Virginia Water Monitoring Council Steering Committee Meeting
March 13, 2002
Virginia Department of Forestry, Charlottesville, VA

Minutes by Stacey Moulds.

Organizations with representatives that attended:

Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay (ACB) – Stacey Moulds
County of Henrico, Robin (Morgan) Wilder
Clean Virginia Waterways (CVW) and Longwood College– Katie Register
United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region III – Chuck Kanetsky
United States Geological Survey (USGS-Virginia Office) – Ward Staubitz
Virginia Agribusiness Council - Dave Frackleton
Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) – Len Smock
Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) – Fran Geissler
Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) – Don Smith
Virginia Department of Health (VDH) – Michele Monti, Jessica Trumbo
Virginia Water Resources Research Center (VWRRC) – Tamim Younos

The Virginia Water Monitoring Council (VWMC) Steering Committee met March 13, 2002
(11:00 AM- 4:00 PM) at the Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOF) office in Charlottesville,
Virginia. Katie Register of CVW/Longwood College (Chair, Steering Committee) led the
meeting. Eleven organizations were represented at the meeting. Each member introduced himself
or herself.

The meeting agenda for the March 13, 2002 meeting was reviewed and adopted. The minutes
from the January 9, 2002 VWMC Steering Committee meeting were reviewed. Several Steering
Committee members recognized the need for a few minor changes to the minutes. Katie Register
will send a copy of the January minutes to Stacey Moulds, and she will make the necessary edits.
Assuming those revisions will be made, the Steering Committee adopted the minutes.

Financial Report
Katie Register filled in for Jane Walker, VWMC Administrative Assistant, to report the
VWMC’s financial status. Katie reported that there have been very few changes to the
organization’s financial status since the January meeting. Katie handed out revisions to the
Jane will be present at the next VWMC Steering Committee meeting to give a full financial
report.

Katie reported that $2,500 from DCR is being sent to the VWMC; Fran Geissler of DCR
reported that this check has not yet been sent as of the morning of March 13, 2002. A proposal
for FY 2002 Section 319 funding was unsuccessful, and a proposal is pending with the Virginia
Department of Forestry. The VWMC balance as of March 13, 2002 is $3,193
Committee Reports:

Operations Committee
Ward Staibitz (Chair, Operations Committee) reported that the Operations Committee met via conference call on February 6, 2002 to discuss several operational issues. The issue of organization incorporation was again discussed. As was discussed at the January 9, 2002 Steering Committee meeting, if the VWMC becomes incorporated, the VWRRC may not be able to provide administrative support. Ward discussed the possible option of having another agency or organization host the VWMC rather than the VWRRC. This was decided by the Steering Committee members to be the least attractive option. Fran Geissler mentioned that there are benefits to not having a state agency host the VWMC. Jane Walker has not yet had time to look into this issue further; however, by the May Steering Committee meeting she should have more information in order to decide if the committee should further explore this issue.

Retaining liability insurance rather than incorporation was discussed as another option. Michele Monti discussed that the Chickahominy Watershed Alliance (CWA) has retained liability insurance for approximately $200 per year to cover the organization for liability during canoe outings and other outdoor activities that the CWA hosts. Michele was unsure as to whether or not the CWA’s 501 (c)(3) status effected the low cost of the liability insurance. She will research this and have more information by the May meeting. The Steering Committee discussed that the VWMC may want to purchase liability insurance in addition to receiving its incorporation status to further protect itself against liability. Don Smith also discussed that the VWMC may want to acquire liability insurance for information on the VWMC website. Chuck Kanetskly asked if the VWMC could have liability coverage thorough the VWRRC.

All of these issues are still pending, and the Steering Committee will be updated of progress on these issues at the next meeting.

Fundraising was also discussed during the Operations Committee’s February conference call. The Operations Committee was successful in getting their request for funding before this year’s General Assembly session. However, the VWMC was not successful in receiving funding. Tamin Younos questioned whether or not the distinction of the VWMC as a non-state organization rather than a state organization may have affected this funding decision and whether we should rephrase our request for next year’s attempt to receive funding from the General Assembly. Ward suggested that the Steering Committee have an “Action Plan” for future years and that this fall was a good time to begin preparing for the 2003 session.

The Operations Committee emphasized that the VWMC needs a solid base of funding in order for it to achieve its long-term goals. The committee had discussed the possibility of recruiting a grant writer in order to be more aggressive in receiving grant funding. The Steering Committee discussed the option of funding this position with a portion of the awarded grant funds. Fran Geissler suggested that this payment could come out of the “grants management” portion of the grant funds and that grants management could be another possible responsibility for this person. Katie Register relayed her discussions with a professional grant writer where this is often the case early in a grant writer’s career. Tamim discussed that the VWMC needs to seek funding for
two “deliverables”: 1) organizational funding, and 2) funding for particular items (i.e., inventory, website, workshops, etc.). Len Smock suggested that we look for a recently retired professional for this type of grant writer. Ward suggested that we tap into our VWMC membership. Stacey Moulds agreed to give the name of a professional grant writer to the Operations Committee. The Steering Committee decided it would be comfortable hiring a professional grant writer to raise funds for the VWMC.

