

York River and Small Coastal Basin Roundtable Biannual All-Hands
December 16, 2019
9:30 AM – 5:15 PM

Virginia Institute of Marine Science
Davis Hall
Gloucester Point, VA 23062

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 receive updates from around the watershed and discuss emerging issues
- Participants will review Cornerstones and the draft strategic plan, prioritizing activities and identifying contributions
- Participants will discover and discuss mutually beneficial connections and strategize synergistic partnerships

Meeting Minutes:

9:30am

Participants arrived and took part in posting their watershed stories/memories/visions and professional/personal identities on watershed maps.

10:00am

Dr. Willy Reay, Director, Chesapeake Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (CBNERR) welcomed participants to the Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS). Dr. Reay noted that CBNERR is managed through a federal/state partnership via the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and VIMS. He noted that VIMS is dedicated to research, education and advisory service, stressing that it was not just an academic institute. Similarly, he noted that CBNERR is mandated to cultivate research, education, stewardship and advisory services/technical assistance, the latter of which motivated CBNERR's role in Roundtable coordination. Dr. Reay indicated that the purpose of the meeting was to re-engage the Roundtable, which CBNERR was helping do through its Coastal Training Program, led by Cirse Gonzalez. Regarding research, Dr. Reay mentioned that CBNERR's program focused on water quality, and that it was engaged in long-term monitoring along the York River; he then commented that the CBNERR water quality lab would be first on the afternoon tours. To conclude, Dr. Reay remarked that the small basins are often overlooked in conversations focused on the York River watershed, and suggested that it was important to include the Mobjack & Piankatank basins into Roundtable conversations, particularly those relating to restoration.

Ms. Cirse Gonzalez, Coastal Training Program Coordinator, CBNERR, thanked participants for making the trek from all over the watershed to VIMS. Ms. Gonzalez noted that there was

representation from headwaters to tidewaters and that this was the second meeting of the newly invigorated YRSCB Roundtable. Following on the morning's activity, she asked all participants that they not leave without posting their watershed stories/memories/visions and professional/personal identities on watershed maps, noting that this member input would help her develop a robust Roundtable narrative, which could be incorporated into communications documents, the Roundtable's Strategic Plan, etc.

Ms. Gonzalez then reviewed the meeting ground rules, noting that her intent was to be sure everyone was on the same page with meeting proceedings. She indicated that a formal adaptation of these ground rules might be merited, suggesting that the Roundtable could establish a code of conduct for members. Participants were relatively neutral on formal adaptation of a code of conduct, and Ms. Gonzalez noted that she wouldn't adapt one at present, though the idea would not be tabled.

New Member Introductions and Round-Robin

Ms. Gonzalez described the need for member introductions, and brief explanations of current/pressing issues relevant to the Roundtable; at which point she motioned for participants to introduce themselves with their names, affiliations and any brief updates.

Mr. Curtis Smith, Deputy Director of the Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission, noted that he was in his third week on the job, having just moved from the Eastern Shore. He was interested in translating his experiences from the Eastern Shore to the local watersheds in which he now worked.

Maggie Roche, noted that she was engaged in economic development efforts within Spotsylvania County, and worked on issues relevant to Lake Anna.

Kevin Marshall, Spotsylvania County's Berkely Division Director, noted that harmful algal blooms are consistently an issue he deals with in-district.

Lewie Lawrence, Executive Director, Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission, noted that his interest lay in DEQ's watershed implementation plan (WIP III) implementation.

Zachary Greenberg, Officer, Conserving Marine Life in the U.S, Pew Charitable Trusts, is interested and engaged in coastal habitat restoration, specifically via oyster and SAV work.

Mark Williams, Environmental Manager, Luck Companies, noted that his business is interested in pursuing environmentally responsible business practices. He suggested that his business wants to contribute to the community and learn, through forums like this, how to be a better neighbor.

Mike Gelber, member of the Lake Anna Civic Association's Environmental Preservation Committee, was taking part in watershed conversations through the Roundtable for the first time and eager to learn from the colleagues gathered.

David Evans, Northeast Regional Office Nonpoint Source Pollution Coordinator, Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, noted that he is working on new total maximum daily load (TMDL) implementation plans in the Mattaponi, and an improved implementation plan in the upper York.

Lauren Fox, Director of the Tribal Resource Center, noted that the Pamunkey Tribe is engaged in, and eagerly pursuing, restoration initiatives.

Andrew Larkin, Senior Program Analyst, Chesapeake Bay Office, noted that he is interested and engaged in oyster restoration and coastal shoreline restorations.

