

New River Valley Green Infrastructure, Committee Meeting
New River Valley PDC, December 3, 2008, 9:00 – 11:00 AM

Meeting goals:

1. Receive updates and comment on progress thus far by mapping working groups.
2. Review and approve committee guide.

Attendees:

Nichole Hair	Town of Christiansburg
Chuck Dietz	VA Department of Conservation and Recreation
Jamie MacLean	Montgomery County
Kim Steika	Community Design Assistance Center
Randall Rose	Virginia Tourism Corporation
Ken Convery	Conservation Management Institute
Debbie Lineweaver	Pulaski County resident
Laura Belleville	Appalachian Trail Conservancy
John Eustis	New River Land Trust
Joey Fagan	VA Department of Conservation and Recreation, Karst Program
David Richert	VA Department of Forestry
Christy Gabbard	Conservation Management Institute
Susan Garrison	Town of Blacksburg
Beth Obenshain	New River Land Trust
Karen Drake	Town of Blacksburg
Paul Revell	VA Department of Forestry

Agenda Items:

1. Welcome and Review of meeting agenda and goals

Regina welcomed the group to this meeting of the Green Infrastructure Steering Committee. The focus of this meeting would be to hear updates from the working groups and discuss the next steps in our mapping efforts.

2. Working Group updates

- a. Progress made to date on assigned tasks
- b. Anticipated completion of tasks

Each working group gave a brief overview of their work since the previous steering committee meeting. Below is a summary of that work by group.

Habitat and Ecosystem Diversity

This group met to discuss the data previously identified. The datasets available were the conservation sites data from DCR and Tier I & II species distribution data from DGIF. In discussion of the conservation sites data, the group chose to rely on the judgment and data of DCR. Rather than trying to further analyze this data, using this dataset, lands will be either identified in this analysis or not. When considering the data from DGIF, additional data was presented to the group by Chris Burkett of DGIF. The new data was a count of Tier I & II species by subwatershed. Rather than attempting to combine disparate distribution data as the previous dataset did, the new dataset was rather a presence/absence analysis by subwatershed. While being less detailed, this new dataset is probably more accurate based on available data on individual species.

Cultural Heritage

The cultural heritage working group met to discuss the cultural model provided to the initiative by DCR. Overall, the group felt that those areas identified by the model were probably appropriate, but would like to consult with the NRV Heritage Coalition for their evaluation. Pending that evaluation, the proposed evaluation of this model for our purposes would be to break the values assigned to certain properties or areas into 3-4 groups (potentially based on natural breaks in the scoring) ranging from high value historical resources to low value resources. In addition to these historic resources, the group identified several routes that should be evaluated to create viewsheds to be included in the NRV model. These viewsheds include: the New River, the Crooked Road Music Trail, the New River Trail, and the Appalachian Trail. Additional viewsheds for consideration proposed by the steering committee include: the Bicentennial Bike Route/Catawba Scenic Byway, Route 42 Scenic Byway (east of Rt. 460), Blue Ridge Parkway, Wildlife and Birding Trail. It was proposed that light pollution be evaluated, but through discussion of the steering committee, it was decided that light pollution may be included in a visioning process to identify where areas of identified green infrastructure conflict with current or proposed land use.

Water

The water working group had been unable to meet prior to this steering committee meeting. Some communication occurred via email. The group provided Regina with some criteria for preliminary consideration for the modeling of water in the New River Valley. Those criteria are listed on the attached worksheet.

Natural Hazard Areas

Although this group was also not able to meet, some consideration was given to some preliminary criteria by which to evaluate the data associated with this green infrastructure theme. These criteria are noted on the attached worksheet.

Forests & Farms

The forests and farms working group has had extensive discussions via email about the available data and how and if to use such data. The group has been working to retrieve the original data from DOF to potentially make the model more suitable for the NRV. This group is currently waiting on the data to make their recommendations on criteria to consider when discussing forest lands in the NRV. The group is also charged with examining the agricultural model from DCR. They would like to discuss the model with a local expert, such as a county Extension Agent or a soil scientist with NRCS, before making recommendations on identifying productive lands in the NRV.

Recreation & Health

The recreation and health working group met to discuss the available data and some criteria to use in the green infrastructure analysis. Among the criteria identified by this group: large contiguous parcels of land and/or parcels which serve as critical linkages, uses available: fishing, hunting, wildlife viewing, paddling, camping, and trail-based activities, and proximity to neighboring communities. Some questions though remained about the data available. The working group expressed a desire to receive more input from local experts in the recreation area.

3. Mapping next steps

- a. Review of network design goals
- b. Discussion of what's coming

During the discussion of the working groups' progress, Regina handed out a preliminary worksheet that will guide the analysis that CMI will be doing. This worksheet outlines the criteria from each theme that is being determined by the working groups. Once the criteria are finalized, steering committee members will be tasked with prioritizing these themes and criteria via the worksheet (attached). Through a set of basic calculations, a weighting system will be developed based on the committee responses. At that time, it will be up to the committee members who to bring into their decision-making process on how to rank each theme and its associated criteria.

Most of the working groups expressed a desire to meet again and potentially contact outside sources of local information to help them evaluate the current data and develop a set of criteria. A new deadline was set for January 20, 2009 to provide feedback based on any meetings or comments received by the working groups. At that time, Regina and Ken will work to develop a completed worksheet and begin the necessary modeling.

4. Committee Guide

- a. Review current document
- b. Approve document for public distribution via website

The next item for discussion was the committee guide that has been discussed at several of the previous meetings. There was discussion of several items that needed to be changed/updated based on the current direction of the initiative. Regina committed to making those changes. As time was drawing short, one committee member suggested continuing this discussion on the Basecamp website. The committee agreed to providing comments on the draft to be posted by Regina by December 18, 2008. Any comments or changes suggested by that time will be made and the document will be made available via the PDC Green Infrastructure website.

5. Other business

- a. Basecamp website

Based on previous discussion, the committee agreed to continue the subscription to the Basecamp website. The site will be used first for discussion of the green infrastructure program overview. Following that, the site may be a venue for distributing maps and discussion of the mapping before presenting them to the public. Based on this conversation, Regina and the PDC will continue the subscription at this time.

6. Recap and Adjourn

The working groups were reminded of their mid-January deadline to have mapping criteria to Regina. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 11:00 AM.