Other issues that the Operations Committee had discussed included the Annual Meeting and the National Water Quality Monitoring Day, both of which were discussed during the remainder of the Steering Committee meeting.

Communications Committee
The Communications Committee Co-chairs, Stacey Brown and Nikki Bennett, were unable to attend the March Steering Committee meeting. The Steering Committee will invite Stacey and/or Nikki to the next meeting to answer questions about the proposed WebPage List-Serve. It was requested that the chair or one of the co-chairs of each committee attend future Steering Committee meetings if at all possible.

Copies of proposals from two database/WebPage vendors were passed out to the Steering Committee members. Katie Register reported that based on Jane Walker’s research, 3 bids are not necessary in order to select a vendor. The Steering Committee briefly discussed the work to be done on the inventory and the website design. Stacey Moulds stressed that since the purpose of the $3,000 DEQ minigrant was for the placement of the inventory on the website and for the interactive database of the inventory, that priority should go to this rather than to the website design. The Steering Committee determined that it was comfortable with having the Communications Committee make the final decision as to which vendor to hire for the database work and WebPage design. The Steering Committee members will give its vendor recommendation to Stacey Brown, and the Communications Committee will then consider these recommendations when making its final decision. The Steering Committee agreed to give their recommendations by March 21, 2002 with the hopes that the Communications Committee will make a decision by April 1, 2002.

The Steering Committee discussed that once a vendor is selected, the consultant will require assistance from the VWMC in terms of proving feedback in a timely manner. Additionally, the VWMC will be required to assist with providing written material for the website. Len Smock suggested that the Communications Committee develop a task list for Steering Committee members to complete on the web inventory database and website design.

Inventory Committee
Michele Monti (Chair, Inventory Committee) reported that the committee had met recently via conference call to discuss the missions and goals of the committee. These missions and goals will remain the same in 2002 as in 2001. The original objectives of the Inventory Committee to create a survey and a mailing list have been met. Objectives that now need to be met include: 1) getting the survey information into a database, 2) making the survey web enabled, 3) making the survey “real time” and available online 4) identifying the gaps in responses and in the inventory itself, and 5) filling in these gaps.
Michele reported that the Committee has two new members. She reported that as of March 13, 112 inventory surveys have been received out of the 2,200 sent out and that this response rate should be considered good for its first attempt. The Inventory Committee has not yet reviewed these survey results. Michele discussed that other groups could assist with this gap identification. For example, Jane Lassiter with the Eastern Shore Soil and Water Conservation District has agreed to look at the survey mailing list and survey responses for the Eastern Shore area and to identify groups that are missing. Michele discussed the need to keep the survey in the public eye and suggested that the survey continue to be mentioned at all events in which VWMC is represented and also, if possible, at events in which VWMC members are attending. Michele suggested bringing a laptop so that the public can enter their survey results online at these events. Michele reported that one of the committee members, Carolyn Thomas, will be attending the Virginia Lakes and Watersheds Conference in March and that she will publicize the survey.

Needs Assessment Committee
Fran Geissler reported the preliminary results of the 129 completed needs assessment surveys. Fran handed out copies of the survey (inventory and needs assessment) along with a summary of the preliminary results. Based on the preliminary results, the committee recognized that survey questions might have not been specific enough in order to identify specific outreach items. Katie Register identified a strategic question: does the VWMC want to recommend specific protocols and/or equipment? Another question asked by the Steering Committee was: do we want to serve the general public or just the monitoring community?

Ward Staubitz suggested that although the results of the needs assessment will give us some guidance on where the VWMC can continue to provide outreach, it would be beneficial to have a strategic planning session in order to determine where the organization is headed and what we need to do in order to meet our goals. Katie identified three items for discussion for a strategic planning session: 1) Determine the VWMC role, 2) Determine whom the VWMC wants to serve, and 3) Determine how the VWMC views itself as an advocacy organization. After discussing several options, the Steering Committee decided that another meeting in addition to the regular Steering Committee meeting was needed for this strategic planning session; **June 5th was selected for the strategic session.** The location for this meeting will be determined. Tamim stated that Jane Walker would organize this event. Stacey Moulds will give the name of a strategic planner to Jane Walker.

