

York River and Small Coastal Basin Roundtable Biannual All-Hands Meeting

May 18, 2021

9:30 AM – 12:00 PM

virtual via Zoom

Link to meeting recording found [here](#):

<https://wmedu.hosted.panopto.com/Panopto/Pages/Viewer.aspx?id=b50cc22e-4620-4979-b1c5-ad2c011421b8>

Meeting Purpose:

To convene the Roundtable membership for updates and discussion on forward movement.

Meeting Objectives:

- Participants will learn of Roundtable progress and updates, and discuss emerging issues and opportunities within the watershed
- Participants will hear from watershed practitioners in an effort to bolster Roundtable initiatives

AGENDA

9:30am Welcome/Opening

Cirse Gonzalez, Coastal Training Program Coordinator, CBNERR

- Our Watershed and Roundtable: Cirse Gonzalez provided stats and facts on the collective York River watershed and small coastal basins in addition to reviewing the Roundtable's Cornerstones and organizational structure.

9:40am Updates!

Cirse Gonzalez, Coastal Training Program Coordinator, CBNERR

Elise Trelegan, Chesapeake B-WET Program Coordinator, NOAA Environmental Science Training Center

Andrew Larkin, Senior Program Analyst, NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office

- Cirse Gonzalez provided a recap of the York River and Small Coastal Basins Symposium, recounting the transition from a symposium dedicated to research, to one that included education and management, in alignment with the Roundtable's Cornerstones.
- Education and Outreach Steering Committee member Elise Trelegan described an Environmental Literacy Effort in the Middle Peninsula.
 - NOAA, VIMS, CBNERR-VA and Friends of the Rappahannock have been meeting to explore idea of building an environmental literacy network in the Middle Peninsula
 - Environmental literacy was equated with building capacity in K-12 students to be able to make informed choices on the environment

- Initial idea is to bring together three school divisions (Essex, Gloucester, Middlesex) and environmental education partners to build a strategy for environmental literacy using the collective impact framework
 - The group is assessing what programs, capacities and partnerships are currently in place, and are planning to meet with representatives from each of the school districts later this month; interest and need as expressed by district personnel will drive any forward movement of the program
 - If Roundtable members would like to get involved, the opportunity may surface after this meeting, pending expression of interest
 - The project has no current funding, though support could be leveraged from existing initiative given interest
 - Contact Elise Trelegan at elise.trelegan@noaa.gov with questions, feedback and ideas
- The Business Advisory Steering Committee has developed the Roundtable's [Top 12 Best Business Practices for Watershed Resilience](#)
 - Next steps include finding and vetting watershed businesses that adhere to these practices to showcase on the website and partner with in watershed communications
 - Roundtable members should submit any ideas or contacts to Cirse
 - Roundtable members are encouraged to share these best practices through their social media channels
 - Members can contact Cirse for draft posts
- Having recognized a 20-year gap in information conveying the state of the York River watershed, the Science Steering Committee has prioritized efforts to synthesize regional information on the status, trends and opportunities related to watershed health
 - Roundtable partners have submitted two grant proposals to this end: one for a [Transfer Grant through the NERRS Science Collaborative](#), and the other for a [Planning and Technical Assistance grant through NFWF's Small Watershed Grant program](#)
 - The idea presented in each of these proposals is that of co-production, whereby Roundtable members will help inform report content and output through needs assessments; ultimately, CBNERR-VA will help guide Roundtable members in the development of audience-specific outreach
 - The proposals were developed to focus on complementary regions of the watershed
 - The NERR Transfer Grant proposal focuses on the tidewaters; it's led by CBNERR-VA in concert with the Center for Coastal Resources Management and VIMS
 - The NFWF PTA grant proposal focuses on the headwaters; it's led by CBNERR-VA in concert with the Lake Anna Civic Association
 - A third proposal, submitted to NFWF by the Upper Mattaponi Indian Tribe, complements these two with a focus on the mid-waters
- Nearshore Habitat Restoration Steering Committee Chair, Andrew Larkin described the committee's mission and species of interest
 - In committee, this community of practice discusses current restoration efforts, funding opportunities, restoration research and best practices, and receives demos on tools and databases.
 - Nearshore restoration efforts may have links to efforts in the headwaters; more conversation on connections is merited though the expectation is that a State of the York report will help elucidate these connections

- The next Steering Committee meeting will be held on May 25; a restoration workshop is being planned for September
- Contact Andrew Larkin at andrew.w.larkin@noaa.gov for details

10:00am Resilient Coastal Forests initiative in the York River

Matthew Lee, Project Coordinator, Green Infrastructure Center Inc.

