The Virginia Water Monitoring Council Steering Committee met March 6, 2001 (11:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.) at the Department of Forestry building in Charlottesville, Virginia. Sam Austin (Chair, Steering Committee) of the Virginia Department of Forestry led the meeting. Ten organizations were represented. Each person introduced himself or herself. The minutes from the January 16, 2001, VWMC Steering Committee meeting were distributed, reviewed, and accepted.

Financial Report:
Jane Walker, Administrative Assistant, reported that the VWMC received a grant of $2,500 from the Department of Conservation and Recreation and a $500 contribution from the Virginia Agribusiness Council since the January Steering Committee meeting. She also reported that the VWRRC provides approximately $5,000 support each year in the form of office space, utilities, office supplies, photocopying, website management, etc. Total expenses since July 1,
2000, excluding the annual meeting, are $10,580, and income during this time, including administrative support by the VWRRC, totals $11,865. Revenues in the form of a $5,000 EPA grant and registration fees covered the incurred expenses for the 2000 annual meeting; revenues and expenses for the annual meeting were estimated at $7,400. Jane also noted that there is pending funding from the Department of Forestry in the amount of $1,000 and possibly up to $5,000 from the Department of Environmental Quality.

Committee Reports:
Operations Committee

Ron Gregory with the DEQ announced that the Operations Committee has not met since the last Steering Committee meeting. He informed the group that he has a new position at DEQ working with watershed management and TMDLs. Ron also announced his retirement from DEQ beginning June 1, 2001. Durwood Willis has taken over Ron’s former responsibilities at DEQ, and Don Smith will most likely be the person to represent the DEQ on the VWMC Steering Committee.

Jane Walker announced that the National Water Quality Monitoring Council sent an assessment form to the state, interstate, and regional watershed monitoring councils. Jane had completed most of the form and was seeking suggestions for an answer to the last question, which requested topic ideas for a special forum or workshop at the 2002 conference. Two subjects of particular interest were suggested. Everyone was interested in learning more about the different councils, particularly what they are doing, their organizational structure, and how they obtain funding. A request for ideas on ways to obtain funding was also suggested.

Communications Committee

Jane Walker reported that the Communications Committee has not met but several members have joined the committee. She commented that three communications had been sent to the membership: 1) an annual meeting summary and announcement of the three elected Steering Committee members, 2) an announcement of the new Steering Committee officers, and 3) an updated membership enrollment.

Inventory Committee

Michele Monti with the VDH reported on the two tasks currently underway with the Inventory Committee. The committee has completed an updated survey questionnaire based on comments received at the annual meeting. The committee is working to complete the mailing list. Roger Stewart with DEQ is in the process of updating the 1998 DEQ survey mailing list and adding citizen monitors and others. The committee will have a conference call on April 18 from 9 a.m.-11 a.m. to provide feedback on the mailing list.

Michele asked if the VWRRC would be able to create an electronic survey form so the survey could be posted on the web site and be an ongoing project. Jane Walker promised to look into the request and get back with Michele. Michele commented on the need for an annual effort to update the data.
A cover letter will accompany the survey that provides background information about the VWMC. It was suggested that the survey be altered so that responders can indicate their desire to join the VWMC. It was also suggested that a VWRRC intern could call people who do not respond to the mailed survey and complete the survey over the phone. Ron suggested that funding to support the intern could be possible through DEQ.

Needs Assessment

Bill Shanabruch with Citizens for Water Quality described the approach taken by the Needs Assessment Committee in developing its survey about the services and activities that could help Virginia water monitors. He explained that the committee took a broad approach when designing the questions for the survey, and that the committee is looking to the Steering Committee for approval of these topics. He explained that the general questions on the front of the survey were developed so that correlations could be drawn between the different types of monitors and their responses. Bill stated that the committee plans to provide in-depth interviews with some who fill out the survey. He explained that other groups within the VWMC might be interested in the results and be able to use them.

The Steering Committee seemed to approve of the categories outlined on the survey and the service and activity list developed by the Needs Assessment Committee. The comment was made that it could be confusing as to why some services and activities have examples while others do not. It was explained that some seemed to be self-explanatory while others could be better explained through examples. The committee will review the suggestion to either have an example for all services and activities or to have no examples. Small, suggested changes were provided to Bill but not discussed.

