

Watershed Protection Advisory Task Force: April 24th, 2014 Meeting Summary

Task Force Members Present: : Tom Anhut, Charles Meeker , Randy Stanger, Richard Rogers, Hardin Watkins

City of Raleigh Staff Present: Ed Buchan, John Carman, Leigh Ann Hammerbacher, Kenny Waldrop

Others present: Catesby Carman, Bill Flournoy, Kevin Brice, David Proper, Caitlin Burke, Mack Paul, George Mathis, Katherine Baer, Chris Dreps

Task Force Logistics/ Election of Chair: Hardin Watkins was nominated as Chair. Members unanimously supported this role

Members adopted a set of ground rules.

- Begin and end on time.
- Stay on subject and follow the agenda.
- One person speaks at a time.
- Let others have a chance to speak on the same issue
- Listen to understand, not to contradict.
- Treat other members with respect, even in the face of disagreement; attack problems, not people.
- Check your understanding by asking questions.
- Constructive, honest debate is desirable.
- Summarize decisions and future plans before you leave

Meeker proposed that the group try to come to consensus on most decisions or a super majority if consensus could not be reached

Follow up from first meeting- Project Review, Project Funds, Accomplishments (see slides)

Staff reviewed program implementation, progress, and budgets to date. Members asked for greater detail on breakdown of expenses and program costs by year separating land purchase and program implementation costs. Members also asked about remaining balances from previous budget years. Members noted that since the adoption of the watershed protection fee, funds should be rolled over from previous years into the same account. Carman noted that Public Utilities has updated the project tracking and budgeting and that moving forward the funds will be able to roll over and stay in a separate account for the watershed protection program.

Staff reviewed the land protected by the UNCWI program and provided an overview of funds invested by other local governments in the Upper Neuse area. Members asked for a breakdown of these investments by percent jurisdiction in the watershed. Staff noted they could provide greater detail on land protection status and a breakdown of funds expensed at the next meeting. Members also asked about priority areas as identified by the original model and whether it makes sense for the City to expend funds in non-priority areas. Staff noted that all of the projects the City of Raleigh has funded were high priority ranking areas, although several of the large projects contained uplands in addition to the prioritized riparian areas and wetlands.

Status of drinking water supply watersheds (see slides)

Staff reviewed past and current water quality conditions in Falls Lake and noted some gaps in water quality sampling. Since 2008, Chlorophyll-a levels in the lake appears to have stabilized, and the lake has been removed from the 303(d) impaired water list for chlorophyll-a. The Public Utilities Department is most concerned about Total Organic Carbon and the resultant potential to increase disinfection byproducts levels within the water distribution system. Staff also mentioned Public Utilities partnership with NC State (Center for Applied Aquatic Ecology) to help provide more comprehensive monitoring in the lake, and this additional data will be provided prior to the next meeting . Members noted that during much of the development boom the lake still met water quality standards at the intake. The impairment of Ellerbe Creek was noted and members wanted to know how the discharge at Durham's waste water treatment plant compared to the water quality in Ellerbe Creek upstream of the discharge. A variety of sources of water quality issues were noted including natural and man-made causes. Members highlighted the larger contributions of agriculture, forestry and septic tanks mentioned in the Division of Water Resources report. Members also noted that the group may want to focus on new strategies which can help limit the water quality impact of these sources.

Review current ordinance and relevant policies

Staff reviewed the current ordinance and provided copies to those present. The ordinance allows for flexibility in the use of the watershed protection funds and allocation to other programs and projects in addition to the UNCWI program. In the past year funds have been allocated to both an innovative new septic system at the Annie Louise Wilkerson MD Nature Preserve as well as the development of a nutrient offset tool for the Upper Neuse River Basin Association. In general members felt the ordinance was comprehensive and outlined a mission for protection water quality while allowing flexibility for future projects. Staff asked the members to review the ordinance in more detail and bring any proposed changes to the group.

Vision and measuring success of the program

Members noted that the ordinance provided a good mission and vision for the program.

"Protection and enhancement of water resources for the purpose of water supply is a fundamental function and duty of the City of Raleigh and its Public Utilities Department"

"All projects fully or partially funded from these monies shall provide measurable improvement or protective benefits for the City's drinking water resources". Members expressed an interest for permanent projects that have a long-term lasting impact.

Members also noted that the Lake should have "clean and outstanding water quality". A long term goal could be reaching for "Outstanding Resource Water Classification" (ORW)

ORW is a subset of High Quality Waters and is intended to protect unique and special waters having excellent water quality and being of exceptional state or national ecological or recreational significance.

To qualify, waters must be rated Excellent by DWR and have one of the following outstanding resource values:

- Outstanding fish habitat and fisheries,
- Unusually high level of water based recreation or potential for such kind of recreation,
- Some special designation such as North Carolina Natural and Scenic River or National Wildlife Refuge,
- Important component of state or national park or forest, or
- Special ecological or scientific significance (rare or endangered species habitat, research or educational areas).

In addition to this classification members also discussed other means of measuring the success of the program including cost of treating water, nutrient prevention/ reduction, number of projects, stream miles protected, on-site before and after impacts, and overall water quality of Falls Lake.

Next Steps:

The task force will review the ordinance and help develop a framework and guidelines for prioritizing and reviewing different project types.

Staff will provide more detailed information on 1) program accounting including a breakdown on land/easement acquisition costs and program costs 2) clarification on water quality status and sampling 3) agricultural, forestry, and septic impacts and existing programs 4) Durham point source contributions and water quality in receiving areas

The next meeting will take place on May 22nd at 5:30pm.