

Virginia Water Monitoring Council Steering Committee Meeting
May 8, 2002
USGS, Richmond, VA

Minutes by Stacey Moulds.

Organizations with representatives that attended:

Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay (ACB) – Stacey Moulds
American Water Works Association (Virginia Section) – Bruce Schwenneker
Clean Virginia Waterways (CVW) and Longwood College – Katie Register
County of Henrico – Robin Wilder
James River Association – Patti Jackson
United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region III – Chuck Kanetsky*
United States Geological Survey (USGS-Virginia Office) – Ward Staubitz
Virginia Association of Municipal Wastewater Agencies – Danny Barker
Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts – Alecia Daves
Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) – Fran Geissler
Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) – Don Smith
Virginia Department of Forestry – Sam Austin
Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries – John Kauffman
Virginia Department of Health (VDH) – Michele Monti, Jessica Trumbo
Virginia Institute of Marine Science – Lyle Varnell
Virginia Water Resources Research Center (VWRRC) – Jane Walker
Virginia Water Well Association – Jane Cain

* Non-voting Member

Committee Chairs attending:

Operations – Ward Staubitz, USGS
Communications – Stacey Brown, Virginia Save Our Streams
Inventory – Michele Monti, VDH
Needs Assessment – Fran Geissler, DCR

Organizations without a representative at the meeting:

Citizens for Water Quality
Virginia Agribusiness Council
Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU)
Virginia Manufacturers Association

The Virginia Water Monitoring Council (VWMC) Steering Committee met May 8, 2002 (11:00 AM- 3:40 PM) at the United States Geological Survey (USGS) office in Richmond, Virginia. Katie Register of CVW/Longwood College (Chair, Steering Committee) led the meeting.

The meeting agenda for the May 8, 2002 meeting was reviewed and adopted. The minutes from the March 13, 2002 VWMC Steering Committee meeting were reviewed. One minor edit to the March 13th minutes was noted and changed by Stacey Moulds. The Steering Committee adopted the minutes of the March 13th meeting.

Committee Reports:

Operations Committee

Ward Staubitz (Chair, Operations Committee) reported for the Operations Committee. The issue of organization liability was again discussed. Jane Walker has asked Virginia Tech's General Council if the VWRRC could cover VWMC activities for liability but has not yet heard an answer on that matter. Ward reported that he had followed up with the liability insurance company that the Chickahominy Watershed Alliance (CWA) uses. The contact he spoke with discussed the two main types of liability insurance: general event liability, which they could offer to the VWMC for \$150-\$350 per event; and professional liability, which they could offer to the VWMC for \$1,500-\$2,500 per year. Both types of liability can be secured for the VWMC without incorporation.

The Steering Committee discussed whether or not there is a need for professional liability due to the low risk of our current activities. Patti Jackson suggested a cheaper alternative: putting a disclaimer on our website. She also discussed the possibility that each Steering Committee member probably has liability coverage with its own organization. Katie Register was unsure as to whether or not this was the case with her organization and others. Michelle Monti discussed that although risk was low for most of our activities, legal fees alone could amount to well over the annual cost for professional liability. It was suggested that the VWMC should talk with an attorney. Danny Barker volunteered to speak with a lawyer and report his findings to Ward. Dave Frackelton was suggested as another Steering Committee member who might be willing to talk with a lawyer about this matter. All of these issues are still pending, and the Steering Committee will be updated on the progress of this issue at the next meeting.

Two main suggestions for fundraising were also discussed by the Operations Committee: securing an individual grant writer and getting VWMC members more involved with fundraising and grant writing. The Operations Committee again emphasized that the VWMC needs a solid base of funding in order for it to achieve its long-term goals. The two main types of funding include: 1) organizational funding (covers Jane's time and basic organizational expenses), and 2) funding for particular "project" items (i.e., inventory, website, workshops, etc.).

During the March 13th meeting, the Steering Committee decided it would be comfortable hiring a professional grant writer to raise funds for the VWMC. Katie Register and Stacey Moulds each had a professional grant writing contact and volunteered to research costs for their services. Katie reported that her contact would not be able to work on a reimbursable basis. Stacey Moulds was unable to connect with her contact and assumed her business has been unsuccessful. Ward reported that no VWMC members have contacted him to offer assistance with fundraising or grant writing. Stacey Brown offered to talk with an SOS volunteer who is a professional grant writer, and Bruce Schweneker offered to find out more about an independent consultant, Mike D'Anucci.

