The Virginia Water Monitoring Council Steering Committee met May 16, 2000 (1:00 p.m. – 3:45 p.m.) at the Department of Forestry building in Charlottesville, Virginia. Ward Staubitz (Acting Chair, Steering Committee) of the USGS led the meeting. Thirteen people representing 13 organizations attended. Each person introduced himself or herself. Brochures for the Virginia Water Monitoring Council and National Water Quality Monitoring Council were distributed.

Proposed changes to the Operating Guidelines were discussed and a consensus was reached for the guidelines. Jane Walker offered to make the noted changes and send the Operating Guidelines via email before final approval at the next meeting.

Jane Walker reported that a proposal had been submitted to the Virginia Environmental Endowment (VEE) in which money was requested to activate the Council. Jane also reported on her meeting with VEE’s Executive Director, Gerald McCarthy on May 2, 2000. At that meeting, Mr. McCarthy summarized his concerns that the proposal needed to provide measurable results that show water quality in Virginia will improve. He requested additions to the proposal be sent by the end of May. The Steering Committee discussed Mr. McCarthy’s comments and concerns.
It was decided in response to Mr. McCarthy, we should stress the fact that monitoring provides information, which can be used to improve water quality. The Council could help groups obtain more accurate monitoring results; speed the problem identification process (including what, where, and how big the problems are); and remove management delays in solving the identified problems. Reiterating how the Council would support citizen monitoring across the state could strengthen the proposal. The Council could also help inform the public of EPA’s and DEQ’s plans to assess all streams in the state within nine years and serve as a way to obtain public input on the assessments. Short-term versus long-term goals of the Council were discussed. As a short-term goal (one to two years), it was decided to conduct an inventory of the water-monitoring activities throughout the state to make water monitoring information more available for informed decision making. This inventory could be used to identify gaps in protocols and gaps in geographic locations for monitoring. This activity would not only be useful to the citizens of the state but could also be useful to VEE when making its funding decisions.

Chuck Kanetsky reported that a $5,000 grant application to EPA for the Council is still pending. A decision will hopefully be reached within a week. Ward Staubitz said the USGS would donate $2,500 to the Council. Ron Gregory, Sam Austin, David Frackelton, and Jud White are all working to obtain contributions from their organizations. Jane Walker reported that Matt Bley with DCR and Michele Monti with VDH are also working to obtain contributions. Jane Cain is planning to ask for financial support from the Virginia Water Well Association at its fall meeting.

Ward Staubitz lead the discussion on developing committees, which included a decision on the number of committees, development of the committee charter, and selection of committee membership. It was decided to initially start with three committees. More committees will be introduced at the annual meeting, and members will be allowed to join them at that time. The three committees starting this summer include the Project, Communications, and Operations Committees. The Project Committee will begin work on the Statewide Monitoring Inventory. Representatives from AWWA, EPA, USGS, DEQ, DGIF, VIMS, and Virginia Water Well Association and others will serve on this committee. Michele Monti with VDH will be asked to lead this committee, with help from Ward Staubitz and Ron Gregory. The Communications Committee will be led by Bill Shanabruch with assistance from Jane Walker and Ron Gregory. Jane Cain, David Frackelton, Ron Gregory, Ward Staubitz, and Jane Walker will work on the Operations Committee.

Tamim Younos introduced a tentative agenda for the VWMC Annual Meeting to be held on November 7, 2000 at the Hotel Roanoke and Conference Center. The VWMC meeting will be held in conjunction with the National Water Research Symposium sponsored by the VWRRC. Other scheduling options were suggested, and this matter will be further discussed by the Operations Committee and at the next meeting. Two or three workshops are to be offered. The business meeting will include committee reports, a discussion of the budget, and election of Steering Committee members. Dr. Robert Ward has been invited as a speaker. It was suggested that different events at the Annual meeting could be sponsored by different organizations. Steering Committee members were asked to propose workshop topics, seek out candidate speakers, and suggest a luncheon speaker.
The next Steering Committee meeting was slated for July 11, 2000 at the USGS office in Richmond at 11:00 am. This meeting will bridge lunch for the opportunity to informally talk and get to know each other better.