- Matthew Lee, Project Coordinator for the Resilient Coastal Forest project in Virginia, described [the project](#), funded by VA Department of Forestry and the U.S. Forest Service
 - Most generally, the project evaluates threats, individually and cumulatively, to coastal forests up to year 2060, and creates a plan to combat those threats and support forest resilience and conservation
 - The plans they create are done so with input from local workgroups
 - The project also evaluates benefits; a link to a related [Benefits Report can be found here](#)
 - This is a pilot study that will hopefully be transferable to other parts of the coast
- The lower York River watershed is the focus of the Virginia Study Area
 - While a local workgroup has been formed, more are welcome to participate
 - The next meeting will be held June 3, 2-4pm, at Gloucester's Colonial Courthouse: 6155 Main St.; Gloucester, VA 23061
 - The workgroup is currently evaluating the feasibility of management actions that will mitigate identified threats; the development of a management plan based on workgroup input will follow, as will subsequent workshops and trainings focused on management options
 - The priorities and goals of a state advisory board will be integrated into the management plan as well
- Contact Matthew Lee at mlee@gicinc.org with questions, feedback and ideas

10:20am Meaningful Tribal Engagement

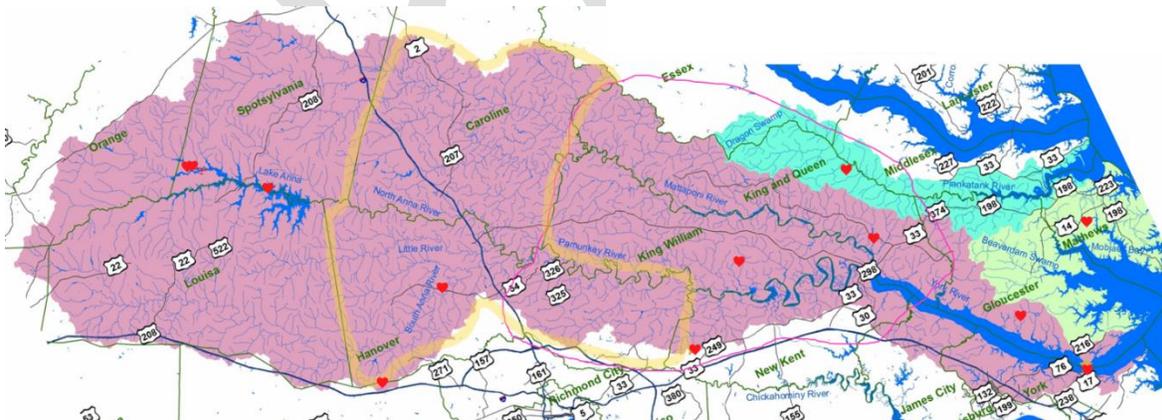
Leigh Mitchell, Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Coordinator, Upper Mattaponi Indian Tribe

- Leigh Mitchell, Upper Mattaponi Indian Tribe Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Coordinator, provided an overview of best practices and considerations for those working with Virginia's tribes, noting that she does not represent all Virginia tribes, nor can speak to their own perspectives on the matter, including those related to the homelands they identify with, or their interest in the consultation process
- There are seven federally recognized Tribes in Virginia and four recognized by the Commonwealth
 - Federal recognition acknowledges Tribes as sovereign nations, a designation associated with legal obligations for consultation at the federal (government-to-government) level; federally recognized Tribes may also have a government-to-government relationship with state government
 - Each Tribe will have its own consultation policy and requirements; understanding both is an important, as is understanding the nature of Tribal lands, especially those in Tribal trust
- The Upper Mattaponi has had a presence in the watershed with pre-contact roots, and they continue to live in it today, in a relatively central area (King William County); their interest in the work of the Roundtable is rooted in this place-based geography