Patti Jackson suggested the possibility of having each represented agency put a few thousand dollars into their budgets for VWMC support. Fran Geissler indicated that because of recent budget cuts, increasing support from state agencies would be difficult or impossible. The Steering Committee generally agreed that the best practical solution was probably to secure funds for specific projects, with sufficient “overhead” support built into the project to cover basic organizational costs. The Steering Committee agreed to make another attempt for funding from the General Assembly as a line item through DEQ or DCR.

The Steering Committee discussed the need to determine a “common vision” for the VWMC, meaning that the committee needs to determine specific tangible goals and objectives in order to determine the best way to secure support funds. The upcoming Strategic Planning Session scheduled for June 19, 2002 in Charlottesville will help with determining the VWMC’s “common vision.”

Fran Geissler updated the group with progress on the 2002 VWMC Annual Meeting and the Virginia Watershed Management Conference planned for September. The VWMC was asked and agreed to sponsor a conference session entitled, “Emerging Issues and Water Monitoring.” Fran offered to distribute the proposed session agenda to all Steering Committee members via email. The Operations Committee will take the lead in developing the session topics and recruiting session speakers. The VWMC Annual Meeting is to be held following the Virginia Watershed Management Conference, on September 27, 2002, beginning at 1:30 PM.

Communications Committee

Stacey Brown (Co-chair, Communications Committee) reported for the Communications Committee. The Committee chose John Schildroth as the VWMC database/WebPage vendor. Stacey reported that the website will include both static and dynamic WebPages. Stacey reported that the Communications Committee would need information from Steering Committee members to develop certain pages. Images to be used on the website were also requested. Stacey Brown reported that she will send out an email with all of the Communication needs described in more detail. The end of May was set as the deadline for providing these materials to Stacey. The question as to who will perform WebPage updates was discussed, and Stacey suggested that the Communications Committee could do most of the WebPage updates.

Inventory Committee

Michele Monti (Chair, Inventory Committee) reported that their last committee meeting was prior to the March Steering Committee meeting. Michele discussed the immediate committee task of identifying organizational and geographic gaps in the inventory. Jessica Trumbo offered to distribute a map identifying the organization location of returned surveys and a map identifying the location and the type of group that returned the survey. Michele suggested that the committee wait until the database is online before having the Steering Committee contact monitors who have not responded to the survey. Michele discussed that the GIS-inventory component will most likely not begin until 2003. Chuck Kanetsky reminded the group that we need to begin to think of funding needs for this task now rather than wait until 2003.

Needs Assessment Committee

Fran Geissler (Chair, Needs Assessment Committee) reported the preliminary results of the 129 completed needs assessment surveys have been sent via email to all Steering Committee members. Fran reported that committee member James Beckley volunteered to perform some analyses of the survey results by early June.

Financial Report

Jane Walker reported on the VWMC's financial status. Jane handed out copies of the January 9 and May 8 financial reports. Jane reported that \$2,500 from DCR and \$2,000 from the DOF have been received by the VWMC since the January meeting; Jane explained that the balance was adjusted by \$537 for scholarship funds that were never received by the intended scholarship users. The VWMC balance as of May 8, 2002 is \$4,240.

Citizen Monitoring Agreement

After the lunch break, Stacey Moulds reported briefly on the recent Citizen Monitoring Agreement. The ACB, DCR, DEQ, and the Virginia Division Izaak Walton League of America, Virginia Save Our Streams Program (IWLA VA SOS) signed a Letter of Agreement on April 9, 2002 to implement the Virginia Citizen Water Quality Monitoring Program. The 2002 Letter of Agreement shows the signatories' dedication to support the Virginia Citizen Water Quality Monitoring Program throughout the Commonwealth for the purpose of collecting useful water quality information and encouraging environmental stewardship. This Letter of Agreement continues the collaborative partnership begun in 1998 and reaffirmed in the 1999 Letter of Agreement among DEQ, DCR and IWLA VA SOS; the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay is entering in 2002 as a new partner. The Agreement was officially signed as part of the Kick-Off reception to the 2002 Environment Virginia Conference at the Virginia Military Institute in Lexington, Virginia. Signatories included: David Bancroft, Alliance Executive Director; Jay Gilliam, VA SOS Coordinator; Jay Bolton, President, Virginia Division Izaak Walton League of America; Joseph H. Maroon, DCR Director; and Robert G. Burnley, DEQ Director. Tayloe Murphy, Virginia's Secretary of Natural Resources received a signed copy of the agreement at the event.

