

**New River Valley Green Infrastructure, Steering Committee Meeting Minutes
New River Valley PDC, January 14, 2008, 1:00pm-3:00pm**

Attendees:

Shawn Utt, Pulaski County
Ursula Lemanski, NPS-Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program
Beth Obenshain, New River Land Trust
Debbie Lineweaver, Pulaski County
Susan Garrison, Town of Blacksburg
Kim Steika, VT Community Design Assistance Center
Regina Elsner, VT – Observer
Randall Rose, Virginia Tourism Corporation
Nichole Hair, Town of Christiansburg
Paul Revell, VA Dept of Forestry
Jack Noll, Appalachian Trail Conservancy
Laura Belleville, Appalachian Trail Conservancy
Bruce Hull, Virginia Tech/Landcare
Glen Stevens, Conservation Management Institute
Dave Rundgren, New River Valley Planning District Commission
Joey Fagan, Dept of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)- Karst Heritage Program
Monica Licher, VA Water Resources Center
Tamim Younos, VA Water Resources Center
John Eustis, New River Land Trust
Steven Sandy, Montgomery County
Amy Doss, Montgomery County
Chris Burkett, Department of Game and Inland Fisheries
Abigail Convery, New River Valley Planning District Commission

1. Welcome and Review of Meeting Agenda (5 minutes)

Abi and Ursula welcomed and reviewed the agenda. This was the final meeting of the Steering Committee organized for delivery of products and services outlined in the Phase I work plan. The Steering Committee will develop a recommendation to the PDC on future goals and priorities, as well as what structure is needed in the future to accomplish identified GI tasks. Ursula explained that the following points would be covered during this meeting:

1. Conduct evaluation of Phase I of the GI the project
2. Identify local and regional actions needed in future to expand on foundation established during Phase I
3. Develop framework for moving forward with future phases (what,who,when,how)

2. Educational Phase Debrief (25 Minutes)

The group then went through a facilitated comment session. See below for results.

Phase 1: Overall Process, What worked? / What didn't?

What Worked

- Great Beginning, difficult to get a new initiative started.
- Basecamp Website is very helpful
- Brochures and fact sheets were great
- Committed Participants
- Great tool to pull resources together to spin off from
- November workshop went extremely well
- Good structure put in place- Advisory and Steering Committees
- Multiple Partners-local and state agencies/organizations
- Community education meetings were helpful

What Didn't Work or Should be Improved Upon

- Need to make case
 - Why now?
 - Why GI?
 - Focus on economic benefits
 - Need to be aware of public perception in more conservative areas?
 - Engage decision makers
- Need to move forward now
- Need list of community leaders
- Message points to different audiences
- Utilize existing information
- Utilize services/skills of UVA_Institute of Environmental Negotiation
- Need flow chart/next step/goals,etc.
- A different approach to education should be utilized. Target your groups and craft your message/presentations to those groups
- Utilize the Advisory Committee members to their full potential
- More detailed discussion of models that would fit NRV
- How to provide support to localities within the model/grant process
- Highlight/Investigate the economics behind Green Infrastructure
- Need to get more elected officials/decision makers involved/bought into the concept of Green Infrastructure
- Need consistent participation from those involved/improved logistics (Designate backup, commit to a set # of meetings, define expectations)

3. Moving Forward (1 hour)

A. Assumptions: Resources available for 2008 (15 minutes)

The initiative has received funding from the Department of Forestry to move forward with a regional assessment and to develop a long term structure for GI planning in the NRV. Additionally, funding has been secured with GI partners through the Forest Land Care Partnership and through a private foundation with the Appalachian Trail, the New River Land Trust, and the Conservation Management Institute. There has been a total of \$113,000 secured through recent grants for the New River Valley Green Infrastructure Initiative and its project

partners! \$83,000 of that amount will be focused on the regional green infrastructure assessment, promoting sustainable land development at the site level in Montgomery County and to continue to move the overall regional initiative forward.

There are two more grants being submitted for green infrastructure projects in the New River Valley. The Radford proposal, being submitted by DOF/RC&D will develop an economically sustainable green infrastructure project. The components of the project will: 1) quantify ecosystem services of existing green infrastructure; 2) create a local/urban scale green infrastructure plan based on City existing open space/alternative transportation plans and the ecosystem service assessments (component 1); 3) creating management plans based upon goals identified in the green infrastructure plan; 4) investigate and employ different income generated models based on the developed management plans for existing City owned green infrastructure. Technical expertise from the regional committee will be requested in this project to develop GI recommendations.

The second grant is a proposal that address economic generation tools/plans such as for green infrastructure submitted by the Appalachian Trail, New River Land Trust, and the Conservation Management Institute. Stay tuned for more!

Abigail announced that she would be leaving the PDC, but would make sure that the project and its next steps are clearly defined for who would replace her. She will also be available to provide background and answer questions to her replacement. A replacement has not yet been found. Dave Rundgren assured the group that the PDC was committed to the initiative.

Funding will begin in March, which is when the first kick off meeting will be held with the new group.

