

Northern Virginia Regional Commission Conservation Corridor Plan Working Session

Tuesday March 29, 2011
Sully District Governmental Center – McDonnell Room
10 am – 1 pm

Meeting Summary

The Northern Virginia Regional Commission (NVRC) hosted a working session on March 29, 2011 as part of its effort to refine the state's analysis of conservation priority areas by using local data and local priorities to establish a regional green infrastructure analysis for the region.

Laura Grape, Senior Environmental Planner and Project Manager with NVRC explained that the main focus of meeting would be to review the updated draft theme-based maps, discuss planning for a public summit, and brainstorm possible future pilot projects. She gave a quick presentation which highlighted the work of the resource groups, including the creation of regional definitions for nature-based recreation, cultural heritage, water quality and water resources, and agriculture. The bulk of the meeting was spent reviewing and commenting on the draft theme maps, specifically the Agriculture map, which was presented for the first time at this meeting. Briefly, the advisory group provided input into the planning of an upcoming public summit. Although discussing possible pilot projects was intended to be a separate item, the group highlighted several opportunities throughout the meeting to assist in filling information gaps and to improve the usefulness of the theme-based maps.

Appendices:

APPENDIX A: Meeting Agenda

APPENDIX B: Meeting Participants and Invited Organizations

APPENDIX C: Draft Theme Maps

Workshop presentations and maps are available for download at: www.novaregion.org/conservation

Presentation/Discussion on Theme Definitions and Overlay Maps

Ms. Grape first presented an overview of the regional base map, with a conserved lands layer overtop. The comments primarily focused on differentiating between federally-owned lands, conserved lands, and those that are publically accessible. The group agreed it is important to highlight intact habitat areas, but to also show that the management strategies are different. Before reviewing the maps, Ms. Grape provided an overview of the results from the resource group meetings that included the recommended regional definitions for each theme and the general categories of data that went into each map. The advisory group made the following comments and suggested change to develop final regional definitions.

Nature-based Recreation

Feedback was generally positive as the group agreed that it was important to show the regional scope of recreational connections. There was consensus that using “natural” in quotations added value to the definition, since many of the nature-based recreational resources are dependent upon the landscape, even though they may have altered the environment (ex. a paved trail in the woods, a nature center).

FINAL REGIONAL DEFINITION: *The Nature-Based Recreation Theme includes regionally-significant areas with public access for recreational opportunities dependent upon a “natural” environment.*

Water Quality – Assets and Impairments/Restoration Opportunities

The advisory group recommends that more information and possibly more maps be included in the water quality theme. However, the group recognized that there is value lost if streams are not identified as being regional assets. Without regionally-consistent stream quality data, one recommendation was to incorporate a table in the report that shows what each locality has in terms of stream water quality data and information. This data could highlight gaps in information. Ms. Firehock recommended that the localities may consider refining the regional map using their local water quality data to identify streams that are of local importance. If provided with the data, NVRC could create a map for discussion purposes that displays locally-important streams and watersheds. Throughout the conversation, the group expressed several ideas to build on water quality themes, including the development of a predictive model for vernal pools, isolated wetlands, and seeps. Charles Smith of Fairfax County offered to provide information to Laura on the significance of isolated wetlands and their surrounding landforms.

FINAL REGIONAL DEFINITIONS:

- *The Water Resources – Assets Theme portrays the regionally-important surface and drinking water features that are dependent upon good source water quality.*
- *The Water Resources – Impairments Theme includes stream segments listed on the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality’s 303(d) impaired waters listing for water quality impairments that are dependent upon the use of the land (benthic/sediment/flow).*

- *The Water Resources - Locally-Important Streams & Watersheds recognizes streams and watersheds of local planning significance, based on stream and watershed assessments conducted by the local jurisdictions, for discussion purposes.*
- *Inundation Vulnerability Theme highlights cores that could provide tidal wetland migration opportunities and buffers for the region's coastal communities in areas at risk of inundation from sea level rise and storm surge.*

Known Cultural Heritage

Overall, the group was satisfied with the regional definition. They particularly changed the definition slightly to highlight the importance of these features, contextually, to the surrounding landscape, regardless of whether it was unaltered. After looking closely at the map the advisory group agreed that sites that have lost their landscape context should be removed, and the report should include photos to show good examples of sites that are still landscape dependant.

