



NEW RIVER WATERSHED ROUNDTABLE REVIEW
New River Valley Business Center | New River Room
12/2/2016 | 10:00 AM to 11:30 AM

ATTENDING

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| Alex McMahan - <i>New River Conservancy</i> | Lauren Grimes - <i>Virginia Tech</i> |
| Ann Goette - <i>ReNew the New</i> | Laurie Buchwald - <i>Pathways for Radford</i> |
| Brad Buchanan - <i>Montgomery County</i> | Llyn Sharp - <i>Virginia Tech</i> |
| Cheri Strenz - <i>Friends of Claytor Lake</i> | Lucy Baker – <i>VA Dept. of Environmental Quality</i> |
| Chris McKlarney - <i>Giles County</i> | Maydeli Figueroa-Stranger - <i>Novozymes Biologicals</i> |
| David Ridpath - <i>City of Radford</i> | Melissa Skelton - <i>City of Radford</i> |
| Eric Gates - <i>Celanese</i> | Mike Harvey - <i>NRV Regional Commission/Friends of the New River</i> |
| George Santucci - <i>New River Conservancy</i> | Patricia Colatosti - <i>Town of Christiansburg</i> |
| James Moneymaker – <i>VA Dept. of Environmental Quality</i> | Peter Huber - <i>Pulaski County</i> |
| Kafi Howard - <i>Town of Blacksburg</i> | Rick Roth - <i>Radford University/Friends of the New River</i> |
| Kevin Byrd - <i>NRV Regional Commission</i> | Shawn Hash - <i>Tangent Outfitters</i> |
| Kevin Sullivan - <i>VT Foundation/NRV Regional Commission</i> | Terri Morris - <i>Floyd County</i> |
| Laura Walters - <i>New River Conservancy</i> | Michael Gottfredson - <i>NRV Regional Commission</i> |

NOTES

1. Welcome
 - a. Kevin Byrd welcomed those in attendance, and had all introduce themselves.
2. Overview of Water Quality/Quantity Activities
 - a. Mr. Byrd played a video highlighting the ReNew the New regional river clean-up event. Mr. Byrd invited all in attendance to share different watershed-related projects or activities they are involved in.
 - b. *Pathways for Radford*
 - i. Laurie Buchwald reported the Pathways for Radford worked on Connelly's Run, and have held their annual Rake & Pies event.
 - c. *City of Radford*
 - i. Mellissa Skelton reported the City assisted in a Virginia Tech study on river access points at Bisset Park.

- ii. Ms. Skelton also reported the City opened a river access point at Riverview Park.
- iii. David Ridplath announced the Southwest Virginia Outdoor Expo to be held in Bisset Park on April 22nd, 2017.

d. *Giles County*

- i. Chris McKlarney reported that Giles County held their annual carcass clean-up.
- ii. Mr. McKlarney also reported Governor McCauliffe announced the County will receive \$762,000 in grant funds from the POWER Program for boat launches and a river center.

e. *New River Conservancy*

- i. George Santucci reported the New River Conservancy assisted volunteers in the Town of Pulaski on a Peak Creek tributary restoration project.
- ii. Mr. Santucci also reported on future restoration plans for the area.
- iii. The group discussed water quality monitoring, along with the idea of “snap shot” monitoring at different key points along the New River.
- iv. Mr. Santucci reported on dam relicensing on the New River, including dams on the Little River and at Claytor Lake. The group discussed dam removal. Mr. Roth relayed the example of the dam removal project on the Pigg River, and reiterated the expense of such projects. The group discussed how relicensing projects offer stakeholder input opportunities.

f. *Friends of Claytor Lake*

- i. Cheri Strenz reported the Friends of Claytor Lake cleaned up 21 miles of the New River at Claytor Lake this year.
- ii. Laura Walters reported the Friends of Claytor Lake assisted in the riparian restoration of 4,000 to 5,000 native plants, in addition to the restoration of fish habitat.
- iii. Ms. Strenz reported the Friends of Claytor Lake removed almost 4,000 tons of trash and debris from Claytor Lake this year.
- iv. Ms. Walters reported on the repurpose of the dock area at Camp Powatan as a fish habitat.
- v. It was noted the key to success for these projects were relationships and cooperation with AEP and volunteers.

g. *Novozymes Biologicals*

- i. Maydeli Figueroa-Stranger reported that Novozymes Biologicals is supporting a company volunteer a group. This “Green Team” has the purpose to provide a positive impact on the environment. This group is currently looking for opportunities.
- ii. Ms. Figueroa-Stranger also reported her organization recently assisted in a tree planting project near Roanoke.
- iii. Ms. Figueroa-Stranger informed the group her organization employs people within the New River Valley, and they are looking for volunteer opportunities.