- With respect to best practices, partners should consider that:
 - Many of the Tribes are in capacity building stages and are building out their government; their communications may be limited - for those seeking to connect with Tribes, do not get discouraged if one email goes ignored, be persistent and aim to develop relationships
 - Early engagement is key; checking the proverbial box with last minute Tribal engagement must be avoided – moreover, partner should be prepared to provide the Tribes with all relevant info in the early stages of project development
 - Assumptions with respect to tribal interests or capacity cannot be made
- Each Federally recognized Tribe has an environmental director; collectively, they have several priorities that align with the work of the Roundtable, including - but not limited to - resource protection, cultural preservation, habitat and species restoration and education
- Do not be intimidated or discouraged in your pursuit of collaboration with Tribes; there is a lot of potential out there for partnership and many different funding vehicles that can be leveraged in pursuit of collaborative efforts
- The environment is a cultural resource, and the connection between the two is inevitable for most Tribes, though Tribes are still grappling with what their cultural resources are – as much has happened between contact and present day and only recently has there been any requirement to share knowledge of these resources with the Tribes
- Participants, via poll, made it very clear that more content (i.e. workshops, trainings, discussions) on tribal engagement is desired
- Contact Leigh Mitchell at environment@umitribe.org with questions, feedback and ideas

10:40am Break!

- A real-time, crowd-sourced representation of where the watershed work of our participants is focused:



11:00am The NPS RTCA Program and its connection to our watershed
Ursula Lemanski, Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance, NPS

- The National Park Service’s mission includes support for natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation outside of NPS park borders; the Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance program (RTCA) is dedicated to this aspect of the NPS mission
- RTCA is comprised of a national network of recreation and community planners; they support local projects through facilitation and community outreach

- RTCA typically works with communities for 1-2 years and has an [application process](#)
- RTCA provides services in the vein of facilitation, program development and strategic planning and tailors its support to each community
- RTCA has five focus areas, including:
 - Building healthy communities through outdoor opportunities
 - Conservation of lands, rivers and watersheds
 - Engaging youth in outdoor recreation and stewardship
 - Strengthening organizational capacity
 - Enhancing NPS and community networks
- Ursula Lemanski's team has hired a few new people and they are eager to partner with the Roundtable and its members
 - Ursula is focused in Virginia, and has worked with Gloucester and Matthews on water trails and on a greenways initiative in Spotsylvania County; she is currently working with Plan RVA on trails at present
 - RTCA has engaged in regional: 1) flood mitigation and nature-based solutions, 2) watershed planning, and 3) water trails and blueways through restoration projects, education initiatives and events, comprehensive water quality planning processes, workshops, interpretative materials, recreational opportunities and more
 - There exists significant alignment between RTCA's mission and work and that of the Roundtable and its respective Cornerstones
- Ursula mentioned the [America the Beautiful](#) developed by DOI/USDA/DOC/CEQ for the National Climate Task Force; it recommends, among other things, funding for local efforts in urban areas through the Land and Water Conservation Fund
- To apply for assistance through the RTCA program, visit their [application page here](#); the application deadline is in March, but prework and scoping can be conducted in advance
- Contact Ursula Lemanski at Ursula_Lemanski@nps.gov with questions, feedback and ideas