FINAL REGIONAL DEFINITION: *The Known Cultural Heritage Theme includes known sites of architectural or archeological importance that are contextually-dependent upon the surrounding landscape. Locations are representative of the significant historic periods defined by the Virginia State Landmark Register and National Register.*

Agricultural Resources

Advisory group members had a variety of viewpoints regarding what should and should not be included, as well as what constituted the resources necessary for a "viable agricultural economy". The group agreed that this overlay should show conflicts in future land use planning between good soils and future land use. "Good soils" are those comprise Classes I and II top tier soils for row crops. One participant pointed out that wineries thrive on poor soils. The facilitation team noted that this map shows where the best "natural" assets are. High value agricultural soils are dependent on a particular location and agriculture that requires good soil can only thrive in these locations. Wineries have their own specific set of needs such as a particular slope, soil types, distance from wooded areas (to prevent spread of wild grape fungi into domestic vines) and water needs for irrigation. Some counties, such as Madison, have mapped areas that are good for wineries but this is outside the current scope of this project. However, this could be a future project for a Soil and Water Conservation District to take on.

The lack of spatial data for the location of existing farms was also discussed. In past years it was possible to obtain data on farms that had crop insurance through USDA. However, the USDA stopped providing this information two years ago. Maps will not show good agricultural soils that are under urban areas as these areas are unlikely to be used for farming given the change in land use that would be needed.

Also, the group recognized that soils that are good for agriculture are also generally good for reforestation opportunities. The group also agreed that it was important to have several case studies and examples within the report. Joe Gorney of Loudoun County volunteered to revise the definition for the Agricultural Resources map, based on the discussion.

DRAFT REGIONAL DEFINITION [prepared by Joe Gorney]: *The Agricultural Resources Theme depicts areas that support agricultural production. USDA soil classifications are included to designate state and nationally significant agricultural areas, which are suitable for agriculture and natural resource management.*

Map Review

Brief introduction – The Advisory Group took the time to review the revised maps. One general comment for all of the maps is that the subtle color variations of the maps’ earth-tone palate may be difficult to distinguish for people who are color-blind. Finally, Fort Belvoir and Quantico and Fort Meyer should be cross-hatched and provided a separate legend category since government lands that are military bases and are not parks are not really protected.

Known Cultural Heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Add Colvin Run – check if any historic designation ● Change the color for the VA/Nat Register Architectural Areas (Hatching is too light). ● Add Washington-Rochambeau Route – can get from JP
Water Quality – Impairments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Change the colors to distinguish between impaired estuaries and impaired waterways. ● Define impairment ● All impairments –fecal vs. benthic (clarify why a stream is impaired) ● Note in map key that this map is specifically focused on those caused by land runoff and use so include those for nitrogen and phosphorus, habitat and benthics.
Water Quality – Assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Scenic designations – see Nat Based cell ● Change map title to Water Resources ● Confirm location of Community Wells with local information – may have changed significantly since 2005. ● Change the coloration of the drinking water intakes to make clearer – blue blends too easily. ● Change the coloration to distinguish reservoirs from other impoundments. ● Check coloration for cores and contributing landscapes. Showed up the same on the maps. ● Add streams under assets legend ● Color shade reservoir watersheds ● One participant noted that streams that serve as recreation areas might be even more important. Staff noted that this could be shown when overlaying the maps together in the final report. <p>Suggestion: Have two maps - one that reflects water assets that are significant for recreation and another for drinking water assets. For example, streams that are adjacent to recreational trails or are blueways could be classified as providing that benefit.</p>
Agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Add vineyards <p>Suggestion: Have two maps - one map for Class I and II high quality ag soils on land not developed as urban and another map showing ag and forestal districts</p>

Map Review, continued

<p>Nature-based Recreation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Turn on the PHNST layer ● Add Mt. Vernon ● Place Bird and Wildlife trails layer over the regional trails layer ● Need for web-based version so that people can zoom and not lose resolution ● Remove Arlington Cemetery ● Add C&O canal path ● Remove Bull Run from Scenic River classification (currently under consideration) ● Extend Goose Creek scenic designation to headwaters in Fauquier County ● Make sure the following are on the map: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Whites Ford ○ North Branch Park ○ Broad Run – trail shape
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Initial Planning for the Public Summit

The group then discussed the upcoming public summit as a means to garner support for implementation of regional priorities at the local level. The advisory group recommended several case studies for public input that should be reviewed as examples before the public summit, including a National Park Service Conservation Study Institute program in Vermont, and the Blue Ridge Environmental Center. The advisory group suggested the Fairfax County Government building as a possible location, and recognized that wherever you have the meeting it may exclude outside jurisdictions. They recommended a week night, and that it was important to set a date as soon as possible and begin to get the word out.