30th Anniversary of Clean Water Act, National Water Quality Monitoring Day, and VWMC involvement

Don Smith reported on the progress of the June 21 Kick-off Event for the 30th Anniversary of Clean Water Act. Don will send an electronic version of the event brochure to Jane, which will then be distributed to the VWMC members. Stacey Moulds asked Don about specifics as to how the monitoring results would be reported and analyzed. Don reported that the results would only be submitted nationally for four basic water quality parameters and that as of this time, the results would have to be entered for each monitoring site, rather than in a batch file. Stacey Moulds suggested that it would be nice, although time consuming, to have the results summarized in some way and sent to all participants. She explained how Pennsylvania sends out water monitoring "Snapshot" booklets to all snapshot participants. Stacey Moulds agreed to discuss this in more detail with Joyce Brooks of the DEQ.

Ward discussed the USGS's plans for recognizing the 30th Anniversary of Clean Water Act by promoting National Water Quality Monitoring Day (October 18). The USGS would like to sponsor an event to highlight monitoring in Virginia and is considering holding an event in Cartersville, Virginia at the site of the USGS stream gauging station that is currently operated in cooperation with the DEQ. Ward reported that the USGS was looking at celebrating this event on Friday, October 18. Saturday and Thursday were suggested as possibly other suitable dates. The VWMC Steering Committee agreed that they would like to be involved with this activity.

Stacey Moulds suggested that the James River Advisory Council might also be interested in being involved with the proposed National Water Quality Monitoring Day event. She offered to contact Kim Conley of the James River Advisory Council and to pass along her contact information to Ward. Stacey Brown, Fran Geissler, and Stacey Moulds also suggested involving the Citizens for Water Quality and the Virginia Citizen Water Quality Monitoring Program (ACB/DEQ/DCR/SOS) with this event. Stacey Brown suggested that activities could take place during the entire week surrounding October 18 at several different locations. It was also suggested that the Industry sector involved with water monitoring should also be involved with this event. Don Smith suggested that the Potomac River might be a good area in which to work.

VWMC/MWMC Joint Meeting

The Steering Committee discussed the possibility of hosting a joint meeting with the Maryland Water Monitoring Council (MWMC). A November meeting was suggested. Katie Register and Stacy Moulds offered to contact MWMC members to discuss this possibility.

Update of National Monitoring Conference

VWMC members, Jane Walker, Don Smith, and Carl Zipper will attend the National Water Monitoring Conference from May 20-23, 2002 in Madison, Wisconsin. Jane will also attend the workshop for state and regional Water Monitoring Councils and will report to the Steering Committee what she learns from the workshop.

New Business

The Steering Committee discussed the possibility of adding visual assessment as a fourth and separate monitoring type to its brochure description. After some discussion, it was decided by the Committee that visual assessment is a category within physical monitoring type and that no change needs to be made to the VWMC brochure.

The Steering Committee decided that, pending no state agency or Virginia Tech regulations stating otherwise, it would be appropriate for the website/database vendor to put a statement on the VWMC website, e.g., "this site developed by ..." with a link to his contact information. It was also decided that the website should list sponsoring funders.

Program

John Kaufman was the Program presenter. He gave a report on the DGIF's involvement with the Instream Flow Council and discussed the Public Trust Doctrine.

Next Steering Committee meeting

The next general Steering Committee meeting is set for July 10, 2002 at the DOF office in Charlottesville, Virginia. The Steering Committee will meet prior to the next general Steering Committee meeting for a strategic planning session, to be held on June 19, 2002 in Charlottesville.

Other VWMC-related Upcoming Events:

VWMC Steering Committee meeting -- September 11, 2002, USGS office, Richmond
Virginia Watershed Management Conference (VWMC Sponsored Session) -- September 25-27, 2002, Hotel Roanoke, Roanoke

VWMC Annual Meeting -- September 27, 2002, Hotel Roanoke, Roanoke

VWMC Steering Committee meeting -- November 13, 2002, DOF building, Charlottesville