

New River Valley Green Infrastructure, Committee Meeting
New River Valley PDC, October 8, 2008, 12:30 – 2:30 PM

Meeting goals:

1. Review and discuss updated GI committee guide.
2. Review and discuss base mapping.
3. Produce decisions/products necessary for CMI.

Attendees:

Chuck Dietz	VA DCR
Nichole Hair	Town of Christiansburg
Blaine Keese	Draper Aden Associates
John Robinson	Australian LandCare
Jerry Moles	NRLT/Blue Ridge Forest Coop
Peter Sforza	Virginia Tech
Melissa Skelton	City of Radford
Joey Fagan	VA DCR- Karst Program
Randall Rose	Virginia Tourism Corporation
Kim Steika	Community Design Assistance Center
Steven Sandy	Montgomery County
Jaime MacLean	Montgomery County
Ursula Lemanski	NPS-RTCA
John Eustis	NRLT
Susan Garrison	Town of Blacksburg
Ken Convery	Conservation Management Institute
Christy Gabbard	Conservation Management Institute
David Richert	VA DOF

Agenda Items:

1. Welcome and Review of meeting agenda and goals
Regina Elsner, GI project coordinator, opened the meeting, and reviewed the meeting agenda and goals. Committee members introduced themselves. Regina introduced John Robinson, a special guest, visiting from Australia LandCare.
2. GI assets mapping
Ken Convery, CMI, and Regina led the committee through a discussion of each network design component including the goal statement, and data available to map the resource feature. Committee comments are as follows. (Note: revised goals are attached)
 - a. Water
 - i. Goal revision: add “groundwater” and “water quality” element to the goal
 - ii. Map addition: DEQ impaired streams layer
 - iii. Floodplains: only Montgomery County has GIS files available; as a fall back, use hydric soils layer to show flood-prone areas
 - iv. Discussion/Other: Regina noted that there was no source water data available, Joey said that DMME is mapping sinkholes in the Shenandoah Valley and may be a resource to assist in New River Valley. Cristy asked about the potential to use LandCare group in Montgomery to map springs

and sinkholes. Joey and Cristy will investigate and get back to the group with recommendations.

- b. Forest and Agriculture
 - i. Goal revision: change “ag fields” to “ag lands”
 - ii. DCR Forest Economics Model available
 - iii. detailed data for farmland soils (Ssurgo) does not include Floyd; the statewide data set is available but of lower quality
 - iv. Map addition: develop map of Working Farms, if data is available (Mont. Co. has developed this overlay as part of their comp plan)
 - v. Map addition: Forest and Ag Districts, if not included in DCR forest model
 - vi. Discussion/Other: There is a lot of soil and land cover data available through the DCR model and other sources; the next step is to analyze the model and determine the best data for the NRV GI mapping. Committee should consider additional expertise/review by a soil scientist; potential options include NRCS, SWCD, or university contact. Suggestions should be provided to Regina.
- c. Natural Hazards: (previously Environmentally Sensitive Areas)
 - i. Map revision: Need a better data set for slope
 - ii. Goal needs to be re-written
 - iii. Discussion/Issue: The goal as currently written includes two topics: potential natural hazard areas i.e. floodplains and sinkholes that pose a threat to public safety; and environmentally sensitive areas i.e. natural features that are impacted by development and could be preserved/enhanced through design. There was consensus by the committee that the public safety issue of floodplains and karst features need to be addressed, and should be referred to as “potential natural hazard areas.” Various views were expressed regarding the inclusion of steep slopes and erodible soils. The issue was raised as to the public safety connection i.e. slopes and soils could be addressed through engineering. On the other hand, these features are one of various “areas of environmental concern” that provide ecosystem benefits. If warranted, this second category of features could be broken out as a separate goal or a component of the habitat/ecosystem diversity goal.
- d. Habitat and Ecosystem Diversity
 - i. Goal revision: take out “valued” and add “biodiversity” and “plant communities”
 - ii. DCR Ecological Model available: utilizes the DGIF Wildlife Action Plan and biodiversity assessment from DCR Natural Heritage Program; considers ecological and biological value and integrity
 - iii. Map addition: need to include a layer on rare plant communities if not in the DCR model

- iv. Discussion/Other: Joey mentioned the problem with invasive species, and asked if there was a way to quantify and map to assist with future management discussions. This will be noted for future discussions.
 - e. Recreation and Health
 - i. Map addition: New River Blueway
 - ii. Map addition: New River PDC Bike and Ped Plan; and potential Great Eastern Trail alignment
 - iii. Map addition: Nighttime Visibility Map: showing various sky conditions/light intrusion for nighttime astronomy opportunities
 - f. Cultural Heritage
 - i. Goal revision: add word “cultural” to distinguish from natural heritage
 - ii. Map addition: add Crooked Road Trail; others?
 - iii. Discussion/Other: Various committee members noted the importance of including tourism opportunities that complemented natural resource goals and objectives.
3. Mapping next steps
- Due to the volume of information and data to be reviewed for each GI network component, Regina request that committee members sign up for one or more working groups. Work group assignments are as follows:
- Water: Chuck Dietz, John Eustis, Blaine Keesee, Joey Fagan
Forest and Farming Lands: David Richert, John Eustis, Peter Sforza
Natural Hazards/Environmentally Sensitive: Joey Fagan, Chuck Dietz, Blaine Keesee, Peter Sforza
Habitat and Ecosystem Diversity: Joey Fagan, Regina Elsner
Recreation and Health: Susan Garrison, Kim Steika, Jaime MacLean, Nichole Hair
Cultural Heritage: Randy Rose, Melissa Skelton

4. GI Committee guide
- As meeting time ran out, Regina asked committee members to review the current draft of the committee guidelines (sent out with meeting agenda) including program goals, committee and sub-committee structure and members, and meeting schedule, and email any comments or concerns.

Meeting was adjourned at 3:00pm.

Next Steps:

- Regina will send out tasks for those individuals volunteering for network design work groups.
- Work groups will complete the tasks to be presented at the next committee meeting on December 3, 2008.
- Committee members will review the most updated versions of the network design goals and committee guide, to be emailed out with the meeting minutes, and provide Regina comments by Friday, November 7, 2008.