Ellis Walton, relayed that he just left his position as member of the Virginia Farm Bureau Board of Directors; he maintains his positions on aquaculture boards, representing the Middle Peninsula and Northern Neck.

Denise Mosca, Gloucester Go-Green, noted that her civic group is focused on advisory services, informing the county's board of supervisors.

Jen Rogers, Piedmont Region TMDL Coordinator, is working on TMDL implementation plans for the Mattaponi, downstream for where Dave Evans' work is located.

Dawn Shank, President of the Mattaponi Pamunkey River Association, noted that she was vested in connecting people to their resources through immersive experiences that foster understanding and ultimately, stewardship.

Michael Steen, Education Coordinator at the Watermen's Museum, noted that he had been working on a series of educational efforts for 6th grade students, some of which resulted in their production of solutions for sea level rise.

Harry Looney, Lake Anna Civic Association's Environmental Preservation Committee, mentioned that he is namely concerned with water quality, and is actively engaged in activities that promote best practices in and around impaired waters. Notably, he mentioned that he sees Lake Anna as the first wetlands area in the watershed (as water moves from headwaters to tidewaters), and suggested that those further downstream in the watershed experience successful water quality initiatives, due to upper watershed efforts.

David Nunnally, Environmental Planner, Caroline County, mentioned that every issue that had thus far been mentioned was on his radar, inclusive of WIP III, local TMDLs, and Chesapeake Bay Act regulations.

Sharon Connor, District Manager, Hanover-Caroline Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), noted that she too is engaged in many of the same programs and issues that had been mentioned, and that her office works on agricultural and urban outreach and education, in addition to WIP III outreach. Ms. Connor noted that she also participates in the Rappahanock and Middle James Roundtables, and as such, Karen Fetty would be the main point for this Roundtable.

Karen Fetty, Education Specialist, Hanover-Caroline SWCD, noted that one of the main issues she faces in her work is impervious surfaces. Her goal, she noted, is to reach diverse audiences.

Keith Boyd, Assistant State Conservationist, United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Science, Smithfield Area Office, works in field operations, directly with the farming community. He described that understanding the new Farm Bill is at the top of his priority list.

Robyn Goad, Colonial SWCD Urban Practices lead, described her work on the Virginia Conservation Assistance Program, which offers reimbursement to homeowners to implement best management practices, like living shorelines, on their property.

Tabea Zimmerman, Colonial SWCD Conservation Technician, works in both the York and the Pamunkey rivers; Tabea noted that she promoted no-till practices and precision agriculture, and works with farming communities.

Mike Rigdon, Chair of the Environmental Preservation Commission of the Lake Anna Civic Association, noted that his association is working on the implementation of artificial wetlands as filters for local waters.

Ms. Fetty then offered kudos to programs, inspiring future agenda items for more notes of appreciation. Ms. Gonzalez also noted that kudos and successes could be shared through the Roundtable Roundup, which, incidentally, was at the root of the next talk, as one of the highlighted articles inspired some questions that prompted the following presentation.

Invited Talk: Virginia Poultry Litter Transport Incentive Program

Seth Mullins, Nutrient Management Coordinator - Animal Waste, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, introduced himself noting that his largest responsibility was review of nutrient management plans, though he had limited experience doing so in the watersheds relevant to the Roundtable. Mr. Mullins described the Virginia Poultry Litter Transport Incentive Program, reporting that it encouraged the movement of poultry litter from Accomack, Rockingham and Page counties to areas of the state that could responsibly use the litter. He noted that to ensure responsible litter use, receiving entities must prepare nutrient management plans, which they agree to fully implement. Mr. Mullins reported that while there were 55 counties in Virginia eligible to receive litter through this program, only three were relevant to the watershed: James City, New Kent and Orange.

At present, 5-6,000 tons of litter move through the transport program per year, though Mr. Mullins indicated that 2020 applications requested a total of 13,000 tons of fertilizer. That said, up to 89,000 tons of litter are transported throughout the state of Virginia each year. Mr. Mullins noted that litter transport through the state program is monitored, in contrast to that which occurs outside of the program. Mr. Mullins reported that a soil test lab at Virginia Tech is largely responsible for the data used in transport assessments.

Ms. Connor questioned why Hanover-Caroline was left out of the equation, and unable to receive litter input. Mr. Mullins suggested that there was neither regulation nor law establishing the receiving counties, and that while they were identified by a workgroup of state officials, they were not set in stone. Mr. Looney questioned where poultry litter was being applied. Mr. Mullins noted that both transfer program producers and end users have record keeping requirements, though he reiterated that Virginia's vast majority of litter produced on farms is, in fact, transferred, and that this program tracks just a fraction of the total.