- iv. Mr. Ridplath noted the success happening in the City of Radford regarding their municipal separate storm sewer system (MS4) is due to the work of volunteers. All agreed the work of volunteers was crucial to their projects.

h. Pulaski County

- i. Peter Huber reported that Pulaski County is currently pursuing a trail to the New River in the Fairlawn community. He said the intent is to eventually connect to a trail crossing the New River to Radford.
- ii. Mr. Huber also reported the County is pursuing signage to post at river access points warning of dangerous rapids, such as those by the Highway 114 bridge.
- iii. Mr. Huber reported the County is researching the purchase of a watercraft for emergency services on the New River (estimated cost: \$80,000.00). The group discussed the use of this emergency watercraft on the New River.
- iv. All agreed the coordination of emergency response on the New River was in the region's best interest. Shawn Hash suggested creating a database for response times on the river for these emergency responders. Mr. Huber suggested to use geographic information software to coordinate this data.
- v. Mr. McKlarney stated Giles County had two older rescue boats. He suggested coordinating emergency responses on the New River with outfitters and others. He suggested having dispatchers send out alerts regarding incidents on the River to volunteer's cell phones.

i. Friends of the New River

- i. Mike Harvey highlighted the new signs installed for the New River Water Trail in Giles County. Mr. Byrd showed the group a photo of the sign on [the New River Water Trail website](#). The group discussed the possibility of installing these signs all along the New River within the region. Mr. Huber suggested New River Valley Regional Commission coordinate a meeting of local government leadership to determine how best to advance expanding the New River Water Trail.

3. Presentation on Watershed Roundtables: Lessons Learned

- a. Michael Gottfredson thanked VA Department of Environmental Quality representatives for funding a review of watershed roundtables in the Commonwealth.
- b. *Watershed Roundtables in Virginia: Two Case Studies*
 - i. Shenandoah Valley Pure Water Forum
 - 1. Mr. Gottfredson discussed the history of the Pure Valley Forum. He discussed their strengths and challenges.
 - a. Strengths: strong government and private support; more robust funding than other watershed roundtables.
 - b. Challenges: lack of community involvement with grants; larger group is more complex.
 - ii. Upper Roanoke River Roundtable
 - 1. Mr. Gottfredson discussed the history of the Upper Roanoke River Roundtable. He also discussed their strengths and challenges.

- a. Strengths: long-time involvement from board members; successful projects and events; developed by-laws and strategic plans.
- b. Challenges: lack of robust funding; lack of partnerships with private business organizations.

c. *New River Watershed Roundtable*

- i. Mr. Gottfredson reviewed the history of the New River Watershed Roundtable.
 - 1. Established in 2005 as 501 (c)(3) charitable organization, but met unofficially since 2001. Was disbanded in 2014 due to lack of activity.
 - 2. Strengths: strong water quality expertise; robust organizational structure.
 - 3. Challenges: members burned-out due to lack of resources; limited staff support for focus groups; lack of support from local and state governments.
- d. The group discussed how the New River Watershed Roundtable operated. Mr. Roth noted one of the reasons it took so long for the roundtable to incorporate as a 501(c)(3) was due to lack of financial support from the state.

4. Discussion

All attendees contributed to the content of this section, including ideas regarding best practices, issues to address, the role of the New River Valley Regional Commission, the focus of the New River Watershed Roundtable, the geographic scale of the roundtable, the financial and organizational concerns, and the regional value of a roundtable.

a. *Best Practices*

- i. Mr. Byrd highlighted some best practices found in a white paper prepared by the New River Valley Regional Commission reviewing watershed roundtables in the Commonwealth and the former New River Watershed Roundtable. These best practices include:
 - 1. Focusing efforts on a smaller portion of the New River Watershed- specifically the New River Watershed within Floyd, Giles, Montgomery, and Pulaski Counties, and the City of Radford.
 - 2. Cultivating participation with business organizations.
 - 3. Focusing on collaboration and developing public-private partnerships with potential funders of projects or promotion.
 - 4. Involving representation from the localities within the New River Watershed.
 - 5. Keeping the scope of work small, and adapt as resources become available.
 - 6. Obtaining financial support for organizational structure.
 - 7. Reviewing cross-appeal with other regional priorities, such as tourism and economic development.

