website, to facilitate the Roundtable's role in communicating the Draft Phase III WIP and soliciting related feedback from the public. The webpage concept was favorably received. Participants discussed pulling key messages specific to the watershed from the draft plan to include on the webpage. Participants also noted that Chapter 11 of the plan was targeted at community members, and reiterated that the website vawipcomments.com provided an easy-access alternative for WIP comment submission. Participants recommended that the new Roundtable site highlight this accessible feedback platform, in addition to the most relevant DEQ links, and a link to the draft plan itself. Ms. Jennings agreed to make her presentation accessible as well.

3:20 pm

Short Break

3:30

Strategic Plan Brainstorm

Ms. Gonzalez asked participants to think beyond an initial, two-year strategic plan in her last call for ideas and input. She questioned participants on other potential contacts and collaborations and urged to them think about additional considerations for the future, like funding. Ms.

Gonzalez urged participants to consider mulling these questions over as she endeavored to synthesize the present meetings' proceedings and develop the Roundtable's next steps. She encouraged all participants to provide her with related input at their convenience. She also encouraged those participants eager and willing to be on the Roundtable board, or a part of a steering committee, to contact her with their interest. Finally, Ms. Gonzalez indicated that she would be summarizing meeting proceedings and delivering those alongside with next steps to the Roundtable membership.

Participants noted that county boards of supervisors, planning districts/regional commissions, and soil and water conservation districts should continue to be represented at the Roundtable. Other constituencies surfaced in conversation during the Deliverables discussion (see above).

Closing Comments

Ms. Gonzalez reminded participants of the meeting objectives and confirmed that they had been met.

Mr. Evans noted that Watershed Roundtables are a DEQ priority, and that the goal of the burgeoning one was to frame its agenda moving forward into the future. He reiterated that DEQ is stressing the importance of local community participation in roundtables.

Meeting Adjourned at 4:00 pm

Participants

Local Government

- Caroline County
 - David Nunnally, Environmental Planner
- Middle Peninsula PDC
 - Lewis Lawrence, Executive Director

State Government

- DCR
 - Amy Walker, Conservation District Coordinator
- DEQ
 - David Evans, NPS Coordinator, NRO
 - Steve Hummel, NPS Coordinator, TRO
 - Jen Rogers, TMDL Coordinator, Piedmont
- DOF
 - Dave Slack, Zoar State Forest
- Office of the Governor
 - Ann Jennings, VA Deputy Secretary of Natural Resources

SWCDs

- Hanover-Caroline SWCD

- Sharon Conner, District Manager
- Tri County City SWCD
 - Mariya Hudick, Education Coordinator

Federal Government

- DOD
 - Kevin DuBois, Navy
- NOAA
 - Lauren Taneyhill, CBO

Tribal Government

- Pamunkey Tribe
 - Lauren Fox, Director, Pamunkey Indian Tribal Resource Center

Non-profit Organizations

- Chesapeake Bay Foundation
 - Joe Wood, VA Senior Scientist
- Gloucester Green Committee
 - Denise Mosca
- Mattaponi Pamunkey River Association
 - Brad Davis
 - Stephen Mitchell
 - Dawn Shank, President
- The Watermen's Museum
 - Michael Steen
- Virginia Conservation Network
 - Elizabeth Christeller
- Virginia Farm Bureau
 - Ellis Walton, State Board Member

Academia

- VIMS
 - Donna Bilkovic, Research Associate Professor, CCRM
 - Cirse Gonzalez, Coastal Training Program Coordinator, CBNERR
 - Molly Mitchell, Marine Scientist, CCRM
 - Willy Reay, Director, CBNERR
 - Christine Tombleson, CCRM

Citizen Representatives, Industry, Consultants

- Caela Gilsinan, Chesapeake Bay Governor's School, Youth Representative
- Denise Nelson, The Berkley Group, MPPDC and GWRC WIP implementation
- Karen Reay, Baywater Communications
- Mike Rigdon, Lake Anna Civic Association, Environmental Preservation Committee