

RappFLOW

Rappahannock Friends and Lovers of Our Watershed

Report to the Rappahannock County Board of Supervisors

January 3, 2005

RappFLOW is a grassroots group of citizen volunteers founded in the summer of 2002, representing a range of stakeholders who live in and near Rappahannock County. The mission of RappFLOW is “to help preserve, protect, conserve and restore water resources and Rappahannock County’s watersheds.”

RappFLOW began its work with the intention of creating educational forums where citizens of all kinds could share their interests and knowledge, with the support of experts from the many organizations and state and local government agencies available to us. Our goal was to build a shared base of knowledge with input from a wide range of stakeholders, and from which we could distill and prioritize issues that are important to the citizens and to the protection of our watershed. We viewed this knowledge-building activity as foundational for future watershed management planning activities.

The five main forum topics included the following: air and water quality in the Shenandoah National Park; riparian buffers; erosion/sedimentation/stream protection; sustainable forestry; and sustainable agriculture.

This work was supported by a small grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), donations and expertise from businesses, nongovernmental organizations and state and local government agencies, and contributions of time and knowledge from over three hundred citizens and local leaders. (See attached list of supporting organizations). Rappahannock County served as our fiscal agent for this grant. We submitted the final report to NFWF in December 2004.

We are also currently preparing a grant proposal to the Chesapeake Bay Small Watershed Grants program. We are requesting a letter of support from this Board for that project, and are asking the County to serve again as fiscal agent.

Outcomes: Through the public forums and a subsequent strategic planning workshop, the following issues were identified as central to watershed management in Rappahannock County’s watersheds:

- Increasing fragmentation of land holdings, land cover and land use due to development, gentrification, and shifts in agricultural economics and practices.
- Need for more awareness and education regarding best management practices and associated cost sharing programs such as CREP.
- Citizen lack of awareness/understanding of watershed and water quality issues. “People see our streams as clean and plentiful.”

- Lack of detailed and systematic data for watershed assessment, county-wide priorities and decisionmaking by individual landowners and county officials.
- Need for stronger and more detailed implementation of the policies and principles of the Rappahannock County Comprehensive Plan and enforcement of existing ordinances.

The challenges we faced in doing this work included the following:

- Since there is not an immediate “crisis” about watershed and water quality protection here, how could we get broad based citizen interest in participating?
- How could we ensure that a full range of stakeholders have a voice in our activities, so that the effort does not become politicized or polarized?
- How could we ensure that leaders of various organizations, including county government and our schools, want to participate and have a voice in these activities?
- Given the many dimensions of watershed protection, how could we ensure that we are taking advantage of expert knowledge in our conversations?
- Given limited financial resources, and the need for a great deal of volunteer time and effort, how could we organize our activities to maximize the talents and resources available?
- How do we decide on venues for our activities? We want the places we meet in to represent the natural world we are talking about, provide modern facilities for use of multimedia presentations and physical comfort, and represent a range of localities in the county.
- How do we best use the limited public meeting time to maximize participants’ opportunities to network with each other, learn from experts, and take away useful information?

RappFLOW evolved a model process designed to address these challenges so as to maximize participation, enhance awareness and understanding of issues most critical to watershed protection in our community, and reflect a wide range of stakeholder perspectives. The model (described in our report to NFWF) proved to be effective in several ways, as follows:

- The numbers of participants increased with each succeeding event, through the sustainable forestry event in April 2004. Beginning with 75 participants at the April 2003 event, each succeeding public forum event drew more participants and the April 2004 forum on sustainable forestry had over 200 participants.
- A wide range of stakeholders participated as designers, organizers, exhibitors, speakers, and participants in these events.
- The extent of volunteer contributions to the work are reflected in over \$30,000 worth of in-kind cost sharing.
- Our citizens had opportunities to learn from and build relationships with experts from numerous government agencies and nonprofit organizations who served as designers, speakers, exhibitors, and co-sponsors of events. See Appendix A for list of cooperating groups.
- We did build knowledge and identify critical issues regarding watershed protection locally, both as individuals and as a group.

- At least fifteen articles in the local newspaper on topics such as protecting your stream and avoiding erosion on your private road helped to increase broad public awareness beyond those who actually participated in the public forums.
- The series of educational maps evolved into a set of 19 natural resources and community maps that were incorporated in the 2004 revision of the County's Comprehensive Plan.
- Our county Board of Supervisors is now considering the establishment of a formal Water Quality Advisory Committee that will include a representative of RappFLOW as well as other knowledgeable organizations.

Our report to NFWF includes a 90 page set of materials from the events, such as agendas, flyers, photos, newspaper articles, maps, participant lists, resource links. This collection will be available in the Rappahannock library and on the RappFLOW web site.