Work Plans for VWMC & Its Committees
Ward Staubitz handed out copies of the 2002 Work Plan for the VWMC and for all of the committees. The VWMC “Year” was defined as the time period between the annual meetings. Ward pointed out that the VWMC was therefore, approximately one-half into its third year at this point. Ward asked for the Steering Committee to review the plan and to provide comments. He will then finalize the plan and give the final plan to the Communications Committee for placement on the VWMC WebPage. The deadline for comments is April 1, 2002. Ward will then revise the work plan and give it to the Communications Committee within one week.
30th Anniversary of Clean Water Act and VWMC involvement in June 21 Kick-off Event

Don Smith discussed the DEQ’s plans for celebrating the 30th Anniversary of Clean Water Act (CWA). The National Water Quality Monitoring Day is set for October 18th, 2002. Virginia DEQ plans to celebrate and publicize this event by encouraging citizens to monitor their local waterbodies on this day. The DEQ regional offices’ monitoring data collected between October 14th – 24th will be accepted for this event. The monitoring will provide a "snap shot" of water quality across the state and will be used in the national celebration of the CWA.

Don reported that pre-registration forms are available in order for people to register monitoring sites. Monitoring kits are designed for use by school children and are available from the LaMotte Company for a cost of $17.00 per kit. Parameters are measured in the field and include dissolved oxygen, air and water temperature, pH, and water clarity. The kits will be available for purchase beginning May 1. Don reported that the DEQ has postcards available for those wishing to send out “Save-the-Date” cards for this event.

A Kick-off event for the National Water Quality Monitoring Day will be held on June 21 at Pocahontas State Park. The main goal of this event is to encourage interest and participation in the national event in October. The Virginia Office of Environmental Education will be coordinating this event. Representatives from each DEQ regional office will be invited to be present and manage booths. Booths will include demonstrations different types of monitoring performed by the DEQ. Both Environmental Education and LaMotte Company representatives will be on hand to discuss the use of the LaMotte kit. A field visit to the State Park is planned for Friday, March 15, and Don invited all Steering Committee members to attend.

Don requested that all Steering Committee members let him know if their organizations can help participate in the Kick-off event and/or the October event. Ward mentioned that it would be appropriate to use the VWMC display for the Kick-off event. Stacey Moulds reported that the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay would help with the October event, but that her organization’s time may be limited in June due to other conflicts.

The purchase of a display board for the VWMC was discussed at this time. Currently, the VWMC borrows the display board from the USGS on which to display the VWMC panels and PowerPoint presentation that have been developed for use of the VWMC at public events. Katie offered to look into the cost for a 4-paneled tabletop display.

Tamim mentioned that the VWRRC is also planning a Water Festival for the celebration of the National Water Monitoring Day in October.

Web Site (Site Map and Scope of Work) –

This agenda item was covered under the communications committee report and was not discussed separately.

Update of 9th Annual Virginia Watershed Management Conference

Fran Geissler reported on the status of the 9th Annual Virginia Watershed Management Conference. A date and location have been set: the conference will take place from September
25-27 at the Hotel Roanoke in Roanoke, Virginia. The conference will begin with a 6 PM reception at on September 25 and will end at 1:15 PM on September 27. The VWMC Annual Meeting will convene immediately afterwards beginning at 1:30 PM.

Fran reported that the conference will include 3 main topics: 1) watershed planning and partnerships, 2) land conservation, and 3) another issue to be determined. The Watershed Management Conference Planning Committee is hoping to secure travel and registration scholarships.

Fran reported that monitoring issues will be included within the watershed-planning topic and that two sessions have been set aside for monitoring issues. Each session will be approximately 1.5 hours in length and typically should have 2-3 speakers. The session topics that have thus far evolved are: 1) capacity-building roundtables and 2) case studies for community action. The VWMC has been invited to sponsor one session and the Steering Committee brainstormed for potential topics. Sponsoring a speaker, such as the former head of the US EPA, was suggested. Various options for session topics were discussed:

- “Capacity Building Through Communication”
- “Statewide Coordination of Watershed Monitoring Programs.” (Describe the work of organizations such as the VWMC and Citizens for Water Quality and discuss the results of the inventory and the needs assessment surveys.)
- National Water Monitoring Council
- Putting Monitoring Data to Action
- Monitoring Needs for TMDL Development
- New Developments in Water Monitoring

Fran will send out an email to all Steering Committee members with more information about the conference and will request input from the Steering Committee on potential topics and speakers.

Update of National Monitoring Conference
Tamim reported that Jane Walker would be attending the National Water Monitoring Conference, which will be held on May 20-23, 2002 in Madison, Wisconsin. Katie Register reported that she and Jane participated in a conference call with the conference planning committee. Jane’s registration and travel costs will be covered by the VWRRC. The EPA has not yet decided if they will be able to offer travel scholarships for this conference. Katie has not yet decided if she will attend the conference.

Fundraising
Fundraising was the last item discussed at the Steering Committee meeting. We discussed the need to “think outside of the box.” Foundations were discussed as a source of funding. Katie reported that the W. Alton Jones Foundation has split into three different organizations, and she is unsure if any of these focus on the environment. Other foundations discussed included the Doris Duke, Jessie Ball duPont, and Hewlett Foundations.

Next Steering Committee meeting
The next meeting is set for May 8th at the USGS office in Richmond, Virginia. The meeting will begin at 11:00 AM. John Kauffman with the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries will lead the meeting program.