- b. *Issues to Address*
 - i. The three key issues identified to move forward with a watershed roundtable in the region included:
 - 1. how to financially support the organization,
 - 2. how to engage a variety of stakeholders, and
 - 3. what the purpose of the organization would be.
- c. *Role of New River Valley Regional Commission*
 - i. Mr. Harvey observed the New River Valley Regional Commission was well positioned to coordinate the types of activities covered by a watershed roundtable. He suggested the Regional Commission be the administrative support for any future roundtable activities.
 - ii. It was suggested by the group to use an organization already set-up to have a better voice at the state level. This organization would build off of its former successes. The group agreed this would be valuable.
 - iii. Momentum was noted as necessary for an organization like a watershed roundtable to be successful, and was built around projects. There was a recommendation for the New River Valley Regional Commission be the organization to handle the role of the New River Watershed Roundtable due to its history of successful regional projects. All agreed to have the Regional Commission handle the role of the New River Watershed Roundtable.
- d. *Focus of New Watershed Roundtable*
 - i. Coordination was suggested as one focus of the new watershed roundtable. The group agreed this would be the most valuable aspect of the new organization.
- e. *Geographic Scale*
 - i. The group discussed the expansive geography of the New River Watershed, and how this was a problem for the previous New River Watershed Roundtable. The group suggested the Virginia portion of the New River Watershed be split into two management areas: the upper New River and lower New River. The newly organized roundtable would focus on the lower New River. The group agreed to this geographic scale.
- f. *Financial and Organizational*
 - i. Mr. Byrd posed the question of which entities can receive tax deductible donations on behalf of a watershed roundtable. It was suggested a new watershed roundtable organization would not necessarily have a problem with donations if it was organized as an unincorporated association, with insurance coverage for volunteer activities. This unincorporated association could be a subcommittee of the New River Valley Regional Commission. It was noted how the Regional Commission already brings people together for collaboration, and this subcommittee would build off of this collaboration. It was also noted a plan was needed for this new subcommittee to succeed. All agreed with the suggestion for the Regional Commission to pursue a subcommittee to act as the

Watershed Roundtable for the region, and recommended to Mr. Byrd to look into the matter of donations.

- ii. James Moneymaker confirmed the Regional Commission could be the administration or fiscal agent for the Watershed Roundtable. The group recommended the reorganized Roundtable did not need a board to direct the work, but would have an ad hoc committee. It was noted that while an ad hoc committee may suffer from a lack of leadership, but was a good start for the Roundtable now.
- iii. The groups discussed whether the Regional Commission had the resources to continue to coordinate and fund administrative activities for the Watershed Roundtable. It was suggested some funding for the Regional Commission's administration activities could come from the regional activities associated with the Watershed Roundtable. It was also noted having the Regional Commission serve as a convener and administrator of the Watershed Roundtable activities falls within the role the Regional Commission has served on other projects. The group agreed to look into options to fund the Watershed Roundtable through activities and other means.

g. Regional Value

- i. Mr. Santucci inquired about how the New River Watershed Roundtable efforts address the Livability Initiative. Mr. Byrd responded the review of the Watershed Roundtable as an important entity in the region came from the Livability Initiative.
- ii. The group discussed the value of a watershed roundtable as a forum to voice what is going on in the region regarding water quality projects, and to coordinate timetables. The group agreed to pursue a designated webpage to host this type of information.

5. Next Steps

- a. The group agreed to meet quarterly. Mr. Moneymaker supported the quarterly meetings, and said the group could discuss DEQ's FY17 funding at the next meeting. The group agreed to also discuss support of the ReNew the New Committee's Ramps and Roads spring clean-up on March 25th, 2017. The group agreed to meet in February as a Roundtable, and then to have a planning meeting for the Ramps and Roads project afterwards.
- b. Ms. Strenz acknowledged Mr. Huber's retirement as County Administrator in Pulaski County, and thanked him for his service. Mr. McKlarney also reiterated his appreciation for Mr. Huber, and his advocacy and work for regionalism in the New River Valley.
- c. Next Meeting: February TBD

END OF MEETING