The pros and cons of combining the surveys from the Inventory and Needs Assessment committees were discussed. Sending two surveys might be confusing to people, but could help distribute the workload. Sending one survey, which addresses the needs of both committees, would be a more efficient use of resources. The two surveys may have different audiences since the Needs Assessment Committee is more concerned with the response by the majority whereas the Inventory Committee needs as complete a database as possible.

It was decided that the two committees would work together to refine the surveys and send them as one. Several suggestions were offered for how to separate the results so that both groups could obtain their desired data. All completed surveys could go to Roger Stewart at DEQ, and DEQ could photocopy the surveys and send them to Fran Geissler at DCR for the Needs Assessment component. Alternatively, the survey could be divided into parts, with one page containing questions for the Inventory Committee and the other page containing questions for the Needs Assessment Committee. The completed surveys could be divided so that each committee received the page with its questions. It was decided that the Needs Assessment Committee members could join the April 18 Inventory Committee conference call to discuss these options and others.

Conference:
Matt Bley with DCR reported (via email to Jane Walker) that the Virginia Watershed Management Conference planning committee is considering a two-three day window in any of the following weeks: September 10-14, September 24-28, October 1-5, and October 9-12. The conference will be in Williamsburg. The next planning meeting is March 22 in Richmond, and Matt Bley and Ron Gregory will attend. At the March 22 meeting, Matt will propose that the VWMC conference be held in conjunction with the Watershed Management Conference, and Ron will indicate a slight preference for the Council’s conference to be the day before the start of the Watershed Management Conference if possible (except October 8, Columbus Day).

Tamim Younos with the WQAAC suggested the formation of a special committee to plan the VWMC conference. Jane Walker volunteered to be on this committee and to ask for other volunteers. It was suggested that the topics of the Council’s sessions should complement the sessions offered at the Watershed Management Conference. It was also suggested that the needs assessment survey results could be used when developing the conference sessions if it is possible to send out the survey in May and have some results back by June. Also, the results of the surveys could be described at the conference.

**Fundraising**

It was suggested that Charles Spooner with the National Water Quality Monitoring Council could talk to the Steering Committee (or to the membership at the conference) about the different water monitoring councils and how they raise funds. It also was suggested that someone help us strategize our fundraising and long-term financial planning.

Ron Gregory knows of carry forward money at DEQ that could potentially be used as funding for the remaining part of the 2001-year and offered to look into obtaining these funds. Ron Gregory and Chuck Kanetsky will work on obtaining 604b and 103b monies for 2002. The work of the VWMC supports the goals of the funding because DEQ is encouraged to work with other agencies and groups to use available data for studying the waters on the 303d impairment list.

At the January meeting, it was suggested to seek funding through the Virginia Environmental Endowment to support posting the inventory results on the web. Jane Walker commented that VEE has two approaching grant proposal deadlines, April 15th and August 15th. It was decided to submit a proposal in August after some of the survey data have been returned. It was also suggested that funds from other sources would strengthen the proposal. Sam Austin distributed information that Stacey Moulds with the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay had obtained about Cosmos, a free website development and hosting service provided through the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*.

David Frackelton with the VAC offered to take the lead with seeking funding from the General Assembly. He is willing to talk with Senator Kevin Miller, a member of the Finance Committee, and Representative Glenn Weatherholtz. David suggested that letters of support from Coors, Merck, other manufacturers, and professional organizations would help show support for the VWMC. Senator Mary Margaret Whipple and Representative Steven Landes were also suggested as possible supporters. David suggested asking for this money in August.
The Virginia General Assembly members will need the VWMC mission statement, brief background information, and a specific funding request.

Other fundraising ideas were discussed, including having sponsorship by equipment companies for the conference and other activities. The idea of sponsoring a “mayfly” license plate was suggested as a way to generate money. Sam Austin agreed to look into the steps needed to have a special license plate design accepted.

The next meeting will be at the USGS office on April 10, 2001 in Richmond. The meeting will begin at 9:30 am and conclude by 1:30 pm. Funding will continue to be a topic of discussion, as will the efforts of planning the conference and the work of the committees. Jane offered to continue sending out the agenda and minutes before the meeting.

Dates for future Steering Committee meetings are:
  April 10, 2001 (USGS, Richmond), 9:30 a.m.
  May 29, 2001 (DOF, Charlottesville)
  July 10, 2001 (USGS, Richmond)