Next steps: Based on what we learned from the past two years' experiences, RappFLOW leaders are defining long range goals and short-term projects. RappFLOW's long range goal is to have in place a community-wide vision, comprehensive watershed management plan, and associated implementation mechanisms by the time of the next revision of the Comprehensive Plan in 2009. Over the coming 18 months the group intends to lead and facilitate small pilot watershed planning processes on a sub-watershed level. These pilot studies will test the full range of watershed management processes and decisionmaking outcomes for carefully selected small watershed areas in the upper reaches of our major streams, including data gathering and organization to support decisionmaking, volunteer training in rapid watershed assessment, community education and involvement, and action outcomes on the part of individual landowners.

The Rappahannock Rapidan Regional Consortium is currently assisting RappFLOW in obtaining small grant funds from the Virginia Department of Recreation and Conservation for our work between now and June 2005. We are also currently preparing a grant proposal to the Chesapeake Bay Small Watershed Grants program. We are requesting a letter of support from this Board for that project, and are asking the County to serve again as our fiscal agent.

This report was prepared by
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RappFLOW Steering Committee Fall 2002 – Fall 2004

RappFLOW does not have a formally established permanent steering committee. The following individuals have provided guidance to RappFLOW activities at various times over the past two years. In addition, some members of the Rappahannock Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission have served as presenters, panelists, and workshop participants.

Robert Anderson
Don Audette
Medge Carter
Janet Davis, Coordinator
Jill DuVall
Jed DuVall
Reid Folsom
Beth Gall
Sarah Gannon
Khalil Hassan
Clyde Humphrey
Hal Hunter
Beverly Hunter, Coordinator
Martin Johnson
Bruce Jones
Jill Keihn
Paul Komar
Kenner Love
Julie May
Dick McNear
Cliff Miller
Chris Parrish
Francois-Marie Patorni, Coordinator
John Rice
Joe Thompson
Jeff Walker
Carey Whitehead
Greg Wilcheln
Lyt Wood
Mitzie Young

RappFLOW Partners and Contributors

Blue Ridge Footshills Conservancy

Scenic Virginia Bynway 231, Route HC6 Box 215, Madison, Virginia 22727 E-mail:

blueridgeconserve@nexet.net

Contact: Carl Schmitt, President, 434-985-9815 (Greene) Susan Cable, Vice President 540-923-9980 (Madison)

The Blue Ridge Foothills Conservancy is a private, non-profit land trust working primarily in Madison and Greene counties in central Virginia. Our mission is to conserve, through voluntary land protection, the agricultural, scenic, natural, historic and recreational resources that define the rural character of our communities.

Concerned Culpeper Citizens

Contact: Perry Cabot

Culpeper Soil and Water Conservation District

351 Lakeside Drive, Culpeper, VA 22701 540.825.8591

Exhibitor: Martin Johnson, Information/Education Coordinator

E-mail: martin-johnson@va.nacdnet.org

Main Contact: Greg Wichelns, District Manager

The CSWCD, a political subdivision of the Commonwealth of Virginia, promotes the stewardship of soil and water and the conservation of our natural resources by educating and providing technical assistance to manage, protect, and enhance the land and water for the benefit and enjoyment of the citizens of Culpeper, Greene, Madison, Orange, and Rappahannock Counties. Greg Wichelns and Martin Johnson have served as expert advisors, presenters, and exhibitors to RappFLOW events and activities.

Friends of the Rappahannock (FOR)

Contact: John Tippet

John Tippet served as a featured speaker at the July 2003 RappFLOW forum on riparian buffers.

Hearthstone School

Contacts: Jill Keihn

Hearthstone is a private K-12 school in Sperryville, adjacent to the Thornton River. Hearthstone hosted the July 2003 RappFLOW public forum on riparian buffers. Hearthstone students have exhibited their work on stream erosion at RappFLOW events. Jill Keihn is an ecologist and serves as an advisor to RappFLOW.

Madison County Task Force for Sustainable Growth

Contact: Khalil Hassan

Khalil Hassan serves as a member of the advisory group for RappFLOW.

Mount Vernon Farm

Contact: Cliff Miller

Mount Vernon Farm in Sperryville is a model for sustainable agriculture and forestry. Through the CREP program the farm has established miles of riparian buffer. Mt. Vernon produces and sells grass-fed beef, lamb and other naturally raised products at the farm, over the internet and at farmer's markets. The farm in 2003 placed over 600 acres in conservation easement. Owner Cliff Miller is a member of the RappFLOW advisory group. Mt. Vernon Farm hosted the RappFLOW April 2004 sustainable forestry public forum.

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF)

Contact: Laura Carrier

NFWF provided a small grant to Rappflow to assist in providing a series of public education forums from July 2003 to September 2004.