Dr. Rigdon questioned what considerations were being made when the fertilizers were tilled in, wondering if there was a conflict with organic nutrient sources like litter. Ms. Connor responded that no-till practices were currently regarded as the most effective, as the residue that is on the surface when fertilizer is applied, retains fertilizer, and therein, nutrients; tilling in fact, deprives soils of nutrients. No-till practices therefore, do not exacerbate excess nutrients in the environment. Moreover, tillage is more likely to cause erosion because it loosens soil and

reduces residue. Ms. Connor noted that places like Hanover County have been no-till for so long, that the soil, which is digesting organic matter at such a fast rate, requires additional substances, like litter, to maintain the nutrient levels necessary for effective yields.

Mr. Smith asked whether alternative markets, like mushrooms, have been explored as possible endpoints for chicken litter. He suggested that including them in the incentive program could open the doors to more opportunities for commerce. Mr. Smith also questioned whether poultry litter could help restore nutrients in and around solar panel operations.

11:00am

Stretch Break!

11:10am

Our Guiding Documents and Leveraging Our Respective Strengths

Ms. Gonzalez described the Roundtable's two guiding documents: Cornerstones for a Sustainable Enterprise and the Strategic Plan 2019-2021. She reported that she drafted each based on input from the May 6 All-Hands meeting, as well as Board and Steering Committee member feedback. Notably, she stressed that these documents are malleable and remained works in progress. Ms. Gonzalez acknowledged that the present meeting was designed to garner additional input that would continue to shape the documents.

Ms. Gonzalez described the **Cornerstones** document as a framework of guiding principles for the Roundtable. As the enduring bedrock of the Roundtable's future agendas, the Cornerstone document represented broad themes of issues/topics that the Roundtable would pursue into the foreseeable future. Ms. Gonzalez noted that she considered this document the Roundtable's compass.

With respect to the **Strategic Plan**, Ms. Gonzalez noted that she regarded this document as the Roundtable's roadmap as it detailed specific actions, or deliverables, the Roundtable could implement to achieve its mission. In addition, the Strategic Plan represented the Roundtable's identity card, as it contained a descriptive background on the Roundtable, which participants would continue to inform as part of the day's activities. Ms. Gonzalez noted that there was a laundry list of deliverables included in the plan and acknowledged that not all were feasible within the next two years, the plan's timeline. She then called on the Roundtable to help prioritize the deliverables, and identify which could be pursued in the immediate future, and which ones may need to be delayed and incorporated in future iterations of the Strategic Plan.

Ms. Gonzalez then reiterated that to inform both documents, participants would be asked to take part in a series of activities, the first of which would be an activity on mental models. She noted that this activity would help garner perceptions on values, threats and protections (or solutions), which may differ among participants based on lived experience. Ms. Gonzalez then noted that she'd be using results from this first activity to ensure that the Roundtable's collective values are reflected in its institutional documents, and that the identified threats to those values, could be mediated by solutions expressed as deliverables in the Strategic Plan.

Ms. Gonzalez then led participants through the **Establishing Our Mental Models Activity**. At its conclusion, participants voiced their take home points, noting, for example, that development was a common threat to the identified values, though it took different forms. For example, while a lack of planned development was a threat across the watershed, development in places with sea level rise was more of a threat along the coast than in places like the Shenandoah Valley. Participants noted that many had values similar to their colleagues, as well as ideas regarding protections/solutions'; Ms. Gonzalez offered that these similarities should be reflected in both the Cornerstones and the Roundtable's deliverables.

Ms. Gonzalez began the next activity by first reiterating the lengthy list of deliverables in the two-year Strategic Plan. Noting that two years was tight timeline, she described some of the deliverables as a little far reaching, though indicated that there were several examples of low hanging fruit. These latter examples, she suggested, should be identified so that the Roundtable can concentrate its efforts on them and begin putting wheels in motion.

To that end, Ms. Gonzalez mentioned that the next activity would be an exercise in weeding, or distinguishing the low hanging fruit and reserving the remaining deliverables for future strategic plans. Before launching into the activity, Ms. Gonzalez noted that she would preview each of the Strategic Plan deliverables one-by-one to clarify their intent and answer related questions. She noted however, that she would not discuss those already in motion, or those that she was directly responsible for, recognizing that they were in the works and easy lifts and would not need to be weeded. She also encouraged participants to record any questions, comments and/or concerns on post-its that could be incorporated in the activity at the next step.

Ms. Gonzalez then proceed to read each Strategic Plan deliverable in turn. She again reiterated that Roundtable members should consider available capacity when thinking about achieving deliverables, and that the aim was to reach for low hanging fruit, much of which individual organizations have already set in motion.