B. Green Infrastructure needs and priorities (30 minutes)

Summary comments were provided from the evaluation forms at the Network Design Workshop and from emails from participants that were not in attendance at this final wrap up meeting. Ursula facilitated a discussion of local jurisdiction and partners needs:

Education and Engagement

-Messaging:

- GI is well managed lands
- GI/Education of ecosystem service payments
- Clarify that GI is problem solving tool to elected officials
- Economic studies on region to help educate and involve
- Assessment and quantification of economic benefits associated with GI
- Feed facts, #'s, strategies to locals to work with decision makers in localities

- Secure local buy-in for long term support/especially from local elected officials
- Increased/Continued Education on GI to Elected Officials/Planning Commissions/Key Interest Groups
- Vet GI assessment with political leadership by securing locality resolutions of approval

Mapping and Analysis Needs

- Synthesize data into map format
- Identify GIS/Mapping needs for region
- KARST mapping
- Identify groundwater resources including source water protection of watersheds
- Identify priority lands and corridors in the NRV as they relate to GI

Plan Development

- Plan should be general enough to not step on toes, and specific enough to help localities that request it
- Identify meaningful objectives within the GI plan
- Plan that can be implemented
- A regional plan or significant progress toward regional plan (e.g. mapping, BOS relationship)
- Specific GI knowledge within group created “steering team”
- Formalize a working GI structure through a MOU
- Needs coordination with state agency efforts to address fragmentation

Implementation

- Address the management of GI for Localities
- Have counties hold conservation easements
- Adopt zoning/ordinances to implement
- Incorporate GI into comprehensive plans
- Promote local cluster development
- Promote sustainable development with new developments (GI concepts/Earthcraft Communities/LEED Neighborhoods)
- Identify critical areas to retrofit with GI

Funding

- Funding and staff support from state agencies (DOF,DCR, VA Tech).
- Funding is ALWAYS an issue...do not stop looking for money
- Develop ecosystem system service payments/models to use existing GI to fund/Profitable Forests, etc.
- How to compete for resources in localities
-

C. What are members’ interest in a Regional GI Initiative

Facilitated discussion of regional needs and opportunities

Outcome: Consensus on tasks that need to be accomplished at the regional level to support local efforts.

The discussion touched on the fact that it would be difficult to engage elected officials and some localities planning commission members within the regional GI plan/assessment process. It was suggested that the locality staff would be responsible for keeping those planning commissions and elected officials briefed throughout the process. Additionally, since BOS and Council members serve on the PDC board, that is also another opportunity to keep them informed and gather feedback.

A discussion also took place about whether a regional or local plan should be done... as well as should it be a regional plan or an assessment. Ursula explained that a plan was something that sets a policy for a locality whereas an assessment is an inventory and scientific evaluation of the area's resources, that can be incorporated into locality plans. Comments were made by the localities that an assessment would be more likely used and incorporated into existing plans rather than a regional plan that may end up sitting on a shelf. Localities have several plans already... adding another one was not necessarily deemed helpful by some of the localities. There was consensus to conduct a regional GI assessment which could be incorporated into planning efforts by each of the localities.

GI planning was viewed in three different stages/scales. The first scale is the regional level and those characteristics that stand out at the 4 county level (county scale). The local scale which would include towns/city, villages, urbanizing areas within the counties. And the site level which promotes GI concepts at the parcel and subdivision level. After completing an assessment, the next stage would be incorporating those results into the local scale which would then be incorporated into comprehensive plans.

Suggested Strategies for Initiative

- Assessment
- Toolbox
- Engagement

Who should be Involved/Targeted

- Planning Commission Members
- Elected Officials
- Locality staff
 - Staff will be responsible for updating elected officials, PDC Board Members when needed.

The following italicized comments were given at the network design workshop and handed out at this meeting. These comments pertain to the following scale discussion (regular text below) at meeting.

Scale

- What scale most effective?
- What process to address different scales?
- How do you address differences in localities?
 - Messaging must be specific to areas?
 - Capacity issues across localities- what would be most useful.
 - Different data available for each locality
 - recommendations from localities on what will work in their jurisdiction

Regional Assessment Needs/Benefits

- Assessment should be done in a format that is user friendly to localities
- Doesn't follow jurisdictional boundaries/value added
- Economy of scale with data
- A plan is regional level policy
- Development of a regional assessment should be the first step, and should serve as a foundation for future policy discussion and potential plan development at the regional scale.
- Assessment can support local implementation tools
- Assessment provide base/something to work from for each locality
- Assessment needs to document trends i.e. identify past conditions (10 years) as well as future build out

Local Scale Benefits

- Decision makers focus on "part of county"-what is best
- Can demonstrate success throughout larger process with local projects.

4. Phase II: Green Infrastructure Planning Framework (20 minutes)

The group decided that a regional assessment would be done over the next year, a framework for implementation would need to be developed, and the kick off meeting would occur in March.

Next Steps:

1. Abi will finalize and send out the meeting summary.
2. Abi will finalize a draft work plan that incorporates the comments and suggestions made by meeting participants, and forward to Dave.
3. Dave will complete the hiring process for a project coordinator.
4. Once the project coordinator is on board, the PDC will schedule the first meeting of the Regional GI Advisory Committee. A meeting announcement will be sent out with a draft work plan. The focus of the meeting will be to discuss and finalize the work plan to begin developing a regional GI Assessment.