Piedmont Environmental Council

45 Horner Street, P.O. Box 460 Warrenton, VA 20188 540.347.2334

Contact: Sarah Gannon, Rappahannock County Conservation Officer

E-mail: sgannon@pecva.org

Sarah Gannon works one-on-one with landowners and others to promote conservation options, including conservation easements. The Piedmont Environmental Council (PEC) was established in 1972 to promote and protect the Virginia Piedmont's rural economy, natural resources, history and beauty. PEC provides technical and legal expertise to citizens, local governments, and grassroots groups in a nine-county region of the Virginia Piedmont.

Piedmont Research Institute (PRI)

130 Mossie Lane, Amissville, VA 20106 540 937-4038 <http://www.Piedmontresearch.org>

Contact: Beverly Hunter

E-mail: bev@piedmontresearch.org

Piedmont Research Institute specializes in geospatial information technologies for purposes of education, conservation, and community development. PRI developed and maintains the RappFLOW web site, develops natural resource maps for educational and public policy decisionmaking, and coordinates RappFLOW activities.

Rappahannock County Conservation Alliance

P.O. Box 228 Washington, VA 22747 (Attn. Lorinda Bosch)

Contact: Hal Hunter

E-mail: hal@targetlearn.com

Other Contact: Sharon Pierce (President), 540.987.8397, pierce_sc@hotmail.com

RCCA promotes the preservation of open space and natural resources in Rappahannock County. RCCA also provides citizens with information and materials on the use of easements as a conservation tool. Most recently, the Conservation Alliance has been working closely with the county to develop a purchase of development rights program, called the Farmland Protection Ordinance. The ordinance would assist local farmers to keep their land in agriculture and forestry by providing a cash payment for development rights.

Rappahannock County Government

Contact: John McCarthy, Administrator

The Rappahannock County Government serves as fiscal agent for RappFLOW grants.

Rappahannock League for Environmental Protection

P.O. Box 94 Washington, VA 22747 540.987.8504

Contact: Bob Lander, President

Email: RLEP@direcway.com

RLEP is a citizen's organization dedicated to preserving the natural resources and rural and historic character of Rappahannock County, VA. RLEP promotes its purpose in the community through public education, coalition building with like-minded organizations, consulting with business interests and county officials on public policy, and advocacy for sound community planning.

Shenandoah National Park

Contact: Shane Spitzer, Physical Scientist

Shane Spitzer monitors air and water quality in the SNP. He was the featured speaker at the April 2003 RappFLOW public forum on this topic.

Sperryville Gateway Project

Sunnyside Institute for Sustainable Agriculture

Contact: Janet S. Davis, Director

Sunnyside Farm is an organic farm in Washington Virginia with a market in Sperryville. Sunnyside's Institute for Sustainable Agriculture contributes expertise on sustainable agriculture and has donated food to RappFLOW events.

U.S. Dept. of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service

Culpeper Office 540.825.4200

Contact: Joe Thompson, District Conservationist for Rappahannock & Culpeper Counties

E-mail: Joe.Thompson@va.usda.gov

USDA-NRCS provides technical and financial support to landowners for the management of agricultural lands and wildlife habitat. Emphasis is on techniques that protect soil and water resources.

Virginia Cooperative Extension

Rappahannock Unit 311-G Gay Street, Little Washington, VA 540.675.3619

Contact: Kenner Love, Agricultural and Natural Resources Extension Agent

E-mail: kllove@vt.edu

Provides research-based technical assistance on plant and animal agriculture to landowners. The extension service also provides family and community services, 4-H programs for youth, and soil sciences information.

VA Department of Conservation and Recreation, Division of Soil and Water Conservation

Tappahannock Regional Office 804.443.8219

Contacts: Julie May, Rappahannock Watershed Field Coordinator; Matt Criblez, Director ; Mike Lee, Erosion and Sediment Control Specialist

E-mail: jmay@dcr.state.va.us

DCR provides many programs to reduce non-point source runoff to restore the water quality of the Chesapeake Bay. Julie serves as a point of contact for community groups and stakeholders for grant opportunities and other watershed activities. Mike Lee was the featured presenter at the RappFLOW public forum on erosion and sediment control in November 2003.

Virginia Department of Forestry, Madison Office

308 Thrift Road, P. O. Box 148, Madison, VA 22727-0148 540.948.5341

Exhibitor: Martin Agee, Forester for Madison, Rappahannock and Greene Counties

E-mail: ageem@dof.state.va.us

Foresters like Mr. Agee provide forestry management and planning assistance to private landowners. The Department of Forestry is also responsible for the protection of 15.8 million acres of forest land from fire, insects and disease; as well as the management of 16 State Forests and other state lands totaling approximately 50,000 acres for timber, recreation, water, research, wildlife and biodiversity.

Virginia Forest Watch

609 E. Market St. Rm 106, Charlottesville, VA 22902 434.971.7678

Contact: Christina Wulf and Danny Dolinger

E-mail: vafw@nexet.net

Virginia Forest Watch provides citizens with educational presentations & general information on sustainable forestry & conservation options for private landowners. VFW also advocates for protection of Virginia's George Washington and Jefferson National Forests.