Possible Pilot Projects

- **PREDICTIVE MODEL**
Develop a predictive model to identify the probably location of unique and sensitive water features, including: isolated wetlands, seeps, and vernal pools.
- **IMPERVIOUSNESS**
Show linkages between impervious surface cover and sediment, benthic, fecal coliform, etc.
- **WINERY MAPPING**
Mapping areas suitable for wineries.
- **REGIONAL HISTORIC TOURISM**
Mapping historic routes (more regional tourism routes)
- **SMALL SCALE ANALYSIS**
Zoom in to conduct some smaller urban scale maps for town (e.g. Fairfax) and cities (e.g. Alexandria).

- **INFOREST MODELING**

Use model to help localities determine how to reduce nitrogen, sediment and phosphorus loadings.

- **CITYGREEN ANALYSIS**

Use extension to help localities map the carbon sequestration and stormwater benefits of forests.

- **HEALTHY WATERSHEDS**

Long term: create a healthy watersheds map based on obtaining consistent, quality assured data for the region.

Next Steps

NVRC will send out a doodle poll to determine the best date for a public summit. Dates should avoid any major public events and/or meetings taking place in May.

The next meeting of the Advisory Group will take place in the early summer (June/July). At this meeting, members will have an opportunity to:

- Review outcomes from public summit
- Review draft report outline
- Review final maps
- Continue implementation strategy discussion
- Continue identifying possible pilot projects and funding opportunities

A copy of the meeting agenda is enclosed as Appendix A, a list of invited organizations and those who attended can be found in Appendix B. Past presentations, meeting summaries and other project information is available on the project's web site: www.novaregion.org/conservation.

Appendix A - Meeting Agenda

Agenda

Northern Virginia Regional Commission Conservation Corridor Plan Working Session

Tuesday, March 29, 2010
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Welcome

Theme Maps for the Region

NVRC will give a short presentation summarizing each theme-based resource group meeting, highlighting common themes and the unique definitions of each theme, and introduce the agricultural theme.

The group will highlight any last concerns regarding the theme resource maps for the region and the relationships of these themes to the region's green infrastructure network. By the end of this discussion, NVRC will have a firm understanding of any last needs to finalize these maps.

Initial Planning for the Public Summit

NVRC will introduce the intended outcomes of the public summit and GIC will lead the advisory group in a discussion to provide input into the design of the spring 2011 Public Summit, including expected outcomes, possible dates, locations, possible speakers, guests, and the general layout of the event.

Implementation Strategy Discussion

To build off of the implementation framework discussion at September 24, 2010 advisory group meeting and the theme-based resource group meetings, the advisory group will have an open discussion of possible pilot study projects or larger scale efforts that could benefit the region or a locality.

Next Steps and Wrap-Up

Appendix B- Meeting Participants and Invited Organizations

September 24th, 2010 Working Session Meeting Participants:

Name	Organization	Email Address
Joe Gorney	Loudoun County Planning Dept.	Joe.gorney@loudoun.gov
David Ward	Loudoun County	david.ward.@loudoun.gov
Bob Slusser	VA-DCR	Bob.slusser@dcr.virginia.gov
Diane Probus	Arlington Co, PRCR	hammig@gwregion.org
Justin S. Patton	PWCo Archeologist	jflanagan@pwcgov.org
Stella Koch	Audubon Naturalist/EQAC	
Noel Kaplan	Fairfax Co Planning & Zoning	noel.kaplan@fairfaxcounty.gov
Ray Utz	PWCo Planning	rutz@pwcgov.org
Erik Oberg	NPS	Erik.oberg@nps.org
Charles Smith	Fairfax County Park Authority	Charles.smith@fairfaxcounty.gov

Organizations invited to send representatives include:

Local Government (Open Space Managers, Land Managers, Urban Foresters)

City of Alexandria	Loudoun County
Arlington County	City of Manassas
Town of Dumfries	City of Manassas Park
City of Fairfax	Town of Occoquan
Fairfax County	Town of Purcellville
City of Falls Church	Town of Quantico
Town of Herndon	Town of Vienna
Town of Leesburg	Town of Clifton

Regional, State, and Federal Organizations

George Washington Regional Commission	National Park Service – GWMP
Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission	National Park Service - Manassas
Metropolitan Washington COG	Bureau of Land Management
VA DCR	US Fish & Wildlife Service
VA DOT	US Army – Ft Belvoir
VA DOF	US Marine Corps Base – Quantico
MD Department of Natural Resources	

Other Interested Parties

Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority	Prince William Conservation Alliance
Northern Virginia Conservation Trust	Northern Virginia Urban Forestry Roundtable

Appendix C – Draft Theme Maps