Regarding the deliverables under the Community cornerstone, Mr. Evans noted that the Lower James Roundtable was engaged in a social media effort spearheaded by VCU, with large support from students. Ms. Connor discussed the need for the Roundtable to be more representative of the constituents that it serves, noting that there was potential for outreach through faith-based communities (which the Middle James Roundtable was successfully collaborating with) and schools. Ms. Connor suggested that schools and churches may have communication networks that could help cast an environmental literacy net wide, and help the Roundtable reach and include a diverse audience. Ms. Hudick noted that Lake Anna is not only a recreational resource, but also a location for some local church baptisms. Roundtable participants echoed the need to involve a wider audience and consider non-traditional resource use in management.

Regarding the York River and Small Coastal Basins Research Summit/Symposium deliverable under the second Cornerstone, Promote Environmental Literacy, Ms. Gonzalez noted that plans were underway for a symposium on April 28 at VIMS. The symposium, hosted by CBNERR and co-branded with YRSCBR, could provide an opportunity to showcase watershed research in an accessible manner for local communities.

Regarding deliverables overall, Mr. Walton noted that conservation easements were absent from the Strategic Plan. Dr. Rigdon echoed the importance of including easements as they are a tool in artificial wetlands restoration. Both members agreed that related language should be

included in the Strategic Plan, recognizing that many who are working on restoration, are involved with easements. Ms. Gonzalez noted that they could be considered.

In response to a question on the concept of wetland banks, Mr. Lawrence suggested that the Norfolk Army Corps of Engineers District oversaw area wetland banks and had some related material. Mr. Lawrence noted that there were both tidal and nontidal wetlands, an important distinction.

Lynnhaven River Now, a regional nonprofit, was identified as a prime example of outreach to minority faith-based communities, and was suggested as a possible presentation speaker at the next All-Hands meeting.

Ms. Gonzalez then led participants through a **Planning Prioritization** activity. She noted that the activity was intended to inspire Roundtable members to connect their work to Roundtable efforts. As designed, the activity would help everyone visualize who was doing what related to each deliverable, and provide some clues as to which deliverables may need to be removed from the current Strategic Plan.

At the conclusion of the activity, Ms. Gonzalez summarized the initial results, noting that there were distinct differences among the deliverables, with some visibly showcasing more support than others.

Finally, Ms. Gonzalez remarked on the social capitol contained on the Roundtable. She described the last activity as an exercise in capturing strengths focused on organizational capacity and capitol. The following activity, she noted, would elicit input on individual member capacity and capitol.

Ms. Gonzalez then led participants through a **Reciprocity Circle** activity, asking each participant to detail on separate post-it notes, their respective strengths (including, but not limited to, skills, abilities, connections and access to resources), as well as their limitations (including, but not limited to, those needs that would facilitate success, gaps in collaborations/partnerships/funding). Participants were asked to review the combined post-its and make annotations where they identified a fruitful connection.

At the conclusion of the activity, Ms. Gonzalez noted that the information contained on the post-its could help inform a robust clearinghouse of contacts, or Roundtable Yellow Pages. She indicated while the resource would likely begin as a tool for members only, making it publicly accessible could broaden the Roundtable's reach and inspire related deliverables, like a speaker's bureau. Participants indicated that they would find such a resource useful; Ms. Gonzalez agreed to develop one.

1:00pm

Break for Lunch

1:10pm

Strategic Plan Implementation: Up Next and Moving Forward

Ms. Gonzalez reported that the Roundtable currently had a nine-member board, and three distinct steering committees: Education/Outreach, Science and Business Advisory. She then introduced Mr. Larkin, who would propose the **creation of a fourth steering committee**.

Mr. Larkin recounted the growing momentum surrounding restoration efforts in the Middle Peninsula, pointing to a successful Middle Peninsula and Nearshore Habitat Restoration Workshop on September 24. He also mentioned a proposal into Virginia's Coastal Zone Management Program which would help fund a place-based community of practice. Recognizing these and other efforts and funding opportunities, Mr. Larkin suggested that the time was ripe for watershed-based nearshore habitat restoration workgroup. Participants questioned the definition of nearshore, and whether shorelines in headwaters would be included. Mr. Larkin clarified that nearshore excluded deep waters (more than approximately 10 feet deep) and open ocean, and agreed to incorporate non-coastal shorelines. He also clarified that habitat was inclusive of tidal wetlands, grasslands and reefs. Participants suggested that the workgroup focus on shoreline rather than nearshore to be more inclusive non-coastal entities. Mr. Larkin was amenable to the shoreline focus, expressing the potential for two sub workgroups (tidal/non-tidal) should need arise. Ms. Taneyhill, Ms. Goad, Mr. Greenberg, Mr. Gelber, Mr. Looney, Ms. Mason and Mr. Rigdon all expressed interest in taking part.