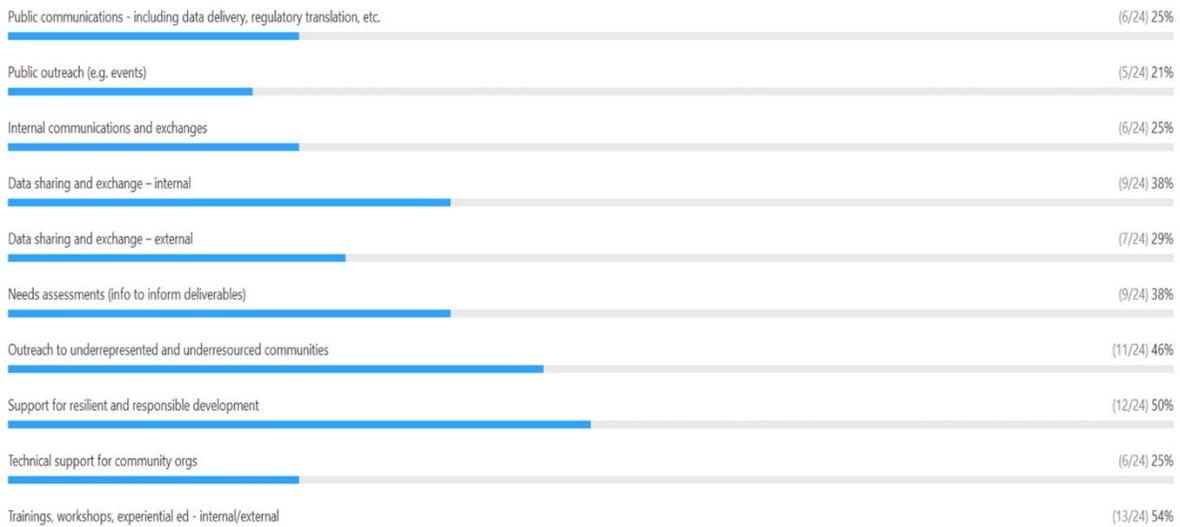
11:20am Next Steps for York River Roundtable

Cirse Gonzalez, Coastal Training Program Coordinator, CBNERR

Andrew Larkin, Senior Program Analyst, NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office

- NOAA's Chesapeake Bay office has been working in concert with CBNERR-VA to build increased capacity for the Roundtable that supports its growing efforts
- NOAA plans to solicit bids for a service contract to add this capacity to the Roundtable and to help support NOAA's environmental literacy goals in the York, Mobjack Bay, Piankatank areas
 - The request for bids should hit the street next month
 - Contracts should start this summer and last through next September
- The Roundtable's Two-Year Strategic Plan timeline will soon come to a close; in recognition of the need to revisit this plan, and as an effort to begin focusing the scope of the next plan, participants were polled on their interest in deliverables that merit continued attention; the results of the poll are depicted below:

1. What would you like to see the Roundtable focus more on moving forward? (Multiple choice)



11:30am York River and Small Coastal Basin Roundtable Education Awards
Cirse Gonzalez, Coastal Training Program Coordinator, CBNERR

- The Roundtable presented two awards to four incredible watershed educators who have gone above and beyond in their efforts to inspire and train the next generation of resource managers:
 - The *Excellence in Environmental Education Award* was awarded to Drs. Michael Fenster and Charles Gowan, Professors in Environmental Studies at Randolph-Macon College. Fenster and Gowan were nominated by the Lake Anna Civic Association (LACA) for their dedication to an undergraduate research partnership focused on identifying potential nutrient sources responsible for Lake Anna's Harmful Algae Blooms.
 - The *Lifetime Achievement Award* was awarded to *Page Hutchinson* and *Eugene Rivara*. Hutchinson was nominated by members of the Virginia Association for Environmental Education for her dedication to, and enthusiasm in, all things environmental literacy. Rivara was nominated by the Mattaponi and Pamunkey River Association for his tireless work in the efforts to protect the Mattaponi River.
- Each awardee is being recognized with a native tree planting in the spirit of planting seeds in environmental literacy, and in line with the Roundtable's mission to steward water resources
- The Education and Outreach Steering Committee developed these awards to demonstrate support for environmental literacy efforts within the watershed, a Roundtable Cornerstone, and to foster awareness of Roundtable

11:55am Kudos and Close-Out
Cirse Gonzalez, Coastal Training Program Coordinator, CBNERR

- Participants were polled on their ability/interest to meet in-person in the Fall.
 - Most participants would be able to meet in the Fall, and believed that a hybrid approach to meetings would be an effective way forward for the group

12:00pm Adjourn