Ms. Gonzalez then examined participant need and desire for a shared **calendar of events**. She noted that she currently receives very little input on related events for the Roundup and questioned whether a calendar of events would be sustainable. She asked participants whether they thought they could be accountable for sending watershed related happenings and populating a shared calendar.

Participants were largely in agreement with developing a shared calendar; Ms. Gonzalez agreed to create one that would be hosted on the Roundtable's website. She next made a call for events that could begin to populate the site in 2020, and indicated that she would remind Roundtable members of the need for event input in each Roundup. Dr. Reay suggested including events advertised through avenues like the VA Tech newsletter. Ms. Gonzalez encouraged Roundtable members to send her ideas of related newsletters she could keep an eye on for related events. Ms. Fetty suggested that the criteria for event inclusion be that each event correspond with one of the four Cornerstones; Ms. Gonzalez agreed with this idea.

Mr. Lawrence noted that a calendar of events would fulfill related Planning District Commission outreach requirements outlined in the WIP III. Participants commented that the Roundtable's visibility would need to increase to make the calendar effective, and that the public would have to be pointed toward the website/calendar page to ensure traffic.

Pam Mason, newly appointed Director of York County SWCD, Lauren Taneyhill, Partnerships Program Analyst, NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office, and Mariya Hudick, Education Coordinator, Tri County SWCD, then each introduced themselves.

Ms. Mason made a note of the Wetlands Watch database for shovel-ready projects that could be applicable to the work of the Roundtable; Ms. Gonzalez suggested that she could give a corresponding presentation at the next All-Hands meeting

Regarding the **next All-Hands meeting**, participants suggested May, noting that April was a busy month, as many would be working between Environment Day and MWEE projects.

Finally, Ms. Gonzalez handed out a **needs assessment** to participants. She noted that their input would help gauge direction of CBNERR training program in 2020.

Participants completed their needs assessments while Ms. Gonzalez concluded the meeting portion of the All-Hands. She noted that the planned tours of the VIMS campus were optional, and would begin at 2:30.

2:00pm

Break

2:30pm

VIMS tours

Candice Vinson, Outreach and Events Coordinator, VIMS, led participants through three VIMS labs, including the CBNERR water quality lab, VIMS oyster hatchery and the VIMS fish collection.

Meeting adjourned at 5:15pm

Participants

Local Government

- Caroline County
 - David Nunnally, Environmental Planner
- Middle Peninsula PDC
 - Lewis Lawrence, Executive Director
 - Curt Smith, Deputy Director
- Spotsylvania County
 - Kevin Marshall, Supervisor, Berkeley District
 - Maggie Roche, Marketing and Communication

State Government

- DCR
 - Seth Mullins, Nutrient Management Coordinator, Animal Waste
- DEQ
 - David Evans, NPS Coordinator, NRO
 - Jen Rogers, TMDL Coordinator, Piedmont

SWCDs

- Colonial/York SWCD
 - Robyn Goad, Urban Practices Lead
 - Pam Mason, Director of York County SWCD
 - Tabea Zimmerman, Colonial SWCD Conservation Technician
- Hanover-Caroline SWCD
 - Sharon Conner, District Manager
 - Karen Fetty, Education Specialist
- Tri County City SWCD
 - Mariya Hudick, Education Coordinator

Federal Government

- NOAA
 - Andrew Larkin, Chesapeake Bay Office
 - Lauren Taneyhill, Chesapeake Bay Office

Tribal Government

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

Non-profit Organizations

- Gloucester Green Committee
 - Denise Mosca
- Mattaponi Pamunkey River Association
 - Dawn Shank, President
- Pew Charitable Trusts
 - Zack Greenberg, Officer, Conserving Marine Life in the U.S.
- The Watermen's Museum
 - Michael Steen
- Virginia Farm Bureau
 - Ellis Walton, State Board Member

Academia

- VIMS
 - Cirse Gonzalez, Coastal Training Program Coordinator, CBNERR
 - Willy Reay, Director, CBNERR

Citizen Representatives, Industry, Consultants

- Harry Looney, Lake Anna Civic Association, Environmental Preservation Committee

- Katie Shelton, CBNERR Intern
- Mark Williams, Environmental Manager, Luck Companies
- Mike Gelber, Lake Anna Civic Association, Environmental Preservation Committee
- Mike Rigdon, Lake Anna Civic Association, Environmental Preservation Committee